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# **Service Academy 2009 Gender Relations Focus Groups**



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# **SERVICE ACADEMY 2009 GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS**

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The lead analysts on this assessment were Paul Cook, SRA International, Inc., and Rachel Lipari, DMDC. Gail Sherry, Jennifer Windham, and Jacqueline Kimball prepared written transcripts of each of the sessions. Policy officials contributing to the development of focus group content include: Gail McGinn, Deputy Under Secretary for Plans (OUSD[P&R]); Kaye Whitley, Lt Col Nate Galbraith, and Bette Stebbins (Department of Defense [DoD] Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office); COL Jeannette McMahon (U.S. Military Academy [USMA]); CAPT Diana Cangelosi (U.S. Naval Academy [USNA]); and Amanda Lords (U.S. Air Force Academy [USAFA]).

# **SERVICE ACADEMY 2009 GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS**

## **Executive Summary**

*Service Academy 2009 Gender Relations Focus Group (SAGR2009)* 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. *SAGR2009* is part of an assessment cycle at the Service Academies that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. Focus groups were conducted at all three Academies. Separate sessions were conducted for male and female students in each of the four class years.

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 differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings. Although focus group findings cannot be generalized to all students 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 each Academy. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments from the students. Each comment identifies the gender of the student. Although the topics reported are similar for each Academy, no attempt was made to compare or generalize findings across Academies.

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# SERVICE ACADEMY 2009 GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Service Academies strive to provide a safe educational and leadership development environment for their students. Working with their Service Headquarters and the Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), the Academies have 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 harassment and assault and enhancing victim care.

One source of information for evaluating these programs and for assessing the gender relations environment at the Academies involves quantifiable feedback from students through a representative survey. Another source of information involves qualitative feedback from students through focus groups with a moderator who is trained to facilitate discussion on these topics. This report presents findings from the recent *Service Academy 2009 Gender Relations Focus Group (SAGR2009)* 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. This requirement applies to the U.S. Military Academy (USMA), U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA).<sup>1</sup> The first assessment in this series was conducted in 2004 by the DoD Inspector General (IG).<sup>2</sup> Responsibility for subsequent assessments was transferred to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), which conducted surveys in 2005 and 2006, and focus groups in 2007 and 2009.

### ***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 each Academy. Although the results cannot be generalized to the population of the Service Academies, they provide insights into issues and ideas for further consideration. Procedures for selecting participants, developing the questions, and analyzing the data are described below.

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), the only Federal Military Academy within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USCGA officials requested they be included, beginning in 2008, in order to evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment. Focus group results for USCGA are not presented in this report.

<sup>2</sup> Details are reported in Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (2005), Report on the Service Academy Sexual Assault and Leadership Survey. Washington, DC. Available at <http://www.dodig.osd.mil/Inspections/ipo/reports>.

## ***Selection of Participants***

Participation in the 2009 focus groups was voluntary. Participants were selected at random at each Service Academy and offered the opportunity to participate. To select participants, each Service Academy first supplied DMDC a roster of all cadets or midshipmen.<sup>3</sup> DMDC randomized the list of students within clusters defined by gender and class year. The rosters were then returned to each respective Academy and it was the responsibility of each Academy to use their randomized list to identify the first ten students who were available (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 by their Academy and asked if they would voluntarily participate in the focus group. Additional students were selected from the randomized lists as necessary to achieve eight to ten students committed to attending. In some case, students who agreed to participate did not show up at the scheduled session. For that reason, session sizes varied.

## ***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 *2008 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (SAGR2008)*. Analysts looked for follow-up topics that might clarify or expand on findings from the previous year's survey. A list of preliminary questions was generated and provided to SAPRO, as well as each Service Academy. A revised set of questions incorporating comments from SAPRO and the Academies was compiled and then returned to SAPRO and the Academies for final revisions. Six question areas with detailed subquestions (probing questions) were presented to focus group participants. The topics addressed were:

1. Reporting—difference between restricted and unrestricted reporting of sexual assault, definition of sexual assault, difference between number of officially reported sexual assaults (restricted or unrestricted) and number of self-reported sexual assault (via 2008 survey), reporting of sexual assault experienced by males, experiences and reporting of stalking, experiences and reporting of sexual harassment
2. Offenders—characteristics of offenders, stopping offenders, bystander intervention
3. Factors influencing gender-related behaviors—precursors to sexual assault, culture encouraging improper behavior, sexist culture
4. Sharing information—sharing results of previous studies, leadership response to sexual assault, change over time in sexual assault as a problem, victim blaming, commonly held beliefs about sexual assault, changing others' behavior
5. Training and education—effectiveness of training and education received in sexual harassment and assault prevention and response, basic self-defense training
6. Recommendations—what more the Academy could do to decrease sexual assault and sexual harassment

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<sup>3</sup> The roster excluded foreign national students, as well as exchange students.

## ***Conducting the Focus Groups***

Focus groups were scheduled based on class year and gender, with eight 90-minute focus groups sessions at each Academy. Focus groups were held in conference rooms or classrooms on each Service Academy campus.

DMDC provided focus group facilitators who led the sessions at all three Academies. A male facilitator led the male focus groups and a female facilitator led the female focus groups. 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 students and the facilitator. Transcripts were provided to each Academy after they were cleaned of all identifying comments and names. 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. Students 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. Students were encouraged to provide information generally but not to specify personal experiences, names, or other identifying details. Students 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 cadets and midshipmen. 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 students at each of the Academies. 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 students' views of sexual assault and sexual harassment at their Academies, but they do not portray a statistical report on incident 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 an *a priori* 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 students differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings.

## ***Organization of Findings***

Findings are presented in separate chapters for each Academy. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments from the students. Each comment identifies the gender of the student. Caution must be exercised in reviewing these findings because comments should not be viewed as representative of all other students. Finally, although many of the themes are similar across the three Academies, each Academy should be viewed separately. No attempt was made to compare or generalize across Academies.

## Chapter 2: U.S. Military Academy

Eight focus group sessions were conducted at USMA on March 30 and 31, 2009. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year. Each session had between two and ten students.<sup>4</sup>

### *Reporting*

Reporting of sexual assault was one of the main subjects addressed in the *SAGR2009* focus groups. Cadets were asked to describe the difference between restricted and unrestricted reporting, actions leaders might take to encourage reporting, and reasons for not reporting sexual assault. Cadets were also asked to discuss incidence and reporting of sexual harassment and stalking.

### *Restricted and Unrestricted Reporting of Sexual Assault*

- **Most focus group participants correctly identified the confidentiality aspects of restricted reporting and the investigative aspects of unrestricted reporting.**
  - *“Restricted is when you report it, to my understanding, you report it to one of your superiors on the idea of confidentiality at the time, I don't want this investigated right away. This was an issue and I'm just reporting it to you so you'd be able to act on it. Unrestricted is this is a problem, it needs to be acted on right away and people want to know that there was an incident.”* (Male)
  - *“Restricted is the people you can tell, they're not going to report us, like chaplains or you can see a doctor. If you tell a friend or somebody who's not in your chain of command, you can tell them not to send it up and they won't. But if you tell a chain of command member, they have to because they're responsible for you.”* (Female)
  - *“One of them is restricted, means that they have to be confidential, whatever they say. Unrestricted means they have to report it or they have the option to report it.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants knew the difference but were not quite sure about the terms.**
  - *“I know that restricted reporting – well, one of them – I'm not exactly sure which one, but one of them, it's completely confidential with who you talk to and they are not required to report it up to the authorities. That would be restricted. And then the unrestricted is they have – they have to report it up, either up the chain of command or take you to the hospital or take you to somebody and get it filed, a report filed.”* (Female)

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<sup>4</sup> Academy officials initially confirmed ten students for each session, but many students chose not to attend the voluntary focus groups after having confirmed their willingness to participate.

- *“As far as I know, restricted is – I'm not sure which one, but one of them you can go and it's confidential and it doesn't get sent up, and the other there's an official report sent up. That's as far as I know.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants mentioned a number of individuals or offices where they could make reports of sexual assault.**
  - *“There's a chain of command referral, sir. If you go up through your cadet chain of command, go to your TAC [Tactical Officer], that's a direct referral. If you go to the CPD [Center for Professional Development] or go to a chaplain or go to a counselor you have the right to keep that private. However, once you go from a private to this open line you can't go back.”* (Male)

### **Choosing Restricted or Unrestricted Reporting**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of situations where they would choose restricted or unrestricted reporting.**
  - *“My understanding, there's a lot of bureaucratic processes we go through so it's a lot easier to confide in somebody that knows the system a little better so you can better speak or address whatever issue you are having. So if you confide in them, not only can you seek personal guidance, but guidance to work the system to what you want to achieve.”* (Male)
  - *“Some people are just nice, they don't want repercussions to go to whoever it was, the perpetrator, and they would just like help for themselves and not make a bigger deal about it than it already was I guess.”* (Male)
  - *“Situational, perhaps. They don't really know the person; they have no ties with. But if it's your friend or a friend of a friend, he may not feel comfortable if there's consequences for him getting in trouble.”* (Female)
- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that having the two reporting options is beneficial to victims because restricted reporting provides victims time to seek help to deal with their physical condition and emotions before involving authorities.**
  - *“I think the important thing is even if you don't want it reported, you can still go to the doctor and stuff and no one will know. So it means that, I guess a lot more rape victims or people who are assaulted get the medical treatment that they need without having to worry about what happens later.”* (Female)
  - *“Obviously some people are going to be embarrassed about it and they are going to want to take one route. Not let it get out past like a chaplain or someone else, just get the help they need. But there's going to be others who are going to want to take it as far up as they can and go to the military police, whoever, get investigated, get I guess somebody put in jail or whatever, get them punished for what they did to them.”* (Male)

- *“If you're in that situation, you would be more willing to talk to somebody about it if you knew that you could have it confidential. If you had those two options, just knowing that.”* (Female)
- *“I think it definitely is. It provides you a certain amount of comfort so that that way you can bounce it off of somebody else so that you know that you're not blowing it out of proportion.”* (Female)

### **Definition of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants generally knew the definition of sexual assault per the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and that the definition includes a variety of behaviors from unwanted sexual touching through completed unwanted sexual intercourse.**
  - *“My understanding, sexual assault actually falls on the same terms of the idea of assault and battery. So assault, if I pull a punch, even if I don't strike the person, I've assaulted them, I've threatened them with violence. Sexual assault can be the indication of a sexual advance or implying that you want to approach a person or violate them in some way.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants knew they had been told the definition, but the timing was such that they were not focused on the presentation.**
  - *“We had a lot of briefings, like, right in between things so people sort of paid attention. It was during the middle of something and everyone was tired.”* (Female)

### **Reasons for Not Reporting Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the number of sexual assaults estimated from survey data is higher than Academy records suggest because students do not want to talk about sexual assault.**
  - *“I can imagine it would be true anywhere, that a lot of people wouldn't want to talk about these things. In any college environment or work environment, that there would be more actual events than reported events.”* (Male)
  - *“A lot of the actual rape briefings that we've gotten here have said that in society also there's a lot of rapes that go unreported. And so through different means of being collected, the unrestricted and restricted ways of finding that out are also a little bit lower than when they do surveys.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that people are not inclined to report offenses involving unwanted sexual touching, but do check it off on a survey as having been experienced.**
  - *“And I think it might go back to the whole difference between the UCMJ defines assault as unwanted touching, and I really don't think that people report that all that much. I think people would be willing to report actual rape, but they're not going to report unwanted touching and stuff. And so then when you have this survey, it's, like, have you ever experienced all these things, you're like, well, maybe. So that probably counts for some of it.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes victims of sexual assault do not report the incident due to feelings of humiliation and shame, or fear of not being believed.**
  - *“I would say because of humiliation, honestly. A lot of cases are like a he said/she said type deal, so they don't really believe you.”* (Female)
  - *“Perhaps shame as well. Maybe you kind of blame yourself for bringing it onto you. Maybe you felt that you provoked it in some way and you don't want to acknowledge that.”* (Female)
- **Protecting one's reputation is a major concern when deciding whether to report.**
  - *“Sir, there are four thousand people in this Corps, we're all on global e-mail distro [distribution lists]. One e-mail can send everything – send a rumor to the whole Corps. That can be disastrous. And people don't want stuff to get out like that because I mean we've got people with reputations that are known Corps wide and they're marginalized and we say ‘Oh, that's X, that's Y.’ And they're effectively derailed.”* (Male)
  - *“Places like this, everyone knows each other. We all hear about whatever happens, and I think a lot of that will discourage the people from trying to put themselves out there anyway, especially in something like this, because people are going to find out about it and talk about it, and you just don't want that extra attention.”* (Female)
  - *“And then in that point there's the idea of ostracism, I might get in trouble or I might get somebody else in trouble and look like a snitch. That's the S word, snitch.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that some male victims might not report sexual assault because the incident does not trigger recognition of sexual assault at the time.**
  - *“I can imagine some guys, if you go through a situation where you actually end up being sexually harassed or assaulted, like in retrospect it bothered you and*

*you are talking about it to a buddy, and then wait a minute, that just happened, that made me feel really uncomfortable and I need to do something. That only happens in retrospect. ” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that male victims are reluctant to report sexual assault because they are concerned that reporting would make them look weak.**
  - *“I think there are a lot, especially with military academies because at West Point you're supposed to be tough and you're just supposed to deal with stuff, like you're a guy here, it's the Army, deal with it. Unfortunately, you're looked down upon and looked as weak if you report it as a guy. I know guys that are afraid to report or say anything, they're taking just as much heat from a girl doing sexual harassment but they don't want to seem weak.” (Female)*
  - *“We go to the Military Academy, there's a masculinity stigma. I don't want to call it stigma, there is a masculinity expectation, you are going to be a leader of men and women, but having that would be an automatic ‘What? Like what happened to you? Why wouldn't you have taken action?’ We've gone through combative, you've had boxing classes for crying out loud. You couldn't prevent something like that from happening?” (Male)*
  - *“I think a lot of times things here go unreported just because the mentality is you're supposed to be tough and just deal with things, so I guess whether it's sexual assault or psychiatric issues, that's a problem that we're seeing here right now.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants also indicated that pride might influence male cadets to not report an incident of sexual assault.**
  - *“It's a pride. They should not be – if they got assaulted but they're most ashamed of it. I'm not saying it's right, but that's the mind-set, especially at military academies like the standards for male are very high, as well as females, but I can completely understand why.” (Female)*
  - *“We're West Point cadets, we're supposed to be the best male college students there are really. To admit that something like that happened to us, I can see where no one would admit that. Especially if it got out, it would be much worse for a guy, in all honesty, that he's doing some sexual assault investigation.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets are trained to take personal responsibility for their actions, leading victims to sometimes look to their own actions that might have led to the assault.**
  - *“I think it's also important to take into consideration the kinds of personalities you're dealing with at West Point. Predominantly Type A, we've been told from*

*day one that there's no excuse, and we're trained to try to take accountability and responsibility for everything. So in those lower echelon instances where it's very easy to convince yourself that you are responsible or it isn't a big deal and you can just soldier on with your personal problems, I mean that's going to be a compelling reason for people not to talk about their problems.” (Male)*

- **Seeking help, such as going to the counseling center, can be viewed as a weakness.**
  - *“They're trying to make it more acceptable to go to counseling, but automatically if you go to counseling, you're looked down upon. It's like they can't handle their own problems. They're not West Point material because West Point is all hoo-rah, you know.” (Female)*
  
- **Some focus group participants indicated that not all services are easily accessible.**
  - *“I noticed at my time at West Point that it's not really a user friendly post because they say they have a whole bunch of services, but no one really knows where they're at or where to find them. Especially as a plebe [freshman], we can't look around when we're walking or anything. We always have our hands cupped in and our eyes straightforward. So for us to find things around campus, like especially your first semester here, you're very intimidated. You don't really want to talk to upperclassmen because you're scared to death. It's almost impossible. Plus, your chain of command usually isn't well informed and they really can't help you out either, and you can't really go outside of your chain of command to find out the information.” (Female)*
  
- **Some focus group participants indicated that a cadet might mark on the survey that they experienced a behavior, but it would not be significant enough to report.**
  - *“There's just the element of – I don't want to say shame or whatever, but people don't want to go through that, so reporting it is a hassle and you don't want to put yourself or anybody else through that, but on a survey it's anonymous. You're going to be honest.” (Female)*
  
  - *“I think most people, depending on the situation, may not want to report it, but in a survey they're going to be more honest because there's the small things that the survey asked about that are included in that definition, but I think a lot of people wouldn't report those things, so they get included on one but not the other.” (Female)*

## **Actions Leaders Can Take To Encourage Reporting of Sexual Assault**

- **Some focus group participants indicated there is not much more Academy leadership can do to encourage reporting.**
  - *“I don't really think that there's anything more that can be done. They put a lot of support and work into it. They have 24-hour chaplain that's always on call, medical centers.” (Male)*
  - *“I don't know if you can really do anything just because it's just the whole mentality at West Point and that's what makes it West Point. The fact that you're all very close; it's a close relationship; you have a minority – the females are the minority, and I don't know if you could – there are some things that you really couldn't change.” (Female)*
- **Academy leaders who can receive a report of sexual assault need more visibility to encourage more victims to come forward.**
  - *“Maybe if we knew who they were better. Put a face with a name or actually knew where they were if we ever needed. The only thing we ever get is we have the briefings and they'll be, like, here's all the numbers you can call and here's the names of all the people you can talk to.” (Female)*
  - *“I think it might be helpful if when they give us our annual sexual harassment, sexual assault briefing, instead of getting the Commandant or another general up there giving the briefing, have a chaplain get up there and give it so we see a face associated with the name.” (Male)*
  - *“If only to bring recognition of that person because maybe the person doesn't know who they are and they don't see them, if they're just a name then they're not really that trusting of them. So maybe they see a name, they hear them and they hear them speak, they would be more trusting of that person, more apt to go forward.” (Male)*
  - *“A clarification on who is the best to report to. I've noticed a lot of, especially the newer cadets, feel that they're responsible to answer their cadet chain of command first and they are obviously nervous about doing that simply because these people are barely older than they are, hardly know how to answer the situation. And as far as the actual officers above those cadets, there's a whole gap, and sometimes the officers I could imagine would seem unapproachable. And regular officers and NCOs [Noncommissioned Officers], including the religious staff, could find ways to advertise their availability more. I know they are available. But if they could advertise their availability more it would probably make people more comfortable to see them, they have avenues that they can follow. Other than that you feel very alone.” (Male)*

- **Demonstrating a no-tolerance approach could also be an effective way to encourage reporting.**
  - *“I think it would be important to up front establish a climate that doesn't tolerate something like sexual harassment or sexual assault and really put out there that this is something that as a leader will not be tolerated under someone's chain of command.”* (Female)
  
- **Sharing more information about sexual assault incidents might increase awareness.**
  - *“I think more people that don't attend the Academy or not even associated with it tell me more about sexual assault incidents than the Academy tells me. My mother or family members or friends say West Point had eight accounts of sexual assault or harassment in the last so many years and I didn't know that and I go there. I think if they told us more it would probably help minimize it or you would be more aware that it does go on. Because I didn't know it goes on unless someone else told me or unless I looked into it or asked about it. So I feel we're in the dark about it.”* (Male)
  
- **Engaging leadership to develop trust and demonstrate professionalism could also be a way to encourage reporting.**
  - *“Our senior and subordinate relationship takes a lot more effort than handing in a weekly report. I think if as a senior you show an interest in the subordinates, have an interest of what's going on in their lives, consistently show a level of involvement, then that builds trust. And so that when something does happen you're more inclined to feel comfortable telling them to resolve the issue.”* (Male)
  
  - *“Our CO [cadet company commanders] and our first sergeant [cadet first sergeant] are always like ‘If you need anything, just come talk to me.’ Even with the plebes [freshmen], they come at a personal level and they come around to your room and they're, like, ‘If you ever need anything, just let me know.’ They let you know that they're in charge of you, but also if something goes wrong, they've got your back. And if you can spread that mentality throughout the entire Corps, that would probably help.”* (Female)
  
  - *“I would not encourage cadets in any way, shape, or form to be involved in this [sexual assault reporting] because it doesn't remain private that way. The only way for the Academy chain of command to promote it would be to actually keep it private. But even the TACs [Tactical Officers] talk to each other and rumors spread. So just a lack of professionalism in dealing with these issues.”* (Female)

- **Improving the Center for Professional Development would facilitate trust in reporting.**
  - *“And the other thing I see with the CPD [Center for Professional Development] is they only have three psychologists on staff, they are often gone. And so you find that even if cadets do want to get in, it takes a long time to schedule an appointment or you're not comfortable with one of the – you have to be comfortable with the person you are talking to or it's just not going to work. And so I think making an effort to build a stronger program there, making them more accessible, more appealing to our generation, since it is us, would be a step in the right direction.”* (Male)
  - *“I think people really trust CPD. I think Army-wide they've had the movement that seeking counseling or psychological assistance is not something that's a label that's going to stay with you, it's not a negative thing. I think here there definitely is a culture of it being okay to go talk to CPD and being pretty helpful.”* (Male)

### **Trust in Anonymity of Reporting System**

- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that they would trust USMA authorities to keep a restricted report of sexual assault confidential, but not their peers.**
  - *“I think for the most part it would, because if you tell your chaplain or something, they can't – they're legally required not to say something. Or if you tell the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator]. She's our person to talk to, I'm pretty sure she said before if you don't want it to be known by anyone, it doesn't have to be.”* (Female)
  - *“I would say yes, sir, but especially here at West Point things have a way of getting out, whether they're intended to or not. And even if you don't know what exactly is going on, people tend to have a suspicion that something is going on, not necessarily what but some hint of something is wrong.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants disagreed that one could make a completely anonymous report.**
  - *“Even if it went up anonymously to the – if it was restricted and it was anonymous, the whole Corps would still know, so it wouldn't really matter if it was anonymous.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't see how at West Point it could truly and completely be anonymous because someone would know and someone would tell and the whole Corps would know.”* (Female)

- **Some participants felt an online reporting tool for victims might be useful for initiating discussions about an incident or collecting data.**
  - *“Maybe to schedule an appointment with somebody so you don't actually have to go anywhere. There's some Web site that you can say ‘Hey, I want to talk to somebody’ and they could send you an e-mail that says ‘Hey, come meet such and such a place.’ That would, I think, help.”* (Male)
  - *“I can see why they would want to do it for the statistical value. I don't know how many cadets would actually use it because it just seems like a formality almost, like, ‘Oh, I was sexually assaulted. Let me go to the Internet.’ It's worth a shot to put it out there, but honestly I don't know how much better that data would be. People reporting it up would probably be the only ones to put it on.”* (Female)
  - *“Maybe to initiate but I don't really think – I don't know how much help you really get out of online counseling.”* (Male)
- **Others indicated that an online system could easily be misused.**
  - *“There's honestly girls here who give a lot of other people bad names that report the most ridiculous things, like, ‘He grabbed me in drill.’ I mean, as sad as that is, stuff like that, the anonymous system would lead, I think, to more rampant reports of just unnecessary stuff.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't think there's any replacement for good leadership and when we do a lot of – push towards all this Internet, these databases, all these anonymous e-mails, we lose touch with almost reality. It's a lot easier to say things and do things that you wouldn't do that aren't entirely rational. I mean all of these phone numbers are known upfront, all of these – we know where the avenues are, we're all given cards with all of the information right on them.”* (Male)
  - *“I also think online reporting would almost be abused. Like you could – some idiot girl could sit there in the room and be like – she wasn't actually sexual assaulted and think that she was or whatever because she's emotionally unstable or can't handle the pressure here and then make a false claim, and then it would skew the statistics.”* (Female)
- **Or not very useful in supporting a victim.**
  - *“People like that [victims of sexual assault] want face time. They want actual someone to comfort them. A computer is not going to be able to do anything for you.”* (Female)

## **Extent of Stalking on Campus**

- **Focus group participants indicated that stalking is rare, taking the form of annoying contacts through the Internet or Facebook.**
  - *“I almost always – when I call up Facebook, I press offline just because every time I come on, somebody says, ‘I haven't talked to you in a while,’ and it's normally a couple guys in my company. It's, like, I don't want to talk to you. They've asked me to come to their room after taps. This is getting way too awkward. I'm just going to stop all conversation. Ignore them.”* (Female)
  - *“You keep constant tabs on people you've found, watch what they are up to online, what their current status is, you send unwanted e-mails or unwanted messages and it's a convenient way for stalkers or would-be stalkers to pursue their targets without actually having to confront them face-to-face. Actually I know of an instance in which that happened, as far as messages being sent to a person that I knew. And they were definitely not wanted and they were not appreciated. But my buddy dealt with it on his own and he went and confronted the person who was cyber stalking face-to-face and that dragged the cyber stalker out of his comfort zone and there weren't any incidents after that.”* (Male)
  - *“I've never heard of anybody being afraid. I've heard of people – like girls have guys hitting on them and they don't want that, but I've never heard of stalking.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants attributed stalking to “creepers,” a term used at the Academies to describe people with immature social skills.**
  - *“Because personally there are so many creeper guys here. I don't know about the girls, I don't know any creeper girls, but I know how creepy upper class guys, even our classmates, there's some guys here that are just relentless. ‘No’ to them means try harder. That is a major joke on campus with upper class guys, with guys in general, that stalking is fair game. It's ridiculous.”* (Female)
  - *“I think that's been increasing the last few years. The word creeper is just – I feel like cyberstalking is very easy and accessible because you're hiding behind a computer, so those numbers seem low to me actually. A lot of times on Facebook anyone can friend you and you typically accept, they're another cadet, maybe I have a class with them and maybe I just don't remember them, but they can look at your pictures; they can look at who you talk to. They can pay very close attention to your life without you even knowing it. You can be friends with someone and they can know more about you than you even could imagine.”* (Female)
  - *“I think most of the time the idea of stalking could be more true to socially awkward people who don't know how to interact appropriately with someone*

*else or they just show up at your room and stay there and they don't realize you can't just hang out at somebody's room indefinitely and when they ask you to leave, not go. But in terms of danger, it would have to be stuff you're doing in the middle of the night and somebody refused to leave or they're always there or that type of thing. It would take a little more to feel endangered.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants pointed out that the availability of personal information at USMA can facilitate stalking.**
  - *“Unfortunately it's so easy to get people's phone numbers, their room number, where their room is located. We have cadet pages here which have your bio and what you choose to put on it, but still for a class you have to put a picture of you. There's tools that can aid them in their stalking, unfortunately. As bad as that sounds, all they have to do is type in someone's last name and they got their phone number, where their room is. You can find out who their roommates are.” (Female)*

### **Unwanted Sexual Attention Online or Through Email**

- **Focus group participants indicated that inappropriate behaviors are exhibited via email.**
  - *“Yes, that happens. What they call the distros.<sup>5</sup> Actually a lot of them got in trouble this year for that, sending inappropriate stuff over e-mails and the wrong person gets it and then the shit hits the fan.” (Male)*

### **Reporting Stalking**

- **Focus group participants indicated there are several avenues for reporting stalking.**
  - *“You can go up through the TAC [Tactical Officer] line and go through the officer line and there's also the EO, the equal opportunity guys. They'll listen to your case too. And we have a Major responsible for overseeing the sexual assault recovery program here and she takes the job seriously and you can go through that back line as well. So there are, depending on your comfort level, there are options. I don't think that EO line is widely known and I don't think people are entirely comfortable with the chain of command line.” (Male)*
  - *“I assume you do it the same way and maybe just, like, talk to your chain of command or SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] or something.” (Female)*
  - *“It could very quickly turn to a respect issue. You could always put them up on respect, and the board itself would handle the case pretty easily.” (Female)*

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<sup>5</sup> E-mail distribution lists.

- **Some focus group participants indicated they did not know you could report stalking.**
  - *“I didn't know you could report stalking at all.”* (Female)
  - *“It's nothing we've ever been trained on or anything, it's not one of those things that come up.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants were not hopeful that much would be done after making a report of stalking.**
  - *“I know my team leader laughed at me; this kid was relentless, and I'm, ‘This kid keeps coming in my room bothering me no matter how many times I tell him to leave me alone,’ and he just literally laughed in my face. And it's, ‘Just shut your door.’ And he doesn't realize that it doesn't stop.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't see it being taken seriously. If some cadet were to tell their chain of command I'm being stalked, they'd be like ‘Get over yourself.’ I think that would be an initial reaction.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that their fellow cadets typically know when a situation is getting out of control and take action.**
  - *“I've definitely seen it happen where the plebe [freshman] female would tell her squad leader that so and so has been hanging out in my room a lot, can you tell them to leave me alone, that will happen. So I think people are fairly comfortable using their cadet chain of command and not – like they don't kick it up to the TAC [Tactical Officer] level but I think it's pretty good, like the system is pretty good at self-correcting.”* (Male)
  - *“I think we tend to protect our own. I think all it would take is somebody just mentioning somebody else, like, ‘This guy is totally harassing me online.’ And half the time it gets around and people are very protective of people in their own company and their own friends, and things are handled internally. Not in a bad way, but all it would take is one person telling another person who tells the other person, ‘Dude, knock it off.’”* (Female)

### **Reasons for Not Reporting Stalking**

- **Focus group participants indicated that there is not much that can be done about stalking, so people are reluctant to report incidents.**
  - *“There's no way to control it. I mean, it's so easy – I know one of my friends has a restraining order on an upperclassman because of some case that was going on, but still he lives a floor above her, so even though there's a restraining order, it's so easy for him to just come down. And all the names are right on the door, so all you have to do is know what company they're in. You find out the room on the Internet or if you don't, just walk around the company, find their*

*room. You can find out classes real easily. It's really hard to avoid somebody.”*  
(Female)

### **Extent of Sexual Harassment on Campus**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual harassment is predominantly crude and offensive behavior, especially joking.**
  - *“Normally when you're a female, you're the only female at your lunch table so you're sitting with nine other guys, and that's all they think about here. I'm convinced that the only thing guys think about here is sex, because that's all they ever talk about. They just make rude, crude comments.”* (Female)
  - *“Verbal is the most common. Lunch tables that are all male that don't have any females on that table at all. It can get very ugly very fast sometimes, especially the plebes [freshmen]. The freshmen have to prepare jokes for the upperclassmen, usually in a certain setting such jokes can be condoned, maybe not – definitely not encouraged but condoned.”* (Male)
  - *“I think there's probably more locker room talk or whatever and then more of like attempts to establish a relationship and there isn't coercion, though. I don't think coercion is too prevalent here.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that it is hard to define the point at which joking becomes sexual harassment because the standard differs by who is listening.**
  - *“Also depends on who you are dealing with as far as who's hearing you. Some people are much more easily offended than others and some people are very defined in what they find is offensive. And some people really just don't know when to stop and it makes it hard.”* (Male)
  - *“You feel it. I wouldn't say it's here's the benchmark, if you cross it you are wrong. It's a ‘I can feel,’ we can feel ourselves sliding towards it, somebody is going to say it, somebody is going to say it. It's said and then you're in the red. And it happens and people tend to just pick it up and run with it. And I do think if the one person says look guys, calls attention that maybe this isn't as appropriate, cadets do back down. People don't like to be that one guy either.”* (Male)
  - *“When it's targeted at a certain person, not necessarily even about them, but if guys are making jokes and they keep making the sexist jokes because there's a girl there or because they know that makes her angry, I think then it's no longer just we make politically incorrect jokes to we're doing it to try to make someone upset.”* (Female)

- *“I think we do have this crude culture I think but I think it's really infrequent to have malicious intent behind comments. Like you said, it's a lot of joking and then that comes down to perception.” (Male)*
- **Sometimes cadets do not realize sexual harassment has occurred.**
  - *“I had a conversation with a female who I think didn't realize she was being harassed. We do this thing called calling minutes, standing to the wall, and sometimes your chain of command will walk by and look at your uniform to see if there was something wrong just for the sake of getting to yell at you. But one guy was supposedly staring at this girl and supposedly looking for something. And as the girl was telling the story, I said how long did he stare at you? The entire time? The entire five minute time and you're doing this. Did that bother you at all because that's just wrong and stupid and he was probably – you need to at least address your chain of command about that or tell him don't do that again, you made me uncomfortable. And only then, hey wait a minute, that was creepy. And she might not have realized what her rights were in that area. That really made her uncomfortable. She thought I am supposed to feel uncomfortable in calling minutes, I'm supposed to be under pressure, but not that pressure.” (Male)*

### **Reporting Sexual Harassment**

- **Some focus group participants did not distinguish between procedures for reporting sexual assault and sexual harassment.**
  - *“As far as I know, unrestricted/restricted applies to sexual assault, sexual harassment, all that kind of general respect issues.” (Female)*
  - *“Just off the top of my head, I feel sexual harassment is something you wouldn't report to the sexual assault people necessarily. I think that's something that we would address in the regular chain of command. Maybe more of a disciplinary thing than a sexual thing.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated they would expect corrective action to be taken if someone reported sexual harassment.**
  - *“Counseling, investigation, possibly further counseling, some sort of remediation if it fits and you address the situation, move on.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the chain of command or whichever cadets would be in charge come to you and ask specifics of what happened – just like as an investigation, I imagine it would go to whoever the accused person was and ask them – like piecing together stuff. I don't know exactly how it would go, though.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that making a formal report of sexual harassment can have several meanings to cadets.**
  - *“When I think formal reporting, I think of actual officer [not cadet].” (Female)*
  - *“I would actually say if they are here and they said they've formally reported it [sexual harassment], they're not specifically saying that they went through the unrestricted or restricted meetings, maybe they didn't want to go through that, but maybe in their chain of command and they went through the chain of command to get someone to stop a particular action that was bothering them and that's how they formally reported it. And then in that case it was – they said I don't want to report this but I want it stopped. So they kind of formally reported it in the chain of command. They really didn't want to do anything other than to just stop it. They wanted help stopping that.” (Male)*

### **Reasons for Not Reporting Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual harassment is not reported because students do not want to bear the stigma associated with getting another student in trouble.**
  - *“Stigma. Especially if it's something like where I've seen this before, if someone makes a joke they're the funny person and they're always making jokes and you're the one that's offended by it, which is not a problem at all. If you're offended, you're offended. You can't act like you're not. But if you get someone popular in trouble, that is a big thing.” (Female)*

### **Offenders**

Participants were asked several questions regarding their perceptions of sexual assault offenders. Specifically, focus group participants were asked to identify characteristics and habits of actual and potential offenders and offenders' ability to perpetrate sexual assault against cadets.

### **Typical Characteristics of Sexual Assault Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that there are no uniquely defining characteristics of offenders.**
  - *“It could be anyone, there's not a specific, you know, tall, thin male or short five two, three hundred pound male, it could be anyone. It could be the simplest person to the person you would never think would do it. So I don't think it's the specific trait or characteristic to look for.” (Male)*
  - *“I think usually there's alcohol involved so demographically, being drunk, but that's really all – I haven't heard enough situations to actually piece something together. Regardless of the numbers, it's still rare here.” (Female)*

- *“It always seems it could be anybody, you're just never sure. I'd like to picture them as a sleazy, low-life scumbag but I know that's not always the case. It's the last person you expected it to be.”* (Male)
- **But the majority agreed that offenders are most likely fellow cadets because they are limited in their interaction with people outside of USMA.**
  - *“We don't really interact with anyone else so it makes sense.”* (Male)
  - *“In general the males that female cadets associate with are typically cadets. So you really aren't going to be in very many situations where there would even be an opportunity for anyone but a cadet.”* (Female)

### **Repeat Offenders**

- **Focus group participants thought it possible for someone to repeat an offense, but would eventually be caught.**
  - *“I would imagine eventually somebody would have to get caught. But a two or three hat trick offender, something like that, yeah, I can see that.”* (Male)
  - *“I know of a situation where a girl put a case in because the guy ended up fratting<sup>6</sup> – I think there's several people putting in just frat cases, and then one rape case on top of it, so, I mean, he's prowling everything. It was a rape case with a plebe [freshman], so he was a team leader and he basically attacked her, and then he was a Beast<sup>7</sup> squad leader and, like, after the school started, he just like contacted them all. And then there were several cases of it, and all the plebe girls in his company too.”* (Female)
  - *“If people don't report things or something falls through the cracks, somebody gets away with it, there's a good chance – I wouldn't say a good chance but a chance they'll do it again.”* (Male)

### **Premeditated Sexual Assault**

- **Some focus group participants thought it possible that someone might premeditate a sexual assault.**
  - *“I'd actually have to say for here it might be spur of the moment but I think that for the most if there's going to be that here that it's probably premeditated because of just the way we live. We're so structured anyway.”* (Male)

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<sup>6</sup> Engaged in fraternization between upper class and lower class cadets.

<sup>7</sup> First year summer cadet basic training.

- **But other focus group participants indicated sexual assault is more spontaneous.**
  - *“I don't think we have anybody who sits down and draws out a five paragraph operations order and says this is how I'm going to sexually assault or harass this person. I think it's much more Cadet A likes Cadet B but knows Cadet B isn't really interested in Cadet A, some alcohol gets involved in the mix, there's an ambiguous situation and things happen.”* (Male)
  - *“I think most of the time it's just people make bad decisions. I don't think I ever heard of a case where it's been premeditated or somebody was out to get somebody else.”* (Female)

### **Preventing Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants offered several suggestions for preventing sexual assault by taking steps to protect oneself.**
  - *“Tell girls not to be alone, use the buddy system. Whenever – even going to the city, a bunch of friends, don't just go with all guy cadets, bring a couple of girls with you too. I think that's one thing that will help out a lot, just having somebody there.”* (Male)
  - *“And it's common awareness – like locked doors at night, but you need to also take steps to protect yourself. Have common sense because you can't dictate what the drunk people are going to do when they come back from the Cow or Firstie Club [Junior or Senior Club]. So just lock your door and pretend you're sleeping and don't answer. You can take steps to be cautious on your own, don't put yourself in a bad situation. And I'm not saying it's the victim's fault if something happens, but it's good to be cautious and be aware of your surroundings.”* (Female)
  - *“Some of the simple security, make it a rule of females, lock your doors at night. When you place a woman's room in a hallway area, like in the center of long hallways, however you get to this person, it's not a quick avenue. Like near the CCQ [Cadet Charge of Quarters] desks, so no matter what. It's the cockroach theory, put light on something, the bad stuff won't go near where there's light. And simple rules. Especially things that go over weekends, always lock your doors at all times whenever you are in the room, especially when you are alone and then you can make sure to secure TACs [Tactical Officers] to go check these things, help that much in that way.”* (Male)

## **Bystander Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they are trained in prevention, to watch out for each other before an incident occurs.**
  - *“Hey, make sure you don't let your friends do anything stupid.’ So you'll have that constant reminder throughout the year as opposed to one broad training. So I think that's more effective to have it more frequently but in much shorter, one- or two-minute blurbs.”* (Female)
  - *“We do typically a good job of that, especially – I'm not a big drinker so if I go out with my friends who are drinking, I watch over them. I feel that's my job.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also indicated that the degree to which they form personal bonds with their fellow cadets affects bystander intervention.**
  - *“The Academy has adopted this thing called scrambling where they're scrambling classes after freshman year, after sophomore year, for all the summer stuff, so I don't think people develop as deep a bond for their classmates. The people that they're living around, they don't have the experiences to develop the bond I guess. I think that definitely probably plays a role in the degree of bystander intervention.”* (Male)

## **Factors Influencing Gender-Related Behaviors**

During the USMA focus groups, participants were asked to indicate aspects of the culture at the Academy that might result in sexual assault or sexual harassment behaviors.

## **Stalking and Harassment as Precursors of Assault**

- **The majority of focus group participants indicated that stalking and sexual harassment could be precursors of sexual assault.**
  - *“It's going to escalate. As almost anything else, it's going to keep going and going and going until something stops you.”* (Male)
  - *“I think if you're getting stalked, you have legitimate concern that it might escalate. It wouldn't always. Maybe the person is just awkward and doesn't realize what he's doing is wrong, but it certainly can be a precursor.”* (Female)
  - *“You identify a potential target and work up to a point where the person decides that they're ready to act, give them time to monitor movement patterns. You can imagine if someone, especially if they were an upper classman, have plenty of excuses to plan these things, what time do they have their door unlocked, all I have to do is go to their room and ask the question and leave. That's the time to check the doors and things like that.”* (Male)

- **Some focus group participants disagreed that stalking and sexual harassment are potential precursors of sexual assault.**
  - *“I haven't seen anything to lead me to buy that argument. I need to see some kind of cause, of logic that argues that. It intuitively makes sense but I think there's a distinct difference between someone who is going to make a sexual kind of joke versus someone who is going to go and fondle somebody. I think there's a big moral difference between those kinds of people.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants offered other behaviors that might be precursors of sexual assault.**
  - *“I'd say disrespect towards women. If you hear a lot of comments like women are useless and all that stuff, I think that's a definite indicator. I know people who – just viewing women differently than men in terms of mental abilities or something like that. That's a sign, not necessarily a definite characteristic.”* (Male)
  - *“I was going to say a preoccupation with sex or with a certain person, whether it's severe porn addiction, whether it is that they're thinking or talking about it a lot, obviously things are going on in their heads.”* (Male)

### **Culture Encouraging Improper Behavior**

- **Most focus group participants indicated that the culture at the Academy does not promote unhealthy sexual attitudes and/or improper behaviors among cadets.**
  - *“I would say most people here are pretty conservative and so deviant activities are highly looked down upon, like even looking at pornography can be looked down upon.”* (Male)
  - *“That's a really small population [those who would promote sexist attitudes]. For the most part people here tend to be more religious, tend to be more in touch spiritually and more respectful even, so I'm pretty sure rape or sexual assault or harassment is still less than any civilian college because this institution deals with it better and cadets in general are aware of the fact they have sisters and they're going to be soldiers one day that they're going to take care of.”* (Female)
- **But other focus group participants pointed out that there is a cultural dual standard for male cadets.**
  - *“I think if you're a girl here, you're a slut if you've got guys around. But if you're a guy, it's, like, have fun. I got some.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the culture is to show respect for each other.**
  - *“It's necessary here because we're going to be living with each other for four years and it's a necessary part of getting through the week.” (Male)*
  - *“People here are conscious, very conscious of not offending the females or making sure you show proper respect. If somebody does say something, they smash it right there on the spot and move on.” (Female)*

### **Sexism Among Students**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist attitudes might occur among some upper class students, but it is not necessarily widespread.**
  - *“I'm not sure that's promoted by upper classmen, but there is a certain degree of sexist nature here, whether they learned it at home or just over time. I'm sure if you go around asking do you think that women should be in the military, I'm sure you'll get a few answers. ‘Hell, no.’ ‘Oh, yeah, they should be in there.’ I mean there are different people here and some people believe different extremes on that end.” (Male)*
  - *“It's still very much like a man's institution; they're the vast majority. And for the most part, I've been treated with such respect here by the upperclassman male, by my male classmates. For the most part, there's great role models here. And it's the Army. The big thing here is infantry. Everything is all done in infantry. The women don't go to infantry. We know that. So what. We move on with our lives. It's male dominated, but it's never bothered me.” (Female)*
  - *“It's really just certain peoples' attitudes towards the opposite sex. I had one plebe [freshman] who did not like being under the command of a female team leader and I had to deal with him rather harshly so he knew to drop it, he needed to get his attitude right. But there are definitely firsties [seniors] and cows [juniors], all classes have this problem, certain people.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated women are held to a higher standard, particularly by other women.**
  - *“I think part of that, though, is to be a woman here, to stack up to the guys, you just can't be as good as them. You have to be better. You have to really prove that you deserve to be here, because there's nothing cadets hate worse than a female who can't pull her weight; a female who can't rock, a female who is incompetent. It's just so despise – and for a good reason. It's the Army. You have to be competent. I think that's where females are tough on other females is because they don't want the stigma perpetuated by some crappy female plebe.” (Female)*

## **Sexist Culture Among Faculty, Staff, and Alumni**

- **Focus group participants indicated that faculty and staff do not promote a culture encouraging sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexism.**
  - *“Most of the time when you talk to the old guys they say most of the changes are pretty good. Things change for the better.”* (Male)
  - *“I had a teacher, he was an old grad, and he didn't have females here when he was here, and he was, like, it's the best thing that's happened to the Corps. So there's two sides of it.”* (Female)
  - *“Teachers try to take care of you, and not unfairly, like ‘Let's favor the girls,’ but they understand when they were here it was harder for women and they try to make sure that the same things don't happen again.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that attitudes among alumni are mixed.**
  - *“Prior to ‘76, I've had some old grads attend formal dinners, ‘Why did you want to go to the Academy? Do you think you can do it? I don't think you should be there.’ Just blatant sexism. I'm like, ‘Okay. Thanks.’ You just be polite and leave. But then there's the people who were here, for example, the Commandant is a grad and his wife is also a grad, so he's the complete opposite. And he really on any gender issues, gets fired up because he saw how badly his wife was treated as a cadet, so he's up in arms about it. He won't allow any sort of sexism whatsoever.”* (Female)

### **Sharing Information**

Cadets in the focus groups were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and impressions regarding leadership's dedication to preventing sexual assault, prevalence of sexual assault over time, victim blaming, and false accusations.

## **Leadership's Dedication to Preventing Sexual Assault**

- **There was near unanimous agreement among focus group participants that senior Academy leaders are very dedicated to preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“I think they know it destroys units. That's the whole focus. There wouldn't be a Military Academy if the goal wasn't to have a strong military, so not only does it ruin our lives if things are bad here, but the goal is to create the type of leader who can handle and prevent these issues when they get to their platoons, so it's not something that's right now; it's something that's for the future and the whole Army.”* (Female)
  - *“I was pretty impressed, we had a briefing early in the year by two girls who fratted last year, and the Commandant was there, and he actually started*

*crying. And I was just thoroughly impressed that he was there in the first place. I think he set it up. That was impressive.” (Female)*

- *“I think [they are] serious but I'm just not sure they know the best way to go about things.” (Male)*

- **But that dedication might not extend to throughout the cadet leadership.**

- *“I'm sure that the officers, [but] not so much the cadet chain of command. I'm sure that the Academy officials are really serious about it, but how it translates down to the cadet chain of command is a different story.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated the evidence of leadership's emphasis on preventing sexual assault is seen in the number of posters, Web site notices, and other communications.**

- *“Like from Bartlett Hall to the barracks, everywhere inside there are posters.” (Male)*
- *“And it's on pretty much all the major Web sites, on the USCC [United States Corps of Cadets] home page when you go on in, that's the biggest thing.” (Male)*
- *“And when they talk to us, they get really serious and you can tell they aren't just hitting on a checkpoint, it's like they actually care about stuff.” (Male)*
- *“At the briefings everyone that talks about it, I know they get some of the counselors at CPD [Center for Professional Development] to talk about it and the doctor and the Commandant and they always – their opening statement always includes ‘I take it really seriously. If you do something like that, you're gonna get in trouble.’” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants also indicated that coaches and sports staff are serious about preventing sexual assault.**

- *“The ones I work with have, very seriously. They're into all aspects of things that you could possibly do wrong, everything from sexual harassment to alcohol-related incidents to drugs. Because they are all interrelated sooner or later. The coaches I've worked with are very serious about it.” (Male)*
- *“I know my coach did. He stopped the ‘That's what she said’ jokes on our team. You know, if somebody says something, you just add ‘That's what she said’ and if you said it, you had to do pike-ups, which are abs, and so it was a punishment. He really cracked down on that. But, unfortunately, he didn't stop the guys from talking their guy talk, but he did try.” (Female)*

- *“I think they care just as much about our welfare and the institution and reputation and all that I think cadets would or faculty or military faculty would and they would support you just as much.”* (Female)
- **Faculty and staff are also viewed as serious about preventing sexual assault, especially the military staff members.**
  - *“I know some of the female officers, especially around female cadets, take the issue much more seriously and are much more willing to talk about it and address it with the female cadets. Probably because they've been commanders and understand women in the units that these things happen and they are much more able to directly take control of the situation and deal with it and stop it because it's bad for their unit.”* (Male)

### **Prevalence of Sexual Assault Over Time**

- **Lower class focus group participants indicated they do not have much information upon which to assess change over time since they became a cadet.**
  - *“It's hard to say. I think someone could gauge like from your plebe [freshman] year to your cow [junior] or firstie [senior] year, you would be able to tell – I don't think things are getting worse. I think things are always moving forward. But it's hard to gauge just one year, especially like plebe year, it's such a different mind-set, such a different situation.”* (Female)
  - *“I think we have all been desensitized to a certain extent because I know that things I would have been shocked about when I got here, ten months in, now a guy could make the same comment and I don't think it would even faze me.”* (Female)

### **Victim Blaming**

- **Focus group participants correctly defined victim blaming as holding a victim partially or entirely responsible for the sexual assault or sexual harassment against him or her.**
  - *“Saying that the victim wanted it by either their body language or things that they – even though they said no they really showed that they wanted it and so it was basically their fault. Like she came onto me so I just reacted like I had no control or whatever. That kind of thing.”* (Male)
  - *“They brought it on themselves.”* (Female)

- **Some focus group participants pointed out that, although sexual assault is never deserved, victims' behavior sometimes contributes to the incident.**
  - *“I want to say as far as percentage wise, just my opinion, probably about seventy percent or seventy-five percent is probably the victim's fault. And I tell my girlfriend all the time, don't go to a party and drink and get drunk because you are putting yourself in a bad situation. Or don't go somewhere with five other friends, if it's five guys it's more a chance of you getting attacked than with a group of people or if you are dancing with the guy don't give him the wrong impression, it's going to haunt you, it's a dance. If you put yourself in various situations, you can put yourself in a bad situation where you can look like you're portraying something. And it's hard because a lot of times you have to think not for yourself but for someone else, it's like, okay, what am I doing to make someone else think I'm this way or what am I doing to or want someone to come onto me. So it's hard. But the way society is, you can't be your own person and be yourself, it's like I have to think for everyone else.” (Male)*
  - *“None of this stuff is prevalent. It doesn't happen that often and if it does, it's quiet. We don't know much about it because it's so minor, I don't hear that much about it. Usually when there's an incident, it's alcohol related; and if it's just the offender who is drunk, then people typically are against that. If both parties are drunk, then people are, like, ‘Wow, you guys are stupid.’ I mean, both parties are at fault because both were not being smart not having a buddy there. But I really think – and this is in the briefs we hear that alcohol – that most sexual assaults happen when there's alcohol.” (Female)*

### **Commonly Held Misperceptions About Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated there is a common belief that some women “cry rape” to avoid punishment or after making a regrettable decision.**
  - “Yes.” (Multiple Male Responses)
  - *“I know one girl that did that.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated a woman might accuse someone of sexual assault to get back at them.**
  - *“As a victim – actually some girl here at my table was talking about it, ‘Oh, yeah, you know, she's just trying to get him in trouble.’ I definitely heard that.” (Female)*
  - *“There's a retributational option. If there's conflict or tensions between male and female cadets or something like that, or something happens, that you can always escalate it to a sexual assault charge and get rid of a guy or something like that.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated such misperceptions arise because situations occur quickly, rumors spread fast, and no one wants to be involved.**
  - *“Once one bad thing happens, everybody related to the issue scatters. So along with the whole people that we call crying rape, the problem there will be other people involved in that or knowledgeable of that, with evidence maybe that the girl is telling the truth or maybe the guy is telling the truth and things like that, the problem is they scatter. And so a lot of times it's difficult in these situations, they become ambiguous, because no one knows what the truth is and anybody who does know what the truth is wants nothing to do with the incident because they are afraid of going to the scary little miniature hall citadel in middle of central area.” (Male)*

### **Outcomes of Making False Accusations**

- **Focus group participants felt that a cadet can get away with making a false accusation.**
  - *“They just have to say ‘I said no.’ And if the guy says ‘Well, no, it was consensual,’ they are going to believe her over him every time. So yeah, they could lie and get away with it no problem.” (Male)*
  - *“But from what I've seen, they're [the Academy] never going to punish somebody for claiming that someone raped them. There was this girl, last year she was one of the girls I knew that played the rape card kind of thing, and she screwed one of her buddies over this year and her company silenced her. They don't talk to her. And it may not be a big deal elsewhere, but here, because of the numbers, if you get silenced in your company, that's who you live with, and it's enough punishment as is.” (Female)*
  - *“I don't think I've ever heard of anyone being found out about lying. We just all know they lied.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that false accusations affect people coming forward who have had actual experiences of sexual assault.**
  - *“Because if you have a slew of cases where they're just doing it to do it because they regret decisions they made, that that automatically puts suspicion on people that don't really have as much evidence, they're not going to be as proactive about gaining evidence if the last ten cases have all been false.” (Female)*
  - *“And that case that happened, a lot of people in that girl's company silenced her, would not talk to her at all. And some people still do. I'll notice when I see this particular girl, people won't talk to her. And for a true victim, even if she was, they're not gonna want to come forward because they don't want that to happen to them if the person is found not guilty of sexual assault.” (Female)*

## **Confronting Offensive Behavior**

- **Focus group participants indicated when someone is confronted about an offensive behavior they typically stop, but people are hesitant to confront.**
  - *“I know I get really offended with suicide jokes. That really bugs me. And my friends, especially after the suicide briefing, were saying stuff; and I said something, and then I got teased for standing up for it. So like the peer relationship, if you say something, ‘Oh, ha ha, aren't you funny; you don't like sexist jokes.’ It's, like, ‘No, I think they're offensive; I think you should stop.’ And they'll stop, but they'll tease you for it.”* (Female)
  - *“Some people aren't assertive enough to deal. What one guy did was literally run away. There's a girl telling me a guy was being unwelcomely advancing towards her, he didn't stop, she slapped him. That worked, that's a signal. There's nothing mixed in that. But some people aren't willing to do – they don't want to admit, there's no problem here, I've got it under control. They don't want to admit there's a problem or want to get into the complication of life here. If I admit there's a problem, people will find out, will I get in trouble, will people think I'm loose or I go after girls or whatever. So people try to hide it.”* (Male)
- **Some people might be hesitant to confront someone based on their relationship with the person.**
  - *“Kind of awkward. Especially if you liked the person or you might be trying to start something with them, like a relationship, you don't want to confront them or do something that will really put them off and make them angry and then completely sever everything. So maybe you feel like you have to accept this, even though you don't like it, and just go on.”* (Male)
  - *“It's awkward.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that they are in a professional environment and it is their responsibility to correct offensive behaviors even though confrontation is hard.**
  - *“Let people know that these behaviors aren't accepted in a professional environment. That's the environment we're in, even in the barracks, it's supposed to be a semi-professional environment where you respect people of different backgrounds and sex and gender. So I'm just saying make a line and let them know these behaviors aren't acceptable in a professional environment.”* (Male)
  - *“I think that's something the Academy needs to work on, especially – and I think it's especially a big deal with females because they're not, a lot of times, willing to say something. Sometimes the guys, they truly don't realize what they're*

*saying sometimes, they make a joke you have an obligation to say something if it's offending you. Or if it's offending someone else and they're not willing to say anything, if you go up to them and say, 'Look, what you're saying is offending people' kind of thing." (Female)*

### **Training and Education**

USMA provides cadets with training and education on the issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Focus group participants were asked to identify the types of training and education they receive, describe which methods they felt have been most and least effective, and give training suggestions of their own.

#### **Type and Amount of Training and Education**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they receive sexual assault and sexual harassment training on a regular basis.**
  - *“Once a semester. But we're also trained on ethics and equal opportunity things, all that stuff, and I can see it could be easily combined. It's usually the Commandant who briefs us.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated they receive some training about how to protect themselves and their friends when out at a party or a bar.**
  - *“We're not really trained how to deal with stuff outside of the cadet world.” (Female)*
  - *“If you see one of your friends, she's really drunk and the guy is trying to persuade her; like spill something on him and get him distracted and get your friend out of there. You have to use your creativity. But we've talked about it.” (Female)*
  - *“I think it might have been the cows [juniors] or something, the Veronda Jackson lecture, remember that? She kind of covers that. If you see a girlfriend acting retarded, tell her, 'Hey, your mascara, you look like a raccoon.' So take her to the bathroom to tell your friend to pull her out of a situation.” (Female)*

#### **Most Effective Training Methods**

- **Focus group participants indicated that interactive and scenario-based training is most effective.**
  - *“I know they did a skit and I think the skit helped. I think it was two males and a female and it was they did a lot of scenarios where sexual harassment or sexual assault was taking place and a lot of people here probably never would know what sexual harassment or assault would look like or what the situation was. So when they did that I think that skit really helped a lot of people and*

*they can relate to it more. Instead of here sexual assault is someone says something inappropriate. And you say what is inappropriate. If someone touched you, that's inappropriate. They don't go into detail exactly what sexual assault or sexual harassment is, they just say all right, if you do this, this is in the category as an attempt to do something.” (Male)*

- *“The most effective one we had I think was that rape victim lady that came in, that was an evening briefing. It was announced for a long time and we went and was specifically set aside for that. And these little classes that the cadet chain of command does, I can't stand them and I think it's a waste of my time. And if you think it's a waste of your time it's not going to do anything for you. Maybe once a year, once a semester, just make it less duration but more powerful.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that being realistic about college student behavior also helps make training more effective.**

- *“I think in the last year or so more of the briefings have been just more realistic. Like okay, there are going to be people having sex, there are going to be people having sex in the barracks, sometimes it happens. And it's just the same with the drinking with the sexual stuff and all that stuff. The more they realize what happens in real life, the way college students act, they'll give us these briefings that relate more and I think the more they relate to us the better.” (Male)*

### ***Least Effective Training Methods***

- **Focus group participants indicated that PowerPoint-based trainings are the least effective.**

- *“It's the most ineffective manner of training ever.” (Female)*
- *“I have a two-slide PowerPoint limit, and after that, I just – .” (Female)*
- *“PowerPoint goes up, head goes like this. And it's completely dry too. You always end up having that one upper classman having been told you're going to brief this PowerPoint and they have their back to the audience, don't touch each other. And it's completely worthless and the entire time you're nodding off when you should be doing your math homework.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants also indicated that negative training is counterproductive.**

- *“And when teaching about it, don't insult the intelligence of who you are talking to about this and don't make it a communist witch hunt where you say sexual predators, they are everywhere and they are going to get you. Once people start hearing that they start turning themselves off because it's just too negative.*

*Teach people this is a real world thing, it happens, we have to deal with it.”*  
(Male)

- *“You get the sense in some of these briefings that it's an indictment of you and that you're the bad guy and watch out, we're out to get you. We put up walls and all of a sudden, yeah, we get ‘I don't want to be here, your story is nice, we don't care [referring to a guest speaker who told her story of being raped].’ And so I do think a more fact-based logic devoid of emotion kind of approach would work better in accessing the four thousand of us here.”* (Male)
- *“All the sexual assault briefings we sit through, guys are made out to be the worse possible human beings. So many of the guys here are really good. They wouldn't do any of the things that go on, but there's a handful of people that do. And a lot of the girls maybe haven't been sexually assaulted or haven't gotten unwanted contact. So everyone just sits there and it makes us feel like they're just shoving it down our throats and we don't want to deal with it anymore. I know where I need to go if something happens. Nothing's happened, so I don't need to go there. So I think if we embrace it from a positive perspective, like, hey, these are the results; let's talk about what's positive going on. And be more positive.”* (Female)

### **Suggested Training Options**

- **Focus group participants cited recent suicide prevention training as a good example of effective training.**
  - *“Suicide prevention training, it was very specific and actually it was interactive where you chose the actions of everybody. And our TAC [Tactical Officer] made us go through every single action to create a negative scenario. So I think the interactive videos, like the suicide prevention ones, they tell you what to do exactly, they give you concrete examples of what to do and what not to do.”*  
(Male)
  - *“We have a psychology class and I think maybe if you had dedicated a lesson or two to just not going over terms and stuff you have to know for the test but just going over experiences and maybe breaking it up into guys and girls in different classes, I feel that might be helpful because people are always a little more receptive if they see a benefit in it.”* (Male)
  - *“And when there's PMEE [Professional Military Ethics Education] briefs, like for sexual assault, all the guys joke, ‘Oh, it's another rape brief.’ And I feel there should be alternative methods to the briefing because it seems like it's the same thing, it happens over and over, somebody comes in and talks or they give a little speech about this is where you go. It's similar to the suicide briefing that we used to get that was all the same and no one really knew what to do, and then they changed it and had it interactive, and I thought that was so much more effective.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated having a victim of sexual assault explain the value of reporting would make it more relevant than just briefing procedures.**
  - *“Maybe when actual victims of sexual assault explain how it is and what helps, reporting procedures. A lot of times if you have a guy standing up on the board describing all the proper steps you should take, et cetera, all you will get are a bunch of guys nodding off in class, okay, fine, bullet point list of things we have to do, got it, next slide. But if you actually have a personal relationship of some kind or a way to personally connect it to the individual, the group you are speaking to or the unit, you would get a lot more attention. Stressing of course confidentiality.” (Male)*
  - *“I think it would be hard to get a cadet to want to do that if they're still here. There was a speaker awhile back that was actually on the subject and I think that it really opened a lot of people's eyes as far as how important it is, whether it's restricted or unrestricted, to report it and to get help.” (Male)*

### **Alternatives to Training**

- **Focus group participants indicated that effective leadership and personal responsibility are important aspects to preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“I don't think any training will ever replace just small unit leadership and people just watching out for each other, like common sense things as opposed to training.” (Female)*
  - *“It's a personal responsibility thing that that can't replace – training can't replace that in any way. Just caring is so much more effective.” (Female)*
  - *“Whereas when we first came here it was more sexual assault is wrong and we're West Point and the public eye is on us and it can't happen. They've gone from that to more of a dialogue. And then the other things I think is with the briefings, they've gotten more into now, which I think is more effective, talking about describing everybody here is a family kind of thing and if you hurt somebody here, you're hurting the family and you're decreasing the effectiveness of the team. I think talking like that is probably more effective generally than talking about right, wrong, legal.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the semester on respect, so I have a deal with the military education classes; I think if they made one just for that, then it would probably be good and you could talk about sexual harassment and assault and the results of the surveys or the focus groups, because I think some of the topics for those classes have been stretched out and repeated over and over again; that no one really wants to go and they don't listen, so if it's something new like instead of a PowerPoint, maybe do the results, have a discussion, and act out situations and the classroom people would figure out what's happening and be more willing to do stuff about it.” (Female)*

## **Self-Defense Training**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they receive mandatory combatives training that can be intense, but more training in defending oneself might be useful.**
  - *“Our boxing classes, you get yelled at for throwing weak punches. And I heard the female courses, they are pretty brutal. I heard one girl broke a girl's nose and stuff like that. So we have really serious defense training.”* (Male)
  - *“This is maybe going to sound awful but I would also argue an increase in self-defense related courses for cadets to take so they are more capable of defending themselves. I'm not even kidding. I think that would be beneficial.”* (Male)
  - *“I would say just having the outlet though for the people who think they need it would be a good step. Because those people who are feeling self-conscious about themselves and not knowing how to deal with an attacker, maybe they can gain the confidence for themselves by taking the Tai Kwon Do class and learning the discipline, the skills associated with it.”* (Male)

## Chapter 3: U.S. Naval Academy

Eight focus group sessions were conducted at USNA between April 20-23, 2009. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year. Each session had between nine and sixteen students.

### ***Reporting***

Reporting of sexual assault was one of the main subjects addressed in the SAGR2009 focus groups. Midshipmen were asked to describe the difference between restricted and unrestricted reporting, actions leaders might take to encourage reporting, and reasons for not reporting sexual assault. Midshipmen were also asked to discuss incidence and reporting of sexual harassment and stalking.

### ***Restricted and Unrestricted Reporting of Sexual Assault***

- **Most focus group participants correctly identified the confidentiality aspects of restricted reporting and the investigative aspects of unrestricted reporting.**
  - *“Restricted is most confidential. It's usually if you want to get counseling or medical help. And unrestricted usually leads to a police report.”* (Female)
  - *“Isn't restricted where you can tell somebody who has confidentiality but there won't ever be an investigation, and unrestricted is basically all your chain of command knows about it and there will be an investigation?”* (Female)

### ***Choosing Restricted or Unrestricted Reporting***

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of situations where they would choose restricted or unrestricted reporting.**
  - *“I think also if you use a restricted option you can get advice from someone with more experience before you decide whether or not you want to take action. So you're talking to someone trained to deal with a situation like that without having to bring about a bigger situation.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of times things are personal issues and when you make something public it can be carried with them throughout the rest of their career, and they'll only know be known for that one thing. It's a stigma. You're put in a position where if you want help you have to reveal what happened to you. But with restricted reporting you can still get the help but not worry about that stigma.”* (Male)

- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that having the two reporting options is beneficial to victims because restricted reporting provides victims time to seek help to deal with their physical condition and emotions before involving authorities.**
  - *“I think it's nice to have a restricted option because I think some people are reluctant to go forward and talk about something with someone else because they're afraid it may blow up into a big thing. They like having the restricted option if they want to keep quiet.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it results in more people coming forward because you do have the option to file a report. Even if you do make it restricted, you can, should you chose so, make it unrestricted. I think that promotes an atmosphere where people aren't afraid to come forward.”* (Female)
  - *“Those two different pathways provide the person with an opportunity to still report and take action, but not necessarily get someone in trouble because touching may not be necessarily as harmful to them or maybe mentally upsetting. But rape is much more severe and you have the opportunity and take the unrestricted one and have someone punished for that.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it's a good idea. I know there are limits with the medical and legal stuff too, with both of them, but I think it's a good idea. A lot of people aren't comfortable if it's out in the open. I know of instances where people don't want people to get in trouble and won't say anything if they know that everything's going to get carried through, somebody's going to get prosecuted. So they won't say anything otherwise. So the restricted thing helps.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated mixed reactions to the effectiveness of talking to a Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI) Guide.**
  - *“SAVIs are not supposed to be counselors. SAVIs are supposed to be there to give people access to the resources.”* (Female)
  - *“There's SAVI guides, but you're not necessarily close to any of them. You don't necessarily know them, so you're not going to want to go to some stranger. Even if they're one of your peers, even if they're a SAVI and could do the restricted report, I wouldn't feel comfortable trying to find a SAVI or figure out who that is.”* (Female)

## **Definition of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants generally knew the definition of sexual assault per the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and that the definition includes a variety of behaviors from unwanted sexual touching through completed unwanted sexual intercourse.**
  - *“I think it's a good definition because there's different people and they're going to be uncomfortable with two different things. Because it encompasses a large range of things it protects the girl or the guy, but more often the girl.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the term “rape” carries extra impact.**
  - *“The word rape is scary. People are not going to lean toward the side of being ‘Yes, I raped someone’ and ‘Yes, I did this, but I don't think it was rape.’ Rape is just a scary word.”* (Female)
  - *“The percentage of girls who actually falsely report rape is really small for the entire population, not just the Academy. I think the bigger issue is the very blurred line of whether or not it was sexual assault. I know they've done surveys where they've asked guys if they've ever raped a girl, and they would say ‘No.’ The next question will give the actual definition of rape, and they will say ‘Yes,’ they've done that. And it just takes rape out of it. Sometimes you don't know if you have crossed the line or not.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that including unwanted touching in the definition of sexual assault might influence whether one reports an incident.**
  - *“I think we fall into the thinking too much ‘Well, I didn't experience a big enough problem,’ or ‘I'm not legitimate enough in having a concern here. I don't deserve help, someone else deserves help more than I do.’ I think [including unwanted touching in the definition] let's you notice that ‘I don't need to have been raped to need help.’ So I think definitely especially on the lower end of the spectrum having that definition helps.”* (Female)
- **Other focus group participants indicated that the decision rests on the individual and not the definition of sexual assault.**
  - *“If it's a more serious allegation like rape, that's more likely to go straightforward. But other ones like someone touches you, you might just not make the report altogether because you want to handle it between the two people.”* (Male)
  - *“What is unwanted touching, to what degree? There's some that's obvious unwanted touching, like groping. But depending on the person doing the touching and the person receiving the touching, where it is, there seems some people can take it too far with the definition. And so I'd say it depends on*

*circumstances a little bit with that. So I might be less likely to report something as specifically sexual.” (Male)*

### **Reasons for Not Reporting Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that students do not want to talk about sexual assault or have others know about it.**
  - *“I would attribute a lot of the unreported cases less to distrust of the system and more the individual not wanting to relive the moments and confront the situation on a personal level.” (Male)*
  - *“The victim feels humiliated by it. Out of their self, save the self-humiliation of having to go through a whole process of letting it come out or having anybody find out about it they want to keep it to themselves and deal with it. I think there are more cases of ‘Oh, it wasn’t that big of a deal. Sure, I was uncomfortable in those situations but it wasn’t rape so I guess I don’t have to report that. I don’t want to humiliate myself, I’ll just keep it to myself and move on.’” (Male)*
  - *“Even if it’s restricted reporting I think that the person might feel if ‘I report it and this person gets in trouble then he’ll know that I turned him in, then who else would have turned him in?’ That might be another reason why there are fewer reports.” (Male)*
  
- **Not wanting to talk about an assault is especially true when the victim is male.**
  - *“When you think sexual assault you don’t think of being done on a dude, you think a guy doing it to a girl. Especially in an environment like this where it’s pretty male dominant, people would be ultimately just embarrassed more than anything to go forward.” (Male)*
  - *“I think he would get the same treatment, but at the same time he’d be more reluctant. I think guys feel more uncomfortable with the issue than girls do. So I very highly doubt it would ever go to that [report it].” (Female)*
  - *“I definitely think that’s the case because being the victim is considered a position of weakness. Just psychologically the males here especially don’t want to be looked at as a weak person or be humiliated. For them to come forward, ‘Okay, I was sexually assaulted,’ chances are pretty good they would be ridiculed by some peers. Not only that, I think they struggle within themselves, ‘Okay, well, I’m a guy. Was that even sexual assault?’ I think they might not come forward just due to the fact it’s not common for a man to come forward with a sexual assault case.” (Male)*
  - *“It’s a little more acceptable for a female to say they were sexually assaulted, not really for a male. Socially I think guys are more looked down upon because they’re supposed to be strong, they’re supposed to be able to fight it off, that females are really too much in this situation.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that protecting one’s reputation is a major consideration in the decision to report.**
  - *“I think the environment of the Naval Academy is such people might be afraid. Their reputation is fairly important here, it's important naturally in a college environment but here we're ranked by upper class and a lot of our rankings go into not only service selection but our careers basically. So you're putting a lot on the line any time you make something public. So if you're talking about a report like that, then you have to really understand what consequence that's going to create on either the other person or your own future.”* (Female)
  - *“I think because the Academy is so performance oriented, because everyone is under the strict scrutiny of everyone else in their chain of command and their peers, I think people are reluctant to come forward about stuff like that, to protect themselves, and protect their ranking, their class ranking, things like that.”* (Female)
  - *“There's a fear that no one would believe the person who reported it. I think that's the biggest thing. No one will believe them that the reputation would be tarnished.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that for USNA finding the right balance between meeting a victim’s needs and stopping sexual assault is a challenge.**
  - *“There seems to be a tension between serving the victim and meeting their needs and being this watchdog going after perpetrators. And somebody who is ashamed or hurt or confused is probably not going to feel comfortable going to the watchdog, big brother. They want somebody who can provide them comfort and security. And finding that balance, settling that tension is what the system is trying to do. And sometimes they lean one way and sometimes they lean the other way.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that high-profile USNA sexual assault cases from several years ago still impact students’ willingness to come forward over incidents of sexual assault.**
  - *“We do go to a school where it's 80/20 [men/women]. And we've all heard the Lamar Owens thing. We weren't here for it, but we've heard about it. That girl is still thought of she just called rape but it didn't happen to her. If that does happen, you're going to think everybody's just going to hate me and everybody's just going to think I'm a liar and all the guys are going to hate me. And that's 80 percent. And probably some of the girls are going to hate me. So I'm probably going to have, like, one friend. If all those people hated me because of something that happened to me that wasn't my fault, that would feel even worse than if you just didn't tell anybody.”* (Female)

- *“I think in general the command does a great job of doing what it's supposed to do. I think all it takes is a couple of isolated incidents to make people think twice about reporting it. For example, the Owens case, after that went on, I would be willing to bet that if you looked at the data the number of reported cases dropped significantly after that, just the way it was handled through the media and the legal process and all that.”* (Male)
- *“I would say there definitely is a stigma if you report something, even if it's restricted reporting, I think there's a fear that this is going to come back on me and what are my classmates going to think. A lot of recent cases that have been very public have come back, especially on a female, like she was the one who screwed up, she should have done all this differently. So when you're looking at potentially reporting a sexual assault, I think that's something you consider. I don't think it's encouraged necessarily by the higher ups, but I think it's in the culture.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that people might endorse a behavior on a survey, but not feel it is important enough to report or they took care of the situation.**
  - *“The survey is not really a report. If you go through restricted or unrestricted you're reporting something. A lot of things that happen, even for harassment, just like one comment, most people aren't going to report one comment by one person. If it's not that big of a deal, why make a huge deal. That might be the mentality.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that people are reluctant to report sexual assault for fear of the impact on them or their fellow midshipmen.**
  - *“The punishment here tends to be so severe. If you get in trouble for something they'll find five different ways to punish you for the same thing, so the tendency is to keep things on the down low. So much of this place in general is about perception there's a tendency to smooth things over and move on.”* (Female)
  - *“I also think part of the reporting issue rumors go so fast. So if somebody does report something, there's automatically so many rumors about it going around that you don't want people talking about you in any type of way. It's hard even if you try to put out a rumor. There was an instance last year, there was a rumor going around about somebody in a similar situation and I spoke up in class and I said something. Automatically I became the bad person. I was trying to put out this rumor. I think that stopped a lot of people from reporting anything because they don't want people talking about them whether it's their fault or not.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants also identified a mindset that they are expected to be tough and deal with issues.**
  - *“If a guy got sexually assaulted, I would feel that he could deal with that. Do what he needs to do to get himself right.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also indicated that policies at USNA differ in their focus from the other Academies and might account for lower levels of reporting of sexual assault.**
  - *“The Naval Academy is different from other Academies because the honor concept about self-remediation. The other Academies it's about honor code; you commit an offense if you allow someone to commit an offense. So they're big about reporting it there, while here we have the option of self-remediating. It's one of three options, remediate, remediate report, and just report.”* (Female)

### **Actions Leaders Can Take To Encourage Reporting of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the emphasis is on helping the victim and should be.**
  - *“I think the emphasis right now is more on letting people know if they want help it's there. I think that's where the emphasis should be. The only real benefit I could see to encouraging people to come forward would be maybe on catching people who did it, which would be something good to do. But the emphasis is on getting people help that need help. If you're going to put your focus on one area, that's where it should be.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated there is not much more Academy leadership can or should do to encourage reporting.**
  - *“I've been trying to think as far as specific things leadership can do, I think they do quite a bit already to make the climate good. We have constant briefs about sexual assault and I mean it definitely has an emphasis. Each company has a person who's sole job is to do sexual harassment prevention type of stuff. As far as specific things, the whole administration is doing a good job.”* (Male)
  - *“I think in the situation where people come forward, people do something about it. It's not that they just let it sit there. If a girl were to report even unwanted touching, they do a lot more than maybe is even necessary to do. They start looking at the background and who is the party and stuff like that. It's not that nothing's going to be done about it. They're obviously going to do something.”* (Male)
  - *“As far as sexual assault here, I don't think there's too much they can do to be proactive that they're not already doing.”* (Male)

- **Some focus group participants indicated that responsibility for reducing sexual assault and encouraging reporting when it occurs is not just a leadership responsibility.**
  - *“I think the leadership and the people that you would go forward to would definitely keep confidential especially if you say please do your best to keep this under wraps. Like your SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] guide or company officers, they don't go and talk about it to other people. It's really not the leadership that can do anything to help. It's really the mids that need to mind their own business. If you hear something and you know you shouldn't say that, you shouldn't go spread it.”* (Female)
  - *“They definitely do everything in their power, but I think really if you want to see a complete and total change it's got to come from us. And that goes back to people doing what they know is right. It's hard for the leadership to force that upon anybody. They already give us the classes and things, I don't think more classes would necessarily help.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that leadership is doing all they can to encourage reporting, but overemphasizing reporting can have negative consequences.**
  - *“I think it would desensitize the issue if it was shoved down your throat too much or just one of the things that ‘Oh, we have another SAVI brief to go to or another whatever.’ Then you're not really listening to anything. It's not doing any good.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants suggested greater access to people outside their direct chain of command would facilitate trust in reporting.**
  - *“In the military it's natural to be reluctant to approach people of higher rank than you. So if you have someone available that is not in the military, it does not necessarily affect your military career. If you make that available, a lot more people would want to approach that person instead of a lieutenant or captain for that matter.”* (Male)

### **Trust in Anonymity of Reporting System**

- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that they would trust USNA authorities to keep a restricted report of sexual assault confidential, but not their peers.**
  - *“It's a matter of the rumor mill at the school we're at. Someone hears something and – frankly, if you're reporting something and you want it to be confidential, I think the administration does a good job of doing that. If you strictly report to the administration, I don't think you'll have a problem of*

*keeping it confidential. I think if you tell a friend or something like that, it's all over the school very quickly.” (Male)*

- *“I'd say especially through the chaplains. They're really supportive, and I know they're someone I'd want to go to to keep something secret if I wasn't sure I wanted to forward it up, that's probably who I would go to. They do a really good job of making their presence felt and making everybody know this is someone you can go talk to.” (Male)*
- *“Definitely I think confiding in a friend [can lead to word getting out]. Sometimes depends, there are trustworthy people but you don't always know. Also I mean my company officer, he wants to keep stuff confidential when he's talking but the walls are really thin. You can hear out into the hall.” (Female)*
- **Other focus group participants disagreed that one could make a completely anonymous report.**
  - *“I think if it happens within your company or the same class we are all living with each other constantly and in such close quarters, if someone was to be accused of some action I think they'd pretty quickly try to figure out who was the one that reported it, especially if it's a girl reporting, there are only so many girls per company that it's easy to figure out what happened.” (Female)*
  - *“You can hear everything from the hallway, like CMOD [company mate of the deck], you can hear everything going on in your company officer's office. The door's open so you hear everybody's business all of the time.” (Female)*
- **Some focus group participants felt an online reporting tool for victims might be useful for initiating discussions about an incident or collecting data.**
  - *“I think doing it electronically to set up a face-to-face meeting would be good. If there was something on line to set up an anonymous meeting or something you would eliminate having people even see you go into the SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] guide's room, I saw so and so go into the SAVI guide's room. They come to the conclusion, must be a SAVI issue.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the biggest fear sometimes is walking up to somebody and bringing up the issue. It's upsetting and embarrassing to you probably. I think that's probably the toughest thing to break the barrier and go for help. That disjoint of typing it on the computer makes it a little easier to do. The only fear is who is reading it.” (Male)*
  - *“I think that's actually a really good idea because it allows some females or males to have their story heard. I guess it's complex on a case-by-case basis why some females might not want the situation to be investigated or brought forth. They might feel some guilt, they might feel some shame like they did something wrong, or they might feel like they'll mess up somebody else's future.*

*So I think it allows somebody the option of if I want it to still be known, however, I don't want to bring it to the light, I can still voice it in a discreet way.”*  
(Female)

- **Others indicated that an online system could easily be misused or not secure.**
  - *“I have zero trust for that. As it is, the Academy monitors every single thing we do on our computers. There is zero anonymity. So going to some random Web site, entering in what happened, there's no way I would every do that. I just figure it's going to go into a database somewhere.”* (Male)
  - *“Would there be a way to host it like on some outside Web site so it wouldn't be on a Naval Academy [Web site]? If it was some independent group, you could go there and just report and say at the Naval Academy this happened. If it's associated with a Naval Academy site, I think there's going to be a lot of questions because we all know they find out, the man knows everything, so.”* (Female)
  - *“You really have to be careful how you implement that. Some people would start typing stuff in to mess with people. Not everybody has good intentions.”* (Male)

### **Extent of Stalking on Campus**

- **Some focus group participants attributed stalking to socially awkward students.**
  - *“A lot of people's social skills here are really lacking. I think it makes the situation a lot worse.”* (Female)
  - *“With stalking, I'm sure we've all experienced times where I feel uncomfortable right now, I want to get away from this person that's looking at me weird kind of lingering over something. But I attribute that to the social awkwardness.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't think there's ever been any cases of stalking that I know of that have had the intent of hurting an individual. But you heard us say ‘mid stalk,’ that's something that our institution's made up. That's in our language or like Facebook stalk. But I think people also know what creeping is. I think that's a lesser form of stalking. That's what I see as somebody following somebody around or poking fun at you, just joking with you and around you all the time. I would see that as creeping, not exactly stalking. We all know what that is.”* (Female)
  - *“I'd say most of the time the person doesn't think they're stalking.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that midshipmen’s confidence in themselves and their peers would make it unlikely that they would feel endangered by stalking behaviors.**
  - *“One thought as we're mentioning this definition of stalking, I would say probably midshipmen are less inclined to think that they're being stalked. If we're talking about perception of danger, I would say generally here we trust our classmates for the most part. We also trust ourselves, we have all taken martial arts, whether it's useful or not. We tend to think of ourselves as a little bit more invincible maybe than the general population. So as we're talking about the definition of stalking, it probably would lean toward the lower side anyway – we might be creeped out by something, but we're not going to call it stalking because they're really not going to hurt me or I'm really okay.”*  
(Female)
- **When asked about the extent of stalking midshipmen experience, most focus group participants indicated that stalking is rare, most likely to occur on Facebook or by observing someone.**
  - *“If you asked that question on a survey nowadays you have to distinguish Internet stalking and Facebook or the Mids system<sup>8</sup> or ‘following around stalking.’ Some people put their profiles up on Facebook and someone will know a lot about that person based on what they put on the profile. And then they're weirded out that someone knows that much about them.”* (Male)
  - *“Then there's Facebook, which it's normal for people to have 500 Facebook friends. And a lot times you can see other people in the Naval Academy network. And there you go, you have their cell phone number, their screen name. All these things you put up because you put it up for your friends and you don't realize ‘Oh, wait, that creeper kid<sup>9</sup> in my physics class can see it too.’”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that people have control over the amount of personal information available to others.**
  - *“In all reality, all the people that use Facebook should be aware of the privacy setting. It's easy to go in there and block everything that's not your friend. I'm surprised why people get upset, ‘This guy is stalking.’ Well, increase your privacy settings. It's your own personal responsibility to take care of yourself every now and then and be a grownup.”* (Male)
  - *“You have to pick who your friends are. I'm not going to press accept for someone I'm not comfortable with. I'm not going to click accept if I don't know the person. I think it's on a personal basis.”* (Female)

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<sup>8</sup> The midshipmen Web-based locator system.

<sup>9</sup> Common term for a socially awkward student.

- **Focus group participants indicated that USNA has its own form of stalking called “mid stalking” that results from readily available information in the USNA online locator system.**
  - *“There's actually a term that's thrown around called ‘mid stalking.’ We have this computer system called ‘Mids’ where you can look up anybody in the entire Academy and find their picture and their schedule, everything.” (Male)*
  - *“We can just find out so much about each other. You can look up anybody's class schedule. You know from the plan of the day when they have briefs. Even not in a stalking situation, even just like relationships that I've had. It's not like you can say ‘I'm busy today.’ They know. And so you can find out anything.” (Female)*
  - *“It's called ‘mid stalking.’ You bring up her alpha, look up her mid's picture. Your picture, your name, full, first, middle and last.” (Female)*
  - *“Especially because personal information is so readily available to other people. It's significantly easier here. All you have to do is type in someone's last name. You can have their phone number for their room, their room number, a picture of them. So they're given all the tools to stalk someone.” (Female)*

### **Reporting Stalking**

- **Some focus group participants indicated they were unsure how to report stalking.**
  - *“I probably would have no idea what to do. Just tell people in your company, ‘See this guy, please get him off the deck.’ I wouldn't want to go to the JAG [Judge Advocate General]. I would feel like that would be such a jump in chain of command.” (Female)*
  - *“I know that SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] guides are trained on stalking and how you can identify it sometimes or some areas of how to protect yourself from being stalked or things like that, but the rest of the brigade is not trained on it. Like it doesn't come up at any of their training.” (Female)*
  - *“I probably would have said I don't know. I guess maybe I would have gone to a SAVI guide. SAVI guide is the default for anything sexual related.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants thought action appropriate to the situation would be taken.**
  - *“A situation happened last year. The upper class that was involved was not particularly well liked by his classmates. A lot of his classmates were very quick to call him out on it. That was taken care of immediately.” (Female)*

- *“Even if there's nobody around there is somebody that can hear everything. So maybe if somebody is stalking or if you're in an uncomfortable position, there's probably an easy outlet right next door, have a neighbor come by or have a third party, something like that.”* (Male)

### **Reasons for Not Reporting Stalking**

- **Focus group participants indicated that it is difficult to prove stalking has occurred.**
  - *“It's really hard to prove. Like they said, they can happen to have a class in the same building, be walking the same path. But I don't know, it seems harder to prove than sexual assault.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that reporting stalking could have repercussions.**
  - *“I think a little bit, especially as a plebe [freshman] coming forward about something like that puts you in a bad position. Because you're potentially ruining your relationship with a lot of your upperclassmen and incoming forwards. You don't want to be the person who makes waves. And at the same time you don't want to be in that situation, so.”* (Female)
  - *“If you're going to report something like that, stalking, you don't know how the administration is going to respond to it. Where if you keep it lower level, you have more control over how it's going to fall out.”* (Male)
  - *“I definitely have the feeling that when you report something you're starting a machine. Once you start a machine if you lose control and the machine is going to finish its work, it's going to follow it all the way through. There's certainly a lot of cases, especially with stalking, where it could be handled with a third party on a personal level without starting a machine and getting someone in trouble or make the situation...”* (Male)

### **Extent of Sexual Harassment on Campus**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual harassment is predominantly crude and offensive behavior, especially joking.**
  - *“A lot of stuff here is oriented toward the male-dominant nature. A lot of girls get looked upon badly when they can't perform up to the same standards or hold someone back, or something, I know people can get pretty rough on the girls. So you can see where they could get some verbal harassment.”* (Male)
  - *“The biggest lead-in to sexual harassment that I've ever seen is somebody starting a conversation by saying ‘If you're going to be offended by this let me know, is anybody going to take offense to this?’ You're immediately putting*

*everybody there on the spot and saying challenge me now. Often it's an upper class thing, go ahead and challenge me if you're offended. And then they go right through – they already know, it's a statement that I know this is offensive, I know this is inappropriate, I'm covering my bases because I gave you the opportunity to tell me now and you didn't. That happens dozens of times a day.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that humor becomes harassment when it is directed at a specific person and is dependent on the context.**
  - *“Mostly if it's at the expense of the other person or where it's a malicious intent other than just joking around.” (Male)*
  - *“I don't tend to take things personally if it's a joke that's a little demeaning. But if they start putting people's name in it, to me that gets to be personal and gets to be a real issue.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that it is hard to define the point at which joking becomes sexual harassment because the standard differs by who is listening.**
  - *“I think just social cues. It's different for everybody, especially when you're talking to girls, joking around with girls. I mean, most of the times you can pick up when somebody's offended or not. You can gauge that and back off. But sometimes people can't for whatever reason.” (Male)*
- **And sometimes midshipmen do not realize they have exhibited sexual harassment in their behavior.**
  - *“I've seen instances where people definitely don't have an idea where the line is. They get like, it's funny amongst the group of guys, then all the sudden a girl walks in the room and gets really offended. Or even a guy walks in the room who has a different belief system and gets really offended. I really think a lot of people don't know where the line is. But I can't say I know how to change that or, tell them to change their beliefs for one or two people.” (Male)*
  - *“Not only do they not know when the line has been crossed, they don't realize by doing the same joke or saying something along the same lines over and over again it gets pretty old pretty fast.” (Female)*
  - *“The atmosphere is to take care of your people. And I think as long as they saw it as a problem, I think any one of us, male or female, we are taught to take the initiative and try to fix it. But I think the big culture change is whether or not you see it as a problem.” (Female)*

## **Reporting Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated that making a formal report of sexual harassment can have several meanings to midshipmen.**
  - *“They might have gone to their upper class or company officer or SAVI guide that's in charge of sexual assault and harassment. They may feel like they did report it to someone. Just not to the people who keep track of it.”* (Female)
  - *“Sexual harassment is a weird issue here. It's covered in two areas. We have our Command Management Equal Opportunity which is technically in charge of sexual harassment. And then there's the SAVI program which is a sexual assault victim program. So sometimes people will report sexual harassment to a SAVI, and the SAVI will say you should report it to the CMEO [Command Management Equal Opportunity] because they are the ones who are supposed to help you. It's weird because we're like semi bringing the programs together, but it's at a weird stage right now. The head midshipman in charge of the SAVI is also in charge of the CMEO program. So that's like a weird area. There are definitely resources, but I think the reporting area is weird because sometimes it's confusing who do you go to.”* (Female)
  - *“Might be reported as a conduct issue. Either handled at the company level or in conjunction with some other inappropriate behavior, maybe brought up an adjudication of someone they were drugged doing this, doing that, destroying government property or something like that, and ‘Oh, by the way, they were sexually harassing somebody.’ And it was maybe all lumped into one in the conduct report. That would be my guess.”* (Female)
  - *“Maybe they talked to their company officer and the company officer dealt with it in company. A lot of it happens where it's a problem where people didn't understand each other.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that midshipmen and their peers might take care of the problem themselves by confronting an offender.**
  - *“Every once in a while you come across someone who doesn't understand they are offending other people. That's when I think it's the job of that person's peers to tell them. Most of the people in the group should see that quiet person is getting uncomfortable, even when the person saying the joke or whatever, doesn't get that. It's their job I think to say something.”* (Male)

## **Reasons for Not Reporting Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated students might not report sexual harassment for fear of standing out or appearing different from others.**
  - *“I think it's bad to be singled out for having a different opinion in any situation, where it's so focused on everyone doing the same thing and thinking about the same thing about everything. When you're the person outside of that, no matter what it's about if you're in the right it's not a good thing.”* (Female)
  - *“If one person wasn't okay with it, are they going to say it in front of the whole group. Especially if you're a plebe [freshman], a plebe girl. When I was a plebe, I never wanted to say anything. As a youngster [sophomore], I never wanted to say anything. There were definitely times when I should have reported some of the stuff that was said to me, but I never did. I felt that none of the other girls feel this way, I don't want to make it a big deal – all the guys are just going to hate me.”* (Female)
  - *“Don't want to bring attention to themselves, maybe forget about it or fly under the radar.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that often incidents of sexual harassment are not reported because they do not make that much impact.**
  - *“I think there's so much sexual harassment that goes on here like just little minor stuff that you wouldn't normally think about unless you really thought about it and said ‘Okay, that was inappropriate.’ I think there's so much, so many incidents of that kind of case that it just goes unreported.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that there are good reasons to report sexual harassment even if it is dealt with at the lowest level.**
  - *“Because if the Academy thinks there is no problem they'll shut down programs like SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] and SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] and not have people available if there is a problem.”* (Female)
  - *“If people are led to believe no one has reported they will be a lot less likely to report something because they don't want to be the only ones. They might see it as making a big deal out of nothing and when it is a big deal and should be reported.”* (Female)

## Offenders

Participants were asked several questions regarding their perceptions of sexual assault offenders. Specifically, focus group participants were asked to identify characteristics and habits of actual and potential offenders and offenders' ability to perpetrate sexual assault against midshipmen.

### **Typical Characteristics of Sexual Assault Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual assault offenders are most likely to be fellow students, because they are limited in their interaction with people outside of USNA.**
  - *“We spend 95 percent of our time with other mids. If something bad is going to happen it's going to happen with other mids.”* (Male)
  - *“That's typical with the overall sexual assault, just someone you know.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that there are some defining characteristics of offenders.**
  - *“I think there are two characteristics of the type of people I would assume would be the likely candidates [for being offenders]. One is the socially awkward, you can always pick out the socially awkward people in your company or class. That person apparently had no training with people, doesn't know how to read people. And I think the second is arrogant people, people who are used to getting what they want when they want. I think it comes from the people that are too caught up on themselves, too arrogant to understand, ‘Okay, I have to actually care about other people's feelings and desires.’”* (Male)
  - *“I would add one more to your two [socially awkward and arrogant people]. The drunk people, obviously your judgment goes way down and makes you do things that definitely increase the offenses.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated the USNA screening process for midshipmen should help prevent sexual assault.**
  - *“I would define a creeper as someone who lacks basic social intelligence. And since interpersonal relationships are so important, especially in the military, I think that there's definitely value in investigating somebody's ability to interact with other human beings in some way that's socially acceptable. And we all had to interview with somebody, whether it was Congressional staff, senator staff, whatever. We all had to interview. I think part of their decision process should be not just based on book smarts because that's what this place seems to place such a heavy emphasis on, it should be on your ability to interact effectively with others.”* (Male)

- *“We're saying that ‘Okay, we're no better or worse.’ You're going to see the same thing. We're trying to make it out to be ‘Oh, we talk about it so much with all these briefs and everything that it starts to seem like we're more geared toward sexual assault cases than any other civilian school.’ But if there's such a strict selection process and it's supposed to be more select, then shouldn't we be lower? We shouldn't be average, we shouldn't be the same as at other civilian schools. We should have a better standard, if you ask me, if the selection process does what it's supposed to do.” (Male)*

### **Repeat Offenders**

- **Focus group participants thought it possible for someone to repeat an offense.**
  - *“I think there are a few issues with catching repeat offenders. One of them is that even if you do report someone, the chances of them being convicted are really, really slim, just as it is in the civilian world. A lot of cases with sexual assault at the Academy involve alcohol. And a lot of those situations can be blurry for both people. And so that sometimes stops the unrestricted report from going up just because the chances of that person being convicted are really slim. It's almost like what's the point of charging them, I might as well go this direction get the help I need. Then if you don't file an unrestricted report, that person's name, the offender's name never comes up.” (Female)*
  - *“I would say in that case [first offense not reported] it's probably more likely for the person to be a repeat offender. One, his behavior, her behavior is almost being condoned because it's not being reported. They're actually probably gaining more confidence or convincing themselves it's not wrong or it's not a big deal because it's not being corrected.” (Female)*

### **Premeditated Sexual Assault**

- **Some focus group participants thought it possible but unlikely that someone might premeditate a sexual assault.**
  - *“I can see that happening. Like people saying ‘Well, I'm going to get this hotel room because I don't know what's going to happen,’ but really it's a plan. They have the visualization in their head of how the night's going to go. She probably has a completely different visualization of how the night's going to go.” (Male)*
  - *“The majority of people don't think that way here. Maybe there's a high percentage of it in the civilian world, but I still think there is a minority. It definitely can happen here, and you can't rule it out completely and say there's never going to be anyone who premeditates sexual assault or sexual harassment.” (Male)*

- *“Most of the things that happen are more like a misunderstanding and fueled by alcohol. And then the next morning it's either the guy doesn't even realize that he sexually assaulted the girl. When I hear a mid sexually assaulted someone, I don't think of that person as a sexual deviant who's camped out in bushes.”* (Male)
- *“I don't foresee that happening as much here. At the very basic level everybody goes ‘Okay, I have so many eyes on me I'm scared of getting in trouble, even if that thought did cross my mind.’”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that midshipmen still think and act like other college age students, such as getting a girl drunk to have sex and not considering the behavior as wrong.**
  - *“I would say that [premeditated sexual assault] could happen but I'd also say likely the person [offender] wouldn't consider it rape. They've tried to train us on it. We've gone through a lot of things about date rape and what it is and how it works. I think there's still this cultural gap in the definition where we still don't quite view that as rape. Rape is still somebody coming through the bushes with the knife kind of thing, that's rape. And well, ‘I know the person, they're consenting even though I'm trying to get them liquored up and I know they're more likely to consent if I get them liquored up. But it's not actually rape.’ I think that would be the mindset. They justify it by saying ‘It's not really rape, they're going out with me, they're choosing to drink.’ So then I think at the end ‘They'll be more likely to have sex with me, so.’”* (Female)
  - *“Maybe more opportunism, ‘Aha, she's drunk.’ It would be easier to get her into bed as opposed to some malicious...”* (Male)

### **Preventing Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated the SHAPE (Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education) program is intended to sensitize midshipmen to the nature of offensive behavior.**
  - *“This is the second year they've started a SHAPE program. The whole purpose of the SHAPE program is to provide us information on how the different sexual assault branches might affect people or what happens to sexual assault victims or things we might do and take for granted and don't think it's offensive to somebody.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it's good. It puts people on edge. Yes, it takes away from other things. This girl started drinking and I can't touch her, she may call it rape. It makes you think twice about everything that you do. It's a good practice. It doesn't matter if it's sex or anything. It's good if you think twice before you perform something. What are the consequences if I do this tomorrow? I mean it may*

*suck a lot of fun out. But again, we're adults now. You should live an adult life and have responsibility in your actions.” (Male)*

- **Other focus group participants indicated that SHAPE training might oversensitize people to behaviors.**
  - *“I think most people came in here with a pretty rudimentary idea rape is when there's some sort of forced sexual activity. But then there seems to be other comments where if she has one glass of wine she can't consent, if they have sex – I would imagine a good number of people were conceived with one of their parents having imbibed some wine. We weren't all the product of rape. There seems to be varying definitions – was it actual like I want to assert power over this person in the most physical way possible, or was it she had a glass of wine and regretted it in the morning and she called rape, or was it that we had two different ideas where the relationship was going. Just the fact that SHAPE seems to have stretched the definition so far.” (Male)*
  - *“Listening to the definition we've been given, sometimes it's a little scary to think, we're both not in the best mindset maybe at that situation, but are my actions, could they be considered rape of me telling a little bit of a lie or fib to somebody. And she wakes up and regrets what happens. It's on the edge. You don't know which way, rape is no longer jumping out of bushes and throwing someone on the ground.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated the Academy is doing a good job of informing students about sexual assault and providing resources.**
  - *“Overall I think they're doing as good of a job they can possibly do. Making us aware of the situation, giving us some kind of basis to make decisions about how to act in those situations, and I think that's really all they can do as long as taking it seriously when the issue comes forward. I think they've covered all that. The rest lies in our hand to make good judgments and to protect our classmates and protect ourselves from getting involved with something like that.” (Male)*
  - *“I feel like they've taken a lot of measures already by keeping the regulations, like the doors open 90 degrees, lights on all the time. They have provided us with the SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] people, we have to go to mandatory meetings and everything. I feel like they've done a lot already. I really can't think of anything more they can do.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants offered suggestions for preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“I think one of the ways to stop it [sexual assault] is honestly being accountable for each other. I mean, if you go around at night and you see the guy and girl are in the same room, they're supposed to have the door open 90 degrees. Some people just put a trash can in the door to have the door open. You don't know*

*what could be going on in that room and you assume its people who are like involved. But it could be a different situation and that like a person in the room might need your help. At the same time if someone comes that drunk and they're looking for what they want, they're not going to take the time to put the trash can in the door. It is a really hard thing. You have to just be aware I think that this situation could happen and it does happen. Mids in general need to be more aware.” (Female)*

- *“I would say 0013,<sup>10</sup> as much as a joke as it is, that's a potential preventative measure. People don't take it seriously.” (Female)*

### **Bystander Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated they have received effective Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education (SHAPE) training on bystander intervention.**
  - *“One thing I found the SHAPE did for me that was really good was making me realize why I should step up on my own personal level. I have two little sisters. I remember one of the very first SHAPE trainings I went to the guy said imagine this is your little sister or your friend. I thought about it. I would be so, ‘I don't know what I would do.’ So since then there have been a couple cases where I saw someone taking advantage of a really drunk girl. I was thinking of my sister in my head. That was my motivation of being the bystander.” (Male)*
  - *“We did this one exercise one day, it was like a little incident, an example – you were walking out of a party and forgot your keys and you had to walk back in. And you find there's a girl on the couch and guy and the girl looks like she's unconscious. What would you do? Little instances like that that we're given. It's varying responses. Another made us stand in a line, one line you would leave, another line is you beat the guy up. You stood wherever you thought was appropriate. We definitely get that.” (Male)*
  - *“Along those lines in one of our SHAPE trainings with my company, that actually came up, the difference between what a girl would do and what a guy would do if they were both bystanders in a situation. A lot of girls in my company said they would be very quick to intervene if they saw an uncomfortable situation escalating with a guy.” (Female)*
  - *“A lot of what the SHAPE training has been doing is going through scenarios and making you think what you would actually do. Part of training is thinking what you would do beforehand. I thought some of those SHAPE sessions really helped me in going through what would I do. I think those are pretty effective beforehand.” (Male)*

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<sup>10</sup> Academy policy is “zero under-age drinking, zero drinking and driving, one drink per hour, maximum three drinks per night.”

## **Factors Influencing Gender-Related Behaviors**

During the USNA focus groups, participants were asked to indicate aspects of the culture at the Academy that might result in sexual assault or sexual harassment behaviors.

### **Stalking and Harassment as Precursors of Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that stalking and sexual harassment are potential precursors of sexual assault.**
  - *“I know it [harassment and stalking] can lead there, especially if you don't put a stop to it and let the person keep going and don't say anything. If you don't say ‘Hey, you've crossed the line, step back,’ I think it definitely can lead and he thinks ‘Oh, this is okay, keep going, keep going, keep going.’” (Female)*
  - *“What you do when you're straight just becomes a lot worse when you're drunk. If you see someone on a day-to-day basis stalking a girl, just like targeting this girl in a really annoying way, there's a good chance when this person's really drunk they go walk in the girl's room and do something they wouldn't normally do when they're straight. I think seeing the signs beforehand would make me at least suspicious of what might come later.” (Male)*
  - *“I feel like someone doesn't just wake up in the morning and go I think ‘I'm going to sexually assault someone.’ There's either that history of stalking them or being inappropriate just in common places, either stalking or sexual harassment, that if unchecked could lead to sexual assault.” (Male)*

### **Culture Encouraging Improper Behavior**

- **Focus group participants indicated that there are some cultural norms that promote crude and offensive behavior, such as joking.**
  - *“Joke Fridays.<sup>11</sup> A lot of squad tables down in King Hall, usually during noon meal on Fridays or some other day of the week, it's the upper class encourage the plebes [freshmen] to tell a joke every week. And most of the jokes tend to be rather off color and raunchy. That's generally what gets the biggest laugh out of at least one or two members of the squad. So that's what the plebe will continue to say even if other people have objections to it.” (Female)*
  - *“You can't really speak up if you do have objections because well, you can't be that one person – and especially I think there's an extra stigma if you're the girl. You can't be the girl trying to keep everybody civil.” (Female)*

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<sup>11</sup> Joke Friday is a tradition that requires telling of jokes at squad tables during mealtimes on Friday.

- **Focus group participants indicated that midshipmen are generally respectful toward each other, although there are exceptions.**
  - *“If I'm walking by a brother at the mall, male or female, I'll say hey. That's me. I would hope there's a lot of instances of people that treat each other with respect. But I know you're also going to find the opposite.” (Male)*
  - *“Regardless of the gender, there's also many, many males who are uncomfortable with the level of humor that people are using. I think that excuse is used too often, that we're all guys here, its okay. There's a lot of things that just cross the line no matter who you're talking to. There's a big lack of respecting that among males here.” (Male)*

### **Sexism Among Students**

- **Focus group participants indicated that some students hold sexist attitudes.**
  - *“It's still very much a boys club, I think. The girls who come here straight out of high school, they're 18 years old, they feel pressure to act in the same manner that the guys act. That leads the guys to think I can say anything I want around these girls or do anything I want because they're one of the guys. That's where a lot of the issues happen.” (Male)*
  - *“My squad leader this last semester, he purposely pointed out I had an all guys squad so we could tell dirty jokes on Friday so we wouldn't have to worry about what we have to say at tables. It definitely does happen, whether it's consciously or subconsciously. But it's not too frequent and not too severe when it does happen.” (Male)*
- **But sexist attitudes can change.**
  - *“I had an incident where a guy didn't think that girls should be in the military. His dad went to the Naval Academy when there weren't females and thought that that's the way it should be. I was told that I was one of the people that helped change his opinion. When he first got here he didn't think that girls belonged here – just because of the way he was raised. If they don't know you, they have a very snap judgment about girls here, and they do watch everything.” (Female)*
- **Some focus group participants indicated that sexist attitudes are stronger in some companies.**
  - *“Attitudes tend to stay in company. If you have sexist upper class guys, then that attitude gets observed by plebes [freshmen] because you come in as a plebe and – the reason you're so intimidated by your upper class is because you're thinking this is what I'm supposed to be, this is what I'm supposed to do in four years. So you're going to take on that attitude. If you listen to their jokes, to*

*their general manner toward their own classmates, I think that easily spreads and can perpetuate within companies. I don't know where you would break it per se.” (Female)*

- *“I know it's really company dependent and class dependent within that company. I know my class, my company, there's a huge divide between the guys and girls. The guys are really down on the girls who can't meet the physical standards in the company. But in a different class it's still there but not to this degree and they're a lot closer as a class. I think it's more the class unity within the company and the people in that class, so.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist attitudes might occur when there are different physical standards between men and women.**

- *“When you have things like obstacle courses and PRTs [Physical Readiness Tests] and things that naturally males excel in, yeah, they're going to be sexist. That's the military in general, not just the Naval Academy. If you go anywhere you're going to have that mentality, that culture. So I think it's just the nature of being in the military. That's the way it is.” (Male)*
- *“To give an example of a sexist thing an upperclassman might say, if we're doing an endurance course they'll make a guy feel bad saying, even that girl beats you. She shouldn't be beating you, she's a girl. Sometimes stuff like that comes up as an example.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist attitudes are addressed in their training.**

- *“One of our training sessions was focused on language and identifying, basically identified negative terms with women. We talked about how that is sexist, and it just made us aware that it is in the Hall [Bancroft Hall – the dormitory].” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that change leading to prevention of sexual assault needs to start with attitudes among midshipmen in leadership positions.**

- *“I think a lot of problems associated with sexual assault here are part of the cultural fabric of the institution, how it is pretty sexist. And I think if there's going to be change it needs to be a grassroots change where the midshipmen leadership really needs to take on board gender equality and things like that before the situation gets better. I think we really do have all the outlets in terms of the people to go to and stuff like that, but...” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants noted that leadership sets the example.**
  - *“I was going to say we were talking about the sexist culture. I know a lot of my guy friends, if I give them crap for talking about this about a girl or something, they make fun of me, you're a feminist or something like that. And I always say, 'Well, I never thought about any of these things until I came to the military.' I think in terms of leadership and sexual discrimination, when leaders don't say anything, it's just as bad as contributing to it. I think the leadership responsibility is to be as proactive as they can in getting rid of that culture.”* (Female)

### **Sexist Culture Among Faculty, Staff, and Alumni**

- **Focus group participants indicated a mix of sexist attitudes among alumni.**
  - *“Just the fact that at one point there were no females at the Academy and now there are. There's still some of that. You can talk to some alumni who aren't in favor of having women at the Academy. I think there's still that perception. And the fact that there's only 20 percent are women.”* (Male)
  - *“I think that alumni, not necessarily that they think women shouldn't be here, they just point out the differences. We're getting to the point where more and more alumni were here when there were girls here anyway. But the ones that weren't, they're very nostalgic about this place. And since it's so different than what they remember, that's probably where they got the animosity or the hard feelings.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that some alumni are excellent role models.**
  - *“One of the good things here, I know they have a sponsor lunch on a Saturday in the fall with the Joyce Wright Hancock Association. A lot of female alumni came back and had lunch with us. We were talking to them and everything. It was good to see positive influences like that. A lot of women like lieutenants and stuff, they look back on the negative about the Academy. It was tough for them, they got through it and seeing they got through it really inspires us too, I would say.”* (Female)

## Sharing Information

Midshipmen in the focus groups were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and impressions regarding communications about sexual assault, leadership's dedication to preventing sexual assault, prevalence of sexual assault over time, victim blaming, and false accusations.

### Communication About Incidents of Sexual Assault

- **Focus group participants indicated that details of sexual assault are not typically shared through official channels.**
  - *“Usually the first place you hear it is from the freshman who stands watch outside the company officer's door.”<sup>12</sup> (Male)*

### Leadership's Dedication to Preventing Sexual Assault

- **There was near unanimous agreement among focus group participants that senior Academy leaders are very dedicated to preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“They want us to be up to their standards because we'll be joining them. And work on their level and be up to the standards of the country and the military itself. So I think most people of our upper command have no problem calling someone out of doing something, because there's no way they belong out in the fleet.” (Male)*
  - *“The Supes [Superintendent], the last Supe, every time he gave a brief he put up the slides of things that keep the Supe awake at night. Number 1 was sexual problems. And that was sexual assault, sexual harassment, people doing things wrong like that.” (Male)*
  - *“They've separated people that have committed sexual assault. And no sexual assault case I've heard of or experienced is taken lightly. And from last year there are two people separated for the sexual assault stuff. I think they do that pretty well.” (Male)*
  - *“We have a lot of rules and they enforce them.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated the evidence of leadership's emphasis on preventing sexual assault is seen in the effort expended to emphasize sexual assault prevention and response.**
  - *“I think simply the fact we have programs like SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] and SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] show they actually care, are trying to prevent things like that to happen.” (Female)*

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<sup>12</sup> The walls are thin and it is easy to overhear conversations.

- *“The fact there are so many resources. Every company has a SAVI guide within the brigade. There's the company ones, the battalion ones, the regimental ones, there's a brigade one. And every sports team has their own contact in case you don't feel comfortable going to someone else. There's always a duty phone, and there's always an officer one can you call. There's a lot of different resources. If you don't feel comfortable going to somebody in company you can call somebody else. I think they're serious about having enough people there. It's not like one person that handles everything, there's enough resources spread out through the brigade, there's enough people. If I didn't want to call the third class guy in my company and explain to him my SAVI issue I could go to the next level or call somebody else or go to my teammate, here's what happened if I want to.”* (Female)

### **Prevalence of Sexual Assault Over Time**

- **Upper class focus group participants indicated that there has been increased emphasis on sexual assault over time.**
  - *“I feel like its gotten better. I have no data to back that up. I just feel like its gotten better.”* (Male)
  - *“I think alcohol incidents were out of control our plebe [freshman] year. A lot of stuff happened around town. That's definitely changed, new rules and all that.”* (Female)
  - *“I think with the SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] and the SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] sessions, sure, sometimes a few of them seem over-mandatory but I think they do a good job making us aware. Even if you have to attend 10 of these things you don't like, there are usually one or two you do like. You start to learn something. They realize the problems and we talk about the improvements they could make, but in all honesty they're making them. They're trying to gear towards making it better. Sexual harassment and sexual assault is a hard issue to cover with one question or one session. I think they're doing a good job at being adaptable to the midshipmen and what we think, in trying to make it so we can get the most out of sexual assault and sexual harassment training.”* (Male)
  - *“I think the new SHAPE training is different, better than the old ones, death by PowerPoint.”* (Male)

## **Victim Blaming**

- **Focus group participants correctly defined victim blaming as holding a victim partially or entirely responsible for the sexual assault or sexual harassment against him or her.**
  - *“This was covered in one of the SHAPE sessions. We had a very lengthy discussion about that, talking about the girl who dresses with the short skirt or something like that. Was she asking for it or whatever, and we have discussed that. I think we got some pretty good training on that.”* (Male)
  - *“Maybe not necessarily victim blaming in the sense of it was their fault that they got raped but just that they were there in the first place. There's more a stigma that that person is lying or not telling the full truth than ‘Yeah, it happened but it was their fault.’”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants gave examples where victim blaming might occur.**
  - *“We hear about things that happen. Some of us may know who the Lamar Owens case was with and the case from two years ago or last year, who that was with or who the victims of those were. And I just heard a couple weeks ago that the victim of the Lamar Owens case was kicked out of the Navy for cocaine. Of course, this is all rumors. She may very well have been sexually assaulted, but it gets to the point that whenever they have no moral integrity themselves, are they just blaming blindly to secure their spot.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that victim blaming depends on prior behavior or the circumstances of the event.**
  - *“It depends on who the girl is and who the guy is, what the scenario was in general. There's a girl in our class who's notorious for SAVI-ing people. But from what I've heard, no one really believes what is going on anymore because she's on it so many times. I think if there was a girl that's known for being the straight arrow, great person, would never do that, that would create a different situation.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it's really circumstantial. I think depending on the evidence the person hears, that person makes up their own mind as to whether that person was being stupid and should have stayed out of that situation or whether there was generally nothing that the person could do about it. So I think it's case by case and the rumors.”* (Male)

## **Commonly Held Misperceptions About Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated there is a common belief that some women “cry rape” to avoid punishment for violations or when they regret having sex.**
  - *“I have heard a story about that, in Bancroft Hall [the dormitory] actually. Just like there's a fraternization problem, so they're both going to get in trouble. But the girl cried rape so she was automatically given immunity in everything. So I feel like it's somewhat of, I wouldn't say a tool, I feel like especially saying for that case it was abused so.” (Male)*

## **Outcomes of Making False Accusations**

- **Focus group participants indicated that a midshipman found to be lying about a sexual assault would not necessarily be formally disciplined but would suffer from the actions of their peers.**
  - *“They would be ostracized. That happened a couple years ago when part of the case got dropped with the football player. And then the girl involved openly admitted in court that she often got so drunk that she couldn't remember what she did. And then he ends up getting in trouble, not as much. She doesn't even stay at school, doesn't get any in trouble. Little lies start coming out and nothing happens to her but his career is done. That's happened a couple times.” (Female)*
  - *“Like lying about rape, then you turn into the girl that lied about getting raped. You don't want that. That is worse than any conduct offense.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that false accusations affect people coming forward who have had actual experiences of sexual assault.**
  - *“I think people think she made that up just to get attention. And another girl would be more hesitant because she doesn't want that image of people thinking that about her.” (Female)*
  - *“A big issue too now is a lot of the high profile cases now, Lamar Owens and the Calvanico case, both, those are the two biggest ones, they both turned out where the person doing the accusing was wrong. Was in a court of law proven wrong. So that's what we have to go on. That might lead to that kind of general feeling in cases where it's the opposite way, when there really is a victim maybe because of these high profile cases, which are the only ones we know about, have that victim guilt or victim blame.” (Male)*
  - *“We discussed that in SHAPE training. We discussed the whole idea of people lying about it. And a lot of us came to the understanding that it's not a good idea, you've got to trust the person that said it, said they've been raped. You have to believe it's true. So everybody came to the understanding if somebody*

*says it and it's not true it totally destroys credibility for anybody else that tries and it actually has happened” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated there is mixed understanding of what it means to be acquitted of a sexual assault charge.**

- *“I think it depends on the person being accused and who is doing the accusing. If it's a girl who has a reputation of being a slut you will tend to think the guy's innocent. But if it's a straightforward girl and the guy's more of a sleazy guy then we'd tend to think he actually did it and he just got off the hook.” (Female)*

- *“Going by the letter of the law, they didn't have enough evidence beyond all reasonable doubt to convict the person of the crime. So that's what you have to go off of. Looking at the particular case again here where the accuser, the plaintiff was lying about it, you have to think that the guy really didn't actually commit the crime.” (Male)*

### **Confronting Offensive Behavior**

- **Focus group participants indicated when someone is confronted about an offensive behavior they typically stop, but people are hesitant to confront.**

- *“Some people, especially when you're in company and you're all friends, you don't want to hurt, you don't want to create some kind of tension between them because they're not really the way they normally are, doesn't coincide with how you really are, so that could create a fear.” (Male)*

- *“Looking back on plebe [freshman] year I would not have been comfortable. But now I feel okay doing it. I think that's one of the lessons that you can learn as you get into higher positions of power at the Academy is that there may be a plebe girl at your table who is uncomfortable with what just happened. If something is said and you think it's inappropriate, chances are there are probably a couple other people that also think it's inappropriate. If you feel like you're comfortable enough saying something, you may be helping out those few other people and like in a way speaking for them so they don't have to feel uncomfortable in the situation and they don't have to feel uncomfortable going to talk to that other person.” (Female)*

- *“I think there is such a strong feeling you have to fit in, especially as females, that a lot of times even if there is a joke or something said that bothers you, you let it go. Even if it's repeated. If it's repeated and bothers you enough, you pull yourself away from the situation as opposed to confronting the person. Confronting them, I can see where some guys would laugh it off. There are definitely a decent number of guys that will stand up. It was cool to see that there are guys that do take into consideration that there are females sitting around and they will stand up for you.” (Female)*

- *“Generally when a female does stand up and says ‘I don't like that type of joke,’ I feel at least from my experience it's pretty much well respected. You understand it's not appropriate around that person or that person's offended by it, you steer clear of that. Generally all it takes is the one person, whether male or female to say, ‘I'm uncomfortable with that.’ And everyone's fine and people stop.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that they are expected to correct offensive behaviors even though confrontation is hard.**
  - *“I've had an upper class girl, she was in my squad. We do squad counseling and she was saying you have to stick up for yourself, don't let the guys walk all over you because they will. Whenever the guys were talking inappropriately about girls, what they did or something, I said you can't talk about girls that way, especially in front of another girl. I was like, you can talk about that behind closed doors with your buddies, but you can't do that in public. You have to be careful of what you say because it can be taken the wrong way. And guys were taken aback by saying you can't say that. They're kind of shocked by it.”* (Female)
  - *“In the case you don't speak up and say this is offensive to me, you're at fault. You're supposed to be a leader, that's why you're here. Everybody gets nervous for confrontation but you're supposed to overcome that and say ‘I'm not comfortable with that, will you stop.’ Usually that's all it takes.”* (Male)
  - *“I think you have to call them out on it. Some people if you don't then they're going to keep going until someone tells them, that's not going to work, you can't keep acting like that.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that one can also count on their fellow midshipmen to be supportive in confronting offensive behavior.**
  - *“They're [men in their company] very protective, they're even protective of us against other guys from other companies. It's like having 30 older brothers. They would look out for you no matter what. You would be like, something happened and people would back you up and people would be there for you.”* (Female)
  - *“The guys will take care of it. The in-company guys especially, your guy friends are so protective.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that improper behavior needs to be corrected/stopped to maintain military professionalism.**
  - *“I think what I've learned over the couple of years of being in the military, you're in this guy environment but in your working environment you don't have to be in a locker room and especially where I draw the line is I've addressed*

*people who have made jokes and said things that blue and gold, which is a professional setting where there's a leader talking to very impressionable people. I've told them you can't say that 'Okay, say it when you're out on the field playing, but this is during our professional time.'*" (Female)

- *"I think there needs to be a shift so that you don't tell these jokes, you don't have these conversations because they're wrong and they lead to terrible things. I think there's been a clear demonstration in the military where sexual humiliation as a greater form of humor turns into incidents like Abu Ghraib where we may not be concerned with how offended the prisoners were, but the rest of the world sees how we lost our moral ground because we're participating in these terrible things. I think there needs to be more of a drive to tell people 'Listen, it's not about who is overhearing your conversation, what you're doing is both wrong morally and hurts the mission significantly.'*" (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes offensive behaviors are confronted indirectly.**

- *"A lot of intervention that happens is peer-to-peer intervention, because you might say something or hurt someone else, that person goes to a friend. We're all friends and that other person comes to you and says hey, so and so told me that you said this and this and that really hurt him or her. That's happened to us in our company. We don't go and apologize directly, but we just won't do it again."* (Male)

### ***Training and Education***

USNA provides midshipmen with training and education on the issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Focus group participants were asked to identify the types of training and education they receive, describe which methods they felt have been most and least effective, and give training suggestions of their own.

#### ***Type and Amount of Training and Education***

- **Focus group participants indicated that they receive sexual assault and sexual harassment training on a regular basis.**

- *"We have the SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] training sessions through the years, sexual harassment assault prevention/intervention program. We go through different case studies so you try to pick a general theme each session and then we go through what the person did wrong or specific examples that would elaborate that broader definition."* (Male)
- *"Go, get up [Saturday morning], listen to a brief on sexual harassment training. I think if you do it too often pretty soon people are, 'It's the same thing over and over.' They have different approaches sometimes. But the general theme of it is all the same."* (Male)

- **Focus group participants consistently indicated that PowerPoint presentations and repeated emphasis on sexual assault and sexual harassment are ineffective.**
  - *“They have to be careful how much of mandatory training that they do. I know from personal experience in the specific classrooms and stuff people start to get cynical about it, like ‘Seriously, we’re doing it again? He taught us the same thing last time.’ So a lot of cynicism comes out of making people go to a lot of mandatory training.”* (Male)
  - *“We have them so often some of the midshipmen, we have to go to another training session. And automatically are, great, they just automatically shut their brain off. It’s just another one of those sexual harassment training sessions.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated they receive training about how to protect themselves and their friends when out at a party or a bar.**
  - *“I know our company SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] representative made a flier that says how to protect yourself on sexual assault.”* (Male)
  - *“The SAVI, I know in your company or battalion, SAVI guides put up reminders to make sure you go out with your friends, make sure you’re taking care of each other. That’s a big thing. It’s not like mandated training or anything like that, but they stress take care of your roommates or friends when you go out.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that watching out for each other is a major responsibility.**
  - *“We’re even sitting in an environment where every weekend the lieutenant commander comes down and says ‘Hey guys, make sure you’re watching out for the girls in your company and girls, make sure you’re watching out for each other.’ He makes a point every Friday morning to come out and say the same thing just to beat it into our heads. And so far, as far as I know, he’s been doing a good job.”* (Male)
  - *“I think the Commandant’s focus on family is a good aspect. Every week he says ‘Take care of your shipmates, we’re a big family, we want you all to come back.’ One midshipman passed away recently. He really emphasized the whole family thing. I think if there’s an emphasis on something to unify us, that’s helpful.”* (Male)

## Most Effective Training Methods

- **Focus group participants indicated that interactive and scenario-based training is most effective.**
  - *“Something good in one of our SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] sessions, I don't know if it's the case with all, but it was a coed session talking about what's consent and what is not consent. I think it was really helpful to have it be coed. I know a lot of the girls would say ‘Just say no.’ But guys don't necessarily respond to that. It was helpful to hear what the guys thought about where certain things fell on the spectrum. Girls can be attuned to that more and understand what they say is not necessarily correlated with how guys interpret that.” (Female)*
  - *“I think they're really beneficial sessions [SHAPE training]. And like mine, it's usually around 20 or 30 of us who do these at a time. I actually think having somebody closer to your age, for us it was people who were just a year, two years older than us doing the sessions. I thought that really helped. I'm not going to say, to me it was never a rule session. Like if X occurs then do Y. It was more like just think about these situations. And recognize what's going on. And it seemed like they give you all this information, all these scenarios and then you formulate your own judgment about what's right and what's wrong with that scenario. I mean sometimes it does turn into a circus, but I know in every session that my company had for SHAPE it was really beneficial. We had really good strong discussion that you're not going to get anywhere else.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the best kind of training is a small group, small discussion. We're not directly talking about the issue, but you get the ability to work these things out and get an understanding of what's going on, how things should be. I think most people know what they're supposed to do and not do.” (Male)*
  - *“People complain about going to the SHAPE training. But I think it's really effective. It's the only time you're in an open forum of your own classmates. It's your company, you're really close with them. And yeah, people complain about it, maybe give the instructors a hard time sometimes, but after a SHAPE training session, that's all people talk about.” (Female)*
- **Guest speakers are also effective when they have a message that engages the students.**
  - *“A lawyer came and presented his whole case that he was working on and he asked our opinions and people just stood up and said ‘Well, I think this is what's going on in the case.’ We found out what actually happened and understanding both as a victim and the victimizer, the responsibility in the situation, and take responsibility for yourself if you're going to go out not to drink a lot and make*

*sure friends are watching out for each other because the situation can escalate into a situation with sex signals.” (Female)*

- *“Every fall there's the two improv actors that come out and do the gender matters, Sex Signals, whatever it's called. It's required for all plebes [freshmen] to go every year and anyone else in the upper class that wants to go can. I think that's pretty good training.” (Female)*
- *“One thing I don't know that classes as training is the time I went and thought was really good is I think it's called ‘Undercovers.’ They have a discussion afterwards, an open mic on the skits and essays and whatever that are put together by midshipmen. I found that really enlightening and really good.” (Female)*

### **Least Effective Training Methods**

- **Focus group participants indicated that negative training is counterproductive.**
  - *“A lot of times they show us stuff like to freak us out. And it gets to the point where midshipmen just ignore everything people say. Like take us to the mandatory briefs, and one thing we hear about sexual assault. Like the cop got raped in the corner. It was extremely graphic. It freaked people out, and next time we hear it we're going to block it out and not make as much of it. If you get rid of all the graphic, we know what happens but, and you focus more on the day-to-day examples of it, it would be more effective. That's my opinion.” (Male)*
  - *“They had an outside group, like a sports team group a few months ago, it was horrible. It was straight up like blaming the guy, it was your fault.” (Male)*
  - *“I get a little frustrated sometimes in trainings where they automatically assume that we are going to go out to get trashed and go home with a guy or whatever. It's almost like every scenario starts with that situation.” (Female)*

### **Suggested Training Options**

- **Focus group participants indicated that smaller sessions to address sexual assault would be beneficial.**
  - *“I think going from massive briefs with 2,000 people in them to things that are more like open discussions similar to this, not a focus group, but actually training where there was a moderator. The SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] program did do something like that when we were plebes [freshmen] with SMT [Saturday Morning Training]. We had to go to an open discussion led by a SAVI. It might not be that popular because of the idea you would be giving up time. But maybe if they did away with some of the larger briefs and the actual amount of time spent would be the same, there's something*

*to be gained from some of those briefs we go to. But when you get in a big group of 1,500 people, whatever, a lot of times you're not paying attention, so.”*  
(Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that additional awareness training would be useful.**
  - *“I think martial arts is beneficial but that's for different purposes. If someone slips a roofie in your drink doesn't matter what martial arts training you have. I think we need a little more training on awareness. Some guys think nobody's ever going to try to do anything to me or whatever. Just to be aware there are people out there who will and they can put you in situations where they can, you know, knock you in the back of the head and make you unconscious or take you somewhere where they have the advantage, just to avoid the situations.”* (Male)
  - *“We're cooped up here. We get separated. Our fellow friends in college, they get the real life experience how people really act out there and treat you. We're all pretty decent guys and girls most of the time. We get sheltered a little bit. I think some of that training will be helpful if you go out in town. Before we went on spring break, if you're going to Mexico they give you training, people are going to try, people have gotten hit in the back of the head and woken up in the bathtub with ice with their organs taken out. We went out of the country and they taught the kind of dangers that are there and how to deal with the dangers to be prepared.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it's a good idea to teach us that [self-defense] to prevent us from being sexually assaulted. But I think it's good to have the SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] classes to teach the preventative stuff. It's good to teach us the moves, but it shouldn't have to come down to fighting each other and learning how to not get raped.”* (Female)
  - *“We should be learning where the line is, what's socially acceptable rather than focusing on if someone's attacking you this is what you do. We should learn the steps before to prevent even getting to that point.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that training by a speaker who can relate to the military environment would keep attention focused on the message.**
  - *“Something that happens a lot here in all situations is that if we're going to be talked to about a topic, a lot of people say it's different in the civilian world than it is here and dismiss it. I think if we had a guest speaker who was in the military that is a victim or came in contact with a close situation it would be more powerful and people would have to pay attention because it directly reflects our lives.”* (Female)

## **Self-Defense Training**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they receive basic self-defense training in physical education classes.**
  - *“It's really, really basic. Nobody here, unless they have other experience, can say they are like into Marine Corps martial arts and could really defend yourself. Yeah, I could demonstrate an arm bar but it doesn't mean I could do it.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the training we get here is like 99 percent better than any civilian would get anywhere else. I think we're pretty well trained.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the most important part is most girls don't have a natural instinct to react violently. I think that's what the training here gives them to some extent.” (Male)*
  - *“I would add the classes probably need a few more instructors and a smaller size. A lot of people are able to skate by just because either they don't care or no one's really watching. It's a pretty big class and it's hard, the instructors do an excellent job but it's hard to watch every single person fight or even tell them what they're doing wrong as they're implementing the thing.” (Male)*

## Chapter 4: U.S. Air Force Academy

Eight focus group sessions were conducted at USAFA between April 7-9, 2009. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year. Each session had between eight and thirteen students.

### **Reporting**

Reporting of sexual assault was one of the main subjects addressed in the SAGR2009 focus groups. Cadets were asked to describe the difference between restricted and unrestricted reporting, actions leaders might take to encourage reporting, and reasons for not reporting sexual assault. Cadets were also asked to discuss incidence and reporting of sexual harassment and stalking.

### **Restricted and Unrestricted Reporting of Sexual Assault**

- **Most focus group participants correctly identified the confidentiality aspects of restricted reporting and the investigative aspects of unrestricted reporting.**
  - *“Unrestricted goes through the law enforcement channels and they let your chain of command know. And so if you approach the issue that way, they notify security forces, OSI [Office of Special Investigations], whoever they need involved and there will be a criminal investigation into it. Restricted reporting allows you to report if sexual assault has occurred. But if there's no notification of the chain of command, there's not a criminal investigation launched, unless at a later time you chose to do that.” (Male)*
  - *“Restricted is when you tell the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] or something and you don't want it to go to your chain or you don't want any legal action to be taken, whereas if you told someone in your chain of command and it was unrestricted, then they have a legal obligation to tell your commander.” (Female)*

### **Choosing Restricted or Unrestricted Reporting**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of situations where they would choose restricted or unrestricted reporting.**
  - *“If everything was restricted, then you'd have issues come up where no one got in trouble for something that was pretty serious. But then if everything was unrestricted, then a lot less people would come forward about stuff that they just wanted help with.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the media plays a huge role in that. They don't necessarily respect especially military privacy. They always try to get names out and stuff. A lot of times people just don't want to hear about it again. They don't want their face in the news and so people will just choose the restricted and at least get it out there, but not necessarily all of the way out there.” (Female)*

- *“You might pick restricted if you want to come to terms with what happened to you first, before you then have to have something done about it.”* (Male)
- *“I think the person that was raped would obviously be more likely to report it. I think if the unwanted sexual touching was severe, then by all means. But I think every girl is used to – if you're at a bar and a random guy slaps you on the butt, you're not going to go report that to the SARC.”* (Female)
- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that having the two reporting options is beneficial to victims because restricted reporting provides victims time to seek help to deal with their physical condition and emotions before involving authorities.**
  - *“I think some people just want help for themselves, while other people actually want that person to get in trouble.”* (Male)
  - *“Because that gives you the choice to report it or not report it. That gives you the option, which I think that's good.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it encourages people that are maybe embarrassed or scared of repercussions to come out and get the help that they need from the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] without fearing that their squadron will find out about it or rumors will start and things like that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants were concerned that restricted reporting, while it serves victims' needs, does not allow action to be taken toward stopping or punishing the offender.**
  - *“I see it as a bad thing, though, because that means the guy who did it is still out there and no one has really gone after him. Rape is never a good thing.”* (Male)
  - *“I think that's unfortunate because unrestricted reporting is the only way that anything could be done about the person who violated whoever.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated mixed reactions to the effectiveness of talking to a PEER (Personal Ethics and Education Representative).**
  - *“I don't think it necessarily has to be officers or permanent parties or cadets who are in the know. The PEER program is pretty good.”* (Female)
  - *“I think people very rarely talk to PEERs. I talk to the PEERs in my squadron and they said no one [contacts them].”* (Female)
  - *“I think it depends a lot on the person. My training officer was our PEER last year as well and she was amazing at it. She switched it so well. When she was your PEER, she was your PEER. So it goes from person to person.”* (Female)

## **Definition of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants generally knew the definition of sexual assault per the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and that the definition includes a variety of behaviors from unwanted sexual touching through completed unwanted sexual intercourse.**
  - *“They're pretty explicit when they show us the slide shows about making a distinction between all of the things within sexual assault and showing that sexual assault is a broad category that you can lump a lot of things into it. It will go through rape, indecent touching and stuff like that.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that the decision rests on the individual and not the definition of sexual assault.**
  - *“I don't think the legal definition has anything to do with it. I think it has to do with how the person felt about what happened.” (Male)*
  - *“If I come across a situation where someone doesn't feel right about it and they say that they were touched inappropriately and they obviously didn't want that, I don't think it changes if it's part of the UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] or not. It still should be brought to somebody's attention and something should be done about it. I don't think it really matters.” (Male)*
  - *“I know some guys who feel sometimes girls just get way too touchy-feely, and they just want someone to back off, and you're like, I'm not even going to go around that girl anymore, because she just won't get off me and she doesn't get the hint. Because if that falls within in the definition, your own personal definition, then that is sexual assault. I think it depends on people's personal definitions of it.” (Female)*

## **Reasons for Not Reporting Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the number of sexual assaults estimated from survey data is higher than Academy records suggest because victims feel shame or fear not being believed.**
  - *“Because of all of the connotations with reporting. Like take care of yourself but reporting it causes a lot of problems. Or when there are reports, they just say ‘Oh, well, she's just making it up; it didn't actually happen.’” (Female)*
  - *“They're humiliated by the whole thing. That's why most people don't report rapes that happen. They feel ashamed.” (Male)*

- **Some focus group participants indicated that victims do not report sexual assault because they fear repercussions on their career.**
  - *“People might think it might negatively influence their career or what they get here if they report it or don't report it.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that victims do not report sexual assault because they fear widespread attention to their situation.**
  - *“A fish bowl effect. Everybody finds out about it. Like, there's an announcement made on the staff tower<sup>13</sup> and people start talking. It's not like a normal university where there's a rape. But here if it happens, the entire Wing finds out about it. There's all of these rumor mills going around, people asking who it is and then the media finds out. It's just like everybody knows what happened to you, and it's not like that anywhere else.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that victims do not report sexual assault because they do not want to relive the situation.**
  - *“Sometimes you just don't want to go through stuff like that again. I know that trials can open all of that up again, and you just don't want to deal with it. You're finding another way to get through it. And it should be more about the victim than about what the perpetrator. And if the victim feels it's better for them to just move on, then it probably is.”* (Female)
  - *“I think another reason they might not tell us because they'd have to go through the experience again. They know there's a lot of steps you have to go through if you report it, and they just want to forget about it, pretend it never happened. Because if they report it, that makes it concrete, like it did happen, go through the process of revisiting it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that male victims are especially reluctant to talk about an incident for fear of the reaction they might receive from others.**
  - *“I think there's a confidence factor, like if you're a male and you're sexually assaulted, it's more embarrassing for them than if you're a female.”* (Male)
  - *“I think there would probably be more joking and more made fun of them in their squad. There'd be more joking around in the Academy about it than if it was a female.”* (Female)
  - *“I think in society at large, there's more of a stigma attached to males reporting some type of sexual assault than there would be a female, because it's not generally expected.”* (Male)

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<sup>13</sup> Announcements made by Academy officials during cadet mealtime.

- *“I think they would be treated the same by the system, but I think their friends would probably not react the same.” (Female)*
- *“So just from hearing past stories and having to be in such a male-dominated community, you can picture the outcome just being around here, how people are going to act around you. So if you decide to come out and say ‘Oh, this has happened to me,’ you won’t hear the end of it your entire time you’re here. So just by not coming out, it’s another way for you to cope, especially around here as a male.” (Male)*
- **Male victims might also be less likely to report an incident because they do not consider it a matter of sexual assault.**
  - *“I was going to say it’s more like an experience. By technical definition, it’s an experience, but by emotional, it’s not the same thing. It’s just like a practical joke thing. You never think of it as anything sexual, you think of it as a practical joke.” (Male)*
- **Some focus group participants indicated that students would not report unwanted sexual touching even though it is included in the definition of sexual assault because of the seriousness of sexual assault accusations.**
  - *“I think if you get unwanted touching that’s sexual assault, but here if you report a sexual assault it’s a huge, huge deal, and people maybe want the other person to have some consequence, but not on the level of getting them put in Fort Leavenworth or something like that.” (Male)*
  - *“They’re more likely, if you actually get raped, than just unwanted touching, because if you say something about that, people are going to give you a hard time.” (Female)*
  - *“If you’re getting touched or something and you don’t like it, you might want to go restricted and then see if someone can counsel you on how to get the person to stop, because you don’t want to necessarily ruin their career.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that people might endorse a behavior on a survey, but not feel it is important enough to report or they took care of the situation.**
  - *“I feel like on a lower level, sexual assault, as defined in the surveys, clearly is like touching or jokes or stuff like that. It’s a lot easier to answer those questions, and you’re not necessarily going to go report just something like that to a commander. It’s just lower level stuff, and it comes out more on the surveys.” (Female)*

- **When noted that USAFA had the highest number of reported sexual assaults in the 2009 academic year, focus group participants indicated that reflects a well publicized reporting system that students trust.**
  - *“You could also say that we have the best reporting system.” (Female)*
  - *“That was actually the approach that DoD took, that you have a system that encourages people to report.” (Female)*
  - *“And I think the Air Force, what they do very well here, is letting people know their options, letting them know how they can report a specific incident, what they can do to get help. I think just basically what they've done and the resources that they have here, hopefully that's encouraging more people to seek counseling or report an incident or do whatever they need to do.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants also identified a mindset that they are expected to be tough and deal with issues.**
  - *“If someone's touching you in a way that you don't like and it's not serious and it's not meant to degrade you or not meant to make you feel embarrassed, I think you should handle it yourself. People should figure out how to solve their own problems instead of having to report every small instance of being touched.” (Male)*
  - *“The stigma behind it is more reputation. If that were to get out, then that would be somebody's reputation going down the tubes as a man, as a warrior, as a cadet. You know, we're supposed to be leaders here, but yet you got sexually assaulted, oh, my goodness, you know what I mean? And that's what I was trying to get at with the women as well, even more so for them. They're trying to build up a reputation as being able to hack it here, but then if something like that happens and other people find out about it, then they almost feel inferior to that, and it's almost knocking them down even more and their reputation is knocked down even more.” (Male)*

### **Actions Leaders Can Take To Encourage Reporting of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that keeping information about sexual assault cases confidential is a good step to making people feel comfortable reporting.**
  - *“I think the current rape case that's going on, I've never heard it in the media, and I think that's really good, because that would maybe enable more people to come forward with restricted or nonrestricted, whichever way. And it's a good step with the connotations that everyone is going to be in your business and you have to repeat the story thousands of times. I think that's a good step in and of itself.” (Female)*

- *“If they want people to know they could report – they can make it a more comfortable environment and let them know it's safe. We're not going to tell everybody, we're not going to publish it. We're going to go at your own pace and do what you want to do, like make it easier to report. A more comfortable environment to do it in would be one way.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated there is not much more Academy leadership can or should do to encourage reporting.**
  - *“From the time we get here, honor is huge and sexual assault is huge from day one of basic until the day you graduate and beyond. And they always say you have your chaplains, you can talk to the people in your squad, you can talk to the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator], you can talk to your chain of command. You can talk to all of these people and lay out every option you have so that you know it. So really you have all of the choices or the options to report that you want.”* (Male)
  - *“I think if the person wants to come forward, they'll come forward. If not, I mean, how much can you do to change their mind? It's all up to them.”* (Female)
  - *“They really have everything covered. They have both venues, like restricted and nonrestricted. I think it's pretty broad. I think that's one of the things the Academy does very well.”* (Male)
  - *“I think everyone knows that there are avenues for us to report things, if we want to. I think the Academy does a very good job of advertising that to women and men at the Academy. Everyone knows that we can go talk to people, that there are people at our school to talk to. I think they're doing enough to provide help, if people do want help.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that leadership is doing all they can to encourage reporting, but overemphasizing reporting can have negative consequences.**
  - *“I think they're doing enough because there's so many different ways you can do it that it keeps coming to our attention. But if they don't bring it up so much that we're just annoyed with it and we don't care and we don't want to listen. It's brought up almost on a scheduled basis that we still know what's available to us.”* (Male)
  - *“This is sexual assault awareness month. Not all of the guys, but a lot of the guys call it ‘men hatred month.’ I understand that there are women in the military, but the focus seems so much on all of the problems as opposed to saying, well, we're all just equal and we have to deal with that. But focusing so much on the fact there are women here, brings about a lot of that.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that too much emphasis on sexual assault can have a negative effect on reporting.**
  - *“I think there needs to be a different method. Because right now we have briefings all of the time. And it gets to a point where it's almost like, ‘Oh, we have another briefing, sexual assault.’ So there's a stigma about it. It almost discourages you more than anything else just because there's going to be an overreaction or an underreaction as far as nothing probably happened type of thing.”* (Female)

### **Trust in Anonymity of Reporting System**

- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that they would trust USAFA authorities to keep a restricted report of sexual assault confidential, but not their peers.**
  - *“I think in theory it's possible to have it completely anonymous. But people talk. You might tell your roommate and then they tell three other people. And all of a sudden a lot of people know. But it's not because the system is not in place. Theoretically if you keep your mouth shut and you don't want anybody to know, just tell the people in restricted outlets. Hopefully, they won't tell anybody.”* (Male)
  - *“Probably just assume that you'd be fine as long as you go to the counselors or something. Going to a fellow cadet is a whole 'nother thing.”* (Male)
  - *“I know if something had happened to me, I'd be comfortable with going to the counselor. But if I were to tell my roommate, I know like a week, not even a week, it would be around everywhere.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants disagreed that one could make a completely anonymous report because USAFA students live in such close quarters that someone would notice a friend is having trouble and ask why.**
  - *“No. High school on crack here. Gossip gets around so fast. It's unbelievable. You could just not tell anyone and everyone knows. You have no idea how. It's very impressive, actually. I was impressed that, like, the first day we started hearing gossip already.”* (Female)
  - *“It's everyone leaning on each other, and so eventually it all gets out no matter what.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that it is difficult to know if a report would stay anonymous when the nature of successful restricted reporting does not reveal a report has been made.**
  - *“I mean there's always a potential that it gets out, so, I guess, that could be a fear. And there's not really anything you can do about it because – only unless you actually say something, you actually say ‘Oh, hey, this happened to me’ and you find out for yourself. And then if it's restricted, you're not going to be like ‘Oh, hey, they're really good at keeping things restricted.’ You're not going to tell someone, so no one else is going to know.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't know a way we could gauge that, though, because we don't know of any situation that it has leaked or anything like that. So as far as we know or are concerned, it's stayed within the boundaries.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants felt an online reporting tool for victims might be useful for initiating discussions about an incident or collecting data.**
  - *“It gives people more of the feeling of anonymity. If they're really not ready to go face-to-face with another human being about what happened, it might be easier to interface with something that's not so human. They can just type it down on a computer and then just leave it. But I think the difficulty with that is the evidence that you would have to gather to make a case later if you wanted to would be probably lost.”* (Male)
  - *“I guess it would feel more anonymous, even though you know they could trace your computer, but nobody is going to see you walk into the counseling center or going in to talk to the squadron PEER [Personal Ethics and Education Representative].”* (Female)
  - *“I think it could help, because I know sometimes it's hard to find a place if you have to make a phone call in private because there's people around all of the time. So I could see why that would be a great source of help, I guess.”* (Male)
- **Others indicated that an online system could easily be misused.**
  - *“You start involving computers and you open up windows for pranksters, somebody that just wants to have a broad joke that's going to make the news. And all of a sudden you have a hundred rape allegations that are completely bogus because all somebody had to do was type it into the computer and send it away. I don't know if anonymous is untraceable. It's kind of scary.”* (Male)

## **Extent of Stalking on Campus**

- **When asked about the extent of stalking cadets experience, focus group participants gave a few examples but indicated that stalking is not common.**
  - *“I could see the potential for something like that happening because we are such a small campus and there are so many mandatory events and places where cadets all have to be together. So if there is a cadet that always ends up next to you or just crossing your path, I could see a potential for numbers being higher.”* (Female)
  - *“I’ve never had someone say ‘I’m being stalked.’ I’ve never had a conversation like that with anybody that I know. Maybe that’s why I feel like this. I don’t see a problem.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants attributed stalking to “creepers,” a term used frequently to describe people with immature social skills.**
  - *“No matter where you go, doesn’t matter what college campus you’re on, whether it be military or not, there’s always going to be a handful or a few of guys or – and girls – who are just not normal. They’re creepers. They don’t feel any problem violating other people, and that’s always going to happen.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of guys here are creepy, but I guess I don’t feel threatened by any of them.”* (Female)
  - *“The person that’s socially awkward. Carries on a conversation that really should have ended at the beginning of the conversation.”* (Female)
  - *“I’ve, unfortunately, witnessed that situation where someone was trying to get out of a relationship and that other counterpart was walking up next to the squadron. I think I can understand those numbers are just – there’s people here who have different social skills, that many people wouldn’t see as regular. They just don’t socially fit in as well.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated they did not think students should be fearful of stalking on campus.**
  - *“In the squadron area especially, because if anything was even close to happening, at least half of my squadron would go protect one girl. So at the Academy, they shouldn’t feel afraid.”* (Male)
  - *“I know lots of the girls here – I can think of four right now – that have been under the stalking thing. Definitely not feeling in danger, at least they haven’t talked to me about that, but definitely being kind of stalked. A classic example that maybe a lot of people can imagine here is a freshman girl and an upperclassman dude and the freshman moves into a different squad and the*

*upperclassman dude wants to stay in contact with her for some delusional reasons.” (Male)*

### **Unwanted Sexual Attention Online or Through E-mail**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they have heard of unwanted sexual attention online (cyberstalking), but attribute it to a lack of social skills rather than ill intent.**
  - *“Actually, I'm going to say that that happens probably the most out of anything, with Facebook and stuff like that. You have friends of yours or if we walk in and they're always on Facebook, and it's almost to a creepy degree. It's a little weird. You're always looking at this one girl's page or whatever. I think it's as a result of being a little socially awkward. You don't know that that's what other people would think. It's just kind of creepy.” (Male)*
  - *“They don't even realize that they are a creeper. It's the guy that will message you every time you get on Facebook. He could have completely innocent intentions. Maybe he just wants to talk to you. But like every time you get on Facebook, it gets annoying.” (Female)*
  - *“It's up to you to block that person or change your privacy settings or whatever [Facebook]. But you have to do it. They give you a ton of flexibility. You can let someone see your first name only and nothing else or you can let someone see your name, address, phone number, pictures, whatever.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants pointed out that the availability of personal information at USAFA can facilitate stalking.**
  - *“It's actually easier to stalk people here. I can go look up anybody's schedule or information here. It's really readily accessible.” (Female)*

### **Reporting Stalking**

- **Focus group participants indicated they were unsure how to report stalking.**
  - *“Unsure.” (Female)*
  - *“I don't think we really report that. We're pretty much, like ‘back off.’” (Female)*
- **Others focus group participants indicated there are several avenues for reporting stalking.**
  - *“I think it would start on the cadet level personally. I think it would start with talking to peers, talking to maybe some upperclassmen and maybe through the cadet chain, going all of the way to the squad commander.” (Male)*

- *“I think cadets like to, when possible, keep things at the lowest level, but they're willing to take it up if need be.”* (Male)
- *“I think most people would go the route through their AOC [Air Officer Commanding] and their chain of command or call the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator], even though it's not sexual assault, or to get advice. Not that it's not physical assault, but just to get advice on what to do about it. Not like a 1-800 stalking number.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants thought action appropriate to the situation would be taken.**
  - *“I know of a situation where that's happened with a restraining order. They do what you need to do if you report it to the right people.”* (Female)
  - *“I think just on the sheer fact that nothing has really happened, it would be taken from more of a defensive standpoint, preventing anything from escalating and keeping an eye on the person who is supposedly doing the stalking. I don't think anything would really happen to the person stalking, per se. But they definitely would be kept track of and the person being stalked would be more defended.”* (Male)
  - *“My AOC talked to another AOC and just asked him to keep an eye on this kid, because one of the girls in our squadron felt as though this upperclassman wouldn't leave her alone. And so the AOC kept an eye on it and just talked to the kid about it and I guess it stopped, because I never heard anything more about it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that there is not much negative impact to making a report of stalking.**
  - *“I don't think there would be as much stigma against reporting something like stalking. It makes the other person look bad. I don't think people would be really embarrassed to get the problem solved. It's them that's creepy. It's not you.”* (Female)

### **Extent of Sexual Harassment on Campus**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual harassment is predominantly crude and offensive behavior, especially joking.**
  - *“From my experience it's been all of the jokes and stuff. And you just sit there, ‘Oh, okay. This is not really funny.’ But you're sitting at a table full of guys and you feel pressure not really to say anything, if it does bother you.”* (Female)
  - *“I think jokes are the easiest one because they represent guys. And mostly with guys, if a joke is told, I don't think the majority of the time the person telling the*

*joke thinks – actually believes that or actually thinks about women in that degrading way. They're just trying to get a laugh.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that other forms of sexual harassment, such as unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion, occur but less frequently than crude and offensive behavior (joking).**
  - *“You get somebody who's been rejected and they keep pursuing the same girl and they're bored just like stalkers. They're just floating around and stuff. They're kind of awkward. It happens a lot here. But the last one, sexual coercion, I mean it happens. The example, like an abuse of power. It happens every now and then, I think. But I don't think it happens as much.” (Male)*
  - *“I'd say the first category we talked about, like the crude and offensive humor, probably occurs frequently, but the other two are rare cases.” (Male)*
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that the rules on fraternization inhibit the more demeaning forms of sexual harassment such as unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion.**
  - *“I think the reason that they put the fraternization in place is to try and prevent the coercion thing from happening. So say if an upper classman and lower classman they break up, and then the upper classman gets a weird mindset that he would try and say ‘Hey, you better get back together with me.’ That's why they have that system in place. Because otherwise it would work like a normal college, you wouldn't have to have an issue with a senior dating a freshman. But because here they have a fear that that coercion instance might arise, so they lay the hammer down on you, just don't put yourself in that kind of situation.” (Male)*
  - *“Like the firstie [senior] and he e-mailed a four-degree [freshman] and said, ‘Hey, you better do this because I'm on the Wing staff.’ That's like a clear case. There's more unclear cases, but I think those usually just fall under fraternization; hence, there's not really any sexual coercion.” (Male)*
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that it is hard to define the point at which joking becomes sexual harassment because the standard differs by who is listening.**
  - *“It depends on the person. Because I have a friend who gets really upset about any kind of sexual joke and I think she's a little too sensitive. But like me, I don't get upset about a little sexual joke. I think it depends on the person who thinks what's going too far.” (Female)*
  - *“I think we hear a lot of jokes from guys here that we're just desensitized to any kind of sexual joke. We're like ‘whatever,’ and you just learn to just ignore them.” (Female)*

- *“I would say everyone has that general sense, it's just some are mean, anyway. It's human nature. Some people like to pick.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also indicated that the intended target influences whether sexual harassment is perceived.**
  - *“Certain girls are more prone to it, just because of the way that they act and react to the jokes. There are some girls out there that no one tells any jokes about because everybody just tends to like them and a lot of people have their back. There's this girl in my squad that I've never heard anyone say anything mean about her because if anyone did, everyone would be on their case.”* (Male)

### **Reporting Sexual Harassment**

- **Some focus group participants did not distinguish between procedures for reporting sexual assault and sexual harassment.**
  - *“You can do that with PEERs [Personal Ethics and Education Representatives], can't you? And then that goes up the chain of command.”* (Female)
  - *“Go through your chain. It could be either one [cadet chain or Academy chain]. If you're a confused freshman, you could very easily go to someone you trust, that you look up to. If you're somebody else and you have a close relationship with an AMT [Academy Military Trainer] or AOC [Air Officer Commanding], you could go that route.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated they would expect corrective action to be taken if someone reported sexual harassment.**
  - *“There was an example in my squadron when a girl's ex-boyfriend just kept coming around and her roommate finally got sick of it and talked to the AOC and the AOC said stay away from her squadron, and it hasn't been a problem since.”* (Male)
  - *“Like paperwork, investigation, all kinds of clarifications, stuff like that.”* (Female)
  - *“Probably counseling, too, if you need it [the one doing the harassing]. They'd probably go on probation or something like that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that making a formal report of sexual harassment can have several meanings to cadets.**
  - *“I could see like when you're being a four-degree [freshman] you might be more comfortable going to someone in your chain of command and you tell*

*them and they might try to take care of it at the cadet level. And I would see that as reporting it, even if it's not reporting it to the official chain.” (Female)*

- *“Maybe people are considering going to a teacher or a coach a formal report, but the teacher and the coach isn't writing something about it.” (Female)*
- *“Anyone above them they would perceive as an authority figure. Even if it might not count as formal, but if you told someone in your cadet chain about the person, that would be considered formal, as opposed to just telling your friend about it.” (Male)*

### **Reasons for Not Reporting Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated that some students do not report sexual harassment for fear of the negative reactions from other students.**
  - *“Probably being looked at different. From the victim's point of view. Because the privacy will get out. Even if you just report to someone and then you tell a friend, and your friend sometimes might not keep her mouth shut or his mouth shut.” (Female)*
  - *“I think if it's not anonymous and people found out that you reported it, then a lot of people would judge you and ‘Oh, this dude's like – can't say anything around her, they're too sensitive.’ You may lose some friends just because they don't want to be around you.” (Male)*
  - *“Maybe not having somebody that you trust enough to share that with. If you're not really close to your AOC [Air Officer Commanding] or don't want to tell anybody, any of the cadets in your squad because you're afraid they might say something. Or if you're not close to a teacher or something like that.” (Female)*

### **Offenders**

Participants were asked several questions regarding their perceptions of sexual assault offenders. Specifically, focus group participants were asked to identify characteristics and habits of actual and potential offenders and offenders’ ability to perpetrate sexual assault against cadets.

### **Typical Characteristics of Sexual Assault Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that there are a few warning signs regarding offenders.**
  - *“I don't think sexual assaults randomly happen. From what I've heard about them here, it's some prior relationship where they at least know each other pretty well. I think if you know someone and you know they're a creeper, then just stay away from them. Don't talk to them. Don't be friends with them. Don't*

*communicate with them because they end up stalking or talking to you a lot or something before.” (Female)*

- *“I could see a fraternization being the first step. I can imagine any assault happening, it would probably be an upperclassman guy with an underclassman female just because she might feel the pressure of her status and not being able to report it. And just stopping fraternization in its tracks would probably [stop] a lot of those problems.” (Female)*
- **The majority of focus group participants agreed that offenders are most likely fellow cadets.**
  - *“Aren't most rapes happening between people who know each other? Doesn't that make sense if you're with the same people all of the time, that if sexual assault is going to happen to a cadet, is probably going to be by another cadet because we all live together?” (Male)*
  - *“I'd say it would be more from here just because we're very isolated. We don't get out much.” (Male)*
- **Other focus group participants agreed that most offenders are someone who the victim knows, but not necessarily always a fellow cadet.**
  - *“Somebody who knows the victim. It could be a friend or they have some sort of relationship.” (Male)*
  - *“It has to definitely be someone she knows. We've all gone through the training or briefings – don't put yourself in that situation. So if you're going to be alone with someone, it's going to be someone you trust, so you're obviously going to know them. So it could be someone from back home or it could be a good friend here that they trusted them.” (Female)*

### **Repeat Offenders**

- **Focus group participants thought it possible for someone to repeat an offense.**
  - *“It's not like the offenders are any different here than in society. And you hear about people in society how if they get away with it, they think they can do it again. And they'll continue their process until either they get caught, maybe they have a close call and then change their ways.” (Male)*
  - *“We've got over 4,000 some people from across the country. The chances and the odds are just – of course, it could happen.” (Male)*

- **Some focus group participants disagreed that there could be repeat offenders.**
  - *“I would say no because the female population is so small, the rumor mill is so strong, that you'll find out. There's no way to keep a secret here, unless you don't tell anyone.”* (Female)

### **Premeditated Sexual Assault**

- **Some focus group participants thought it possible that someone might premeditate a sexual assault.**
  - *“Maybe going out on a Friday night, going downtown drinking or whatever. If somebody was going to perpetrate an act like that, especially here, given the type of personalities that are present, I think they would probably plan it out beforehand.”* (Male)
  - *“Yes, we're there at the Air Force Academy, and yes, we're a fine group of individuals, but there's bad apples in every barrel. And you can't – no matter how much training – you can't get rid of those bad apples. They just exist in society.”* (Female)
- **But other focus group participants indicated sexual assault is more spontaneous, particularly when alcohol is involved.**
  - *“I think it probably happens more on accident. Not to say it's right, but you're both drunk and you're losing control and then all of a sudden things happen that you didn't want to happen. That's probably more common than somebody planning to get somebody hammered, or. . . ”* (Male)
  - *“It's not really from them trying to get other people to a degree where they can take advantage of them. It's just that they take themselves to a degree where they really have no more self-control over what they're thinking and they cross the line. We try and look out for people so they don't do stupid things like that”* (Male)
  - *“I don't think it does as much as other colleges. We hear about it all of the time at other colleges and sororities and stuff. I don't think it really happens that much here just because of our rules and stuff we have in place.”* (Male)
  - *“I think that happens anywhere. I think it happens less here. This place isn't more prone to it. I think it's less. I think we have good guys here. And, yeah, things go wrong, people get assaulted, but I don't think that's specific to this school.”* (Female)

## **Preventing Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated the Academy is doing a good job of informing students about sexual assault and providing resources.**
  - *“All of the other things the Academy does to be preemptive about it, to prevent attacks before they occur, I think it's right on with where it needs to be. They're very straightforward and direct about making sure that this is not acceptable behavior at the Academy, that people are aware of the resources they have should something like this happen to them. And just creating a culture in which people know that sexual assault won't be tolerated and here's what we're going to do about it. 'Here's the systems we have in place and the resources for you to take advantage of that.’” (Male)*
  - *“My understanding of the statistics is that we have a lot less assaults here than other colleges do around the country, even some of the other Service Academies. We get crap for it from the press because people actually do come forward and we do catch it and we do have this fraternity, if you want to call it that, or this brotherhood and this sisterhood of people actually watching out for each other and keeping each other accountable. And I think that's the whole wingman thing that they constantly pound us with is something that's taken [seriously]. And we understand that and we step up to it. And even though that it might hurt us in the press, we know what the right thing to do is and we do it.” (Male)*
  - *“Your teachers even tell you if you need a ride home, give me a call and I'll come and get you.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants offered several suggestions for preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“I think along with the rules that we have in place there's going to be backfires to every rule you set in place. But I think really the best thing you can do is to inform us, educate us on what to look for, how to spot it ourselves so that maybe the person who is the target or the offender – the offender is definitely not going to report it themselves and then the target may not want to report it because they're embarrassed or ashamed. But maybe if you can spot it, you can tell what's going on from an outside point of view, then maybe you can be there for the target as a support, helping like, ‘Hey, this doesn't look right from an outside point of view.’ They may not see it yet. Maybe you can help prevent it yourself, seeing it from a different point of view.” (Male)*
  - *“I think we're talking about what type of people are likely to be assaulted or even harassed. One thing that's not considered here very often or addressed is a girl's responsibility, a female's responsibility to monitor her own behavior. Just like you don't want males to act a certain way around you, you shouldn't act ways around them that would provoke or send the wrong messages, give*

*them the wrong ideas. You're responsible for maintaining their respect for you, as much as they're responsible for respecting you.” (Female)*

- *“We have rules to help prevent it. We can't have just one guy or one girl in the room with the door closed. That's partly like if it's consensual they can't do stuff, but what if the guy gets the wrong idea, it's easy for the girl to get help.” (Male)*

### **Bystander Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated they have a responsibility to intervene between an offender and victim.**
  - *“If you see something happening, you know it is your responsibility to look after people.” (Male)*
  - *“I'm sure we've had a CPME [Cadet Professional Military Education] video on it.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that they are trained in prevention, to watch out for each other before an incident occurs.**
  - *“Usually, with our group, at least my big group of friends, you know how to bring the guys in. Like they're talking to a girl from the Springs [Colorado Springs], say that isn't one of us, you do a pretty good job of being – stop or whatever. And then with the girls, we all look out for girlfriends. Probably even more than we would normally, just because there's so few of us usually in social settings. So I think it's really easy – there's definitely training, wingman training, but it's also really natural for all of us just to stop stuff.” (Female)*
  - *“They always tell us to have a good wingman in place. Mantra, I'd say. ‘Have a friend. Never be alone.’” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants also indicated that the degree to which they form personal bonds with their fellow cadets affects bystander intervention.**
  - *“You're only going to intervene if it's someone that you care for, someone that you're close with, like one of your best friends or a girlfriend or something. And that's the only thing that I would probably only intervene for, someone that you respect and you care for. As long as there's good relationships between all of the cadets, that's pretty much the only thing I think you can do. You can't train someone to intervene, if you really don't know the person.” (Female)*
  - *“I think it's a little different here. There's only so many of us [female cadets]. And when we do go out together, you just know. It's not something that they have to send you a pamphlet, like these are things you should do, watch out for these signs. You just know.” (Female)*

- *“He talked about whether or not the Academy being our sisters and stuff, and I really think that's how people generally view women at the Academy. It's not like two separate groups. They care a lot about us and we care a lot about them, and nobody wants to see anything bad happen to either us or them. It's not one of those things where people are discriminatory at all. I think it's very much an acceptance of the fact, that they're part of the Air Force team just as much as we are and we need to protect them just as we'd hope they'd do the same for us.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that it is difficult to train for specific bystander situations, but raises awareness of factors associated with assault.**
  - *“Did you guys ever watch that video like the X square, some guy attacks this woman and they all just stand around and watch? I've had that training before. I don't know what you'd do in that situation. I think it's in the heat of the moment what you'd do or not. You can sit here and say ‘Oh, yeah, I'd do this or I'd do this.’ But, actually, when you get there, it's just who you are and what's going to happen.” (Female)*
  - *“Just learning about how – when the lawyer came and talked to us, this girl that had been sexually – I guess it was rape – she was walking and talking and basically looked capable, she was tripping over, but it wasn't as if she were passed out or something. Now that I know that, I might watch a girl more and more carefully, like if she was about to leave with a guy, even if I don't know her.” (Female)*

### **Factors Influencing Gender-Related Behaviors**

During the USAFA focus groups, participants were asked to indicate aspects of the culture at the Academy that might result in sexual assault or sexual harassment behaviors.

#### **Stalking and Harassment as Precursors of Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that stalking and sexual harassment are potential precursors of sexual assault.**
  - *“Maybe the actual perpetrator is coming up with a threshold. She'll tolerate this comment, and then she'll tolerate this touching or, now everything. So maybe he's just testing her over time. That's what – sexual harassment, and then it leads to rape. I could see how it could occur that way.” (Male)*
  - *“The guy in my squad that I always see make sexual harassment comments, even in some cases, it could be construed as sexual assault. I wouldn't trust anyone around him alone.” (Male)*
  - *“I think they just get in a habit of it and they don't realize what they're doing is wrong and it just snowballs. I had a kid in my four-degree [freshman] squad*

*who was always creepy and trying to get close to my roommate and stuff like that. And he would just say weird sexual things to all the girls. And he turns out this year he asked a four-degree to do some stuff for him because he was in a Wing staff. So it's weird how we saw he gets assigned his freshman year and didn't think anything of it and it snowballed and he got into a lot of trouble this semester.” (Female)*

- **But other focus group participants indicated that exhibiting one form of unwanted behavior does not necessarily lead to the others.**
  - *“It makes sense, but I really don't think that we should say ‘Oh, my gosh, he has time for stalking, he can commit a rape later, let's get him in a program.’ I don't think that that's right. I think probably a lot of guys show some signs of stalking, but it's nothing serious.” (Female)*
  - *“When we have the CPME [Cadet Professional Military Education] lessons, I remember a slide in particular where they give this continuum where it starts at crude and offensive joking and all of the way on the other side of the spectrum is rape. And I'd say that the two of them probably are interrelated. So it's based on the cultural values and the desensitization he was talking about when making these jokes and stuff. But I don't know necessarily that you can say that somebody who makes crude and offensive jokes is going to perpetuate along the spectrum to being a rapist. I can see how they can lead in that direction, but at the same time I'm not sure you can start one person at the bottom of the spectrum and move them all of the way to the top without saying beforehand that this person was probably going to be at the top of the spectrum regardless.” (Male)*
  - *“I think if you told jokes, that doesn't mean that you're a potential rapist. I don't [think] there should be a correlation.” (Female)*

### **Culture Encouraging Improper Behavior**

- **Most focus group participants indicated that the culture at the Academy does not promote unhealthy sexual attitudes and/or improper behaviors among cadets.**
  - *“Not only is it more frowned upon, but it seems there's a lot more people here that just have more of a moral background as far as rules that govern the way that they act.” (Male)*
  - *“Not any more than anywhere else.” (Female)*
  - *“I feel like the culture that we have here that we've maintained here, is that we have this brotherhood/sisterhood thing that goes on here at the Academy, but that transcends the Academy grounds. It goes to every party that we go to, even if it a civilian party off base, that transcends that and that happens. And I can*

*guarantee you. I've seen it where some civilian guy will come hit up on a cadet girl and another cadet who is with her will just be like, 'Hey, what's up?' you know, protecting her right there. And that's something that we have, that protection that – watching out for each other that goes even downtown, even goes up to Greeley, even goes to Boulder.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the culture is to show respect for each other based on attitude and performance.**
  - *“I think it's on an individual basis. If the person is applying themselves, yes. If the person doesn't appear that they want to be at the Academy, then no.” (Female)*
  - *“I don't think it's sexist, but it is male dominated. You can't get away from the statistics when it's like 80 percent male and 20 percent female. And so I can see how that would come across, but I don't feel like there's a sexist undertone to it. I think people here, more or less, are given a chance to prove themselves and to be judged on their actions and not where they come from or who they are.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the respect you have for people is more on a person-to-person. It's more about that person's personality than if they're male or female or anything like that.” (Male)*

### **Sexism Among Students**

- **Focus group participants indicated that some students hold sexist attitudes.**
  - *“Well, I have heard comments, even said to me, that women don't belong at the Academy. They should have never let you in. And then I've heard a girl say, 'I didn't want to go for a position because a guy told me that he'd get it over me just because I'm a woman.' But it's undeniable. Women are getting squadron commander positions and are group commanders. So somehow there are women who are making it to the top, and they're not necessarily sleeping their way there.” (Female)*
  - *“I had my coach [cadet mentor] sit there and tell me the only reason you got in because you're a female. The ironic part is, is that he's on academic and athletic probation.” (Female)*
  - *“There's a large portion of the cadet wing that would honestly say if you asked them in a closed room with no retributions, that they don't want women here. I think there's a lot of people that are like that. So, I guess, it is kind of condoned. People don't admit to it, but it's underlying.” (Male)*

- **When asked if sexism were more likely among upper class students, focus group participants indicated that is sometimes the case but when it occurs it is not unique to upper class.**
  - *“I’ve had more upperclassmen tell me that women, not necessarily me personally, but they believe that there are a lot more unqualified women here than unqualified men.”* (Female)
  - *“There’s going to be that guy who’s always going to be an asshole. But then there’s going to be that guy who’s really chivalrous and really nice. And I don’t think it matters if you’re an upperclassman or a freshman. I think it happens in both places.”* (Female)
  - *“I think the freshmen vocalize more. So it could be completely equal, but, we had a sexism issue in basic where a guy put the effort into his mailing each of his female counterparts in his basic squadron letters telling them that they shouldn’t be here. They should go home. They don’t belong in the military. In basic, you don’t have time to do that. That was just stupid.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that when upper class students exhibit sexist attitudes, they tend to develop over time.**
  - *“I think it starts with basic training in a lot of ways. Because I remember hearing somebody say something like they came in with a better perception of women than when they left because, you come in and you’re carrying the female cadets through basic training and you just get tired of it, and then the cadre makes fun of the girls sometimes for being weaker. And then it persists and builds on itself and you get people in a group that all think like this, and then their opinions grow. So it builds this, not hatred towards women, but distaste for them at the Academy. I think that’s a real problem that nobody really talks about.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants disagreed that there some students hold sexist attitudes.**
  - *“I don’t think I get that a lot from upperclassmen. I don’t hear a bunch of firsties [seniors] talking about how females shouldn’t be at the Academy.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants noted that all of the emphasis on women as victims of sexual assault reinforces a sexist attitude.**
  - *“And going back to the topic of is there is a sexist culture. I almost think that the overabundance of training and the idea that girls aren’t responsible for themselves, because you hear so many of those cases that, ‘Oh, the girl was drunk, so it’s the guy’s fault.’ Well, the guy was drunk, too. And it’s that girl’s responsibility as well. And I think the fact that with all of the overabundance of*

*training and 'the girl's the victim, the girl's the victim, the girl's the victim,' I think that makes the sexist culture a little bit stronger – I'm not a fan of it. And they [women] don't take responsibility [for a situation].” (Female)*

### **Sexist Culture Among Faculty, Staff, and Alumni**

- **Most focus group participants indicated that faculty and staff do not promote a culture encouraging sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexism.**
  - *“Not very publicly if they do. I'm sure some of them from back in the day probably think that, but we don't. It's not like they come in and talk to us about it or anything.” (Male)*
  - *“Not that I've witnessed. All of our instructors are extremely professional.” (Female)*
- **Attitudes among alumni are mixed.**
  - *“It depends on the grad. I've met a lot of grads who have said ‘Wow, women weren't here when I was here and I wish they had been so then I could have learned how to interact with girls before I met my wife.’ But then I've met other grads that I don't believe women should be in the Academy and you guys are all wasting government money.” (Female)*
  - *“I think it might be the opposite, if at all. Because I know a couple of my friends have dads that graduated in the '60s, so there were no women. So they had it instilled in them that women don't belong. And one of my really good friends that actually his dad was a grad, and he hated all of the girls in his squad freshman year. He was a complete jerk to them, but now he regrets it. He realized that we deserve to be here just like them.” (Female)*

### **Sharing Information**

Cadets in the focus groups were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and impressions regarding communications about sexual assault, leadership's dedication to preventing sexual assault, prevalence of sexual assault over time, victim blaming, and false accusations.

### **Communication About Incidents of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that Academy officials make the Wing aware that incidents of sexual assault have occurred.**
  - *“There was a formal courts-martial for something. Unless it's a serious thing – I guess we only hear about it if it's serious. So I don't know if there's that many that we don't hear about them. But, the serious ones are – whatever the permanent party deems to be more serious is what we hear.” (Male)*

- *“There's been cases where people have been brought up on sexual assault, and it's been announced to the school as well. The person was brought up on sexual assault and then they got off and it was never explained why. Or that they didn't really do anything wrong. That's a big deal, because that person's reputation is forever ruined. And the fact that we're not told about it, but then not told the whole story is – there's something wrong with that. And I know there's the whole it's private business and not everyone should know about it, but at the same time, I think a lot of people get destroyed in the process.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that there is a negative side to measuring and publishing statistics about sexual assault.**
  - *“It's almost like putting a spotlight on it. Does that make sense? And it's like everyone is just digging to find something when there might not be anything. And so someone who doesn't actually know the definition or doesn't properly think about it will report something when it's not really something, because the Academies have made such a huge deal about it, because I don't think it happens. It happens, but it happens just as much as it would happen on a – probably even less than on a civilian campus. Because there's not the party scene that happens on the dorms and there's not drugs readily available. And I feel these numbers are just wrong.”* (Female)

### **Leadership's Dedication to Preventing Sexual Assault**

- **There was near unanimous agreement among focus group participants that senior Academy leaders are very dedicated to preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“It's very apparent that they care and this is something they want to take care of and they want to try and make this better. And I think that's really good that they demonstrate that and they're really trying. I would say that's a good thing.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel like a lot is already done – it will go as far as maybe canceling a parade or canceling formation, something that's mandatory that the Academy seems to take so important around here. But they'll send a message as ‘No, this [sexual assault/sexual harassment survey] is more important than that parade; this is more important than that mandatory training. Here's this time that you're allotted to take this survey.’ And then the Commandant or general, maybe even the Superintendent, will get up there and we'll be ‘Okay the Supe is spending his time to come and talk to us about this, this must be important.’ Just the fact that he's there to do that, that's an important thing that we see, this is something that's serious. I'm sure there's some cadets who blow it off, which is to be expected, but I feel like the majority of people actually sit down and do take it seriously.”* (Male)
  - *“And just the amount that we hear about this topic, it's obviously a priority and a priority that's pretty high up there. Like he said, the Superintendent called us*

*all together for a last-minute briefing. And I heard a firstie [senior] say that that was the only time that they've had that happen.” (Male)*

- *“I think that's just indicative to how serious the Academy takes sexual assault that they're sending people [like PEERs] to conferences to learn more about it and teach other cadets about sexual assault and how to prevent it. It's just another thing that the Academy can say this is what we're doing to try to put an end to this.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated the evidence of leadership’s emphasis on preventing sexual assault is seen in the number of posters, Web site notices, and other communications.**
  - *“The frequency that it's harped upon. They always drill in your head don't do something stupid, here's the number for the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator], if something happens, report it.” (Male)*
  - *“In the library they'll have this huge stand set up with SARC and everything like that and posters everywhere. There's a table full of stuff.” (Female)*
- **Leadership below the senior level is also serious about preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“I think my AMT [Academy Military Trainer] polices a little bit more during the day. Everyone is a lot more aware of what's going on. Not necessarily directly. They're not going to be like, ‘Hey, stop sexually assaulting that girl.’ But my AMT definitely walks around the halls during the day ‘Hey, what's up?’ to everybody. So I think there's more involvement as far as our squad level.” (Female)*
  - *“My AOC [Air Officer Commanding] has zero tolerance. ‘If you do something like that, I'm not going to back you up. I'm not going to be there for you and be like I think you should stay.’” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants also indicated that coaches and sports staff are serious about preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“I'm on a team and we had an incident where something like that happened and they took it really seriously. They gave us a briefing at 6:30 in the morning. And they were, like, you need to be here otherwise you're off the team.” (Male)*
- **Faculty and staff are also viewed as serious about preventing sexual assault.**
  - *“It falls under the same thing. Everybody is on board with it. There's nobody that's going to cut it. They're going to support that.” (Male)*
  - *“A lot of it comes from the top, but if you were to tell your teacher ‘Something happened to me, I want to talk about it,’ they would take it seriously, they wouldn't just blow you off.” (Male)*

## **Prevalence of Sexual Assault Over Time**

- **Upper class focus group participants indicated that there has been increased emphasis on sexual assault over time.**
  - *“Definitely a more concerted effort, more resources being put into it. Because we showed up right after all of that stuff went down, maybe a year or two after. And it was still very much a transitional mode to that where I feel like now they're pushing forward to really eliminate sexual assault and get away from some of the instances that have occurred in the past.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel like you can see the improvements happening. And there's always going to be room for even more improvement. But I think even within the time we've been here, it's gotten a little more positive, so that's good.”* (Female)

## **Victim Blaming**

- **Focus group participants correctly defined victim blaming as holding a victim partially or entirely responsible for the sexual assault or sexual harassment against him or her.**
  - *“It's where the victim asks for it in some way, the way they dress, the way they acted, getting drunk, something along that nature.”* (Male)
  - *“It depends on the girl's reputation. If she has been messing around, some of the guys are going to be ‘She brought that on herself, like leading a guy on.’ I know a girl who leads guys on all of the time and doesn't realize it until we tell her. But then at the same time, there could be those pretty good girls that never really even dated a guy, they'll get more sympathy than the girl who has been around a few times.”* (Female)
- **Some male focus group participants indicated that women tend to engage in victim blaming more than men.**
  - *“I think women are more likely to victim blame than men. I could be wrong. You hear girls talking about somebody who gets raped and they're like, ‘Well, she was dressing slutty or whatever, and she deserved it.’ I think guys might think that but they're less likely to verbalize it. So I think it's common. More common than anything else.”* (Male)
  - *“I think sometimes the girls here can be just as harsh on the girls, even harsher. I think the girls can be harsher on the girls than the guys are when it goes to reporting. Just because girls are like, ‘Okay, I would never do that, why would you?’ But at the same time, I think it goes back to what was the girl's reputation? Because there can be that girl who is just one time it was, ‘Okay, that was enough’ or there's that girl that's sleeping with everyone and then all of a sudden she's raped. ‘Okay. That's interesting.’”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants gave examples where victim blaming might occur.**
  - *“There's so few girls here that when something happens to one of them – especially with the freshmen, because you're not supposed to have an unprofessional relationship with upperclassmen – when something's happened to them, you know that there has to be some way that they got in touch with the upperclassmen, because upperclassmen don't just go door to door and be like ‘Hey, can I hang out with you?’ You know there was some initial response from them. So if these girls going around and talking to every upperclassman they can find, no one comes out and says ‘Well, they pretty much asked to get raped,’ but it's always in the back of everyone's mind that girl was talking to all these upperclassmen, so that's going to happen eventually.” (Male)*
  - *“It's a small school. We all pretty much know. We've all seen each other in the hallways and stuff. You know people's reputations, too. If you know a girl that you've had in class that's really flirty with all of the guys and you hear about something that happening, you just know, is it really the firstie's [senior] – all of his fault, or is she to blame for part of this also?” (Male)*
- **Some female focus group participants noted that victim blaming does not occur.**
  - *“It's like the exact opposite, if anything. The victim can do no wrong here.” (Female)*

### **Commonly Held Misperceptions About Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated there is a common belief that some women “cry rape” to avoid punishment or when they regret having sex.**
  - *“I think that happens somewhat. There was a case a little while back that dealt with that. And they're going through all of the evidence. It seemed to me they were both drunk, and she had a fiancé. The way it seems she was claiming rape because she screwed up big time. So she was as much to blame. That's what I hear from a lot of people when something happens. They're just trying to get out of something.” (Male)*
  - *“By looking at numbers of reportings, doesn't mean that the actual cases of sexual assault are occurring less or occurring more. It could just mean that more girls reported it and their motivation for reporting it you don't know. It sounds like an awful thing to say, but I know of cases where girls reported sexual assault just to get out of something.” (Female)*
  - *“We have so much power in that sense. The victim is very powerful. And you have something you perceive it's going to affect your career, there's a lot of people who would do anything, and that includes throwing someone else under the bus.” (Female)*

- **Other focus group participants disagreed that someone would go that far, especially because such behavior would be a violation of the honor code.**
  - *“That kind of trouble, I seriously doubt. Them saying, ‘Well, instead of getting in trouble by having sex in the dorm, I’ll claim rape.’ But whenever you’re talking about some sort of life-altering mistake that they’ve made, then I could see that it could possibly happen.”* (Male)
  - *“No.”* (Multiple Females)
  - *“I don’t think that happens so much here. I’m probably positive it crosses people’s minds, just to lie about it, get out of trouble. But we have the honor code. You lie, and mixed with drinking underage or whatnot, that’s just automatic disenrollment. And it’s just not worth it.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the victim’s veracity is often questioned in sexual assault cases.**
  - *“Well, it becomes public. You have a trial. It’s really emotional. And then for some reason the military in general really judges the female. A lot of times guys, or even girls, will say ‘Oh, you know she did it,’ and then the next day decided, ‘Oh, now I regret that,’ so she’ll cry rape. It just has a really bad stigma about it.”* (Female)
  - *“One of the things people always say when a big briefing case comes out, one of the first things that comes up is either she led him on or she did it and she changed her mind or something like that. People are vicious, and sometimes they’re right.”* (Female)

### **Outcomes of Making False Accusations**

- **Some focus group participants felt that a cadet would not get away with making a false accusation.**
  - *“I have heard a situation where they had gotten caught and asked the guy. And he confessed and said we did this and this, because they were investigating about it behind the doors thing. And they went to her and asked and she was like ‘No, that’s not what happened, I got raped.’ So that she would not [get in trouble]. But then they found out that she had been lying and so she got in trouble.”* (Male)
- **Others thought it possible.**
  - *“Because there’s been so many cases where the girl got out of it. I don’t think I’ve ever heard of a case where a girl was legitimately victimized. I’ve only heard these stories where she said that she was raped or she said she was sexually assaulted, only because she’s trying to get out of something or she’s*

*trying to improve her reputation, blah, blah, blah. So, if I heard one legitimate story, I might be more confident, but I haven't.*” (Female)

- *“It's gotten to the point where we've heard stories about girls using it as a tool to get out without the commitment, to leave the Academy without having to pay back money.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that false accusations affect people coming forward who have had actual experiences of sexual assault.**

- *“If you feel like you're going to come forward to say something that happened, in the back of your mind you're thinking about ‘Oh, what is everyone else going to say or think about this and all of a sudden I'm going to get so much more negative publicity from it.’ It's going to have people think twice about reporting their case.”* (Male)
- *“It really sucks because if a girl is actually assaulted, people would have that doubt in the back of their minds, saying, ‘Oh, is she just trying to get out of something, is she just trying to save face.’”* (Female)
- *“It sounds really bad to say it, but honestly, when I heard about the last case, I said I bet it's not true. And that was the first thing that came to my mind. And if it was, that's a horrible thing for me to say about that girl. But in our training, like we said before, it's gotten to the point where the victim can do no wrong and the girl is not responsible for her actions. And any time the girl's drunk, it's the guy's fault, even if the guy's more drunk and even if the girl said yes.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that an accusation of sexual assault can have significant impact on the accused and the alleged victim.**

- *“In the last rape case there was, they don't tell you who the victim is, but they tell you who the guy is. I know people who are like ‘That's messed up.’ Because now his reputation is ruined and it ended up that he did get acquitted of his charges. And so people see that as negative impact on the guy. And I guess at that point, they almost blame the girl because they're like ‘Oh, he was acquitted of all of those charges, it's your fault.’ So that's what happens.”* (Male)

- **But there is mixed understanding of what it means to be acquitted of a sexual assault charge.**

- *“That's the thing. I don't know. I assume he's not guilty.”* (Male)
- *“So there wasn't enough evidence for them to say it was rape. Especially with the circumstances surrounding, it almost makes you suspicious of the victim because you're not hearing anything from an official source beside the basics of the case. You hear most of the details it seems from just other cadets. But it*

*makes the pendulum swing back the other way to where people start looking at rape cases and sexual assault cases more critically at the victims.” (Male)*

### **Confronting Offensive Behavior**

- **Focus group participants indicated when someone is confronted about an offensive behavior they typically stop, but people are hesitant to confront.**
  - *“If you're in a group and you're afraid of being ostracized, being the only one that thinks that.” (Male)*
  - *“I just walk away. Because some of the guys that I sit at lunch with, they always do stuff like that. If I'm finished eating and I get annoyed, I'll just leave. I sometimes feel like if I were to say ‘Hey, can you guys just stop’ they'll tell me to get over it or whatever. It's easier to leave or just ignore them.” (Female)*
  - *“It's that whole rumor thing. If you tell them to stop, they will stop, but then they talk about you to their friends, ‘Oh, well, she doesn't like any of this or she's really a prude, stuck up kind of thing.’ You're trying to fit in with the guys, but at the same time it offends you.” (Female)*
- **Some people might be hesitant to confront someone based on their relationship with the person.**
  - *“If it's your friend you don't want to offend a friend. People are afraid of having people mad at them.” (Female)*
  - *“If you care about the person at all that had an offense with it and they come – if somebody came to me later in the day one-on-one and said ‘Hey, listen, I didn't want to say anything in front of everybody else, but it bothered me when you said such and such.’ then I'd say it would have an impact and I'd say ‘Oh, my bad’ and try to change.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that they are expected to correct offensive behaviors even though confrontation is hard.**
  - *“I asked them ‘May I leave or can you please not talk like that anymore, because this is very offending.’ And they just all stared at me, because they were all guys. I was the only girl at the table. And they were, ‘Oh, sorry.’ They honestly felt bad about it. I think I did gain respect with the upperclassmen guys at that table when I asked them to stop, because it was really offending me. They didn't do it again.” (Female)*
  - *“I do it all of the time with my guys [walk away when they become offensive]. It's a weird social situation, because all of the time we're one of the guys. And so they always start acting like they always would. And if it's weird all you have to do is be ‘You guys are ridiculous’ and walk away. And, usually, at least one*

*of them will ask you later, 'Are you okay, we're really sorry. We just forgot or whatever.'*" (Female)

- *"Communicating to others, I don't know if that's hit home as much, but they said if you're uncomfortable, tell somebody about it. Because we're supposed to respect each other enough, respect human beings. If somebody has a problem, you should stop whether you think their opinion is right or wrong. If they have a problem with it, you're supposed to stop."* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that correcting a deviation from professional behavior is common sense.**
  - *"We're definitely trained on what is and is not a professional relationship and things like that, but I think it's just common sense and something that people have within themselves – knowing when to step in and what's right and wrong and protecting younger people who might not be as confident to step up for themselves."* (Female)
  - *"A lot of the time I feel more like an obligation to protect my peers, too. If I see somebody crossing the line and they might not know it, I would feel more obligated to go to them and say, 'Hey, you don't know this, but other people might perceive this differently than you meant it and I don't want you to get in trouble.'" (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that although most people typically stop an offensive behavior when asked, they do not necessarily change permanently.**
  - *"It's one of those things, it's like they want to know and they'll try to stop, but they'll remember for the next 10 minutes and then they'll go off onto some other tangent that's not exactly what they were talking about, but it's similar. They'll stop when you ask them, but that doesn't mean that something else won't start up five minutes later."* (Female)

### ***Training and Education***

USAFAs provide cadets with training and education on the issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Focus group participants were asked to identify the types of training and education they receive, describe which methods they felt have been most and least effective, and give training suggestions of their own.

#### ***Type and Amount of Training and Education***

- **Focus group participants indicated that they receive sexual assault and sexual harassment training on a regular basis.**
  - *"It gets to a point where people don't take it serious anymore. And it's definitely turned into a briefing you want to sleep in because there's so many – and it's*

*really unfortunate, because I feel like it should be a serious topic. But you just get to a point where they over-dwell on it.” (Female)*

- *“You might be paying attention, but you don't really take from it what you're supposed to. But as in occurrence or frequency of how often we're being told about it, that's personal opinion. I don't think it's too often. I think it's about right because it keeps it at the forefront of things and it keeps it in the back of your mind. But PowerPoint is just horrible.” (Male)*
- *“I almost just think that a few good substance briefings on, this is what sexual assault is, this is how you can get help, and still having the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] and the counseling center and avenues and making sure everyone's aware of it would be the best approach. But the constant, constant, constant, constant, constant training and the constant fliers in bathrooms and reminders and things like that, I don't think that's necessary. And I think that's what's taking it over that step with being too victim-friendly to the point of where the process is being abused.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated they receive training about how to protect themselves and their friends when out at a party or a bar.**

- *“We always have to have a designated driver and buddy system.” (Female)*
- *“You're more than looking out for yourself. We're taught to look out for our wingman, as we call it. And I think that helps out more than just looking out for yourself. You need the common sense to make your own decisions. But as long as you have another cadet next to you, I would feel a thousand times more safe.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that watching out for each other is a major responsibility.**

- *“She could be kicking and screaming and mad the whole way back to the Academy, but I don't care, like, I'm driving her back.” (Female)*
- *“...the girls look out for the girls but they also keep an eye out for the guys.” (Female)*

- **Some focus group participants indicated that their training in sexual assault is designed to help them as cadets as well as prepare them to deal with these issues as officers.**

- *“They're always preparing us for a role we're going to step into. And if nothing else, life in general. Because, they're not going to just say ‘Here, just go.’” (Male)*

- *“That would be the only reason that I think they might want to tell us what happened [regarding details of a sexual assault case] and what they did just because they are training us to hopefully someday maybe try and deal with something like that. I'm sure it will probably happen once, at least, when we're an officer. And if they don't tell us what happened and what they did, we have to make own mistakes then, which isn't necessarily bad, but it would be better to learn from other people or at least see what they did well and how it turned out.” (Male)*
- **Others indicated their training is focused on cadet life.**
  - *“I don't think they teach us much outside of the Academy.” (Female)*
  - *“Rather than listening to the same thing we listen to every day and just hearing what unrestricted and restricted reporting is, actually bring in a commander. I don't know if you can do that or if it's confidential or whatever, but something along the line that they can tell us about an experience they've had.” (Female)*

### **Most Effective Training Methods**

- **Focus group participants indicated that interactive and scenario-based training is most effective.**
  - *“That one guy that came and just talked about that court case was a good one. It was very effective.” (Male)*
  - *“I think the fact that we didn't just walk away from it [the speaker who discussed a court case] saying, ‘Oh, there's another hour I have to go to some PowerPoint presentation.’ People were talking about it. There was controversy. People were discussing it. It was really setting us up for the open flow of information, rather than just having something drilled into us on an overhead.” (Male)*
  - *“We had a lawyer come in and he was telling us about a case that he had done that was a trial between a sexual assault. He didn't even draw any conclusions, he just laid out the facts and let us see how our own class would vote. Half thought the guy was guilty and half thought he was innocent. It just led to a lot of discussion among the cadets. And he didn't use PowerPoint.” (Female)*
  - *“There was one speaker that we had that I thought was pretty effective. They pulled a video of a girl getting drugs dropped in her drink and stuff like that. You just sat there and watched it happen and saw how people reacted. I thought that was more effective than just somebody briefing on what reactions are, what percent of people would actually do something. It was better than just a straight-up PowerPoint.” (Male)*

- *“I think a focus group like this gets the point across a lot more than the CPME [Cadet Professional Military Education] lessons about sexual harassment.” (Female)*
- *“Oh, that was really good [a rape victim who spoke recently]. She was such a powerful speaker. All she did was joked around, which on our crowd, you need to joke around. And then all of a sudden, she just hit you, and it was completely serious. And you could tell all the guys are like, ‘Oh my gosh.’ The guys were affected by it.” (Female)*
- *“Our AMT [Academy Military Trainer] makes the slides personal and he makes them come alive, like you have the responsibility to protect the women in your squadron. It's hard to describe, really. It's the personality that he uses. He's not our superior. He's someone who has a responsibility also to his wife and his kids and his daughters and that kind of thing. And then he shares his personal experiences and doesn't just this bullet, this bullet, this bullet. You know, he goes through it and talks about it, here's how you can do this. This is why you need to do this.” (Male)*
- **Guest speakers are also effective when they have a message that engages the students.**
  - *“She [Veranda Jackson] really brought it home and it affects your whole life, or the person, the victim. It doesn't just affect them for a month or two months. She said it ruined her marriage like 10 years later. So, it's a pretty big deal. It gives you something to think about before you go out and do something like that.” (Male)*
  - *“And I think a lot of it had to do with how she [Veranda Jackson] incorporated the motivational factors. Because a lot of times with our sexual assault briefings, it's just saying a sexual assault briefing is like, ‘Oh, gosh, I'm going to be asleep. It's death by PowerPoint.’ But when she put the motivational factor in there would sexual assaults here, but you deserve to be here, you're strong, you're going to succeed, all of that stuff, and it was awesome.” (Female)*

### **Least Effective Training Methods**

- **Focus group participants indicated that PowerPoint-based trainings are the least effective.**
  - *“If we're going to use the PowerPoint, making the slides your own, because some AMTs or AOCs are just going to go through a PowerPoint and be like, ‘This is what the PowerPoint says, and this is what PowerPoint said.’ You're sitting there and you're like, ‘I'm a freshman in college, I can read.’” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that presentations by a PEER (Personal Ethics and Education Representative) are not always effective.**
  - *“The PEERs tried to do one once and I know in our squad, it just didn't work. And I actually felt bad for them. If I was them, I'd be like, ‘I'm done talking to you guys.’ I think that's the worst thing. The CPME [Cadet Professional Military Education] lessons, they're stupid. But when they become a joke and everybody's laughing while there's a stupid movie on about sexual assault, which is a serious issue, but that's so ridiculous that everybody is joking about it.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants also indicated that negative training is counterproductive.**
  - *“It scares the girls [a reenactment of a man who went to jail for raping a woman]. And then you lose a little bit of trust. You don't want to lose that trust with your friends. That's what I hated about it. It was trying to make us scared of people we went through basic with, people that we're low crawling beside us, stuff like that. That's what I hated so much about it.” (Female)*
  - *“Some of the USAFA briefings just scares the crap out of us. Like you're telling us that these guys that we would trust with our lives on a battlefield would rape us. But, eventually you're going to go into battle with these guys. I don't want to be thinking that, ‘Oh, would this guy try to drug me while we're in the bar or something like that?’” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that some mixed male/female training sessions are ineffective.**
  - *“That one [training during basic] was just awkward. My AOC [Air Officer Commanding] is a man. We're with mostly guys. There's only a few girls in my freshman part of the squad. And so it was all of the freshmen girls are just completely sitting there, and of course all of the guys. But they just don't know how to be not awkward about it. So then it's just the awkward just kind of passes around the group. It kind of sucks not hearing what the guys' opinions are, but at the same time it's, like, thank God, because now it's not that horrible, awkward feeling.” (Female)*

### **Suggested Training Options**

- **Focus group participants indicated that fewer training sessions, in smaller groups, would be more effective.**
  - *“Maybe smaller groups and like one a year or one a semester max. Because if it's in a smaller group, it's less easy to turn it into something that you can just ignore or something that you turn into a joke. And if it's less often, you're more*

*likely to not already know what she's going to say. If she clicks on the slide and you can tell her what's going to be next, there's a problem.” (Female)*

- *“During CPME [Cadet Professional Military Education], which are like mini briefings we have Tuesday and Thursday morning, usually our AMT [Academy Military Trainer] in our squadron gives them, sometimes the AOC [Air Officer Commanding]. When our AMT just sits down and talks to us, he makes it funny sometimes. Not that there's anything funny about rape, he doesn't do that. He makes it interesting. He really almost convicts you to be a man and stand up and protect the women in your squadron and not let stuff slip by.” (Male)*
- **Some group participants indicated that they prefer mixed-gender training on sexual assault.**
  - *“They should definitely be coed. When I see the freshmen now and they're going to sexual assault briefings – and why are we dividing them up so early already? If we're America's best and brightest, why don't we just have common sense for the situation of awareness education. Combine male and female cadets together in the room and say, ‘Here's the situation, how would you handle it?’” (Female)*
  - *“I think too much emphasis is put on the fact that it would be uncomfortable [to have mixed-gender sexual assault training]. I feel it's an uncomfortable subject and if we're actually going to deal with it in real situations, we should be able to handle that in a briefing.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that addressing the role of alcohol in sexual assault would be beneficial.**
  - *“It seems like a lot of sexual assault cases occur in a real alcohol-rich environment. So I think one of the most valuable trainings that the Academy can give cadets has to do with alcohol and controlling it and not overdoing it with alcohol. I think trainings on alcohol can help prevent sexual assault and also it will help whether or not you're in the best mental state to be able to make good choices before it gets out of their hands or something like that, or vice versa.” (Male)*

### **Self-Defense Training**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they receive unarmed combat training.**
  - *“The girls get self-defense class. We take boxing and they take self-defense. That's freshman year, and then junior year we all take unarmed combat one and unarmed combat two. That's theoretically, I guess, a deterrent or a way to fight it [sexual assault] off.” (Male)*

- *“The fighting skills that you learn in unarmed combat are valuable, but I think a bigger part of unarmed combat is the self-confidence that you get that you can handle yourself in a situation like that. I was in unarmed combat and they paired me with a guy who weighed 230 pounds. I didn't do well, but I was able to hold my own. It was a big confidence booster, just to know that if somebody who is bigger than me attacks me, that I still have some ability to fend them off to some degree. And so especially for smaller females who have a big guy that comes after me, there's nothing I can do. I think unarmed combat helps to dissuade them off.” (Male)*
- *“I think some of the skills they teach you in UC2 [unarmed combat 2], they teach you enough that you could maybe fend him off for five minutes while you scream your head off. I don't think they teach you enough – I don't think they could teach you enough to actually get away or incapacitate him, because he's a lot stronger than you. But I think you could hold them off until you get help.” (Female)*
- *“Maybe there's like a confidence maybe that comes with just even having seen what those things are like, but not something significant. But I do think that the UC1 class, which is essentially the same as our self-defense class, is more useful because there's males in it. When it's a bunch of females in self-defense class and you're a little freshman, you can't get anything out of it. There's not enough intensity. There's no realism. It's really pathetic.” (Female)*

**Appendix**  
**2009 Focus Group Protocol**

## Focus Group Guide

### Introduction to the Focus Group

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 for the past four years some students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year the survey will not be administered, but a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide information to DoD and Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted all three Service Academies as well as the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

<b>Time for briefing and introductions: 5 minutes</b>
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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 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.
  - Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. While the press and others may claim to know what is going on at the Academies, members of Congress, Secretary Gates, and your senior leaders want to hear directly from you and they will get the survey results, as well as your Superintendent.
  - The focus group results will go to these 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.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and I will co-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. It is also mandatory for you to protect the privacy of comments made within this session when you leave.
- Although we will keep anything discussed confidential and we ask that all participants keep it confidential, we cannot guarantee that what is said will be kept confidential.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Any questions?

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 by discussion issues of reporting gender issues.

<b>Time for Question 1: 15 minutes</b>
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## 1. Reporting

- Do you understand the difference between restricted and unrestricted reporting of sexual assault? (warm up question)
  - Please describe the difference.
  - Why would you choose one over the other?
- How do you define sexual assault? Are you aware that sexual assault as defined in the UCMJ includes more than attempted or completed rape? Read the definition of unwanted sexual contact.
  - Does this definition affect whether you would report an incident of sexual assault?
  - Does your training address unwanted touching as sexual assault?
- The 2008 survey revealed more incidents of sexual assault at all the Academies than is officially reported. Why do you think there is such a gap between reported sexual assault and survey findings?
  - What can your leadership do to encourage more victims to come forward to report sexual assault?
    - Probe for actions that can be taken by senior leaders, company/squadron leaders, SARCs, support personnel, legal staff, security/investigative personnel, counseling centers, etc.

- Do you think it is possible for victims to make anonymous reports?
    - (If no) Do you think more (valid) reports would be made if victims could make truly anonymous reports?
    - Would you feel confident about the anonymous nature of an online report?
    - Can you suggest a way that a truly anonymous report could be made?
  - Our survey results indicated (Read for each Academy: 0.6% USMA; 2.4% USNA; 1.4% USAFA; 2.4% USCGA) male students experienced sexual assault, but none reported the incident. Are students more or less willing to report incidents of sexual assault when the victim is a male? Why?
  - Our survey results indicated (Read for each Academy: 7% of women and 1% of men at USMA; 5% of women and 1% of men at USNA; 7% of women and 1% of men at USAFA; 3% of women and 0% of men at USCGA) indicated they experienced stalking and felt in danger of physical harm or sexual assault—do those numbers sound high or low to you?
    - What are some examples of stalking behaviors?
    - Does cyber-stalking occur? Please describe.
    - Do you know how to report stalking?
    - What action would you expect to have taken if you did report being stalked?
    - What reasons would someone give for not reporting stalking?
  - Do students experience sexual harassment? (Provide examples of sexual harassment based on crude/offensive behavior, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion after they have had a chance to discuss for a few minutes).
    - Do you know how to report sexual harassment? If someone said “I formally reported sexual harassment,” what does that mean to you?
    - What action would you expect to have taken if you reported being sexually harassed?
    - What reasons would someone give for not reporting sexual harassment?
- When does unwelcome humor become sexual harassment?

OK, now let’s switch gears and talk about the offenders, that is the people who commit sexual assault.

**Time for Question 2:  
15 minutes**

## 2. Offenders

- Do you know anything about the types of people who are the offenders in sexual assault? For example, do you think they are typically Academy people or people from the local community?
  - Do you think there could be any predators or repeat offenders at (USMA, USNA, USAFA, USCGA as appropriate)? By this we mean a premeditated, planned assault or someone who is determined to have sex whether or not there is consent. For example, a student who planned ahead of time to get a peer drunk to enable them to have sex with that person. How would you define a predator at the Academy?
  - How do you find out about cases of sexual assault?
- Your Academy wants to stop sexual assaults before they happen. What can be done to stop a potential offender before he or she takes action?

- Is there a climate or culture at the Academies where unhealthy sexual attitudes and improper behaviors are condoned or encouraged?
- Is there any training or action the Academy can provide that would be helpful to students in protecting themselves from sexual assault? For example, protecting your drink, stopping jokes or overtly sexual talk. (If such training already exists, ask if it is helpful in reducing sexual assault.)
- Can friends or bystanders be more effective in intervening when a situation develops that might lead to sexual assault?

We have talked a while about sexual assault offenders, now I want to talk to you a little about culture and how that impacts sexual assault.

<p><b>Time for Question 3: 15 minutes</b></p>
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### 3. Factors Influencing Gender-Related Behaviors

- Do you think stalking or harassment are precursors to sexual assault? Discuss.
  - Are there other behaviors typically associated with sexual assault?
- When we read the comments some students made on the last survey, they indicated that a “sexist” culture is promoted by some upper classmen. What are your thoughts on that?
  - Do faculty or staff attitudes contribute to a “sexist culture?”
  - What are some cultural or climate factors that contribute to unwanted sexual contact?
- Some students indicated on the survey that they experienced unwanted sexual attention online or through emails. Does this happen often? Can you describe how this happens?

<p><b>Time for Question 4: 15 minutes</b></p>
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### 4. Sharing Information

- Are students likely to be completely honest on surveys or in focus groups like this one? Why/why not?
  - Do you trust the survey to be anonymous? (Explain that the surveys are conducted anonymously. Students are selected to participate, but no record is kept that can associate responses to an individual. Surveys are conducted via paper and pencil, with the respondents sealing the survey in a plain envelope and dropping it in a box at the survey location.)
  - Have you heard the results of the 2008 survey?
  - Have you heard the results of the 2007 focus groups?
  - Are there better ways to make students aware of results?
  - Are there better ways for Academy leaders to understand the dynamics of sexual assault?
- Do you think your Academy and Service leadership is serious about preventing sexual assault?
  - What could they do differently or better?
  - How about your civilian faculty and staff?
  - Do sports coaches and staff demonstrate support for prevention of sexual harassment/assault?

- The majority of students say sexual assault is no more or less of a problem since they became a student at the Academy?
  - Do you think things have changed since you became a student? How have things changed?
  - Do you think more progress should have been made? Why?
  - Is this also true for sexual harassment?
- Now let's talk about "victim blaming." Victim blaming is when there is the perception that the victim was responsible for the assault. For example, the victim encouraged advances by the offender or placed himself/herself in the wrong place at the wrong time.
  - Does this occur in some instances? Please describe an example for me.
- We are going to discuss commonly held beliefs, including misconceptions, about sexual assault?
  - Do some women say they were raped to get out of trouble, such as being caught having sex in the dorm? Do you believe that happens?
  - Do some women say they were raped because they later regretted having sex with someone?
  - If someone lies about being sexually assaulted or raped, do they get away with it? Do they receive punishment?
  - What are other common beliefs at your Academy regarding sexual assault, victims, and offenders?
  - How does that affect true victims of sexual assault in their willingness to come forward?
- We hear in our focus groups and comments to our survey that people who engage in offensive behavior will typically stop when asked, but we also know from survey data that not everyone is willing to confront another person over offensive behavior.
  - Why would someone hesitate to confront another person over objectionable behaviors?
  - What does the Academy teach about social responsibility and communicating to others that you are uncomfortable about their behaviors? How does someone develop a sense that their behaviors are offensive if no one tells them?

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

<p><b>Time for Question 5: 15 minutes</b></p>
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**5. Training (optional question if time permits for USMA, USNA, and USAFA. Ask for USCGA)**

- Students have expressed the opinion that the training about sexual assault occurs too often and is less effective when given as a PowerPoint presentation. Has the training improved in the past year?
  - What type of training is most effective?
  - What do you think about interactive training, such as scenario type training (tailor to each Academy)?
  - Has training in sexual harassment also improved in the past year?

- What is the balance between training about sexual assault and sexual harassment? More emphasis on one versus the other?
- Does (USMA, USNA, USAFA, USCGA as appropriate) provide any training on basic physical self defense?
  - If not, would you like to receive such training?
  - Should basic physical self-defense training be mandatory or optional?
  - Do you think this training should be co-ed or female only/male only?
  - What physical training could or should be replaced with basic self-defense training and why?

I said that you are the experts on Academy life and as the last topic for today I want to see what your recommendations are for improvements.

<b>Time for Question 6: 15 minutes</b>
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## 6. Recommendations

- What more can the Academy or your Service do to decrease the incidence of sexual assault?
- What can students do to reduce sexual assault?
  - How can friends and bystanders be more effective?
  - What can students do to create a climate of respect?
- What more can the Academy or your Service do to decrease the incidence of sexual harassment?
- What can students do to reduce sexual harassment?
  - How can friends and bystanders be more effective?
- Are there issues we should know about that you would like to see action taken on? What action?

Do you have any final comments you would like to make?

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. Thank you again for your participation.

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