



THIS MAN'S MILITARY: MASCULINE CULTURE'S ROLE IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE

BY

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The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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ABSTRACT

The central goal of this thesis is to determine whether or not there is something inherent in US military culture that makes members of the Department of Defense (DoD) more prone to sexual assault than their civilian counterparts. The author assesses the role of masculinity in defining the organizational culture of the DoD, and seeks to apply social scientific analysis to the problem of sexual assault in such a culture. Using organizational change theory as an analytical lens to military culture, the author highlights areas that warrant further discussion in a holistic effort to combat sexual assault in the professional military ranks. The conclusion is that there is a demographic proclivity toward sexual violence in the DoD which is aggravated by the generational gap between senior leaders and those most at risk of assault, and that to address the challenge head-on the military must view the problem as one of military culture. The writer first reviews the contemporary academic literature on organizational culture and defines the method of evaluating cultural characteristics in US military service. Next, the author evaluates the case of sexual assault in the military today, including a definitional and legal review and relevant statistical facts, in order to objectify military culture in the theoretic form. After describing contemporary military sexual assault issues, the author applies organizational and psychoanalytical theory to military culture in order to highlight any areas that can be exploited to reduce sexual violence. The final section of the work offers how organizational change theory can be used to change military culture to combat sexual assault, and highlights areas that require further study to fully understand the problem.

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CONTENTS

Table of Contents

DISCLAIMER	II
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT	V
CONTENTS	VI
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THEORY	10
CHAPTER THREE: SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE US MILITARY	27
CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE	39
CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS	62
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As with the military's acceptance of African Americans and gay soldiers, the issue does not lie with observing regulations or executive orders. This is about culture. The rank and file have yet to accept women into their community. Women have fought and died in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are no longer excluded from combat zones. But the military has yet to fully accept women or their contributions.

– US Army Maj Gen (ret) Robert Scales
Washington Post Interview, 2013

The United States took over the French effort to build the Panama Canal in 1904 amid terrible yellow fever and malaria epidemics that ripped through the workforce there to connect the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. At the time, there was a common perception that these diseases were afflicted upon immoral and “unclean” workers who, in essence, *deserved* to get sick.¹ Today, without question, we know that mosquitos caused the outbreaks. Unfortunately, even in the early 1900's evidence strongly supported this fact, but was not accepted because it went against the popularly accepted understanding of the cause of the crippling diseases. By the time Teddy Roosevelt confronted the American cultural distrust of medical research in 1905 and committed to the eradication of mosquitos near the canal work zones, some 85% of the 26,000 workers had been infected with malaria or yellow fever at some point in their two year stints. Within one year of eradication efforts, the infection rate was down to less than 50%, and within 4 years it was less than 1%.² John Stevens, a railroad man chosen by Roosevelt to be the Chief Engineer of the canal project, recognized that “digging was the least important thing of all,” and knew that the health of his workforce had to first be guaranteed.³ He famously said to his staff upon arrival in Panama, who largely still resisted what they thought to be “wasted efforts” on mosquito eradication that “There are three diseases in Panama. They

¹ Col William Bowers, “Yellow Fever, Malaria, and Construction of the Panama Canal: How to Eradicate a Scourge” (Leadership Seminar Paper, USMC Southeastern District Command, n.d.).

² Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), “American Experience: Panama Canal,” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/panama-fever/>

³ Thomas E. Morrissey, *Donegan and the Panama Canal* (Xlibris Corporation, 2009), 284.

are yellow fever, malaria, and cold feet; and the greatest of these is cold feet.”⁴ Informed by expert medical advice and having logically thought through the problem, he casted off old biases and overcame the tendencies to resist change. Despite severe resistance, including from Secretary of War Taft who even attempted to fire Stevens and his medical counterpart, Dr. William Gorgas, the priority to solve the health crisis before just “letting the dirt fly” won over, and the rest, as they say, is history.⁵

Yellow fever and malaria compelled a group of leaders to question their underlying biases toward a very real problem of national security in the early 1900’s, and in this regard, sexual violence is not so different an indicator of needed refocus on our underlying beliefs. This thesis investigates the role military culture may play in aggravating sexual assault, and the implications of culture which must be confronted to better affect underlying conditions conducive to the crime. Sexual violence is by no means a recent phenomenon, but a problem as old as time that is being confronted today as a behavior incompatible with our liberal democratic society that values equality and dignity. The United States armed services have undergone a number of major transitions since their birth some 250 years ago. From “Minute Men” to Cyber Warriors, part-time militias to Special Forces teams, fledgling rebel power to hegemonic super power, the American military experience has a short but rich history of valor and struggle. Like the military, civil society has also sacrificed and struggled to change; in fact, the ability to change is one of the things that makes America so powerful. The abolition of slavery, women’s suffrage, and the civil rights movement which continues today are all examples of change which have made this country better than it once was. However, as analogies tend to do, previous examples of overcoming challenges like diversity and equality reach some plateau of utility when it comes to the most recent focus on sexual assault. Can organizational theory in a contemporary context help guide the US military toward a more holistic sexual violence prevention program? What are the costs of doing so?

The US military has spent the last 12 years or more actively fighting terrorism and insurgencies around the world, which has no doubt shaped contemporary views of the ways of war, both in the military and civil society. An internal fight, like sexual assault, is

⁴ Bowers, “Yellow Fever, Malaria, Construction,” 6.

⁵ Morrissey, *Donegan and Panama Canal*, 285–286.

not so different from this experience, but requires its own special handling. Speaking about his efforts to reverse the sexually aggressive environment at the USAF Academy, Lt Gen (ret) John Rosa, a former Superintendent who was sent to respond to the sex scandal in the early 2000s, said in an interview that “Fifteen percent of the people will always do the right thing. Fifteen percent will do the wrong thing. We were fighting for the 70% in the middle.”⁶ The military today is fighting an insurgency in its own ranks – one that can’t be won without the influence of the middle 70%. Senior leaders are one or two generations older than the demographic most prone to assault and therefore naturally at risk of projecting their well-intentioned but generationally out of touch values on the younger target demographic. In the same way, military members in their Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) are often removed from the population they are trying to influence. In the former, age is one barrier; in the latter, it is a maze of concertina wire and HESCO barriers.⁷ The military has learned the hard lesson of “knowing thy enemy” in irregular war recently – is it so difficult to believe we are struggling to understand the sexual predator in the same way?⁸ The strategy, thus far, has been to looking at the sexually violent criminal as an outsider, when in fact, they wear our uniform and sit beside us every day. We look out the window to see the crime, instead of look in the mirror. The DoD SAPR education program is the means with which we can fight this battle in the human domain, but we risk losing the influence of the middle 70% if we choose to bridle the conversation in terms of classifying sexual assault as just another crime that needs better enforcement to stop. The truth is: *this is war*. Sexual assault, like terrorism, is a cancer that threatens the otherwise healthy host if only symptoms are treated instead of attacking the source of the tumor. The military has spent more than a decade trying to solve wicked problems in foreign lands, and it is time to turn our attention inward with the same fervor.

The spectrum of sexual violence does not start with the commission of a crime, and neither should our attempt to understand it. Well before America’s young enter

⁶ Lt Gen (ret) John Rosa (former USAF Academy Superintendent, current Citadel President), interview by the author, 29 January 2014.

⁷ HESCO barriers are large earth-filled containers used as rapidly deployable blast barriers in combat zones, as well as flood barriers in civilian application.

⁸ Sun Tzu; the definitive engl. transl. by Samuel B. Griffith, *The Illustrated Art of War* (Oxford University Press), 125.

military service and are trained, trusted, and placed among their peers, their formative education has had a 20-year head start on their military education. This time matters greatly, not only for sexual assault, but for how a person spends their life perceiving everything around them. How we think about sexual violence is important, because it reflects in how we talk about it, and how we act to prevent it. As best the author is able to perceive the issue as an insider, it seems the current DoD effort to combat sexual assault focuses on the *act of the crime*, and less on discussing how the military *thinks* about the crime. Immediacy has its place, though, and the purpose of highlighting the role of culture in sexual assault is not an attempt to reduce the role of prosecution (etc.) which are reflexive outcries to assuage the public that the military cares about the problem. The truth, of course, is that we do care about protecting our service men and women, but are programmed to operate within our cultural norms to seek a solution, instead of thinking about changing the cultural assumptions that the author hopes to bring to a more privileged place in the discussion. Protecting the victim and prosecuting the criminal responsible are *extremely* important, and yet still only a part of the total approach needed to understand sexual violence. This essay seeks to discuss each aspect in turn, starting with how culture plays a major role in how groups of individuals with unique formative experiences tend to think; how that thinking can shape the vernacular, the conversation, and the perception of the problem; and how acting first, without due diligence toward underlying cultural issues, will not solve the long-term problem.

Culture trumps strategy, *every time*.⁹ As is explored in Chapter Two, culture is the basis for most group oriented behavior. You can copy the strategy of a competitor or peer organization, but you cannot copy culture. Culture is organic, holistic, and an infallible reflection of underlying beliefs. Strategy harnesses the power of culture to achieve goals through acts; however, an achievable strategy is one underwritten by the capacity of the supporting culture. Mismatch the two, and there is some level of overachievement or underachievement. It is possible however to change culture to shape it into the image desired; the strategy to do so is the subject of Chapter Two, drawing deeply from Edgar Schein's Organizational Culture and Leadership. The interplay he

⁹ Nilofer Merchant, "Culture Trumps Strategy, Every Time," *Harvard Business Review*, 22 March 2011, <http://blogs.hbr.org/2011/03/culture-trumps-strategy-every/>

focuses on deals with the individual and the group, though mostly from the perspective of a leader promoting change ‘top-down’ versus a follower effecting change on the organization ‘bottom-up.’ Individuals assimilate into cultures in various ways and to certain degrees, and to a lesser extent, the individual in turn affects the culture incrementally in the same manner. For a practical example, if one pours a cup of cold water into a cauldron of boiling water, the net effect of the cup is quickly overcome by the thermal inertia of its larger host. Pour a cup of oil into the same cauldron, and the host rejects the addition as something foreign, and something unable to assimilate to its surroundings, and duly separated from larger interaction. In summary, an understanding of culture shows what is part of, or *in*, and what is not part of the culture, or *other*. We are naturally drawn to assume characteristics of culture from observed acts, but as is explored later, nailing down what culture *is and isn’t* is no easy task.

Chapter Two also clarifies how culture is clinically defined, as a theoretical construct with which to later apply to the military in subsequent discussion. Observed behavior is not necessarily “cultural” as much as it is what Edgar Schein calls “artifacts of culture,” meaning that culture is the cause, and behavior is the symptom.¹⁰ Culture is not only about observable behavior (artifacts), but instead the amalgamation of underlying beliefs and ideas, which inform and reinforce values that are upheld by the group as standards of behavior to espouse.¹¹ Later, in Chapter Four, the author also discusses *what underlies ‘underlying beliefs’* as well, largely focusing on research drawn from psychoanalytical academics who talk about the role of individuals in cultures. Schein states that culture is the very basis of how individuals are to “perceive, act, and feel” in certain contexts.¹² Such a state of influence on the very basis of human behavior—to so powerfully control the subconscious—is an area of social science theory that compels society and the military to pay attention to the human phenomenon of *culture*.¹³

Chapter Three discusses what the military has done to tackle sexual assault in recent decades. Since the 1992 Tailhook scandal that sensationalized military men behaving badly, the DoD has put a significant amount of effort into fighting the problem,

¹⁰ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, Fourth Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 25.

¹¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2–9.

¹² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3.

¹³ Dr. David Lisak, interview by the author, 5 March 2014.

or at least fighting the perception of the problem.¹⁴ The case of sexual assault in the military as outlined in Chapter Three also defines the demographic realities facing the DoD. Census data shows the all-volunteer force construct of the US military does not demographically reflect a proportional cross-section of American society. This fact is for a number of reasons (many of which are not the subject of this paper), but one major reason for the disparity is the self-selecting nature of those who choose to join the US military. This leads to an uncomfortable question about military sexual assault that remains unaddressed in the mainstream conversation: is the military is demographically prone to a sexual assault at a higher rate than other civilian institutions *and/or* psychoanalytically prone at an individual level?¹⁵ The military is 86% male.¹⁶ Forty-three percent of military members are aged 18-24 years, the demographic representing most victims and perpetrators.¹⁷ The fact that most military members (by a landslide margin) *and* most sexual predators are *men aged 18-24* should be cause for special consideration.¹⁸ As chronicled in Chapter Three, the military has made strides in confronting certain aspects of sexual assault, particularly with protecting victim's rights, encouraging reporting, and attempting to remove stigmas associated with sexual assault. Such advancements are not to be cast aside, but instead included in a broader cultural approach to addressing the issue at its core.

Chapter Four attempts to clarify how organizational change, as applied to the case of sexual assault in the military, can suggest ways of understanding culture and managing the change in the military-specific context. Identifying the source of the problem, even more exactly than will be done in this work, does not offer ease of manipulation though.

¹⁴ Rosa, Interview, 29 January 2014. Some (former graduates of the USAF Academy) thought Gen Rosa should have refrained from attempting *culture change* at the Academy, and focused on fixing the perception of the problem instead: to keep the institution out of the papers.

¹⁵ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014. As is discussed in the conclusion chapter, part of the challenge is to collect and interpret large sets of data on the military demographic itself. However, as Dr Lisak has said repeatedly in Congressional testimony and DoD inquiries, some data suggests the military is fertile ground for would-be sexually violent offenders. See also Turchik and Wilson's "Sexual assault in the U.S. military: A review of the literature and recommendations for the future"

¹⁶ Department of Defense, "2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community," iii.

¹⁷ David Lisak, "Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence," 6; Department of Defense, "2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community." 13.3% of the Officer Corps (N=238,103) and 49.3% of the Enlisted Corps (N=1,173,322) represent 43.2% total of all Active Duty DoD forces (N=1,411,425).

¹⁸ Lisak "Nature of Sexual Violence," 6; DoD, "2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community," *see previous*.

Sexual assault is a vastly complex problem, and the attempt to label it a cultural problem does not alleviate the effort required to change the course. For this reason, Chapter Four dives deeper into what the military values from the perspective of a cultural issue, and indeed what it does not value. From this point, it becomes necessary to define why the military has a *masculine* culture, why it is perpetually propagated, and why shifting away from it will be difficult. Experts agree almost unanimously that with regard to sexual violence, the military should actively facilitate more research to understand the demographic of military members psychologically, demographically, and with particular attention to the formative experiences (like childhood sexual abuse) of those who choose to serve.¹⁹ As it is today, the military is hamstrung to consider the formative experience of individuals in its care because, relatively speaking, there is so little *military-specific* research done.²⁰ Much of the leading contemporary research on sexual assault is based on civilian culture or small segments of military culture, which begs the question: why isn't the DoD spending more time and effort studying its own demographic to help establish a better understanding of its members?²¹

Chapter Five of this thesis attempts to abstract the implications of how military culture may need to change in order to more holistically reject sexually aggressive behavior, and highlights where more research is needed to better understand the complexity of the societal problem that the military must deal with. As is outlined in Chapter Four, labeling the problem of military sexual violence as a cultural problem does not offer any shortcuts to eradicating the crime in the ranks, but argues that the most intellectually rigorous way to confront the problem begins with understanding what

¹⁹ "2012 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members-Survey Note and Briefing"; *ibid.*; Harrell et al., *A Compendium of Sexual Assault Research*; Madeline Morris, "By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture"; "Childhood Physical Abuse and Combat-Related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Vietnam Veterans"; "Do Military Sexual Assaults Against Men Trump Those Against Women?"; Sadler et al., "Factors Associated with Women's Risk of Rape in the Military Environment"; ed. by Craig A. Rimmerman, *Gay Rights, Military Wrongs*; Mic Hunter, *Honor Betrayed*; Coughlin, "It Is Time to Change the Culture of the Military and Change Attitudes About Sexual Assault"; "Justice Denied Movie, Military Sexual Trauma from the Male Point of View"; Stones, *Key Sociological Thinkers*; "Pentagon Report on Sexual Assault in the Military in 2012"; The Defense Task Force for Sexual Violence, *Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies*.

²⁰ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014.

²¹ Lex L. Merrill, Cynthia J. Thomsen, and Joel S. Milner, "Childhood Abuse and Premilitary Sexual Assault in Male Navy Recruits." This study linked the number of males joining a small segment of the military to their history of childhood sexual and physical abuse linked to their self-reported propensity for pre-military rape perpetration.

makes up a culture. The final chapter attempts to summarize the implications of culture theory as applied to the case of military sexual violence and offers some ideas for a holistic approach to combating the crime.

In summary, the DoD has an opportunity to better address the crime of sexual assault. The first step involves intellectual honesty: the military is an organization dominated by the male demographic and male values. This may serve some purpose in the military context, but may also have unwanted cultural side effects. Second, the DoD should understand and embrace its historically western patriarchal military model of organization if it is to achieve lasting change. We are already on this path, with the far-too-long delayed repeal of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” as one such example, but there is much more to do. Third, in turn, the military must embrace an educational program that more frankly discusses sexual assault to gain the trust of its heavily overrepresented demographic of at-risk youth – offenders *and* victims. This approach will allow us to think of prevention as that of a proverbial “three legged stool” in which prevention is focused on the most at risk, education is used to normalize behavior, and the response is focused on preventing secondary victimization (including “victim blaming”) and prosecution. With too much focus on any of these ‘legs’ of the stool, the military stands to lose the battle with itself for survival. In short, we must first admit the uniqueness of the military problem as a reflection of our culture, then embrace it, talk about it honestly, and come up with solutions that transcend the generational subcultures of the military.

This thesis serves but one purpose regarding sexual violence in the armed services: to change the conversation. It is time to change the way we, the military, view ourselves and how we talk about violence in our ranks. Sexual assault is not about sex. It is about power and control, and the few who misuse it. If we don’t change the conversation, and confront predators directly, we are party to their crime. Why would we offer them a haven in which to lurk without casting light into the shadows of our culture? Classically, this inability to confront one’s self has been for fear of survival if they are forced to change.²² This fear of survival, born of the fear of change, is the fundamental challenge of culture change. The US military is more than capable of making this change. Sexual assault is a wicked problem to try to solve, but like women’s integration, racial

²² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 299–304.

integration and normalization, and the recent integration of gays and lesbians openly serving, the US military is more than capable of tackling the change and coming out stronger. It is known, broadly speaking, who commits the crime: men. It is also known, with high statistical surety, the age of most victims and perpetrators: 18-24. The question, it seems, is if the military knows itself enough to be confident that it can take on the problem honestly, change for the better, *and for good*.



CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THEORY

Culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations deriving from culture are powerful. If we don't understand the operation of these forces, we become victim to them.

– Edgar H. Schein,
Organizational Culture and Leadership

What is the impetus to study culture as a social phenomenon? Edgar Schein offered that the importance of different cultures is at the very core of the human experience by implying how we are supposed to perceive, feel, and act in that culture.²³ The resultant societal order is based entirely on the interactions of the individual in the context of a greater culture and whether or not that person conforms to the expectations of behavior to be “in” the culture. Further, there are a number of different categories of culture that an individual may participate in: *macroculture* as a national or ethnic structure; *organizational culture* as categorical designation of belonging (private or public employee, etc.); *subculture* as perhaps a specific occupation within an organization; and *microcultures* relevant to microsystems within a subculture, such as peer-groups or coworkers.²⁴ As an example of this categorization, a Roman Catholic priest may have a strong identity with his parish as a microculture; another identity shared in the subculture of priests within his denomination; one of service to the public in a non-profit manner as an organizational culture; and a macroculture of a citizen of either a church or a state with a common set of beliefs. Identities are not necessarily exclusive, either, and may exist simultaneously at different levels. Some links are conscious and obvious – others less so. Regarding the priest, for example, how much of his identity is tied up with being *male*, or *celibate*, or in opposition to other cultures with different values? Cultural categorization is not a means to an end, but does help clarify how different categories of culture affect the individual experience. To understand the culture of an organization at different categorical planes is to understand ourselves better and recognize the forces acting around and within us that define who we are.²⁵

²³ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, Fourth Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 3.

²⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2.

²⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 9.

A major part of who 'we' are has to do with the emotive connections made with who we identify with. 'We' comes from identifying primary groups. The term *primary group* is a common sociological phrase used to describe a phenomenon in which the central emotive driver to the individual is the identity of the group itself.²⁶ In 1909, social scientist Charles Cooley wrote that primary groups were:

characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of the individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a "we"; it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which "we" is the natural expression.²⁷

The most basic form of the primordial primary group is the family, but may also include close friendship groups, fraternities and sororities, religious orders and cults, street gangs, sports teams, etc.²⁸ In fact, the primary bond in such groups copies that of the family. There are clear membership requirements, usually a demarcation of *belonging* to one primary group at another's exclusion, and subscribing to a loftier group ideology.²⁹ As stated by Cooley, primary groups wield great influence in the individual lives of their members because of the emotional connection the group identity attempts to draw to the vision of *self* in the individual. Consequently, primary groups "profoundly affect individuals' inner emotional lives and, consequently, their attitudes and actions."³⁰ Primary groups, so defined, are potently capable of influencing individual behavior, transcending the macro to the micro by their very existence.

Cultures have evolved over time, and are defined by the state of affairs around their formative experience. If something works, the practice becomes a sort of de facto solution to a wider range of problems. Successful practices are, naturally, often codified and normalized as best practices to be emulated in other areas of operation. A team that wins on the football field is likely to study their success in an effort to capture the essence of the victory and repeat the process in subsequent challenges. In a perfect world, the

²⁶ Madeline Morris, "By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture," 691.

²⁷ Charles H. Cooley, in "By Force of Arms," Morris

²⁸ Morris, "By Force of Arms," 692.

²⁹ Morris, "By Force of Arms"

³⁰ Morris, "By Force of Arms"

positive lessons are separated from the negative like wheat from the chaff, retaining only the wholesome kernel. Realistically, though, it is possible that there are unintended side-effects of preserving what *has worked* for what *will continue to work* in the future.³¹

Eventually, there may come a time that a leader may recognize that a cultural change must be made in order to continue success or survival. The reason for the realization of change comes in many ways, but the leader must know how to effectively do a few things. First, the leader must recognize the need to change. Second, he or she must be able to assess the culture as-is, define the end state, and develop a system of monitoring change along the way. Third, the leader must separate the desire to change *behavior* versus changing the *belief*. The goal with organizational change is long-term and self-sustaining change, in which a new culture manifests itself in behavior that matches the desired standard.

Defining the Three Levels of Culture

Culture is not simply the summation of norms, values, behavior patterns, rituals, and traditions. Culture is an abstraction that goes beyond simple observation of behavior, and also defines *why* the observable is and *how* it is shared and propagated.³² Observable evidence of an underlying culture, like espoused beliefs or traditions, is important to an organization, but such evidence is not *the culture* itself so much as the manifestation of culture. Culture must also be thought of as stabilizing, in an unconscious and less tangible way, across an entire group. According to Schein, culture is therefore defined:

as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.³³

Schein's model of analyzing institutional culture is presented at three different levels.³⁴ The first, *artifacts*, describes the manifestation of underlying beliefs of the culture in observable behaviors and processes. While easy to decipher, Schein warns, the

³¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 11.

³² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

³³ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 18.

³⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 23.

norms can be difficult to decipher or assign causality.³⁵ One cannot infer deep institutional beliefs regarding the observations of behavior alone because the behavior is only reflective of belief and not directly attributable to the “meaning” of the artifact.³⁶ Schein, for instance, uses the example of pyramids (an observable behavior) built by ancient Egyptians and Mayans (unconnected cultures) who demonstrated similar behavior, but for very different reasons.³⁷ The meaning of the pyramids was different between the two cultures, and so the observer must be careful not to correlate the two very different cultures with similar behavior.

Second, Schein distinguishes the role of the individual in the process of defining culture. “All group learning ultimately reflects someone’s original beliefs and values, his or her sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is.”³⁸ This aspect of culture speaks to the role of leadership in defining what is a declared (though not necessarily shared) goal of individuals in an organization. Leaders are in a position to socialize their views to the group. The group then take action on the individual’s belief and observe the outcome. Where the outcome is positive, the group is then able to develop a shared basis for a new observable norm in an institution – which is the process of change.³⁹ An individual belief which is *socially validated* may then become an espoused belief which the community values and internalizes. After an individual’s beliefs are normalized within a culture by the group, the belief may then influence the propensity of the group who have experienced the outcome to dismiss ideas to the contrary. Individuals have an important role in defining acceptable rules of behavior within an organization, but only as far as the group provides validity to the individual’s beliefs. In short, what was an individual’s *hypothesis* may then become a *reality* shared by the members of a group.⁴⁰

The role of the individual in organizations can be different depending on the power of influence the person has over the organization, whether they are a leader at the top or a follower at the bottom. “Deindividuation” is a phenomenon in which an

³⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 24–25.

³⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 25.

³⁷ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 23.

³⁸ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 25.

³⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

⁴⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 27.

individual subverts his or her identity to the group's.⁴¹ In certain situations, this “eclipsing” of individual characteristics to the group has been shown to reduce individuals’ “internal constraints on behavior.”⁴² This is not to suggest that an individual is prone to mob violence, per se, as deindividuation may also provide a positive outcome, as Duke Law University Professor Madeline Morris has published on the study of group behavior. “Strong feelings of unity ... ecstatic experiences, and religious and other conversion experiences are associated with deindividuation.”⁴³ Group behavior theory, as it relates to cultural levels, also accounts for the darker side of deindividuation, and also covers the gambit of mob-like crimes like lynching or rioting.⁴⁴ In a culture that values the group identity over that of the individual, which also tend to have strong and distinctive cultures, the individuals’ and groups’ behavior is not random. Instead, quite the opposite is true: The emotional impulses and situational cues that tend to guide behavior are themselves manifestations of individual desires and group cultures. Morris writes

The situational cues present in the deindividuated situation develop into the context-specific standards of behavior or “emergent norms” of the situation. In conditions of deindividuation, emotional impulses together with situation-specific group norms govern. In turn, those emotions as well as those emergent norms reflect the proclivities of group members.⁴⁵

Further, Professor Morris highlights that the role of the deindividuated person in a group as operating on a scale of “acute” to “chronic” forms of submission to group identity.⁴⁶ Rioting or group violence is an example of acute deindividuation, while more long term or chronic forms may manifest themselves in subtle ways, such as that of religious cults.⁴⁷ The distinctions along the scale of deindividuation imposed on the individual for the group are a matter of normal samples of behavior. Radical and acute action that conforms to the group’s culture, such as that of terrorist cells or criminal networks, may

⁴¹ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 725.

⁴² Morris, “By Force of Arms”

⁴³ Morris, “By Force of Arms”

⁴⁴ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 726.

⁴⁵ Morris, “By Force of Arms”

⁴⁶ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 727.

⁴⁷ Morris, “By Force of Arms,”

also be *normative*.⁴⁸ The same behavior may also be exceptional in the same group, depending on the identity and behaviors the group adopts as normal. Likewise, chronically deindividuated persons may also participate in subtle behavior, positively and negatively, but also on occasion take extraordinarily radical actions. An example of this type of extreme behavior is demonstrated by mass suicides, like that of Jim Jones' followers at Jonestown in 1978. The power of culture, especially deindividuated culture, cannot be underestimated when one considers that the Jonestown massacre was the largest single human-caused loss of American civilian-life until the attacks of 9/11.⁴⁹ Culture matters greatly, as the root *cult* suggests, and the difference is one of degree. To summarize, individuals must shed their personal identities to varying degrees depending on the type of group they join. Some institutions, big or small, prescribe certain codes of behavior that one must assimilate to in order to be 'in,' and not be an 'other.' The behavior required to fit in manifests itself acutely or chronically, and ranges the scale of contest between absolutes, where individuality is not valued at all, to where the role of the individual is the most important aspect of group belonging.

Schein's third level of culture is "*basic underlying assumptions*."⁵⁰ Basic assumptions tend to be non-confrontable and non-debatable, and as such are difficult to change within a culture. Challenges to cultural norms, those observable and unconscious, may be viewed with open skepticism or internal anxiety.⁵¹ A common example of the manifestation of such anxiety is an individual or organization acting defensively, as if the cognitive inconsistency presented by challenging ideas threatened the assumptions the group had previously validated. Often there is a great deal of effort that is expended toward validating and upholding cultural beliefs, and to attempt to revise previous efforts as having been wasted will naturally meet with anxiety to this realization. As Schein suggests, "the human mind needs cognitive stability," and is generally hostile to attempts to disrupt the stability provided by previously adopted assumptions.⁵² Again consider the example of the pyramids built by the Egyptians or Mayans. After the culture accepted that the efforts to build the monuments were worth the cost, any person, *even a strongly*

⁴⁸ Morris, "By Force of Arms"

⁴⁹ History Channel, "Jonestown - Facts & Summary," <http://www.history.com/topics/jonestown>

⁵⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 27–28.

⁵¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 28.

⁵² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 29.

influential leader who wanted to, would have to deal with a great deal of consternation were he or she to propose tearing them down for the good of the culture. It would simply be easier to continue to believe the previous decisions that led to the construction were more valid than another belief that they should be torn down. There is cultural and institutional inertia that must be overcome to successfully challenge previously held assumptions. The assumptions which are validated by the group as worthy of internalizing, in artifacts and the unconscious, begin to inform individual beliefs; these individuals then propagate their own influenced beliefs on their level of interaction with the culture.

The three levels of culture are clearly intertwined in the objective and subjective. Organizational leaders are the central source of beliefs which govern how a culture will respond to internal and external problems. Their beliefs, in turn, are influenced by their previously held assumptions of acceptable behavior as a product of their individual experiences within another cultural context. When these leaders are introduced into a new environment and a different culture, they will have to confront the new culture's previously held assumptions and obtain social validation of their views if they are to overcome cultural inertia in response to internal or external factors.

The construct offered thus far offers a few specific problems that must be clarified before continuing. First and foremost, defining cultural characteristics is a subjective endeavor. Artifacts, or observed behaviors, may take their form clearly, even if the form hides meaning. As the Egyptians had pyramids, the Navy has nuclear submarines, the Air Force has spy planes, and the Army has artillery batteries – but what does that mean? To people who are part of the respective organization at the lowest level, they may (rightly) perceive these artifacts as proof that the organization values the objects intrinsically. To senior leaders of each regime, the artifacts mentioned may be but a small part of a larger meaning, as is also correct to assume.⁵³ Still yet, the meaning of artifacts to a mid-level commander in each service may represent singular areas of importance, since their own personal identity is congruent dependent on each object. One artifact, therefore, can take on multiple meanings at different levels of culture.

⁵³ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 53.

As both observers and participants in the experiment of cultural cause/effect interaction, we tend to make observations of particular situations heavily influenced by our own cognitive processes, and as such, before overcoming institutional biases we must first overcome our own.⁵⁴ A leader who sets out to precipitate a change in organizational culture must therefore consider the three levels of culture that exist at different categorical designations. Different *categories* of culture (macro, micro, etc) each may have exclusive or shared *levels* of culture (artifacts, individual contributions, underlying assumptions). Further, there may be different *meanings* of said artifacts at each category of an organization as reflective of different cultural realities of the corresponding system. Therefore, gaps in understanding the meaning of behavior between different levels of culture should be anticipated and accounted for as a leader prepares to change an organizations culture.

Managing Cultural Change

Schein's model of defining culture has thus far allowed for some level of anthropological examination to articulate how a certain culture is defined. The task of changing a culture naturally begins with defining what the existing state and end-state goals of the culture should conform to, but the topic of *how* to change a culture is still important to elaborate upon. How can leaders use knowledge of artifacts and associated meanings at different cultural categories, individual contributions, and institutional underlying assumptions, to foster change? Certainly, a leader wants to manage change to 'steer the ship' in the intended direction. Culture change must be planned and mitigated against the broadest set of variables as can be reliably accounted for, and to do so requires a leader to be pragmatic in his approach toward this end. Additionally, a leader must be careful to avoid correlating *organizational change* with *cultural change*, since to change the former may not necessarily involve corresponding evidence of change in the latter.

The process of changing can be thought of as manifesting itself in three different stages. The first stage is "unfreezing," or creating the motivation to change. The second stage is introducing and normalizing new concepts and adapting current knowledge to

⁵⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 53–54.

new meanings or standards. The last stage is one in which the new concepts are internalized in such a way so the behavior is normalized. Any change will introduce anxiety in the members who must undergo the change, which will manifest itself in two principle levels of fear: *survival* anxiety and *learning* anxiety. Survival anxiety is the fear that “something bad will happen” to an individual, group, or organization if change is not realized.⁵⁵ Once survival anxiety is realized, learning anxiety is the apprehension to the process of changing. Survival anxiety is the realization that change must be made. Learning anxiety is the fear that change will be too costly.

Unfreezing, as Schein labels it, is the process of disconfirming previous beliefs or assumptions.⁵⁶ “If any part of the core cognitive structure is to change in more than minor incremental ways, the system must first experience enough disequilibrium to force a coping process that goes beyond just reinforcing the assumptions that are already in place.”⁵⁷ To unfreeze a system in order to foster the motivation to change, an institution must undergo three different processes. The first is to expose enough disconfirming evidence to introduce disequilibrium and serious discomfort which challenges previously held beliefs. The second process is to tie the disconfirming data directly to the achievement of important goals and ideals, causing more anxiety. The last step is for the new data to allow for assimilation of new beliefs into the existing power structure, in that while the process of change introduces anxiety, it does not threaten the loss of identity or integrity of the organization writ large.⁵⁸

The first process of unfreezing culture involves “unlearning” something while learning something new at the same time. The tension between the two states of knowledge is the amount of disequilibrium introduced in the system, which manifests itself in the amount of anxiety or resistance to change that overtly or subtly becomes evident. Psychotherapists have suggested that in some cases, even dysfunctional or irrational behavior toward specific goals may still meet resistance to change due to the amount of “secondary gain” such behavior provides.⁵⁹ If one works at a frozen banana stand, but eats the bananas because he is hungry, the behavior is an irrational one because

⁵⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 301.

⁵⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 300.

⁵⁷ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

⁵⁸ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 301.

⁵⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

it is not profitable to do so, but the secondary gain of eliminating hunger obviously incentivizes the employee to continue the behavior. A culture that is unfrozen by disconfirming data must then first be ready to deal with some level of learning anxiety, and ready to manage the natural phenomenon in a productive way toward the desired end state.

There are a number of valid reasons why individuals and microcultures will experience learning anxiety when exposed to disconfirming data. Much if not all of the anxiety is the result of fear, which any leader must be ready to confront and acknowledge. The first that Schein offers is the “fear of loss of power or position,” or that newly assimilated learning will result in a lower level of power than before.⁶⁰ Individuals having to change behavior or belief may also fear that the learning process may make them temporarily incompetent, and that they may also face punishment for such incompetence. Many members of cultures, or even entire microcultures within a larger construct may also fear that new information and subsequent cultural change will rob them of their personal identity. Dedicated employees, after all, may base much of their identity on their life’s work, and to threaten the classical understanding of the latter may indirectly threaten the former. Lastly, cultures are largely defined by an “in/out” set of beliefs in which one either belongs or doesn’t. New information may make those who are ‘in’ fear becoming a deviant in his own group. This problem is especially important when discussing the need to change groups or entire cultures, because individual acceptance is directly tied to the perception of the group’s acceptance: for one to change, it may require all to change, for a failure for all to adapt to disconfirming information may then foster the individuals that changed to be ostracized.

Since disconfirming information causes real and rational anxiety to former cultural paradigms, there is some level of resistance to change that is to be expected. Schein states that “as long as learning anxiety remains high, an individual will be motivated to resist the validity of the disconfirming data or will invent various excuses why he or she cannot really engage in a transformative learning process right now.”⁶¹ These responses come in three distinct stages: Denial, Scapegoating, and Maneuvering.

⁶⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 303.

⁶¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 304.

Denial is exactly what it sounds like – denying there is legitimacy in the disconfirming data. Scapegoating, or buck passing and dodging, is convincing ourselves that the data is more applicable to a different person, microculture, or institution, and that *they* should change first if anyone should. Maneuvering is the desire to seek special compensation or recognition for the effort of assimilating to new information, and wanting to be further convinced that the disconfirming information compels change for long term benefit.⁶²

Any leader who takes his or her organization on the journey of change should therefore expect there to be resistance to change. In fact, where a leader has spent time evaluating what specific areas of culture are contributing to undesirable behavior, they can predict how certain information will be received and to what degree it will be resisted. If a leader expects strong opposition to an underlying principle or belief, and yet receives less, it could be the change is *not* being implemented. There are no shortcuts, and any organization will naturally do everything it can to resist the call to change. Presenting disconfirming information, and the ability to monitor its reception, becomes a useful tool to a leader: resistance to the information, even fierce resistance, is proof that the organization is having to question its underlying beliefs and is attempting to assimilate new information. The question is: how does a leader know when this task is complete?

The Five Principles of Organizational Change

Significant change requires significant pain. Schein offers five total principles in managing organizational change, and the first two deal with the anxiety to change. First, survival anxiety or guilt must be greater than learning anxiety. Second, learning anxiety must be reduced rather than increasing survival anxiety.⁶³ Charged with the task of transforming a culture in a specific direction and considering the natural human response to change, a leader must set to minimizing learning anxiety, never to exceed the amount of survival anxiety. If the carrot-stick model of behavior was being replaced with an apple-stick model, one must be ready to compel an institutional desire for apples without the aid of a bigger stick. Schein stated that some level of “psychological safety” must be

⁶² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 304–305.

⁶³ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 305.

institutionalized in order to reduce learning anxiety, and in doing so, a leader must be ready to implement eight activities.⁶⁴

- 1) A compelling positive vision: The vision must *compel* in clear behavioral terms what the new standard of operation will be, and that such behavior will contribute to the long-term wellbeing of the organization.
- 2) Formal training: If the new paradigm involves new knowledge or skills, formal and informal training must be provided.
- 3) Involvement of the learner: “Learners” must be able to manage their own informal learning process. The goals, as articulated by the leader of the organization, are non-negotiable, but the method of learning can be highly individualized.
- 4) Informal training or relevant team groups: Cultural behaviors depend on the action of groups if they are indeed group behaviors. Learners must not be ostracized for participating in the new learning.
- 5) “Practice fields,” coaches, and feedback: There must be time and space in order to practice implemented change without fear of reprisal. Feedback is important to groups and individuals alike.
- 6) Positive role models: The new way of operating may require demonstration of behavior before it can be normalized within an organization. Individuals in a learning group must be able to observe behavior and attitudes in others with whom they can identify.
- 7) Support groups which openly discuss learning problems: Learning produces anxiety. Openly discussing such problems promotes joint problem solving and the assimilation of information while reducing perceived deviance.
- 8) Consistent systems and structures with the new way of thinking: A system that promotes group responsibility must offer group oriented rewards and individual-based punishments for non-conformance.⁶⁵

Transformational change must be approached pragmatically, in which the definition of the problem and the new expectations of behavior must be clearly defined. Once this is done, the leader has an expectation of the level of anxiety that must be overcome, and the

⁶⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 311–313.

⁶⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 306–307.

amount of effort that will be required to overcome such anxiety. In order to realize long-term gains from change, the target must be the less tangible underlying assumptions of the culture, not just the behavioral artifacts.

The third principle of culture change deals with defining the specific problem which is precipitating the change.⁶⁶ Schein states that at the beginning, when an organization encounters disconfirming information, “it’s not clear...whether culture change will be involved.”⁶⁷ Most change processes emphasize the need for behavior change, but Schein states that the behavior change alone will not produce lasting results without some level of cognitive restructuring.⁶⁸ Alexander Wendt, writing of the power of ideas in social theory, echoed this sentiment: “it is often harder to change someone’s mind than their behavior.”⁶⁹ Behavior may be successfully coerced in the beginning of the cultural change, but unless the belief is internalized by behavior change, old behaviors will last after the coercive force is removed.

Cognitive restructuring is the process that begins after an organization has been unfrozen. The change process takes place by trial and error based on scanning the environment broadly, or imitation of role models based on psychological identification with the role model.⁷⁰ Imitation works best in cases where the definition of the new standard of behavior is clear and the associated concepts with the new standards are clear. Scanning works best in situations where the end result may be equally clear as with imitation, but the means to achieving the standards aren’t necessarily defined.⁷¹ In either case, the guiding principle is that the goal of the change must be defined concretely in terms of the specific problem to be addressed, and not as “culture change.”⁷² In some cases, existing culture may be a helpful tool in affecting transformative change, and in others, perhaps not.

The fourth principle of a conceptual model for managed culture change is that old cultural elements can be destroyed by removing the people who “carry” those elements,

⁶⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 311.

⁶⁷ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

⁶⁸ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 308.

⁶⁹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1999), 134.

⁷⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 308.

⁷¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 311.

⁷² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

but new cultural elements can only be learned if the new behavior leads to success and satisfaction.⁷³ Once a group has been constructed and experienced success, the resultant culture cannot be changed directly unless the group itself is dismantled.⁷⁴ An athletic team who is assembled at the beginning of a season will, over the course of the season, develop their own culture. If they experience success, their culture tends to become retrenched, with each “in” member identifying and linking aspects of the culture with the team’s success. If a coach were to then challenge the team with transformative change, he or she would meet great resistance to the change, since the tie between culture and success would be strong. A leader could impose (compel) change by behavior modification, but no change would produce *culture* change unless the modified action produced better results. In the athletic analogy, this might mean that the team would have to experience even more crushing wins to internalize further change.

The fifth and last principle of culture change is that it is always a transformative change that requires a period of unlearning that is psychologically painful.⁷⁵ New learning presents a different and easier set of challenges than unlearning. New learning offers efficiency and does not challenge old regimes of thinking. Having to unlearn previously held beliefs which will be at odds to some degree with new disconfirming information is potentially a significantly harder problem to solve. Therefore, any leader who sets out to institute a program of lasting change in an organization must consider the amount and significance of change that will cause anxiety and resistance, and account for it in the model of change.

In summary, the principles of culture change require the leader to first assess the culture before attempting change. Organizations have a culture of some kind; some with great inertia to overcome, and others that are more fluid. However, as an institution, organizations *begin* assessing their culture by focusing on specific behavior. However, it is crucial that leaders understand there is rarely a “culture of behavior.” Human institutions are much more complex, of course. Organizations may have an undesirable behavior or artifact, but culture is a much larger abstraction than just describing observable behavior. Consequently, the study of culture begins with the study of

⁷³ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 312.

⁷⁴ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

⁷⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 313.

behavior. Behavior is the reflection of what a culture values implicitly or explicitly. By first defining the new behavior required and anticipating a certain degree of anxiety that will accompany the new learning, then enforcing and incentivizing it, leaders are able to start the organization on the path of a culture change. The goal, in the end, is for internalized *beliefs* to then guide individuals in the organization to behave in the desired manner as the leader intended.

Assessing Culture Change

The first step of transformative culture change is defining the type of change required to operate in a new way. Next, a leader who will manage the change must be able to assess the culture of an organization and decide whether or not the current culture will aid or hinder the change process. Schein offers an in-depth description of ways to rapidly assess culture in order to inform the leader.

First, according to Schein, most of the culture present at the beginning of a period of change will aid the change process.⁷⁶ As stated in the third principle of organizational change, there is no need to “slash and burn” every element of old cultural regimes in order to institute new ones. However, there are some elements of old culture that may have to be excised in order to allow for new practices. Some aspects of the culture will require long term change in order to be lasting, as in the case of long held underlying assumptions of acceptable behavior. Others may need more immediate attention and call for more drastic cultural compellence, especially where potential harm may be great. For instance, a culture that tolerates substance abuse and whose primary purpose is to wash vehicles obviously poses less risk to public safety than one who is charged with securing nuclear weapons, and so on. The consideration of change must consist of two parts: First, how big of a change is being asked of the current culture in an effort to anticipate the level of learning anxiety? Second, even seemingly minor culture changes can be amplified if the change required must be immediate. These considerations follow a simple business formula: “fast, good, cheap ... pick two.” If the change is big, and it must be done immediately, the solution will not be cheap – and so on. In organizations with vast resources (time, money, people) it’s possible to make the change no matter the

⁷⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 325.

cost; however, almost always there must be a carefully balanced tradeoff between priorities. The decision of how much to change the culture is made, but there must be a way to measure the change as well to score against priorities.

Schein states that the best way to assess culture is in individual and group interview processes, in which the various elements of the culture (artifacts, individual assumptions, and group underlying assumptions) are qualified.⁷⁷ Specifically, he favors group interaction toward the goal of assessing culture in terms of both validity and efficiency.⁷⁸ Next, any assessment must be tied to some organizational problem. Culture is not necessarily the source of the problem being addressed, at least in the beginning of the process in which specific behaviors are being targeted.⁷⁹ In assessing the underlying assumptions of a culture, a change manager must always seek to answer the question of whether or not the assumptions aid or hinder transformative change in the declared direction. First recognizing the assumptions and then attempting to leverage cultural strengths against the ‘old way’ of behavior minimizes change and subsequent learning and survival anxiety.⁸⁰ According to Schein, “it is much easier to draw on the strengths of the culture than to overcome the constraints by changing the culture.”⁸¹ Further, a change manager must consider sub- and micro-cultures within an organization and be prepared to assess them differently corresponding to their relevance to the specified change. For example, in the athletic team example from the previous section, if one sought to change the culture of anyone associated with the team brand, it would be appropriate to formulate change across all areas of the team: medical support; players; coaches; administrators; etc. If the impetus for change came from the behavior of players on the field, one would not start a cultural change agenda by examining the role of the team’s medical support to change player’s behavior. Lastly, and most importantly, any effort to assess the culture of an organization must identify underlying assumptions. To quote Schein, “If the client system does not get to assumptions, it cannot explain the

⁷⁷ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 315–327.

⁷⁸ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 326.

⁷⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 327.

⁸⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

⁸¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

discrepancies that almost always surface between the espoused values and the observed behavioral artifacts.”⁸²

Theoretical Summary

Our perception of culture matters, and our culture helps shape our perception of everything around us. Culture is not a list of behaviors or codes that a group follows, but rather the set of self-propagating beliefs that manifest themselves in observable behaviors. In short, *culture* is the cause, and *behavior* is the effect. A leader who seeks to change behavior in some fashion must first be capable of deconstructing the *meaning* of the artifact that has led them to believe change is necessary. What does the undesirable behavior (artifact) *mean*? The answer to this question will likely vary depending on the purview of different categories of culture, and must therefore be pursued to the underlying assumption that manifests itself in the behavior precipitating the change. Further, a leader must execute a carefully managed plan to change behavior, which may or may not involve fundamentally changing the organization’s culture. As a matter of practicality, leaders must leverage the strength of a culture against its weaknesses and preserve the good while abandoning the bad to strengthen and enrich an organization. There will be resistance to change, but the process of learning is itself an exercise in overcoming fears, and presents an opportunity to further strengthen an organization by proving that it can be flexible. Once disconfirming information unfreezes an organization and it starts to learn new concepts and new meanings for old concepts, leaders have to lead, and allow subordinates the safety to learn without reprisal and participate in shaping their own changing assumptions. Incorporation and internalization follows successful learning; building new cultural aspects that reflect themselves in positive behavioral artifacts that signify the end of the sought after change. Some changes are long term goals, and some require more immediacy, but leaders must constantly assess the cultural climate of the organization and be prepared to refreeze various aspects of cultural development to retain the good and discard the bad.

⁸² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

CHAPTER THREE: SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE US MILITARY

The aim of any strategy – land, sea, air, diplomatic, economic, social, political, a game of poker, or the way of a man with a maid – is to exercise some kind or degree of control over the target of the strategy, be it friend, neutral, or opponent.

– J.C. Wylie
Military Strategy, 1967 (underlined for emphasis)

The DoD goal is a culture free of sexual assault, through an environment of prevention, education and training, response capability, victim support, reporting procedures, and appropriate accountability that enhances the safety and well being of all persons covered by this Directive and Reference.

– DoD Sexual Assault Prevention Directive, 2012

As world renowned clinical psychologist and applied forensic expert Dr. David Lisak says, “There is no domain of crime and violence as fraught with misunderstanding and misconception as that of sexual violence.”⁸³ Indeed, any discussion of sexual assault in the military requires a great deal of effort exerted into exploring the context and vernacular of the phenomenon before unpacking any of the other great problems it presents. As cited above, as recently as 2012 the DoD mistakenly grouped behavior and culture together in stating it’s goal was a “culture free of sexual assault,” as if the military culture was one that *valued* or *believed in* sexual violation. How has the military sought to define the specific behavior of sexual assault, and what has been the effort to separate that artifact from underlying culture? This chapter first defines the crime of sexual assault, and discusses the relevant legal context of the crime itself in the military. Next, as the military is an all-volunteer force, a demographic study of the people who join the military and serve adds to the setting of the problem. Last, this section will explore the history of sexual crime in the DoD, and how the military has moved to stop it from happening.

⁸³ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence,” 1.

Definition

Sexual assault can have very different definitions and implications depending on the way the phrase is used. Sexual assault must be viewed differently from sexual harassment, even though the former is often found in places where the latter is allowed to happen. Sexual assault is about unwanted and often premeditated sexual interaction. The DoD Directive 6495.01 *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program* defines sexual assault as

Intentional sexual contact characterized by use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. The term includes a broad category of sexual offenses consisting of the following specific UCMJ offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex), or attempts to commit these acts.⁸⁴

The definition is carefully worded, commensurate with the difficulty of characterizing the attacks ranging from a contest of perceptions of consent, to violent rape. The definition offers a construct in which to discuss the problem in this broad context, which is the first task of exploring the DoD's response to sexual assault.

Intentional – Sexual assault is not accidental. It is an act in which one or more people *decide* to carry out an attack on one or more victims.

Sexual– The word itself predisposes the reader into imagining the act of sex. However, as will be explored more in the following chapter, one must deconstruct the physically and emotionally pleasurable act of sex from the phenomenon of sexual assault. Sexual assault is not about sex, but is similar to any other violent physical assault that is characterized by some sexual aspect for either the offender or victim. Sexual assault is about the use of violence, and the exercise of power and dominance.⁸⁵

Physical – the domain of sexual assault is the physical. Emotional sexual distress is best characterized as sexual *harassment*, which is itself an area related to the physical act.

⁸⁴ Department of Defense, "Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program," 18.

⁸⁵ David Lisak, Ph.D., interview; David Lisak, Ph.D., "Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence," 8.

Characterized – Justice Potter Stewart famously said in 1964 he could not describe pornography using words, but he knew it when he saw it. Sexual assault is similar in this regard, and even the definition acknowledges the subjectivity of the crime.

Use of force, threats, intimidation, abuse of authority – A victim may be coerced in many ways more than physical violence. An assault that was not physically forced may still have been committed without the willful consent of the victim. Simply stated, the lack of physical brutality in an assault does not indicate willful consent.

Victim – Sexual assault obviously has one or more victims.

Consent – The core of the crime is embodied in the concept of consent. A victim is so called because that person does not or cannot concede to the act. Consent is a subjective personal emotion, and as such, evades effective codified definition. Instead, it is helpful to define the *lack* of the emotion in an effort to mitigate subjectivity. As Article 120 of the UCMJ states, “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.”⁸⁶

Legal Context

Sexual assault is a crime reviled only second to homicide, if sentencing standards are any indicator. In fact, in some cases, it ranks even higher.⁸⁷ In Alaska, for instance, serious sex offenses carried mandatory minimum sentences higher than those that result in death, because “death can often be caused by reckless neglect,” where sex offenses were never “reckless – they are at the very least knowing, and often intentional ... The

⁸⁶ The Uniform Code of Military Justice, “Article 120 - Sexual Assault,” 69.

⁸⁷ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence,” 1.

severity of the sentences in comparison to other crimes was intentional.”⁸⁸ Article 120 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) treats sexual assault with similar severity in theory, though like the UCMJ’s civil court counterpart, overturned or diverted convictions are an area of concern.

Regarding policy, there is no doubt that discrimination and unwanted sexual contact, whether violent or not, is a crime in any service in the DoD. The legal construct which codifies the DoD’s penal response to the crime is defined by the UCMJ, even though the different services may act individually to combat the problem within their own ranks. Each service must “align Service prevention strategy with the Spectrum of Prevention” consistent with the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy, which consists of six pillars:

- (1) Influencing Policy
- (2) Changing Organizational Practices
- (3) Fostering Coalitions and Networks
- (4) Educating Providers
- (5) Promoting Community Education
- (6) Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills⁸⁹

Additionally, the construct of “restricted” versus “unrestricted” reporting of sexual assault crimes has created two legal channels through which the victim can choose to report. As is stated in the SAPR Office Directive document,

The DoD is committed to ensuring victims of sexual assault are protected; treated with dignity and respect; and provided support, advocacy, and care. The DoD supports effective command awareness and prevention programs. The DoD also strongly supports applicable law enforcement and criminal justice procedures that enable persons to be held accountable for sexual assault offenses and criminal dispositions, as appropriate. To achieve these dual objectives, DoD preference is for complete Unrestricted Reporting of sexual assaults to allow for the provision of victims’ services and to pursue accountability. However, Unrestricted Reporting may represent a barrier for victims to access services, when the victim desires no command or law enforcement involvement. Consequently, the DoD recognizes a

⁸⁸ Alaska State Legislature, 24th Legislature, 2nd Session, “Senate Bill 218.” http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_single_journal.asp?session=24&date=2%200060216&beg_page=2201&end_page=2227&chamber=S&jrn=2207

⁸⁹ DoD, “Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program,” 10.

fundamental need to provide a confidential disclosure vehicle via the Restricted Reporting option.⁹⁰

The DoD's approach to solving the reporting problem is key to understanding the sexual violence problem. Until rape and other lesser sexual offenses are reported in greater numbers than they are currently, social scientists' three fundamental realities will remain unchecked: "1) most interpersonal violence is perpetrated by individuals who in some way are known to the victim; 2) most of the is violence is never reported to authorities; and subsequently, 3) most perpetrators of this violence are never prosecuted."⁹¹ The gravity of the logic should not escape the argument: that there is a type of person who commits the crime but usually doesn't face a courtroom to answer for it. Most victims know their attackers and don't report it, and the offenders often get away with the crime. Once identified, the military has an effective way of prosecuting sexual offenders, though the system has faults; the majority of which center on identifying who the perpetrators are.

Demographic Study of Military Members

Many studies address the ever-changing demographic of the men and women who serve in the US armed services. This section does not attempt to add to that body of knowledge, but to highlight certain factual cases that can be used to further examine the nature of the demographic reality alongside the artifact of sexual assault.

The US military is *not* a representative cross-section of US society at large. Among the various differences of socioeconomic class distinctions in which certain races and religions are over and under-represented in service, the biggest misrepresentation of the military demographic juxtaposed to society is gender. Men are 49.2% of the population of the United States, but comprise 85.5% of those serving on active duty in the military.⁹² Women, who actually have a slight majority in the larger US demographic

⁹⁰ DoD, "SAPR Program," 5.

⁹¹ Lisak, "Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence," 5–6.

⁹² Department of Defense, "2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community," iii; United States Census Bureau, "Age and Sex Composition: 2010," 2.

(50.8%), make up only 14.5% of the DoD Active Duty force.⁹³ Women serving as officers in the military have increased since 2000 from 14.4% to 15.9% in 2011, but the number of women who are enlisted has fallen .5% in the same period.⁹⁴

Second to the overrepresentation of men in the military, the DoD is overrepresented by young people. It is true that the population of the US “grew at a faster rate in the older ages than in the younger ages” from 2000 to 2010, but the number of young people entering military service relative to the general population grew disproportionately in the same time period.⁹⁵ The military got *younger* from 2000-2010 as the US population got *older*, thereby exacerbating the demographic difference of the military service member from its civilian counterpart. As such, the US population aged 18-24 years as of 2010 was 9.9%, up 0.4% from 2000.⁹⁶ The average age of a military service member in 2011 was 28.6 (34.7 for officers, and 27.4 for enlisted).⁹⁷ Of this aggregate, the enlisted corps of service members less than 25 years old was almost half – 49.3% of the entire force.⁹⁸ For sake of comparison, the number of officers the same age comprised only 13.3% of the officer corps.⁹⁹ However, even 26-30 year olds made up only an additional 22.5% of military active duty officers.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the largest number of active duty officers are 41 or older, totaling 25.1% of the officer force.¹⁰¹

Are any of the key differences between the military service members and the civilian public that surprising? It is not shocking that the military is mostly made up of *young men* to fight wars and exercise political will for national defense, but why is this so? The previous chapter studied the role of culture on observable behavior, and the artifact of young men self-selecting for military service is itself a reflection of American cultural norms in which men are predominantly the warriors of the nation. In this regard,

⁹³ Department of Defense, “2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community,” iii; United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts.”

⁹⁴ Department of Defense, “2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community,” iii.

⁹⁵ United States Census Bureau, “Age and Sex Composition: 2010,” 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Department of Defense, “2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community,” iii.

⁹⁸ Ibid., iv.

⁹⁹ Department of Defense, “2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community,” iv. This statistic is not surprising, given the educational requirements of obtaining a commission, but used to demonstrate the age gap between the youngest elements of the officer corps against the enlisted corps.

¹⁰⁰ DoD Demographics Profile, iii.

¹⁰¹ DoD Demographics Profile, iv. 31-35 year olds are 20.1 of the officer corps, and 36-40 year olds are 19%

the military *is* a reflection of societal underlying beliefs (the basis of culture), even if the demographic reflection is distorted. *Why* is this so, and what other notions of military service are conjured by the population that employs its men at arms? The analysis of these types of questions, especially as it relates to confronting sexual assault, follow in subsequent chapters.

Trends in Military Sexual Assault

From a societal perspective, violent sexual assault is a relative newcomer in the arena of legislative reform. It was not until the early 1970's that rape legislation in the United States was reformed to focus the legal issues on the "behavior of the perpetrator rather than the victim."¹⁰² With this change, many outdated and ineffective legal challenges began to favor protecting the victim of such reported assaults against what is called "secondary victimization," wherein their character and integrity were the target of counter accusations from defendants.¹⁰³ It was not until the early 1980s that any considerable amount of effort went into studying the source and effects of violent sexual assault. Rape was not a new phenomenon, by any means, but scientific rigor was finally being applied to the problem, replacing what was previously unorganized and anecdotal vignettes collected by rape crisis centers and the like.¹⁰⁴ Violent sexual assault, a crime in which men are typically the offenders and women are the victims, was not a public issue until the mid 1980s. Taken in the context of a woman's place in society in this period, this lack of focus is sadly all too predictable. In 1980, women earned just over half of what men did in the work place at \$0.61 to a man's dollar; *down*, in fact, from 1951.¹⁰⁵ The civil rights movement and women's liberation movement had achieved codified equality and protection under the law starting with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but there was (and is) a long way to go towards full realization of equality. The public's perception of the treatment of minorities and women was changing, and so began the public awakening to the problem of violent sexual assault.

¹⁰² Harrell et al., *A Compendium of Sexual Assault Research*, 4.

¹⁰³ Harrell et al., *A Compendium*, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Harrell et al., *A Compendium*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ National Committee on Pay Equity, "Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's, 1951–2011," <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0193820.html>

There were a number of popular beliefs about rape that were perpetuated in society at large and reflected in inadequate victim protection measures. “Rape myths” generally focused on the victims of sexual assault, for instance, that women secretly desired to be raped; or cried rape whenever it suited them; and that men are never the victims of rape.¹⁰⁶ As time went on and laws increasingly protected victims and encouraged reporting, new myths came about. “Date rape” as it came to be known, unintentionally led to the debasing of the crime of sexual assault to something like “rape lite,” in which “date rapists” were viewed as less serious offenders and therefore less culpable than stranger rapists.¹⁰⁷ The notion of shared culpability did less to educate people on the danger of acquaintance rape as it did to further reinforce classical rape myths by convincing women that they had indeed willingly participated in any unwanted sexual encounter because of “too much alcohol and too little communication.”¹⁰⁸ The legacy of confronting these long-held notions of rape mythology are multi-faceted and real, but also internal and subjective – and at any rate, not the subject of this paper. There are, however, significant sociological correlations between “rape supportive attitudes” such as self-propagating rape myths and the presence of organizational cultures with sexual assault problems that must be accounted for in any serious conversation on the topic.¹⁰⁹ The news is not all bad, though. As research better reveals the neurobiological facts around human behavior, we are growing more aware of the fact that how we think affects what we do.¹¹⁰ The challenge of changing the thinking and language that informs our actions is therefore an intellectual one, and requires us to think differently and acknowledge rape-supportive attitudes for what they are. The way the public views the crime of sexual assault has changed arguably for the better, but the history of such a debate, *even today*, carries the baggage of decades of misunderstanding the crime.

As the public grew more aware of violent sexual assault, so too did their focus on the issue of sexual assault in the military, though this progress came in incremental stages. By 1990, Congress was passing sexual assault reform laws aimed at preventing the crime. The “Student Rights-to-Know Act and the Crime Awareness and Campus

¹⁰⁶ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence,” 3.

¹⁰⁷ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence”

¹⁰⁸ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence,” 2.

¹⁰⁹ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014.

¹¹⁰ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014.

Security Act (P.L. 101-542, later renamed *The Clergy Act*)” required colleges to disclose crime statistics and formalize prevention and security procedures on campus.¹¹¹ By 1998, this law had been modified to include more robust victims-rights measures and codify reporting obligations. The US Navy “Tailhook” scandal in 1991 had, in sensational fashion, generated a great deal of interest in the US military writ large regarding sexual misconduct. Subsequent investigations in 2000 into the US Air Force Academy sexual assault scandal led Congress to demand that the DoD “develop comprehensive policy regarding the prevention and response to sexual assault” (P.L. 108-375) in 2004. In 2006, the National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 109-364), like previous revisions to The Clergy Act, required the DoD to submit annual reports to Congress on sexual assault at US military academies.¹¹²

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office was established as an oversight directorate of the DoD in 2005. What started as a joint task force to develop a DoD-wide SAPR policy was transformed into a permanent directorate with DoD Directive 6495.01. Their mission was to “work hand-in-hand with the Services and the civilian community to develop and implement innovative prevention and response programs.”¹¹³ The program, which continues today and is expanding as public pressure to confront the issue grows, codifies the requirement: “Command sexual assault awareness and prevention programs, as well as law enforcement and criminal justice procedures that enable persons to be held accountable for their actions, as appropriate, shall be established and supported by all commanders.”¹¹⁴

The military has made some major changes in the justice apparatus to confront alleged sexual offenders while protecting the rights of victims. A recent program that the US Air Force launched at its Judge Advocate General (JAG) School at Maxwell became a model of service in protecting the legal rights of the assaulted as legal proceedings go forward. Col Kenneth Theurer, the Commandant of the USAF JAG school at Maxwell AFB, AL, runs a program called the “Special Victims Counsel (SVC)” that trains military

¹¹¹ Harrell et al., *A Compendium of Sexual Assault Research*, 4.

¹¹² Harrell et al., *A Compendium*, 4–5.

¹¹³ Department of Defense, “Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program,” 5.

¹¹⁴ DoD, “SAPR Program,” 3.

attorneys to represent the sexual assault victim during any subsequent trials.¹¹⁵ The program marks an important step in the DoD's role in mitigating the effects of sexual assault and fostering an environment that encourages military members to report the crime without fear of reprisal or secondary victimization. Before the SVC program launched in January of 2013, the accused defendant in an assault case was provided legal counsel, and the prosecutor represented the government. Victims, however, were left unrepresented – and the government's desire to prosecute the crime was often at odds with the victim's desire to put the incident behind them and/or protect their privacy.¹¹⁶ The SVC program introduced an interesting dynamic in the process of prosecuting these attacks in that a new legal counsel party now entered the traditional litigation process. Today, as the SVC program is being adopted as a model of success across the DoD, victims now have a legal say on the level of intensity a prosecution carries out across the spectrum: it can range from fully open testimony against the accused to the withdrawal of charges—all with legal advice and being party to the action instead of a victim at the mercy of a bewildering system.¹¹⁷

The first-order effect of programs like SVC appear successful. Those who prosecute and defend sexual assault cases hope that the SVC program will provide second and third-order effects which are of equal or greater significance. As previously mentioned, one aspect of sexual assault that makes it such a difficult problem to solve is the fact that *they have to be reported to be prosecuted*, and by any measure, most sexual assaults are not reported.¹¹⁸ Seemingly, this is so because of the victims' fear of reprisal and secondary victimization that follows the attack.¹¹⁹ The SVC program helps satisfy the mandated requirement to prevent such secondary victimization, but may prove even more useful as a vehicle to encourage reporting.¹²⁰

Conclusion – The Evolution of Problems and Solutions

¹¹⁵ Colonel Kenneth Theurer (USAF JAG School Commandant), interview with the author, 7 February 2014.

¹¹⁶ Theurer Interview, 7 Feb 14.

¹¹⁷ Theurer Interview, 7 Feb 14.

¹¹⁸ Harrell et al., *Compendium of Sexual Assault*, 2–4.

¹¹⁹ Harrell et al., *Compendium of Sexual Assault*, 2.

¹²⁰ Theurer, Interview, 7 February 2014

Sexual assault is a human phenomenon, and not one exclusive to the military. It is a crime perpetrated almost entirely by a small minority of serial-offender men against women.¹²¹ American society has changed greatly in the last 100 years, and will certainly continue to do so in the future. Women were once excluded from military service altogether, then in limited auxiliary roles, to today serving alongside men in the most hostile combat conditions. This change is reflective of societal demands placed on the military. Laws governing the equal treatment of women in the military evolved alongside the growing pressure to integrate them fully into military life. However, laws regarding victim rights in sexual assault cases have lagged societal progress, and as women are most often the victims of sexual assault, this lapse seems too long in coming. Is the trend changing?

There is an argument that the military sexual assault problem is little more than a paradox: we are only finding sexual assault because we are looking for it. There is some truth to this argument, given the command apparatus and bureaucratic capabilities of the very hierarchical military sub-society. The problem may not be any worse in the military than it is outside the military, at say, public colleges. The challenge that the US military cannot turn away from, however, is that the military has the capability to change for the better.¹²² Colleges and other public institutions have no central command or exclusive legal authority to enforce belief or behavioral changes like the military can and therefore must. It would be a tragedy to have the power to eliminate or at least minimize the threat of sexual assault in an organization, and do nothing. Military commanders, and Congress, agree, and the history and evolution of the bureaucratic response to the issue to date reflects just such an agenda. Military and civil leadership therefore agree on the *need* to stop the perceived epidemic, and so there leaves only one question: *How?* The military will not change society to be more accepting of the sexual assault rates in the military. Instead, the military will have respond to the behavioral problem of sexual assault to satisfy the civil demands placed on it, and that adjustment may eventually foster a *change in military culture*, and the object of further discussion in the following chapter.

¹²¹ Lisak, "Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence," 8.

¹²² Theurer, Interview, 7 Feb 2014.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The problem with the [DoD's SAPR] training is that they all dance around the issues, and we don't listen to it. We don't listen to it because the conversation isn't real. They won't say it and we won't talk about it, but we know what it's about. Men are the ones who rape people. And I'm surrounded by men. Men who joke about it and even sing about it.

– Anonymous Sexual Assault Victim, 2012

Culture can be a difficult thing to separate from the behavior used to stereotype it. The purpose of this chapter is to explore more deeply what organizational theory says about the origins of sexual assault in the military from a cultural perspective. The first task is to dissect the different levels of culture in the military. Second, under the assumption that there is an attempt underway to address the artifact of sexual assault in the military culture, the author will advance what organizational theory suggests is most effective in managing the change to underlying beliefs. Finally, changing a culture for some end requires an apparatus to monitor the change, which transcends every stage of the change and challenges leaders and followers of the military institution.

Organizational theory is not at odds with military culture, and should not be considered some outside influence that existentially threatens the military culture. It is a set of tools and a logical construct that is helpful when addressing the internal workings of any organization that has some input, and some output. Overwhelmingly, the military takes a small percentage of America's young as an input and produces remarkable leaders and followers who, often in the face of overwhelming danger, perform heroic acts of service for each other and the nation they love. This, as an underlying principle, is not in question and is not the focus of this thesis. Organizational theory does, however, require that a pragmatic scholar of the situation examine in detail the facts that surround an organization and objectively assess the larger picture. It is a difficult thing, even for the sake of argument, to accept that there is an underbelly of a great organization like the US DoD which might be at fault for egregious violations of basic human dignity. Organizational theory, and how to change culture, requires us to take such a leap if we

are to shape our current way of thinking about the problem so as to appreciate and better understand the greater context.

Levels of Culture: Generational Challenges and Sub-Cultural Context

As detailed in Chapter Two, Schein spends a great deal of effort discussing the meaning of behavior at different levels of culture. Of the many different levels of culture in the military, a useful and consistent approach is to consider the generational divide between senior leaders and the most at-risk 18-24 year old demographic. The gap is wide enough that it mimics grandparent/grandchild relationship, and at the very least, parent/child age differences. As a practical exercise, consider a proposition that magnifies the gap: Is it popular for 18 year olds to ask their grandparents for sex or relationship advice? If it were the elder generation that broached the topic, would the young teens listen or tune them out? The answer, it seems, is intuitive and so we must pare the understanding of culture into the theoretical categories of subculture. Just as the military services have their own brand of internal culture, different specialties also enjoy theirs: fighter pilot culture; artillery culture; infantry; submariner, and so on. Additionally, in the macro or micro sense, there are varying degrees of interpretation and participation in the culture for a myriad of reasons, none the least of which is age. There are generational gaps that exist between senior military leaders and the young who are most at risk of sexual assault that must be bridged across military culture, its sub-cultures, and down into the micro-cultures that exist. This does not mean that generationally-older leaders cannot relate to the younger demographic, since they too were once 18-24 years old. Sexual violence is not a 21st century phenomenon, but one as old as the human species, and many people in today's older generation were probably just as at risk of previous victimization as today's young are. Has technology expanded this risk though? As will be later be discussed in greater detail, today's youth are more enabled *at younger ages*, to access sexual content and sexual partners. The implication is that today's young, in some degree of contradistinction to just one or two generations ago, are more likely to have had formative sexual experiences in civil society prior to an age that they could join the military. If there was a time to study the interaction of civil and military culture on one another, the contemporary challenge surely compels such an undertaking.

The military does not own the problem of sexual assault. It does, however, own the military approach to fighting military sexual assault. There is not a *culture* of sexual assault in the military as the 2012 DoD SAPR directive suggests, because culture is not based on observable behavior but rather the beliefs that underlie the behavior. Sexual assault is, after all, also an artifact of civilian culture in the same way it is in military culture. The question at stake is to what degree the artifact is representative of the each underlying belief system. There is therefore a link between the two cultures which sexual assault transcends, especially as long as we consider the military demographic as one that is drawn from a greater civil pool of candidates. With this truth laid bare, it seems counterproductive to think, speak, or act in a way that suggests the problem is anything less than the manifestation of a larger US culture. With this in mind, meaningful dialogue can ensue that focuses on what is important: what organizations can do within their purview to affect positive results. Here, it seems, is the source of popular consternation.

The military is a powerful bureaucratic organization with its own legal system and hierarchal power distribution descendent from 1775 when George Washington first took command of the Continental Army. Politicians, like Senator Kristin Gillibrand of New York, are sometimes seen by military professionals to be interfering with the role of commanders in the military when they suggest the authority to prosecute sexually aggressive crimes be removed from the role of the commander. At the same time, such an attempt could actually alleviate any tension in tight-knit units in which a sexual crime occurs, since there could not be favoritism if the matter was outside the commander's realm of influence. However, the other side of that argument is that any attempt to remove the commander from the prosecution process allows them (and their organization) to resist change by not having to adopt the new beliefs, which as previously mentioned, does not provide lasting *culture* change. As organizational theory suggests, and as reviewed so far, meaningful change must be accompanied by resistance and anxiety *to that change*. Attempts to circumvent the associated anxiety are therefore attempts to prevent change.

The civilian institution, in this case, is seen to lay blame for a sexually hostile environment at the military's doorstep, as if the military operated in a vacuum from societal influence. Juxtaposed to this perception of civil-military affairs from either side,

are some senior military leaders' views on the inheritance of such culture problems. General Mark Welsh called this the "hook-up culture," which he offered as one such way to help explain the uptick of military sexual assault.¹²³ Gen Welsh was lambasted in the news and blogosphere for "outrageous" testimony tantamount to "victim blaming," and that "what the military has to confront is criminality, not a hookup culture."¹²⁴ It seems too easy to blame the military from the outside, or the volunteers from society which the military draws recruits from, but both arguments have significant weight. Civilian rage over the military's handling of the crisis is warranted, because of the prestige of military service and the fact that the military has the legal and authoritative apparatuses to confront the problem. So too, however, the military has the right to offer the cultural norms of those that enter service as one factor of the problem.

General Welsh was right in principle. There is not a "hook up culture" *problem* so much as a casual-toward-sex cultural *reality* with which the military must deal. Nomenclature matters, though, and as using slang is not appropriate for academic discussion any more than congressional testimony, a new way of discussing the germane must be included. First, we have to acknowledge that generations of persons tend to fit categorical cultural labels for the sake of discussion. "Gen X'ers" and "Baby Boomers," and even the rosy retrospective applied to "The Greatest Generation" are but a few. It is not that the current generation of millennials, or "Gen-Y'ers" have a culture which is inferior to others, but it is certainly formatively different than even their peers' close in age. As the DoD report on sexual assault at service academies states as part of "the real challenge" regarding "youth culture:"

The Academies must contend with the clash between youth culture and the highly disciplined military culture needed to train future leaders ... American youth today generally have casual attitudes toward sexual activities, underage and reckless alcohol use, and illegal drug use. Additionally, some young people have been exposed to sexual harassment and/or assault prior to their matriculation to the Academies. While these attitudes and experiences alone do not cause sexual assault, they may contribute to poor judgment, lowered

¹²³ Air Force Times, "Welsh Explains 'Hookup' Comment," 21 May 2013, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20130521/NEWS/305210037/Welsh-explains-hookup-comment>.

¹²⁴ Eleanor Clift, The Daily Beast, "Air Force General Blames Increase in Military Rape on Hookup Culture," 8 May 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/05/08/air-force-general-blames-increase-in-military-rape-on-hookup-culture.html>

inhibitions, and increased aggression and/or vulnerability to sexual assault.¹²⁵

Sexual assault is a shared problem between youth culture and military culture. These young people do not deserve to be raped. The military's problem is using its bureaucratic structure to prevent the attacks, and the subject of so much political scrutiny. However, to say that Gen Welsh's remarks were tantamount to "victim-blaming" is ludicrous.¹²⁶ The military must honestly confront its own cultural aspects that are possibly fostering the problem, but so too must political leaders engage in the same pragmatism. Both Congress and DoD leaders should remember that they may have a great deal of wisdom to offer each other and the at-risk, but are most likely generationally *separated from* and not necessarily *representative of* the most at-risk of sexual assault as a starting point, which may inspire more listening than talking.

Generation gaps are only one piece of the puzzle regarding efforts to effect change across generational lines. Another reason the generational argument is important is the role of learned sexually aggressive behavior. The "intergenerational transmission of violence" hypothesis is one that grapples with relating what non-academics think of when they talk about the "cycle of violence."¹²⁷ The basis of the plausible argument is that a person who is abused as a child grows to understand the abuse as a normal thing that older people do to children, and so does it himself once he reaches adulthood. Similarly, a child who grows up in a home in which his or her mother is abused is at a higher risk of modeling the same behavior when they become an adult. Obviously, the hypothesis of repeated behavior extends beyond violence, and into all behavior. Positive role modeling can result in generally more positive behavior, and so on. The hypothesis does not condemn all children who experience sexual and physical violence to repeat the behavior, but suggests that certain experiences in a child's formative years often correlates with behavior later in life. The age of one party in this model is one of the distinguishing variables between parties, and an important one to consider in any familial model of cultural analysis. Age matters, in short, because it separates parties along generational

¹²⁵ The Defense Task Force for Sexual Violence, *Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies* (DoD, 2005), 8.

¹²⁶ Air Force Times, "Welsh Explains"; Clift, "Hookup Culture."

¹²⁷ Lex L. Merrill, Cynthia J. Thomsen, and Joel S. Milner, "Childhood Abuse and Premilitary Sexual Assault in Male Navy Recruits," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 69, no.2 (2001): 252-261.

lines. Understanding the role of the generational gaps begins, but certainly does not end, with acknowledging there to be a difference between the life experiences and perception of the military's senior leaders and the demographic majority they represent.

A 40-year-old who grew up without internet until after college has had a dramatically different life experience than a 20-year-old who has used a smart-phone since he or she was 14. The generational gap that exists between senior leaders in the military and the newest recruits is remarkable, especially if one considers technology and its effect on communication and behavioral norms. As of 2013, most Four-Star general officers were born in the 1950s, and a few were born in the 1940s. Consider that Sputnik, the first ever orbital man made spacecraft, was launched in 1957 by the USSR. The personal computer was not popular in American homes until around 1980, after most of today's leaders were out of college, and affordable commercial internet did not follow until the early 1990s. This is a generation that has *adapted to* contemporary technology, unlike the youngest serving generation today who have been *transformed by*, or at least *formatively affected* by personal computer technology and the social norms that are entailed. In summary, young people wanting to have sex is by no means some modern phenomenon – there has always been some level of capability and intent to do so. Whatever enduring *intent* there has always been, today's youth have a much better *capability* to act on their impulses than that of a generation just 20 years older thanks to modern communication norms.

Forty-nine percent of today's military enlisted force and 13% of the officer corps are under the age of 24. Combined to represent the military force as a whole, this demographic represents 43% total of of DoD forces as an aggregate, some 610,000 service members.¹²⁸ Computers, internet access, and the Information Age itself were a part of life during the formative years of the majority demographic of the military, since most were born after 1990, and as late as 1996. It is not a stretch to guess that most millennials had not even heard of Sputnik by the time the "Y2K" glitch loomed, and if they did, they probably learned about it from the internet. Social media was the informational revolution that most changed this generation's interaction with each other,

¹²⁸ Department of Defense, "2011 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community." 13.3% of the Officer Corps (N=238,103) and 49.3% of the Enlisted Corps (N=1,173,322) represent 43.2% total of all Active Duty DoD forces (N=1,411,425).

starting with Myspace and Facebook, and continuing today with apps like Tinder that are specifically designed to bypass conventional dating norms and seek out those close by who are interested in no-strings-attached casual sex. The smartphone has replaced the local tavern or bar – and kids carry smart phones more and more today. Right or wrong, the technology that shapes how humans interact is here to stay, and offers opportunity and pitfall to a leader who must deal with the distance between generations as such technology matures. The reach of social media does not stop at “hooking up” or hanging out, etc. Politics, and neo-political activism with a decidedly anti-authoritarian tone, is also being transformed by the role of social media.¹²⁹ This is not to say, however, that young people are detached from political issues today any more than the senior leader’s generation was detached from social networking; however, the *means* and efficiency with which the participation is done is drastically different. “Para-politics” is a transformative phenomenon that is not *going to happen* – it is already happening.¹³⁰ The people carrying out the transformation are those who have turned from traditional social constructs and toward the internet – and they are young.

Sexual Tension in the Ranks

This paper, and its methodology, hinges on the notion that there is a military culture that is in some way different from American or even *human* culture. As defined in Chapter Two, the assumption that a military culture exists to begin with does not demand much of a leap of faith, and so continues below. “Culture,” as Schein states, “is an abstraction” that is powerful in creating forces that guide behavior.¹³¹ Further, he warns, by failing to grasp the subjective nature of culture and change by examining the observable *and* less objective behaviors, “we become victim to them.”¹³² In order to avoid such folly, our efforts must turn toward dissecting military culture.

The role between the organization of the DoD and what is called the “Patriarchal Family” in social science literature is clear: where one finds bureaucratic organization that closely regulates human activity through relentless planning, rule following,

¹²⁹ Wired Magazine UK, “Only Social Media Can Fix the Crisis of Modern Politics,” 12 February 2014, <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2014-02/12/the-coming-storm>

¹³⁰ Wired, 2014.

¹³¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3.

¹³² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*.

discipline, duty, and obedience, there is an associated correlation with sexual control as well.¹³³ In the Middle Ages, at monasteries, convents, and churches, “outrageous sexual behavior” posed organizational problems to a similar degree as is realized today in the DoD.¹³⁴ Like current reactionary policy responding to the organizational reality, the Middle Age reaction was to increase severity of punishment.¹³⁵ Sigmund Freud would later write on this very phenomenon, that to “promote social order and civilized behavior the libido has to be brought under control.”¹³⁶ The trend continued throughout the western world through the industrial age, and policy born of puritanical origins transcended not only the workplace, but indeed the western cultural understanding of the role of obedience and discipline at odds with human sexual nature.¹³⁷ Only recently, after all, has the military stopped regulating the sexual practices of homosexuals. This step was crucial in deconstructing the governmental control of people’s sexual preferences in the name of good order and discipline. Critics of the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT), like Sen John McCain of Arizona, argued that the repeal would ultimately undermine combat effectiveness and serve as a distraction to a military engaged in two wars.¹³⁸ However, the repeal passed, and with little drama inside military circles, operations continued unabated when the military was no longer allowed to organizationally repress this particular sexual identity. Proponents of the repeal classify this as a victory for human rights, while opponents aptly point out that perhaps the impact of the repeal is not yet felt. In any case, repealing the law certainly signified a change in the underlying beliefs that define what it means to serve in the modern US military. Whether those beliefs were the military’s beliefs or the civil population’s beliefs, the fact the law was repealed is indicative of some pressure forcing change in policy.

That the US military has struggled to deal with the balance of sexuality and normative guidelines of acceptable behavior is of no surprise when one considers the rich history of like organizations also fumbling to define sexual norms throughout the ages. The hierarchical structure of the patriarchal family becomes, in the view of many writers

¹³³ Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing 2006), 216.

¹³⁴ Morgan, *Images of Organization*

¹³⁵ Morgan, *Images of Organization*

¹³⁶ Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

¹³⁷ Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

¹³⁸ Franke-Ruta, “John McCain’s ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Last Stand,” *The Atlantic*, 18 December 2010.

on the relationship between sexuality, gender, and organization, a “factory for authoritarian ideologies.”¹³⁹ Continuing the model patriarchal organization in the familial context is useful in this case. Just as a son and daughter yield to a parent, formal organizations like the DoD breed a culture in which “one person defers to the authority of another” with little question.¹⁴⁰ Morgan offers a salient quote on the outcome of such a familial organization which is so tied up in “sexuality versus morality”:

The prolonged dependency of the child upon the parents facilitates the kind of dependency institutionalized in the relationship between leaders and followers and in the practice where people look to others to initiate action in response to problematic issues. In organizations, as in the patriarchal family, fortitude, courage, and heroism, flavored by narcissistic self-admiration, are often valued qualities, as is the determination and sense of duty that a father expects from his son. Key organizational members also often cultivate fatherly roles by acting as mentors to those in need of help and protection.¹⁴¹

Directly at odds with this male-dominated classical understanding of organizational structure and culture, is the matriarchal family, which tends to focus on “love, optimism, trust, compassion, capacity for intuition, creativity, and happiness.”¹⁴² The values associated with what society has ascribed to the feminine half of American culture is fundamentally at odds with how the same defines masculinity. Critics of patriarchy suggest that a turn away from a male-dominated hierarchical society and embracing women in authoritative positions is the only way to prevent “impotence accompanied by a fear of and dependence on authority.”¹⁴³ Until a change, conscious or subconscious, away from rigid authoritative organizational structures, the roles of women in organizations will always “be played out on male terms.”¹⁴⁴ America, not just the military, has a problem with crediting classical notions of positive service, such as heroism, bravery, and strength with the masculine, and associating *the weaker sex* with less desirable traits like weakness, frailty, vulnerability.¹⁴⁵ But is this a choice consciously made, or culturally underwritten? The author asks the reader to consider if it

¹³⁹ Morgan, *Images of Organization*, 218.

¹⁴⁰ Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

¹⁴¹ Morgan, *Images of Organization*, 218–219.

¹⁴² Morgan, *Images of Organization*, 219. For more on the negative aspects of a dependence on authority, also see Morris’ “By Force of Arms.”

¹⁴³ Morgan, *Images of Organization*, 218.

¹⁴⁴ Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

¹⁴⁵ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014

seems like society sometimes goes out of its way to lionize feminine examples of bravery and the like, taking pause to reflect on the inherent femininity of the act as if it should multiply our wonder. Some words may automatically denote sexism, as previously mentioned. Heroic, brave, aggressive, loving, nurturing, and empathetic are but a few adjectives whose context is underwritten by individual bias and almost immediately distilled to be gender specific. The classification of what is feminine and masculine, subconsciously and consciously, and what is positive military behavior and what is not, should be telling of the military's underlying beliefs and culture. As such, one underlying challenge facing women who seek to break the glass ceiling of executive America is have to compete in historically western patriarchal organizations – a common link between the military and civil society.

The question, it seems, becomes *can the military organization change and should it change?* Does the DoD stand to lose part of its identity if it makes a conscious turn away from classical Western patriarchal organization habits which are dominated by masculine values? Further, can the overwhelmingly male culture of the US military be modified simply by changing the demographic? The military is not demographically the way it is because *that's what the military wants*, not at least in the first order, if you consider military demographics as the artifact of underlying American societal beliefs. The military is mostly male because the values ascribed to military service are defined by society, including those outside the military, to be male dominated. Heroism, and everything else that makes one heroic, is historically tied to masculinity, and the union of the two is partially to blame for the organization we have today. Returning to the question of focus: does it have to be this way? Is positive military service and masculinity a “package deal” that America must purchase together if we are to enjoy strength? Or, as is suggested in the text above, can society writ large handle, or even lead, the drive to disassociate masculinity from heroism. Lastly, can the change be innovated purposefully, or is the task too large to help along faster than evolution allows? Our own biases, including the author's, inform how we will talk about this fundamental challenge to changing culture. However, we must have this conversation. *Why* is the military dominated by male values and *servicemen*, and *what* does that say about American societal and military-specific underlying beliefs?

There are a few key takeaways from the discussion on the role of historical organizational cultures such as the current US military. First, it is demographically and intrinsically factual that the military is, and has been, dominated by the presence of strict male authority. Though it is too early to tell, this could be changing toward adopting a more matriarchal set of values as equality for men and women creeps forward. Are the two value sets mutually exclusive? Can we have it both ways? Second, it is useful to examine American society and compare the differences of a military and civil organization. The military organization is a microcosm of its larger counterpart, and of a distinctly different character as well in terms of sexual, racial, and age factors. Women are still not earning equal pay and filling the boardrooms of American business, but have made enormous strides in recent decades toward this end. So too, in the DoD, have women risen into higher ranks. However, the key differences between civil and military organizations are the remnants of patriarchal notions of authority, and dependence thereon. Logically, command and control are crucial parts of the military structure, and as a strategist plays a “long game” past the next move, so too should military leaders be introspectively looking at how demystifying sexual behavior from the shadows into the forefront affects military culture at large. It may be possible to deconstruct the classical argument of *libido* versus *organizational effectiveness* so as to achieve ideals of liberal democracy in both, but it will require challenging our most deeply seeded beliefs in what our American culture is built on, and therefore extremely challenging to present in a manner that balances the fear of change with the demand to change.

Evidence of Behavior as Representative of Underlying Culture

Sexual assault is an artifact of military culture, but not exclusive to military culture alone. Further, it is certainly not the only, nor the most important manifestation of military culture, but it is one that is incompatible with military ideals and civilian leadership’s expectations, as well as the human collective conscience. From Schein’s work, we know not to infer deep institutional beliefs about the culture of the military by observation alone, but that such observation can point us in the right direction of discovering underlying beliefs.

As stated in Chapter Two, assigning causality in terms of cultural inferences is dangerous ground. Still, the DoD must look at the evidence honestly and survey the means with which the problem (in this case, the artifact of sexual assault) can be addressed. Simply put, there is no strategy that can solve an artifact problem. This is obvious, logically, and part of daily life. One does not assail a malfunctioning light with new lightbulbs every day without exploring the cause of exploding bulbs. So too, must the discussion of a recurring problem such as sexual assault be viewed from the perspective of having an underlying problem. As such, the DoD should embrace in a publicly transparent way that there may in fact be a problem with military culture encouraging sexual violence and expend considerable effort to study all the aspects of underlying culture, including demographic proclivities. The bulbs, as it were, are most likely not the problem in a lamp that has a history of burning them out. As an organization, the DoD must embrace uncomfortable disconfirming information that the cultural problem may be very real. Moreover: the military must manage the change to promote a non-aggressive sexual environment, but must be combat effective. The military mission demands violence, but leaders must manage the second order effects of such a culture who exists to execute that mission at all times. The US Air Force Academy (USAFA) sexual assault scandal in the years after Tailhook is an instructive case that allows a cultural discussion to follow from the realization of the artifact.

By the time Lt Gen John Rosa arrived at the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs in 2003, Congress had already demanded action on solving what seemed like a festering sexual violence problem at USAFA. Gen Rosa was an outsider, of sorts, as a graduate of The Citadel in Charleston, SC, and only the second USAF Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) graduate to ever serve as Superintendent of USAFA. Immediately, he set about to observe the culture of the organization of which he'd never been a part. To help him understand the issues, he brought in experts in sexual assault to take a deep look into the closed society of the Academy and report on the underlying issues that might lead to such behavior as was reported to be happening at the academy. Dr David Lisak was one such expert, who commended Lt Gen Rosa's change in approach to the problem as one defined by a cultural problem versus a behavior problem:

“In the wake of the sexual assault scandal at the Air Force Academy, both the Academy and the Air Force as a whole have undertaken what is perhaps the most comprehensive program to confront and prevent sexual violence that has ever been undertaken by a major institution. It is still too early to determine the overall effectiveness of the Air Force’s new policies and prevention efforts. However, at a minimum, the Air Force has already demonstrated that it is possible for a major institution to honestly confront sexual violence, and to do so with the comprehensive initiatives required for a reasonable chance at success.”¹⁴⁶

The program in question had the distinct goal of addressing underlying beliefs of the Academy culture. Specifically, there was a problem of not having enough women in leadership roles at the Academy (cadets and regular officers) to serve as role models for female *and* male cadets.¹⁴⁷ The Task Force charged with investigating the scandal concluded that the number one cause of the sexual assault problem was cultural: there were not enough leaders across the spectrum which had modeled behavior that “positively convey the value of women in the military.”¹⁴⁸ Lt Gen Rosa had been pressured into solving a public relations situation and not to mess with the Academy’s culture, per se, but soon identified that the culture of the institution was contributing to an environment conducive to sexual assault, and set about to change it.¹⁴⁹

How Gen Rosa set out to change the culture of the USAFA is the subject of Dr. Lisak’s praise: education. “We cut out a drill period, and every Tuesday at 11 o’clock we were doing something about honor, respect, and our core values. It was tailored to the audience. Freshmen didn’t get the same class as the seniors, because their perspective was different.”¹⁵⁰ He added that until you talk frankly about sexual assault, and the sexual climate in the organization, your audience won’t respect you. Respect is a two-way street, obviously, but this can be lost where respect is overshadowed by authority. The sentiment of the two, respect and authority, must not be confused as is too common. One of Lt Gen Rosa’s major achievements in taking on the underlying culture of the Academy was in

¹⁴⁶ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence,” 9.

¹⁴⁷ Defense Task Force for Sexual Violence, *Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies*, 8. The Task Force used the same generalization as an element of the US Naval Academy and US Military Academy as well.

¹⁴⁸ DoD Task Force, ES-1.

¹⁴⁹ Rosa, Interview, 29 Jan 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Rosa, Interview, 29 Jan 2014.

acknowledging the audience garnered more respect than they were given. “Youth culture,” it seems, could handle frank and open discussions about honor and respect as it relates to sexual activity. In turn, by showing the audience the respect to have an honest conversation, he increased the cadet’s trust in the military and facilitated better reporting and more intellectually honest education programs that got the participation – not just subjugation – of his target demographic. David Lisak also focused the faculty of the USAFA on the role of facilitators and bystanders in sexual assault, a conversation that would lead to formalized bystander intervention programs across the entire DoD.¹⁵¹ “We started calling it the 15% rule. 15% of the cadets were always going to do the right thing. 15% were always going to do the wrong thing. The fight is for that middle 70% ... and until you get the facilitators and bystanders to stand up against [sexual assault], you’re not going to stop it.”¹⁵² The fight was fought for the victims and against the perpetrators, but the battleground that the USAFA faculty and experts would wage the war on was the bystander.

Academic research by sociological experts suggest that the risk of sexual harassment and assault against women *and* men is higher in the military than in civil society, partly because it is a male-dominated environment.¹⁵³ Many researchers have hypothesized the nature of this risk is the direct result of “organizational cultures that value characteristics traditionally attributed to men and with attitudes that women are unsuitable for many roles because of the supposed need for physical strength and acceptance as an authority figure.”¹⁵⁴ General Rosa found many if not all of these factors at the USAFA. The correlation of women at risk to assault at the Academy followed a lack of female leadership and supervision in the cadre and the student command structure. Is the solution to promote more women to supervisory roles, or is the lacking number of women in leadership positions the natural reflection of a culture that does not value femininity?

¹⁵¹ Rosa, Interview, 29 Jan 2014.

¹⁵² Rosa, Interview, 29 Jan 2014.

¹⁵³ Sadler et al., “Factors Associated with Women’s Risk of Rape in the Military Environment,” *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 43, no.3 (Spring 2003): 263.

¹⁵⁴ Sadler et al., “The Military Environment: Risk Factors for Women’s Non-Fatal Assaults,” *Journal of Environmental Medicine* 43, no. 4 (2001): 325.

Are Women in the Military More Likely to Experience Sexual Violence?

Published psychological research indicates that women who have served in the military are almost twice as likely as their civilian counterparts to experience some form of sexual or domestic violence in their lifetime.¹⁵⁵ A research article which examined the history of 508 women who served in the military in Vietnam or later, revealed that 79% reported having experienced sexual harassment, and 54% reported unwanted sexual contact.¹⁵⁶ Thirty percent (n=151) experienced one or more completed or attempted rapes.¹⁵⁷ Repeated rape was a common occurrence in those who said they had been raped, with more than one-third of the respondents indicating they had experienced it at least twice, and 14% reporting they had been gang raped.¹⁵⁸

However, there is an interesting twist in this tragic tale: the rate of rape in the woman's lifetime was more than twice as likely to have happened *outside* of military service as *in* the service.¹⁵⁹ Added together, women who experienced rape in the military *alone* without other instances of assault in their lifetime made up just 12% of all the women studied, where 25% of women had only experienced sexual violence during their childhood.¹⁶⁰ Regarding the relationship between pre-military violence exposure and subsequent rapes in military service:

Women who joined the military at age 19 years or younger, who were of enlisted rank, or who experienced childhood physical or sexual violence or rape prior to service were at least twice as likely to experience rape during their military service.¹⁶¹

The environment that women in the military work in accounts for another telling sign of their risk of being victimized. Women who report hostile work environments are

¹⁵⁵ YubaNet, "Women Soldiers Face Stronger History of Sexual Violence," August 2007, http://yubanet.com/usa/Women_Soldiers_Face_Stronger_History_of_Sexual_Vio_64357.php#.UvzfdfldW50; Jessica A. Turchik and Susan M. Wilson, "Sexual Assault in the US Military: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for the Future," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 15, (2010): 268.

¹⁵⁶ Sadler et al., "Factors Associated," 266.

¹⁵⁷ Sadler et al., "Factors Associated."

¹⁵⁸ Sadler et al., "Factors Associated."

¹⁵⁹ Sadler et al., "Factors Associated," 266-267. Twelve percent (n=61) of all respondents experienced rape solely during their military service; and one-fourth (25%, n=126) experienced sexual violence only during their childhood. Fourteen percent of respondents experienced sexual violence both prior to and during military service.

¹⁶⁰ Sadler et al., "Factors Associated."

¹⁶¹ Sadler et al., "Factors Associated," 267.

six times as likely to be raped.¹⁶² Senior enlisted and officer leadership also identifies with increased likelihood of sexual violence in the workplace, with their behavior (sexually demeaning comments, gestures, “quid pro quo” attitudes) being “strongly associated with women’s frequency of rape.”¹⁶³

There is a great deal to research in this particular area of sexual assault. Sadly, women are likely to experience sexual aggression in their lifetime, regardless of the decision to enter military service. Professor James Daley, who co-authored a report with USAF Col Deborah Bostock on the rate of sexual assault victimization rates in the USAF in 2007 that involved interviewing 2,018 USAF women, said “... sexual trauma appears to be common as women grow up.”¹⁶⁴ Upon matriculating into the military culture, though, their risk of rape while serving, while comparatively less than their risk of *ever* being victimized, is still intolerably high versus their prospects outside service: nominally, the victimization rates of military servicewomen is around 28% in their lifetime, versus 13% in comparable civilian studies.¹⁶⁵ Research indicates that 38-67% of adult women “recall sexual assault during childhood” which is consistent with the corresponding rate of women who report the same *and* have chosen to serve in the military.¹⁶⁶ Enlistment, workplace environment, off-duty and on-base environment, and ranking officer behavior are all heavily influential in the chain of events that allows sexual violence.¹⁶⁷

Even when controlled for established risk factors for sexual violence, like prior victimization and younger age, the military environment is strongly associated with rape during military service.¹⁶⁸ The previous assault rate among America’s women is high; perhaps higher than the military would like to believe. In this regard, the rate of women who experience sexual assault in their lifetime who happen to also serve in the military is correspondingly high. This information hopefully stimulates leaders in positions of power to further reflect on the need to study the cultural and demographic realities of the twenty-first century American military, and who is answering the call to arms. Where

¹⁶² Sadler et al., “Factors Associated,” 268.

¹⁶³ Sadler et al., “Factors Associated.”

¹⁶⁴ YubaNet, “Women Soldiers.”

¹⁶⁵ YubaNet, “Women Soldiers.”

¹⁶⁶ Sadler et al., “Factors Associated with Women’s Risk of Rape in the Military Environment,” 272.

¹⁶⁷ Sadler et al., “Factors Associated,” 277.

¹⁶⁸ Sadler et al., “Factors Associated,” 269.

sexual assault is a societal scourge, evidence that suggests women who have been previously victimized are more likely to join the military should cause us all to pause and reflect on the underlying reasons why the phenomenon may exist.

The Hypermasculine Military

Sexual assault is, unfortunately, a human affliction that transcends age, gender, or social status. It is not a crime of the poor or rich, educated or uneducated. The military's role in confronting the mounting epidemic should begin with understanding the nature of the individual as they fit into the group, and how the group can be used to shape the behavior of the individual. One way to look at this problem is to devote more study to the role of gender identity from birth to the time the individual joins the group. Gender identity has a great deal to do with the role of masculine versus feminine value sets, and must also be considered in any discussion of sexual violence.

Gender identity is not as simple a task as it may appear beneath a few layers of clothes. Other than cases of rare medical exception, at birth *physically*, men are men, and women are women. As such, it is a statement of fact that women give birth to children, and psychoanalytically speaking, form the strongest bond with child in their most formative years.¹⁶⁹ Women, that is, *mothers* are the primary bonded parent with children in their early years. As a young girl enters adolescent childhood, she continues to retain the *primary attachment* with her gender identity of being a woman.¹⁷⁰ Boys, however, are different. Boys share the primary attachment to the female gender in their younger years by way of their mother just as their sisters do, *but at some point*, must “affirm their masculinity” and gender identity. *They have to switch*, whereas girls do not. Many psychologists support the argument that this shift creates a sort of *gender asymmetry* and fosters the need for some young (and even older) men to “separate, distance, and distinguish themselves from the feminine, the mother, and to affirm their masculine identification in sharp contradistinction to femininity.”¹⁷¹ The word *contradistinction* is important in this definition, because masculinity and femininity are not discussed

¹⁶⁹ Madeline Morris, “By Force of Arms: Rape, War, and Military Culture,” *Duke Law Journal* 45, no. 4 (February 1996): 749.

¹⁷⁰ Morris, “By Force of Arms.”

¹⁷¹ Morris, “By Force of Arms.”

clinically as parallel paths of gender-specific behavior, but rather, masculinity is defined as the *opposite* of femininity.¹⁷² The theoretical argument supports that the shift away from the feminine at an early age involves the role of the father in child rearing as the primary male role model, as well as all-male hypermasculine groups such as the military.¹⁷³ In this regard, military service has strange company: gangs, militias, volunteer fire companies, social clubs, (among others), all offer a vision of men partaking in “elaborate sets of constructs of masculinity and male behavior.”¹⁷⁴ But, as Morris points out, the role of primary parenting in the feminine sense is changing in modern times. Women are still, by a large margin, the primary caretakers of children, however men are beginning to fill the role to greater extents today.¹⁷⁵ It is possible, though yet realized, if the greater role of men in parenting will alleviate the gender asymmetry which currently dominates the formative experience (at least on a grand societal scale) of the men and women who serve in the military today, but it is yet another area of research that merits further attention.

There is an additional correlating factor that must be considered regarding sexuality, gender identity, and masculinity: the sexual abuse of children. Children who are sexually abused grow into adults, and this especially cruel sort of crime against an especially vulnerable victim leaves lasting emotional and physical scars. There is compelling but limited research on the likelihood of pre-military sexual abuse victims being the perpetrators and/or the victims in later sexual violence.¹⁷⁶ The author broaches this issue in the military context, not because the evidence compels it, but because the *lack of study* does.¹⁷⁷ Lex Merrill has done one such study on a small segment of naval enlisted recruits in the Great Lakes region that showed a propensity for rape perpetration in military men previously sexually abused as children.¹⁷⁸ Further, and perhaps even

¹⁷² Morris, “By Force of Arms.”

¹⁷³ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 750; Craig A. Rimmerman, *Gay Rights, Military Wrongs* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing 1996), 87; Robert Stones, *Key Sociological Thinkers* (New York, NY: NYU Press 1998), 237–238.

¹⁷⁴ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 750.

¹⁷⁵ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 750–751.

¹⁷⁶ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence”; Merrill, “Childhood abuse and Premilitary Sexual Assault”; Turchik and Wilson, “Review of the Literature,” 267–271; Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 749.

¹⁷⁸ Lex L. Merrill, Cynthia J. Thomsen, and Joel S. Milner, “Childhood Abuse and Premilitary Sexual Assault in Male Navy Recruits,” 252

more concerning given the contemporary realization of the extent of sexual abuse in the military, the evidence suggests the incidence of previous physical and sexual abuse in adults who join the military at a rate higher than exists in civil society.¹⁷⁹ Sadly, this is one of the few studies that have paid attention to the issue enough in a military context to study it.¹⁸⁰ The reason it should be studied on a larger scale is to further illuminate the psyche of those drawn to military service, but also to be able to target education and victim-prevention measures. Further, a boy, now a man, who was raped as a child may not even be aware of his increased risk to commit a crime, or that his view of normal behavior is even objectionable. There is a cycle of violence that must be broken in order to solve the problem of rape – and what little evidence there is on people who self-select to join the military strongly suggests this problem begins when the member is a child. Further, there has also been civil research done on women being prone to rape based on certain risk factors, including sexual assault as a child.¹⁸¹ While the issue of focusing on the victim is understandably controversial, Gidycz et al. showed that educating women on recognizing behavior that was consistent with known rape-supportive situations lowered the reported frequency of sexual aggression within a control group – and fast.¹⁸² If the military is able, with reasonable confidence, to identify persons of increased risk of violence, it should act to educate and prevent the crime as much as possible. The classification is important: crafting focused education programs to a section of a demographic that is at greater risk is an important part of sincere prevention strategy. Prevention must go beyond treating everyone the same in order to gain effectiveness.

Education level, age, socioeconomic indicators, race, ethnicity, and previous exposure to sexual and physical violence may all prove to be useful and effective indicators of sexual violence, and must be pursued academically to help eradicate sexual assault. There is a cost, though, when it comes to including the question in a discussion of

¹⁷⁹ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014. Dr. Lisak indicated that the report showed a correlation to other research he has done at rates higher than civil averages. The Merrill article was a focused methodology on a Navy populace, which was only compared to other samples for method validation. The Daley & Bosteck article raised the same issue regarding women who join the USAF, stating that they were twice as likely (28% vs 13%) to experience rape at some point in their life, including childhood.

¹⁸⁰ Merrill, "Childhood Abuse".

¹⁸¹ Christine A. Gidycz et al., "The Evaluation of a Sexual Assault Self-Defense and Risk-Reduction Program for College Women: A Prospective Study."

¹⁸² Gidycz et al., "The Evaluation of a Sexual Assault," 173.

military sexual assault: acknowledging predators in the ranks, and acknowledging that there may be more ‘prey’ in the ranks as well. The answer comes after the military devotes significantly more research to the topic. The DoD, and much of the civilian rage, tends to focus on the predatory nature of sexual violence in the military. Consider, for the sake of argument, if there is a sexual assault ‘prey’ problem in the military? Depending on the study (as previously cited), some seem to show a higher propensity for men who offend, and others show evidence of women who are at risk self-selecting for military service at higher than normal rates.¹⁸³ It is possible, though the author does not agree, that in light of the cycle of violence problem, that the military attracts criminals who seek a haven, and those at risk of sexual assault who seek out the same structure. The combination is a dark and dangerous one, if true.

The Role of Masculinity

Competition is a human condition, and war is its ultimate manifestation. Masculinity used to be the basis of military strength, because the physical strength of the army was the summation of the physical strength of its members. In short, men formed the armies because they were stronger than women, and the strength to swing the sword or throw the spear was the difference in life and death on the individual level, and prosperity and subjugation on the national level. Technology is changing this historical fact. Today, women participate in a vastly wider combat role when compared to their auxiliary role prior to 1948. Before congratulating ourselves on deconstructing sexism for achieving this milestone, we must consider that the change is due more to the lack of physical strength required in many combat roles than realizing and acting upon a new paradigm of equality. Instead of breaking down a primary group founded on the basis of masculinity, women have simply been introduced into a still-masculine environment. The vision of military service is mostly unchanged from ancient times, and as such, is dominated by a masculine historical precedent of “aggressiveness” and “toughness.”¹⁸⁴ These attributes are not necessarily exclusive of gender though, and there is no particular reason why the military is forced to choose between a masculine or feminine construct. In

¹⁸³ YubaNet, “Women Soldiers.” This study specifically studied USAF women.

¹⁸⁴ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 751.

fact, argues Morris, “it is the very combination of aggressiveness with compassion that is required for compliance with the laws of war that require humane treatment of prisoners, civilians, and the wounded.”¹⁸⁵

It is commonly accepted fact that environments where sexual harassment or non-violent but unwanted sexual advances are allowed to take place are factors that are conducive to violent sexual assault taking place.¹⁸⁶ The DoD has taken steps to confront any environments where sexual harassment is normal, but must also consider the role of gender asymmetry in military culture. Most officers today cannot imagine a time where it was commonplace for a racial slur to be used in a group environment by white Drill Instructors to tear down black service members and deindividualize them into the group, and yet the same type of denigrations that play on male insecurities of masculinity are commonplace.¹⁸⁷ Repealing DADT is an important step in removing this aspect of exclusion and separation that has subconsciously attempted to remove any feminine characteristics from recruits and distill their subconscious and popularized views on traditional masculinity, as if it were the only trait compatible with military service.¹⁸⁸

In summary, there are a number of factors that characterize and inform the deeply contextual nature of sexual violence in a culture as strongly identified as the US military. By thinking of it as masculine in nature, one is able to consider what it is that makes it masculine *versus* feminine, whether or not one consciously associates values to either. In doing so, it becomes easier, albeit still extraordinarily complex, to identify on a personal level the traits associated with humans placing values on values, and explore what it is that forms the individual perception of cultural artifacts. Different people will invariably occupy different levels of interpretation in hierarchal organizations, and each will also have their own formative lens to interpret. In the case of sexual violence, it is argued here that the need to deeply study the role of traumatic childhood experiences is of greatest importance if one seeks to generalize on a larger cultural level. Gender identity, family dynamics, and childhood trauma are all at play in defining how and why each person will

¹⁸⁵ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 753.

¹⁸⁶ Rimmerman, *Gay Rights, Military Wrongs*, 87.

¹⁸⁷ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 736; Rimmerman, *Gay Rights, Military Wrongs*, 87. *Pussy, Gay, Fag*, or truncated to its core, *Girl* are all insults that target the masculine insecurities while also creating an environment that fosters an attitude degrading to the *other* in which women or feminine characteristics are viewed negatively.

¹⁸⁸ Stones, *Key Sociological Thinkers*, 236–237.

assimilate into a hypermasculine culture, and whether or not the DoD chooses to approach the myriad of problems, it will certainly have to deal with the consequences of such societal issues with every new recruit.

Managing Change

American Soldiers moving south from Normandy after D-Day in World War II carried with them the *France Zone Handbook No. 16*.¹⁸⁹ The book was, for all practical purposes, a travel guide for soldiers visiting brothels in Paris. As General Patton put it, “A soldier who won’t f—k won’t fight.”¹⁹⁰ Is this the case? Some social science research suggests there is a strong link of sexual tendencies tied to combat, or even violence, and if true, is a troubling starting place for military leaders confronting the paradox.¹⁹¹

When approaching the problem of sexual assault as a cultural artifact of a hypermasculine organization such as the military, we must first discuss the impact of changing the culture before setting out to do so. To paraphrase Schein, unmanaged culture change can be disastrous.¹⁹² In the theoretical construct laid out so far in this paper, sexual assault has been treated as an artifact of a hypermasculine military culture. The culture is managed by senior leaders but individual members at lower ranks constitute the majority of the force at large, as well as the demographic most at risk of sexual violence. The disconfirming evidence compels the leaders to foster a different environment for the 43% of military members demographically predisposed to sexual violence, and the question is not only *how* to change the culture, but *if* it should be done at all.

Can the military change from a hypermasculine culture into something less gender specific while maintaining military effectiveness? Unit cohesion is a core tenet of military command, and the ideological basis of classical military cohesion has until recently been a masculine one.¹⁹³ This gender discriminator, in which the physical and emotive factors play, between *us* and *them* can serve a useful purpose in bonding those

¹⁸⁹ John Gimlette, *Panther Soup: Travels Through Europe in War and Peace* (Random House LLC 2011), 62.

¹⁹⁰ Gimlette, *Panther Soup*.

¹⁹¹ Lt Col Dave Grossman, *On Killing* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company 1995), 136–137; Nancy Sherman, *The Untold War* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company 2010), 78–79.

¹⁹² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, Fourth Edition*, 299–314.

¹⁹³ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 751–752.

who would otherwise have nothing in common. Stripped to their core, the group would at least identify with being *manly*. The gender basis, it seems, is the core of cohesion in the US military.¹⁹⁴ To engage in culture change, and not just suppressing or changing the artifacts (via reporting, or definitions), will require a pivot from this underlying and permeating masculinity. In effect, the military must redefine the basis of cohesion from masculinity to an ideological basis as many other groups have done independent of gender.¹⁹⁵ The answer to what this may be is the subject of the following chapter, and extremely difficult to articulate. Regardless, the DoD requires competent and loyal service members – not competent and loyal service members *who act like men*. Using the historical patriarchal familial structure as a model of western military organization has served its purpose, but has come with a cost that is only today being fully acknowledged: defining the military on a masculine base encourages those who are prone to offend to join because it meets many of their psychological needs.¹⁹⁶



¹⁹⁴ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 753.

¹⁹⁵ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 751–756. Specifically, Alcoholics Anonymous, some religious orders, communist party cells, and the French resistance underground are a few examples of strongly cohesive groups who were indifferent to gender in their fundamental organization.

¹⁹⁶ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 755.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued research identifying the relative power of factors that promote and maintain a sexualized military environment is necessary in order to develop interventions and policies to decrease the level of risk and increase the protection for women.

– Anne Sadler, et al.
American Journal of Industrial Medicine

Organizational culture theory has a great deal to say about how the military can approach the topic of sexual assault. At this point, a brief summary is in order to set the context for this chapter's proposed strategy to combat the crime. First, the way individuals think and perceive things around them is the product of their culture, which is informed by their personal and assimilated beliefs. Thoughts and words underlie all of our actions, and in the commission and prevention of sexual assault, the psychological profile of those most at risk for sexual assault (both as offender and victim) must be accounted for. Second, there is a dearth of research on the role of deindividuation, power and submission, and sexual tension in historically patriarchal organizations like, but not exclusive to, military service. The traditional view of military service is predominantly a masculine narrative, and subconsciously, so too are the values held so dear by military and civilian culture. Put together, the masculine military complex is self-perpetuating, and with it comes the risk of attracting individuals who are a) demographically at risk of sexually assaulting, and more controversially, b) psychologically more at risk of crime and victimization. Third, and the focus of most of this chapter, is the role military leaders can play in confronting sexual assault in the military context. The military has the legal jurisdiction and the moral impetus to help right societal wrongs, as it did with racial integration and belatedly with the integration of openly-serving gays and lesbians, and the solution is one that gravitates around education. There are two aspects of culture at play: societal culture at large, with challenges that the military inherits (such as the demographic drawn to service); and military culture, which theory and psychological research suggest may inadvertently exacerbate sexual-related violence. Culture manifests

itself in observable artifacts, though not entirely, and if one wishes to cure behavior one must acknowledge and change the underlying beliefs. The final question, then, is how can military leaders affect the underlying beliefs of their superiors, peers, and subordinates?

Culture is developed over time by the shared learning of a collection of people in order to normalize acceptable behavior. Herein lies a major challenge to adapting military culture to one that rejects violent sexual assault intrinsically and retains its important core of military identity. Some cultures are strongly based on underlying assumptions that justify their existence, and transcend almost all areas of their operation. Doctors, for instance, have the strongly socialized and accepted belief that their primary duty is to “first, do no harm.” In the case of a professional military, the underlying purpose of existence is to fight and win wars on behalf of the public it protects. We can, however, do something to change the military culture to remain potent and lethal without the side-effect of hosting aggressive sexual deviancy. Expanded research that targets military culture, honest education programs, and targeted demographic engagement with thoughtful and open dialogue are steps necessary to make long-term changes in *beliefs*. According to organizational theory, normalized behavior will follow.

Deciding to Change

There will not be any meaningful change until the DoD embraces the reality of the situation today. There is evidence to suggest that the military culture is one that is prone to sexual assault psychologically and demographically, which is manifesting itself on the front pages of newspapers and in testimony on Capitol Hill. But what if the artifact of sexual assault cannot be changed in the military? This might suggest, unlike the author has, that military service comes with the “occupational risk” of sexual assault. This is a morally and politically disastrous position to defend, and one not likely to be testified to in Congress any time soon, but would offer an even tougher point to ponder: Can we have the world’s most dominant military, capable of extraordinary violence in short order anywhere in the world, without attracting and further fostering aggressive personalities whom are predisposed to sexual violence as well?

The way society decides to have its military fight its wars has a play in how the human element will react to the demand. For instance, long drawn out wars with low

body counts do not necessarily offer valuable investment on the dollar. There is a great deal of research that suggests post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is strongly correlated to the realities of modern military service spatially and temporally.¹⁹⁷ One minute our soldiers are convoying around being shot at and blown up, and the next they're chatting with their kids at home via Skype. The decompression from combat to the homefront can be a matter of hours, and in the case of remotely operated weapon systems, like remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs), minutes. Killing a hut full of purportedly enemy combatants before 10 a.m. and making it home in time to eat lunch with the kids and see your work on CNN is an aspect of modern war that is no doubt affecting the psyche of the warfighter. This leads to a discussion of *nature* and *nurture*, one which forces us to answer the question of whether the nature of the warfighter is changing, and how the DoD is nurturing such a change. Ostensibly, we want Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who operate with such dependency as a light switch. Realistically, society may be asking too much of its service members. Unfortunately, extracurricular violence, including sexual violence, may be one such manifestation of this demand. Where does the military begin?

Redefining the Basis of Military Service

The DoD must set out on an arduous journey to change its hypermasculine culture for something different. Masculinity is defined as the opposite of femininity, and in doing so the military in-group is that of male values at odds with feminine values, and particularly, with women.¹⁹⁸ The ill-famed 1991 Tailhook convention brought the hostile sexual environment of the military to the forefront of public debate in a way wearing shirts declaring “Women are Property” and “The He-Man Woman Haters Club” will tend to do.¹⁹⁹ Fortunately, the time that this behavior is acceptable is long gone, but unfortunately, the core of the problem has yet to be addressed. The misogynistic symptom belies the greater current underneath, which as discussed in preceding pages, is the organizational disdain for everything other-than-masculine. Viewing sexual assault as

¹⁹⁷ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014.

¹⁹⁸ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 716–717.

¹⁹⁹ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 717.

the manifestation of underlying cultural beliefs *and doing something to change the behavior* is the first major step toward positive and lasting cultural change.

First, the use of any language that portrays non-masculine behavior as unacceptable to military service should be eradicated from the vernacular of military service members in the same manner religious or racial slurs were in the past. Emasculation is not congruent with feminization: the goal is to remove the focus on classical masculine values, and we cannot do this by counterbalancing with an inter-military feminine awakening. The DoD should not challenge masculinity in order to foster yet another *other* to compete with, but instead operate a scheme of incentives and disincentives that target stereotypical masculine behavior. The task is a tall one, and requires rethinking even the way we, as a society, think of heroic acts in the masculine tone. Naturally, as is stated in Schein's theory of organizational culture, there will be resistance to this change because it threatens exactly what the institution holds dear. However, if we intend to affect lasting change for the good of the institution, such resistance is proof that the change is meaningful and deep, and not an attempt to rake over the surface and rearrange the artifactual ground truth.

The primary identity any person is born with is their gender, and the next is their family. Gender selection, that is, '*are you a boy or a girl?*' is simple enough on the surface, but remarkably less so if considering the psychological tides that shape behavior as children grow into adults. In fact, the gender basis is as complex as family dynamics, but we just have to treat it as so. By dropping the 'macho man' façade, in which there is only one acceptable behavior the institution values of men *and* women, you ease the tension many young adults feel when joining up to prove something to themselves and others and de-incentivize those who would seek to use the military as an excuse to engage in hypermasculine and hypersexual activities such as assault and rape. The military does not value individuality, because the common understanding of cohesion up to this point has been that the masculine is the foundation of service. However, it is time to embrace that one man or woman is as different as another, as one family is different than another.

The argument is not for androgyny. Men are not born women and vice versa, and that will never change. We are born with a nature and are nurtured to behave in certain

ways. The point is that the comparison should not exist to begin with when it comes to the mission a military is supposed to accomplish: win the nation's wars. As long as the military advertises itself as a bastion of masculinity to those longing to prove themselves as *manly* (which, includes some women), any achievements military members make will continue to reinforce the macho culture.²⁰⁰ Western tradition, in fact the most ancient human tradition of contest, is based on the role of men fighting wars. Today the military is dealing with this anachronism that still shapes our thinking. As difficult as it may be, it is time to move past the *in* and *other* argument inside our ranks, and figure out concrete steps that can be taken to bring women and non-traditional views of masculinity into the *in*, and reserve the *other* for the one that matters: enemies that mean to do our country harm. We are, after all, in this together when it comes down to it, just as though we were a *family*.

Strengthening the already present familial aspects of military service is only one such idea for forging a more resilient culture. One way of doing this is to reexamine fraternization rules, and examine how it can change the existing regulatory structure to address cultural realities of the target demographic and foster a family mentality. Madeline Morris suggested such an approach in her article "Rape and the Military" in order to change the base of the military culture toward the familial and away from the masculine.²⁰¹ After all, she states, the military (and other western organizations) already copy so much of the patriarchal family organization construct anyway, why not adopt the corresponding *incestual taboo* as well?²⁰² In a family, at least in any conceivable *functioning* family, there is a firmly accepted taboo against sexual relations among relatives, which could translate to the proposed military model. As it currently stands, fraternization commonly understood as inappropriate relationships between officers and enlisted troops that ultimately affect good order and discipline. This isolates the young enlisted men and women from their officers, ensuring the chasm between the two remains wide. This definition could be expanded to fit a familial model of behavior, which may include banning any intimate personal relationships (or the appearance thereof) inside whatever the family unit would come to be in this new system. There are, however,

²⁰⁰ Lisak, Interview, 5 March 2014.

²⁰¹ Morris, "By Force of Arms," 755.

²⁰² Morris, "By Force of Arms."

serious downfalls to a strategy like this. First of all, it would involve regulating and repressing sexuality, which has been shown to be highly correlative with the patriarchal organizational structure underlying the current military culture. Second, since when has banning sexual relationships been effective at actually changing beliefs, or for that matter, behavior?

Changing the basis of the military culture toward a familial ideology is easier said than done, a trait not exclusive to military culture change. However, as discussed in this paper, the family already serves as an important role in military training and ideology – it’s just that the military is a family with nothing but *fathers and sons* who demand obedience and strive to be worthy of recognition, respectively. Expanding the family model to include an *incestual taboo* is a logical extension of the familial analogy, but also a perilous path on which to lead any journey of culture change. Morris was seeking a new underlying basis of identity other than masculinity, but the family model is not strong enough to invite a new strategy. Still, what other basis of identity could replace classical masculinity?

Military Sexual Assault is a Leadership Problem at All Ranks

The generational divide between the senior leaders and the 18-24 year olds that make up the majority of sexual assault victims and perpetrators is a real challenge, and must be accounted for in trying to come up with any strategy to confront sexual assault. However, let there be no doubt, *culture trumps strategy every time*.²⁰³ Sexual assault is the behavioral manifestation of the military culture for a number of possible reasons, but is certainly predisposed demographically. While we’re all in this together, the egalitarian attitude toward shared problems does not encourage responsibility and ownership. In short, we are privatizing leadership “wins” and socializing failure as if it were systematic. And it may be systematic, but change starts with the individual, and is observable in acts of moral courage leading our peers, subordinates, and even our superiors – from the top of the chain down.

The goal of effective leadership is to change the underlying beliefs of the military culture and in doing so, change the artifactual manifestation of sexual assault as a

²⁰³ Merchant, “Culture Trumps Strategy, Every Time.”

criminal behavior incompatible with the popular view of military service. Leadership is not a task which is its own reward, but for some purpose, and that purpose must be re-characterized to be culture change – not *behavior repression*. To break down the necessary steps to liberate our leaders to lead, we must first examine who follows, and their role in leadership.

A crucial task facing leaders is *who* their followers are. We must consider followership at least as important as leadership in changing military culture. The leadership answer to the generational sexual assault problem might go deeper, however, and could cause the military to exchange its classical leader/follower model for a leader/leader-in-training model.²⁰⁴ As a congruent part of military education commensurate with a service member's grade, followership should be teaching members *who to follow* and *how to lead*. We must encourage young Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines what behavior to model, and teach them the difference between good leaders, and unfortunately, the bad leaders they may have to follow. This effort would be a form of conditioning future leaders, but primarily to teach those at risk (with little power, education, and impressionably vulnerable) the skills to avoid placing themselves in compromising situations. This approach has the added benefit that it helps inspire young service members to surround themselves with positive role models who will further groom future leaders with the same attributes. The difficult but necessary side of this approach will be embracing that there are bad leaders, or in Lt Gen Rosa's words, "bottom 15%'ers" who exist in our system as currently constructed. A leader walks a fine line teaching a group of his or her 100 service members that, statistically speaking, roughly 15 of them are poor military leaders and followers and should not be followed. Nevertheless, such honesty, even if not always anecdotally true, may be the difference in winning the attention of the 18-24 year old demographic that the DoD is fighting to influence.

Formalizing education requirements on followership early in a career, which would transition to leadership education as the member advances, would inspire young service members to lead among their peers. This area, the peer influence arena, is the gold mine for culture interests, and the target of all efforts to infiltrate it. In effect,

²⁰⁴ Thanks to Col Jeff Smith (SAASS Commandant) for this input.

focusing on education earlier in young service members careers (not *training*, education!) would be the way to help redefine what 'macho' behavior is. We cannot change the value of behavior by enforcing some standard. It can only happen organically within the ranks of the 18-24 year old sub-culture, and only by their own leadership. It is time to arm them with the vision of acceptable leadership and followership behavior so that they learn what kind of behavior to aspire to, and what kind of behavior is suspect. The process starts with honesty, and talking about what we, the DoD, value of leadership and followership, and by acknowledging there are those in the ranks who would misuse their power to commit sexual assault.

Young followers must also lead. Historically, young people regardless of being enlisted or in the officer corps, are matriculated into service with little in the way to add for leading people, at least culturally. There are several unwritten rules that accompany the classical hierarchical military organization chart which seek to limit young members' place in shaping norms and policies. This approach is incompatible with the problem of sexual assault. In fact, it is only the young people, who are the most likely to experience sexual assault as the perpetrator and as the victim, who can lead us out of this mess. The rest of us should be doing everything in our power to facilitate their being able to police their own ranks.

Of course, peer leadership in the 18-24 year old demographic can only do so much in isolation of other grand cultural considerations in the military, but it is the most important area to focus on. The campaign is not so different from operational planning in the military: there is a task (culture change) which must be accomplished, there are certain means we have to accomplish it (effective peer leaders) and ways of using the means with which to achieve the object of the operation. The ways, as previously stated, start with education to modify behavior and normalize patterns of leadership and followership among the 43% of military members who are between 18-24 years old. The operation ways of using the target demographic is to set conditions for effective peer leaders to be recognized above their peers, and the strategic vision of this approach must be to empower commanders with the authority to prosecute individuals who fall outside the new rigorously enforced model of behavior, and reward those who step up to the challenge (i.e., giving stripes to those who show they possess the qualities the DoD

values). Senior leaders cannot lead the youngest generation of military service members out of a sexual assault crisis, so those members who lead above their grade should be recognized as accomplishing what Field-grade and General Officers cannot.

Summary

So far, the author has proposed that organizational theory is a useful tool to apply to the case of sexual assault in the US military. The culture of the military, it is argued, is informed by American societal preconceptions of what it means to have a military, and in fact, what it means to be *brave and aggressive* or *weak and empathetic*. This is to say, the military is the way it is because it is an artifactual reflection of American underlying cultural beliefs and values. Psychoanalytical research suggests but does not prove that, in the larger societal context, there is a statistical link between military service and a male psychological predisposition to offend and a female predisposition to victimization. The military must address the sexually aggressive behavior described so far by punishing offenders, protecting victims from post-assault victimization, but also by studying the psychological impact of a changing generation entering military service. Armed with better knowledge of the at-risk generation's risk factors, leaders can then better design education, promotion, and command apparatuses that encourage a leader/leader-in-training model of behavior that allows those most at risk to be empowered to shape their surroundings. Only then will the military be able to root out those who do not belong in positions of trust in the US military.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Studying military sexual assault as the product of deep-seeded underlying beliefs, instead of people just behaving badly, has important implications for how the US military can more effectively combat sexual violence. The problem of sexual assault is vastly complex, but such a challenge should not intimidate leaders and followers charged with eradicating it from the ranks. “Culture change” is not a buzzword-phrase that should be tossed around when it comes to seriously considering the source of such a disruptive and hurtful crime as sexual assault. The road to change is paved with honest appraisals and pragmatism. In an organization as large and bureaucratic as the DoD, we should not assume the process to be easy. If we are comfortable making the change, we are doing it wrong. For this reason, this paper has raised a number of controversial issues that must be frankly discussed in order to win the trust of the public and our brothers and sisters in arms.

The evidence presented in this paper suggests there are two main reasons for the sexual assault epidemic in the US military today. The first is a demographic discussion. Sexual assault is almost an exclusively male problem from an offender’s perspective, and the military has many men. In this regard, the problem is a statistical propensity to draw more people who may commit sexual assault, simply because it draws more men. This analysis is simple, however, and does not discover underlying issues. The important question is: why do more men than women join the military? The answer leads to the second area of concern, which is the psychological study of the demographic propensity to serve. Unlike the statistical discussion of demographics, the psychological approach seeks to answer if, among the high number of men who join the military, a higher percentage of them are more likely to commit sexual assault due to a number of underlying issues like previous sexual and physical abuse, or gender identity disequilibrium. There is considerable psychoanalytic research that suggests military members may be at higher risk of sexual assault, and it has been available as far back as

the Second World War.²⁰⁵ Recently an article in *Esquire* praised the military for taking “in-your-face” steps to acknowledge and confront a phenomenon of repeating sexual offenders in the ranks – as if this was some new discovery.²⁰⁶ The fact is, much of the literature on the propensity of serial predators is as old as the story of sexual predation itself, and certainly not limited to any sort of contemporary renaissance in academia.²⁰⁷ The troubling problem, it seems, is that it is taking so long for the military to assimilate this information in order to confront the possibility it has a higher propensity for serial sexual predation. If we want to stop treating patients, we have to seek out the source of the disease. When it comes to sexual violence, this means taking a long look in the mirror and having difficult and honest conversations about dark subjects like childhood sexual violence, the role of macho behavior by gender-insecure men, or even the historical understanding of what it means to be in the military.

This essay has humbly attempted to offer a road map to start such a journey. Edgar Schein’s methods for assessing and modifying culture offers great promise for the military leader who must confront an issue like sexual assault. The topic fills volumes of books, notably Schein’s own, and the selection of topics on culture change offered in this paper’s body are only but a few that must be considered. However, *consider we must*. The key goal of this paper is not to change military culture, per se, but to change the way people may think of how behavior, *including sexual assault*, is underwritten by underlying beliefs and values – some conscious, and others less so. Culture underwrites behavior, and should be studied for this reason.

The way the military views sexual assault, and the vernacular used to describe the crime, its perpetrators, and its victims matters greatly. Viewed as an *artifact*, we are able to separate the behavior from the underlying belief; that is, we are able to separate the symptom from the cause. The symptom in this case, is violence, which has a sexual manifestation, and is perpetrated within and by a certain demographic against another.

²⁰⁵ Morris, “By Force of Arms,” In fact, WWII records of violent sexual crime in the military are one of the most rich histories of the propensity for this type of violence available, and still used in modern study of the phenomenon.

²⁰⁶ Lt Col Robert Bateman, “How One Colonel Is Tackling Military Rape The Right Way,” *Esquire Magazine*, February 2014, <http://www.esquire.com/blogs/politics/military-focus-on-serial-rapists-022514>

²⁰⁷ Lisak, “Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence,” 3-8; Morris, “By Force of Arms,” 654. In particular, for more information, see Dr Lisak’s extensive bibliography on 1in6.org or his works cited list in “Understanding the Predatory Nature of Sexual Violence.”

However, sexual assault and demographic disparities compared to society at large are symptoms of a greater societal culture – one born of a patriarchal society and further advanced by a military sub-culture (with its own sub and micro-cultures). Sexual violence is *not the culture itself*, and talking of the problem as if the military has a “culture of rape” is no more helpful than ignoring the problem altogether.²⁰⁸ The military does not have a rape culture, it has a hypermasculine culture like few others in the United States, and *that culture* may propagate sexual assault at higher rates than society at large, among other things. Sexual assault must be considered a possible undesirable outcome of such a culture.

Second, the role of the individual in defining culture is multi-sided. Contemporary literature tends to focus on the role of the leader managing culture change, but a culture change requires others to internalize and act on the new direction laid out by the leader. In essence, followership is just as important as leadership, because leaders are only so empowered by those that follow them. Today’s followers are tomorrow’s leaders, and for this reason, it may be useful to shape promotion systems (especially in the 18-24 year old demographic) to one that rewards peer leadership instead of classically described followership. In any case, the DoD must act in positive ways to encourage leading among peers, and reward such behavior. Restructuring, and in fact completely rethinking the positive and negative effects of changing fraternization rules to open the pool of available leadership and followership opportunities is only one such idea. The strategy should be to empower the 18-24 year old demographic most at risk of sexual violence in the military to lead each other. This is not hyperbole or rhetoric, but a strategy of education that empowers the at-risk to recognize situations where they are in danger and act to prevent the crime at the grass roots level. The strategy should not, and cannot, be to *impose* values across generational lines. Egalitarianism will not work to solve this problem, because while we are all in this together, the problem is remarkably lopsided to affect our youngest service members. Leaders should be held accountable for setting the conditions for their subordinates to lead each other and change their culture. Perpetrators should be prosecuted fully, and victims should be protected *before, not just after* the crime.

²⁰⁸ Paula Coughlin, “It Is Time to Change the Culture of the Military and Change Attitudes About Sexual Assault,” Huffington Post, 20 November 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paula-coughlin/military-sexual-assault_b_4312348.html

To eliminate the threat of sexual assault we must first question and embrace what lurks beneath the behavior. Organizational culture theory, as argued in the preceding pages, is one such powerful lens with which to evaluate the sources of sexual assault. Like the Panama Canal project, which itself transformed America, we should abandon the preconceived biases toward sexual assault and instead approach the problem with relevant and formidable strategic understanding informed by psychological study and demographic consideration. However, more information needs to be gathered, analyzed, and published. The main finding of this paper is that if the military wants to institutionalize a resistance to sexual violence, it must first study the phenomenon pragmatically, including delving into the psychological makeup of the men and women who choose to join.

The DoD should spend more energy collecting information to allow factors that lead to higher risk to make themselves known, and so inform a strategy to minimize the threat of sexual violence in the military. The seeming lack of attention given to the underlying basis of what military culture is or isn't only points to a lack of privilege organizational culture theory plays in the discussion right now; and for that, we have only ourselves to blame. Whether you agree with the argued role of military *or* societal culture in sexual assault or not, there is no question that it is not studied enough in the military, *by the military*. By including the disconfirming and uncomfortable concepts of a cultural predisposition to sexual violence in the military as part of the discussion, we can only make ourselves, the military, and our nation more resistant to the crime.

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