



2019 U.S. Coast Guard Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups

Overview Report

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Overview Report

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Acknowledgments

The Office of People Analytics (OPA) is indebted to numerous people for their assistance with the *2019 U.S. Coast Guard Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups (2019 SAGR)*. These focus groups are conducted under the leadership Dr. Ashlea Klahr, director of OPA's Health and Readiness (H&R) Division. Ms. Lisa Davis was the government project manager for this effort.

The lead analyst on this assessment was Ms. Amanda Barry, Fors Marsh Group. Mr. Mark Petusky, Ms. Ariel Hill, Mr. W. Xaviar Klauberg, Ms. Yvette Claros, and Ms. Anna Scolese, Fors Marsh Group, assisted in the analysis and preparation of this report. Ms. Alycia White, Ms. Sarah Mason, and Dr. Laura Severance, Fors Marsh Group, and Dr. Ashlea Klahr and Ms. Lisa Davis, OPA, assisted with the review of this report. United States Coast Guard Academy officials who contributed to the development of the focus group content included Ms. Shannon Norenberg. Policy officials who contributed to the development of focus group content included Dr. Nathan Galbreath and Ms. Anita Boyd (Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office). We would like to thank all of the individuals at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy who assisted us in organizing the focus groups.

The data collection team consisted of Ms. Amanda Barry, Mr. Brock Brothers, Mr. W. Xaviar Klauberg, and Ms. Mallory Mann, Fors Marsh Group.

Executive Summary

The *2019 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups (2019 SAGR)* study is a part of an assessment cycle at the Military Service Academies (MSA) that started in 2005, focusing on gender relations including sexual assault, sexual harassment, and Academy culture. The cycle alternates annually between a qualitative (focus groups) and quantitative (survey) assessment. The goal of the survey is to provide statistical information about prevalence rates of unwanted gender-related behaviors and student perceptions on gender relations and Academy culture, while the focus groups provide a deeper insight and understanding of the climate and culture at each Academy. Combined, these assessments help Academy leaders and Service policy makers assess the effectiveness of programs and identify opportunities for improvement.

This report uses data from focus groups to explore the perception of issues related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-related topics at the United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA).¹ Results provided in this report are qualitative in nature and cannot be generalized to the full population of USCGA cadets. Themes should be considered the attitudes and opinions of focus group participants only and not the opinions of all USCGA cadets, faculty, and staff.

Focus Group Methodology

Ten focus groups were conducted at the USCGA from March 18 through March 22, 2019 with 62 cadets and 10 faculty and staff members. Sessions were conducted by trained focus group moderators over 90 minutes in closed-door conference rooms or classrooms on the USCGA campus.

Using a focus group guide and protocol, the moderator led a discussion covering topics related to the Academy culture, prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment, reporting of such incidents, and alcohol use. Using analytic induction,² major themes were identified and coded into key categories. Findings from the analysis are summarized and presented with quotations throughout the report.

Summary of Themes

The perspectives of the cadets as well as the faculty and staff are invaluable in assessing and understanding the policies and programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment, along with the culture at the USCGA.

¹ Focus groups were also conducted at each of the DoD Service Academies (United States Military Academy at West Point, United States Naval Academy, and the United States Air Force Academy), as well as the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA); results for these groups are reported separately.

² Analytic induction is a strategy used in qualitative research that involves collecting data and developing assertions that capture findings. Subsequently, assertions are modified as more data is collected and analyzed, taking into account the extent to which assertions are supported or contradicted.

Academy Culture

Focus group participants identified several factors that impact relationships between men and women at the USCGA. Consistent with past years, cadets in the focus groups noted that cadets have close-knit relationships and interactions between men and women are considered fraternal. Many attributed these relationships and interactions to the higher percentage of women at the USCGA compared to other Service Academies. They see this gender ratio as a positive feature at the Academy that promotes equality and respect.

However, there are still sources of contention between male and female cadets. Some female cadets perceive male cadets as having a dismissive attitude toward female cadets' ideas and personnel issues, noting the perceived double standard regarding leadership traits among male and female cadets. Male cadets, however, perceive that the Academy favors female cadets for acceptance into the Academy as well as for leadership positions and view the Academy as being more lenient toward female cadets compared to male cadets when it comes to punishments and sexual assault incidents.

When asked about official rules, cadet participants identified dormitory "open door" policies and fraternization policies as official rules impacting gender relations. Cadet participants said they believe these policies have unintended consequences and message to the cadets the Academy's lack of trust in them. When discussing unofficial rules, cadet participants mentioned being taught by fellow cadets to handle situations at the lowest level and that they should avoid getting other cadets in trouble. Further, unofficial rules differ by gender. Females cadets identified the unofficial rule of "perception is reality," meaning they have to be mindful of their interactions with male cadets to avoid the assumption that they are more than friends. Male cadets discussed avoiding interaction and romantic relationships with female cadets to avoid being unjustly accused of sexual assault or sexual harassment.

Cadet participants indicated that they learn the unofficial and official rules during Swab Summer³ and from observing and conversing with upperclassmen and rules are enforced by their cadet leadership. According to the participants, the enforcement of the rules varies by the cadet leader; therefore, some leaders may be stricter on enforcement than others. The 2018 SAGR survey found similar findings, as USCGA women (56%) and USCGA men (64%) said they felt that cadet leaders enforce Academy rules to a large extent.

Prevention at the Academy

In previous years cadets discussed a range of behaviors that fall into "the gray area" in which it is often difficult to know if and how to intervene in situations involving sexual assault and/or harassment. The 2019 SAGR focus groups sought to better understand what types of behaviors cadets have difficulty identifying as worthy of intervention. Participants were given a list of behaviors that ranged from roughhousing or horseplay to committing an act of sexual assault and asked whether they would intervene for each behavior. Cadet participants largely responded that they are comfortable intervening in severe behaviors, would not intervene in behaviors perceived as consensual or horseplay, and are hesitant toward intervening in situations in which

³ Swab Summer is an intensive seven-week program that prepares students for the military and Academy life.

upperclassmen are involved, consent is unclear, or there is little contextual information. Often this context involves having an understanding of the relationships between the people involved and the ability to pick up on situational cues. Most participants said they were unaware of intervention training or the training did not resonate with them, as many cadets were unable to discuss or recite specific intervention techniques that were taught in these trainings. Some discussed how they were taught to report a situation, but they felt they would not use this technique and instead would resolve the matter on a peer-to-peer level.

Consistent with findings from the 2018 SAGR survey, across the focus groups, the participants said they perceived the leaders as playing an important role in prevention efforts at the Academy. Specifically, senior leadership is viewed as effectively prioritizing sexual assault as an Academy issue, messaging zero tolerance for offences, and endorsing a genuine approach to addressing the problem. However, many cadets wanted to see more transparency from senior leadership, by better informing cadets of their plan to fix issues pertaining to sexual assault and sexual harassment or by providing more information on cases. Participants said they viewed cadet peer leadership as proactive in creating a culture that does not tolerate sexual assault or sexual harassment. Cadets mentioned that their peer organization Cadets Against Sexual Assault (CASA) provides resources and trainings to cadets on sexual assault and sexual harassment. Cadet participants reported that peer leaders are approachable and available; however, there is a lack in confidence with regard to confidentiality and trust. Cadets mentioned peer leaders need additional training on how to handle sexual assault and sexual harassment to better address future situations.

Resources and Reporting

When discussing the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office at the Academy, cadet participants discussed the secluded location, whereas some said they lacked familiarity of the resources. Cadets who were familiar with the location of the office commented that the office is in an area where a cadet's anonymity would be at stake, which may deter cadets from using the SAPR office as a resource. Participants noted that while the SAPR staff are approachable, a victim might feel more comfortable going to peers, CASA members, a chaplain, or leadership within their company.

Barriers to reporting sexual assault and sexual harassment persist. Participants identified these barriers as including the rumor mill, collateral misconduct (behaviors such as underage drinking, fraternization, or other violations of USCGA regulations that can result in disciplinary actions), fear of not being believed, being expelled or delayed graduation, stigma, and the lengthy and rigorous reporting process. To increase reporting, cadets suggested reducing the stigma associated with reporting, improving trust in the system, and/or making the reporting process easier.

Alcohol Use and Training

Cadets at the Academy spoke of alcohol use as a way cadets relieve stress, often describing alcohol use as binge drinking. When asked about the trainings provided about alcohol use, participants stated that the trainings are unrealistic and not always helpful in creating behavior change or promoting responsible alcohol choices. Cadets discussed the need for training that

promotes responsibility over abstinence and suggested it be taught by individuals who cadets can relate to, such as recent graduates or young officers.

Synopsis

The focus groups align and add context to *2018 SAGR* survey results. Participants mentioned that they are willing to intervene in situations that seem clearly criminal or unwanted, but have a harder time identifying sexual assault or sexual harassment incidents falling in the “gray area,” an area where cadets often do not know how to intervene.

Results from the focus groups also align with the perceptions of leadership in relation to gender issues. Although participants said they feel confident in senior leadership’s ability to address sexual assault and sexual harassment, it is peer leadership who have the most influence on Academy life. The attitudes and influence of cadet leaders are a key component of the prevention effort.

Finally, participants recommended improvement to both their bystander intervention and alcohol trainings. Cadets expressed that the current trainings are not resonating and are often seen as unrealistic. Across both topics, cadets in the focus groups expressed a desire for relatable training facilitators and realistic scenarios.

The perspectives expressed in these groups are vital in assessing and understanding the dynamics surrounding sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-related issues at the USCGA. The ongoing program of alternating focus groups and surveys conducted at the USCGA strives to inform the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the U.S. Coast Guard, and Service Academy leadership to understand the depth of issues associated with unwanted gender-related behaviors and to identify potential cultural and environmental factors that can be addressed to reduce these behaviors. The body of this report contains a wealth of information on these topics. Although this report alone cannot answer all of the questions about unwanted behaviors that are reportedly experienced by students at the USCGA, it is a powerful source of insight from the students and faculty that cannot be obtained otherwise.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) strives to provide a safe environment for their cadets' educational and leadership development. Working with their Service Headquarters, the Academy has implemented programs to reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment while updating response programs, including reporting and victim care procedures. A recurring evaluation of these programs through ongoing mixed-methods research (i.e., surveys and focus groups) informs the development of the improvements to policies, procedures, and trainings aimed at reducing instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment and advancing care. Both focus groups and representative surveys are used to gain qualitative and quantitative feedback from cadets and personnel at the Academy. This introductory chapter provides background and history on these focus groups, a review of the methodology used to administer the *2019 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups (2019 SAGR)*, an overview of the report, and an introduction to key terms.

Study Background

The Health and Resilience (H&R) Division within the Office of People Analytics (OPA) has conducted congressionally mandated gender relations assessments at the Academies since 2005,⁴ and at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) since 2008. Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.), Sections 4361, 6980, and 9361, as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2007, codified an assessment cycle at the Academies that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. This requirement applies to the DoD Service Academies (U.S. Military Academy [USMA], U.S. Naval Academy [USNA], and U.S. Air Force Academy [USAFA]). Although the aforementioned policy does not require USCGA to be assessed, the Academy has requested to participate since 2008.⁵

This report presents findings from the *2019 SAGR*, a source for exploring general attitudes of the gender relations environment at the USCGA. This is the sixth administration of the gender relations focus groups for the USCGA.⁶ The *2018 SAGR* survey found that rates of unwanted sexual contact (USC)⁷ increased at the USCGA for female and male cadets compared to 2016, reaching tracking highs since measurement began in 2008 (see Figure 1). Among female cadets, 30% indicated reporting USC which is a 10% increase in reporting compared to 2016.⁸ Among male cadets, 8% indicated reporting USC; however, significant trends could not be determined, as 2016 results were not reportable. Rates of sexual harassment also increased for both male and

⁴ The first assessment in this series was conducted in 2004 by the DoD Inspector General (IG). Details are reported in the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (2005).

⁵ The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 mandates reporting of sexual assaults in the Coast Guard (United States 111th Congress, 2010).

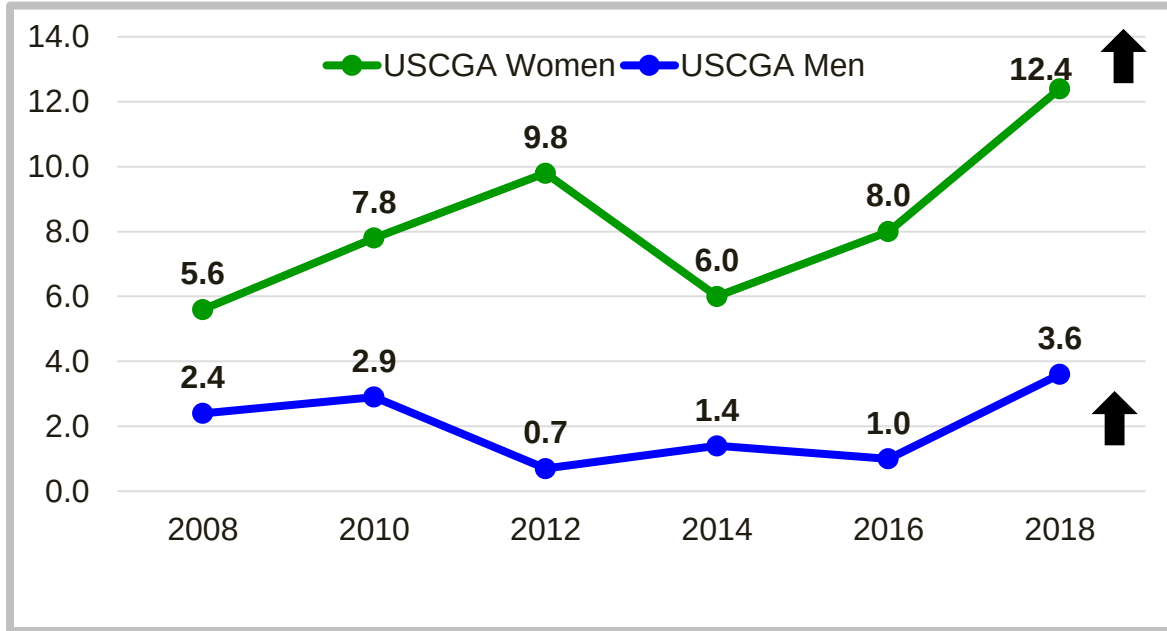
⁶ Previous surveys were administered in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018, and previous focus groups were conducted in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017.

⁷ Unwanted sexual contact (USC) is the metric used to assess behaviors in line with sexual assault, including penetrative, non-penetrative, and attempted crimes, on the SAGR survey

⁸ Reporting rates are estimated by dividing the number official reports by the number of students estimated to have experienced USC per the *2018 SAGR*.

female cadets. These findings have prompted significant concern and calls to action from across the USCGA, Department of Homeland Security, Congress, and the public. The 2019 SAGR was conducted approximately two months after the 2018 SAGR findings were reported, and it is a crucial next step in understanding the climate at the Academy to inform efforts to strengthen prevention and bolster reporting.

Figure 1.
Estimated Unwanted Sexual Contact Rate, by Gender



Margins of error range from $\pm 0.1\%$ to $\pm 4.5\%$ (Q48)

Methodology

OPA conducted 10 focus groups on gender relations with cadets, faculty, and staff at the USCGA from March 18 through March 22, 2019. Each group was conducted in 90-minute sessions with a moderator trained in sensitive topic facilitation. In total, 62 Academy students and 10 faculty, coaches, activity leaders, and military cadre participated in the groups. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary.

The focus group guide (see appendices A and B) for the Academy was developed to provide insights into general Academy culture, sexual assault and harassment prevention and reporting, and the role of alcohol at the Academy.

Although the results cannot be generalized to the entire USCGA population, the focus groups provide insights into issues and ideas for further consideration. Data collection is discussion-based; therefore, although many subjects are addressed, not all questions are asked in all groups, and not all participants are able to answer each question. Procedures for selecting participants, developing the questions, conducting the groups, and analyzing the data are described below.

The focus group procedures were reviewed by a DoD Human Subjects Protection Officer as part of the DoD survey approval and licensing process.

Participants

Study participants were selected from the general population at the Academy and may or may not have had direct experience with sexual assault and/or sexual harassment. Students, faculty, and staff who were selected and volunteered were recruited to participate in one of 10 focus groups: nine student focus groups and one group comprising faculty, staff, and military cadre members. The focus groups were held at the Academy. Student groups were broken out by gender and class year, with the exception of one mixed-gender and mixed-class year group that was made up of members of Cadets Against Sexual Assault (CASA), a student group focusing on sexual assault prevention and awareness. See Table 1 for a detailed layout of the groups that were conducted.

Table 1.
Focus Group Participant Composition

Class Year/Category	Gender	
Senior	Male	Female
Junior	Male	Female
Sophomore	Male	Female
Freshmen	Male	Female
Student Group	Mixed	
Faculty and Staff	Mixed	

To select participants for the student focus groups, the Academy supplied OPA with a roster of all cadets. After randomizing each list within clusters defined by gender and class year, the rosters were returned to the Academy. The USCGA was responsible for recruiting the first available 12 students via e-mail to participate in the appropriate session, with an even split of female and male cadets for the mixed-gender group. The Academy was required to emphasize that participation was voluntary and that participants were able to exit the study at any time. For this reason, the size of the sessions varied. For the faculty sessions, Academy officials advertised the sessions through the most appropriate forum for the Academy and solicited volunteers. In total, 62 students and 10 faculty and staff participated in the focus groups.

Development of the Guide

Using findings from the 2018 SAGR, topics of interest were identified during the release of the report and OPA analysts drafted the initial focus group protocol. Working with the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) and the Academies, OPA incorporated collaborative feedback before finalizing the focus group guide.

Each section of the guide covered multiple topics, including questions on culture, official and unofficial rules, leadership, bystander intervention, and barriers to reporting. The student and faculty guides can be found in appendices A and B, respectively. The protocol also included several activities and handouts designed to encourage discussion and to foster thought beyond top-of-mind responses. Table 2 shows the different activities used throughout the focus groups. The handouts that were provided to participants can be found in Appendix C.

Table 2.
Focus Group Activities

Activity	Group Type	Description
Leadership Assessment	All groups	Participants were asked to grade different levels of leadership on their handling of issues related to sexual assault. Moderators probed about the reason behind the grade and what leaders could do to improve their grade.
Bystander Intervention	Students groups	Participants were asked to place a range of behaviors on the handout to indicate if they would or would not intervene to stop the behavior. Participants were also given the option to place the sticker on a third option, the “gray area.”
Campus Mapping ⁹	Student groups if time allowed	Participants were asked to map where alcohol use occurs and where it “gets out of hand” on and around campus.

Conducting the Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted on site at the Academy in closed-door conference rooms or classrooms. Experienced facilitators trained in focus group moderation and sensitive topics led the sessions. Gender-specific groups were led by facilitators of the same gender (i.e., male groups were led by a male facilitator, female groups were led by a female facilitator). For mixed-gender groups, the facilitator was either male or female.

Analysis

Data from the focus groups were analyzed using analytic induction, a multistep method (Erickson, 1986). First, the data were organized, removing any personally identifiable information (PII) or other identifying information. Next, using qualitative analysis software (NVivo), the team coded data into key themes, and analysts developed assertions, which stated possible findings. Transcripts were coded and verified by two independent analysts to avoid individual bias. Once the data were compiled for each assertion, researchers determined whether to keep, revise, or eliminate the findings based on the support and contradictions for the assertion. If an initial finding did not have evidence of support, it was eliminated as a potential assertion. Assertions that were retained are summarized in the subsequent chapters of this report.

⁹ Due to time constraints, most groups were unable to complete the campus mapping activity.

Quotes that exemplify key findings reached through the analytic induction process are included throughout the report.¹⁰

Findings for the Academy are presented in the following chapters:

- Chapter 2 provides a summary of findings.
- Chapter 3 provides a discussion of major themes

Terminology

Throughout the report, uses of the phrases “sexual assault” or “sexual harassment” do not indicate that the actions met the legal definition. Terms, such as “offender,” “perpetrator,” or “victim,” are not intended to convey any presumption concerning sexual assault allegations; references to perpetrator/offender throughout this report should be interpreted as “alleged perpetrator” or “alleged offender.” Without knowing the specific outcomes of particular allegations, the presumption of innocence applies unless there is an adjudication of guilt. References to “retaliation,” “reprisal,” “ostracism,” or “maltreatment,” or perceptions thereof, are based on the negative behaviors as reported by the focus group participants. Without knowing more about the specifics of particular cases or reports, this data should not be construed as substantiated allegations of reprisal, ostracism, or maltreatment. Therefore, no legal conclusions can be drawn on whether behaviors meet the definition of an offense having been committed.

Throughout the report, quotations are used to highlight key themes and findings. Within quotations, participants may use slang and terminology specific to the military, the Service, or the Academy. Please use the glossary in Appendix D as a guide.

¹⁰ For clarity, throughout the report, filler words (e.g., “like,” “um,” “you know,” “yeah”) were removed from quotations, and explicit words are indicated by [explicit] where they have been removed.

Chapter 2:

U.S. Coast Guard Academy

The USCGA is located in New London, CT, about two and a half hours from both New York City and Boston. At the Academy, students in their first year are referred to as “fourth class” or “freshman,” students in their second year are referred to as “third class” or “sophomore,” students in their third year are referred to as “second class” or “juniors,” and students in their fourth and final year are referred to as “first class,” “seniors,” or “firsties.” For the purposes of this report, beliefs and opinions attributed to “student,” “faculty,” or “cadet,” refer to participants in the 2019 SAGR focus groups.

General Culture

Throughout the focus groups, participants were asked a number of questions about the culture at the Academy and how it plays a role in interactions between men and women and cadets of different class years. Cadets discussed their day-to-day activities and interactions and spoke on the rules of the Academy. Additionally, cadets spoke of the shift in the gender ratio in recent years, many stressing the higher percentage of females at USCGA compared to previous years.

Life at the Academy

Cadets in the focus groups highlighted the amount of time spent on Academy grounds and the dual role the Academy plays in their lives as both a home and workplace. Despite its role as their home, male and female participants focused on the need for professionalism at the Academy. Participants reported that on a day-to-day basis, they mainly interact with their teammates, roommates, or other cadets and feel that there is a close-knit community. Cadets said they perceive that there is a familial atmosphere where some see each other as “brothers” and “sisters.” Some cadets attributed this family culture to the small population of the Academy. Cadets also described a stressful environment where they balance schoolwork and military duties. Cadets perceive that they are always on duty or expected to perform academically in their division, which over time has led cadets to feeling fatigued.

“You spend a ridiculous amount of time in this environment. 16:00, the end of the workday, the officers go home. People on base go home, live their regular lives. We’re still here. We still have to wear the specific uniform. We still might have duty to stand until late hours of the night and early in the morning. And it’s exhausting. The longer you’re here, the more it hits...” —Junior, Male

“And also, I think there’s a very strong family atmosphere. At least from what I’ve experienced here. So before coming here, I probably had more close girlfriends. But now, it’s more guy friends, too. It’s equal or I almost see the guys as like my brothers, too. It’s a comfortable environment from what I have experienced.” —Sophomore, Female

Academy Views

Faculty mentioned that the Academy is one of “exceptionalism,” in which it is perceived as too different from others to successfully implement programs or changes made in other institutions. Additionally, faculty feel they have to support a positive image of the Academy regardless of existing issues, and those who raise issues are perceived as being disloyal. Faculty also feel that cadets are told how to think (e.g., on topics related to gender) and they feel the Academy promotes conformity as opposed to diverse thought. Furthermore, faculty mentioned that there is a culture of being afraid of asking for outside help, since it could be perceived as weakness.

“And there’s no way, right. Because the answer is, ‘Well, we’re different,’ right, ‘We’re exceptional. Yeah, that might work at Conn college and Yale and da, da, da, da, but that’s not going to work here.’ And so even if it’s something that you think like, ‘How hard can that be?’ Right. You start working at soup kitchens, all these different—‘No, no. We can’t do that. We’re too different.’ So it’s a kind of strange insular culture that incest that for multiple reasons.” —Faculty

“Right, so, it’s personality-driven, right? So then, you tell the stories that we know of from our students and then it’s because, ‘Well, you’re exaggerating.’ It’s about the person who then wants to tell the truth, not about the truth they’re trying to share. So that’s one of the structural part of our culture that has difficulty with dissent in that way because it’s perceived as disloyal. It’s part of command structure. It’s part of military culture. We have not figured out or not open to how do you actually have the jeremiad, which is, ‘I love this place and I know it can be better.’ As opposed to the critique means that I’m a dissident, unpatriotic, whatever, troublemaker.” —Faculty

Focus group participants discussed the feeling that the Academy is often scrutinized by the media (e.g., New London Day Newspaper) about issues related to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

“And what’s frustrating is I feel like we genuinely do a pretty good job amongst peer to peer with respect. The experience is—my sister goes to a big state school. It’s ridiculous what girls go through at other schools. At parties, or at frat houses. And it just constantly, constantly feels like we’re just getting bombarded as almost bad dudes here. That last article that came out in the New London Day, actually pissed me off. I get the surveys and this and that, but these people don’t live here. They don’t know what’s actually going on. And then you have people just absolutely roasting male cadets in like the comment section. And that’s where I get frustrated when I talk to my friends because they can’t even comprehend, so.” —Sophomore, Male

“And on that same note, it seems the stories that go to the paper, outside people look in on everything that goes here, take a few instances, or maybe just one instance, and create this whole story and tell the public that there’s a giant problem here and the culture is pervasive and just create a whole different story than we who live here. And it’s like, ‘Whoa. It’s not that way here at all.’ And it

sounds like there's this huge cultural issue, and we hadn't even heard of it. And that's more than just with sexual assault and harassment, but it seems like outside people looking in jump to conclusions.” —**Senior, Male**

Higher Percentage of Women at the Academy

When participants in the focus groups were asked about gender relations at the Academy, they frequently cited the higher percentage of female cadets at the Academy compared to other Military Service Academies. Cadets indicated that the Academy is doing a better job over the last few years in bringing more women to the institution. Participants pointed to the ratio of female students as one of the reasons that interactions between men and women are seen as commonplace and that men and women are perceived as equal, alleviating potential difficulties in gender interactions.

“I think in the three years that I've talked to kids about coming here, I've never heard that as a question [Moderator asked participants, 'If you were talking to someone who's thinking about coming to the Coast Guard Academy who's never been here, what sort of things would you tell them about how men and women interact here?'], or I've never thought to give that before they've asked. I've never had anyone ask and never thought of saying that because I think for the most part it's very respectful. I've never had a thought of men and women relations. I just think that we're all pretty equal. So, it helps that we have a high percentage, too. I think it'd be a lot different if there were less of us.”
—**Junior, Female**

Although many female participants discussed the Academy's diverse and strong female presence, some mentioned that when they leave the Academy and go to the U.S. Coast Guard fleet, there will not be the same diversity and gender ratio. Although the Academy is viewed by students as doing a good job in bridging the gap between the number of women and men on campus, once cadets leave the Academy, female cadets no longer feel like they will have an equal balance.

“I was just in the fleet over break at [LOCATION] and here, we're 40% female so you kind of get used to—we're literally almost equal. And the Academy is genuinely trying to get diversity, female, male, get pretty much 'level playing field.' And then you go out in the actual fleet, and that's only 17% female. So, I sat in a briefing that I was one of three females in a room of about 30 guys. And I had no issue with it. It was just an observation. So, I think the Academy itself is doing great job of getting more females.” —**Sophomore, Female**

Male participants voiced noticing that the Academy is actively trying to increase the percentage of female cadets at the Academy, and some held the belief that women who apply to the Academy are more likely to be accepted than their male peers. As a result, there is a belief by some at the Academy that less qualified female cadets are accepted to the Academy.

“And it upsets me a little bit, because they love to push the number of the percentage of females they have here. They love to talk about it. I think 2022 is almost 50% female. Do I think that 50% of the applicants are female? No, I think they’re about 25% female because it’s the military. That’s how it goes. And I don’t think that the numbers represent the actual applicants or qualified applicants...” —Junior, Male

Rumor Mill

Participants in the focus groups repeatedly discussed the presence of a strong rumor mill; due to the Academy’s small population, it is easy for rumors to spread quickly. Participants mentioned that discussing other cadets’ interactions or behavior is a prominent pastime. Cadets mentioned that there are rumors about everything, such as someone taking extra leave or who is dating who. Because of the rumor mill, participants indicated that cadets take sides or view someone differently, which could lead to animosity between cadets and the person who is in the spotlight. As a result, cadets mentioned that they would not want to be the focus of this negative attention.

“Yeah. There are definitely times when I’ve had teammates that have had people accuse them of something that ultimately just never happened. And that just starts a rumor mill and people just, like you said, they thrive off of it. They just love talking about it. They just make some—have something to talk about because they just—this place, it just kind of numbs you sometimes. So, you take anything you can and just kind of go with it. But just the fact that you have so many people around you that are—you can be personable with, unlike the command. So that’s better for just as peers.” —Sophomore, Male

“I do think a problem with the rumor mill, though, is that it is a rumor mill, so there’s going to be like 800 different stories that everybody’s telling. So one story could be completely different than the other. It’s like playing telephone when we were kids. So, it could be one person has the blame, and one person’s the person. The other person has all the blame. So, I do think it is a little dangerous because even if we are a family and we view ourselves as that, then if you hear the wrong story, then you might look at somebody a different way. I mean, I think we can’t sit here and say we’re not all judgmental because we all have those judgments in our minds. Whether or not we express them is one thing, but I know I wouldn’t want somebody talking about me when it comes to this stuff...” —Senior, Male

Relationships at the Academy

Focus group participants mentioned that the relationship between cadets is fraternal. Cadets pointed to a family atmosphere at the Academy in which students view each other as brothers and sisters. Additionally, a few senior male cadets said they view their relationship as protective, as they would look out for a female cadet.

“I had a similar instance in my company [in fourth?] last year, and since you get so close to those people during Swab Summer and throughout the school year just going through the suck, you kind of feel like you are a family and that you don’t

want third class to be hitting on the fourth class girls or vice versa because as a fourth class, you're not necessarily aware of how severe the punishment may be or anything like that. So, I definitely was like, 'Back off. You're not supposed to be doing this, and you're going to pressure them.' Even a third class who's a year older, you have so much more authority and power that—I don't know—it's kind of gross, especially right out of Swab Summer, when people have no idea. It's like, 'All right. Go away. You're being a creep.'" —**Senior, Male**

Gender Beliefs at the Academy

Cadets were asked about their general beliefs about gender at the Academy, including how male and female cadets are similar or different.

Similarities in Gender Beliefs

Cadets in the focus groups expressed viewing gender at the Academy as equitable. They reported having mutual respect and treating everyone fairly, regardless of gender. A few freshman male cadets noted that having female cadet leadership helps with their interaction with female superiors and enforces for them that both men and women can occupy leadership positions. Female cadets cited living in the same building as males helps blur the line between men and women, creating equality between the genders.

"Well, going off of a point that someone else made earlier about variety of genders in positions of power and command, I think that one lesson I learned is that it does not matter what gender is, whether you have—When you're in a leadership position, everyone's going to take you seriously and follow your orders the same. Our company had a female Guidon that was in charge of our fourth class. Respected her the same that we respect our current male Guidon. And I think that's something important that I saw at the Academy."
—**Freshman, Male**

Differences in Gender Beliefs

Some female cadets in the focus groups expressed that there is some dismissiveness toward women when personnel issues arise or when sharing their perspectives or ideas in the classroom. Female cadets mentioned that if a male cadet has a similar issue as a female cadet, his personnel issue is perceived as a legitimate issue, whereas the female cadet's issue is viewed as a "silly girl problem." Additionally, female cadets perceive that their perspectives or ideas are not taken seriously, and if a male cadet were to say a similar idea or disagree, his viewpoint would be considered.

"I also think that there's some dismissiveness towards women along the lines of what you were saying ... But I just heard a lot of guys whenever there's 'drama' or a problem with a certain group that involves women, a lot of those problems get dismissed as, 'Oh, it's just a silly girl problem.' I've heard that said a lot. And it's frustrating because I can make parallels with this situation is no different from this other one that happened with guys. How is this one a silly girl problem"

and this one is a legitimate personnel issue? And so, I hear that a lot and that's really frustrating." —**Senior, Female**

"But when it comes to small group exercises within the classrooms, sometimes not all the ideas are heard clearly. So, one idea might be mentioned and then someone else of the opposite sex will say the same thing, and then they'll hear it from the opposite sex, not from the person that said it." —**Freshman, Female**

Senior female cadets discussed how women at the Academy need to be concerned with first impressions more than their male counterparts. Some female cadets mentioned that these impressions are developed during Swab Summer (an intensive seven-week program that prepares students for the military and Academy life) or by information provided to others by someone in the fleet, in class, or family members. Swab Summer was identified by some female cadets as a time when women at the Academy are molded in uniform to be like one of the men and if they deviate from this concept (e.g., making an effort to look "cute" while at work), they would not be respected. Female cadets reported having to look presentable by ensuring their appearance looks appropriate, such as not having a messy bun, since they would be perceived as not caring about their uniform. Female cadets said that if they try to "look cute" in uniform, it could be frowned upon or they may not be respected by cadets, whereas male cadets do not have to worry as much about their appearance.

"I think it was told to me a little later or maybe out in the fleet or something, that women in general just have to make a better first impression or your appearance is pretty—it's says a lot about a woman, whereas a guy—I mean, just going to a female's hair, if they have a messy bun or something or messy hair, it's just kind of—that's one more thing to kind of like, 'Oh, she doesn't care about her uniform.' ...Whereas like [name] said earlier, if you want to look cute in uniform, you can do that and it's still within [inaudible], and it's nice to feel like a woman and be able to kind of differentiate yourself between male and female, but then it might look like it might be frowned upon or some people might think that—"
—**Senior, Female**

Female cadets also discussed that women are categorized into stereotypes, such as being a "bitch," "pushover," or "promiscuous." Typically feminine traits such as being nice or caring are seen as weaknesses. As a result, female cadets may feel the need to watch how they behave in order to ensure that they are not being perceived negatively, whereas male cadets do not face the same level of scrutiny. Many female participants discussed a perceived double standard, stating that while male cadets are not expected to possess certain traits to be considered a good leader, there is an expectation for women in leadership roles to have these types of traits.

Although female cadets mentioned that these perceptions are held by male peers, a few female cadets also mentioned that senior leadership and other female peers also hold similar perceptions. A few female cadets also said they perceive senior leadership (in particular) believe that good leaders cannot have feminine qualities, since feminine traits are perceived as being weak. These senior leaders' perceptions may have been instilled during previous years at the Academy when

women were not permitted, or that senior leadership does not view the positive aspects of feminine qualities.

“I think there’s a lot of emphasis on things that are traditionally female traits being seen as weaknesses. So, like you said, you can either be a bitch or a pushover or promiscuous. I think was the third one. Things that are traditionally female categories or assigned to females like being nice or being caring, that’s like pushover. Men don’t have to be caring to be good leaders but you have to be—to be a good female leader, especially in a military setting, you would have to have all of these male categories but you can’t take it too far because then you’re a bitch...People don’t see—and when I say people I mean generally older military people who when they were coming up in the coast guard, they had many less female counterparts and peers and seniors and subordinates. I’m sure some of the men who are leading the Coast Guard right now went to the Academy when there were no women here still. And so, they don’t have as much view, I think, of the positives of female qualities. And so that gets pushed down that if you have those positive female qualities, you can’t be a good leader because that’s not what they’re used to. So I think most of that comes from senior leadership and less from my peers.” —Senior, Female

Additionally, some female cadets mentioned hearing about male cadet and senior leadership perceptions from their fellow female cadets. Female cadets indicated a sense of competition among each other in which they feel the need to stand out and do not feel encouraged to support other female cadets, since helping another female would not be recognized as their own personal accomplishment. As a result, female cadets may feel threatened or intimidated by other female cadets and may resort to putting other female cadets down.

“I don’t come from a very ambitious high school at all or town. So, there, it’s easy. You’re already at the top, so you’re cruising over pretty much everyone else. There’s not really any competition. But here you kind of have to—not fight for a spot but you have other females that are really great people and that can be seen as threatening or intimidating to other people, other females.” —Senior, Female

“It’s very encouraged for guys to pull each other up and not as much for women. It’s seen as very acceptable for the men in our class to just be like, ‘Yeah, my friends are with me, and we’re doing this whole together as a group,’ and they can still be recognized for that. But it’s almost harder for women to be recognized if it wasn’t just their own personal accomplishment. If they did it in a group, it’s seen as worth less. So, it’s harder to be recognized for things that you’ve actually worked hard on if it wasn’t just you. And so, it’s not as encouraged to pull other women up with you.” —Senior, Female

Additionally, male cadets mentioned that the Academy is more likely to see female cadets as victims in sexual assault cases and to be lenient toward female cadets when it comes to various rules. Male cadets stated that Academy command does not always give male and female cadets

the same benefit of the doubt, specifically when it comes to incidents of sexual assault. There is a perception among male cadets that female cadets are given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to reporting sexual assault incidents and are given more lenient punishment (e.g., slaps on the wrist) for issues such as inappropriate relationships. In contrast, participants believe male cadets face harsher punishment for the same infractions. However, female cadets stated that male and female cadets would face equal punishment for committing the same infractions.

“In this one specific situation where a girl—upper class—was continuously having inappropriate relationships with underclass guys and girls. And she has [been] given multiple slaps on the wrist. What if it had been the other way? It would’ve been treated so much more seriously. And the guy would not be here.”
—**Junior, Male**

Rules at the Academy

Participants were asked to identify both official and unofficial rules at the Academy. Throughout the focus groups, several rules were identified relating to policies on cadet interactions, as well as unwritten rules that guide cadet culture.

Role at the Academy

Cadets in the focus groups mentioned that upperclassmen are responsible for enforcing and showing cadets the rules of the Academy, especially to the freshman class. According to participants, sophomores are assigned as direct supervisors to freshmen and are there to help cadets and show them how the Academy functions. Cadets described maintaining professional relationships with their classmates and taking care of their fellow cadets.

“Yeah, I agree it’s the third class. You’re not allowed to be friends with them, but they’re the ones who you can joke around with a bit and stuff. As far as second class and first class go, you’re supposed to maintain more of that professional relationship. But because we’ll be allowed to be friends with the third class in, what, two months now, it’s more of a point where now you can have an actual conversation with them and not be having to ‘Sir’ all the time...”
—**Freshman, Male**

“Over Swab Summer, we have a saying called, “Ship, shipmates, self.” So you take care of your job first. Then you take care of the people around you. Then you take care of yourself. So that mindset’s kind of ingrained into us, so we do whatever it takes to get the job done first and then help other people achieve that same goal and then help yourself, kind of mindset.” —**Freshman, Female**

Official Rules

Cadets considered certain policies, such as the “open door” policy and “fraternization” policy, as official rules at the Academy that are in place to deter sexual misconduct and to ensure professional relationships between cadets. Cadets explained that their understanding of the “open door” policy is that if a roommate is not present in a room and a cadet of the opposite

gender walks in, the door has to be open at a 90-degree angle and can only be closed if a cadet's roommate is present in the room. Cadets also spoke of not being able to sit on the same horizontal surface as a member of the opposite gender. Although cadets mentioned that the policy is in place to help prevent sexual misconduct, there is a general consensus among cadets that the “open door” policy has unintended consequences. Cadets said they feel that the open-door policy brings a negative connotation to socializing with the opposite gender and they feel the Academy does not trust them to interact with members of the opposite gender. Cadets also asserted that the open-door policy is a nuisance at times, as it prevents cadets from having privacy to talk to their friends or to work on homework.

Participants also shared their understanding of the “fraternization” policy. Many noted that the policy restricts freshmen from having a romantic relationship with upperclassmen and only allows freshmen to date within their own class while upperclassmen can date within their own class or the years adjacent to it. Male cadets also discussed Shark Week, a period of time when freshmen move rank and are allowed to date classmates who are in higher class years. These participants indicated that this time period is less about new relationships forming and more about when hidden relationships are made public. Outside of romantic relationships, the “fraternization” policy is attributed to freshmen needing to maintain professional relationships with upperclassmen. Participants noted that due to the “fraternization” policy, freshmen are faced with the most restriction compared to other classes when it comes to interactions.

“The rules that determine sexual misconduct: (A) they’re very vague, and (B) there’s a lot of them. So, it could be anything from two people of the opposite gender in the same room together with the door closed to just sitting. Another rule is you can’t be on the same horizontal surface with the opposite gender. And I feel like that is a very strange rule. I would get it if you’re lapped up. I understand, I get it, but if you’re helping each other out, doing some homework on a couch or on a desk—I don’t know. That’s one specific rule. There’s also one with the whole dating thing. It’s supposed to represent the distinction between officers and unlisted as the distinction between the upper class and the freshmen. So they’re very strict about that, but it makes it hard because sometimes I’ll be in a class with an upper class, and we have to leave Chase¹¹ or go to a different room or a different building to work on a project together, because we’re not allowed in the same room together to work on a project. I can’t go to their room and just chill out and work on this project. If I were in their room, I would have to be braced up, very strict.” —Freshman, Female

“There’s a fraternization policy that divides all the classes up to where the fourth class can’t have relationships with anybody else other than fourth class. And then for all the other classes, it’s your class and the class adjacent to you.” —Freshman, Male

¹¹ Chase Hall is the cadets’ dormitory. All cadets reside in Chase Hall located on the U.S. Coast Guard Academy campus.

Unofficial Rules

Focus group participants spoke about being taught to handle situations at the lowest level and to not report other cadets for minor infractions (e.g., a door closed when the opposite gender is in a room) because of the idea of “taking care of your classmates” or possibly facing backlash from fellow cadets. As a result, cadets said they are less likely to report anything they do not consider a severe infraction in order to avoid getting another cadet in trouble.

“When I first got here, after the summer was over, a lot of people kept saying if you come upon a situation where you have a conflict with somebody or you see someone doing something they’re not supposed to be doing, they always keep saying handle it at the lowest level. So, talk to that person first, tell them what they’re doing is wrong or whatever, like you’re uncomfortable with it, or just leave it alone. And then if that behavior doesn’t stop, then you move on to the upper levels of whatever but handling it at the lowest level was something that I was taught when I got here.” —Junior, Female

“I think someone may not want to say something because they don’t want to get another cadet in trouble because they know how bad it is for them almost. They know that they would get booted, and they know the pressures of people being here and stuff.” —Senior, Male

Cadets’ perception of the “unofficial rules” at the Academy differed by gender. One unofficial rule that female participants discussed was “perception is reality.” Female participants mentioned that although this “rule” is taught to everybody, it is particularly important that women attend to it. Female cadets stated that if they are with a member of the opposite gender, it may be assumed that they are in a romantic relationship and that they could possibly be punished by being mast, which is similar to a non-traditional punishment in the fleet. If a cadet is charged with such an infraction, he/she could face punishments, such as having additional marching tours or work hours. Therefore, female cadets have to be especially careful of their interactions with male cadets to prevent others from assuming they are more than friends.

“I think we just harp on the perception is reality thing. I mean, it kind of sucks, because if something does happen, it’s not always what you see is actually going on. But it’s like you just kind of tell them [younger cadets], so they’re safe, so that they know. Because some people, they can get told whatever and then once they get in trouble, they actually understand like, ‘Wow, the rules here are kind of different.’” —Senior, Female

“So going back to frat, so if an upper class was very friendly to an underclass just because they play the same sport or because they are in classes together, or something along that nature, and they were in Chase, someone can perceive a relationship. And here, perception is reality. So although there wouldn’t have been a relationship, people can get harshly punished just because of the perception. And it’s something that I’ve seen a couple times that it happened.” —Freshman, Female

Male participants discussed the “unofficial rule” of avoiding interaction and romantic relationships with female cadets to minimize being unjustly accused of sexual assault or sexual harassment. In general, male cadets said they feel the need to maintain professional relationships with female cadets to avoid getting in trouble. However, male cadets mentioned there are some cadets who ignore this rule and have romantic relationships with other cadets.

“When girls are around it’s not the same. When you’re with your guys, you can pretty much say whatever you want. But when there’s a girl in the mix, it’s a little harder especially—if you take us out of the Academy, it’s okay. But brought in this environment where what you say can destroy your career even if to you and your friends it’s harmless—just throwing a girl in the mix just completely complicates it.” —Junior, Male

“You don’t date a cadet.... That’s not really a rule, but it’s just something everyone says. Just don’t date someone here.” —Sophomore, Male

Enforcement and the Perception of Rules

Participants were asked about how rules are enforced and related effects on interactions between men and women at the Academy. Focus group participants described a contrast between people who follow all of the rules, who fall in between following all of the rules and none of the rules, or who barely follow any of the rules. According to cadets in the focus groups, cadets who enforce the rules do so because they believe it is important or out of fear of getting in trouble for not reporting rule violations. Cadets also said that cadets who do not enforce the rules either do not agree with the rules or do not want to be “that person” who is reporting other cadets. One female participant pointed out that although some of the rules seem insignificant, cadets are encouraged to enforce rules because they will be responsible for doing so as officers. Since enforcement is dependent on the cadet who is in charge, cadets are cognizant of what rules they can and cannot get away with at the Academy.

“I feel like this dichotomy of people who really just—they just love the rules so much. And they always take every opportunity to enforce the rules on everyone, either out of fear that they’re going to get in trouble for not reporting, or just justifying it. There’s very few people that fall in between. We have that, and many of the people who hate everyone else who follows the rules and barely following any of the rules. And don’t enforce anything on anyone. Just super chilled out, super relaxed. And there’s not too many people that fall in between. Just kind of have these two opposite sides of people who hate each other, but don’t really talk about it.” —Sophomore, Male

“But it all comes from the rules. I’m sure every one of us can say we don’t agree with every single rule. And you have to make this choice if you’re going to—there could be rules that you don’t agree with. So, it’s like this decision to enforce things that you don’t agree with just because they’re a rule or not at all.” —Sophomore, Female

Participants said they react to some rules, such as the open-door policy, with disdain, since it is assumed cadets are doing something bad before having a chance to prove otherwise. Although participants said they have distinctive unofficial rules that correspond to their gender, such as avoiding interaction and avoiding romantic relationships with female cadets, these rules are perceived as cautionary advice to help keep cadets from getting in trouble. Additionally, cadets said that rules are intended to be clear and specific to ensure that punishment for infractions is equitable among cadets.

“But you could be—I think it’s the assumption that you are doing something wrong if you are behind a closed door with the opposite gender. That really throws everybody off here. It’s like a lot of the rules we have are assuming that you’re doing something bad before you even have a chance.”

—Sophomore, Female

“So, I don’t really ever experience anything where I don’t know. Can I or can I not do this? It’s always—I can look it up just because it’s a military school, so everything’s very structured. So, every rule is written out for us, but I think that’s because they don’t want any leeway. They don’t want one person to get in trouble for something and another person not because the rule is not specific or something. So, I can’t think of anything else off the top of my head.”

—Freshman, Female

Passing Down Rules and Culture

Cadets in the focus groups were asked how they learned to adapt to the Academy’s culture. Participants discussed two key ways: Swab Summer and lessons from upperclassmen.

Swab Summer

Both male and female focus group participants mentioned Swab Summer (an intensive seven-week program that prepares students for the military and Academy life) as an integral aspect of adapting to the Academy’s culture before starting the school year as freshmen. During Swab Summer, cadets acclimate to military life through trainings and learning the importance of teamwork. Participants recalled how during Swab Summer a cadet’s daily schedule is planned for them, which trains new cadets to follow a strict regimen and helps with the transition to the school year. Swab Summer also teaches cadets to manage their time and maneuver through the academic school year. During this time period, cadets are trained to trust and rely on their fellow cadets to accomplish goals. Cadets are also taught not to focus on gender, as cadets are not referred to as “men” or “women” but instead as “swab,” which teaches cadets to treat everyone fairly.

“I agree with all those statements. Swab Summer makes it really easy to come here, and the day after Swab Summer ends, all the cadre, they’re like, ‘Alright. You have to be here at this time. Go.’ And then you transition to the school that way. So the academic year, it’s very different from Swab Summer, but you learn how to manage your time and you manage yourself efficiently through the process. When it comes to gender relations over Swab Summer, again,

everyone's treated exactly the same. And you learn to treat everyone fairly because that's what you're being trained to do." —**Freshman, Female**

"I don't think there's anything specifically stated about gender differences, but throughout Swab Summer and everything, you're trained to trust the person to your left and right. Rely on everyone and anyone beside you, because you can't accomplish the goal without them. So, it's more so your gender's taken out of it. Like, over Swab Summer, there are no personal pronouns. You're not a him, a her, a me. You're a swab. Everybody's a swab. So, that's all you're taught of. And you just don't really look at that." —**Sophomore, Male**

Upperclassmen

Focus group participants expressed that over their time at the Academy, they have learned the rules of the Academy through observing and having conversations with upperclassmen. Participants indicated learning everything about cadet life, traditions, and culture at the Academy from upperclassmen.

"Yeah. In the school year, that blurred line kind of takes effect when we first meet our third class. They're our direct supervisors. They're sophomores here. So we kind of have a meet-and-greet session saying, 'Hey, I'm your third class. Here's what I'm into,' to get to know them. And then they're more like, 'If you ever need anything,'—that's something that you hear a lot—'If you ever need anything, just stop by. My door's always open.' And granted, we have to keep our doors open, unless we're changing, until 4:00 p.m. But the fact that they encourage—like, 'Hey, come by whenever you need anything. Come by if you need anything. Come by just to say hi,' I appreciate because it helped a lot. It helps a lot." —**Freshman, Female**

"You pick up on it. You hear about firsties get in trouble when you're here. And I don't know. You just kind of develop an understanding about how things are run through friendships and how people get in trouble and why they did and who got them in trouble, that kind of stuff." —**Junior, Male**

Prevention

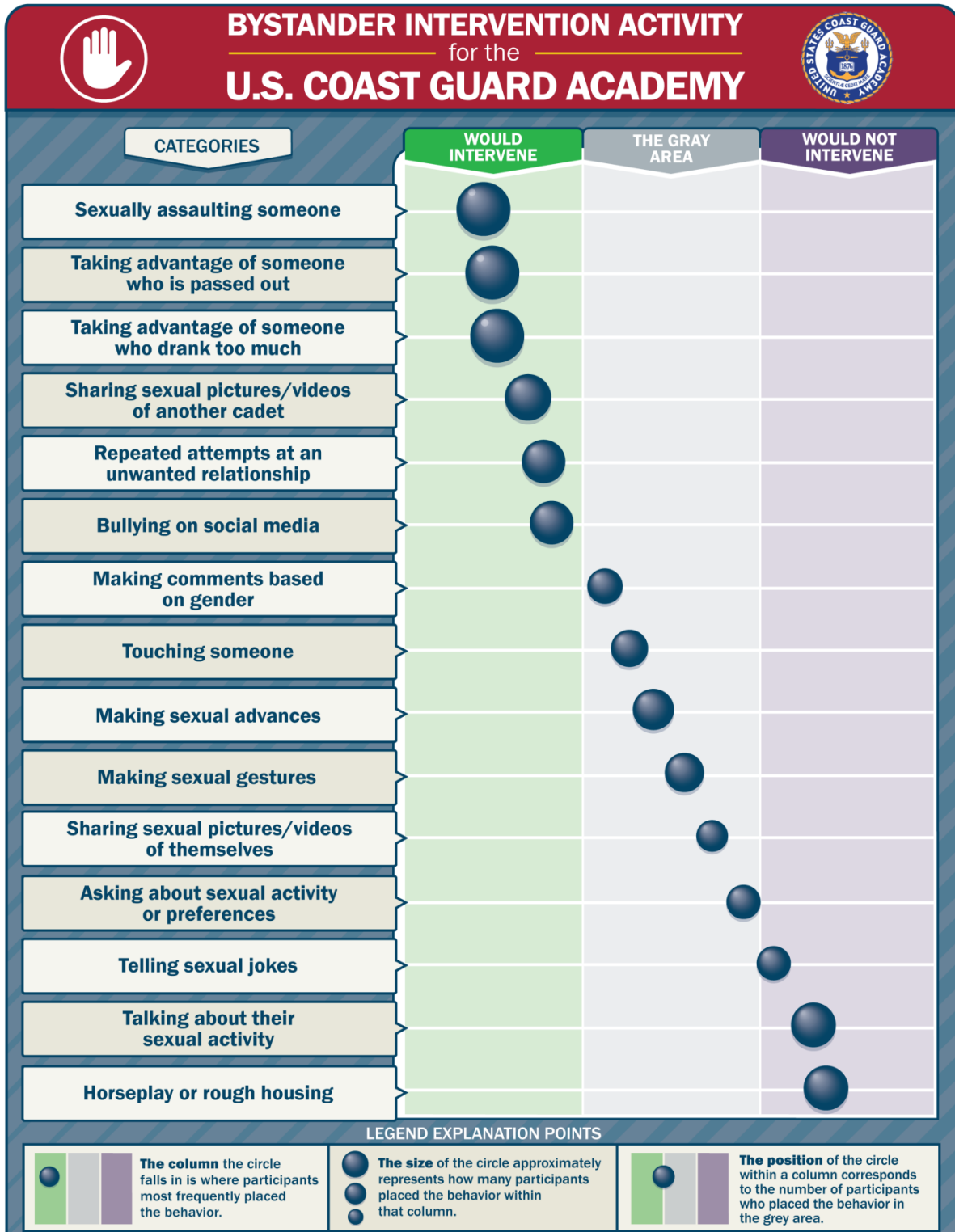
Bystander Intervention and Training

During the focus groups, cadets were asked to identify whether or not they believe they would intervene in a number of problematic situations that they could potentially witness between a variety of people. Participants were also given the option to identify behaviors as being in the "gray area," a term used to indicate that the participant was unsure how they would react. Participants were given a set of stickers representing a range of behaviors that aligned with, or increased the risk for, sexual assault and sexual harassment, and were asked to place the behaviors on a continuum where one end signified "would definitely intervene," the other end signified "would definitely not intervene," and the middle of the spectrum signified a "gray area," where the decision to intervene was uncertain. The behaviors ranged in severity from

verbal jokes and comments to sexually assaulting someone and behaviors could be placed in multiple categories. Participants then discussed the specific situations that they would or would not intervene in, what contributes to the decision to intervene, and the techniques they use when intervening.

Figure 2 displays whether cadets at USCGA said they would and would not intervene in the situation, as well as which behaviors fell in the gray area. Cadets were asked to discuss their rationale for placing behaviors where they did on the continuum. The resulting discussions illuminated several factors that contribute to reasons for intervening and not intervening in risky behaviors.

Figure 2.
Bystander Intervention Activity at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy



Situations in Which Cadets Would Intervene

Cadets in the focus groups indicated they would intervene in situations that are perceived as clearly criminal or unwanted. There was a general consensus among cadets that regardless of whether they know the person or not, they would intervene in these severe behaviors. Some male cadets mentioned regardless of any repercussions (e.g., collateral misconduct) they may face, they would also intervene. The majority of participants indicated they would intervene in situations such as sexually assaulting someone or taking advantage of someone who passed out or was drunk. Participants reported that they would be willing to help someone who could not stand up for themselves, seemed uninterested, or if a person were incapacitated and could not give consent. Situations that were easy to identify as sexual assault or sexual harassment were clearer instances for cadets to intervene.

“There’s sexually assaulting someone, taking advantage of someone who’s passed out, taking advantage of someone who drank too much, and then making repeated attempts to establish an unwanted romantic or sexual relationship with the same person. That was a mouthful. Those, immediately I was like, ‘No, that is not okay.’ This is [where I] would intervene. I don’t care who you are. No.”
—**Sophomore, Female**

“Because in those particular situations, it’s a situation where someone doesn’t have the ability to think clearly on their own. And then that makes them vulnerable to possibly unwanted sexual assault or activities that they don’t want to be involved in. Or just activities at all. And so my thing has always been when someone’s drunk and all, they’re not really able to think for them—almost like they can’t think for themselves, so you kind of have to help them with that. And I just think taking advantage of that would be like breaking, almost, a trust in you. If you either did something or you just did nothing and let something bad happen to them when they weren’t able to take care of themselves.” —**Freshman, Male**

“Those are some serious things especially with the passed-out thing. Deal with that a lot. I feel like not just here but college, in general. You can kind of tell when someone’s super drunk. At that point, they can’t give you consent. And then sexually assaulting someone, you see that, anyone in this room I feel like would take care of that.” —**Junior, Male**

Cadets indicated they would intervene in situations that seem unjust. If the situation were to make other cadets uncomfortable or were to ruin a cadet’s reputation, cadets indicated they would be more willing to intervene and stop the situation.

“With the sharing [of an image] of another cadet, absolutely. Even if I didn’t even know the person that they were sharing the picture of and it was a sexual image or video, that’s not cool. And that is going to hurt someone. That could hurt them pretty bad, can mess up their reputation, something like that. And I would have to, because I wouldn’t want that to happen to me. So, definitely talk to this person and just tell them that. And say, ‘Hey, think about it.’”
—**Freshman, Male**

Additionally, cadets indicated the decision to intervene was dependent upon the severity of a behavior. Cadets expressed that if a situation were to escalate from being a joke to something more serious in which someone ridicules, disrespects, or physically harms a cadet, they would be more likely to intervene.

“And I also put bullying on social media to some extent. If I saw a severe case of that, I would most likely intervene and tell the person they should stop and explain why. And I think that can be subjective to the levels of bullying or whether it’s a simple roasting of each other or more like a playfulness. But if it was really serious, I would definitely intervene.” —**Junior, Male**

Participants stated they would be more likely to intervene if they know the person involved in the situation. They said it would be easier to assess a situation and they would feel comfortable approaching their friends. Cadets reported holding their friends to a standard and looking out for them by ensuring they stay out of trouble.

“I think it’s the same for me because if there’s something I would intervene with complete strangers, then there’s no reason for me to not intervene with my close friends because you want to hold them to a standard of like, ‘You’re better than this.’” —**Senior, Male**

“I think it’s a lot easier to intervene when you know the people well because you have a better understanding of their relationship and whether or not it’s serious or if they’re joking, and you can kind of—and it’s a lot easier to communicate with them because you talk to them all the time. But if it’s people you don’t know, I feel like you might not know their relationship or you might misunderstand. So, I think it’s still important to intervene and go talk to them, maybe just ask what they meant by it or whatever if you feel comfortable.” —**Junior, Female**

A few cadets said they would intervene if they believed a cadet was making a poor decision (e.g., sharing sexual pictures or videos of themselves). Participants mentioned that although the cadet’s actions are voluntary, they would intervene if they foresee harm to a cadet’s reputation.

“For the part of themselves, I put intervene. And what I mean by that, I’d probably go to them and basically just tell them that’s not a good idea. You’re going to get yourself in trouble. You’re going to embarrass yourself. And once you share it, it’s out there. You don’t have any control over it anymore.” —**Freshman, Male**

The “Gray Areas” of Intervention

The context of a situation, non-verbal cues, and familiarity with a cadet were described as factors in determining whether or not to intervene in situations they construe as falling in the “gray area.” Cadets considered “making sexual advances” and “touching someone” as gray area behaviors. Cadets felt confident intervening in situations in which it was clear through a person’s facial expression that they were feeling uncomfortable. Cadets indicated expressions

were easier to interpret if they knew the person. Additionally, cadets reported that the location of an incident affects willingness to intervene. For instance, cadets stated they would not intervene if a behavior takes place in a cadet's room or if they are a by passer in the hallway, but they would intervene if a behavior takes place in a class with a teacher. Although cadets are faced with situations they consider to be in the "gray area," they were cognizant of when intervention is necessary.

"Making sexual advances, horseplay, roughhousing, sexual gestures, touching someone, or making repeated attempts to establish an unwanted—just because most of them depend on situational stuff. So that's why it's kind of a gray area. The making repeated attempts to establish an unwanted romantic relationship, that sort of depends on if I think the person who is receiving the attempts or receiving the unwanted attention. If I think that person is capable of standing up for themselves, then I'll kind of just let it lie, but stand by, I guess. But if I see that person, and you can clearly see that they're not okay, then that's a situation where you need to step in. But it's kind of like it's based on the way their face looks, their facial expression, or the way they're standing, the way they're sitting, stuff like that. That's how you can tell, 'Hey, they look uncomfortable.' Or if someone's standing there with their arms crossed and someone else is making sexual comments or something, the arms crossed kind of tells me, 'Oh, they can probably handle themselves or get themselves out of it.' So, I just listen in, I guess, eavesdrop, and not do anything about it until I felt like I had to."

—Freshman, Female

"Like the context. Because if it's just something I'm overhearing, those two people might be super good friends, so it's kind of a more private conversation that you kind of walked by. But if it's just someone being plainly rude, I'd hope I'd be like, 'Yo, dude, calm down.' But I put making sexual advances and touching someone in the gray area because this could be like touching someone. And that's not something I'd intervene in. But if it's inappropriate touching, then yeah, I'd intervene. And then also making sexual advances, I guess I didn't really totally understand what that meant, but I thought about like if someone's at a bar and someone's going to go hit on someone, I feel like I probably wouldn't intervene unless it went too far. So that's like very—depends on the situation."

—CASA

Situations in Which Cadets Would Not Intervene

Cadets indicated they would be less likely to intervene if a situation seemed consensual. They also indicated they would not intervene in situations such as horseplay and conversations among cadets about sexual activity. Participants noted that if behaviors are not harming others, they would be less likely to intervene in the situation.

"I said, 'Horseplay and roughhousing.' Just because I do that all the time. And it's something that's normal to me. Even from my school, coming up to now, it's always just been something that's occurred. And I feel like I could—I don't know. Some cases, you can't really tell if it's actually horseplaying. They may actually

be getting into it. But in some cases—I feel like you’d be able to tell, though, that something was up. But I just leave that stuff alone.” —Sophomore, Male

“I put that one on would not intervene. Kind of this whole column is talking about their sexual activity, sharing of themselves and then asking about sexual activity, because if it’s not interfering with anybody else or being discriminatory towards anybody, if that’s what they want to talk about and do, by all means. It has no effect on me, and if it has no negative effect on somebody else, then they can do whatever they want.” —Junior, Female

According to cadets, the class rank of the individuals involved in a situation affects the decision to intervene. Cadets stated it would be harder to intervene if a cadet in the questionable situation were an upperclassman, since they would feel uncomfortable addressing him/her; however, some cadets mentioned they would intervene depending on the severity of the situation.

“I think it’s just that positional power is a big thing at the Academy. And even though it’s a third class to a fourth class, it’s still they’re a rank higher. And the same with the second class and the first class. As a second class, you might be [inaudible]. You might have a leadership position, but then if there’s a first class, you’re still a little uncomfortable with addressing them.” —CASA

“Yeah, that second class who says stuff to the upper class and thinks that they know—even if you are right, you can come off that way. So I probably would be less likely to intervene in the less serious stuff. If something’s serious, it wouldn’t matter.” —Junior, Female

Fear of collateral misconduct, such as underage drinking, was considered a deterrent to intervention. Participants said if they were to help a cadet, they could also be punished for either breaking the rules or for being in a bad situation, which would discourage cadets from intervening.

“And I think a big thing too is that—I’ve seen it with underclass, I’ve seen it with upper class, people who are 21, people who aren’t 21—you can get in trouble even if you weren’t drinking irresponsibly for helping someone who was drinking irresponsibly, for being in that situation. Especially for underclass cadets. So, it really encourages people, if they are in a situation where, yes, they did break the rules and drink underage, but it encourages people to not get help when you put the same punishment on people who were helping the situation.” —Senior, Female

Situations that involve friends also present complexities when it comes to intervening. A few cadets indicated that they would be less likely to intervene in situations in which they do not perceive their friend’s action as harmful, since they know the cadet or do not want to make the situation awkward. For instance, some cadets mentioned that they would be less likely to intervene if their friend were telling a sexual joke or making sexual gestures, since they view these as jokes and not serious enough to warrant an intervention.

“Yeah. I pretty much agree wholeheartedly. I think it’s easier to intervene with serious things, like with the bullying, stuff like that, sticking up for your friend or something. But when it comes to telling sexual jokes, I know for a fact that I’ve heard people tell sexual jokes, and I’ve just been like, [inaudible]. I thought it was funny, and then kind of thought about it in the back of my head, but then not really giving it a second thought and didn’t really say anything because I thought it might make it awkward—not like ruin a friendship. I don’t think that’s ever been a thing because especially if you’re friends with them, then they should at least know that you’re trying to look out for them. But I do think it could potentially make things really awkward if you intervene on things that some people might think are small or trivial.” —**Senior, Male**

“I mean, yeah. With that, just thinking about the people that I know pretty well, making sexual gestures, I moved that from gray area to I would not intervene, because just thinking about my friends and everything, we make gestures to each other all the time. And it’s a joke, and no one’s offended. So, I’m just assuming it’s a similar situation. And if that happens, I’ll probably end up laughing at it.” —**Sophomore, Male**

Romantic Relationships

When asked about their decision to intervene in a situation in which two cadets are in a romantic relationship, cadets in the focus groups indicated they would be less likely to intervene. Cadets often said they feel it is not their place to intervene, since it is a private relationship and it would be assumed their behaviors are consensual. However, a few cadets mentioned that they would intervene if they view the behavior as inappropriate (e.g., making sexual gestures), especially in a professional setting. They indicated that intervening would be easier if they know the cadets.

“For me, for some of them, I thought about two people dating, in a relationship and a lot of people are like, ‘Even if you would intervene, you think about it and you’re like, ‘Well, it’s their relationship and they can get mad for you saying something because it’s not your place, it’s not your relationship.’ But let’s say if I’m friends with the girl or I’m friends with the guy, I would definitely talk to them on a separate time and be like, ‘Hey, you shouldn’t—’ I don’t know, say something to them that relates to some of these, I guess.” —**Senior, Female**

“So, for that, there’s an inherent understanding of consent. And if you know them, you’re not really worried about it. But these situations can be—if it’s obvious that these advances are unwanted, I’m going to react the same way if they were or weren’t in a relationship because I understand just because you’re in a relationship doesn’t mean you say yes all the time kind of thing. But if they’re goofing off and touching each other and stuff, I’ll be like, ‘Okay. That’s kind of weird to do here,’ but I’m not going to jump in and say anything.” —**Junior, Male**

Intervention Training

The majority of cadets in the focus groups said they were unaware of receiving training on intervention techniques. Of those who did recall being taught intervention techniques, they mentioned ensuring a cadet is safe, deescalating a situation by talking to the cadet, and holding others accountable. Participants also mentioned they felt they were not encouraged to intervene but instead to report situations they witness. Cadets said they feel they would not want to report in some situations, since many believe the situation could be handled or resolved on a peer-to-peer level through discussion while others fear repercussions for reporting. However, some cadets said they would be willing to report depending on the severity of a situation.

“I wouldn’t say we’ve been taught a whole lot on what to do. Actually, I pretty much haven’t been taught anything on how to intervene in a simple situation like that, just like you’re at lunch and you hear people talking. Nobody has ever instructed us on what to do. That is totally going to be on you to decide what to do. So, we haven’t been taught any specific ways to handle something like that.”

—**Junior, Female**

“I think that goes with the whole, ‘If you see something, say something’ ideology that they teach. They don’t really tell you to go directly to talk to the people involved and get their accounts or find out what’s going on. It’s kind of just, if you see something, then directly report it. And I think that there definitely needs to be more of a focus on actually intervening and gaining knowledge about what’s going on in the situation before reporting it up to the chain.”

—**Sophomore, Male**

When asked about what the Academy could do to help cadets feel more comfortable intervening, female cadets suggested small group discussions or guest speakers. Freshman male cadets in the groups mentioned that by removing the rank structure among cadets, it would make it easier to intervene. Additionally, they indicated that there would be less hesitation to report to an upperclassman if the individual who makes the report is not reprimanded.

“And I think smaller groups are almost more effective because I know we had training last year that was just like the entire Corps, like our entire class. I don’t remember which one it was, but you had half of the Corps listening trying to pay attention but then some people were making jokes about it. So, then it was just a very uncomfortable setting because if somebody felt a certain way and didn’t want to speak out because the people behind them were making jokes about it. And I feel that people are less likely to make a comment in a small group of people that’s negative than in a whole group like we said at a Corps-wide, there is 1,000 people there. You can say something to the person next to you and they’re not going to know, so.” —**Junior, Female**

“I kind of wish that we did have more options for talking to upper class about our problems, because as good as it is to handle things in a class, I would—Nothing is really happening to me, but I would definitely be hesitant about talking to a second class or first class about a problem that I was having of any sort because

I'd be worried that that would be kind of like snitching on somebody from my class. And I don't want them to get on the books in trouble. So, I kind of wish we had more options between getting a stern talking to from an upper class and going to mast because a lot of times that seems like the dichotomy that happens when you report something. —**Freshman, Male**

When asked about the intervention techniques that cadets would use outside of those taught in training, participants said they would either talk to the offender or victim by discussing their behaviors or ensuring that the victim feels safe. Additionally, cadets reported physically removing the offender or victim from the situation. By using these intervention techniques, cadets would be handling it at the lowest levels by deescalating the situation in a calm manner and looking out for their fellow cadets.

"I kind of had a similar situation to [name]. There's this guy. He was dancing on this girl who was clearly uncomfortable. I didn't know the girl. I knew the guy but wasn't good friends with him at all. And so, in that situation, I just kind of pulled her aside and just started talking to her and asking her if she's okay and everything, and then we just made small talk. But I just kind of separated the two because I didn't know the guy well enough, and, I mean, I just didn't like the kid. And I was drunk, so I didn't really want to get into a confrontation with him. So, I just started talking to her instead. I just made sure she was okay and put myself between them." —**Senior, Male**

Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Training

Focus group participants recalled a variety of sexual assault and sexual harassment trainings such as computer-based trainings, sit-down discussions, PowerPoints, and case studies. They also mentioned receiving training during Swab Summer. Cadets stated that the computer-based trainings are ineffective, as many cadets click through the training or test out. Participants said the computer-based trainings are outdated and do not provide a thorough explanation when cadets answer a question incorrectly. Cadets indicated they would rather have small group, in-person trainings where there could be an open discussion among cadets. Additionally, cadets suggested having a guest speaker or making the trainings realistic by providing scenarios that are not clear-cut or providing scenarios in which the victim is not always a woman.

"So basically, every six months we have to do this online sexual harassment and assault training. And you can either click through all the different slides or you can test at the beginning. And if you take the test, you don't have to take the training. So, everyone just tries to take the test and pass it so you don't have to do the training. Basically, the point of them, is to give us all this Coast Guard-wide information. But the secondary point of them is to get them done as fast possible, because there are always these deadlines that happen at very inconvenient times for academics and everything. Which there aren't a lot of convenient times to get other stuff done, but it always comes down to the wire of, 'Let's just get them done as fast as possible.' And the messages aren't always as well received, I think." —**Senior, Female**

“I mean, and honestly you learn so much more being in person, learning, taking notes, having actual conversation. The computer-based trainings for anything, I think, should be a supplement at best to a person-to-person training. And I think that the shift to technology-based stuff for important things like this isn’t going to solve the problem. It’s just going to exacerbate it.” —Freshman, Men

Leadership

Cadets in the focus groups were asked about how peer and senior leadership handle sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Peer Leadership

Focus group participants stated that peer leadership does an exemplary job in creating a culture in which sexual assault and sexual harassment are not tolerated at the Academy. Cadets mentioned the peer organization Cadets Against Sexual Assault (CASA), which is comprised of cadet volunteers who are experts on providing different resources and training to cadets on sexual assault. Cadets indicated that peer leadership is transparent in providing information from senior leadership or being open and communicative through e-mails. Cadets also said that peer leadership is proactive in trying to make culture changes or advocating other cadets to join CASA. Furthermore, cadets described peer leadership as being approachable and available to help out cadets (e.g., helping after an incident).

“I did. I think that, like he was saying, it’s not like cadets are able to lead and actually rewrite the regs, but I don’t think that that’s really their job in the first place. I think it’s more to start changing that culture. And I can definitely say that here compared to civilian schools that my friends go to and I’ve been to and I’ve talked to, there’s definitely a culture against it. And it’s not tolerated. And that’s been established through organizations led by cadets, run by cadets, and then promoted by cadets in the barracks. Yeah, so I just think that they’re more trying to do their part to win more of the cultural battle.” —Freshman, Male

“They’ll send out e-mails, a lot of just—I think that’s a good way to be transparent because a lot of the things—like this institution is like a bigger high school. That’s kind of my way of thinking about it. We’re the smallest one. So, as soon as something happens, you kind of just know about it through—even you don’t have to be there. It’s just the rumor mill kind of thing. So, I think to prevent that, they’ve been just being a lot more transparent about things, or trying to be.” —CASA

Cadets stated that peer leadership is unable to make any changes to cadet regulations, since their job is to help prevent and report the problem, whereas senior leadership is in charge of implementing new policies and handling reports. Participants reported that there is an issue with peer leadership maintaining confidentiality. Many stated that due to the rumor mill, many cadets have found out about sexual assault or sexual harassment incidents, which has led to some cadets having a lack of trust in peer leadership. Cadets said peer leadership needs additional training on handling sexual assault and sexual harassment to be fully prepared. Furthermore, some cadets

mentioned the need for peer leadership to be more approachable and to more actively encourage cadets to report.

“Well, hands are kind of tied with that. Unless you’re a certified member of one of the organizations we have that’s against sexual assault, things like that, counseling, you have to report it. And if you’re in any sort of official leadership position, you can’t take any type of report and not report it up the chain. So there’s not much that peer leadership can come into play there because a lot of us are just mandated reporters. It goes out of our hands and into command anyway.” —Junior, Male

“I appreciate all the different groups and stuff that the cadets have, but I think I’ve just lost so much faith in actual confidentiality across the Corps. And with how bad the rumor mill is at this school and stuff like that, whenever it gets to a certain point, if a cadet knows about it, the whole Corps ends up knowing about it somehow. I kind of don’t trust that system in that way. I think [inaudible] does a better job of handling it with that respect, but as soon as something gets out to a group of cadets, there’s no constraining it from there, which I think isn’t fair to the victims in a lot of cases.” —Senior, Male

Faculty mentioned that although cadets are involved in issues related to sexual assault and sexual harassment, they face difficulties when proposing ideas on how to better address these issues on campus.

“I guess, to be honest, if I see who feel helpless, they know peers who have been sexually assaulted, they join CASA because it’s personal to them and it’s also professional to them. And they’re passionate to eliminate sexual assault. And when they propose certain ideas, there’s a ceiling that’s there. They have fear of retaliation of just proposing ideas. Not even, reporting sexual assault just proposing the ideas to improve it, they have fear of retaliation, so.” —Faculty

Senior Leadership

Cadets provided both positive and negative feedback on how senior leadership addresses sexual assault and sexual harassment. For example, cadets indicated that senior leadership does a good job in providing preventative resources such as training and materials on sexual assault and sexual harassment. Cadets reported having thorough trainings (e.g., going through scenarios) and the necessary resources. Participants also stated that senior leadership handles reports appropriately and does a good job in spreading awareness by getting cadets involved in issues pertaining to sexual assault and sexual harassment. Participants said senior leadership takes reports seriously and would remove an offender quickly from the Academy.

“I know there were a few cases before we got here with regards to sexual assault. And I feel like since we’ve got here, they’ve been doing a pretty good job of addressing it and kind of taking more preventative action. So, sometimes it can feel like maybe we’re getting slapped in the face with this stuff with trainings and talks and kind of always talking about it. But I feel like that’s also very important,

and we take it for granted. So, I would definitely give them points for that.”

—Sophomore, Male

“But as far as prevention, there’s not a whole lot you can do to prevent it, I suppose. But they do have systems in place, and they talk about it a little bit. They probably could talk about it more. But on the positive side, when they did learn that it happened, they made sure to handle it correctly, got the member out. And I think they even prosecuted... just a strong deterrent to cadets from doing it in the future.” **—Senior, Male**

However, participants also reported that senior leadership could improve transparency by better informing cadets on plans to address issues pertaining to sexual assault and sexual harassment or by providing more information on cases. A few participants mentioned that optics drive senior leadership to address issues about sexual assault and sexual harassment. Similar to cadets, faculty indicated that senior leadership needs to be more communicative and transparent when it comes to issues around sexual assault and sexual harassment.

“I had the same reasoning. I mean, I feel like they’re definitely trying to address the problem, but I feel like their methods of addressing it also aren’t as public to us. They kind of say, ‘Yeah, we’re fixing the problem.’ And then don’t tell us how or what they’re really doing to fix it. So, having the same idea of how they’re not as open with us as they probably could be. I mean, maybe they shouldn’t be as open with us or that maybe we’re not at the appropriate level right now of being open with us. But I do think there’s stuff that they haven’t told us, which is probably the military or I don’t know.” **—Freshman, Male**

“I’d say like was mentioned earlier, there’s, to me, a big disparity between how our previous command handled it and how we’ve seen—we haven’t really seen it as much with our current command because—like was mentioned—we got all new people this year basically except for the Superintendent. And so, a lot of the people we interact more on a day-to-day basis, we haven’t really seen them in those situations yet. But I think it was [name] who said it earlier that we don’t get a lot from them. Everything is very reactionary here. And that’s across the board. So, I think if things were happening about sexual assault and harassment, we wouldn’t know unless it went to an outside source and then the command felt like they had to then react to the Corps because people were asking questions.” **—Senior, Female**

Cadets also indicated that senior leadership addresses sexual assault and sexual harassment cosmetically, rather than talking to cadets, finding solutions, or addressing deep-rooted issues related to these topics. Faculty also agreed that there is a need for senior leadership to address the deep-rooted issues and to actively listen to cadets and faculty.

“I think it was the gender relations survey that they kind of e-mailed us out the results that there were cases of sexual harassment rising, and maybe even sexual assault. I don’t completely remember, but I think that’s something that is important and should probably be talked about on a Corps-wide scale and

actually in person because I know a lot of people see e-mails from senior leadership and probably just gloss over them and don't necessarily read it completely. But I think that that's an incredibly important issue and something that should be talked about in person with the entire Corps from senior leadership." —Senior, Male

"I think in terms of how to fix it—and we've heard from senior leadership that, 'We're going to actively listen,' but I don't think it happens. I think that would at least start to address to solve some of these problems is just actually hearing people and what they go through and how that makes them feel." —Faculty

Female participants mentioned that senior leadership needs to expedite the investigation process to shorten the length of the investigation. Participants noted that due to the lengthy process, victims may struggle for the duration of the investigation, or the offender may still be at the Academy until the investigation concludes. Additionally, participants noted that senior leadership needs to improve the process for integrating victims back into cadet life by slowly easing them back into their daily routine rather than expecting them to pick up where they left off.

"I just think it's interesting that we handle it—at first they handle it within the Academy level and let it go through that trial and punishment process before it goes to the actual legal level. And I don't have a ton of understanding on the process for that, but I don't know, it just seems to take a lot longer when it has to go through the Academy process and then the actual legal process, because if it was like the civilian rule, they would get what they kind of deserve quicker." —Junior, Female

"I think something I know from experiences that I've had with people that I know as victims of sexual assault and the way that they are integrated back into cadet life is absolutely horrible. They are expected to sleep in the same room maybe where the assault happened and there has been no movement on how to change things like that, like be surrounded by that person, maybe that person is in their company. There is no, what we would call, a soft landing for them to maybe live somewhere else. There is no plan in place for that, so people will be integrated and expected to just go from maybe being off campus and at home or with family and then come right back in and pick up exactly where they left off, which is completely ridiculous." —Junior, Female

Reporting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

Cadets in the focus groups were asked how comfortable they are with going to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office and who they would consider the go-to person for SAPR-related issues. Also, participants were asked about barriers to reporting sexual assault as well as how to encourage more reports of sexual assault.

Perceptions of the SAPR Office

Focus group participants were asked about their knowledge of the SAPR office and whether they felt comfortable approaching a Sexual Assault and Response Coordinator (SARC) if they had a SAPR-related issue.

Knowledge of the Office and Resources

Although there was a general understanding of the location of the SAPR office, upperclassmen were more familiar with the location than underclassmen. Upperclassman males mentioned that although the location is secluded, if other cadets were to see upperclassman male cadets around the area, it would be assumed the upperclassman male cadets were visiting the SAPR office. Some cadets in the focus groups indicated not knowing the location of the SAPR office, as many assumed they would never need to see a SARC. Although there was some ambiguity around the location of the SAPR office, cadets mentioned it would not be difficult to find the location. Cadets said there are ample resources available that list contact information and the location of the SAPR office.

“Yeah. I would because, I mean, there’s typically only one reason you’re in that sort of secluded hallway. If another cadet were to see you going in there, I think it’s kind of obvious why you’re going to talk to the SAPR.” —Senior, Male

“I feel like they definitely have resources. It’s just—in this case, I don’t know where the SAPR office is. And a lot of times, I can pass cases about different issues. They’ll tell you about resources we have, and for a lot of people, it’s their first time hearing about them. So, it’s kind of like, yeah, we have—at full, we definitely have all the necessary resources. It’s just that people don’t know about it all the time.” —Sophomore, Male

Trust in the SAPR Staff

Focus group participants indicated that they would feel comfortable approaching the SARC if they were to have a SAPR-related issue. Some female cadets mentioned that if cadets feel uncomfortable seeing the SARC, they would bring another cadet for support. Although some cadets indicated that the SARC is approachable and personable, cadets would rather seek help from their peers, CASA members, chaplain, or leadership within their company. Cadets reported wanting to seek out people who are relatable, trustworthy, loyal, or approachable. Participants said they would rather talk to someone who understands what they are going through or would look out for their best interests in situations in which the cadet could get in trouble for collateral misconduct.

“I feel like it’s very comfortable. I mean, I’ve not personally experienced an issue nor helped someone with an issue like that. But I feel like the SARC is very good about trying to—even if you have peer-on-peer support to ultimately bring them to her, to the SARC, to ultimately deal with the issue, because she has the most amount of information.” —Senior, Female

“And I think the reason why people are more likely to go to CASA and Cadet Peer Support—a big part of it is because it’s people you see every day. It’s people we know. It’s people who know what it’s like to be in the barracks. But also, the confidentiality part of it’s big, because I feel like a lot of the problems people run into—it’s underage drinking. It’s somewhere you shouldn’t have been. And so, if you tell someone—and I think that’s part of my grading senior leadership well is because I feel like a lot of the stuff, they aren’t ever going to hear because it’s when people are doing other things that they don’t want to get in trouble for. So, I think that’s a lot of reasons why—or those are a few reasons why people go to see other cadets. It’s because they know they can take care of it but also they have their backs and they’re not going to end up getting [inaudible] when they were trying to claim that they were sexually assaulted.” —Sophomore, Female

Barriers to Reporting

Cadets in the focus groups were asked to discuss the barriers for reporting sexual assault and sexual harassment as well as to provide suggestions that would help encourage cadets to report.

Rumor Mill

The “rumor mill” was cited as a major barrier to reporting sexual assault. Focus group participants said they believe that if a cadet were to report, they would face the possibility of other cadets learning about their report and the incident through the rumor mill. Some consequences of the rumor mill included cadets spreading different versions of the story or students picking sides between the alleged victim and the perpetrator, depending on who they believe, pre-existing relationships, and their reputations.

“Because we’re kind of like a high school, everything spreads so fast and you don’t know it’s actually true because you’ve got two sides of something. And say, the guy actually did it, but he’s more popular or he’s got more friends. Then, that’s going to spread faster and people are going to believe him. And just the way that a lot of those things work, it’s just totally arbitrary which person all the cadets believe because it’s whichever person gets their story out first.”
—Junior, Male

Collateral Misconduct

Cadets pointed to the fear of being punished for collateral misconduct (e.g., underage drinking or violation of the open door policy) as a barrier to reporting sexual assault. Participants said they would be less likely to report a sexual assault or sexual harassment incident if they think the circumstances surrounding the situation would result in punishment for themselves or others. Cadets said they do not believe it is worth reporting if they or their classmates risk expulsion or possibly jeopardizing their careers. Participants said they would prefer to not report an incident if it would mean they or others would face any repercussions. Few female cadets indicated that command tries to encourage reporting even in cases where cadets fear getting in trouble for collateral misconduct.

“I think one thing too is a lot of times there is something else to it. So, if there is alcohol or if it happened behind a closed door and you’re thinking about reporting, then you’re also thinking, ‘Okay, I could literally get myself in trouble here if I go through this.’ So, if that was something that happened a couple of years ago, the girl’s like, ‘If I report this, we’re at a party and there is alcohol, my friends are at a party and there is alcohol. I want to report this, because I know what happened to me is wrong but then here they’re not just going to let—everyone else is going to be implicated,’ and I think that’s really, really—I think that’s a huge barrier to reporting, is that you can’t say anything and expect help without them wanting to know who else was there and like ‘Well, who was a witness in this? If they were there, then we want to talk to the witnesses.’ And then they know they were drinking and you’re going to get masted for drinking, and everyone is going to get kicked out for supplying alcohol. And it’s this huge spiral that then falls back on the victim of like, ‘Why would I want to report that, to begin with? It would be so much easier if I just didn’t report it.’ That’s a mind process that happens here that’s very unfortunate.” —Junior, Female

“I feel like I disagree with you on that. I don’t necessarily feel like that—it might be a perception or something. I don’t know. But I feel like it’s more what else happened during this—I’m sorry—encounter that people more fear at sea [inaudible]. I feel like from my perspective, it’s either a shame thing or I was underage drinking and I don’t want to get in trouble for that so I’m not going to say anything because I’d rather just kind of toss it under the rug than get in trouble for my underage drinking. I think they’ve been better about saying, not necessarily, ‘Oh, you’re going to get away with underage drinking if you were assaulted.’ But I think they’re making it more comfortable to come forward if other things were present and that you’re—whatever happened does get taken care of. You’re going to be okay.” —Senior, Female

Fear of Not Being Believed

Cadets in the focus groups indicated they would not want to report for fear of not being believed. Participants reported it would be a “he said, she said” issue and would lead to cadets choosing sides between the alleged victim and the offender. Female cadets said they perceive that there are rumors of women pulling the “victim card,” in which cadets assumed the woman fabricated the incident. Some male cadets mentioned that they feel women face more of a barrier when it comes to reporting, since they perceive women do not want to be seen as giving a false report or not being believed by cadets. Since cadets assume their classmates may not believe them, they are less likely to report in order to avoid rumors from spreading or having their fellow cadets question their credibility.

“And it was the rumors that were going on about, ‘The girl that just pulled the victim card.’ Like, ‘Oh, she did it because it wasn’t how she wanted to be,’ that type of thing. Where it’s like if a girl was to report like, ‘Hey, I’ve been sexually assaulted,’ the way that one turned out, it was like, maybe I’m going to feel like everybody is just thinking I’m making it up just for some type of publicity thing, or I don’t like that guy, so I’m going to purposefully say that this happened because,

in the end, majority of them are he said, she said. A lot of them aren't evidenced just because if it's just you and the person, unless you go medically afterwards, there is no evidence on what happened. So, I think that's a hard thing here is when things do come off across as like he said, she said, no one wants to say anything because it's just like, who's got more friends to back you up?"

—**Junior, Female**

"But I think there's a divide between men and women at this school that women are too afraid that men will judge them or not believe them if they say they were assaulted or harassed. And I don't think that's true at all if it happened, if at all. And I think that as men, we should be more open and more—I think if the administration could facilitate a way for men to say, 'As a majority, we do not tolerate this. You will not be judged or there will not be retaliation. Maybe there'd be more trust built between men and women at the school.'"

—**Junior, Male**

Clear Year

Focus group participants indicated that reasons not to report vary by class year. For example, cadets indicated that underclassman may not want to report for fear of getting in trouble, being removed from the school, reporting someone who has power over them (e.g., upperclassmen), not being aware of how the system works when it comes to reporting, or feeling isolated from other classes. In contrast, participants mentioned that upperclassmen may not want to report because the reporting process could potentially delay their graduation or commission. A cadet's rank plays a role on whether or not a cadet would report due to the potential repercussions that could affect his/her academic trajectory.

*"I mean, I guess a fourth class, like a freshman might have a harder time reporting just because they're new. They just got here. They don't want to leave. Well, most of us don't want to leave. I mean, you always don't want to—I guess you always don't want to do it, but you do it anyway because you know that this is where you belong. But so you're scared, I guess. I know I'm terrified of getting kicked out. I'm always following the rules, doing exactly what I need to do because I don't want to leave. So, I think if a sexual harassment case came about that I was involved in, I would be hesitant to report it just because I don't want to be involved in something that could potentially ruin this experience for me. And then, I guess, another grade would be seniors, sort of in the opposite things. They're so close to getting out, so if something goes wrong now—like we just got talked to today that—the seniors at lunch, one of our commanders told us, 'Seniors, stay out of trouble. Don't do anything that could ruin this for you. You're so close.' So, they might, if they were sexually harassed or witnessed it or something, they might not come forward because that could potentially delay their graduation." —**Freshman, Female***

"Right, like you were talking about. So, [name] was talking about the upper class having more at stake which is definitely true. So, they are less likely to report. But then, it also kind of evens out because the underclass—a fourth class isn't

going to want to report someone who has a lot of power over them. This is everyone.” —Junior, Male

Reporting Process

Cadets in the focus groups indicated that a barrier to reporting is the length of the reporting process. Participants reported not having enough time to go through the reporting process due to their academic workload. Additionally, cadets mentioned not wanting to relive the incident by having to tell their story multiple times or having to see the perpetrator. Because the reporting process takes too long, cadets said they find it burdensome and not worth their time.

“I think it was just a really, really, really, really long process, and just—because we still had all the stresses that the Academy puts on us. We’re still expected to perform academically in our divisions and stuff like that, and so to have to go through such a long process and still do training over the summer and during the school year and stuff like that, I think it’s just like—I think the system needs to be fixed so they can handle these more efficiently and know, ‘Okay, if this happens, this is what we’re going to do and how we’re going to handle it.’ So, I don’t know if they could make changes to the systematic way of how to handle it.”
—Junior, Female

“They just don’t want to talk about it. It just gets—I feel like it would just get—not dragged out but the process takes a while. It just does. That’s just the natural way of things with it. Whether it’s restricted or unrestricted. The one person I was mentioning earlier, not the [inaudible] person but the case. They were still here for a while and it wasn’t taken care of. So, it’s just constantly—if you’re that person, you’re going through that. You keep seeing that person around and you just—maybe not feel like things are getting done.” —Senior, Female

Participants indicated that seeing how past reports have been handled and rarely hearing of a “success story” after reporting affects the decision to report an incident. Cadets recalled past cases and mentioned that since the reporting process was not efficient or the victim was treated negatively, they would not want to go through the same experience as their classmates. A few cadets suggested that to make reporting easier, the Academy should share stories of victims who reported and went on to do well at the Academy. Others suggested that victims might consider going through an alternate legal process.

“There was one incident last year that I think wound up going a little bit sideways on senior leadership with some information asymmetry. They thought one thing was happening, and it turned out it was a little bit different. But they came out really strongly in support of the victim and the person who had reported an incident. It wasn’t sexual assault related, but that was very different than the way that they normally handle incidents, because I think the problem with sexual assault reporting is that word is going to get out. This is not a tight environment. And no one in command is going to stand with you until the investigation is finished or any after investigation proceedings, whatever’s going to happen. You are going to have no one in senior leadership publicly standing with you. And,

you will be totally alone up until that gets concluded, which could take months. I think when we had the whistleblower incident last year, it was the same thing. No one in her chain of command stood with her, because they were all pensively waiting for the investigation, or they didn't want to go outside the chain of command. And if that's the climate that you're reporting into, where you're a victim, you're going to bring that information forward and then going to be totally left on an island while they figure out if you're lying or not is not a good reporting climate." —**CASA**

"I think in terms of proving that you'll be okay after you report it maybe, we've never heard of a 'success story' of somebody reporting a sexual assault. We've heard of people that have gotten DUIs [Driving Under the Influence] and come back, and they're fine. We've heard from people that have done drugs and come back, and they're fine and lived a good life. But we haven't heard from somebody that's like, 'I was sexually assaulted. I reported it. I was taken care of, and I'm here in my life doing fine. You're going to be fine, too.'" —**Senior, Male**

Faculty mentioned that although cadets are told to report to the chain of command, they are less likely to report due to a lack of trust. Faculty said they perceive cadets to be afraid to report because they do not trust people to handle their report appropriately or fear facing retaliation from their peers (e.g., ostracism). Faculty recalled cadets who reported being removed from the Academy or victimized. Faculty indicated that these types of retaliatory behaviors could impact a cadet's professional career. Furthermore, faculty said cadets are not treated with care after filing a report. Faculty said that distrust, retaliation, and the aftercare cadets receive after reporting are barriers for cadets to report.

"But I think there's something with reporting that they're so indoctrinated to use the chain of command that if they don't use it, they're going to be penalized. And yet the chain command is something they don't necessarily trust." —**Faculty**

"Can I have a couple of specifics related to the question. When you ask what is the problem here with respect to sexual assault. Retaliation continues to be a major problem. So, a couple of the cadet cases that I'm unofficially helping with because of my experience from a prior career are continuing to face both documented retaliation, both like, here's a direct impact to your professional career and all of the intangibles that come with making reports, right. So, a lot of the processes that we have in place in other places of the Coast Guard aren't here, which creates a problem, right. So there's a problem with respect to sexual assault about what happens after a report, right. You can't separate people. It's much harder to do here and no one wants to think about the harder question of how we protect a vulnerable population that is all in one building. So, that has been, of last couple that I've [had to] and continue to do, I would say the retaliation aspect and the aftercare for the mental health aspect, the emotional support, the way they are treated post-reporting. In my experience, it's worse here than in the fleet." —**Faculty**

Although cadets mentioned not feeling comfortable with reporting, a few cadets agreed that compared to previous years, senior leadership has done a better job in spreading awareness about sexual assault and harassment and being more approachable.

“I think this group of senior leaders has actually been much more vocal and outgoing to the Corps than previous leadership at the Academy. And I think there’s good and bad that comes with that. So, with the good, they acknowledge that things haven’t been the best in terms of handlings of sexual assault or other scandals or—not scandals, I guess I don’t really know the right word. But they are acknowledging that and saying that the best things aren’t in place right now, and they’re working towards a better solution.” —CASA

“I think it’s a culture of how safe people feel. Not in terms of physical safety but in terms of how comfortable you are going to someone. And, I think that a lot of it stems from the senior leadership and how they want to drive the Academy. Last year, I thought that the culture here was pretty toxic coming from the senior leadership. And then the change happened. And I just thought that they kind of embraced their role.” —CASA

Stigma for Men

Cadets in the focus groups discussed that there is a stigma or bias against men reporting sexual assault or sexual harassment because the culture makes it hard for men to report. Male cadets mentioned that women are typically seen as the victims and that male cadets do not want to report in order to avoid being vulnerable or feeling a loss of masculinity. Overall, participants reported that men would be less likely to report due to the stigma that men face when it comes to reporting.

“I think men would be probably—just thinking [inaudible]. I think men are less likely to report because I think there’s kind of a stigma where—When you think sexual assault, you’ll think a man against a woman and all. It’s how the case normally is. But if a man is the victim of a sexual assault, it kind of makes them—Thinking about if that happened to me, it would make me feel like I’m—almost a loss of that sense of masculinity and all. Being a victim and being vulnerable and all kind of would make me want to just try to forget about it instead of—And if you had to talk about it, it just makes you have to think about it, and it comes back up. And it keeps coming back up, especially if you go into investigation and you have to be a witness, too.” —Freshman, Male

“Honestly, I normally feel kind of bad for the guys because I feel like even if it is true and everything, there tends to be a bias, I feel like, that the guy is wrong. And if that happens and they’re not wrong, they were right, then that really kind of ruins them. And it’s not just professionally. I think it’s emotionally, too, and the impact that has on your relationships and everything like that. So, that’s just one thing I know that comes to mind when it comes to reporting the consequences for the guy whether it’s true or not, or I never hear guys reporting girls, but it would be the same way that way too.” —Junior, Female

Participants mentioned that it is difficult deciding whether they would file a restricted or unrestricted report. Cadets said if they were to file a restricted report, their confidentiality would be protected, but nothing would come out of reporting. In contrast, if a cadet were to file an unrestricted report, there might be justice against the perpetrator, but because of the rumor mill, most students would learn of the report. Participants mentioned that although they would like the perpetrator to be held accountable, they would also like to maintain their anonymity. As a result, cadets may not want to go through the process of reporting due to the difficulties of deciding if they want to file a restricted or unrestricted report.

“I think there is a stigma that if you do have a restrictive report, then nothing is going to happen, or say you want justice or you want something to happen to the other person in some way, whatever way that may be, but you want it to be confidential. So, there’s this problem where you can’t mix the two where you want to report, because you know how you feel and you want this to be recorded, but then there’s a huge jump between a restricted and a non-restricted and all the stuff that comes with that here in terms of confidentiality and stuff. So, I think it’s hard for people to get past that initial first step, because that’s such a big step and then there’s such a gap between restricted and non-restricted and there’s a very—you can’t just go easily from one to the other. You want to be confidential but you want something to happen and it’s like you can’t have the best of both, so then why put yourself through the process I guess, if that makes sense.”

—**Junior, Female**

“I think try to find a way to make it more appealing to them because it’s kind of like—when you go to unrestricted versus restricted, there’s always the question of do I want the perpetrator to be held accountable for his or her actions or do I want to remain anonymous and not be embarrassed or humiliated or anything. And, I think the best way to do it would be try to find a way to change the [caring?] environment to when if you do come out and people realize you’ve been a victim of sexual assault that you’re not afraid of having it known out there. That’s really hard to do because it’s talked about them in a very vulnerable state, which is really hard.” —**Freshman, Male**

Female freshman cadets reported that there is a stigma that “it is not okay to be not okay,” which can be a deterrent in reporting sexual assault or sexual harassment. Participants said they perceive that if a cadet were to seek psychological help, it could have a negative impact on the cadet as well as implications for their career.

“And it’s all because of that stigma that’s formed around that ‘it’s not okay to be not okay,’ I guess, sort of, which is horrible. And, it sort of goes back to what you were saying earlier about we’re taught from the moment we get here that if someone asks you how you’re doing, you say, ‘Outstanding,’ no matter what. You’re fine. In the privacy of your own room, you cannot be fine. That’s okay. But out of the barracks, out of the privacy of just you and your roommate, you have to be strong, I guess. And that comes with the military in general. We’re supposed to be strong because we’re protecting. So, I don’t think you can ever really get rid of that specific stigma that you have to be okay all the time, just

because it's the military. We're supposed to be okay because we're protecting, but the stigma around the fact that you could potentially be removed from the school because of an incident, that's something that needs to go away. But, again, I have no idea how we would go about removing that. I don't know."

—**Freshman, Female**

"It comes from the Corps' belief that if they seek psychological help, that that can harm their cadet career or their professional career." —**Freshman, Female**

Handling the Situation at the Lowest Level

Cadets in the focus groups also stated that they would be more likely to handle situations at a peer-to-peer level rather than reporting. Participants indicated not wanting to make a big deal of a situation that could be handled at a lower level or being able to quickly stop an incident by talking to the cadet. Cadets said they find it easier to handle situations among each other rather than reporting.

"Yeah. No one wants to be the guy who reported something small and then it turned into a whole big investigation with a 60-page report when it could have just been handled really easily. Because then people will start looking at the guy who reported it as not a trust—someone who's not trustworthy. Like, 'I can't open up to them or anything, because they'll just go report it.'"

—**Sophomore, Male**

"And you just kind of shut that down. You see it, you shut it down. And you have to be—that's the hardest thing about saying something. You have to be ready for the pushback because it's going to be awkward. There's no way around it. But if you can't walk by that situation and be okay with it, then you need to say something." —**Sophomore, Female**

Perception of Women

Male focus group participants said a potential barrier to reporting for female cadets is having to worry about their reputation. Additionally, male participants mentioned that women are more likely to report or perceive a situation as sexual assault or sexual harassment compared to men. A few male cadets alluded to the idea that women file false reports, since they are more likely to report situations that could have been perceived as consensual.

"So, I feel like specifically men, I feel like, are less likely to report it, especially sexual harassment because—I don't know—I feel like it's more of hindsight, like you're like, 'Oh, yeah. That was kind of pretty creepy. She was getting kind of weird.' But I don't know. It might not bother us as much because we might feel like we're in control of the situation, whereas females might be more likely to report. But at the same time, they probably have more of a stigma of like, 'Oh my gosh. If I report this, people are going to view me one way.' And obviously, they're the bigger group who has these[stigmas] against them." —**Senior, Male**

“I guess for an example, if someone were to come back with a female, obviously, they’re breaking the rules having sex in the barracks anyways. But if they do that, like he said, most guys would just—if it’s not someone they want to sleep with, they just kind of the next morning like, ‘Goddamn. It’s a loss but whoa.’ But the girl might be [laughter] like—they would be like—if they’re upset about it, and then they’re telling their friends kind of something different than what actually happened like, ‘You know, I didn’t want to have sex with him,’ then what does that make you look like because it was consensual the majority of the time? Then when she’s saying, ‘I didn’t want to do that,’ then that makes you look like you did something way out of bounds. It’s like, ‘How are we going to be on the hook for your mistake?’ kind of thing. That’s the problem because both people are responsible in that situation, but I feel like I know that it’s always towards the girls.” —Junior, Male

Sexual Harassment

Focus group participants indicated that they would be less likely to report a sexual harassment incident than sexual assault incident because they do not see it as important enough to report and because it is difficult to identify sexual harassment. Cadets also noted that they would be less likely to report sexual harassment than assault because they can handle the situation at a lower level or simply ignore it. Participants also said they do not want to get themselves or others in trouble and that they fear backlash for reporting. Participants said it is difficult to identify sexual harassment, since it is arguably more ambiguous than sexual assault and may depend on a person’s perception.

“I think sexual harassment isn’t as intense, obviously, as sexual assault. And people might not—I guess, might not know—like if someone was saying a joke at them that that was sexual harassment or not. There’s a clear definition of it but applying it to real life, I think that’s hard. So, reporting sexual harassment is almost kind of like your perception on things. And even though it could be a restricted report, and no one has to know about it, you’re just kind of like, ‘What’s the trouble? I’m not really getting anything from it anyways. It’s not like I’m trying to get someone else in trouble. It’s just how it made me feel or something.’ I don’t know. It doesn’t seem as serious. It is serious but people might not think it as something enough to report.” —Senior, Female

“I do think that there’s just a lot more gray area when it comes to sexual harassment. So, I think someone else was saying you might reflect on it, like after it happens, you’re like, ‘Was I just—was that?’ And then again, especially for guys, I feel like we’d probably just be like, ‘Nah. It’s whatever. It’s not that big of a deal.’ I know personally, I would be like, ‘Oh, it’s no sweat off my back. I don’t really care.’ So, I think there’s just a lot more gray area, so it’s kind of hard to recognize initially, so.” —Senior, Male

Cadets, especially males, indicated not having much knowledge of, or a clear definition of, sexual harassment. Male cadets reported not knowing if some actions would be considered

sexual harassment (e.g., catcalling, making a joke). A few male participants said male cadets may not have been aware they were sexually harassed until they took the survey on issues related to gender relations. Because of the uncertainty of identifying or knowing what constitutes sexual harassment, cadets said they would be less likely to report sexual harassment incidents.

“‘Was I just sexually harassed?’ I don’t know what the survey says, like based on stuff, but there could be somebody who got sexually harassed but had no idea. But even though that behavior from the perpetrator’s not okay and they’re going to do it to somebody else, you individually may not even know.” —**Senior, Male**

“I’d agree with that. I don’t think they do a good job at explaining what exactly is sexual harassment. I know we have online trainings about it, but they’re just kind of—They come at you in a sort of roundabout way that doesn’t leave you with a good definition of various actions that do or do not constitute sexual harassment explicitly.” —**Freshman, Male**

Changes Cadets Would Make

When focus group participants were asked about what the Academy could do to help encourage cadets to report incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment, participants expressed various ideas. Female cadets mentioned that the Academy needs to work to erase the stigma of getting help after an assault while also speeding up the process. Male participants indicated that there needs to be a better understanding of sexual harassment and suggested having a discussion between women and men or obtaining outside experience (e.g., spend time at another college) in order to develop a more common understanding of the definition of sexual harassment. Underclassman male cadets mentioned encouraging members of different classes to engage with each other.

“That’s going to be hard, but it goes to erasing the stigma behind getting help, being okay with not being okay, kind of, I’d say. Because all of Swab Summer, it’s ingrained in you, actually, that no matter what, you’re feeling outstanding, that you’re okay at all times. Unless you physically can’t walk, can’t do your job, you’re okay. You’re fine, which can deter people from seeking help when they need it, be it emotional or physical, deter them from reporting stuff even, because they’re, ‘You know what, I’m outstanding. I’m still walking. My grades haven’t slipped. I’m fine,’ even though they could be going through this psychological trauma.” —**Freshman, Female**

“I think in general, it’s just hard to have those personal conversations among classes. As third class, we can’t go hang out in the fourth class room and just have a conversation with them. They have to be braced up when they talk to third class. They have to be at the position of attention or you can get in trouble. It doesn’t happen that way all the time. And you still do have conversations, but that with friends or teammates, not with just any brand of person. So, it’s just the ability to be approachable is hard.” —**Sophomore, Male**

CASA members suggested that more frequent communication between senior leadership and the Corps may encourage reporting among cadets. Also, CASA members suggested changing the consequence a cadet may face for reporting an incident involving alcohol. They mentioned that if punishments were more lenient (e.g., not every person has to go to alcohol remediation programs) or if there were no punishments, cadets would be more likely to report. Similar to cadets, faculty said that the Academy should provide a system that is in the reporting cadet's best interest and treats the victim with care, rather than treating the victim as the problem or focusing on the optics of the Academy.

"I would say have that constant interaction like [name] said with the Corps and made yourself available. And when the senior leadership does that and you see that face over and over again, and they interact with you, they talk to you, they smile at you, you feel more comfortable going to that person because you've seen them before and they've mentored you before in something. So, when you're doing that, to me, you'll be more comfortable going to that person in a time of crisis." —CASA

"I think that the system is fundamentally not centered on [crosstalk] [laughter]. So that's why, for example, they're not being communicated to, right, because that's not the purpose. If we care about someone's dignity, we treat them as an actual human being, not a less than—not a thing. And we would look the person in the eye, we would explain to them because we care about them regardless of the ultimate outcome. We would actually treat this person with care, treat their information with care. We would walk them through the process. That's if we actually cared about the person. If we actually are not centered, we're centered on the optic of the institution and, 'Oh, my God. What is this report going to mean to what others may think, because it may disrupt power structure,' then it's centered on that." —Faculty

Alcohol

Focus group participants were asked to describe the drinking culture at the Academy. Cadets were also asked to complete an activity in which they looked at the map of the Academy's campus and placed stickers on places where situations involving alcohol could escalate or become potentially dangerous. Additionally, cadets were asked to talk about the trainings they received on alcohol.

Drinking Culture

When asked about the drinking culture at the Academy, cadets mentioned drinking to excess since they are unable to drink during the school week and thus drink heavily during the weekend. Cadets indicated that they feel stressed, busy, or restricted at the Academy due to having to balance schoolwork or not being able to drink on campus. Another prominent theme was that cadets look out for their friends or other cadets when they are intoxicated.

"It's honestly so bad. It's so ridiculously bad that it's hard to—that's why everyone laughs, it's because it's well known how bad people are about it, so it's

just sad but it's almost funny. I don't know if that makes sense, but the times that you're drinking are like, Friday, Saturday, and a majority are drinking to get drunk and that's how it is, and everybody knows that's how it is. Everybody knows that once you turn 21, you're going out, and you're probably going to get drunk, and you're probably going to come back, and then your friends are going to take care of you then you'll be all right. It's, I feel, like really dumb, but it's a culture. I think most people know about it and that's why it's kind of funny, but it's also not at the same time because it's sad that that's how cadets feel that they have to act—feel that that's what they can do on the weekends, so.”

—**Junior, Female**

“You're cooped up all week in this tiny building with the same people doing work all week. And then it gets to the weekend and then you just go way overboard because you haven't been able to do anything fun for a week. You're like, well, I got to pack it into this one weekend. It's like every person here who's 21 counts as—what is it, binge drinking when you don't drink and then drink a ton and then don't drink? Every single person here who's 21 is either lying or would qualify for that.” —**Junior, Male**

Similar to cadets, faculty also mentioned that cadets drink to deal with life at the Academy.

“That type of drinking that does lead to dangerous situations of many types—I've had cadets come to my office and say, ‘We're not—’ sorry, ‘We're not going out to have a good time. We're going out to forget this place because of what it does to us. We just want to forget. And that's a way to get away.’ And whether it's sexual assault or other things, I mean, that's a terrible thing to hear repeatedly. One kid that's one thing, one person. But holy smokes, that's crazy.” —**Faculty**

When cadets were asked about situations involving alcohol that could escalate or become potentially dangerous, they mentioned places such as Eagle, Slice, Chase Hall, or the O Club (i.e., ship, bar, dorms, and dining/reception hall on campus). Participants indicated that when cadets are overseas on Eagle, they are more likely to drink since the legal drinking age is 18. As a result, cadets do not follow the Coast Guard policy of drinking when they are 21. Additionally, participants said they are more likely to go to places that are walkable such as Slice. Furthermore, cadets indicated that Chase Hall is an area where incidents, such as breaking the open-door policy, could occur.

“Well, I don't think it occurred on my phase when I went, but maybe it did. I didn't know. Kids will go out—because we'll go to different ports internationally. Like we went to Bermuda or when people go to Canada, even Europe, places like that, even in the United States—international the drinking ages are different. So even though we have the Coast Guard policy, it's 21, you can only be 21 and over to drink, people still go to stores, liquor stores, and sneak it around. And they'll go back to their hotel room, Airbnb, or something. They'll binge drink before they have duty or watch and then come back to Eagle drunk, or you can just smell

the alcohol coming off of them when, legally, they're not 21. So a lot of people have had alcohol incidents on Eagle.” —CASA

“I have three on campus. I have one in Satterlee, so this building because I know that people when they're coming up from Slice, they'll stop in here because it's the first building, and then just Bear Drive [street near USCGA] in general, that's the struggle of getting up here, you don't know what could happen on the way up, and then I have one in Chase just because there's a parking lot there, so stuff happens out there. And then also when you get inside, people do have alcohol in Chase, and also that's where the closed-door stuff can start happening, so.”

—Junior, Female

Upperclassman female participants said that when cadets get in trouble for an alcohol violation, they are sent to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings or they are given alcohol remediation, even though individuals may not self-identify as alcoholics. Cadets mentioned that it is a one-size-fits-all solution, which may not work with some cadets. Additionally, cadets said that when they talk about alcohol, it typically revolves around punishment rather than being taught how to take care of themselves.

“And for the Academy's reprimand or punishment for situations like that, usually any incident involving alcohol, especially underage or something like that, they'll give out alcohol remediation. But it's the same remediation for, basically, every offender. And so, it's given to people who really don't need a remediation, who aren't having a problem or dependency. And then, the people who do have a problem and who should be taking it seriously view it the same light as, ‘Oh, I don't need this. Oh, this is just run of the mill, everyone does it.’”

—Senior, Female

“Yeah, it's interesting at the same time because every time we do talk about alcohol it's in the context of punishment or ways you could mess up with it.”

—Junior, Female

Upperclassman male cadets said they perceive alcohol playing a role in situations leading to sexual harassment or sexual assault. As a result, one cadet suggested having more education on the risks that alcohol may present with respect to sexual assault.

“Just to avoid that altogether because in my opinion, the majority of, maybe not harassment, but assault, probably comes from both parties consuming alcohol and then them going back up to Chase together. And then one thing leads to another and then one of them wakes up and says, ‘I didn't want that to happen.’ Then, they don't report it and claim it was sexual assault, which it might've been but nobody really knows. I think more education on knowing where you're putting yourself in situations would be beneficial.” —Junior, Male

Training

Many cadets mentioned they were taught to not drink or were told drinking alcohol is not acceptable. Others recalled being taught to know their limits on how many drinks they can have per hour through the 0-1-2-3 guideline. Cadets also said they were given online training or told not to drink and drive (e.g., a guest speaker spoke about their DUI).

“The last time one of the cadets tried so hard to destroy the cadet alcohol culture, that’s all she focused on was just, ‘Oh, stop drinking. Stop drinking. Stop drinking.’ There’s an alcohol offense, the punishment’s going to be way worse. A bad offense with alcohol is way worse than just a bad offense with them. So, she spent so much time attacking that that it didn’t change anything.”

—**Junior, Male**

“It’s just kind of like know your limit. They give a set, like a 0-1-2-3. And how many drinks you can have per hour per day. You can’t obviously drink before you drive. And just a general policy of drinking.” —**Freshman, Male**

Participants said in order to improve the trainings at the Academy, they could give cadets a more realistic guideline than the 0-1-2-3 guideline. Cadets mentioned that since everyone is different, each person’s alcohol tolerance could vary. Additionally, cadets mentioned that they want realistic trainings in which they would be taught how to drink responsibly in a social setting, how to take care of someone who is drunk, or invite guest speakers to whom cadets can relate. Male cadets reported that during the end of their first year, they had Quarters. During Quarters, cadets are supposed to learn how to drink with an Admiral in their house, but since this takes place at the end of the cadets’ first year, cadets have already been exposed to alcohol. Participants suggested that it is not effective or that it should take place much earlier.

“Yeah, I think it should shift to—I know like the quantity thing is also dumb because they show a small glass of wine and then a shot glass and a beer and everyone is like, ‘Ha, ha, ha, three beers,’ and like, ‘Ha, ha, that’s hilarious.’ I think the training just needs to be realistic to how 21, 22-year-olds actually act, and the problem with the trainings is that they’re not realistic or straight up. They give stuff that people don’t already listen to. So, I think they should focus on not just drinking and driving but quantities and then they’re saying real stories of how it affects people in the Coast Guard and things that actually happen, like excess drinking, not just three drinks in a night, like a beer and a shot. That’s just so unrealistic and that’s what the trainings are.” —**Junior, Female**

“I think more bad things happen when it comes to drinking when it’s being done when it’s not allowed. So here, we’re not allowed to just drink on campus. So then when we want to drink, we have to go off base somewhere. We have to go—especially, if you’re underage, you got to go sneak somewhere, stuff like that. I think a lot of problems stem from being in a location where it’s not allowed, because naturally, when you aren’t allowed to do something, it’s going to make you want that more. But I think if we were in a position where it was allowed, I think people would chill a lot more.” —**Junior, Male**

Suggestions

When cadets were asked about what the Academy could do to promote a healthy understanding of, and culture around, alcohol, they mentioned being more lenient in regard to the alcohol policy. Cadets reported that opening a bar on campus or allowing cadets to drink on campus are ways to promote responsible drinking and would allow the Academy to have more supervision of cadets. Cadets said that if the alcohol policy were more lenient, it would help cadets from drinking to excess and potentially help mitigate alcohol-related issues.

“And I don’t know the numbers for other Academies, but I know other Academies are much more lenient in terms of drinking policies. I don’t know if that cuts the numbers down or not, but maybe almost lax the alcohol policy on base to make it—don’t make us go out to Slice or Hot Rod’s and binge drink out there and come back and just be belligerent. Almost kind of foster an environment where, okay, this is how you drink. And this is how you drink responsibly. And you’re going to do it around us almost.” —CASA

“But I’ve had these talks with my friends. Every other Service Academy has a bar on campus. It would be so much more safe. And a lot of people would come here and drink instead of leaving. I don’t know. You’d just have more of a watchful eye there. You’re on campus, you could drink here. Used to be like that. I don’t know about a bar, but they used to be able to drink in the barracks.”
—**Junior, Male**

Chapter 3: Discussion

The United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) has committed to developing strong leaders for tomorrow's fleet. Leadership at the USCGA continues to act on that commitment by ensuring that students have a safe environment to develop their education, physical abilities, leadership, and character. The *2019 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups (2019 SAGR)* represent qualitative feedback from students, faculty, and staff at the USCGA.

Culture at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy

The focus group participants at the USCGA revealed a number overlapping aspects of Academy culture. Participants at the Academy were quick to express the feeling of comradery and the familial relationships they developed with their peers. Many suggested their entry training period (Swab Summer) played a large role in forging these bonds. Participants expressed that during that time, gender differences did not seem to matter, as all cadets were part of the Academy.

Cadets in the focus groups often mentioned the higher percentage of female cadets at USCGA compared to the other Military Service Academies. Many suggested that this aspect of the Academy helps create a sense of togetherness; however, cadets also said it is a source of contention between male and female cadets. Some female cadets voiced that they felt male cadets are dismissive toward their ideas and perspectives, even when male cadets voice similar perspectives. In contrast, some male cadets described a belief that the Academy is lenient toward accepting female applicants due to the Academy's desire to increase female presence, and thus, fewer qualified female cadets are accepted to the Academy.

Several male cadets in the focus groups said they perceive that the Academy favors females for leadership appointments. However, female cadets mentioned a double standard regarding leadership traits for males and females. Female participants stated that although male cadets are not expected to possess certain traits to be considered a good leader, there is an expectation for women in leadership roles to have certain traits.

Female participants reported that a greater emphasis is put on female cadets' appearance than male cadets' appearance. Some female cadets voiced that Swab Summer is used to mold the women in uniform to be like one of the men, and a minor change in their presentation could lead them to lose respect from their fellow peers. Cadets also described how quickly stereotypes are assigned to females such as "bitch," "pushover," or "promiscuous."

Participants frequently cited the higher percentage of female cadets at the USCGA compared to other Military Service Academies. Participants discussed the gender ratio as one of the reasons interactions between male and female cadets are considered commonplace and that the gender ratio helps promote equality and respect.

Participants discussed the two official rules, the dormitory “open door” policy and the fraternization policy. Cadets said they believe these policies have unintended consequences and that the policies are the Academy’s way of expressing their lack of trust in cadets; however, cadets also noted they feel these policies are in place to promote professionalism at the Academy.

Although gender differences are present at the Academy, cadets reported the Academy’s overall culture promotes respect and comradery regardless of gender. Nevertheless, many of the “unofficial” rules of the Academy involve avoiding romantic interactions and relationships with fellow cadets to reduce the chance of misinterpretation. These rules are largely passed down from upperclassmen to freshmen as cautionary advice. Further, many cadets

suggested that although official and unofficial rules can be burdensome, they act as an additional measure to protect cadets from trouble during their time at the Academy.

Prevention Through Intervention and Leadership

Prevention was a second major topic of discussion in the 2019 SAGR focus groups. Many participants shared similar ideas on bystander intervention as a method to increase prevention efforts.

The cadets in the focus groups were provided with a list of problematic situations and asked to identify which situations they would and would not intervene in, as well as which behaviors cadets said fall into the “gray area.” The cadets who participated generally expressed that they ranked behaviors by severity and clarity regarding whether the behavior is unwanted. Virtually all cadets who participated said they would intervene in the most severe behaviors such as seeing someone being sexual assaulted or seeing someone take advantage of someone who drank too much. On the other hand, there were some behaviors that many participants said they would be less likely to intervene in such as horseplay, roughhousing, or telling sexual jokes. Prior research suggests that acceptance of sexual harassment may facilitate higher rates of sexual assault, consistent with the continuum of harm approach (Davis et al., 2019).

Many of the behaviors that the participants were asked about fell into a “gray area.” Cadets who participated expressed that they would need more context to understand if something could be interpreted as risky or not. The participants tended to think that more ambiguous behaviors fell into the gray area, such as touching someone or making sexual advances. Many participants expressed that they would have to determine if these behaviors are wanted or unwanted by examining visual cues, such as body language and facial features, to know if they should step in. Several cadets who participated suggested that the appraisal of situations is sometimes difficult, and the fear of misunderstanding a situation could prevent cadets from stepping in.

Context was described in a number of ways by the cadets who participated. It included situational factors such as where they were, who was around, class year differences, and personal factors like facial expression.

Cadets who participated expressed that their current training did not resonate with them. Several participants said they need more specific trainings to help them identify risky situations and how to intervene when there is ambiguity.

Many cadets who participated expressed that their training on bystander intervention did not resonate with them (if they remembered receiving it in the first place). Intervention techniques that cadets could use, outside of the techniques taught in training, consisted of physically stepping in to remove a person from a situation, although other participants were able

to speak to more subtle methods, such as striking up a conversation or ensuring the victim feels safe. Some cadets suggested that they would benefit from more realistic trainings that address situations not as obvious to distinguish.

Leadership at all levels plays a pivotal role in prevention efforts at the Academy. Many cadets said that peer leaders do an exemplary job in creating a culture in which sexual assault and sexual harassment is not tolerated at the Academy, but they are unable to make any changes to cadet regulations. Other participants said there are problems with confidentiality among peer leaders and there is a need for additional training on handling sexual assault and sexual harassment. Due to their unique position, peer leaders are often looked up to by other cadets.

Cadets said they thought that Senior leadership often takes the issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment seriously.

Cadets who participated expressed that although they believe senior leadership is working to address these issues, they also need to be more transparent with their decisions. Several cadets said that more

changes are needed to address deep-rooted issues surrounding sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Academy. Overall, cadets said they believe that senior leadership provides good messaging regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment.

The peer organization, Cadets Against Sexual Assault (CASA), was viewed as a positive force in trying to make cultural changes surrounding sexual assault and harassment at the Academy. Cadets reported that CASA members are approachable and available to help following an incident.

Reporting: SAPR, Barriers, and Opportunities

Reporting was a third topic that cadets discussed in detail. Specific to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office, many participants said they assume they would never need to visit the office during their time at the Academy. Many cadets stated that although they feel comfortable approaching the SARC, they would rather discuss an incident with their peers, CASA members, chaplain, or leadership within their company.

Cadets offered various suggestions to encourage cadets to report incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Female cadets mentioned the Academy needs to work to erase the stigma behind getting help while speeding up the process. Male participants indicated there needs to be a better understanding of sexual harassment.

The cadets in the focus groups discussed several barriers to reporting. These barriers included fears of collateral misconduct, expulsion or delayed graduation, and not being believed or taken seriously. Social stigmatization and the rumor mill deter both male and female cadets from reporting. Female cadets said they perceive that there are rumors of women pulling the “victim card,” and male cadets mentioned avoiding reporting because of

a fear of appearing vulnerable or less masculine. Both male and female cadets mentioned that the prominent rumor mill facilitates a “he said, she said” situation in which other cadets will take sides based off preexisting reputations and relationships. Another major barrier that cadets talked about was the reporting process itself, which many cadets viewed as long, stressful, and burdensome. Participants mentioned that the long reporting process would deter a student from filing a report, since it would only add stress to an already highly stressful environment.

Many cadets who participated suggested reporting could be improved in a number of ways. Some said that improving trust in the system and/or making the reporting process easier would encourage students to report. Others expressed improving knowledge about what constitutes as sexual harassment. Cadets and faculty participants also indicated that the Academy should provide resources that focus on cadets’ best interests and treat the victim with care to help improve trust in the system and encourage reporting.

Lack of trust in the system was mentioned by both cadets and faculty participants as a barrier to reporting because of improper care of the victim and further victimization of the cadet following reporting. Prioritizing care and minimizing collateral misconduct consequences during the reporting process were suggested to help improve reporting.

Alcohol Use and Prevention Training

The last topic cadets discussed was alcohol use at their Academy. Many participants suggested that binge drinking is common and a way to relieve stress. Much like the discussions about bystander intervention, many cadets who participated expressed that the training they received on alcohol did not resonate with them.

Cadets suggested opening a bar on campus or allowing cadets to drink on campus. Cadets said this would promote responsible drinking, since the Academy would have more supervision and the cadets would have a safe place to drink.

Many of the cadet participants said they believe the trainings they received were not realistic because they focused on abstaining from alcohol use and/or described how many drinks they could have in a certain time period. Participants requested various trainings that would be relevant to their unique situation and/or would focus on how to stay safe while drinking.

Conclusion

The questions asked during the *2019 SAGR* focus groups were developed with the results of the *2018 SAGR* survey and discussions with policy makers. The key themes and findings from this qualitative effort continue to contribute to the knowledge that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has of the USCGA. These findings will be used to further inform the *2020 SAGR* survey, as OPA continues to assist the Department in their mission to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Military Service Academies.

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Appendix A.

Focus Group Guide: Students

**DATA
DRIVEN
SOLUTIONS
FOR
DECISION
MAKERS**



Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol Student Guide

Part 1: Introduction to the Focus Groups (8 min)

Hello everyone. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____. My colleague, _____, and I are here on behalf of the DoD Office of People Analytics, also known as OPA. While I will be leading today's discussion, _____ will be taking notes so that I can concentrate on what everyone is saying today.

I want to mention a couple of things before we get started.

- **This is intended to be a conversation among peers.** I know we are at a service academy and there are policies in place for how to act and when to speak, but for the purposes of this discussion I encourage you to speak freely as peers. I was hired to run this focus group so you won't hurt my feelings or offend me with whatever you say. I don't have a personal stake in these results.
- **There are no wrong answers.** As students at this academy you are the experts on your own perspective on the topics we plan to discuss, and I'm here to listen to you and get your thoughts. Please speak up, especially if what you have to say is different than what someone else is saying. You may represent what a lot of other people think.
- **We are not trying to come to consensus.** It's OK for there to be disagreement and in fact I welcome different points of view. Please share what is true for you. In the spirit of this, I ask that you remain respectful of each other's opinions during our discussion. Everyone in this room may see things differently and we want to hear everyone's perspective.
- **Your participation is completely voluntary,** meaning that you do not have to answer every question and you can withdraw from this study at any time. However, I do encourage your full participation today to ensure that I am getting a representative response.
- As I mentioned, my colleagues are here for notetaking purposes. **We will be recording comments but will not be recording names or other identifying information.** We are interested in what is being said, not who is saying what.
- We will be **audio-recording today's session.** The audio files will be transcribed and then destroyed after 90 days.
- **This is a non-attribution session.** To the extent permitted by law, OPA does not publish or share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session by not saying anything that would identify you or other participants. For example, do not state your name. In addition, we also ask that you do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave.

Today, we will be discussing sensitive topics of gender-related issues, including sexual assault and harassment. I know this can be a fairly awkward topic to discuss but it is an important discussion to have. I want to emphasize that we are here to learn from you and your perceptions here, so please feel free to speak candidly.

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This protocol is meant to guide a discussion. Based on the discussion all questions may not be asked and all participants may not answer each question.

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You were randomly selected for this focus group from the members of your class. Your knowledge and experiences offer valuable insight on these important issues. However, I do not want to discuss any specific cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment. I would like to discuss these issues more generally so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for you.

The information you provide today is a part of a larger study that will help DoD leadership to better understand gender-related issues here as well as at the other service academies.

In the interest of time, we may need to move on from one topic to get to another area of interest.

Does anyone have any questions?

Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to go around the room and get to know each other a little bit better.

Tell me a little bit about getting into the Academy. Who did you work with on getting your nomination?

Moderator Note: Probe on the screening process for the nomination.

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Part 2: Gender Relations at the Academy, Leadership, and Resources (14 min)

Gender Relations

Warm up Question: Thinking about your day-to-day at the Academy, who do you interact with the most?

Warm up Question: Who do you consider some of the most influential people in your Academy life?

Probe: What makes them influential?

If someone were thinking about coming to <<Academy>>, what would you say to them about how men and women interact at the Academy?

Probe: What are some of the beliefs related to men and women here at the Academy?

Probe: Who influences some of your beliefs?

Grading Leadership

MODERATOR NOTE: Hand out grading exercise for Senior Leadership

Now, I would like everyone to take a moment and think about Academy Senior Leadership, including the Superintendent, Commandant, Vice/Deputy Commandant, and Dean in your definition. How would you grade their handling of issues related to sexual assault at the Academy?

I understand this grade may depend on an individual person, but let's start by grading leadership as a whole.

A B C D F

Probe: Tell me some reasons for your "grade?"

Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual assault and sexual harassment that sets them apart from others?

Probe: What can they do to get a higher grade?

How would you grade their handling of issues related to sexual harassment at the Academy?

MODERATOR NOTE: Collect Academy senior leadership handout AND hand out peer leadership exercise

Now I would like you to grade your peer leadership on the same issue. Peer leaders could include students higher in the chain of command or student unit leaders. What grade would you give your peer leadership on their handling of issues related to sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Academy?

A B C D F

Probe: Tell me some reasons for your "grade?"

Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual assault that sets them apart from others?

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Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual harassment that sets them apart from others?

Probe: What can they do to get a higher grade?

MODERATOR NOTE: Collect Academy peer leadership handout

SAPR/SHARP Office

When I mention the SAPR/SHARP office, NOT the SAPR/SHARP training, what are some words that come to mind?

MODERATOR NOTE: Keep the conversation on resources and reporting away from training.

Probe: How comfortable are students going to the SAPR/SHARP office?

Probe: When it comes to SAPR/SHARP related issues, who do you consider as the go-to person?

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Part 3: Rules and Culture at the Academy (18 min)

Culture

Now I would like to take some time to talk about the culture here at the Academy.

If you had to describe the culture here to someone back home, what would you tell them?

Official and Unofficial Rules

What are some of the official rules at the Academy that affect how men and women interact with each other?

Probe: What are some of the positive effects?

Probe: What are some of the negative effects?

What are some of the “unwritten” rules you learned but are not in any rule book?

Probe: How do some of these unwritten rules affect how men and women interact?

Probe: Who taught you those unwritten rules?

Probe: When did you learn these unwritten rules?

Probe: Who else was there when you learned some of these unwritten rules?

What are the unwritten rules for different class years?

What are the unwritten rules for women here?

What are the unwritten rules for men here?

Passing down the Culture

How would you describe the relationship between class years?

I would like you to think back to when you were a 4th year/4th class (for freshman: the start of the year), how did you learn to adapt to the Academy culture?

Probe: Who taught you about how the Academy works?

What are some of the lessons the upper-classmen taught you about life at the Academy?

Probe: What about the alumni?

Probe: What about parents?

Probe: What about sponsors?

Probe: How about the officers at the Academy?

Probe: How about the noncommissioned officers at the Academy?

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For Juniors and Seniors: What are some of the lessons you have taught the lower-classes about life at the Academy?

For Freshmen and Sophomores: Thinking about the upper-class years what are some of the beliefs they hold about the Academy?

Probe: What about the alumni?

Probe: What about parents?

Probe: What about sponsors?

Probe: How about the officers at the Academy?

Probe: How about the noncommissioned officers at the Academy?

For Juniors and Seniors: Thinking about the lower-class years, what are some of things they need to know about the Academy?

Changes over time

Thinking about before you came to the Academy, how were your views about gender relations different than they are now?

Probe: How much have your views about men changed?

Probe: How much have your views about women changed?

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Part 4: Boundaries and Intervention (18 min)

Intervention

MODERATOR NOTE: Hand out exercise for Intervention

Please turn to the handout in front of you. When interacting with fellow cadets/midshipmen, leaders, friends, or coworkers we all have different boundaries.

You will see a line down the middle of the paper. I want that line to represent your boundary for when you would intervene in a situation you are witnessing. You will also see a set of stickers with words and phrases. I would like you to stick these words and phrases on either the left or the right side of the line: those that you would not intervene in on the left side and those that you would intervene in on the right side. I also understand that some things might be in a gray area, you can place those on the line.

When placing these stickers on the sheet, please think about witnessing a situation occurring between two cadets/midshipmen that you do not know well.

LIST OF BEHAVIORS TO INTERVENE IN: telling sexual jokes, making sexual gestures, sharing sexual pictures or videos of themselves, sharing sexual pictures or videos of another cadet/midshipman, bullying on social media, talking about their sexual activity, asking about sexual activity or preferences, making repeated attempts to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the same person, touching someone, making comments based on gender, making sexual advances, horseplay or rough housing, taking advantage of someone who is passed out, taking advantage of someone who drank too much, sexually assaulting someone

Moderator Note: Participants should not try to move the stickers around during the discussion.

Probe: What behaviors did you place on the “would intervene” side?

Probe: Tell me your thinking behind placing those items on that side?

Probe: What behaviors did you place on the “would not intervene” side?

Probe: Tell me your thinking behind placing those items on that side.

Probe: (If there are stickers in “gray area”) What would move that sticker to the left or right side of the page?

MODERATOR NOTE: Collect first handout and hand out second exercise for Intervention

Now look at the next handout. I would like you to do the same exercise but imagine that you are witnessing a situation occurring between two cadets/midshipmen that you know well.

Probe: For those who had scenarios changed sides, tell me about your thought process.

Probe: How might the behavior change sides if the cadets/midshipmen involved were in a romantic relationship?

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Probe: How might the alleged behavior change sides if the cadets/midshipmen involved were in a higher class than you?

Probe: How might the alleged behavior change sides if the cadets/midshipmen involved were in a lower class than you?

Probe: How might the alleged behavior change sides if you knew the person who allegedly perpetrated the act, but not the potentially victimized person?

Probe: How might the alleged behavior change sides if you knew the potentially victimized person, but not the person who perpetrated the act?

Moderator Note: Collect the handouts.

What are some intervention techniques you have been taught that you would use if you felt someone was crossing someone else's boundary?

Probe: Which behaviors would you use that technique for?

What are some intervention techniques you have been taught that you would use if you felt someone was crossing your boundary?

Probe: Which behaviors would you use that technique for?

Thinking about the intervention training you have received, which techniques do you think would be more realistic to use in real life?

Probe: What are some of the reasons you would or would not use that method?

How does intervention change when you are off-campus versus on-campus?

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Part 5: #MeToo and Reporting (15 min)

#metoo at the Academy

Starting in 2017 a number of high profile sexual misconduct cases gained attention in the media, causing #metoo, and other hashtags to take off.

Now, we could spend our entire focus group speaking about this issue, however, I would like us to focus our conversation here at the Academy rather than speaking about our Nation as a whole.

How has #metoo affected the Academy?

Probe: What types of conversations have you heard around #metoo here at the academy?

Probe: What, if any, are some positive effects you have seen here at the Academy?

Probe: What, if any, are some negative consequences of #metoo, here at the Academy?

Barriers to Reporting

Now I would like to speak about the reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment here at <<Academy>>.

Here at <<Academy>> the number of people that made an official report of sexual assault last school year was far less than the number of incidents that occur. This includes both cadets/midshipmen who make restricted and unrestricted reports. Based on your knowledge of the Academy and your fellow students, how would you close this gap?

Probe: What are some things the Academy can do to get those reluctant to report the options they need?

Probe: What do you think causes the difference between the number of reports versus the number of incidents?

Probe: What specific barriers are there to reporting incidents of sexual assault?

Probe: Are there any barriers specific to class year?

Probe: How might there be a difference in reporting for men versus women?

Moderator note: If false reporting does not come up naturally, probe around the topic. Example probes: What kind of things do people say about false reporting here at the academy? How prevalent do you think false reporting is at the academy? What steps are in place to prevent false reporting? How does this impact reporting overall/true reports?

There was also a gap between the official reports of sexual harassment and the number of incidents that occur.

Probe: What are the barriers for reporting sexual harassment?

Probe: Do cadets/midshipmen know how to report sexual harassment?

Probe: How are these different than barriers to reporting sexual assault?

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Student Guide

Probe: Tell me about the type of training you receive on sexual harassment. Who conducted the training?
What did you learn?

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Student Guide

Part 6: Alcohol (12 min)

Alcohol on Campus

Now I would like to speak a bit about alcohol use.

How would you describe the drinking culture at the Academy?

You know the ins and outs of this campus better than anyone else: where to go and when to go there. You also probably know more about what goes on here at the Academy than anyone else.

What I would like for you to do now is take a look at this map of your Academy's campus. You will also see a page of stickers.

Moderator Note: Hold up the map and pages of stickers in view of the participants. Hand out materials.

Moderator Note: pass out stickers

Now I would like you to use these stickers to represent alcohol use. I'd like you to think of places where people go to drink alcohol and place these stickers on the map where you think these experiences get out of hand or become potentially dangerous.

Moderator Note: If more clarification is needed: Where alcohol use may lead to sexual harassment. Where it may lead to sexual assault.

What are some of the locations you placed your stickers?

Probe: Talk me through your thought process.

Probe: How would this map look different for different class years?

What are some locations where drinking can get out of hand, or out of control?

Probe: How could the Academy help you from feeling unsafe or keep things from getting out of hand?

Probe: How can the Academy help create a healthy understanding and culture around alcohol?

Moderator Note: collect map

Alcohol Training

Here at the Academy you receive a variety of trainings. I would like to take some time to talk about the trainings you receive on alcohol.

What are some things your trainings teach you regarding alcohol usage?

Probe: How do you and your fellow cadets/midshipmen view these trainings?

Probe: Which parts of these trainings do you find memorable?

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Student Guide

Probe: Which parts of the training miss the mark?

Probe: Which changes would you make to your alcohol trainings?

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Student Guide

Part 7: Risky Behaviors (Remaining Time)

Mapping Feeling Unsafe

So we just spoke about times you may feel unsafe around alcohol use, or when things get out of hand involving alcohol, but now I'd like to talk about times you might feel unsafe generally.

Moderator Note: Hold up the map and pages of stickers in view of the participants. Hand out materials.

Now These stickers represent times you may feel generally unsafe or uncomfortable, but outside of when you may participate in risky or dangerous training activities such as weapons training.

If there's a location off Academy grounds you'd like to place a sticker on, please place the sticker on the white margin, and label it with a pen to the best of your ability. Place as many or as few stickers as you like. Are there any questions before we begin?

Moderator Note: Give participants time to place stickers

What are some of the locations you placed your stickers?

Probe: Talk me through your thought process.

Probe: How would this map look different for different class years?

Probe: How would this map look different for men and women?

What are some locations where you feel that things can get out of hand, or out of control?

Probe: What are some things about these environments that contribute to this feeling?

How could these stickers be removed? What would need to happen?

What could the Academy do to make these areas feel safer/more comfortable?

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Student Guide

Part 8: Conclusion (2 min)

That wraps up my prepared questions for today, but if you have anything you would like to add to today's discussion I open the floor to you.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Your insights have provided valuable feedback.

Appendix B.

Focus Group Guide: Staff and Faculty

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol Staff Guide

Part 1: Introduction to the Focus Groups (8 min)

Hello everyone. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____. My colleague, _____, and I are here on behalf of the DoD Office of People Analytics, also known as OPA. While I will be leading today's discussion _____ will be taking notes, so that I can concentrate on what everyone is saying today.

I want to mention a couple of things before we get started.

- **This is intended to be a conversation among peers.** I was hired to run this focus group so you won't hurt my feelings or offend me with whatever you say. I don't have a personal stake in these results.
- **There are no wrong answers.** As staff members at this academy you know a lot about the topics we plan to discuss, and I'm here to listen to you and get your perspective. Please speak up, especially if what you have to say is different than what someone else is saying. You may represent what a lot of other people think.
- **We are not trying to come to consensus.** It's OK for there to be disagreement and in fact I welcome different points of view. Please share what is true for you. In the spirit of this, I ask that you remain respectful of each other's opinions during our discussion. Everyone in this room may see things differently and we want to hear everyone's perspective.
- **Your participation is completely voluntary,** meaning that you do not have to answer every question and you can withdraw from this study at any time. However, I do encourage your full participation today to ensure that I am getting a representative response.
- As I mentioned, my colleagues are here for notetaking purposes. **We will be recording comments but will not be recording names or other identifying information.** We are interested in what is being said, not who is saying what.
- We will be **audio-recording today's session.** The audio files will be transcribed and then destroyed after 90 days.
- **This is a non-attribution session.** To the extent permitted by law, OPA does not publish or share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session by not saying anything that would identify you or other participants. For example, do not state your name. In addition, we also ask that you do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave.

Today, we will be discussing sensitive topics of gender-related issues, including sexual assault and harassment. I know this can be a fairly awkward topic to discuss but it is an important discussion to have. I want to emphasize that we are here to learn from you and your perceptions here, so please feel free to speak candidly.

Your knowledge and experiences offer valuable insight on these important issues. However, I do not want to discuss any specific cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment. I would like to discuss these issues more generally

This protocol is meant to guide a discussion. Based on the discussion all questions may not be asked and all participants may not answer each question.

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Staff Guide

so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for the students here at the Academy.

The information you provide today is a part of a larger study that will help DoD leadership to better understand gender-related issues here as well as at the other service academies.

In the interest of time, we may need to move on from one topic to get to another area of interest.

Does anyone have any questions?

Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to go around the room and get to know each other a little bit better.

What is something you like to do here at <<Academy>> in your off time?

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
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Part 2: Gender Relations at the Academy, Leadership, and Resources (18 min)

Gender Relations

Warm up Question: Thinking about your day-to-day at the Academy, what is your role here at the Academy?

Warm up Question: Who do you consider some of the most influential people for cadets'/midshipmen's Academy life?

Probe: What makes them influential?

When it comes to topics related to men and women here at the Academy, who influences the cadets'/midshipmen's beliefs?

Grading Leadership

MODERATOR NOTE: Hand out grading exercise for Senior Leadership

Now, I would like everyone to take a moment and think about Academy Senior Leadership, including the Superintendent, Commandant, Vice/Deputy Commandant, and Dean in your definition. How would you grade their handling of issues related to sexual assault at the Academy? How would you grade their handling of issues related to sexual harassment at the Academy?

I understand this grade may depend on an individual person, but let's start by grading leadership as a whole.

A B C D F

Probe: Tell me some reasons for your "grade?"

Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual assault that sets them apart from others?

Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual harassment that sets them apart from others?

Probe: What can they do to get a higher grade?

MODERATOR NOTE: Collect Academy senior leadership handout AND hand out peer leadership exercise

Now I would like you to grade cadet/midshipmen leadership on the same issue. Peer leaders could include students higher in the chain of command, student unit leaders, and battalion commanders. What grade would you give cadet/midshipmen leadership on their handling of issues related to sexual assault at the Academy?

What grade would you give cadet/midshipmen leadership on their handling of issues related to sexual harassment at the Academy?

A B C D F

Probe: Tell me some reasons for your "grade?"

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Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual assault that sets them apart from others?

Probe: What are some things they do to handle issues related to sexual harassment that sets them apart from others?

Probe: What can they do to get a higher grade?

MODERATOR NOTE: Collect Academy cadet/midshipmen peer leadership handout

SAPR/SHARP Office

When I mention the SAPR/SHARP office, NOT the SAPR/SHARP training, what are some words that come to mind?

MODERATOR NOTE: Keep the conversation on resources and reporting and separate from training.

Probe: How comfortable are students going to the SAPR/SHARP office?

Probe: Are you comfortable sending students to the SAPR/SHARP office?

Probe: When it comes to SAPR/SHARP related issues, who do you consider as the go-to person? Why?

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Staff Guide

Part 3: Rules and Culture at the Academy (18 min)

Culture

Now I would like to take some time to talk about the culture here at the Academy.

If you had to describe the culture here to someone that had never been stationed at the Academy, what would you tell them?

Official and Unofficial Rules

What are some of the official rules at the Academy that affect how men and women interact together?

Probe: What are some of the positive effects?

Probe: What are some of the negative effects?

What are some of the “unwritten” rules the cadets/midshipmen learn to do but are not in any rule book?

Probe: How do some of these unwritten rules affect how men and women interact together?

Probe: Who teaches the cadet/midshipmen those unwritten rules?

Probe: When do they learn these unwritten rules?

Probe: Who else was there when they learned some of these unwritten rules?

What are the unwritten rules for different class years?

What are the unwritten rules for women here?

What are some of the unwritten rules for men here?

How would you describe the relationship between class years?

Culture

What role do you play in Academy culture?

What are some of the things you try to teach cadets/midshipmen during their time at the Academy?

What aspects of Academy culture do you think should change?

Probe: What are some ways the Academy can encourage this change?

#metoo at the Academy

Starting in 2017 a number of high profile sexual misconduct cases gained attention in the media, causing #metoo, and other hashtags to take off.

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
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Now, we could spend our entire focus group speaking about this issue, however, I would like us to focus our conversation here at the Academy rather than speaking about our Nation as a whole.

How has #metoo affected the Academy?

Probe: What types of conversations have you heard around #metoo here at the academy?

Probe: What, if any, are some positive effects you have seen here at the Academy?

Probe: What, if any, are some negative consequences of #metoo, here at the Academy?

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Staff Guide

Part 4: Reporting (15 minutes)

Role in Reporting

What is your role in the reporting process?

What tools do you use to fulfill your role?

What additional resources would you want that you do not currently have to help assist you in the reporting process?

Probe: Without speaking about a specific case, what are some of the challenges to interacting with potential victims?

Probe: What about potential perpetrators?

Barriers to Reporting

Now I would like to speak about the reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment here at <<Academy>>.

Here at <<Academy>> the number of people that made an official report of sexual assault last school year was far less than the number of incidents that occur. This includes both cadets/midshipmen who make restricted and unrestricted reports. Based on your knowledge of the Academy and your fellow students, how would you close this gap?

Probe: What are some things the Academy can do to get those reluctant to report the options they need?

Probe: What do you think causes the difference between the number of reports versus the number of incidents?

Probe: What specific barriers are there to reporting incidents of sexual assault?

Probe: Are there any barriers specific to class year?

Probe: How might there be a difference in reporting for men versus women?

Moderator note: If false reporting does not come up naturally, probe around the topic. Example probes: What kind of things do people say about false reporting here at the academy? How prevalent do you think false reporting is at the academy? What steps are in place to prevent false reporting? How does this impact reporting overall/true reports?

There was also a gap between the official reports of sexual harassment and the number of incidents that occur.

Probe: What are the barriers for reporting sexual harassment?

Probe: Do cadets/midshipmen know how to report sexual harassment?

Probe: How are these different than barriers to reporting sexual assault?

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Staff Guide

Part 5: Boundaries and Intervention (12 min)

Intervention

MODERATOR NOTE: Hand out exercise for Intervention

Please turn to the handout in front of you. When interacting with cadets/midshipmen, leaders, friends, or coworkers we all have different boundaries.

You will see a line down the middle of the paper. I want that line to represent where you think most cadets'/midshipmen's boundary for when they would intervene in a situation they are witnessing. You will also see a set of stickers with words and phrases. I would like you to stick these words and phrases on either the left or the right side of the line: those that they would not intervene in on the left side and those that they would intervene in on the right side. I also understand that some things might be in a gray area, you can place those on the line.

When placing these stickers on the sheet please think about a cadet/midshipman witnessing a situation occurring between two cadets/midshipmen that they do not know well.

LIST OF BEHAVIORS TO INTERVENE IN: telling sexual jokes, making sexual gestures, sharing sexual pictures or videos of themselves, sharing sexual pictures or videos of another cadet/midshipman, bullying on social media, talking about their sexual activity, asking about sexual activity or preferences, making repeated attempts to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the same person, touching someone, making comments based on gender, making sexual advances, horseplay or rough housing, taking advantage of someone who is passed out, taking advantage of someone who drank too much, sexually assaulting someone

Moderator Note: Participants should not try to move the stickers around during the discussion.

Probe: What behaviors did you place on the "would intervene" side?

Probe: Tell me your thinking behind placing those items on that side?

Probe: What behaviors did you place on the "would not intervene" side?

Probe: Tell me your thinking behind placing those items on that side.

Probe: (If there are stickers in "gray area") What would move that sticker to the left or right side of the page?

MODERATOR NOTE: Collect first handout and hand out second exercise for Intervention

Now look at the next handout. I would like you to do the same exercise, but imagine that the cadet/midshipman is witnessing a situation occurring between two cadets/midshipmen that they know well.

Probe: For those who had scenarios changed sides, tell me about your thought process.

Probe: How might the behavior change sides if the cadets/midshipmen involved were in a romantic relationship?

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Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
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Probe: How might the behavior change sides if the cadets/midshipmen involved were upper-classmen?

Probe: How might the behavior change sides if the cadets/midshipmen involved were lower-classmen?

Probe: How might the behavior change sides if the witnessing cadet/midshipmen knew the person who allegedly perpetrated the act, but not the potentially victimized person?

Probe: How might the behavior change sides if the witnessing cadet/midshipmen knew the potentially victimized person, but not the person who allegedly perpetrated the act?

Moderator Note: Collect the handouts.

What are some intervention techniques cadets/midshipmen have been taught that they would use if they felt someone was crossing their boundary?

Probe: Which behaviors would they use that technique for?

What are some intervention techniques cadets/midshipmen have been taught that they would use if they felt that they were witnessing a situation that was crossing someone else's boundary?

Probe: Which behaviors would they use that technique for?

Thinking about the intervention training they have received, what techniques do you think would be more realistic to use in real life?

Probe: What are some of the reasons you think they would or would not use that method.

How does intervention change when cadets/midshipmen are off-campus versus on-campus?

This protocol is meant to guide a discussion. Based on the discussion all questions may not be asked and all participants may not answer each question.

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Staff Guide

Part 6: Training (16 min)

Alcohol Training

Here at the Academy there are a variety of trainings. I would like to take some time to talk about some of those trainings.

What are some trainings students receive regarding alcohol usage?

Probe: How do cadets/midshipmen view these trainings?

Probe: What from these trainings do you think are impactful?

Probe: What messages miss the mark?

Probe: What changes would you make to the alcohol trainings?

SAPR/SHARP Training

Now I would like to speak about SAPR/SHARP trainings.

What is your role in SAPR/SHARP trainings?

What are some things that you find most helpful or useful from the various trainings you receive on sexual assault?

What are some things that you find most helpful or useful from the various trainings you receive on sexual harassment?

What are some things that you find least helpful or useful from the various trainings you receive on sexual assault?

What are some things that you find least helpful or useful from the various trainings you receive on sexual harassment?

What are some things people need to know, but don't, regarding sexual assault?

What are some things people need to know, but don't, regarding sexual harassment?

Thinking about the trainings the students receive, how effective are they in preparing cadets/midshipmen to be an officer?

Probe: How can the SAPR/SHARP trainings better prepare cadets/midshipmen to be an officer?

Probe: If a future subordinate came to them to discuss being the victim of unwanted sexual contact, how has the training they received helped them to assist that person?

This protocol is meant to guide a discussion. Based on the discussion all questions may not be asked and all participants may not answer each question.

Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Protocol
Staff Guide

Part 7: Conclusion (3 min)

That wraps up my prepared questions for today, but if you have anything you would like to add to today's discussion I open the floor to you.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Your insights have provided valuable feedback.

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Appendix C. Handouts

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Ground Rules for Discussion

Thank you for participating in this important focus group. We will follow a few ground rules for the focus group:

- This is intended to be a **conversation among peers**
- There are **no wrong answers**
- We are **not** trying to **come to a consensus**
- Your participation is completely **voluntary**
- The conversation will be **audio-recorded**
- This is a **non-attribution** session
- No side conversations

Preserving the privacy and confidentiality of focus group participants is a fundamental principle for any successful data collection program, and the Department of Defense (DoD) Office of People Analytics (OPA) strives to maintain and protect the identity of every individual who participates in any of our data collection efforts. To accomplish this goal, OPA uses procedures and protocols that protect respondent confidentiality to the extent permitted by all federal laws and statutes.

Participation in this focus group is voluntary; however, maximum participation is encouraged so that data will be complete and representative. The data collection procedures strive to maintain the anonymity of all participants; no one from OPA will know who has been selected and no record will be made of those who participate in any given session. Further, no comments will be kept in the written notes that could be linked to any individual participant. The risk to you is accidental or unintentional disclosure of any identifying data you provide during the session or other disclosures required by law. However, OPA has a number of policies and procedures in place to preserve the anonymity of focus group data to the extent allowed by law, and all potentially identifying information has been removed.



Definitions

Sexual Harassment:

Involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a favorable decision.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for decisions affecting that person.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

This definition emphasizes that conduct need not result in concrete psychological harm to the victim, but rather need only be so severe or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and the victim does perceive, the environment as hostile or offensive.

Unwanted Sexual Contact:

Unwanted sexual contact refers to a range of activities including uninvited and unwelcome completed or attempted sexual intercourse, sodomy (oral or anal sex), penetration by an object, and the unwanted touching of genitalia and other sexually related areas of the body. Uninvited and unwelcome implies lack of consent. Article 120 of the UCMJ defines "consent" as "a freely given agreement to the conduct at issue by a competent person." The term is further explained as:

- "An expression of lack of consent through words or conduct means there is no consent.
- Lack of verbal or physical resistance or submission resulting from the use of force, threat of force, or placing another person in fear does not constitute consent.
- A current or previous dating or social or sexual relationship by itself or the manner of dress of the person involved with the accused in the conduct at issue shall not constitute consent.
- A sleeping, unconscious, or incompetent person cannot consent.
- A person cannot consent to force causing or likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm or to being rendered unconscious.
- A person cannot consent while under threat or fear or under the circumstances described in subparagraph (C) or (D) of subsection (b)(1). (Under the definition of sexual assault, these are (C) making fraudulent representation that the sexual act serves a professional purpose and (D) inducing a belief by any artifice, pretense, or concealment that the person is another person).
- Lack of consent may be inferred based on the circumstances of the offense. All the surrounding circumstances are to be considered in determining whether a person gave consent, or whether a person did not resist or ceased to resist only because of another person's actions."



We appreciate your participation in this focus group. In the event you would like to discuss issues related to this focus group with someone from OPA during (or after) our visit to the U.S. Military Academy, please contact Dr. Ashlea Klahr at (571) 372-2278 or DSN 372-2278.

If you wish to provide feedback regarding this focus group process or the focus group content, please send us an e-mail at: SA-Survey@mail.mil. If you know of others who might like to contact a member of the OPA team, please share this information with them.

In April 2011, the Department of Defense launched the DoD Safe Helpline to provide confidential, live, one-on-one expert advice to victims of sexual assault. Available 24/7, users can click, call or text to access Safe Helpline services:

CLICK: Logging on to www.SafeHelpline.org allows users to receive live, one-on-one confidential help with a trained professional through a secure instant-messaging format. The website also provides vital information about recovering from and reporting sexual assault.

CALL: Calling the telephone hotline (877) 995-5247 allows users to speak with trained Safe Helpline staff for access to resources and support. Safe Helpline staff can also transfer callers to installation or base Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs)/On-call SAPR Victim Advocates (VAs), civilian rape crisis centers or the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

TEXT: Texting their location to 55-247 (inside the U.S.) or (202) 470-5546 (outside the U.S.) allows users to receive automated contact information for the SARC at their installation or base.

If you feel uncomfortable or uneasy after participating in this focus group, and/or if you are a survivor of sexual assault, or have experienced sexual harassment or stalking, we strongly encourage you to contact the following resources that are available to you:

Center for Counseling and Development: (860) 444-8520 (0800-1630, M-F)

Website:

<http://eduportall/Divisions/Superintendent/Center%20for%20Counseling%20%20Develop/Pages/default.aspx>

SARC: Shannon Norenberg (860) 625-1002 (24 Hours)

CASA Website: <http://eduportall/sites/CASA/default.aspx>

Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut: (888) 999-5545 (24 Hours)

Website: <http://saccec.org/>

Cadet Chaplain's Office: (860) 444-8480

Grade for Senior Leadership

(Includes Superintendent, Commandant, Vice/Deputy Commandant, and Dean)

A

B

C

D

F

Grade for Peer Leadership

A

B

C

D

F

I would not intervene	I would intervene

- Telling sexual jokes
- Making sexual gestures
- Sharing sexual pictures or videos of themselves
- Sharing sexual pictures or videos of another cadet/midshipman
- Talking about their sexual activity
- Asking about sexual activity or preferences
- Making repeated attempts to establish an unwanted romantic or sexual relationship with the same person
- Touching someone
- Making comments based on gender
- Making sexual advances
- Horseplay or rough housing
- Taking advantage of someone who is passed out
- Taking advantage of someone who drank too much
- Sexually assaulting someone

Behaviors Key



Alcohol use occurs

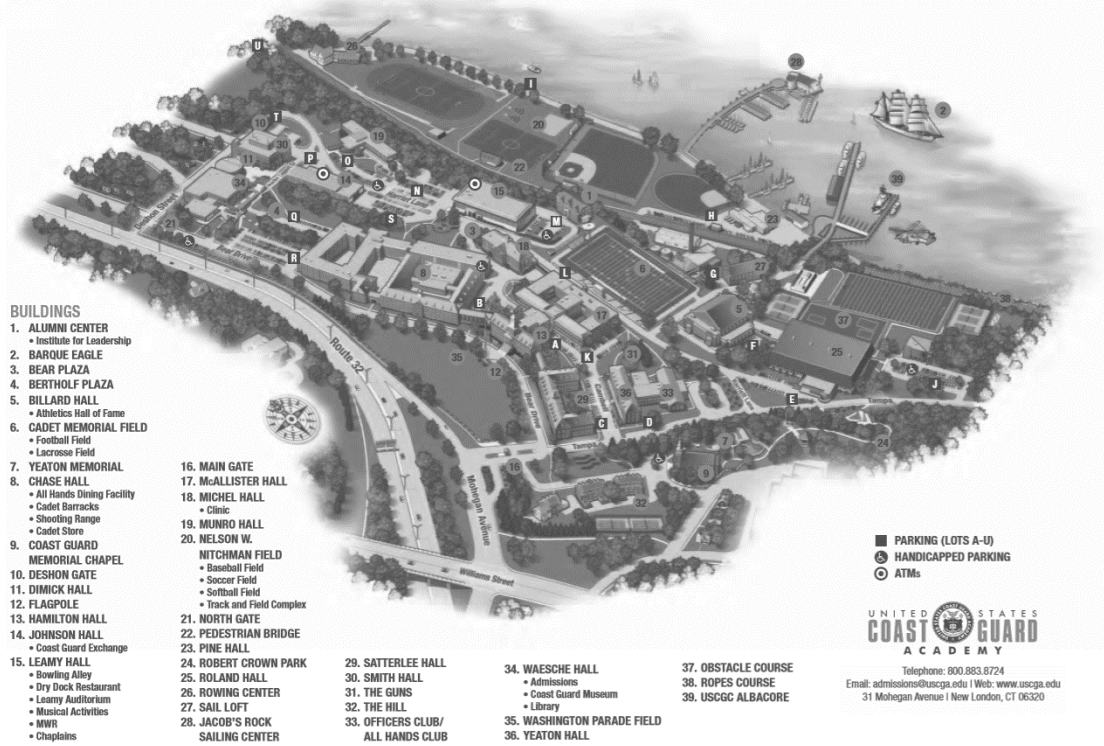


Alcohol use gets out of hand

Behaviors Key

	Sharing of explicit imagery
	Feeling unsafe
	Staring/Gawking
	Verbal harassment
	Unwanted touching
	Unwanted Sexual Contact

12/14/16



REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE					Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the Department of Defense, Executive Service Directorate (0704-0188). Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ORGANIZATION.						
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 15-04-2020		2. REPORT TYPE Final Report			3. DATES COVERED (From - To) March - April 2019	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE 2019 U.S. Coast Guard Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups: Overview Report					5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
					5b. GRANT NUMBER	
					5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Claros, Y., Scolese, A., Barry, A., Davis, L., & Klahr, A.					5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
					5e. TASK NUMBER	
					5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Office of People Analytics 4800 Mark Center Drive, Suite 06E25 Alexandria, VA 22350					8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER OPA Report No. 2020-069	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Coast Guard Academy 31 Mohegan Avenue New London, CT 06320					10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
					11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES						
14. ABSTRACT This report provides results of the 2019 U.S. Coast Guard Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups (2019 SAGR) conducted by the Health & Resilience Research Division within the Office of People Analytics (OPA). These focus groups are the seventh of a series of focus groups mandated by U.S. Code 10, as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007. It provides a deeper insight and understanding of the climate and culture at the U.S. Military Academy (USMA), the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and the U.S. Air Force Academy (USFA). Although the aforementioned policy does not require USCGA to be assessed, the Academy has requested to participate since 2008 and meets requirements for reporting under The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010. This report uses qualitative data from focus groups to explore the perception of issues related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-related topics at the Academies including general culture and climate at the Academy, prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment, reporting of such behaviors, and alcohol use at the Academies.						
15. SUBJECT TERMS Unwanted Sexual Contact, Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Service Academy Culture, Service Academy Climate, Bystander Intervention, Reporting, Training, USCGA						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: a. REPORT UU b. ABSTRACT UU c. THIS PAGE UU			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT SAR		18. NUMBER OF PAGES 114	
19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Elizabeth (Lisa) Davis					19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) 571-372-1105	

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