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2013 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups

Overview Report

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2013 U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

Natalie Namrow and Paul J. Cook
SRA International, Inc.

Defense Manpower Data Center
Human Resources Strategic Assessment Program
4800 Mark Center Drive, Suite 04E25-01, Alexandria, VA 22350-4000

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DMDC's Survey Design, Analysis, and Operations Branch, under the guidance of Elizabeth P. Van Winkle, Deputy Branch Chief, is responsible for the development and oversight of questionnaires and focus groups in the survey program. The lead analysts on this assessment were Natalie Namrow and Paul Cook, SRA International, Inc. Lindsay Rock, DMDC, assisted with facilitation. Written transcripts of each of the sessions were provided by Gail Sherry Court Reporting Associates, Inc. Mr. Jay Velis of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy made all on-site arrangements for conducting the focus groups.

2013 U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

Executive Summary

The *2013 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2013 SAGR)* study is a focus group assessment conducted per U.S. Code 10 as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (10USC§4361). This focus group study assesses students' perception of issues related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-related topics at the U.S. Military Academy (USMA), the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). USCGA joined the program in 2008 and USMMA in 2012. USMMA, within the Department of Transportation (DOT), is not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USMMA officials requested they be included, beginning in 2012, in order to evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Separate sessions were conducted for male and female students in the freshman and senior class years as well as separate sessions for men and women in sessions that combined sophomores and juniors. Academic faculty (civilian and uniformed), coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre (company/squadron officers, training NCOs) exert considerable influence on students' beliefs and values; therefore focus groups of those Academy personnel were conducted as well.

Data from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively to identify major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions. For each theme, supporting comments from the focus group participants are included. Analysts used a combination of topical coding and repeated reviews to gather specific comments that supported the emerging themes. Where students and personnel differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings. Although focus group findings cannot be generalized to all students and personnel at each of the Academies, findings serve as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by Academy officials as they review their programs.

Findings are presented in separate chapters for midshipmen and Academy personnel. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments. Each comment identifies the gender of the student and the category (Faculty, Uniformed, Athletic) of the personnel. DMDC analysts also summarized potential opportunities for addressing issues raised by focus group participants. These opportunities are based on comments from the participants and the conclusions drawn from DMDC analysts. They are not directive or binding, but rather are offered to stimulate discussion and consideration by Academy leadership.

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2013 SERVICE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

Chapter 1: Introduction

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) strives to provide a safe educational and leadership development environment for its students. USMMA has implemented programs to reduce sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact/sexual assault, and to provide reporting and victim care procedures. Recurring evaluation of these programs is helpful for developing process improvements aimed at reducing instances of sexual harassment and assault, and enhancing victim care.

One source of information for evaluating these programs and for assessing the gender relations environment at USMMA involves quantifiable feedback from students through a representative survey. Another source of information involves qualitative feedback from students and Academy personnel through focus groups with a moderator trained to facilitate discussion on these topics. This report presents findings from the recent *2013 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2013 SAGR)* study. This introductory chapter provides background on why this study was conducted, a description of the focus group methodology, analysis methods and limits, and a brief overview of subsequent chapters.

U.S. Code 10 as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 codified an assessment cycle at the Academies that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. The first assessment in this series was conducted in 2004 by the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General (IG). Responsibility for subsequent assessments was transferred to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) beginning in 2005. This requirement applies to the U.S. Military Academy (USMA), U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA). Neither the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), the only Federal Military Academy within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), nor USMMA are required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USCGA and USMMA officials requested they be included, beginning in 2008 and 2012 respectively, in order to evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual harassment and assault.

Data Collection Methodology

The Human Resources Strategic Assessment Program (HRSAP) within DMDC follows standard, scientific methods that are widely used in the survey industry for data collections across a variety of domains. The program for assessments at the Military Service Academies (MSAs) is unique in that two different methodologies are used in a complimentary, alternating cycle of surveys and focus group assessments. Each type of assessment provides distinct insights into gender issues: the surveys provide valid statistical information about incidence rates and students' perception on a host of issues; the focus groups provide deeper insights into the dynamics behind the numbers. Together they help Academy leaders and Service policy makers assess the effectiveness of programs and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, each type of assessment informs the other. For example, survey results are used to identify

topics for deeper discussion during the focus groups and the focus group identify new questions to be asked on the surveys.

During the survey years, DMDC uses scientific, state of the art statistical techniques to draw conclusions from random, representative samples of the MSA student populations. A cornerstone of DMDC's methodology is the use of complex sampling and weighting procedures to ensure accuracy of estimations to the full student population at each MSA. The use of scientific sampling and weighting methods to construct population estimates are the same methods used by all federal statistical agencies (e.g., the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics), private survey organizations (e.g., RAND, WESTAT, and RTI), and well-known polling organizations (e.g., Gallup, Pew, and Roper).

Another cornerstone of DMDC's survey methodology is the use of standard measures of unwanted sexual contact, sexual harassment, components of sexual harassment, and sexist behavior. The unwanted sexual contact measure (USC) is behaviorally-based and encompasses a range of behaviors consistent with those prohibited in the UCMJ. The items were developed through an iterative process that included consultation with DoD legal counsel, discussions with researchers at the University of Illinois, examination of sexual assault surveys used with civilian populations, and focus group research with Academy students. The sexual harassment measure (including component measures and sexist behavior) was derived from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) by researchers at the University of Illinois and adapted for use in DoD populations. The DoD-SEQ consists of 12 behaviorally stated items measuring sexual harassment and four behaviorally stated items measuring sexist behavior. Using classical test theory, item response theory, and factor analysis, the measure has been found to provide reliable measurement of gender-related experiences.

Focus Group Methodology

Unlike other research methods that employ statistical sampling and extrapolation of findings to the larger population, focus groups follow a qualitative research approach to collect subjective details from participants on a limited number of topics. The design for these focus groups was replicated for each session at USMMA. Although the results cannot be generalized to the population of midshipmen, they provide insights into issues and ideas for further consideration. Procedures for selecting participants, developing the questions, and analyzing the data are described below.

Selection of Participants

Participation in the 2013 focus groups was voluntary. Participants were selected at random and offered the opportunity to participate. To select participants, USMMA first supplied DMDC a roster of all midshipmen.[1] DMDC randomized the list of students within clusters defined by gender and class year. The rosters were then returned to USMMA and officials used the randomized list to identify the first ten students who were available (e.g., did not have a class scheduled during the focus group) to attend the focus group appropriate for their gender and class year. Students were contacted and asked if they would voluntarily participate in the focus

[1] The roster excluded foreign national students, as well as exchange students.

group. Additional students were selected from the randomized lists as necessary to achieve eight to ten students committed to attending. In some cases, students who agreed to participate did not attend their scheduled session. For that reason, session sizes varied.

For the sessions of faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre, USMMA officials advertised the sessions through the most appropriate forum and solicited volunteers until they received twelve participants committed to each session.

Development of Questions

To begin the collaborative effort of developing focus group questions, DMDC analysts drafted potential questions by reviewing comments and findings from the *2012 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (2012 SAGR)*. Analysts looked for follow-up topics that might clarify or expand upon findings from the previous year's survey. A list of preliminary questions was generated and provided to the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), as well as to the DoD Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO) and to each Service Academy. A revised set of questions incorporating comments from SAPRO, ODMEO, and the Academies was compiled and then returned to each for final revisions. Six question areas with detailed subquestions (probing questions) were presented to student focus group participants. The focus group protocol for students is included in Appendix A with the student handout in Appendix B. The topics addressed were:

1. Sexual Assault—awareness of the behaviors that comprise unwanted sexual contact, discussion of the incidence rates for men and women from the *2012 SAGR* survey,[2] knowledge of where incidents were most likely to occur, thoughts on victims experiencing multiple incidents of unwanted sexual contact over time, role of "sexting" and pornography, and the role alcohol plays in unwanted sexual contact.

2. Sexual Harassment/Sexist Behavior—discussion of the sexual harassment and sexist behavior incidence rates from the *2012 SAGR* survey, the possible relationships among these unwanted gender-related behaviors, whether cultural factors (e.g., attitudes of disrespect toward women) contributed to unwanted sexual contact, and discussion of recommendations for decreasing sexual harassment and sexist behavior.

3. Reporting—opinions of a number of potential reasons for not reporting, especially the perceived repercussions from reporting, and recommendations for removing barriers to reporting.

4. Perceptions of Leadership—opinions about the degree to which they interact with leadership on these issues, whether leaders react appropriately and lead by example, and what else leaders can do to help diminish unwanted sexual contact.

5. Training—discussion of training received, perception of their training in reducing unwanted sexual contact, examples of most effective training, and recommendations for improvement.

[2] USMMA focus groups were given USCGA rates, which are comparable to USMMA. Data for USMMA were not available for presentation during focus groups.

6. Additional Recommendations—how well prepared they felt for dealing with future gender-related issues once they have subordinates, opinions on counseling for midshipmen who experienced USC prior to coming to the Academy, helpfulness of a Dignity and Respect Code, and final thoughts. The questions ended with "What did we not ask that we should have?"

Six question areas with detailed subquestions (probing questions) were also presented to Academy personnel focus group participants. The focus group protocol for Academy personnel is included in Appendix C with the Academy personnel handout in Appendix D. The topics addressed were:

1. Sexual Assault—discussion of the incidence rates for men and women from the *2012 SAGR* survey,[3] knowledge of where incidents were most likely to occur, thoughts on victims experiencing multiple incidents of unwanted sexual contact over time, role of "sexting" and pornography, and the role alcohol plays in unwanted sexual contact.

2. Sexual Harassment/Sexist Behavior—discussion of the sexual harassment and sexist behavior incidence rates from the *2012 SAGR* survey; possible relationships among these unwanted gender-related behaviors and the potential impact of addressing verbal behaviors and possibly reducing unwanted sexual contact; whether cultural factors (e.g., attitudes of disrespect toward women) contributed to unwanted sexual contact; and recommendations for decreasing sexual harassment and sexist behavior.

3. Reporting—discussion of why, even with all of the emphasis on unwanted sexual contact and zero tolerance, students are still reluctant to report their experiences; potential reasons for not reporting; and recommendations to remove barriers to reporting.

4. Roles and Responsibilities—perceptions about their roles with respect to preventing and responding to unwanted sexual contact, interactions they have with students on these issues, interactions with the SAPR staff, and recommendations for helping students better deal with issues.

5. Cultural Change—discussion of approaches the Academy might take to improve unwanted sexual contact prevention and response by changing the culture and attitudes toward this issue, how such change could be made, and thoughts on the usefulness of a Dignity and Respect Code.

6. Additional Recommendations—what more the Academy could do to decrease sexual assault and sexual harassment.[4]

[3] USMMA focus groups were given USCGA rates, which are comparable to USMMA. Data for USMMA were not available for presentation during focus groups.

[4] The focus groups concluded with an open invitation to express any other thoughts regarding gender-related issues at the Academy and any additional recommendations for ways the Academy could reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment. These recommendations are not reported separately; rather they are integrated with other discussion points on similar topics.

Conducting the Focus Groups

Nine focus groups were scheduled in 90-minute sessions at USMMA. Six separate midshipmen focus groups were conducted by gender and class year and three were conducted by personnel affiliation. Focus groups were held in conference rooms in the USMMA library.

DMDC provided focus group facilitators who led the sessions. A male facilitator led the male focus groups and a female facilitator led the female focus groups. Both a male and female facilitator led the sessions for Academy personnel. The facilitators conducted the subsequent qualitative analysis of the data. DMDC provided a female recorder who used a stenographic machine to transcribe all comments from participants and the facilitator. No audio or video recording was made of any focus group session.

All focus group sessions were governed by a number of ground rules, most notably that they were all non-attribution sessions. Participants were advised of the purpose for the recorder, and they were informed that their names were not recorded and their comments would not be attributed back to them. Participants were encouraged to provide information generally but not to specify personal experiences, names, or other identifying details. They were also advised not to share information learned within the focus groups after the session was concluded.

Analysis Methodology

Data from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively for major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions. The order of presentation does not imply that any one theme is more important than any other. For each theme, supporting comments from the focus group participants are included. The supporting comments do not include every comment made on a particular theme; rather they illustrate the theme in the words of the participants. No attempt was made to quantify the number of comments made on a specific theme.

The results in this study are based on qualitative analysis—findings cannot be generalized to all midshipmen or Academy personnel. Findings should be viewed as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by Academy officials as they review their programs. Findings may also be viewed as a general perspective on participants' views of sexual harassment and assault, but they do not portray a statistical report on incidence rates or performance of response and prevention programs.

Categorization of Topics

Focus group analysts reviewed transcripts to identify major themes. Although findings tended to cluster around the main questions asked in the sessions, categorization based on the questions was not a set requirement. Analysts were sensitive to themes that emerged from the discussions. Analysts used a combination of topical coding and repeated reviews to gather specific comments that supported the emerging themes. Where participants differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings. Analysts used an iterative review process to extract and classify comments that included different reviewers who verified that themes were supported by comments.

Organization of Findings

Findings are presented in separate chapters for midshipmen and Academy personnel. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments from the participants. Each comment identifies the gender of the student and affiliation of the Academy personnel (Faculty, Uniformed, or Athletic). Caution must be exercised in reviewing these findings; comments should not be viewed as representative of all other midshipmen or Academy personnel.

Chapter 2: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Midshipmen

Six focus group sessions were conducted at USMMA from March 18-19, 2013. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for freshmen, seniors, and sophomores and juniors combined. Each session had between nine and twelve students.

Sexual Assault

The *2013 SAGR* focus groups devoted a majority of the time to topics designed to gather students' perceptions on unwanted sexual contact (USC) and their recommendations for reducing the prevalence. In each topical area the facilitator made an effort to drive out causes for behaviors or situations being discussed and recommendations for improvement.

The discussions began by sharing with the participants the USC rates for the DoD academies[5] and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA)[6] from the *2012 SAGR*. Midshipmen were asked whether they were aware of the rates presented, and to discuss whether they felt the rates were similar to those at their Academy. Additional questions were posed for midshipmen's' knowledge of where incidents were most likely to occur, their thoughts on victims experiencing multiple incidents of USC over time, and the role of "sexting" and pornography. Midshipmen further contributed comments on the role alcohol plays in USC and when during the day it is more likely to occur.

Familiarity with Incidence Rates from 2012 SAGR

- **Some midshipmen indicated that USC incidence rates for USMMA women would closely resemble USCGA rates for women.**
  - *"I agree with that, it sounds right considering the number of women we have here."* (Female)
  - *"I guess I consider it realistic considering that means if I think ten of my female friends, one of them in the past year has had unwanted sexual contact. And while I may not have heard about it, I think it's pretty realistic."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist for DMDC to work with the Academy to prepare a briefing or handout of *2012 SAGR* and future survey results tailored to the Academy.
- Another opportunity might exist for the Academy to use the results of the surveys to generate discussion during sexual assault training sessions.
- Engaging midshipmen in discussions and problem solving helps give them a sense of ownership of the solution.

[5] U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Military Academy, and U.S. Air Force Academy

[6] Rates for USCGA were used by the facilitator as a comparison model for rates at USMMA. Actual USMMA rates from *2012 SAGR* were not available at the time of the focus groups.

- **Some midshipmen indicated that USC incidence rates for USMMA women would not be as high as those for women at USCGA.**
  - *"Yeah, it sounds high."* (Male)
  - *"It seems kind of high to me."* (Female)
  - *"I'm very surprised that it's even that high. Because we're here all the time and we hear everything that goes on, and even the amount of rumors which would probably be higher than the number that actually happened, even then we don't hear that much."* (Male)
- **Female midshipmen indicated that USC incidence rates for USMMA women would be higher than those for women at USCGA.**
  - *"I think of ten of my female friends, I can definitely think of at least one that has in the last year alone had unwanted sexual contact, if not more than that. So just looking at the Coast Guard Academy and our numbers, I would expect our numbers to be higher. In fact just from my personal experience I might be able to think of more than one out of ten girlfriends."* (Female)
  - *"I think it's low. I think it should be at least 20, 25 percent."* (Female)
- **Midshipmen also indicated that USC incidence rates for USMMA men would be higher than those for men at USCGA.**
  - *"I feel it may be a little bit low on the side for the men because I feel it's much harder for men to come forward and present that they have been sexually assaulted."* (Female)
- **Midshipmen indicated that rates need to be distinguished between USC incidents at the Academy versus at sea.**
  - *"Just to clarify, are we talking about just at school, because out at sea it's a completely different thing."* (Female)
  - *"We have a little bit of a different situation than the Coast Guard because we go out to sea and there are some sketchy guys out there."* (Female)
  - *"I would actually be surprised if our numbers weren't significantly higher seeing as how we send all of our females out to sea. And this doesn't say on campus."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that deterrents for USC incidents occurring on campus include security measures provided by the Academy, size of the campus and student body, and knowing that an offender would be punished if they are reported.**

  – *"I think the level of security here is at a point where it isn't too invasive in privacy. You can have cameras out in front of every room, but it becomes a point where it's just a prison."* (Male)

  – *"I think another factor is that there's so many – in such a closer community here being the size of the school, everyone knows everyone. There are very few people that you see on a day to day basis that you don't recognize at least, and I think that's a deterrent itself for people."* (Male)

  – *"We have got a guy who works in our school as a sexual response coordinator and SARC. And we know that if it is reported, we'll get in trouble. So I don't know if there's anything more you can do."* (Male)

- **Female midshipmen indicated the disproportionate gender ratio contributes to USC.**

  – *"And I think it happens partially because there's so few of us, that a lot of us get a lot of attention from other guys because there's not much to do and they're not used to that."* (Female)

  – *"I feel we can account for more instances happening just because the ratio is more guys to one girl. Some of my friends from other colleges, they don't really get as much of this attention because the ratio is so much smaller. I could see how it would be more prominent at our school or another academy."* (Female)

Location of Unwanted Sexual Contact: On Campus

- **Midshipmen indicated that the majority of incidents on campus occur in the barracks.**

  – "*That's where everyone is most of the time."* (Female)

  – *"We're not really allowed out. We have a new sheriff in town [meaning the new Superintendent] so a lot of rules have changed. We're restricted more on campus. So if problems do happen they are going to happen in the barracks."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist to raise awareness among midshipmen that many of the unwanted behaviors occur right in their own living area, generating greater attention to surroundings and watching out for each other (greater bystander intervention in the midshipmen living area).
- An opportunity might also exist to add more secure common areas to offer safe options for midshipmen to congregate other than their rooms.

- *"But most of the time everybody is going to be back here. When they're done out having their fun, everyone comes back typically."* (Male)

- *"I also feel safety, it's not people outside of the campus, its people on campus. Even if you did key cards or anything, they'd still be in the barracks because they would be in your company."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated the most likely time for an assault to occur would be at night or during the weekend.**

  - *"I can almost guarantee it would be on the weekends or nights."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that not being able to lock bedroom doors makes midshipmen feel unsafe. Midnight bed checks are a hindrance to locking doors as well.**

  - *"You'd have to stay up until midnight to close the door until after room check comes."* (Female)

  - *"In the older barracks, in Cleveland Hall they have the traditional doorknob and you have a key. You can lock it from the inside or lock it with the key but we typically don't lock it unless both roommates are leaving for Christmas break or something. We normally don't lock it."* (Female)

  - *"Everyone knows the master [to the electronic locks]."* (Female)

  - *"When I was a plebe [freshman] we had a girl that went around to all the female plebe rooms and told us to lock our doors. As plebes, when we're not supposed to, at six o'clock, close them and just don't open them for anyone because there are drunk senior guys walking around trying to find the nearest plebe female room to knock on their door and just come in and start talking to us and trying to make out with us."* (Female)

  - *"You can't lock the doors in the old barracks, they're broken."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist to consider if the "no locked door" policy and midnight bed checks might result in midshipmen feeling less safe.
- Another opportunity might exist to upgrade older rooms with key cards where only the resident of the room can easily gain access. An officer or other authority figure might also regulate the "watch standard."

- **Midshipmen indicated that the watch standard is not effective since it is run by midshipmen.**

  - *"The watch standard is not someone outside of the Academy, it's one of us."* (Female)

  - *"There's a watch standard but honestly they don't do much. We just walk around and make sure everything is okay."* (Female)

- *"I feel it's generalized depending on company. I know people in our company, every hour you just walk around the barracks and take a tour. But it's not extensive; you're not going through rooms and knocking on doors."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that the barracks are safe overall because midshipmen can hear through walls.**
  - *"The walls are pretty thin."* (Female)
  - *"You can talk inside with the door closed and people can hear the conversations."* (Female)
  - *"Good luck getting away with anything in the barracks, it's smaller."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that the Waterfront and chapel basement are other locations on campus where midshipmen feel vulnerable.**
  - *"[The Waterfront] is down where all the boats are stored. There's not a whole lot of supervision there."* (Female)
  - *"[The Waterfront] is definitely a more relaxed environment."* (Female)
  - *"Chapel basement."* (Male)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the majority of places an incident would occur would be areas outside the Academy.**
  - *"There have been situations in the park before, I guess."* (Male)
  - *"A lot of the problems happen when we travel into the city, and normally when we travel into the city, that also brings alcohol into the situation."* (Male)

OPPORTUNITY

- *2012 SAGR* survey data indicate that the majority of incidents occur on-campus.
- An opportunity might exist to train midshipmen to correct these perceptions and focus on interactions with other midshipmen on-campus.

- **Midshipmen indicated that Team Movements (TM) might allow for possible vulnerability.**
  - *"But I think that's more interesting because there's a professional presence. You've got a coach or a chaperone or whoever they are, but it really it's the non-professional part of the day."* (Male)
  - *"But you get one chaperone and 20 guys running around, and you can't say everyone stay in the house and don't go anywhere."* (Male)

- *"We're a small enough population of women that even on TM the number of women is still very low. As far as protecting your own, that's hard because there may only be two of you and then a large number of men and things like that. I do think that the proportion, if you look at the Coast Guard Academy, that is one of the things that make us very different, is that we don't even really have a critical mass of women whereas the other academies are up in the 20 percent and 50 percent and things like that. I think that maybe it goes almost accepted sometimes, which is unfortunate."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that chaperoned trips into the city would not be welcomed.**

  - *"No, that would be a horrible idea. Oh, my gosh. That's where we go to blow off steam."* (Male)

  - *"How much do you want to police the cadets? What's the limit?"* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that alcohol mixed with an inability to leave campus plays a large role.**

  - *"I think it has to do with alcohol too. The school has the strictest rules on alcohol imaginable but people still drink here all the time. And I see a lot of assault cases probably do happen when alcohol is involved because both parties judgment is impaired."* (Female)

  - *"Maybe if they let people go out more or have more structured things happening I think people would be less likely to do that. Because people – can't leave, so what are you going to do, you are going to stay here. And it's, we should watch a movie and drink. Everything has to be involved with drinking."* (Female)

  - *"I think it's honestly a cultural thing too. It's just you go to a party and alcohol is going to be there at most of the parties. And it doesn't matter what they do here, if its stricter policies on here, you probably won't catch as many people drinking but everybody just goes off campus."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that if people want to do something, they'll find a way on campus to make it happen.**

  - *"Wherever there's a will there's a way."* (Male)

  - *"Yeah, they are going to find a place."* (Male)

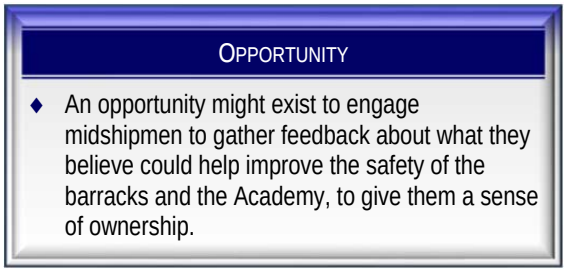
  - *"The campus is big enough that you can find a lot of places."* (Male)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist for the Academy to invest in more recreational outlets and locations on campus for socializing, other than the dormitories.

- *"I would agree with them simply because the same fact you're only at sea for a little over a year. That's a quarter of our time here, I guess, but you can be in a lot more trouble, there's a lot more boredom and whatnot on the weekends and if there's going to be drinking on campus and it's certainly not going to be in the same atmosphere at sea; it's going to be a lot more hush hush and there may be frat involved with upperclass males and subordinate females and whatnot, so you throw that into the mix."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen suggested that employing better judgment is the best way to make the barracks safer. The responsibility belongs to the midshipmen themselves.**



  - *"I think it's mostly your own intuition, it's your own judgment. We have the whole frat policy, we have the whole being plebes you're supposed to stay away from the upperclassmen and vice versa, whatever. But when you are a plebe at first, at least the first time it's so awesome to have an upperclassman interested in you, would be like what's the harm of having a couple of drinks in the barracks, I'm a bad ass, I'm cool, I'm not supposed to be doing this and I will do it."* (Female)

  - *"We have a lot of roommates and the plebes' doors are always closed or opened and when our doors are closed, it's rare to be in there alone. And to let someone in your room that you don't want in there would be pretty unusual."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated they were surprised to learn that in most cases the offender was a midshipman.**

  - *"I'm surprised it's another cadet. I'm surprised it's on campus. Because out at sea, I had a female sea partner and we had issues with some of the licensed officers. It's just – that's just surprising."* (Male)

  - *"I would weigh with something unwanted. I think it's different than drinking down at the Waterfront versus sexually assaulting somebody in their room. I would imagine it would be two different things."* (Male)

Location of Unwanted Sexual Contact: Sea Duty

- **Midshipmen indicated sea duty was where midshipmen are most vulnerable to USC.**

  - *"Even though the doors here are a lot less secure, I was more nervous out at sea."* (Female)

- *"Most of the cases I heard of were of people actually at sea, not on campus."* (Male)

- *"Think about it, most merchant ships you have 20 sailors, the whole crew. And if it's you and your sea partner, that's two cadets with 20 men."* (Female)

- *"Out at sea I felt actually not secure – at sea you're one female in a crew of 20 men and you're isolated. At least here on the weekends the guys can go out and do their thing, whatever they need to do to release their sexual tension. But you're on a ship. And then also some of us had experience with different cultures, where if you are on a foreign flagship or if you didn't grow up in the United States, where it was acceptable to objectify women. It was a different experience. Here we've all been brought up in pretty much a similar way, on weekends you might get crazy but at least you know it's wrong even if you do it. But some of these people at sea, you're not able to trust that you know this is wrong."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- Midshipmen indicated that women are more vulnerable to USC during sea duty because they are usually the only females on board.
- An opportunity might exist to continue promoting the use of "code words" and sea duty partners as good practices to make midshipmen feel safe. Also, introducing physical and safety training to women prior to boarding ships might be effective.
- Another opportunity might exist to allow more female midshipmen to have sea duty together making them feel more secure.

- **Some female midshipmen felt crew members chose to leave them alone or ignore them.**

  - *"I don't think a lot of people progress to the step of actual contact out at sea because there's a huge stigma with people out at sea of also being afraid to come on to a cadet because everybody knows there's all sorts of [stuff] that can happen."* (Female)

  - *"I was on an American flag ship, I haven't been on a foreign flag ship, I don't really know what it's like to be on there. But all of these guys have been in the career for so long that they're there for their career and they all know if they get in trouble for something then they know that's the end of their career."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that code words to get off the ship seem to make midshipmen feel safer on ships.**

  - *"You have a training officer that supervises everything, and if you call them I know they give you a safe word or something that you can say over the phone. I know if you have an issue you call that person, whoever is in charge of you or a group of kids, and then I need to get off my ship, somebody needs to help and usually it happens."* (Female)

- *"At the sea year lectures, talk about the ship, basic schedule of the ship, what to do, what you're expected to do. And they also tell you the safety word, if your ship gets really bad you send an e-mail or send a phone call saying that word and they get you off the ship the next day or the next time you're in port. So there's a safety word if it gets really bad."* (Female)

- **Female midshipmen want better self-defense classes to protect themselves during sea duty.**

  - *"The only thing that I would think of to improve, the fact that our self-defense program isn't very advanced. I knew the majority, if not more, of what they taught us in self-defense. And just having that kind of training would probably help us be safer too. That's the only thing that I can think of."* (Female)

  - *"It's also geared more towards guys that get drunk in bars than towards girls trying to defend themselves against potential rape."* (Female)

Multiple Incidents of Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Midshipmen offered opinions about multiple offenders versus the same offender.**

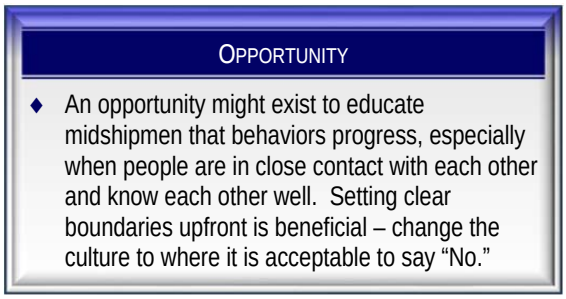
  - *"If it was more than once I would assume it was from the same person. A repeat offender."* (Male)

  - *"A mistake or poor judgment would probably explain the one time issue but a mind set would explain the long term."* (Male)

  - *"I think that a lot of guys, if they're intentionally doing something they justify it to themselves why they're doing it and even when a girl does approach them, 'What are you doing, I thought you were my friend, that's not okay, way past boundaries.' They'll try to play it off like its cool. They'll just play it like it's a very casual thing for me, or I thought we were like that. And who is then to say that they'll do it again."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that unwanted behaviors might progress.**

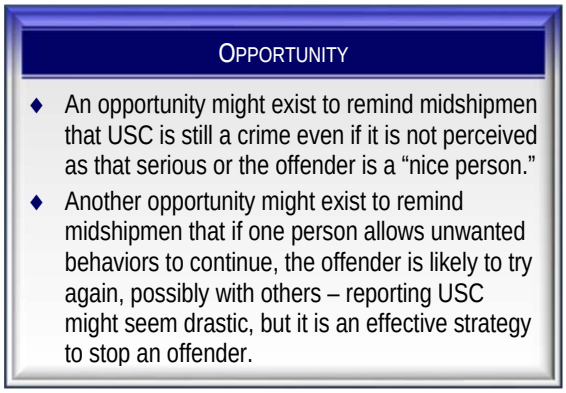
  - *"It definitely starts with something that you could just brush off or say 'Hey, don't do that.' And then you're around them again and it becomes something more. And it is definitely a progression, especially if you are someone that internalizes something instead of says something back. If they feel they can push the envelope this far and nothing happens, then they go a little further."* (Female)



- *"I remember we had training [where] we had someone come in and talked about why is the line between sexual assault and not sexual assault so blurry. The steps that you take to have a normal healthy sexual relationship with somebody are almost the same, you have some drinks and break down the barriers with liquid courage and you get somewhere private. It starts out as easy, when you are having a normal sexual relationship with someone it starts out easy, just a hug or that – the small touch, so it starts off the same. And so then it escalates and you get a little more comfortable, this girl isn't going to go and tell anybody if I just touch her leg, what about when I touch her boob or what about when I force her down and actually rape her."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that they are reluctant to turn in offenders due to the social repercussions.**

  - *"I think that depends on the person. I know a lot of people are uncomfortable, especially here where your reputation is so hard – it's very, very easy to lose and it's very hard to maintain. So for some people something happened to them, it would be very difficult for them to make the decision that they need to search for help because it actually ruins your reputation more than the other person."* (Female)



  - *"I think it also depends on the severity. If it was full out rape, I think someone would probably seek help confidentially, that's what I would personally do. But with other stuff I would probably just try to avoid the situation again and not so much project it."* (Female)

  - *"But those reputation issues I think are pretty much learned here because we're such a small school."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that perpetrators might continue because victims do not report or because offenders are not charged and punished.**

  - *"I was going to say, I think it's just, past history, whether this person has done it in high school and it's worked on one out of ten girls, let's just keep trying it, playing the odds, I've never gotten in trouble."* (Male)

  - *"I think it's because victims don't report it. I think it's a thing about feeling comfortable about just admitting it to other people."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that if an incident is reported, the perpetrator would be punished.**
  - *"They take it really seriously here."* (Female)
  - *"The Academy really cares about the reputation concerning stuff like this."* (Female)
  - *"I think it would be an interesting deterrent to see how hard they're bringing the hammer down these days to see what the outcomes were."* (Male)
- **Midshipmen indicated that alcohol plays a factor in repeated offenses.**
  - *"If they're drunk it's a different story. Usually their friends are monitoring them. And usually they know, they're very aware."* (Female)
  - *"Alcohol and then trying to save face if it's something they regret. Maybe it was with their friend's boyfriend or something."* (Male)
  - *"At this school I think [alcohol consumption] is definitely higher. It's probably the highest than at any other school."* (Male)
- **Midshipmen indicated that polices about alcohol on campus have changed, helping the situation.**
  - *"They used to kick you out. There was a rule, two alcohol offenses and you're kicked out. And we've all heard stories of people graduating with three or four. We have new leadership in the past year and he's a real stickler on this, he will go through the books and take care of anybody. If you get one, he'll tell you if I see your name and alcohol again, just pack your bags."* (Male)
  - *"We've had a dozen people get kicked out."* (Male)

Sexting, Pornography, Flirting, and Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Midshipmen indicated that there is some pornography on campus, but it does not appear to drive USC.**
  - *"Unsolicited sexting maybe. Because I know cases where that's happened. People sending you stuff on the internet or your phone, I don't know how they got your number."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- Pornography does not appear to be a widespread problem, although what midshipmen do in private is hard to assess.
- An opportunity might exist for the Academy to educate midshipmen on the potential relationship between pornography and unwanted behaviors.

- *"People aren't sitting around watching porn."* (Male)

- *"It doesn't involve us. It's more of their nature, that's their stuff to take care of them. It doesn't ever cross over to our side to harass us with that stuff."* (Female)

Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior

This major section of the focus groups posed a hypothesis about the relationship of verbally offensive behaviors, such as sexual harassment and sexist comments, on USC. The facilitator began this section in a similar manner to the first section of the focus groups by sharing results from the *2012 SAGR* on sexual harassment and sexist behavior at the other Academies and hearing their reactions. Midshipmen also provided thoughts on the subjective nature of these behaviors and why they are offensive to some and not to others. The facilitator then gave additional findings based on *2012 SAGR* that those men and women who experienced USC in the past year also tended to experience sexual harassment and sexist behavior at higher rates. Midshipmen commented on the possible relationships among these unwanted gender-related behaviors and what the impact might be of addressing the verbal behaviors and possibly reducing USC. Following up, the facilitator asked if cultural factors, such as attitudes of disrespect toward women, contributed to USC. This section ended with a discussion of recommendations for decreasing sexual harassment and sexist behavior.

Familiarity with Incidence Rates from 2012 SAGR

- **Midshipmen indicated that the sexual harassment incidence rates at USMMA would be higher for both females and males than the rates at USCGA.**

  - *"It would be like 80 or 90 percent."* (Female)

  - *"Low [indicating the rates would be higher at USMMA]."* (Multiple replies – Female)

  - *"I imagine crude and offensive behavior would be close to a hundred percent."* (Male)

  - *"I can tell you almost every single day since I've been here there's a sexist remark. 'Dang, girl, woo hoo.' And even though it's one of my friends just walking down the hallway, I'm like ha ha, so funny. But every single day it's something like or the classic make me a sandwich."* (Female)

  - *"I don't think the men would be necessarily as high as women but I do think it would be a little bit higher because I feel almost every girl in this school has thrown some jokes back at a guy that could be considered sexual harassment."* (Female)

- **Some male midshipmen believed the sexual harassment incidence rates at USMMA would be on par with the rates at USCGA.**

  – *"I think we'd be on par with them."* (Male)

- **Some male midshipmen believed the sexual harassment incidence rates at USMMA would be lower than the rates at USCGA.**

  – *"We have so few girls, we know all of them really well, and we're in their section, 20 people in the section, there's going to be at least ten people that would stand up for the girl."* (Male)

  – *"I think people know their boundaries. Just because you tend to stick with the same people year after year, that if there are females in the class, you know where that boundary is. You usually have to cross that boundary to find out where it is, but once the boundary is crossed, you don't go over."* (Male)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist to promote education on what qualifies as sexual harassment and sexist behavior, in conjunction with USC, to encourage more students to report issues they experience, thus discouraging future unwanted behaviors.

- **Midshipmen indicated that until this discussion, some did not know they had experienced sexual harassment.**

  – *"I would say that also we're surprised that the rate isn't higher but also we just read the definition. I would not have thought of all the crude or offensive non-verbal behaviors that happened to me until I read that and realized it pops into your head all the things that happen. If you are just reading have you ever been sexually harassed, I probably would have said no."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that sea duty leads to higher rates due to a different mix of people on board.**

  – *"So on a ship of maybe 24 people, you're the only female, there's talk that goes on behind your back, to your face, comments back and forth. I feel every female has probably experienced some form of sexual harassment at sea."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist to work with the shipping companies with whom midshipmen spend their sea duty. For example, more emphasis should be put on encouraging midshipmen to report issues that occur on sea duty, and likewise, crew members should be told that midshipmen are encouraged to report issues that happen on board, the enforcement of which might lead to the offender jeopardizing their employment.

- *"When you come here as a plebe it's more of a rude awakening but unfortunately I feel most of us have become desensitized to a lot of it. But when something does stand out, I think for us especially after going to sea, when we say something happened, it's something serious because we're so desensitized to everything else. Some of it just doesn't bother me maybe like it used to or that it should anymore. There's still that line that nobody usually crosses if they know better, most people."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that sexual harassment occurs on campus as well.**

  - *"I agree it does happen out at sea a lot but I think it's here too. It's just midshipman to midshipman. There are a lot of comments that you just get the center of attention because you're female all the time. It's just because there are nine guys to every girl here and because we're locked up on campus, we're not supposed to leave. They see us and they make comments and they don't realize that they're inappropriate half the time they make them. I think that's the problem."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that they would expect sexist behavior incidence rates to be higher at USMMA than USCGA.**

  - *"I think our number would be very close to 90, if not a hundred."* (Female)

  - *"We live in a locker room."* (Female)

  - "*I don't know about the men. Sometimes I've made a sexist comment against a man because someone says it to me all the time. I believe that their number probably is at least 40."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that sexist behavior is encountered more often than sexual harassment.**

  - *"And I think it's definitely more sexist behavior than sexual harassment. Because I don't think I've ever been in class with my section and felt sexually harassed. I've definitely felt a lot of sexist behavior, I would say that sexual harassment is probably more in the private. At least with my experience."* (Female)

  - *"But I definitely think the sexist behavior on a whole is a lot higher percent of what we encounter."* (Female)

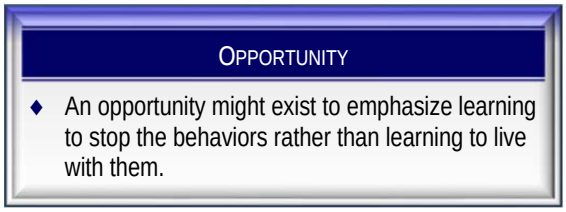
OPPORTUNITY

- A common military assertion is that they break people down and then build them up as soldiers and leaders.
- An opportunity might exist to emphasize that "breaking people" is different than sexual harassment. Using repeated sexual harassment to break people might damage them, leaving them unable to be built back up or perform their duties effectively.

- *"The whole system is set up to dehumanize us. We dehumanize each other. It's to make us a functioning unit as a group. So there is always going to be that, and that easily translates into a dehumanizing on this sexist scale as well."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that they are desensitized to the sexist behaviors and language.**

  - *"I think the guys have become desensitized too because they see us half the time as accepting it. So when we say something suddenly after being here for a couple of years then they brush it off, you laughed at this last week, why is this comment any different?"* (Female)



  - *"I think a lot of times we don't recognize it as sexual harassment. I know one time someone said something here, and I said the same thing back home and they were like, I can't believe you just said that. I didn't really notice it was that big of a deal because we're used to it up here."* (Female)

  - *"I feel a lot of us are desensitized to the behavior, it is something we put up with."* (Female)

  - *"If you were to take everything that was said here too personally every single day, you wouldn't make it through four years of this place. You have to develop a thick skin if you want to graduate from this place, otherwise you would be gone in a year."* (Female)

- **Female midshipmen indicated they have to become "dudes" to fit in with the culture.**

  - *"I get this a lot from my friends. It's, you're a dude, deal with it. They don't necessarily think of us as women when they say things like that."* (Female)

  - *"I feel the thing about it, for us females to fit in we have to become a bro to fit in. We have to talk like them so they don't come back at us ten fold. With the sexist jokes and everything, we have to come back at them with a response in order for them to accept us in their group or whatever."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that to change the culture, a top-down approach is needed; change is unlikely though.**

  - *"It would be really really hard. You would have to start at the highest level of our leadership, the commissioned officers, not a single bad thing from them, and when one of them does say something bad, they would have to apologize for it."* (Male)

- *"And a lot of other officer leadership didn't come from the military officer corps; it comes from the enlisted corps. It's a different culture, and it puts them in a different position."* (Male)

- *"I think that's purely a cultural issue here. We are a male dominated society that we live in. We have, what is it, ten percent girls, ball park figure. And being in a male dominated society of 19, 20 year olds I think it's going to be very, very difficult to get those numbers down."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that stress from the Academy causes the need to blow off steam.**

  - *"We are more professional, but at the same time I'm sure everybody has used the excuse, work hard, play hard, we're stressed out, we are going to go extra hard in the city. We go harder than all the other colleges. So there's still that aspect of it."* (Male)

- **Some believed midshipmen would stop offensive behavior when asked or confronted.**

  - *"The guys here are really good about stopping when you tell them honestly this is bothering. Even back to the sexual harassment, if someone is trying to come on to you and you say no, they almost always stop."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist for the Academy to encourage midshipmen to be responsible in challenging unwanted comments and to respect someone who challenges; allow this characteristic to be the mark of a professional leader.

  - *"And it's usually in a non-confrontational manner. It's not like 'Hey, you need to stop.' It's not that kind of atmosphere."* (Male)

  - *"A lot of guys like to avoid that kind of confrontation with each other just because for them it's a really awkward subject since we are such a minority. And they feel sexual harassment has been beaten into them. To me it seems they're sick of hearing it, they're sick of the training, sick of all of this stuff. Because they don't feel like they do a lot of it, that's from their perspective."* (Female)

Attitudes of Disrespect

- **Midshipmen offered views on disrespect toward women at the Academy.**

  - *"Each guy has a standard they have to uphold, physically, emotionally, mentally, academically. So if you are struggling in any of those areas, you're not good enough, you're not being man enough. That's the only way I could see comments."* (Female)

  - *"Sometimes there's not that many girls here, it sucks. But sometimes they say 'I wish they weren't even here.' So it's confusing in that way."* (Female)

- *"I've given up hope. I see our society on the television, I see we just have a culture of rape and it's like you've gone too far and there's really no way you can come back. Even my future career, be able to go into this male dominated industry and have faith in the industry that I'm going to go here and I'm not going to get sexually assaulted. And I can't blame the guys because it's how they're raised. Their daddies were the first one that said go make me the sandwich, woman. They're the first ones that started the culture of rape. You can't blame them either. You ask us what can we do to change it and how can we reduce these numbers and look at how does the 40 percent of women or the numbers who have been sexually assaulted and sexual harassment, how are they correlated, how can we change that? Honestly, I don't see a way, I think we're too far gone."* (Female)

- **Male midshipmen indicated that some women play the "female card" which hurts attitudes of fairness at the Academy.**

  - *"Females here will play that card, will play the I'm a female, I want to get out of this whatever I did when push came to shove. That's not for everyone, but when you're in a situation when you could be facing disenrollment, males don't have an option of playing that card, whereas females do, and I think that in itself causes the negative attitude that could cause some of the, quote unquote, sexist behavior."* (Male)

  OPPORTUNITY

  - An opportunity might exist for the Academy to provide ongoing education on how gender inequality messages ultimately question the place of female midshipmen at the Academy and may further a culture of gender disrespect.

  - *"How can we be all equal if we're not treated equal?"* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that perceived inequality between genders leads to lasting feelings about women in the Service.**

  - *"The gap between men and women here is very much widened by the fact that the women are treated differently than the men and they're held to a more lax standard because there are very few women here and it's just the discrepancy of that."* (Male)

  OPPORTUNITY

  - An opportunity might exist for the Academy to determine if and where inequalities exist, educate on the reasons behind these inequalities, and, where necessary, highlight misconceptions of preferential treatment.
  - Another opportunity might exist to review measures of standards, physical or otherwise, to ensure they are based on validated gender neutral determinations about what is required of midshipmen in the field and not based on standards previously developed when the Academy excluded women.

- *"I think it should be stressed that everyone tries really hard not to paint the brush for all of our female colleagues, and even girls in my section, they don't like that either because they know that try it as people may, they're still going to fall under that suspicion of why is she still here? Is there something we don't know about? So even if only one person gets led by because they need to keep up the diversity quotas, that perception can then spread to everyone else, rightly so or not."* (Male)

- *"I completely agree with the diversity push is detrimental to society and especially the women here, because if you're a woman here, you have to prove that you actually deserve to be here and that you're not just a quota."* (Male)

- **Male midshipmen indicated bringing more women to the Academy, letting more fail out, or keeping the same standards would help.**

  - *"Bring more women or fail out. That's just what it is."* (Male)

  - *"I wouldn't necessarily accept any more than normal that are qualified but just keep hold of the same standard. If a guy's going to get kicked out for this, have a girl get kicked out for this. Even if that means that every single girl here ends up getting kicked out, it should be fair."* (Male)

  - *"I don't see any good way to do it other than just try to honestly attract more qualified candidates at the beginning. I think the fairest way to do that is to start with the gatekeepers. Keep the standards, maybe open up a better PR front. I've heard that we lose a lot of our good candidates to the top three schools. We're a very small school. People don't think about coming here when they think service academies."* (Male)

- **Female midshipmen indicated that there are a few "bad apples," but the majority are "good guys."**

  - *"For the guys that say stuff, it's the same guys. It's not like every guy is saying a sexist remark, no. It's the one that says it, they're repeat offenders. I don't think it's every guy here. I've definitely experienced one guy for sure that is just always a pain in the neck like that."* (Female)

  - *"Sometimes I think with the sexist remarks is more for the guys who just hate women. They just look down on them, just hate them. But the sexual harassment might just be because they can't get a girl or have a girlfriend or anything and they want that attention but I see a little bit of a difference there."* (Female)

  - *"I know this sounds super negative, I feel most of the guys here are really good people and there's only a few who maybe in large groups are really bad. In general they're good people."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that some behaviors are learned at home or at sea.**

  – *"For a few of them it's learned from home. Not the majority."* (Female)

  – *"Some of that I think is a learned behavior from sea. The guys who are really nice guys coming in as freshman and they go out to sea and what happened to you. They are completely different people and now they are making these remarks that you would never have heard come out of their mouth coming in."* (Female)

  OPPORTUNITY

  - An opportunity might exist to debrief midshipmen following sea duty to emphasize that bad habits might form at sea, but they should not carry over to the Academy.
  - An additional opportunity might exist to raise consciousness about the possibility of bad behaviors at sea.

  – *"Part of the hard part is we go out to sea for four months and then eight months, and what's acceptable on a ship with 22 guys in an engine room when you drop a wrench on your foot is completely different than what's acceptable in the classroom or the barracks. So to come back from sea and then to have to all of a sudden put a filter on is not easy."* (Male)

- **Male midshipmen are also bullied and harassed.**

  – *"I've also heard of bullying, there are some guys here who are considered nerds or socially weird and stuff, so I feel it's more the guys that are weird or who don't really have their own voice, they'll be bullied and harassed in the showers and stuff."* (Female)

  – *"Whether or not this is a good thing, there's also a bonding process with the guys. We like to give each other crap because part of that fun is we get to prove how witty we are, but I think also a secret undertone is why would you want to be friends with someone, why would you rely on someone who can't take what you're giving to them, because if you're out with them and there's an actual threat, they're not going to back you up. So this is a precursor, you're putting your friends under your own little crucible of fire to see if they're actually someone you want to continue being friends with."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that learning how to handle sexist behavior is good preparation for sea duty.**

  – *"And they tell you, you're going into a male dominated industry, it's not going to stop when you go into the industry and stuff like that."* (Female)

  OPPORTUNITY

  - An opportunity might exist for the Academy to emphasize that change starts at the Academy, and by giving midshipmen the skills to challenge and confront bad behaviors at the Academy, they will be better prepared to do so at sea.

- *"You're not going to do 360 days on a ship if you can't take it. Even if you want to go active duty, you're not going to last that long."* (Female)

- *"It's better to learn now, because some of the girls that didn't want to deal with it already left. We're graduating now, they're gone, they didn't want it, they're done. So you learn what it's like if you're going to get a degree or a license, you need to know ahead of time. You can't go out blindly. Some of the state schools, they never go out on a real ship, they're always on their Academy ships. They are going to be in for a completely rude shock."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that "victim blaming" occurs at the Academy.**

  - *"Usually the way it starts is a female asks a question in class and they're a plebe and the other boys are there and they are trying to vie for alpha dog and one goes 'Why don't you just go make a sandwich?' It starts with the demeaning comments about women and then suddenly a not serious situation that could be joked about, it gets applied to a woman being raped."* (Female)

  - *"I think we put ourselves in the situation. Most likely, I'm not saying that nothing can happen out of the ordinary, but most of the time you put yourself in that guy's room or you invited that guy over and you chose to close the door. It's our responsibility as well to be extra safe because we're in this situation."* (Female)

  - *"A lot of things I've heard, it's preventable. A lot of girls I've been talking to they said wore short shorts or tight clothes or something like that. It's easy to prevent by just being conscious of what you're wearing."* (Female)

  - *"And what's involved. If there's alcohol involved, the victim is going to be blamed a lot more. If she goes out drinking every weekend, what was she expecting? That's a big attitude, not just here, everywhere."* (Male)

OPPORTUNITY

- The topic of victim blaming is so vital that an opportunity might exist to continue to remind midshipmen that the behavior of a victim is not the focus of the crime; to create a culture where everyone is on board with stopping USC, victim blaming must be minimized.
- Another opportunity might exist to educate midshipmen that victim blaming creates an environment where offenders feel justified in their behaviors. In addition, victims will not feel as comfortable reporting for fear they will be faulted by peers. Increased opportunity to offend and decreased accountability through lower reporting impacts rates of both USC and sexual harassment.

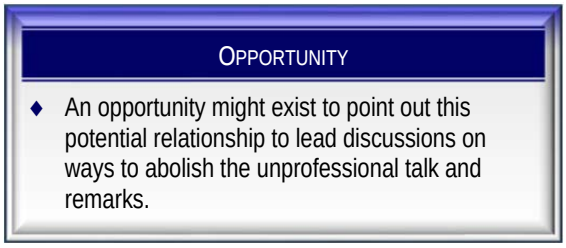
- **Midshipmen indicated that higher rank or class year at the Academy does not lead to abuse of power.**

  - *"Being near the top, you get the issue of no one really wants to associate with you because if they stepped out of line, you don't have a choice; you have to do something about it."* (Male)

– *"I assume in the real military where someone is an admiral and he has connections left and right, there is definitely a higher chance of abuse of power, but we're really just putting on bars. There's not much of a difference between us and the plebes."* (Male)

Relationship to Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Midshipmen indicated that progression of severity in behaviors is possible, but does not cause sexual assault.**



  – *"I think there is a connection. I think there are some people that just don't see women as individuals, they see them as objects. If they say sexist things, then they might progress that to sexist comments towards that person. If that person never says stop and never tells someone else, then they continue. And it's almost like a relationship but a person's relationship with an object, it's not really a person's relationship with another person."* (Female)

  – *"To me it's obvious that's how it happens. It starts with one thing, a person steals a candy bar and then they go do something else and then they have a gun. I think a lot of those things escalate over time."* (Female)

  – *"I do believe that there is a solid link between a culture that allows rude and crude jokes and a higher rate of these behaviors. Thoughts lead to actions."* (Male)

  – *"They can be linked, but there's not necessarily a direct, if you're going to do one, you're going to do the other. Because I think here where there's more of a culture of the sailor attitude, and that doesn't mean necessarily that there is going to be a higher percentage of women who have a sexist behavior, sexual assault, anything, versus being, if you're going to go out and sexually assault someone, you're not going to necessarily go out and start making lewd comments because that might draw attention. They're not necessarily related in that sense."* (Male)

Midshipman Recommendations

- **Sea partners alleviate some of the vulnerability experienced at sea.**

  – *"My first sea partner was a girl and the second year I went out with a girl and a guy. I had better experience going out with just a girl. If you go out with a guy sea partner, the entire crew is going to assume that you are together in some way, so then that leads to weird things. So it can be good. There's not much you can change about sea year, it's pretty much as good as you can get. They're not within the realm of the school's power."* (Female)

- *"Most of the time on first sail you go with a guy. I went with a guy first sail and that was the best thing ever, he was always looking out and had my back and telling me if anything was going on. I felt a lot better."* (Female)

- **Education and promotion of "healthy" relationships would be helpful.**

  - *"How do you punish someone for an unhealthy sexual relationship when even the healthy ones are not okay? How do you make that distinction when you said that both of them are evil? We are talking about 20 year old adults, and while we may not be treated like adults, there are things that adults have, sexual relationships, that should be permitted and that's a huge problem I think."* (Female)

  - *"It trickles down pretty fast. Recently our policy on frat has changed for our grade. Before you were allowed to befriend upperclassmen, at this point in this year, but we're not allowed to anymore. Now it's strictly the whole entire year frat is completely not allowed."* (Female)

- **Allowing more leave time away from the Academy would also be helpful in developing relationships.**

  - *"More liberty on weekends. Get us away from here more."* (Female)

  - *"That's really the root foundation of all of our humor it seems. And so I don't see that being helped whatsoever unless we can get off campus more. I think the reason why there's so much of it is because we're so repressed. And that's one of the big things is that there's so many guys here versus not very many girls that there's so much sexual repression that they have to talk about it in order to deal with it."* (Female)

Reporting

The purpose for this section was to gain additional understanding of why, even with all of the emphasis on USC and zero tolerance, that midshipmen are still reluctant to report their experiences. Midshipmen offered a number of potential reasons, especially the perceived repercussions from reporting. The section ended with midshipmen providing recommendations to remove barriers to reporting.

Reasons for Not Reporting Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Midshipmen indicated that USC is underreported at USMMA.**

  - *"Yes, I think so. If I were to report someone for what I thought was harassment, they are going to get such a huge punishment for it and then you ask yourself was what they did really that bad or you just starting thinking about the person and decide, 'I don't want them to get a class one.'"* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that embarrassment, gossip spreading, and ostracism are major deterrents to reporting.**

  – *"I think a big factor is the fact that the school has 950 students and we know everything that happens. So if you do one little thing, everybody knows about it."* (Male)

  – *"The rumor mill here is worse than getting punished. So them doing something, they punish themselves because someone finds out and then someone talks about it. So even if they are not getting in trouble, that sucks for them because people are talking about how they raped this girl and this and that. Even if all they did was talk to a girl in a way that the girl felt disturbed a little bit. So things blow up here pretty bad without getting reported, so it's not a secret."* (Female)

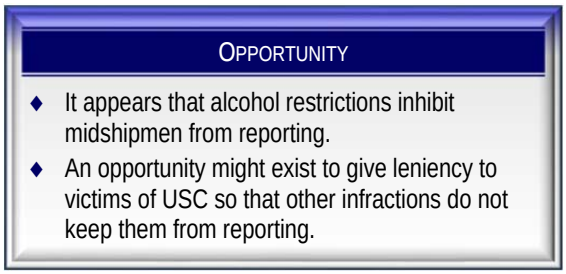
  – *"If you were to report something like that, the chances of it getting out are high, and once it gets out, then any cases where people get blacklisted for actually reporting type of thing, but I guess that could be a possibility or a fear."* (Male)

- **Some midshipmen fear trouble for alcohol offense more than being a victim.**

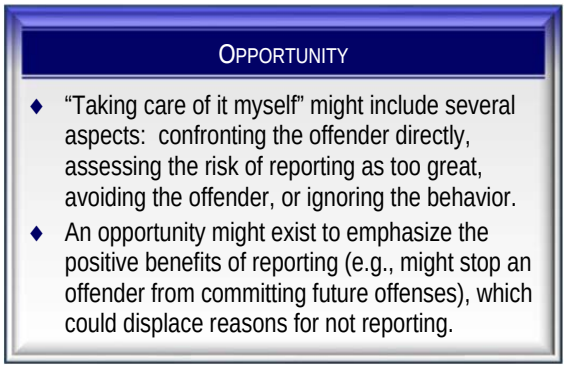
  – *"Once you say alcohol is involved your credibility goes down. When it comes to your credibility it just goes out the window."* (Female)

  – *"If you have unrestricted [reporting] they take on the sexual assault part of it first but then there are follow up consequences. Usually I feel like plebes are pretty vulnerable to things sexual assault because they're in the mindset of wanting to please, wanting to fit in and I feel that there are older midshipmen that take advantage of that vulnerability and turn it into something sexual. And a lot of times alcohol is involved and all of these kids are under age, which is an extra problem, because if you're under age then you have even a more serious alcohol offense. So it puts you in a place that's almost impossible to report. If I was a plebe and I was sexually assaulted and there was alcohol involved, there's no way I would say a single thing because I want to stay at the Academy."* (Female)

  – *"I know several friends who have been sexually assaulted and they won't say anything because alcohol is involved and because of the way the administration takes care of, the ATRs [Academy Training Representatives], the Superintendent, and the staff up there, they just will address the alcohol issue. If we could and try to stretch out and say, we need your help, this happened to me, we would do it. But the fear of what the administration is going to do, if we're going to get stuck or if we're not going to be allowed out, getting kicked out, anything like that, we're more afraid of retaliation."* (Female)



- **Midshipmen might not report to minimize the impact on the career or reputation of someone in the maritime industry or as a midshipman at the Academy.**
  - *"If you report it to the captain, that person automatically gets kicked off the ship."* (Female)
  - *"Their license can be put up."* (Female)
  - *"If something does happen, it's all or nothing. It's either something really bad happens to them, they get kicked out or they get set back or something like that, or it's nothing. And there's a huge stigma against reporting anyone because something extreme can come out of it."* (Female)
  - *"If it's reported it ruins your life."* (Male)
- **Female midshipmen indicated that they would rather take care of the situation themselves.**
  - *"They'll go to the guy and say stop it or might confide in some of their friends or have their friends go talk to him or something like that."* (Female)
  - *"If you say no once and it stops, it's taken care of."* (Male)
  - *"If you talk to them they'll probably get scared that you are going to say something else."* (Female)



- **Some midshipmen choose to "do nothing" when handling a situation.**
  - *"Just getting over it. Suck it up."* (Female)
  - *"At least as a woman, I don't think that entails an action. Maybe the men would have a different statement. But as a woman it means talking to somebody about it, maybe your friends, and quietly sitting there and, quote/unquote, sucking it up. Which isn't necessarily justice."* (Female)
- **Midshipmen indicated that getting a group of male friends to talk to the offender would also help.**
  - *"If a group of guys were to find out that somebody was doing something that – get a group of the boys together to go take care of business."* (Male)

- *"They'll go to the guy and say 'Hey, stop it,' or might confide in some of their friends or have their friends go talk to him or something like that."* (Female)

- *"I think there's a weird relationship between girls and guys here because we are all trained together and bond, so it's closer than a friendship but I think a lot of people are like my brothers or something, so if something happened I know they'd have my back."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that punishments are not always severe enough.**

  - *"My first ship a crew member over stepped his bounds really far. And I was with a female sea partner and we brought it up to the captain and the captain took action, talked to our ATRs, what should we do about this? He just didn't talk to us from then on and he got a slap on the wrist and that was it."* (Female)

  - *"But I know plebe year people would fill out sexual harassment, sexual assault cases and it would be swept underneath the rug. You would make an official report and everything, go through all the proper actions and you wouldn't hear from it and the kid would be graduating that year walking across the stage with a freakin' Navy uniform on."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that the popularity of a student is a factor in reporting; popular students might be more likely to get away with improper behavior.**

  - *"Everyone here is very close knit so everyone covers for each other. So even in sexual assault I feel people would cover for other people and would say no, this didn't happen. Because when there's no solid proof it's just one person's word against another. And when you have somebody who's maybe more popular and more liked by an officer, they can get a far less severe punishment than if it was somebody who is not necessarily liked."* (Female)

  - *"I think it depends on the aggressor. If the aggressor is well-liked, then everybody is going to look at you like you screwed his career."* (Male)

  - *"If you've ever been in trouble for anything here, it totally makes you look bad and people are less likely to believe you about something like that."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that leaders at different levels react differently depending on their perspective of the people involved.**

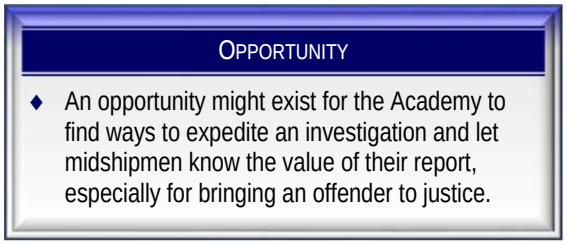
  - *"Sometimes it comes down to a single officer who when I feel there are things that should be prosecuted on a criminal level, they are not going to be because the officer says that's the end of their punishment, we don't need to take this any further. And it comes down to one individual who can just say that's the punishment that you are given so that's the final say."* (Female)

  - *"It's one thing who you report it to a midshipman officer who has no power or a real officer who's going to play favorites."* (Female)

- *"They refuse to believe that it ever happened because they don't see that side of them, they only see the nice chatty side of them, they don't see everybody else."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen are unlikely to report USC because the process is time consuming.**

  - *"You have to pick and choose your battles at this Academy. And sometimes it's not worth it. I'm probably going to lose more than gain. You have to think about it like that, or at least how we think about it as women here at the Academy."* (Female)



  - *"If something were to happen, like a couple of weeks before finals or a couple of weeks before licensing, nobody is going to turn that in. Not even if you can just put aside the stress it will cause on yourself. The amount of time it takes, who are you going to have to meet with, how many people are you going to have to meet with."* (Female)

  - *"If this happened to you on your first year, they prolong it, at least before the SAVA guy [the new SARC] came here, they'd prolong the issue and you would have to wait – your sea year would be on hold and now you're a deferred grad."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that reporting is a personal decision and some might lack the courage to report.**

  - *"I think it depends on the person's character and their support system. I think there's a lot of hypocrisy here, but they do emphasize on moral courage and doing the right thing, no matter what. Having courage in adversity. But I think it comes down to the person's character and their support system. If you feel like you're strong enough to go through it, I think that's what it comes down to. We have so much stuff going on in school, it all comes down to am I strong enough to go through this right now. It just depends on the person."* (Female)

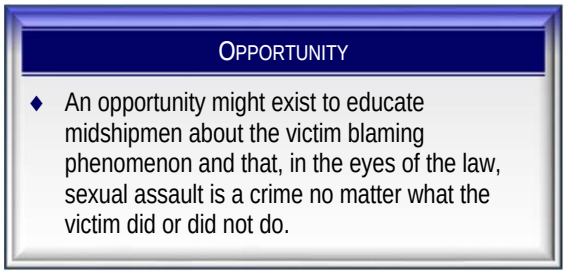
- **Midshipmen believe that reporting impacts their record, ability to be commissioned, and social status.**

  - *"Everyone is always worried about getting stuff put on their record, specifically for commissioning and getting the Coast Guard license. And it's not really made all that clear to us if you get this help it will not affect commissioning. So people have this mindset that if I get any sort of help I'm not going to be able to graduate and commission and et cetera."* (Female)

- *"Patten [Clinic], they are always trying to see if you're the one that has psychological problems. They are always trying to trick you into you saying something that makes you sound crazier, you need to go seek psychological treatment. I've heard that a couple of times."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen fear being blamed or isolated because of reporting.**

  - *"I feel the idea that you're not allowed to work because of something somebody else did and now this guy is not going to talk to you but he is talking about you to other people. You are so isolated out there that whatever community you have out there you really need. You took the right course of action and look."* (Female)



  - *"They black list you. You're no longer part of the regiment. You get nastiness from upperclassmen, from their friends."* (Female)

  - *"You see it in every single class. It's usually the plebes that report it because you've chosen to come to this school because you do know what's right and you're chosen because you are above the rest. So you know what's right and you come in and here you get sexually assaulted or sexually harassed and so you say I'm going to stand up and say this is wrong. And then you're told for the rest of your Kings Point career that you did something wrong because you stepped out and said this was wrong and the rest of your career here you're going be black listed, you'll be given up for positions when you're a senior, you'll be looked at differently when you go into a session with your classmates, stay away from that girl because she's a whistle blower or she cried rape when she was the one who wanted it."* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen indicated they had never heard of cases.**

  - *"I've never heard of any cases."* (Male)

  - *"I've never heard of any cases being mishandled, I've never heard of any cases being handled extremely well. I haven't heard of any cases being handled at all."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that in a same-sex scenario, talking to the person to avoid reporting is best.**

  - *"If it was the same gender and the same gender was the offender, say it was a female offender, if word got out she would just be a social ruin."* (Female)

- *"I think as girls we all know each other pretty well and it would be harder to do that just because we all know each other. We might not hang out but there's a sense of we're all sisters. So you wouldn't want to turn in someone like that. I think you would be more inclined to talk to them about it from a female standpoint."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that males reporting other males would be a rare event due to social stigma.**
  - *"It would be so rare; I don't think he would be believed."* (Male)
  - *"Because you would get a stigma of possibly being gay if it was a guy."* (Male)
  - *"Probably not. Just the stigma."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that type of behavior involved is a factor in reporting.**
  - *"I think the touching is probably less reported because everybody has different ideas – certain things are completely inappropriate but people have different things that make them uncomfortable. I think that maybe touching is seen as less severe and so people don't want to report it."* (Female)
  - *"Unsure whether it actually is sexual assault or whether the administration will view it as one."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen shared mixed views of human relations officers' duties.**[7]
  - *"I don't even know who our human relations officer is – I've never talked to them, it wasn't very personal. And if something happened and I needed talk to a human relations officer, one, I didn't know who it was and, two, I wouldn't feel comfortable talking to an upperclassman who I've never talked to before. It's supposed to be confidential but if I don't know the person on a personal level, I don't know how professional they are going to be about it. I wouldn't be able to go to a midshipman officer, there would be no way. And I know our human relations officer is a guy, but for me to go and talk about something personally that happened to me, it would be even more uncomfortable if it was a male."* (Female)

    OPPORTUNITY

    - An opportunity might exist for the Academy to educate midshipmen on the exact duties and responsibilities of human relations officers to give students the opportunity to know someone they can report to comfortably.

  - *"I've never heard of anyone using their human relations officer."* (Female)

[7] A regimental staff position held by midshipmen.

- *"They do a good job I guess of putting out specific things, examples and stuff for everybody to see, but I don't think that they're necessarily a person to go to to get counseled."* (Female)

- *"Most of the ones that we have have been pretty good."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that reporting an assault to a leader depends on trust.**

  - *"It just depends on how much they trust the people, if they can even trust them at all, and how comfortable they are with telling them what happened."* (Female)

  - *"Most of our issues come with the fact that unless you're one of the top people in either the company or the battalion or the regiment, you don't get the one-on-one interaction with a commissioned officer where you can become comfortable with them so there's not that avenue. So it's much easier to take it to your friend and deal with it that way than to try to take it to a commissioned officer or even to the SARC or SAVA."* (Male)

  - *"It depends upon the company officer. I think each company officer approaches it differently."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen are confident leadership will take action if a report is brought to them.**

  - *"In an overall sense maybe our leadership does have flaws, but it's a pretty effective system compared to a lot of other systems out there. It's by no means perfect, but I think it would pretty effectively deal with the situation."* (Male)

Midshipman Recommendations

- **Train shipboard representatives to handle conversations after sea duty.**

  - *"When we get back we have to turn in copies of reimbursements and receipts and copies of your discharges. And there's also a sheet and it's basically a simple questionnaire about your ship. And they ask did you have an overall good sea year experience. And then the bottom box is would you like to talk to anybody about your sea year. I would assume that they at least look over and see if somebody checked yes in that box or something. If you had a problem with somebody, you can easily e-mail, or if you want to wait until after you get off your ship you can talk to the ATRs and say, 'So and so approached me, I didn't feel comfortable.' You can bring it up with them and I'm sure they take notes of it with the ship. I'm not sure how they are organized but I feel they would take some input into it."* (Female)

- *"They have a form when you get back that says if you want to talk to somebody about the ship, it doesn't have to be if you were sexually harassed, you check some box, and they don't even talk to you. I filled that box out once and there was no follow up at all. What if I had been sexually harassed? I definitely think it would help to have a girl. Even if they're not the person in charge of you, at least you can probably contact them."* (Female)

Perceptions of Leadership

Another major area for investigation in the *2013 SAGR* focus groups centered on perceptions of leadership with respect to being engaged in preventing USC. The presumption is that programmatic aspects of sexual assault prevention and response are in place but require continual emphasis. Leadership at all levels is necessary to make programs maximally effective. Midshipmen were asked about the degree to which they interact with leadership on these issues, whether leaders react appropriately and lead by example, and what else leaders can do to help diminish USC.

Interactions with Leadership on Gender-Related Topics

- **Midshipmen indicated that leadership maintains a zero-tolerance policy and takes sexual assault seriously.**
  - *"Just the general blanket zero tolerance, open door policy."* (Female)
  - *"They're pretty much point blank no tolerance because once they find out they have to enforce it but they're also there if you have any questions as well. Don't feel comfortable with students, don't think that students are going to take you seriously, they are there for that role too."* (Female)
  - *"Our school definitely has a very clear no tolerance policy. If it's brought to a commissioned officer or reported, it's usually taken care of. I think as a solution our school has implemented no fraternization with the plebes. Pretty much you get a class one, which is pretty heavy punishment if you fraternize or just be friends."* (Female)
- **Midshipmen indicated that discussions with leadership on gender topics depend on established relationships.**
  - *"Depends on the relationship with them."* (Female)
  - *"I think it goes to the professional versus when we're out of professional mode. When we are in professional mode there really isn't any opportunity for that [discussing gender topics] to happen."* (Male)
  - *"I've talked to my teachers about a problem once but it just depends. Some of them are more open than others."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen can police themselves, especially because of leadership turnover.**
  - *"In policing ourselves, we determine right and wrong."* (Male)
  - *"The turnover of our people in charge. Or us not trusting them. Either way, we take care of a lot of problems ourselves."* (Male)
  - *"It might stem from the fact that we've had no real stable leadership in half a decade. And everyone just leaves and comes or leaves and comes for a myriad of different reasons. And now that we have some leadership, they're trying to entrench themselves as quickly as possible."* (Male)
- **Midshipmen indicated that to discuss USC issues, they would more readily approach their coaches.**
  - *"Coaches are another outlet, they are on the outside. Here we have officers, adult officers that live in our company and there are other midshipmen who we don't often come in contact with, so I think the coaches and people who are brought in are another outlet for a lot of people. In case something was happening, they are another outlet for us instead of us just holding back because we don't want it to be spread around the school so quickly. With them we know they could keep it a little more confidential if we asked them to."* (Female)
  - *"Our coach always says if you have anything wrong, come talk to me. I'm always here for you guys. It's just that kind of support. It's not necessarily harassment or whatever."* (Female)
  - *"If coaches were bringing it up point blank how it's brought up in the regiment, then maybe we wouldn't confide in them because in the regiment it's just a joke. I think the coaches keep it to if you guys have any problems you can come talk to me, it doesn't have to be if you guys are being harassed by other teammates or anything like that. It's more of a 'You can talk about anything; don't feel worried that I have to go through this certain process and steps to report it.'"* (Female)
- **Midshipmen indicated that coaches are powerless to do anything about the situation.**
  - *"[Coaches] can do a little but if you want to talk or have someone be able to maybe help you facilitate going through the process of reporting, the coaches, they're not really that connected to the regiment and so they don't really care if they are going to piss somebody off."* (Female)

OPPORTUNITY

- Though coaches were the persons that midshipmen would feel comfortable approaching, many felt that coaches were powerless to do anything about the situation.
- An opportunity exists for the Academy to expand the role of coaches and staff to help counsel students without creating an official report, which might encourage more midshipmen to seek help.

- *"They are good people to talk to. But, if you are going to go through it with somebody that's going to make a difference, like a proceeding or you are going to file a report, your coach can't help you."* (Female)

- *"They have no power. There are a select few people who have power at the school and at the regiment, and you can't really talk to them directly, you have to go through the chain of command. You can talk to somebody at the bottom of the chain of command and if they don't care about your issue as much as you do, then it doesn't go anywhere."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that former alumni faculty members are easier to approach or talk to.**

  - *"I know it's easier to talk to the teachers who were alumni."* (Female)

  - *"They know what you are going through, they know how people act here. They can give you advice. They can tell you maybe you're taking the situation wrong or something, so it gives you a different perspective."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that senior leadership says only "what they are supposed to say" regarding USC.**

  - *"They just say what they're supposed to say."* (Female)

  - *"The Superintendent will send out a notice that nobody reads and it's just 'I have to write this, so here you go.'"* (Female)

- **Midshipmen gave perspectives on the messages from the Superintendent about USC prevention.**

  - *"He had some great comments at the last training, our Superintendent did."* (Female)

  - *"I can tell he cares a lot and he's the Superintendent I know he seems really serious about stopping behaviors."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that the new Commandant has changed the atmosphere of the Academy slightly.**

  - *"Everyone is afraid to get in trouble."* (Male)

  - *"More stringent disciplinary atmosphere overall. There's not really as much leniency or wiggle room with the rules anymore."* (Male)

  - *"It's a lot more formal, bureaucratically documented stuff that they're doing to curb issues from the past. Hiring a sexual response coordinator, hiring a civilian rights human affairs."* (Male)

Leading by Example

- **Midshipmen described both good and bad examples among faculty and staff.**

  – *"I think the majority of teachers are pretty respectful. A lot of them have worked in the same situations that we'll be in when we get out of this school. And a lot of them have been raised by working only with males. So some of them are a little bit more hard core males but I think they're a lot more respectful since they've worked here for so long, seeing more females brought into it and they are still learning too. They are just set in their ways and that's just how they are going to be until you make a comment. But if you say stop, their job is also on the line and they respect that too."* (Female)

  – *"It depends on what faculty and staff is. There are certain departments that are worse than others. The ATR department being one of the worse."* (Female)

  – *"Some of the uniformed ones are some really great examples. There are also some teachers who are pretty good."* (Female)

  – *"There are teachers who don't like that there are women here and then there are teachers who don't know how to deal with it, so then they give preferential treatment on how they treat you."* (Female)

  – *"We've even had teachers have sexual harassment comments towards us, very sexist behavior. One teacher got fired by a body of his own peers because he was unprofessional with what he said in class. We've had other comments made towards specific people, they were meant as jokes but again, it was a line that was crossed, and those are just our teachers."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen sometimes follow the negative example set by leadership.**

  – *"They follow the examples set by our officers."* (Female)

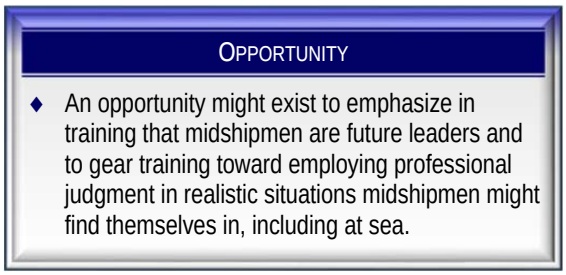
  – *"If they apologize to you then the whole thing doesn't matter anymore. It's, 'They apologized, that's okay.'"* (Female)

Training

Training in sexual assault prevention and response is a recurring topic for surveys and focus groups. The facilitator started by asking midshipmen to describe the training they receive on these topics, how they perceive their training in reducing USC, and to give examples of the most effective training they have experienced. The section on training concluded with a discussion of recommendations for improvement.

Training Received

- **Midshipmen discussed the types of training they received in the past year.**
  - *"We've had Navy midshipmen come in."* (Male)
  - *"We have had outside groups come in."* (Male)
  - *"A lot of the training we've had is regiment-wide in Ackerman Auditorium with some type of presentation."* (Male)
  - *"They've done things with victims, they've done things with advocacy groups, like when that man and woman came, they've done things with just the SARC."* (Male)
- **Midshipmen indicated that most training received did not or would not help alleviate the rate of USC.**
  - *"Training may bring it up, but it's not going to make someone change their attitudes about this. I feel if someone wanted to do something like that, going to a training isn't really going to change their opinion of what they are doing, unless it's a really big training."* (Female)



  - "*A poster is not going to stop a rapist.*" (Female)
  - *"There are three problems with the trainings. First, it takes people's time. You should never take someone's time when they feel it could be better use studying or sleeping because they're so exhausted. Second, it's something they've already heard a thousand times. And the third would be, that if it's something they heard about and then they're personally insulted by the fact that it's being presented either again or in that manner. No one walks into those trainings and expects to have some soul life changing revelation and on some level, I think everyone feels a little insulted that they assume that we need it again."* (Male)
- **Midshipmen indicated that training makes male midshipmen feel like rapists.**
  - *"Every single one of my guy friends that comes out of one of those meetings, they're all just telling me that I'm a rapist and I'm going to rape somebody and they don't even care. Even if I try and defend myself, they just don't care. And so you're never going to get anywhere with having someone come and talk to them."* (Female)

- *"The guys, they really do get offended by us having all of these trainings. And it's always a guy does this to a girl or this happens to this or you guys really need to stay out of the girls room because of this, or isolating us when we all go to school together. It's not their fault that these percentages or these numbers come about just because this is the percentage of us. They really get offended by it so they don't take it seriously, so they are going to lash out and make it into a joke because they know whether or not they take it seriously, they are going to have another training just because the school is punishing them they feel."* (Female)

- *"We had one training – I think it was two years ago – and the woman basically had a montage of masculine Arnold Schwarzenegger and basically the whole point of the presentation was to blame men and we're the cause of all the problems. I think we're doing a pretty good job being cooped up in here with a bunch of dudes."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated they did not enjoy large lecture-based training.**

  - *"The large group wasting time. Because everyone here, I don't know how it is at the other academies, but our schedules here are very crammed from our class schedule loads and stuff, so when we have to take an hour out of our day to go sit in a lecture hall with basically the whole group not paying attention, we view it as a waste of time rather than something that could be beneficial in some way."* (Male)

  - *"Death by PowerPoint."* (Female)

  - *"I think part of the problem is the way we go about training, we do a lot of full regimental training where we have anywhere from 300 to 900 students in one room, and instead of using a smaller group where they can actually be focused and the presenter can actually keep everyone's attention, you've got people making cat calls and doing all sorts of other stuff, and so you get this one person's not paying attention but then they influence six or seven around them. And unless you have either midshipman officers or commissioned officers who are correcting that issue, which then they're not able to pay attention, you lose the entire group very quickly. And that's happened at multiple trainings we've had this year."* (Male)

- **Some midshipmen indicated they found PowerPoint useful.**

  - *"It covered everything pretty well, it was point blank this is what happens when this happens. This doesn't need to be happening, but if it does here are the steps you can take."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that computer-based training was disliked by many.**

  - *"None of it is taken very seriously."* (Female)

- *"I got nothing out of it. We do a lot of alcohol training also. And they have to do it all online, and everyone does it the night before it's due at two o'clock in the morning and nobody pays attention to it."* (Female)

- *"Another thing we had in the beginning of the year was a link for a computer training program. And I feel the general consensus for those sort of things, any computer training, it's just, click, click, click, click, click. How fast can I get through this thing? Nobody wants to sit down for two hours of their own time that they could use studying or catching up with a friend or sports or sleeping."* (Female)

- **Many midshipmen disliked a specific training with a guest lecturer.**

  - *"There was one speaker who was talking and she had two white boards and she would write down. But most of the guys, you could tell the sarcasm in the room, our school is very cynical, you could tell the sarcasm in the answers and it was embarrassing."* (Female)

  - *"I think this was the first I've been really offended by anything here. Not just because the words were offending but because, this is what everyone thinks about me. I can't wait to go to class tomorrow and be surrounded by all these people that think this about girls and women. And it was awful."* (Female)

  - *"The last two or three that I've had to go sit through, where they bring in victims to tell the whole story, and it's really uncomfortable, it doesn't apply to the overall majority of us, and it's not relevant at all – it's like State U."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen gave positive feedback for the Sex Signals training.**

  - *"It was more interesting than someone describing how they were raped. A little less disturbing."* (Male)

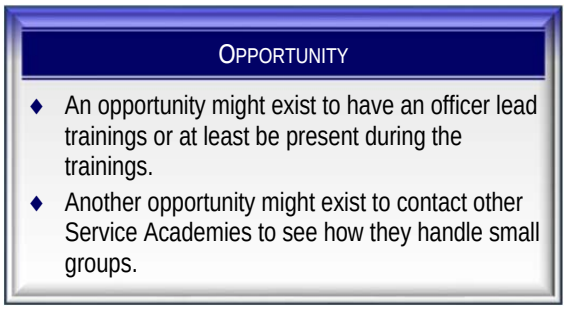
  - *"I really liked that Sex Signals group. A lot of people had mixed feelings about it, but I sat in the front row, and they encouraged audience participation. I had no alcohol that whole day. I had a lot of fun."* (Male)

  - *"It was tailored more to sexual assault and sexual behavior taken too far, as opposed to, it's violent rape. Because people aren't getting violently raped on campus at gunpoint every weekend. So that's not what we need to hear about. It's you're at a club, at what point is it sexual assault."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that small groups might be effective.**

  - *"Definitely more personal or else it's group mentality."* (Female)

- *"I think something like that would help more because hearing from the seniors here of experiences they had out at sea or this happened and I put myself in this situation, that's helped me get a perspective than somebody telling me this happened in college, this could happen to you. Hearing one on one from the midshipmen is the only way I've learned anything, not from a guest speaker or someone who had a bad experience."* (Female)



- *"I would say one thing that would be beneficial at the company level training if you had a group come in, not necessarily company officers because you have a unique interaction with the company officers, and I don't think they would be necessarily the right person to do training on that kind of issue, but I think if you brought a group in and said one company goes to this area for this training, another company goes here, and broke it up into that smaller, you would eliminate some of the more large group problems that you would have."* (Male)

- **Some female midshipmen indicated they were against small group trainings, especially in regards to how males would behave.**
  - *"As soon as you get any guys in the group, the guys are immediately we're the bad guys, you hate us."* (Female)
  - *"As soon as you get people in a group, we need to talk about this, everyone hates donating their time, so they are going to be 'Does anyone have anything to say?' And then nobody has anything to say, and then everybody goes. I know we've had discussions like that before because they try to get you together on the company level and then they always do it in the morning, so it's 6:30 in the morning and everybody sits there and so can we go because no one has anything to say. So the small group things I don't think would work. Even if it was at night, everyone would be like we don't have anything to say, because it's wasting their time."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen agreed there was no appropriate time for training.**
  - *"There's no convenient time."* (Female)
  - *"I can't think of any good time that I would want to go talk about sexual harassment."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that victims speaking at the Academy would be interesting, especially a male.**

  – *"With the guest speaker they are trying to make a joke out of it. Through the victim it's not a joke, so it's going to be taken – not taken as lightly."* (Female)

  – *"I think it would have been interesting if they had a guy victim come in. I'm not talking about scare tactics but I know a lot of the guys here, they just want to focus, a lot of them just want to graduate. A lot of them have a lot of best interest here, it's just sort of the environment. And I guess there are not a lot of females, and we're so focused just because we're so small. But I think if they could hear, just change it up a little."* (Female)

  – *"Having someone come in to talk. I thought that was the most sobering one, at least for the guys, because they just love to make fun of everything that happens in these meetings and then there's this girl on stage saying some guy held a knife to my throat and raped me. And then felt really bad because they've been making fun of it. I think that had the most impact just because it showed how brave she was to go talk about it and something that actually happened to her. And I think it made everybody sit back and think about if they have sisters or their mom. I think it was a little more personal for everyone."* (Female)

- **Midshipmen indicated that bystander intervention training is useful and well received.**

  – *"I think it's not that it's going to happen to me, it's that one of the important things is what do you do when you see this happening because you see it happening. So even though it's not happening to you, when your buddy is taking it a little too far, what signs to look for. So I think that part is important."* (Male)

  – *"We did have one seminar that actually talked about as a woman what are the signals of a man who is probably trying to get you into a vulnerable situation compared to what is normal, because there are differences and things like that. And they actually also said that as a male what you can do if you see either one of your friends doing it or if you see another female being put in a vulnerable situation. And while we've been seminared and PowerPointed a lot, I did think that for the first time we had one that might be effective."* (Female)

  – *"If you're in a group situation and something doesn't feel right at a party and you see the way the guy is behaving around the girl that doesn't seem right, trust your gut. And one of the trainees said, 'What are some creative ways that you can step in between the wolf and the mouse or whatever?'"* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that they do not have much direct interaction with resources.**

  - *"They have [poster] boards up, so there are pictures up at least once in every company. They may have them on each deck."* (Female)

  - *"The hard part is there's very little interaction [with resources]. On an average day, they're here for eight hours; we're in class for seven of those eight, so there's maybe one or two hours in which we might be in the barracks at the same time as they're in the barracks. But they're in meetings, we're in meetings; we're in class, they're in training. So there's no real time that there's interaction even for that training."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that repeated training hurts the effectiveness of the message.**

  - *"First trimester we had the issue of they broke us into different groups but a lot of us fell into multiple groups, so I personally got that issue training four times in a matter of three weeks."* (Male)

  - *"We have been over trained to the point of desensitization."* (Male)

  - *"I think what would help the mandatory training sessions would be to change it up because out of the ones I've been to, it feels like the exact same things being said in the exact same way and it's just repetitive."* (Male)

  - *"I think they have overkilled the amount of training we've had on this. It's necessary, yes. But at the same time I think they have just exhausted the topic, to the point where for some people it is desensitizing. It also creates I think in a way a sense of fear about hanging out here with the women."* (Male)

- **Midshipmen indicated that there is not enough time to devote to multiple trainings, especially with repeated topics.**

  - *"We have so much studying and other things that are way more important to us. We have five tests the next day and we have team practice, we can't deal with all of this extra training that people really don't see as important because they tell you to do it but it's not stressed, and if it was no one would really care anyways."* (Female)

  - *"They're more pissed that their time is being eaten away after it's been reiterated."* (Female)

Midshipman Recommendations

- **Training should focus on treating midshipmen as future leaders.**
  - *"I think more training directed at the fact that we are future leaders both in the military and the civilian world that at some point all of us are going to be VPs or captains of a boat."* (Male)
  - *"It's the fact that we're taught that this is what happens, which is I don't want to say insulting our intelligence, but it's another one of those we're adults, we're supposed to be the best and brightest in America, yet we're being treated like eight year olds when we have this training instead of teaching us as leaders, how do you react as a leader, how do you prevent this as leader, how do you provide a leadership climate that allows reporting and prevents people from harassing those that do report?"* (Male)
  - *"But they don't do anything that applies to going to sea and the challenges of going to sea."* (Male)
  - *"Treating us as adults and as future managers. People act the way they're treated. Treat us like adults; we'll act like adults."* (Male)
- **Too many trainings overwhelm them and there is a need for consistency in trainings.**
  - *"Almost have to step lightly and not just throw it down our throat."* (Male)
  - *"I think the hard part is in our four years here, we've had a revolving door of leadership at the top level, so we haven't really had any consistency at all in our training."* (Male)
  - *"You have to remember, the schedule for four years, from the time you enter in to the time you leave, to avoid that overlapping same message that if you came in and you learn these are going to be the signs, and the next year you learn this, and the next year you learn that, without going over and repeating everything, because I think that's what's happening now is that it's very short sighted that you're using a single year as a window, and you may get things different in that year, but then you come back the next year and you get the same things over again."* (Male)
- **There should be a female representative in shipboard training.**
  - *"They need a woman in that department. We can't come back from sea and tell them this happened on this ship, don't send another girl."* (Female)
  - *"There are no females in shipboard training."* (Female)

- **Trainers should work with male midshipmen more so training is not seen as a joke.**

  - *"I guess I sound like I'm being an advocate for my male peers but I really think they don't really listen to it all. You always talk about the girls are being surveyed and talked to and stuff but I'm not aware of any small group where they would sit down with the guys. And I think with guys the smaller group would be a lot better because they try to do it en masse, big auditorium. And peer pressure, not a lot of guys are going to step up and speak out. But I think if you do a voluntary thing like this and talk, I think the school would really benefit from their input."* (Female)

  - *"It's all about that perception. I think the school needs to work on the perception of the purpose of the training, if that makes sense."* (Female)

Additional Midshipman Recommendations

The final major area of discussion in the *2013 SAGR* focus groups was titled "Additional recommendations for addressing USC and sexual harassment." The purpose was to spend a few minutes reflecting on the general discussion of factors influencing USC at the Academy and to drive out any other good ideas from the midshipmen on ways to reduce it. To start the conversation, midshipmen were asked how well prepared they felt for dealing with gender-related issues when they have subordinates. The facilitator also asked if a Dignity and Respect Code, similar to the Honor Code, might be helpful in creating a culture of zero tolerance. The facilitator ended the focus groups by asking midshipmen for their final thoughts on issues and if there were any questions that were not asked but should have been.

Counseling for Unwanted Sexual Contact Experienced Prior to Coming to the Academy

- **Midshipmen indicated that counseling for incoming midshipmen who experienced USC prior to entering the Academy is a good idea.**

  - *"They don't really deal with things that happened before the Academy."* (Female)

  - *"I think what we need is for counseling that is not recorded, you can do it freely with no consequences and make it public knowledge; either they think it's going to hurt them or they just don't know about it."* (Female)

Preparation for the Future

- **Some midshipmen indicated they did not have training for instances where someone comes to them for help.**

  - *"I don't even know what my obligation is."* (Female)

- *"Our training here is for here. And when you go in the Navy, we're gonna get training on this. And that should be helpful because Navy life should be more specific about these are the proper channels. We've gotten the training if someone comes to you or something happens to you, we know about the restricted and unrestricted reports. It may not be the same exact as we're out in the merchant fleet or the Navy or wherever you end up, but you got your training there. So maybe if you – they had the last one, they did put that in the reference of your future career and why that's important. That was the first time that was ever mentioned."* (Male)

- *"I think instead of being in one of those instances of sexual harassment or sexual assault, I think I'm more likely to be in a situation where someone comes to me and says this happened with so and so, how do I deal with that?"* (Male)

Dignity and Respect Code

- **Incorporating a Dignity and Respect Code was met with mixed reviews.**

  - *"I think that would be a good idea. I know the fact that we have an honor code and the midshipmen handle case by case honor offenses, which really makes us very respectable. It's extremely defined. I feel if you have one of those codes people would take it more seriously."* (Female)

  - *"I feel the investigation should be done just the way that they do it now, not be brought into the regiment because then people are going to be taking sides and people's opinions are going to be taken out on anybody else, she said, he said, and that's not really something you can put on the board, an honor situation. An honor situation is a black and white they did this. This situation is more of an opinion and your feelings."* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen believed it would not be effective.**

  - *"Our Honor Code, it's a 'No exceptions.' If you lie, cheat or steal then you will get the worst possible punishment. If you were to have a moral code instead, so you are not going to rape anybody, kill somebody. So if you were to have that code and then no exceptions, just with our Honor Code, if you were to break our Honor Code, it would turn into a similar witch hunt with people who don't really deserve, who are honorable people they just made a bad judgment and start this whole other thing where it turns into a witch hunt."* (Female)

  - *"We have what's called an Honor Board, it's actually a group of midshipmen that handle it, they are officer's positions. But when you establish a code of respect and dignity, I wouldn't necessarily go as far as implementing a regimental function solely for that. That would be a bunch of he said, she said and rumor mill."* (Female)

- *"We talk about leadership all the time, and one of the points that always comes up is firmness, fairness, dignity, and compassion, and so that's always talked about and brought up, so it's there. It's not something we sign on the dotted line, and, again, we don't really sign on the dotted line even for the Honor Code."* (Male)

- *"I don't think it would be taken seriously."* (Male)

- *"It would be laughed out the door. It just seems a little heavy handed."* (Male)

- *"That's something you have to define on your own. You either have it or you don't."* (Male)

Chapter 3: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Faculty and Staff

Three focus group sessions were conducted at USMMA on March 19, 2013. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There were three sessions: faculty members, coaches and athletic staff, and uniformed staff. Each session had between ten and fourteen participants.

Sexual Assault

The *2013 SAGR* focus groups included faculty and staff because they interact with midshipmen daily. The rationale was to present to them many of the same questions posed to the midshipmen participants to gain a different perspective on issues. The same approach was taken where in each topical area the facilitator made an effort to drive out causes for behaviors or situations being discussed and recommendations for improvement.

The discussions began by sharing with the participants the unwanted sexual contact (USC) rates for the DoD academies[8] and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA)[9] from the *2012 SAGR*. Participants were asked whether they were aware of the rates presented, and to discuss whether they felt the rates were similar to those at their Academy. Additional questions were posed for participants' knowledge of where incidents were most likely to occur, their thoughts on victims experiencing multiple incidents of USC over time, and the role of "sexting" and pornography. Participants further contributed comments on the role alcohol plays in USC, when during the day it is more likely to occur, and whether "victim blaming" occurs.

Familiarity with Incidence Rates from 2012 SAGR

- **Faculty and staff indicated that USC incidence rates for USCGA women would closely resemble USMMA rates.**
  - *"It's about right."* (Uniformed)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that USC incidence rates for USMMA women would be higher than those for women at USCGA.**
  - *"My experience, I think these numbers are low. I think they are probably pretty profoundly low."* (Faculty)
  - *"I would have expected higher rates."* (Faculty)
  - *"Should be higher – not that it should be higher but that the numbers I think are falsely low."* (Faculty)

[8] U.S. Naval Academy, U.S. Military Academy, and U.S. Air Force Academy

[9] Rates for USCGA were used by the facilitator as a comparison model for rates at USMMA due to *2012 SAGR* rates not yet being readily available for USMMA. Both academies have similar rates.

- **Faculty and staff indicated that USC incidence rates while on sea duty are different than those experienced at the Academy.**

  - *"Our students spend an extended period of time at sea in an environment that is not here at the Academy."* (Faculty)

  - *"Sometimes seamen aren't quite so well varnished."* (Faculty)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that USC incidence rates for male midshipmen are most likely a reflection of hazing and bullying.**

  - *"Men, I think about one and a half percent said they experienced something that was unwanted. I always ask them, what's going on there, and most of the time they think it's joking around. But a true full on sexual assault seems to be pretty rare among men, or at least the ones that are willing to admit it."* (Athletic)

  - *"As hazing or bullying most likely, I would assume."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that sophomores are more vulnerable from having their first sea duty.**

  - *"I would assume that's so because half of our third class go off to sea."* (Athletic)

  - *"They get their first taste of freedom."* (Athletic)

  - *"Not only are you free, but now you're going to go travel the world."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that the fluctuation in USC incidence rates depends on the number of women and accurate reporting.**

  - *"When you're looking at it based on women who are victims, the numbers fluctuate so differently from class to class. So then the fact that it's going up or staying flat makes sense with the small number of women."* (Athletic)

  - *"Maybe one thing is maybe people are being more honest in surveys they're taking, because they know it's something that people are looking at. So the number of incidents could be the same, but actually the number of people who are reporting these incidents could be higher. So it may not be 'Oh, if we didn't bring it up it wouldn't happen,' maybe it was happening before but we are saying it right."* (Athletic)

  - *"I know about unwanted behavior but assaults, you don't know. You don't hear about those. But I do know there's a stream of unwanted behavior male to female. Neither would surprise me. We have a small female population."* (Uniformed)

Location of Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Faculty and staff indicated that barracks were the most likely place for USC to occur at the Academy.**
  - *"In the barracks."* (Faculty)
  - *"Because that's where they live and that's where they're all in close quarters together."* (Faculty)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that housing female midshipmen is complicated.**
  - *"It varies from company to company and by class. So some company officers are grouping the female plebe freshmen together and then in other areas they're spread throughout the buildings. And one of the things you have to be really careful with on that is that, to give you a hypothetical, you have a midshipman who's a midshipman officer, sometimes the priority becomes putting her with other women as opposed to giving her the quarters that she rates as a midshipman officer. So are you undermining her then as a midshipman officer by not giving her the quarters that she rates."* (Faculty)
  - *"If you go back in the history of Kings Point, the class rate system applied, which means based on your class rate depending on what floor you were on, first deck, second deck or third deck. And everything is intermixed, you can have female room next to a male room to go back and forth. In recent years they tried to intermix everything and I think that's causing some of the problems; you have class rates and mixing and the viewpoints are changing. So curious about the changing of how the barracks are set up is influencing some of this because you had officer rooms set up with overlooking the classes."* (Faculty)
  - *"They should have an all-female barracks. And I know it's not the right thing to do and I know it's segregation or whatever you want to call it, but you have an all-female barracks, half the stuff will go away. Because you have females and males living right next door to each other, walking down the P way in bathrobes and in towels. And when they come back after hours, guess who's there to supervise? Nobody."* (Uniformed)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that the Waterfront is another location where improper behaviors might occur.**
  - *"You could go for a walk with somebody and have one thing in mind, going for a walk, or I don't mind if I kiss him but I don't want to do anything else. And somebody could say she kissed me, she wants more. That's unwanted behavior."* (Uniformed)
  - *"Down at the Waterfront. Within the campus itself there are many, many places that it can happen."* (Uniformed)

- *"Historically sometimes it happens at the Waterfront, sailing team; who's there, who's managing it; there's been some strange rumors some years from the Waterfront. Men and women, young men and women on these boats overnight, a night or two or three."* (Faculty)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that ships are safer than barracks.**

  - *"There's way worse stuff going on in the barracks at night or out in the park or things here in New York City than you're getting on a ship. Maybe when the ship pulls into port you might have an issue with the locals but as far as being on the ship, harassment I would say is probably more prevalent than any type of assault, somebody giving somebody a hard time."* (Uniformed)

  - *"I would think 90 percent on campus."* (Uniformed)

  - *"These are major shipping companies and the employees make up to $100,000 and well over $100,000 and they would be fired immediately to prevent a lawsuit. And they go through training. The private sector. So even if they wanted to do something, they are thinking about their whole livelihood going down the drain. So that's the stop mark right there."* (Uniformed)

  - *"As far as crew member on a ship, there's a culture of the new guy, everybody is going to pick on the new guy. And that can be flipped over to some harassment, especially if it's a male going on a female. There's a fine line there. But I really think it's a lot more of a barracks issue than anything."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that a preventive action would be to lock doors.**

  - *"You can't have a female and a male in the same room, so that's why the doors are always open until low light period."* (Athletic)

  - *"Anyone from the outside can come in the dorm."* (Uniformed)

  - *"Our dorms are very open. They don't get locked up."* (Uniformed)

OPPORTUNITY

- An opportunity might exist to make the barracks safer by allowing midshipmen to lock their doors after a certain time. Other strategies include letting midshipmen living in the barracks come up with solutions that make them feel safer and creating an exit survey for graduating midshipmen asking about what they would have liked to help them feel safer.

- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen purposely disable their doors.**

  - *"They make their doors push doors, they put magnets in them, they give each other the codes."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that additional surveillance might help.**

  - *"Put cameras up."* (Uniformed)

- *"I always thought it was bizarre that at night you really only have two people, you have one person in the commandant's staff here and one security guard to look at 800 kids. So the odds are in the kids' favor, unless I'm dumb, the chance of me getting caught is slim to none."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen are in charge of the watch which is a good strategy since they are culpable.**

  - *"During the evening, though, beyond just the regimental duty officer and the security guard there are watches manned 24 hours a day in those dorms."* (Athletic)

  - *"And that's part of being under the UCMJ, so if something happens under their watch, they're then culpable for it. They do have something there."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that once midshipmen are off campus it is their free time.**

  - *"When these kids get off campus it's enough with the regulations sometimes. They just want to let loose, I want to wear whatever I want to wear. And it does go along with being part of an academy, you give up a lot of your freedoms when you decide to come here. But at the same time, I think then the kids get a chance to go off campus, they don't want to be, 'Okay, I have to wear this, I have to wear this.' And for law making or rules purposes, the freaking book is going to be this much of what you can and can't do."* (Athletic)

Multiple Incidents of Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Faculty and staff indicated that multiple incidents of USC might be the result of a progression of behaviors.**

  - *"Somebody will do something that is mildly offensive to gauge your reaction and at some point in time it just becomes progressively more aggressive. I've seen people who become more aggressive from female to female; in other words, start off with one woman doing some things, maybe grabbing her buttocks while she's working on the radar, the next woman who comes along, they advance more and more. I would have to say that's true."* (Faculty)

- **Opinions differed on whether multiple incidents involved the same offender or different offenders.**

  - *"I think there's that category and there's also the people who eventually they are going to hit the trip wire of criminal conduct because they're escalating from incident to incident and eventually they'll cross the line."* (Faculty)

- *"I went to sea for a long period of time. And the vast majority of men have very good gauges on where appropriate limits should be. And so what I've seen is a small percentage of men who are doing it repetitively. One chief engineer I sailed with used to say 'God made me for ugly women.' And every female that he felt fit in that category he was going to hit on. And maybe one out of ten would bite but that's what they do. Like fishing for trout, you throw the hook out, you pull it back. Eventually you're going to get a fish to bite."* (Faculty)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that if a perpetrator is not discouraged, they will continue offending.**

  - *"If they get away with something the first time, I'm sure they can get confidence that they could keep going."* (Uniformed)

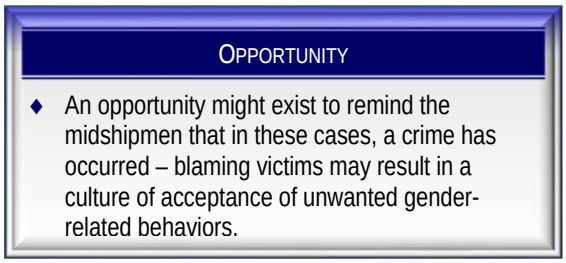
  - *"You could actually have a systemic problem as well. It could be a person but if the system doesn't respond and treat it correctly then the person is encouraged to continue."* (Uniformed)

  - *"By not reporting it it's tacitly condoning it."* (Faculty)

Victim Blaming

- **Faculty and staff indicated that some victims might try to get themselves out of trouble or cover up poor performance.**

  - *"They use the system to get themselves out of perceived trouble, so they use the system not for intended reporting but report something so they can get themselves out of trouble, which destroys the system itself because now you bring doubt for the next person who makes a claim. Are they just trying to get out of trouble, are they trying to not get stuck or what have you, and that's an issue here at the Academy."* (Faculty)



  - *"Absolutely. You hear about it. Especially if somebody doesn't do well maybe out at sea, sometimes they'll blame that they got harassed out there."* (Uniformed)

  - *"It's 50/50 I think. Hopefully that person has reached out to you and you can document that they are having troubles and we know about it and things of this nature instead of coming back after eight months."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that they do not understand why someone would falsely report since it is very hard on victims.**

  – *"Or while we were picking up about society that if you report the problem, is it being truthful, that then you become the victim."* (Athletic)

  – *"I think I consider it sometimes more of a tyrant at times. I just think that more attention should be given to the punishment of what will happen to the person that does it, that's accused – that's convicted of doing it. But even within the process let them know that this process shouldn't be easy for the person who did it, just as much as it shouldn't be easy for the person who was the victim."* (Athletic)

Use of Alcohol

- **Faculty and staff indicated that fear of alcohol violations deter people from reporting.**

  – *"Do predators, sure, they come but it's rare. So most of the issues are deep into a bottle of vodka. So they're going to be getting in trouble as well and that's the trouble with the chain of command. Once the chain of command gets in, that's fine, you were harassed, but guess what, you still were underage drinking. So I think that's where a lot of the students throw up the shield and they'll go talk to their shipmates or what have you on the subject matter."* (Uniformed)

  – *"The interesting thing with the case that they presented on Friday was it was alcohol related, but then it turned into a sexual harassment thing by a ship's officer."* (Athletic)

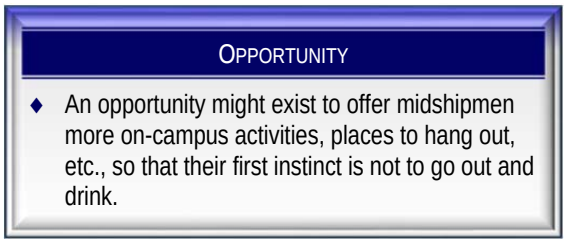
  – *"And when they go out to sea, most of the companies have a zero tolerance policy."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that alcohol regulations are already as light as they can be.**

  – *"I don't think they could get much lighter than they are at the moment, that's probably part of the problem."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that alcohol is a problem because students are locked down for most of the time.**

  – *"We've had big, big cuts in activity spending, such as it was. Big, big cuts. So we literally have very little to offer the students on the grounds. Not from not wanting to do it, but just funding."* (Uniformed)



- *"There's not much to do here on campus. Yes, you are in the greatest city in the world and you walk out the gate and you can get lost in the jungle. But as far as being on campus, if you are not staying busy it's easy to get involved in something you shouldn't get involved in. Unlike the Naval Academy that has an ice rink and they have a student center and they have this, that and the other."* (Uniformed)

- *"The alcohol thing here I think is more of an issue than most places. Most of us went to civilian schools, and we could get off and drink whenever we wanted to. These kids have a tendency to overdo it when it comes to drinking."* (Athletic)

- *"Because they're locked up. They can only get off Friday and Saturday. So they try and get in as much as they can. And if they're on a sports team, they can't get off for possibly a couple months at a time because you're on TMs or whatever. So I think that's going to lead to, at all the academies, not just here, with the kids."* (Athletic)

Sexting, Pornography, Flirting, and Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Faculty and staff indicated that pornography seems to be an issue at the Academy.**

  - *"About this time last year the outgoing IT person on campus was at the faculty forum and he reported overwhelmingly in the evening the broad band use at this school is for pornography."* (Faculty)

  - *"I don't know where the leadership is here where this is going on. I assume these are young men paired in rooms watching pornography together. But I was astonished. But when I tried to engage in discussion with people about it, it was a sort of boys will be boys attitude about that."* (Faculty)

  - *"This is just a mystery to me. Especially after being told semester after semester that they have no time to study or read or be prepared for classes."* (Faculty)

OPPORTUNITY

- Similar to midshipmen's perspective, pornography exists but the magnitude is hard to assess.
- An opportunity might exist to emphasize the impact of persistent viewing of pornography on attitudes and beliefs toward genders and relationships.

Faculty and Staff Recommendations

- **Producing XYZ reports for midshipmen might encourage them to report by knowing the outcomes of cases.**

  - *"A lot of them are about honor, but it's also an example of something that says this is what happened, and it's reporting no names, and it says what the final outcome was. And someone reading that might say wow, if I cheat on this or do this, this could happen to me. Maybe that would be something to do if programs come up in this instance."* (Athletic)

Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior

Similar to the midshipmen focus groups, this set of questions posed a hypothesis about the relationship of verbally offensive behaviors, such as sexual harassment and sexist comments, on USC. The facilitator began by sharing results from the *2012 SAGR* on rates of sexual harassment and sexist behavior at the other academies over the past four surveys and hearing participants' reactions. The facilitator then gave additional findings based on *2012 SAGR* that those men and women who experienced USC in the past year also tended to experience sexual harassment and sexist behavior at higher rates. Participants commented on the possible relationships among these unwanted gender-related behaviors and what the impact might be of addressing the verbal behaviors and possibly reducing USC. Following up, the facilitator asked if cultural factors, such as attitudes of disrespect toward women, contributed to USC. This section ended with a discussion of recommendations for decreasing sexual harassment and sexist behavior.

Familiarity with Incidence Rates from 2012 SAGR

- **Faculty and staff indicated that the sexual harassment incidence rates at USMMA would be higher for both females and males than the rates at USCGA.**
  - *"I think it's probably on the low side but I think it's probably a couple of things. One, if you're in a distinct minority you tend to internalize that. The other is I think every person at some point in time has said something stupid and most people realize that they said something stupid."* (Faculty)
  - *"It's higher."* (Athletic)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that sexual harassment and sexist behavior are cultural issues; perceptions of gender inequality are a driving factor.**
  - *"We experience something else here. The male students don't have a healthy respect for a lot of the female students because they know the female students can get away with more than they can get away with. They truly believe that. And then you try to have a conversation with a male student saying maybe it wasn't the female student, it was the way that the higher ups reacted to the female student, don't be so quick to judge. And then they just laugh at you, and they say she knew exactly what she was doing. They know how to play the system, the females, or at least the males think that more than the females. So there's a little thing going on there, less respect or more of an attitude, let's put it that way."* (Uniformed)
  - *"And [female midshipmen] do get out of a lot of stuff. You could have a male do the same thing academically as a female and then all of a sudden the appeal goes all the way up and the next thing you know the males are gone and the females are still here, how does it happen."* (Uniformed)

- *"The numbers probably reflect being we are a military academy, meaning we're more closed, where if they go to an open school, open meaning they can go in and out freely, they're not so willing to concentrate on what one person's effort is and what another isn't. Versus we have physical fitness tests here; we have standards that we have to maintain. There's a back and forth, a competitiveness or a machoism or the feminism or the more athleticism – the more athletic a person is, it's being critiqued because it's a concentrated effort here within these four institutions."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that these behaviors are more likely to occur at sea than on campus.**

  - *"Harassment, I would say it's going to be more at sea, but harassment, if you take into account the way they perceive things during indoctrination, it could very well be 50/50. But the sexist behavior, I think that it's going to be 75/25, it's going to happen more out at sea because it's still not a large population."* (Athletic)

  - *"If you would consider the timeline in the past year of a kid going out to sea, I would definitely expect it to be 90 percent. I would hope if you were to limit it to just what goes on here that it would be a tiny bit lower."* (Athletic)

OPPORTUNITY

- Similar to the comments by midshipmen, many feel these behaviors are learned at sea and are in turn brought back to the Academy.
- An opportunity might exist to make midshipmen aware of these statistics and engage them in conversations about whether they felt these behaviors are appropriate for professional leaders. Appealing to their professionalism and respect may yield a lasting sense of responsibility for discouraging inappropriate behaviors.

Relationship to Unwanted Sexual Contact

- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen might escalate behaviors if unchecked.**

  - *"It could be escalating behavior too. It could be the same individual doing both."* (Athletic)

  - *"The only thing I could think if it's just unchecked by that individual or just trying to ignore it, maybe the next time it's 'They didn't say anything last time so I'll say it again or I'll do something.'"* (Athletic)

  - *"Sometimes they're told to just ignore negative comments generally in society and maybe it will go away. It probably doesn't go away, especially in a place like this."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that sexist behavior on campus establishes a zone of permissibility.**

  – *"I have students come in and give presentations in class and they have to plug their own computer in. On the background they'll have some scantly clad woman and we all have to sit there as they're setting the computer up and look at it. It establishes a zone of permissibility to these people. How do we get them to understand that that is not acceptable, and again I think without standing above them and slapping them with a stick and say 'I don't think that works here.' It just feels like there hasn't been guidance, there hasn't been any leadership about a wisdom about that. I don't know what the answer is."* (Faculty)

  – *"All these reality shows of what goes on and gets all the popular comments absolutely. And then, if I could also just say for everything, and not to take it the wrong way, is that the way you conduct yourself, you might be sending the wrong message. What you said before, a crime is a crime. But the way you dress could send the wrong message. But obviously if you commit the crime it's still the crime."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that reducing sexual harassment and sexist behavior might reduce USC.**

  – *"It's a little like if you look at domestic violence, verbal abuse always precedes the physical abuse. And I think that's probably a similar pattern that you are seeing going on here. And sometimes it's actually quite methodical."* (Faculty)

  – *"I think you can create an atmosphere that increases the risk and so that's where the institutions have to step in. Would you rather discipline somebody for saying something stupid or would you rather have to deal with these extreme cases of assault. And by dealing with this stuff on the low level you are also setting a standard on the higher level. One of the things I've always told my students is you can sit down with a rule book and debate all day long whether or not this particular little statement fits within a sexual harassment type policy. But there's actually a really simple way to go, and that is before you let something fly out of your mouth or do something, ask yourself is what I am thinking about doing professional or unprofessional."* (Faculty)

Faculty and Staff Recommendations

- **To change the environment, punish midshipmen who participate in sexist behaviors.**
  - *"You fail them. That's one way to do it, fail them."* (Faculty)
  - *"Having a zero tolerance. I think that harassment occurs almost in a bullying aspect where you have that group mentality to where there are three of us together, two are on the sidelines, why aren't those two stepping in to say 'Hey, that's not acceptable.' These are the future leaders."* (Uniformed)
- **Increasing awareness and real world training in small groups might be effective.**
  - *"I think also having real world examples of what can happen, like when something happens at Air Force Academy, all the problems they've had, and students are e-mailed or people learn about what happened there and how it messed up someone's life, you have to think of those. Like what happened in Steubenville, Ohio, someone who's a teenager or a parent now should think of these lives, whether it's the person who was raped or the people that were found guilty of it, there are big things that happen afterwards. I think you need things that are going to get their attention, and real world things are going to do that."* (Athletic)
  - *"It's an awareness thing; I think it needs to be something that is shared with them in smaller groups during indoctrination."* (Athletic)
  - *"I actually went to one of the student ones, I think it was just the athletic one, plebes athletes or something. The program was somewhat funny, the kids would laugh. It was a guy and a girl, they came on. It was people their age speaking about things that actually did happen. They were talking about sex fairly openly as opposed to something that's taboo. And I think that resonates with them a little bit better than PowerPoints. That is important, but I think a lot of those things go over well."* (Athletic)
- **Too much training for life in the Service will not be appropriate.**
  - *"I think that it would be a mistake to focus whatever they're going to do here as a preventive measure and not worry about the future so much about if they were going to go in the military. This is a learning community, and at the end of the day this is still a college, this is still a university. And we have to make sure that the students, first and foremost feel safe. And then the secondary product would be if they were to go into a military situation, if they were going to go on a ship and sail on their license after they graduate, that's a secondary byproduct of it. But in my opinion, the number one priority should be to make sure the students here as a part of a learning community feel safe."* (Athletic)

– *"If you are going to add another course to an overloaded curriculum, it's not going to happen."* (Athletic)

Reporting

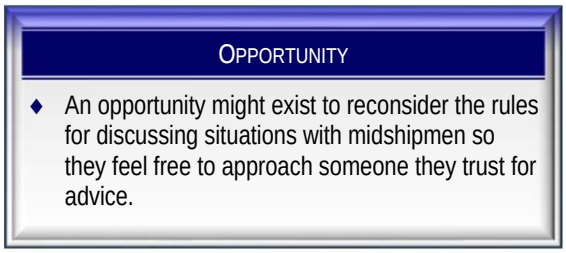
The purpose for this section was to gain additional understanding of why, even with all of the emphasis on USC and zero tolerance, that midshipmen are still reluctant to report their experiences. Faculty and staff offered a number of potential reasons, especially the perceived repercussions from reporting. The section ended with faculty and staff providing recommendations to remove barriers to reporting.

Reporting at Sea

- **Faculty and staff indicated that the protocol for reporting issues while at sea is problematic.**

  – *"A lot of times we don't know. A midshipman doesn't tell us what happens."* (Faculty)

  – *"And one of the other things too is these are ships that are owned and operated not by us. And so for those reports to do any good there has to be a feedback system to the operators. And I don't know where we're at on them being given the feedback."* (Faculty)



  – *"We put the students out to sea. And it used to be a few years ago when they would come back the female students, our first question would be how was your time at sea and how did you deal with the men. And they would tell us. And they did have some sexual harassment, certainly not too many serious things to report. Almost to the person and the females they had something to report. Now, they're at sea six months at a time or eight months at a time. But then in the last year or so we've had a whole different approach here. We were told that if any student talks to us as staff members, we have to report it immediately. And all of the conversation with all of the students has completely ceased. No one tells us anything. I feel strongly that if a student wants to have a mentor or sponsor or someone to feel that they can get direction or whatever, they should."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff had mixed reviews of shipboard training.**

  – *"I think seaport training, for those going out to sea, seaport training does do a group meeting with just the female cadets so they try to explain it to them. The person who runs shipboard training does explain all this to us pretty much."* (Athletic)

- *The rumor on that is it's not a good system. It's not anonymous, it's not trusted by the midshipmen. So a lack of reporting might be surfacing because of that.* (Faculty)

Reasons for Not Reporting

- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen do not report USC for fear of social retaliation; reports were not always handled well.**
  - *"I've heard throughout the years that I've been here that if somebody reports something, it's not handled in the proper manner, and I'll say he or she could be very uncomfortable for continuing their studies here."* (Athletic)
  - *"I think they're still reluctant, especially for a young lady, because I think if you report something, then you're afraid for reprisal action against you. That's big. There's no whistle blower protection like the IG has."* (Athletic)
  - *"When someone comes forward, I'm not sure what will happen, and if it follows the same structure or process as everything else, that could be a deterrent because if you then have to go in front of a board or something that to be managed or scrutinized or whatever for your reporting, that would be a definite deterrent for someone."* (Athletic)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen do not report USC for fear of the incident becoming known.**
  - *"I think they're very sensitive to maybe being railroaded out if they say something. Because the fact is it's not going to be anonymous."* (Faculty)
  - *"People have nowhere to go. It's round robin all the time. Everybody tries to help and then you have the student mentality that they don't want to be singled out and have anyone know anything is different about them than any other person because they will be marked different for four years."* (Uniformed)
  - *"Two things that go against it. One, it's a very small campus population, so everybody is going to end up knowing. Two, you have such a small female population, so the support group for a woman midshipman, let's say, to have something happen, then report it, then try to advise or something, what's the next step, how do I go about trying to figure this out and make it right, there's a very, very small group that she might feel comfortable sharing that information with, which is going to be very difficult for her."* (Athletic)
  - *"For sexual harassment here, the students can't make an anonymous complaint. Whereas sexual abuse, they can make an anonymous complaint. But if you don't have that protection, everybody knows quickly and it's very unfortunate that they're not protected in that aspect."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that Academy management might be reluctant to interfere with issues occurring on ships.**

  – *"The ATR is reluctant to take them off the ships. They have very few ships at this point, it's become a crisis at this Academy, the paradigm is closing in on collapse. And the message you get from ATR is this is a good assignment, you better keep it. And we probably send them out and the kids know they'll get push back if they have to get off."* (Faculty)

  – *"That's a management issue. That's a top down issue. That means that our ATRs are not getting the word from way up top that this is of importance."* (Faculty)

  – *"It goes the other way too, which I know the perception is unless it's an extreme case, don't do it because you won't get support. So therefore it doesn't get reported. It's a management problem."* (Faculty)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that they would like to discuss issues with midshipmen, but midshipmen are reluctant to approach them for fear it will generate an official report.**

  – *"I tell them you can't tell me anything because I have to say something to somebody. And then it breaks your heart because then where are they going to go."* (Uniformed)

  OPPORTUNITY

  - Coaches, uniformed members, and faculty want to help midshipmen feel comfortable coming forward.
  - An opportunity might exist to identify procedures to give midshipmen the chance to discuss these issues without triggering a full report.

  – *"We were concerned about that aspect of what you're talking about because referrals and people coming in to talk about stuff has just disappeared. And it seems that the current process almost causes people to have to report and there's no mechanism for saying come on over to anyone. It's totally been eliminated."* (Uniformed)

  – *"I think that the fact that there's that law where we're thwarted from speaking one to one with someone who has been sexually assaulted, it put a stop to communication."* (Uniformed)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen are more likely to talk to each other about their experiences.**

  – *"Their best friends know more than anybody."* (Uniformed)

  – *"But they will go to one another. Company officers, am I right, that students will talk to one another."* (Uniformed)

  – *"Within themselves, within the regiment."* (Uniformed)

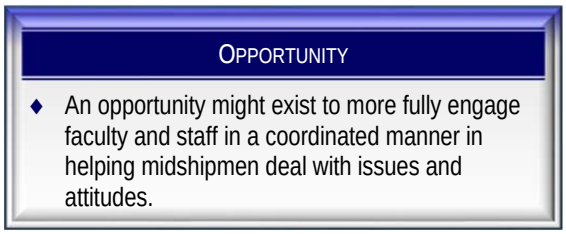
Roles and Responsibilities

In this section of questions, participants were asked how they perceived their roles with respect to preventing and responding to USC. They were asked to describe the interactions they have with students on these issues, their interactions with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) staff, and recommendations for helping them better deal with issues.

Perceived Roles

- **Faculty and staff indicated that relationships between midshipmen and staff vary.**

  - *"I'm not sure where we would hear this. At least in my classes, I don't have that kind of relationship to talk to students about this stuff. I don't know if that's common among the faculty. Where would we hear from the students about these issues?"* (Faculty)



  - *"My sense is, the women on the faculty probably have a more fine-grained view of a lot of this than do the males because if there's an incident they're more likely to come to you and say 'Hey, here's what happened, what do I do?'"* (Faculty)

  - *"For the most part they're doing a particular sport, they're doing it because they enjoy it. They enjoy the camaraderie and that sort of thing. So in many ways it's a safe environment to be able to talk about it or on my team, we're establishing certain rules and certain expectations, and as many times as I can I'll check certain behaviors, whether it's language or whether it's how one treats another person on the team. And we are a men's and women's team that train and travel together. So I've found you need to just check behaviors at all times."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that midshipmen appreciate hearing about real experiences.**

  - *"I think a lot of it has to do with setting standards and being specific as far as what's acceptable and not. And I think also helping students learn – the current students learn from what happened in the past that they may not know about, that this occurred and we had a problem with something and it's something that hopefully will prevent other problems from happening in the future, whether it's before they go out to sea, when they're a plebe, before recognition, any time. There are things that I think as adults and people who have been in different situations can bring that out in students and help them learn that way."* (Athletic)

Interactions with SAPR Staff

- **Faculty and staff members interact with SAPR staff differently or as needed.**
  - *"I have met with him several times."* (Faculty)
  - *"I haven't. It's relatively new."* (Faculty)
  - *"We've had faculty meetings with him where he's made presentations."* (Faculty)
  - *"I would have no idea. He's [the SARC] a very nice man. But I don't know what response, as it should be, that you don't know who goes to him. So it's hard to know. But I know that he's done programs."* (Uniformed)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that top down support is needed for midshipmen to feel safe reporting.**
  - *"I think individuals need to know that they're going to be supported if they come forward, from the top down. If they feel in any way it's just going to be slid under the table, I don't blame the person for not wanting to report it."* (Athletic)
  - *"Try to prevent things making sure that all the students understand that if this number is ten percent, that's ten percent too much and this is something that's not going to be allowed here. And I think the higher ups and everyone needs to be aware of it and make sure that there's not a tolerance for this."* (Athletic)
  - *"There is a separation from those making the policies and how they are putting those policies into effect as opposed to what's really happening."* (Uniformed)
  - *"Because it starts at the top. And everyone looks at the students and say look at what they're doing. But I think you have to go up to the person who's on the top."* (Uniformed)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that leadership is taking USC very seriously.**
  - *"We've actually had the Admiral come talk to our department in one meeting. He said if this happens that they're going to bring in the FBI, they're not going to have the police. They're going to get the proper authorities to come in. So we have had multiple admirals tell us that. I think Kelleys and Green both told us."* (Athletic)
  - *"I think it's a huge leap for us. I've been here for a number of years and there's very frequently been some rumbling of some incidents in the barracks or on a cruise or something that without necessarily substantiation. Now there's much more explicit focus on the problem. The training that midshipmen are now supposed to get will probably help with that to some degree as well."* (Faculty)

- **Faculty and staff discussed how midshipmen and human relations officers are trained.**

  – *"Every company also has two SAVAs [Sexual Assault Victims' Advocates] that are trained, so they are more trained for the sexual assault, that area. The human relations officers are definitely more broad based on harassment, fraternization, alcohol training, I think we did some tobacco training at the beginning of the year."* (Uniformed)

  – *"These are all lead by midshipmen. When I say company lead, within the company are midshipmen. Within the company you have one company officer and then you have a midshipman who's a SAVA, a midshipman who's a human relations officer."* (Uniformed)

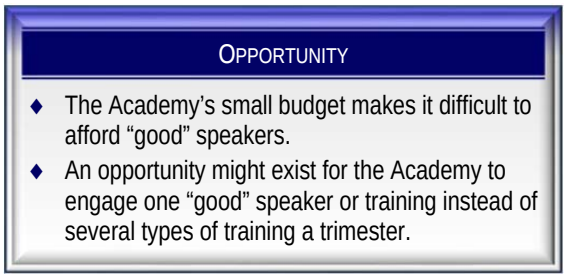
  – *"We have sea lectures every Monday for the students going out to sea and it will start at the beginning of the trimester. And every Monday morning for an hour we'll have different lectures on alcohol awareness, sexual, self-prevention, safety, pirating. So it covers everything that has to do with being on a ship. And we give those lectures and we bring in somebody from the medical staff, Dr. Wall talks about the alcohol awareness. We have the nurses come in and talk sexually transmitted diseases and things. Obviously you can never do enough training but I think we do somewhat of a good job preparing them for sea."* (Uniformed)

  – *"For sex [Jay Velis, the SARC] does but for other things some of us give other kinds of training. But just for sex and sex attacks, Jay."* (Uniformed)

Faculty and Staff Recommendations

- **Improve sexual assault prevention and response training for midshipmen.**

  – *"The issue is that you have first class, the seniors that you are training, first rotation, second rotation, so you have the continual turn over, and you are training them every rotation with pretty much the same information and then you are having them train the companies with the same information. So the midshipmen are bored. So finding new ways to train them with what resources? What resources do we have here that we can use to train them with? What budget do we have that we can go out and get them new and exciting resources? Let's get them excited about alcohol awareness. Let's get them excited about fraternization. It's just coming across with new ways to train them. That's where the challenge lies."* (Uniformed)



- *"You now find yourself in a situation that nobody should have to deal with. Were you able to deal with it more effectively because of the training that you received? And if the answer on that is no, then we need to go back and rethink our training."* (Faculty)

- *"Because when you get out [to sea], every company out there is going to have their own set of sexual harassment policies and they all have safety management systems that state this. But the female and male should know clearly what is acceptable and not acceptable and have a clear path to report this back to the school and say I need to get off the ship now, I'm having issues.* (Faculty)

- *"I think where it could get better is I think the training has to get better."* (Uniformed)

- **Training should be accomplished in small groups within the company.**

  - *"Small groups, keeping it in small groups. I think when you do it in large groups you get the pack mentality. So I think the key is keeping it in small groups."* (Uniformed)

  - *"When you think about your company. My company is better when I break them down into small little units."* (Uniformed)

  - *"I think all of them are better in small. Whenever we get them together in an auditorium, they are going to be a bunch of wild animals, they're not going to be respectful of whoever is talking to them and that person is just not going to get the attention that they deserve and the lesson to be learned is just missed, so it's better within the small company. And as far as them respecting the person that's speaking, when it's a classmate speaking to their own classmate, I think they blow it off, they laugh at them. And then that person who speaks knows that they're not being respected, so a lot of time it's missed and they say I tried. Now, a senior can talk to a plebe or a fourth classman all day long because it's just the respect of the position. But when it comes classmate to classmate, they're not listening to each other."* (Uniformed)

Cultural Change

The facilitator began this section by stating that some people believe the Academy can improve USC prevention and response by changing the culture and attitudes toward this issue. Participants were asked if they agreed and how such change could be made. The section ended with a question about the usefulness of a Dignity and Respect Code.

Need for Cultural Change

- **Faculty and staff indicated that there is a need for cultural change in addition to programs.**
  - *"What drives it is our admissions policy. All our efforts have been towards attracting male midshipman who can contribute to the varsity athletic program. How many females here doesn't matter. When you have that boys' club atmosphere, you are going to get that."* (Faculty)
  - *"I just want to reiterate the women are not the problem, it's the way masculinity is constructed at this school; it's backwards, I feel sometimes I'm on a team bus with a bunch of 15 year olds. We have to completely repair the academic culture here and look at the men, it's the men. Females, I'm from the point of view of someone in the classroom, female students are wonderful. The more I have in the class the more chance we have of actually learning something. Individually these guys are nice people but it's the group, it's the culture here that is something that is hideously wrong."* (Faculty)
  - *"This generation comes from a culture where half of our kids came from a broken marriage, they didn't raise themselves, they raised each other, that's a big difference. And it's a sex drenched, violence drenched culture and then we recruit pretty much jocks. 70 percent of our midshipmen are on a varsity team at some time. I have to tell them, actually say gentlemen, ladies, this is not O'Hara Hall, we act like officers here. But how do you address the lack of civility that the world they're coming from, this oversexed world they come from, and to say you're training to be an officer, officers are gentlemen and ladies, first of all is civil and is mindful of the feelings and human dignity of others and start there."* (Faculty)
- **Faculty and staff indicated that punishments should be consistent.**
  - *"And in my humble opinion, this school does not uphold standards the way it portrays it upholds standards, and that's the biggest issue. And that reflects across the board. So hopefully things change with new leadership. But I think that's been a cultural issue that this institution has had."* (Athletic)
  - *"I think everything needs to be consistent as well. I think that's one of the biggest issues at the school, just getting off the sex aspect but from an honor code standpoint. One person cheats, and they're slapped on the wrist. The other person cheats, they get kicked out. So what are the variances. I know you said there are different levels, but there shouldn't be any different levels. If you cheat, you're done, that's the code, period."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff discussed approaches to change culture and foster civility.**

  - *"They did start doing that when the new plebes came in, they had the seniors not yell at the new plebes and to speak calmly to them to get their point across in speaking not yelling. So they are implementing it to a certain degree, I think."* (Uniformed)

  - *"One of the things I've noticed is people tend to emulate somebody they admire. I would say the adults for the most part conduct themselves pretty well here at this school. But there's probably too big of an age difference for the students to really identify with us as closely. And I see that missing out of the regiment here, where it seems at times our incoming plebes at times are better behaved and more mature than some of the first classmen."* (Faculty)

  - *"And civility is another thing that starts from the top down. And if you were in classrooms where the teachers are civil and if you have administrators who are civil to the people who they are working with, it's going to float down to these students, many of whom come in with big gaps in what their socialization is. So I think it's how we treat one another."* (Uniformed)

  - *"The number one group of people here at this school who want to ask me about my experiences at sea, men midshipmen. I'll have them ask me about it in the classroom, they want to know. So I think sometimes we over focus on the negative and we don't try to build on those positives as much as we should. If you treat people first class, they act first class."* (Faculty)

  - *"I feel at times maybe the zombos[10] are not respected as they should be. Every one of them has an important role and I think at times we're not doing a good enough job with them. And we're really doing them a terrible disservice because if they go out of here with the idea that this is how they're supposed to behave, they are all going to have problems at some point in time. Hopefully not big enough to hurt them but they're going to go through some learning experiences when they start learning the difference between what was appropriate in school and what was appropriate outside of school. I've had women come back to me years after they've graduated and at the time they were here they would have been in my office sometimes for some issues, and they would come back and say you want to know when I really got mad, when I got out of school and I realized how women were really treated. That was when they got away from here – it's there all the time and then when they got out, that women were treated with professionalism and respect, that's when they really started getting angry."* (Faculty)

[10] Non-officer senior.

- **Faculty and staff indicated that the Academy way of life has improved over time.**

  – *"I think it's changed a lot in the past, years ago. I've been here for a long time. I know a number of years ago a rape occurred, the school wanted nothing to do with it, the young lady went out and brought in the police. And then she was ostracized. She hung in for the next year, but it was tough on her. But that was different, I've seen in the past year, especially with Jay [Velis – the SARC] coming in, a huge changeover. So hopefully it's a night and day difference."* (Athletic)

  – *"That's been a major change here, because going back many years ago the problems just stayed within here when it should have been a police matter."* (Athletic)

  – *"I think one of the things that actually has been good, the fact that he's, number one, he's on campus, so that's good, Jay's fully accessible, generally 24/7. There's numbers that you can call, it's anonymous as well, so it's hush-hush if you don't want to let everybody else on campus know, there's this 24 hour line number that you can call. He would have phone calls two, three o'clock in the morning on a – these girls are like, or men, he didn't say specifically obviously, so it's obviously been somewhat helpful that during the regular hours you can come and meet with him, but those off hours, if something would happen I think that's definitely a huge help."* (Athletic)

Affecting Cultural Change

- **Faculty and staff indicated that bad behaviors begin in the home and need to be corrected there.**

  – *"That's a family issue. That's a family issue at home."* (Athletic)

  – *"That's the core values of family falling apart. I have children at home, my spouse and I talk about it all the time. It's all about the family unit. You can't police everybody that comes in."* (Athletic)

  OPPORTUNITY

  - An opportunity might exist to emphasize that even if learned at home, it is the responsibility of the Academy to challenge sexually-based offenses, much like teaching midshipmen to not steal or cheat.

  – *"So you're not going to change them in the four years they're here. You can tell them they can't behave in a certain way."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that they cannot change the core beliefs of midshipmen, but can teach them how to act professionally.**

  – *"Defining the consequences, actions and consequences. That I think they'll listen to. If you say look, here's an example, someone did this and this is what happened to him. That will wake them up."* (Athletic)

- *"They are trained to follow rules. So someone who is a misogynist, who comes here as a misogynist, they may leave as a misogynist, but they will know they can't just walk up to a woman and slap her in the face while they're here. So they can be trained, and then what they do after they leave here is something different. But changing I don't believe."* (Athletic)

- *"Just make sure they know it won't be tolerated."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that the culture of the Academy is not independent of society.**

  - *"Society in certain areas continued to lose control and I think a perfect example would be a classroom. When I was going to school nobody ever worried about a gun or a shooting, and all of a sudden there was just another person yesterday or the day before that they found guns and ready to kill people in a college. What has happened with the standards of society?"* (Athletic)

Dignity and Respect Code

- **Faculty and staff indicated that by choosing to be at the Academy, midshipmen have higher expectations for themselves.**

  - *"Just by virtue of them being here, there's already that higher expectation. So I think we are already enforcing with the regiment then, how they have to follow all the rules."* (Athletic)

  - *"There's no way to quantify respect – what's demeaning to you, might be acceptable to you. I don't think that's something you can really monitor or quantify it in the way that you're asking."* (Athletic)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that the goals of a code can be achieved through education and correction.**

  - *"I think also in different places students learn what is acceptable and what is not acceptable to different people. It's something that's in my team or in my office, the way someone talks and stuff, they might not be able to talk and I'll make it clear they can do that, and somewhere else maybe they can't, I don't feel comfortable with it. It could be an age thing, it could be how we are brought up."* (Athletic)

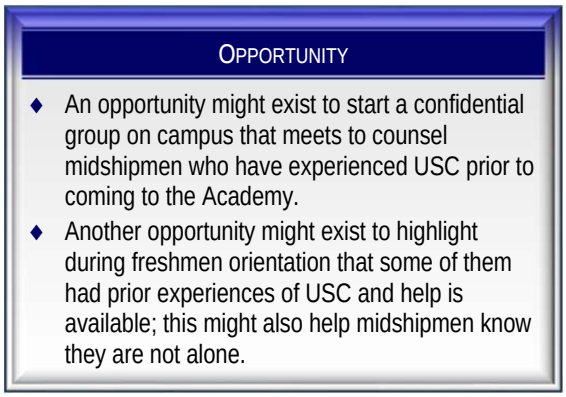
  - *"I don't think the students need any more rules, just better, perhaps more even enforcement of them [enforcement of the existing rules]. And when you talk about some of the stuff, especially with harassment, by the time they come here at 18, you're too old to change if you're a bully, a bigot, a racist or whatever."* (Athletic)

Additional Faculty and Staff Recommendations

The final major area of discussion in the *2013 SAGR* focus groups was titled "Additional recommendations for addressing USC and sexual harassment." The purpose was to spend a few minutes reflecting on the general discussion of factors influencing USC at the Academy and to drive out any other good ideas from the participants on ways to reduce it. The facilitator ended the focus groups by asking for any final thoughts on issues and if there were any questions that were not asked but should have been.

Counseling for Unwanted Sexual Contact Experienced Prior to Coming to the Academy

- **Faculty and staff indicated that they do not ask midshipmen about experiences of USC prior to entering the Academy.**
  - *"We first have to be made aware that that even has taken place. That's not something we ask when they come on deck. We don't know they had the prior experiences."* (Uniformed)
  - *"Because you're not allowed to. Privacy."* (Uniformed)
  - *"I know that everybody who goes into the Academy goes through one source and is screened through one source, which is the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board. So the process for screening may not include an in depth analysis or questioning. I don't know if it's necessarily a privacy issue, I think because there's a lot of medical stuff that's on those forms already."* (Uniformed)



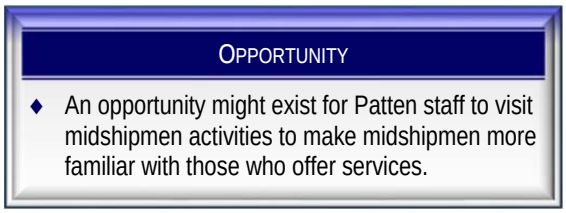
- **Faculty and staff agreed that prior experience of USC is an important issue that needs to be handled by the Academy.**
  - *"The question is how to do that with bringing up all the other problems. But if you have 25 percent that are coming in with a negative or adverse issue, that has to have an effect on the culture that we're trying to build here. And I think now you're starting at a handicap trying to change the end result that we're trying to get by a means."* (Faculty)
  - *"We're behind the eight ball before we even start because they are tuning out a lot of the training because of their past experiences, and we have to address that somehow."* (Faculty)

- **Faculty and staff indicated that counseling is available, but most midshipmen would not go to it.**

  – *"They won't go to it, that's my concern. If you go in sometimes asking for help it could result in a psych evaluation."* (Faculty)

  – *"I've referred a number of people over the years to the chaplain's office because of that fear. They don't want to talk to anybody for fear that it's going to jeopardize their futures. Sometimes people make a bigger issue out of it just because you want to speak about it. But I'm not shocked at that. I think those sorts of things, unfortunately they do happen."* (Faculty)

  – *"I also think if that is correct and they're worried about psych evaluations, then we're failing in our ability to allow them to get counseling with no repercussions, and that needs to change if that's the case. There should be a place they can go for this type of advice or counseling with no repercussions at all. If it is a case that they're not doing it because there's a psych evaluation or something threat, then that should be removed or it should be made clear to them that they can go to this person and this person is going to provide them confidential counseling."* (Faculty)



- **Faculty and staff indicated that they do not know who to send midshipmen to in situations.**

  – *"Who do you send them to, the SARC, or send them to the counseling department?"* (Uniformed)

  – *"You could when they have indoctrination talk about it and bring it up, for those of you there's a fine service here but you need to be able to label it. And under the current staff if it has to do with sex, I don't think it goes over to counseling."* (Uniformed)

References

DMDC. (2012). *2012 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey: Survey Note* (Report No. 2012-023). Arlington, VA: Author.

John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-364, H.R. 5122 (2006).

Appendix A.
2013 Student Focus Group Guide

2013 Student Focus Group Guide

Introduction to the Focus Group

Time for briefing and introductions: 5 minutes

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____ and I am with the Defense Manpower Data Center. My colleagues with me this morning/afternoon are _____ and _____ also with DMDC. We have asked you to be here with us to help us investigate issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response. You might recall that in May and November of last year students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide information to Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted at all three DoD Service Academies and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

This is **a voluntary focus group**. The Academy staff member who invited you to participate in this session should have informed you that we would be discussing gender-related issues, including sexual assault and harassment, and asked if you were willing to participate. If you prefer not to sit in on this focus group, you are free to leave or to sit quietly while others participate.

I have provided each of you with a handout. Please turn to page 1. You can follow along while I share with you the purpose for this focus group and the ground rules we will follow.

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. While the press and others may claim to know what is going on at the Academies, members of Congress and your senior leaders want to hear directly from you about the issues that affect you. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. While this Congressional requirement does not cover your Academy, your leadership asked to participate because they know these are important issues. This is an opportunity for you to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.
- Focus group participants sometimes say "I have not experienced any of these behaviors, so why should I stay for this session?" The purpose of this focus group is to understand these issues at your Academy. You're the experts on what it's like to go to the Academies and we want to hear your opinion about Academy life. It doesn't matter if you *have* or *have not* had gender-related experiences. We do not want to discuss your personal experiences with sexual assault and sexual harassment. We do want to discuss issues in general so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for you.

I want to thank you in advance for participating in this important focus group and go over a few ground rules for the focus group:

- Please respect each others' opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.
- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.
- I will lead the discussion and _____ will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report. If you would like to see how comments are being recorded, please examine what _____ is typing.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, we will not share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session, so please do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Any questions?

On the next several pages of your handout are results from the 2012 survey that we will use as part of the discussion today. I will call your attention to the specific item as we reach that part of the discussion.

Please note that these results are for the average of the three DoD Service Academies and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Results for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy are still being analyzed and will be available to you within several weeks. Our 2012 DoD report is available at the Web site shown if you are interested.

I have several questions to ask you today, with a few subtopics in each. I will watch the time so we will be able to cover all questions by the end of this session at [give specific end time].

Let's begin our discussion today with some results of the survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment. Please turn to page 3 of your handout. Here you will see some of the results from our 2012 survey that we will discuss today.

Time for Question 1: 15 minutes

1. Perceptions about sexual assault and sexual harassment

a. Let's start the discussion by discussing the rates for unwanted sexual contact from the 2012 survey. [Ice breaker question] Do you recall taking the survey last spring?

i. For DoD women, the average rate of unwanted sexual contact was 12.4% in 2012. For Coast Guard Academy women the rate was 9.8%. For DoD men the average was 2.0%. For Coast Guard Academy men it was 0.7%. Preliminary analyses indicate the rates for midshipmen

here at the Merchant Marine Academy are similar to these results. Do these unwanted sexual contact rates seem right to you? Too high, too low? Please discuss.

ii. Please note the description of sexual harassment and sexist behavior on page 4, then the rates on pages 4 and 5. [Explain how sexual harassment is comprised of several types of behavior if they ask. And sexist behavior is based on gender, not sexual behaviors] For DoD women, the average sexual harassment rate was 51% in 2012. For Coast Guard Academy women it was 40%. For both DoD men and Coast Guard Academy men the average was 10%. For DoD women, the average rate for sexist behavior was 90% in 2012. For Coast Guard Academy women it was 77%. For DoD men the average was 39%. For Coast Guard Academy men it was 40%. Do these rates seem right to you? Too high, too low? Please discuss.

b. A finding from the survey suggests that people who experience unwanted sexual contact also tend to experience other unwanted behaviors, such as sexual harassment and sexist behavior. Take a look at the rates for sexual harassment on page 4. This is for all men and women at this Academy. If we look at the rates for sexual harassment of just those men and women who experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past year, the rates for sexual harassment are much higher. For example, at the Coast Guard Academy, the rate for sexual harassment was 72% for women and approximately 63% for men who had experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past year. I say approximately for men because there are too few at the Coast Guard Academy to estimate accurately, so we used an average across the DoD Academies to get 63%. These findings are similar for all of the academies. Look also at the rates for sexist behavior on page 5. For those who experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past year, sexist behavior was also experienced by 100% of the women and approximately 76% of the men at the Coast Guard Academy. Again, this is similar for the other academies as well.

i. What do you think about the relationship between sexual assault and sexual harassment? Sexist behavior?

ii. If someone gets away with sexual harassment or sexist comments, do you think they might move on to more serious behaviors like unwanted touching or sexual acts? Have you seen any examples of someone moving from one type of unwanted behavior to another?

iii. Do you sense attitudes of disrespect toward women at the Academy that might contribute to sexual assault or other unwanted gender-related behaviors? Are there any attitudes of disrespect toward men? Please describe. [Keep the discussion to gender issues if they start discussing racial, religious, political, or other groups.]

iv. What can/should the Academy do to address sexist behavior or sexual harassment? Do you sense that there is acceptance of some of these behaviors as being part of the military environment? [If students acknowledge that there is acceptance, probe further on who they sense that from. Ask if it is part of the Academy "culture" or "military culture." Have them explain how they learned the "culture."]

c. Let's go back to the earlier discussion of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment rates for men from the survey. You indicated they are [higher or lower] than what you might have expected. Who would you think are typically offenders? Where would you think such incidents are most likely to occur?

d. I would like to end this section by asking for your perceptions of the cause of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment behaviors at the Academy.

   i. With all the emphasis on prevention, why do they still occur?

   ii. Does pornography or sexting play a role?

   iii. What more can be done to prevent unwanted sexual contact? Sexual harassment?

OK, now let's switch gears and talk about reporting unwanted sexual contact.

Time for Question 2: 10 minutes

2. Reporting

a. Another finding from the survey at the academies is that only about 20% of students who experienced unwanted sexual contact report it. Do you think unwanted sexual contact is under reported here at the Merchant Marine Academy? Why do you think the majority of students who experienced unwanted sexual contact choose not to report the incident? Do they also choose not to report sexual harassment?

b. What more can be done to encourage reporting? What barriers could be eliminated? Does the competitive nature of the Academy inhibit people from reporting?

c. Many students who experience unwanted sexual contact say they did not report it but "Took care of it myself." What does that mean to you? What actions would one take?

d. Do you think someone would be more or less inclined to report unwanted sexual contact that involved an offender of the same sex for example, male-on-male or female-on-female? Sexual harassment?

We have talked a while about unwanted sexual contact and reporting. Now I want to talk to you a little about the locations where it might occur.

Time for Question 3: 10 minutes

3. Places where unwanted sexual contact is most likely to occur

a. Most victims of unwanted sexual contact indicated on the survey that the incident occurred on Academy grounds. Where would the most likely place be at this Academy for an incident to occur?

b. How could these places be made safer?

c. Are there other locations, such as field settings, sports team trips, club trips, on ship, or at another military location where students might be more vulnerable to unwanted sexual contact? Please describe.

d. Are students on sea duty away from campus more vulnerable? How could these places or experiences be made safer?

Let's turn our discussion specifically to multiple incidents of unwanted sexual contact for a few minutes.

Time for Question 4: 10 minutes

4. Multiple experiences of sexual assault

a. Survey results show that victims often experience more than one incident of unwanted sexual contact. Do you think behaviors tend to progress, such as experiences of touching first, followed by more aggressive behaviors?

b. Do you think someone would be more inclined to report or seek help after experiencing one type of behaviors more than others? [If asked for clarification, ask if someone would be more likely to report completed sex versus attempted sex or touching?]

c. If a victim were to experience multiple incidents of unwanted sexual contact, do you think it would be more likely to be from the same offender/perpetrator or different ones? Do you think a perpetrator who assaults one person would also be likely to assault someone else?

d. Is there a sense that perpetrators have a good chance of getting away with unwanted sexual contact, hence they repeat their actions? Are perpetrators getting away with these behaviors because victims do not report it or perpetrators are not charged and punished?

Let's discuss leadership's response to unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment for a moment.

Time for Question 5: 10 minutes

5. Leadership Perceptions

a. What do your faculty, coaches/activity leaders, and uniformed staff [such as company officers, training NCOs] say to you about sexual assault and other unwanted behaviors? Can you give an example? [Depending on the response, ask if the discussions are helpful or what they would like their leaders to say to them.]

b. How well do faculty/staff lead by example? Do they say something when they witness a questionable behavior? Do they help set a standard or give the impression that a certain amount of "locker room talk" is acceptable? [Depending on the responses, probe for good or bad examples.]

c. Do you think it is the responsibility of faculty/staff to address these issues? Do you see them as roles models? Who specifically [positions, not names]?

d. Has your Company Officer ever discussed unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment with you? What kind of information was discussed? Was it helpful? Why? What would you like to hear from them?

e. What does senior leadership say about unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment? How do you think they handle reported cases of unwanted sexual contact? Do you think leadership would react differently to same-sex unwanted sexual contact? How does leadership respond to instances of sexual harassment? [Probe for good and bad examples, or instances where behaviors are tolerated or overlooked.]

f. In the past few months, have you noticed any new emphasis on unwanted sexual contact or sexual harassment? What has been done? Do you think these steps will make a difference? Do you think there will be any unintended consequences [if asked for examples, ask if the message was negatively received or made them angry]?

g. Do you know the SARC/victims' advocate? [Would you talk to them about an incident of unwanted sexual contact? Why or why not?

Now let's turn our attention briefly to the topic of training at your Academy.

Time for Question 6: 10 minutes

6. Training

a. What type of training have you received this year in the prevention and response to unwanted sexual contact? Sexual harassment?

b. When do you receive this training? Is the timing and location convenient for you?

c. Who typically conducts the training? Are they effective trainers?

d. What training did you consider to be the most effective this year?

e. Did you learning anything this past year that you did not know before? What? Is there something you would like to know more about?

f. [Seniors only and the mixed junior/senior session] Do you feel prepared to deal with issues of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment among your subordinates when you enter active duty? What training was the most helpful? What could be done better to prepare you?

I would like to wrap up our session today with a couple of final questions.

Time for Question 7: 10 minutes

7. Additional recommendations for addressing unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment

a. Do you think the Academy should do more to make counseling or Sexual Assault Prevention and Response resources available to students who experienced trauma prior to entering the academy?

b. As future leaders, what would you do now in your midshipman role to address the problem of unwanted sexual contact? Sexual harassment?

c. Do you believe it would be productive to have a Midshipman "Dignity and Respect Code," much like the Honor Code, in order to instill these values in the midshipman Regiment?

d. What else can you tell us about unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment at the Academy? What did we not ask that we should have?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. As I mentioned at the beginning, we will treat all of your comments anonymously. There is no attribution to any of you for the specific comments you made today. Please also respect that non-attribution when you leave here today. Our goal is to provide the best data possible and you have helped us greatly today with your comments and insights.

One last comment – on the last page of the handout you will see a list of resources available to you if you would like to follow up with us or have any questions. It also lists Academy resources if you would like to talk further to someone about this study or any experiences you might have had with unwanted gender-related behaviors.

Thank you again for your participation.

Appendix B.
Handout for Midshipman Participants

2013 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

Handout for Midshipman Participants

Purpose

We have asked you to be here with us to help us investigate issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response. You might recall that in May and November of last year students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide additional information to Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted at all three DoD Service Academies and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

This is a voluntary focus group. The Academy staff member who invited you to participate in this session should have informed you that we would be discussing gender-related issues, including sexual assault and harassment, and asked if you were willing to participate. If you prefer not to sit in on this focus group, you are free to leave or to sit quietly while others participate.

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. While the press and others may claim to know what is going on at the Academies, members of Congress and your senior leaders want to hear directly from you about the issues that affect you. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. While this Congressional requirement does not cover your Academy, your leadership asked to participate because they know these are important issues. This is an opportunity for you to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.

- Focus group participants sometimes say "I have not experienced any of these behaviors, so why should I stay for this session?" The purpose of this focus group is to understand these issues at your Academy. You're the experts on what it's like to go to the Academies and we want to hear your opinion about Academy life. It doesn't matter if you have or have not had gender-related experiences. We do not want to discuss your personal experiences with sexual assault and sexual harassment. We do want to discuss issues in general so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for you.

Ground Rules for Discussion

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

- Please respect each other's opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.

- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.

- I will lead the discussion and our recorder will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report. If you would like to see how comments are being recorded, please examine what is being typed.

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Discussion Resources

On the next several pages are results from the 2012 survey that we will use as part of the discussion today. I will call your attention to the specific item as we reach that part of the discussion.

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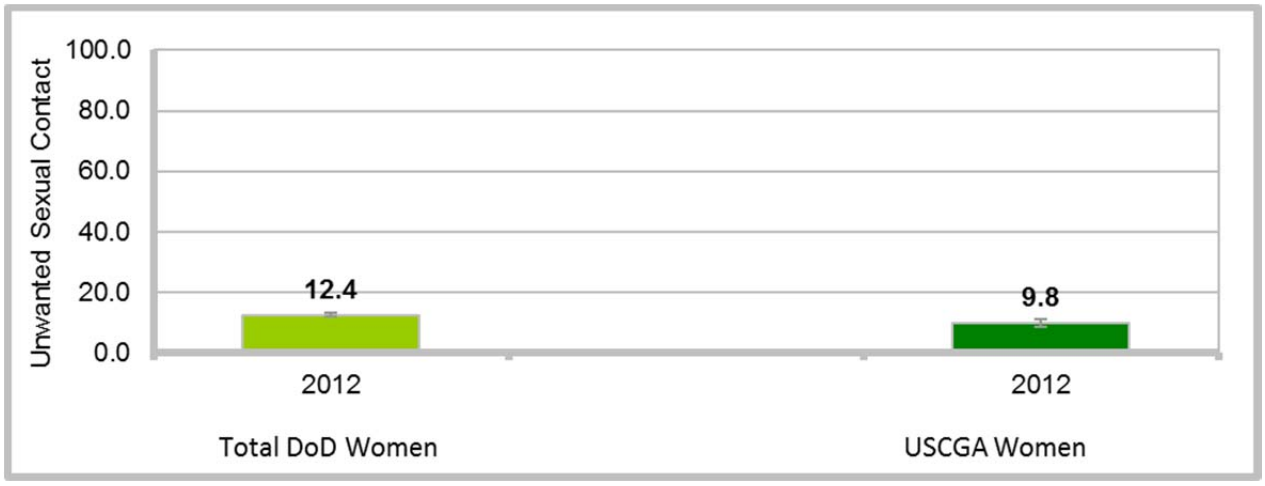
The full DoD report is available on the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPRO) Web site at: http://www.sapr.mil/media/pdf/reports/FINAL_APY_11-12_MSA_Report.pdf

Unwanted Sexual Contact

Unwanted sexual contact consists of a range of unwanted behaviors including unwanted sexual touching, attempted sex, and completed sex.

1. Unwanted Sexual Contact Rates for Women



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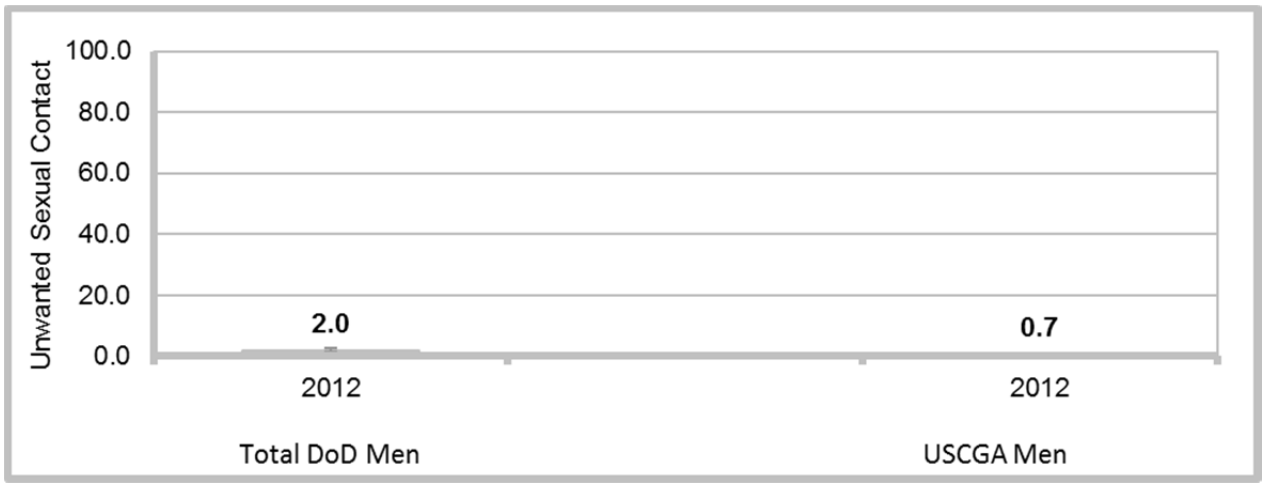

Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior

- **Sexual harassment**
  - Crude/Offensive Behavior – verbal/nonverbal behaviors of a sexual nature that were offensive or embarrassing
  - Unwanted Sexual Attention – unwanted attempts to establish a sexual relationship
  - Sexual Coercion – classic *quid pro quo* instances of special treatment or favoritism conditioned on sexual cooperation
  - One "labeling" item that asks if the student considers any of the selected behaviors to be sexual harassment
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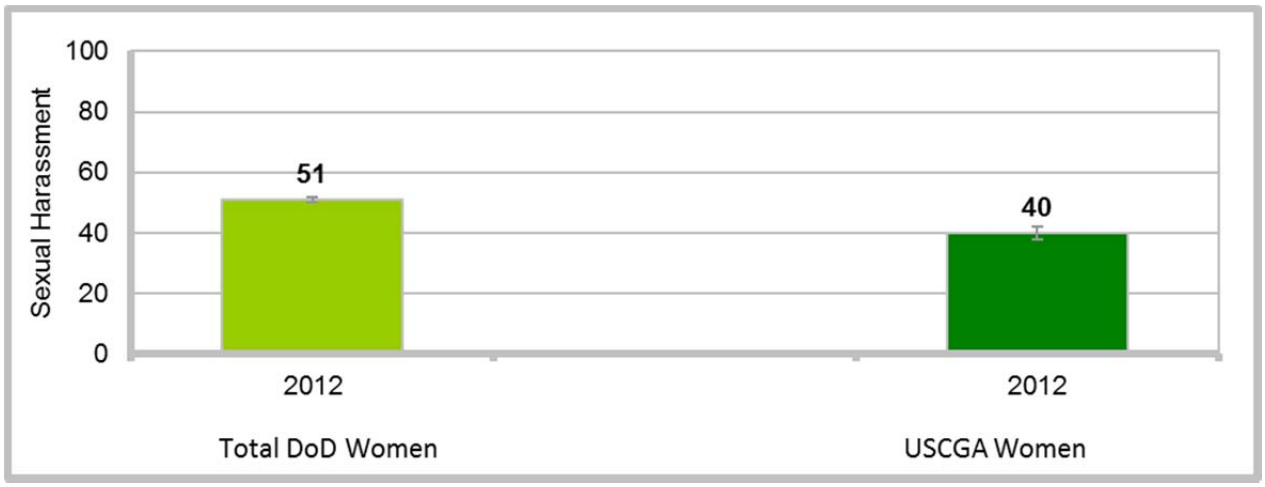
  - Verbal/nonverbal behaviors that convey insulting, offensive, and/or condescending attitudes based on one's gender

3. Sexual Harassment Rates for Women



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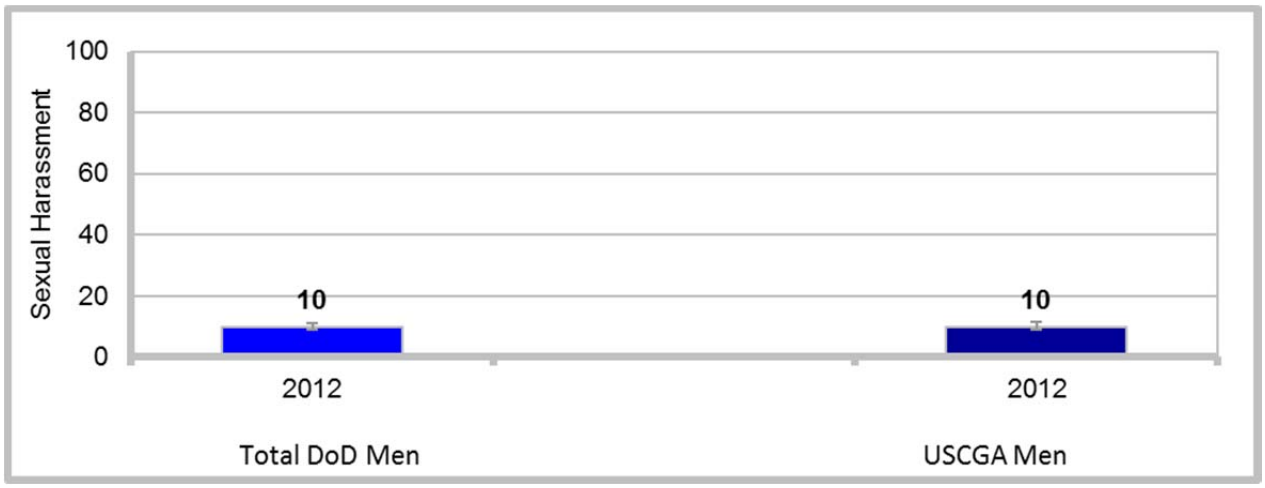

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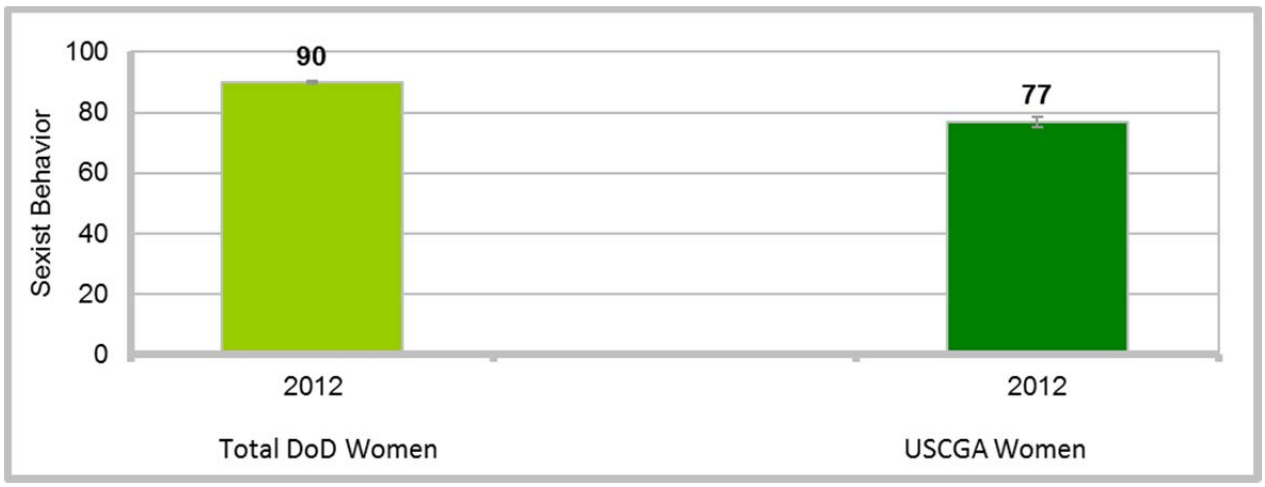

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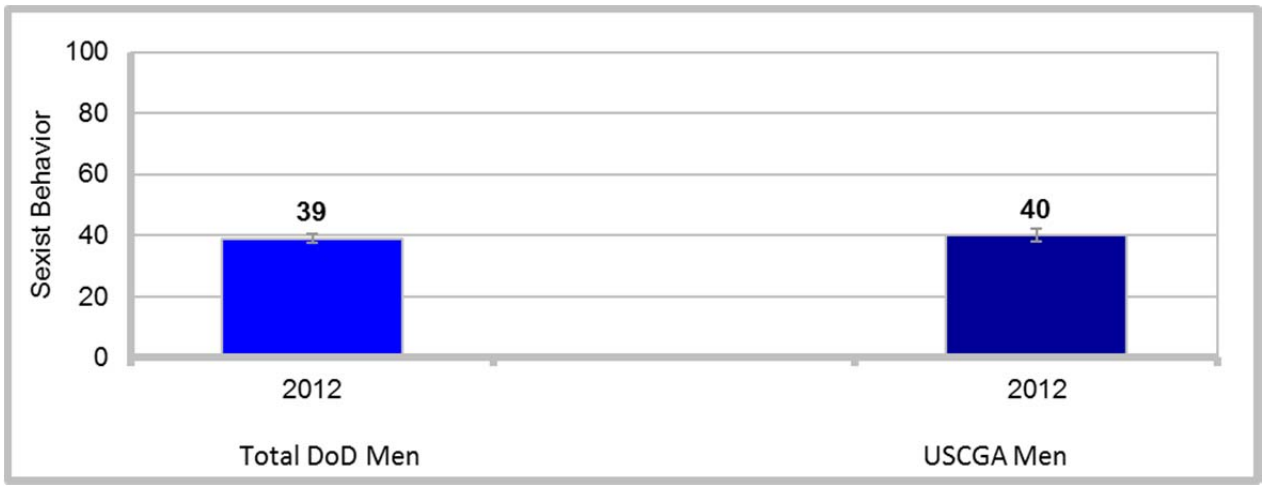

We appreciate your participation in this focus group. In the event you would like to discuss issues related to the focus group with someone from DMDC during (or after) our visit to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, please contact Ms. Kristin Williams at 571-372-1033 or DSN 372-1033.

If you wish to provide feedback regarding the focus group process or the focus group content, please send us an e-mail at: SA-Survey@mail.mil. If you know of others who might like to contact a member of the DMDC team, please share this information with them. You may also use the Department of Defense SAFE Hotline at 877-995-5247 to report abuse of authority, mismanagement, fraud, and waste.

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

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator: (516) 462-3207 cell Available 24/7 HOTLINE

Nassau County Sexual Assault Hotline: (516) 542-0404 (Hotline)
Chaplain: (516) 376-3257 cell
Academy EMS Ambulance: (516) 726-5858
North Shore Hospital: (516) 562-4125 (Emergency)
Academy Public Safety: (516) 773-5309

SEXUAL ASSAULT is a heinous crime that has no place in our academy, or ANYWHERE!!

Appendix C.
2013 Faculty/Activity/Uniformed Focus Group Guide

2013 Faculty/Activity/Uniformed Focus Group Guide

Introduction to the Faculty/Activity/Uniformed Focus Group

Time for briefing and introductions: 5 minutes

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____ and I am with the Defense Manpower Data Center. My colleagues with me this morning/afternoon are _____ and _____ also with DMDC. We have asked you to be here with us to help us investigate issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response. You might recall that in May and November of last year students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide information to Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted at all three DoD Service Academies and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

This is **a voluntary focus group**. The Academy staff member who invited you to participate in this session should have informed you that we would be discussing gender-related issues, including sexual assault and harassment, and asked if you were willing to participate. If you prefer not to sit in on this focus group, you are free to leave or to sit quietly while others participate.

I have provided each of you with a handout. Please turn to page 1. You can follow along while I share with you the purpose for this focus group and the ground rules we will follow.

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. While this Congressional requirement does not cover the Merchant Marine Academy, your leadership asked to participate because they know these are important issues. This is an opportunity for you and students to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.

- This is the first year we have invited members of the faculty, athletic and activity staffs, and uniformed cadre to participate. Because you interact with the students, we believe you are in a position to share valuable insights with us on these important issues. We do not want to discuss any specific cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment. We do want to discuss issues in general so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for you.

I want to thank you in advance for participating in this important focus group and go over a few ground rules for the focus group:

- Please respect each others' opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.

- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.
- I will lead the discussion and _____ will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report. If you would like to see how comments are being recorded, please examine what _____ is typing.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, we will not share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session, so please do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Any questions?

On the next several pages of your handout are results from the 2012 survey that we will use as part of the discussion today. I will call your attention to the specific item as we reach that part of the discussion.

Please note that these results are for the average of the three DoD Service Academies and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Results for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy are still being analyzed and will be available to you within several weeks. Our 2012 DoD report is available at the Web site shown if you are interested.

I have several questions to ask you today, with a few subtopics in each. I will watch the time so we will be able to cover all questions by the end of this session at [give specific end time].

Let's begin our discussion today with some results of the survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment. Please turn to page 3 of your handout. Here you will see some of the results from our 2012 survey that we will discuss today.

Time for Question 1: 15 minutes

2. Perceptions about unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment

a. Let's start the discussion by discussing the rates for unwanted sexual contact from the 2012 survey. [Ice breaker question]

i. For DoD women, the average rate of unwanted sexual contact was 12.4% in 2012. For Coast Guard Academy women the rate was 9.8%. For DoD men the average was 2.0%. For Coast Guard Academy men it was 0.7%. Preliminary analyses indicate the rates for midshipmen here at the Merchant Marine Academy are similar to these results. Do these rates seem right to you based on your knowledge about the midshipman regiment? Too high, too low? Please discuss.

ii. Please note the description of sexual harassment and sexist behavior on page 4, then the rates on pages 4 and 5. [Explain how sexual harassment is comprised of several types of behavior if they ask. And sexist behavior is based on gender, not sexual behaviors] For DoD women, the average sexual harassment rate was 51% in 2012. For Coast Guard Academy women it was 40%. For both DoD men and Coast Guard Academy men the average was 10%. For DoD women, the average rate for sexist behavior was 90% in 2012. For Coast Guard Academy women it was 77%. For DoD men the average was 39%. For Coast Guard Academy men it was 40%. Do these rates seem right to you? Too high, too low? Please discuss.

b. A finding from the survey suggests that people who experience unwanted sexual contact also tend to experience other unwanted behaviors, such as sexual harassment and sexist behavior. Take a look at the rates for sexual harassment on page 4. This is for all men and women at this Academy. If we look at the rates for sexual harassment of just those men and women who experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past year, the rates for sexual harassment are much higher. For example, at the Coast Guard Academy, the rate for sexual harassment was 72% for women and approximately 63% for men who had experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past year. I say approximately for men because there are too few at the Coast Guard Academy to estimate accurately, so we used an average across the DoD Academies to get 63%. These findings are similar for all of the academies. Look also at the rates for sexist behavior on page 5. For those who experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past year, sexist behavior was also experienced by 100% of the women and approximately 76% of the men at the Coast Guard Academy. Again, this is similar for the other academies as well.

i. What do you think about the relationship between unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment? Sexist behavior?

ii. If someone gets away with sexual harassment or sexist comments, do you think they might move on to more serious behaviors like unwanted touching or sexual acts? Have you seen any examples of someone moving from one type of unwanted behavior to another?

iii. Do you think a student who had a previous experience of unwanted sexual contact, before entering the Academy or in previous years at the Academy, is someone more vulnerable for future assaults? How? How do you think they might feel about getting help? How would you advertise help for people with such a background? Is there anything that could be done to help people avoid the “spotlight” if they seek assistance?

iv. Do you sense attitudes of disrespect toward women at the Academy that might contribute to unwanted sexual contact or other unwanted gender-related behaviors? Are there any attitudes of disrespect toward men? Please describe. [Keep the discussion to gender issues if they start discussing racial, religious, political, or other groups.]

v. What can/should the Academy do to address sexist behavior or sexual harassment? Do you sense that students accept some of these behaviors as being part of the military environment? [If participants acknowledge that there is acceptance, probe further on where students get that perception. Ask if it is part of the Academy "culture" or "military culture." Have them explain how they define the "culture."]

c. Let's go back to the earlier discussion of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment rates for men from the survey. You indicated they are [higher or lower] than what you might have expected. Who would you think are typically offenders? Where would you think such incidents are most likely to occur?

d. I would like to end this section by asking your perceptions of the cause of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment behaviors at the Academy?

i. With all the emphasis on prevention, why do they still occur?

ii. Does pornography or sexting play a role?

iii. What more can be done to prevent unwanted sexual contact? Sexual harassment?

OK, now let's switch gears and talk about roles and responsibilities with regard to unwanted sexual contact.

Time for Question 2: 10 minutes

2. Roles and Responsibilities

a. What do you see as your role in helping reduce unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment? Do you discuss unwanted sexual contact prevention and response with your students? Do you discuss issues about sexual harassment with them?

b. What resources and training do you receive to prepare you to discuss unwanted behaviors with students and to advise them when an incident occurs? What has worked well? What has not worked well? What training or resources would be helpful to you?

c. Are you aware of instances where one of your students has experienced unwanted sexual contact or sexual harassment? [Do not discuss cases by name.] What would you do if a student came to you for advice about an incident of unwanted sexual contact they or a friend experienced?

d. Has Academy senior leadership engaged you in discussions of unwanted sexual contact prevention and response? If yes, how so? If not, what information would you find useful to have?

e. Is there anything that prevents you from being more effective in supporting messages about unwanted sexual contact prevention to the students?

f. What is your opinion of how unwanted sexual contact cases are handled?

g. Do you think leadership would react differently to same-sex unwanted sexual contact?

I would like to ask several questions now about the locations where unwanted sexual contact might occur.

Time for Question 3: 10 minutes

3. Places where unwanted sexual contact is most likely to occur

a. Most victims of unwanted sexual contact indicated on the survey that the incident occurred on Academy grounds. Where would the most likely place be at this Academy for an incident to occur?

b. How could these places be made safer?

c. Are there other locations, such as field settings, sports team trips, club trips, on ship, or at another military location where students might be more vulnerable to unwanted sexual contact? Please describe.

d. Are students on summer training programs away from campus more vulnerable? How could these places or experiences be made safer?

Let's turn our discussion specifically to multiple incidents of unwanted sexual contact for a few minutes.

Time for Question 4: 10 minutes

4. Multiple experiences of unwanted sexual contact

a. Survey results show that victims often experience more than one incident of unwanted sexual contact. Do you think behaviors tend to progress, such as experiences of touching first, followed by more aggressive behaviors?

b. Do you think someone would be more inclined to report or seek help after experiencing one type of behaviors more than others? [If asked for clarification, ask if someone would be more likely to report completed sex versus attempted sex or touching?]

c. If a victim were to experience multiple incidents of unwanted sexual contact, do you think it would be more likely to be from the same offender/perpetrator or different ones? Do you think a perpetrator who assaults one person would also be likely to assault someone else?

d. Is there a sense that perpetrators have a good chance of getting away with unwanted sexual contact, hence they repeat their actions? Are perpetrators getting away with these behaviors because victims do not report it or perpetrators are not charged and punished?

Let's discuss briefly the phenomenon of victim blaming.

Time for Question 5: 5 minutes

5. Victim Blaming

a. It is not uncommon for people to blame a victim for an incident of unwanted sexual contact saying things like "she led him on" or "she was trying to avoid getting into trouble herself for an offense, like underage drinking."

b. Do you ever hear those comments? How do you react to such comments?

c. Do you hear the same kind of "victim blaming" comments when the victim is a male? If not, why do you suppose there is a difference?"

d. What can be done to address victim blaming?

Now let's discuss interactions with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response staff here at the Academy.

Time for Question 6: 5 minutes

6. Interactions with SAPR Staff

a. Do you interact with the professional unwanted sexual contact or sexual harassment staff? What is the nature of the interaction?

b. What is your opinion about the programs for prevention and response?

c. What is your opinion of the training the students receive in sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact prevention and response? What do they tell you about the training? Is it effective? How could it be improved?

d. What would work better to reach students and help them take the training seriously? Do you see instances where midshipman leaders deal effectively with inappropriate behaviors based on the training they received?

e. Do you think the training adequately prepares the students to respond to unwanted sexual contact once they graduate? How could it be improved?

I want to ask you a couple of quick questions about potential cultural change.

Time for Question 7: 10 minutes

7. Cultural Change

a. One way some people believe the Academy can improve unwanted sexual contact prevention and response is to change the culture and attitudes toward

this issue. Do you agree? Please provide some examples of areas where change is needed.

b. How can such a cultural change be made at this Academy? What elements need to be addressed?

c. How does the Academy secure buy-in for change from the students? From leadership, faculty, and staff?

d. Who should lead a cultural change? How would they do so?

e. Do you think students treat each other with dignity and respect? What does it take to reach students about the importance of civility and proper behavior toward each other? Are these potential areas for cultural or attitudinal change?

f. Are students prepared to lead other students with regard to preventing and responding to unwanted behaviors? Do they take that responsibility seriously?

g. Do you believe it would be productive to have a Midshipman "Dignity and Respect Code" much like the Honor Code, in order to instill these values in the midshipman Regiment?

h. As preparation for future leadership positions, should issues such as proper behavior, unwanted sexual contact/harassment prevention, and response to unwanted sexual contact/harassment be made into graded coursework to ensure students take it seriously? Would that enhance accountability?

i. Does the highly competitive nature of the Academy affect how students treat each other with respect to unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment? How does the competitive nature affect reporting of inappropriate behaviors?

Now I want to ask you a couple of quick questions about recent changes here at the Academy.

Time for Question 8: 5 minutes

8. Recent Changes

a. Are you aware of any changes the Academy has implemented recently to address unwanted sexual contact or sexual harassment [such as tighter dormitory patrols]? Please describe.

b. Are these changes effective? Did they go far enough? What else could be done?

c. Is there a point where such actions become counter-productive [unintended consequences]?

d. Have you seen changes in students over the years in terms of behaviors, attitudes, moral standards, and competitiveness? How do such changes relate to unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment behaviors?

I would like to wrap up our session today with a couple of final questions.

Time for Question 9: 5 minutes

9. Additional recommendations for addressing unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment

a. Do you think the Academy should do more to make counseling or Sexual Assault Prevention and Response resources available to students who experienced trauma prior to entering the military?

b. What else can you tell us about unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment at the Academy? What did we not ask that we should have?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. As I mentioned at the beginning, we will treat all of your comments anonymously. There is no attribution to any of you for the specific comments you made today. Please also respect that non-attribution when you leave here today. Our goal is to provide the best data possible and you have helped us greatly today with your comments and insights.

One last comment – on the last page of the handout you will see a list of resources available to you if you would like to follow up with us or have any questions. It also lists Academy resources if you know of a student who would like to talk to someone about any experiences they might have had with unwanted gender-related behaviors.

Thank you again for your participation.

Appendix D.
Handout for Faculty, Athletic Staff, Uniformed Cadre Participants

2013 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

Handout for Faculty, Athletic Staff, Uniformed Cadre Participants

Purpose

We have asked you to be here with us to help us investigate issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response. You might recall that in May and November of last year students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide information to Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted at all three Service Academies and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

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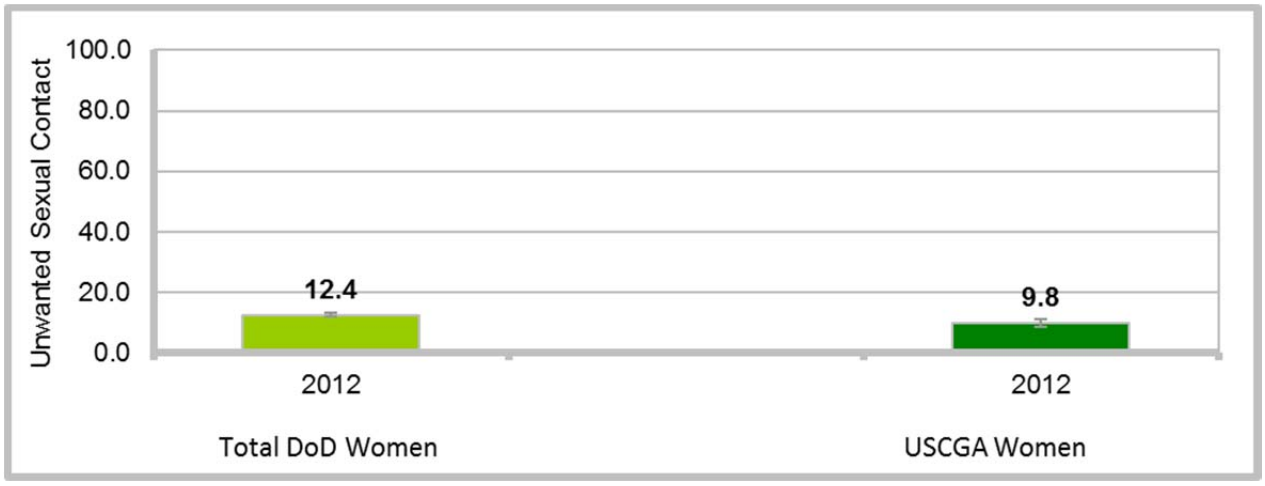

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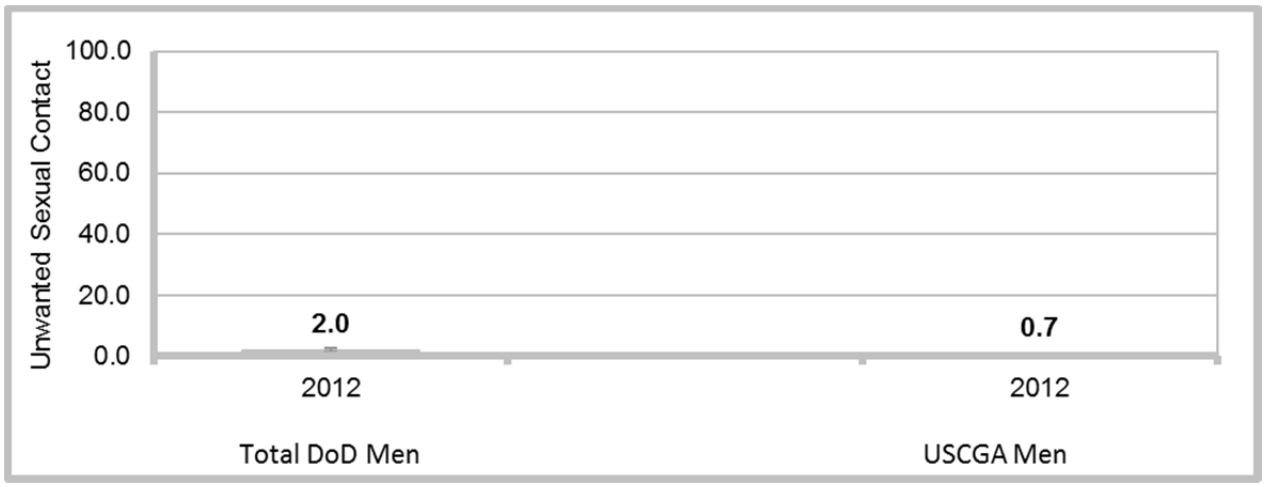

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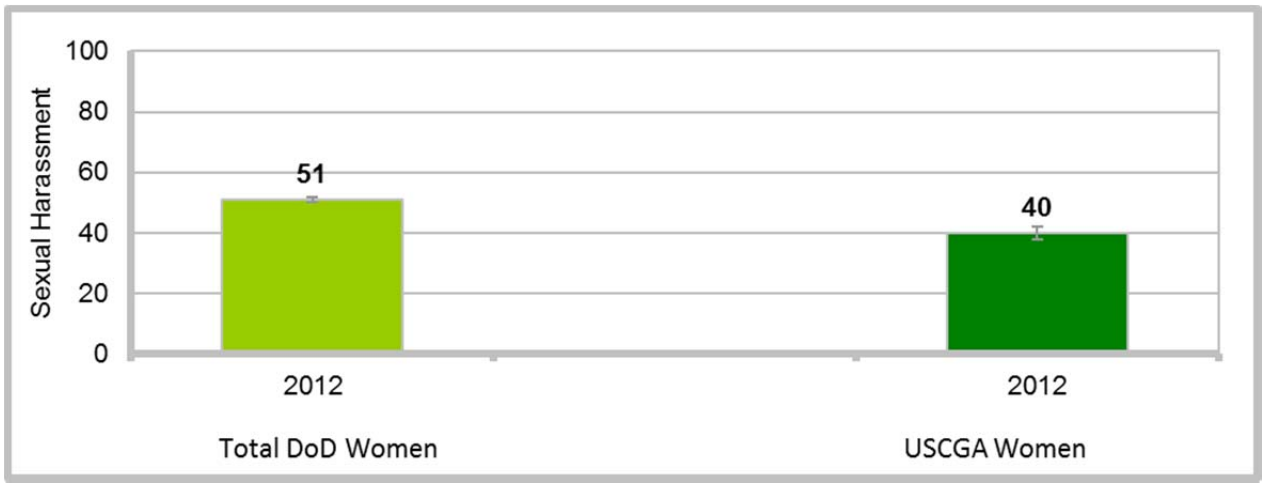

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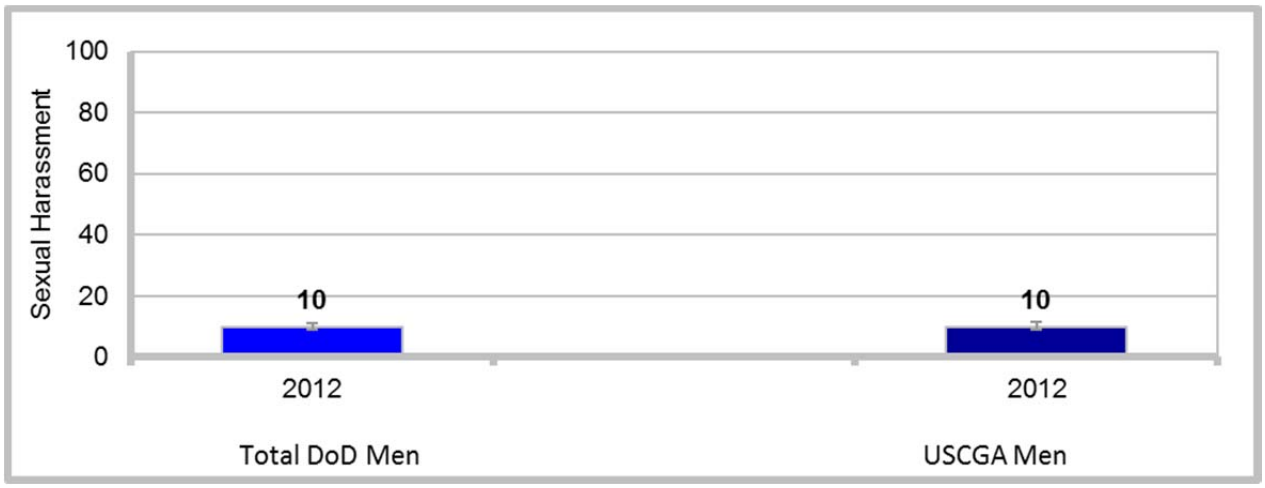

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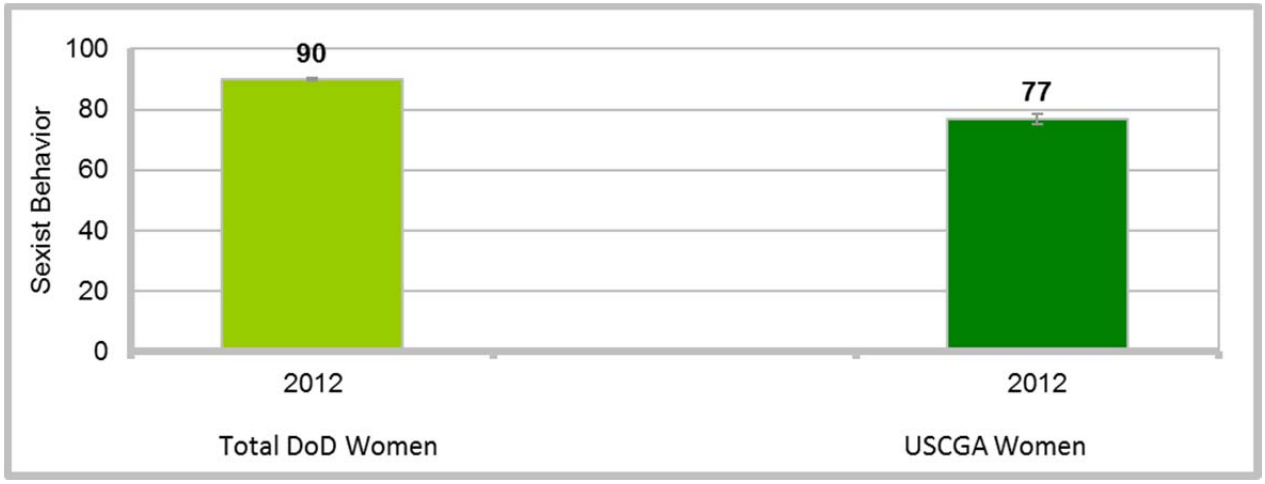
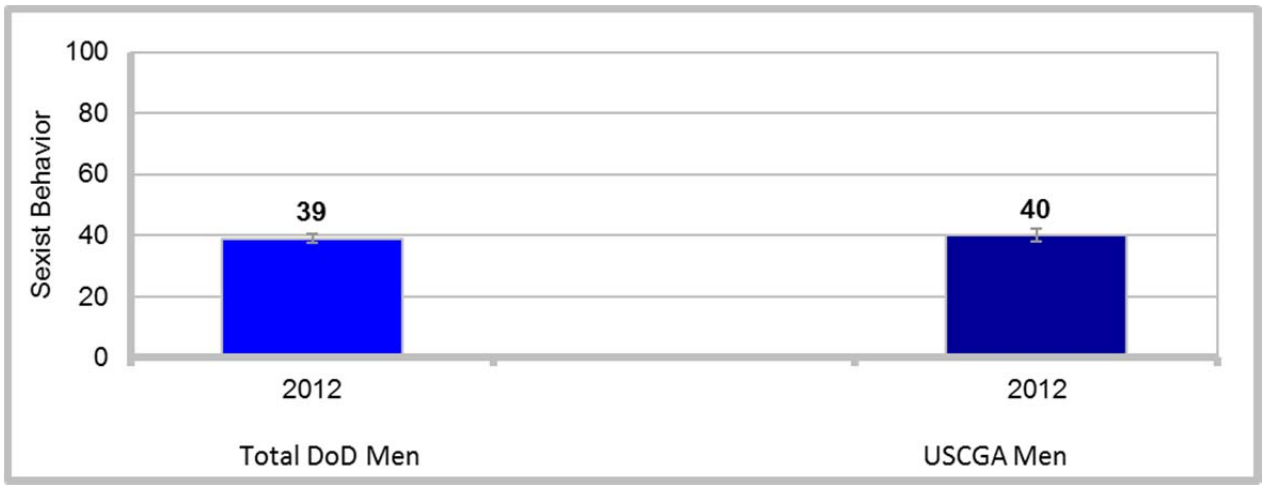


6. Sexist Behavior Rates for Men



We appreciate your participation in this focus group. In the event you would like to discuss issues related to the focus group with someone from DMDC during (or after) our visit to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, please contact Ms. Kristin Williams at 571-372-1033 or DSN 372-1033.

If you wish to provide feedback regarding the focus group process or the focus group content, please send us an e-mail at: SA-Survey@mail.mil. If you know of others who might like to contact a member of the DMDC team, please share this information with them. You may also use the Department of Defense SAFE Hotline at 877-995-5247 to report abuse of authority, mismanagement, fraud, and waste.

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

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator: (516) 462-3207 cell Available 24/7 HOTLINE

Nassau County Sexual Assault Hotline: (516) 542-0404 (Hotline)
Chaplain: (516) 376-3257 cell
Academy EMS Ambulance: (516) 726-5858
North Shore Hospital: (516) 562-4125 (Emergency)
Academy Public Safety: (516) 773-5309

SEXUAL ASSAULT is a heinous crime that has no place in our academy, or ANYWHERE!!

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA