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The Influence of the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention
Program on Norms and Society in the United States Army

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**This paper and research by the author does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the U.S. Army or Department of Defense.

Abstract

How effective has SHARP been in preventing Sexual Assault and Harassment in the US Army?

The U.S. Army has used the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention program (SHARP) since 2008 as a way to address the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment among its ranks. However, current research by the Department of Defense show that the rate of both assault and harassment has not significantly declined over the years. Existing literature also discussed that there are a number of cultural norms within the Army and military as a whole that continue to perpetuate an environment where concepts of male masculinity and gender inequality exist. The research for this study involved conducting a survey of soldiers to get a better sense of how they thought the program influenced the Army as a whole and themselves as an individual. While the SHARP program is effective in educating soldiers that the problems of sexual violence exist, the key finding is that it does not target the societal and gendered norms that have existed in the Army that perpetuate a culture which is conducive to harassment and assault. By failing to do so, SHARP has had little effect in reducing the number of incidents. However, progress, such as increased reporting and increased awareness, highlight that SHARP is not inherently broken. Instead, it must evolve in its educational focus to have greater results in the reduction of sexual assault and harassment incidents in the future.

I. Introduction

Since the Aberdeen Scandal of 1996, the U.S. Army has made significant progress to create a response to the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in its community. Going through many changes in the past two decades, the Army has sought ways to effectively target the causes behind sexual assault and ultimately, reduce the number of incidents. To help attack these issues, the Army has relied on the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program to train and instruct soldiers how to file a report of an incident and how to recognize and prevent sexual violence. Yet how effective has the program been in the prevention of sexual harassment and assault? Although SHARP has helped educate soldiers to a far greater extent than the past, it has not done enough to create the environment among soldiers to change the cultural norms that influence their behavior that can lead to sexual harassment and assault. This failure has allowed the continuation of negative norms that enforce gender inequality and male hegemony in the Army.

The objective of this research paper is to evaluate the efficacy of SHARP to combat sexual harassment and assault and the norms that encourage sexual violence within the U.S. Army. In doing so, we will explore how the SHARP program has impacted the way soldiers think and act since the creation of the program in 2008. Through a review of data collected from a survey with soldiers, ranging from cadets to officers, whom SHARP is likely to have impacted the most, we discover the limitations of SHARP's ability to properly educate soldiers and prevent sexual harassment and assault. This paper also analyzes the statistics provided by the Department of Defense to understand if SHARP training has been successful in reducing the number of cases of sexual assault or if the program inadequately influences the norms behind sexual violence. More importantly, there will be a discussion on how SHARP enforces gender

inequality in the Army amidst a critical moment when leadership is currently attempting to integrate females into combat arms branches.

II. Historical Context

In 1996, the United States Army was rocked by its first public scandal regarding sexual assault in its ranks. Previously kept from the public eye, the Aberdeen Scandal exposed a serious problem in the Army that, at the time, they did not have the resources or institutional capabilities to adequately deal with. Twelve commissioned and non-commissioned male officers were charged with acts of sexual assault committed on female trainees while they were under their command. Rather than a focus on the lack of sexual assault and harassment training available to soldiers, leaders within the military blamed it on the individuals' desire to abuse their powers as trainers. The Army, with heavy public and political pressure, responded by quickly bringing charges against those accused of sexually assaulting the victims and establishing a hotline dedicated to receiving reports of sexual harassment and assault.¹ Yet, as the public eye moved away from the Army and the Aberdeen scandal, the motivation for progress quickly became stunted. Only 3 of the 12 charged perpetrators were punished, the military still lacked a formal process for reporting sexual misconduct, and it took until 1999 before the Army implemented fraternization policies prohibiting relationships between superior and subordinate (referring to Officer-Enlisted relationships).² It is important to note that this change did not come at the initiative of the Army. Rather, it was a directive issued in 1998 by the Secretary of Defense,

¹ The Aberdeen scandal revolved primarily around the drill Sergeants who had a contest to see who could sleep with the most trainees. Zumer, Dryna. "Retired APG General: The Players Change, the 'GAM' Remains the Same."

² Borlik, Alicia K. "Services Fraternization Policies." Services Fraternization Policies

William Cohen, instructing the military branches to reform their current policies regarding fraternization.

The call for strong institutional reform did not come about until 2004, when the Secretary of the Army established a task force to evaluate the Army's policies on reporting and addressing allegations of sexual assault. Recognizing the severe deficiency of any training or effective institutions to accommodate reports, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program was established. For the first time, victim advocates were provided to those making reports and there were processes that facilitated a coordinated sexual assault response effort involving investigators, the victim and perpetrator's chain of command, and medical resources.³

Although these were big steps forward for the Army, there were also a number of shortcomings. For example, the program stated that the responsibility of preventing sexual harassment is the sole responsibility of the commander, rather than being an individual task of every soldier. This logic influences a negative mindset that incidents are not an issue that concern the greater Army society, but rather, they are isolated events that only leadership must deal with. Additionally, while basic reporting information was provided, it lacked any explanation of the actual process. Training within the SAPR program was also barebones, only containing education of the definitions of sexual assault and harassment and a reiteration of the Army's policy on sexual assault, lacking any formal training for officers and instructors on how to educate their subordinates to be active bystanders.⁴

It wasn't until 2008 that the integration of SAPR and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment program formed the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention

³ "Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (Sharp) Program. *"STAND-TO!"*. United States Army, 29 Mar. 2011.

⁴ "Army Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program." Online Army Study Guide. QuinStreet, Inc., n.d. Web.

(SHARP) Program. Building upon the foundations of SAPR, SHARP seeks to better train leaders and soldiers in how to create a more positive environment and recognize offender tactics to stop assaults from occurring. More importantly, the intent is for soldiers to be fully educated on not only how to report, but also the processes that occur after reporting as well. At every U.S. Army training school such as Basic Combat Training, Advanced Individual Training, Basic Officer Leadership Course, and ROTC institutions, every soldier is required to undergo SHARP training. Beyond that, every year, soldiers, regardless of rank, are required to participate in a three-hour classroom facilitated discussion and watch two training videos with their unit. There is also a required online portion where soldiers must answer questions correctly at the end of training.⁵ However, with SHARP heading into its eighth year of implementation many soldiers feel that despite the vast institutional reforms in addressing sexual misconduct in the military, the program is still missing the point.

At a broad institutional level, sexual assault and harassment are problems that continue to plague the entire United States Military. Despite the growing efforts of the Department of Defense to adequately prevent and respond to sexual assault and harassment in the military, the number of cases for men and women remain at a disturbingly high level across all branches. For women in the military the rate so sexual assault exceeds the general American population. One in three have reported being assaulted while in the military. In contrast, one in five women in the civilian world have reported assault.⁶ Both the social science and medical communities have criticized the military's continued failure to effectively tackle this complex and pervasive issue.

⁵ "SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT RESPONSE & PREVENTION." *SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT RESPONSE & PREVENTION*. United States Army, n.d. Web.

⁶ Black MC, Basile KC, Breiding MJ, Smith SG, Walters ML, Merrick MT, Chen J, Stevens MR. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2011.

Most current literature on sexual assault as it pertains to the military continue to highlight one underlying issue: the root causes of sexual assault are imbued in the military culture of masculinity. While SHARP focuses on intervention, it does not address normative influences that are dominant in Army culture, such as objectification of women and concepts of masculinity.

III. Literature Review

Michelle A. Mengeling et al., Carl Andrew Castro et al., and Rose Weitz discuss why servicewomen choose not to report incidents, the culture that contributes to sexual assault, and the overall fear of rape that persists in military culture for women service members, respectively. These articles help frame the effect of sexual assault in the military and highlight the specific fears that women have in military culture. Yet, these articles have a limited perspective due to their focus on women, failing to report on how men perceive this culture. Despite this, they provide invaluable insight on how the culture within the Military and the Army have influenced how they think and act, especially since women make up the majority of victims in sexual harassment and assault incidents.

A Trend of No Confidence

In their paper, *“Reporting Sexual Assault in the Military: Who Reports and Why Most Servicewomen Don’t”*, Mengeling et al. report results from an original survey of serving and veteran servicewomen both in the active duty component and the Reserve and National Guard. They reveal that sexual assault is vastly underreported among the ranks--in their survey, only 25% of those who were victims of sexual assault officially reported the incident. Yet, while this statistic is similar to the one provided by the Department of Defense in their annual report on

sexual harassment and assault, it is interesting that they have discovered that women with some college education were less likely to report compared to those with a high school education or less.⁷ Additionally, the study points out that 52% of respondents stated that they were too embarrassed to report the attack and 42% believed that filing a report would have a negative impact on their military career.⁸

The findings of Mengeling et al. imply that as one achieves higher rank in the military, there is a higher sense of discouragement to report sexual assault. Since an undergraduate bachelor's degree is a standard requirement for officers in the military, those less likely to report an incident of sexual assault can be confidently presumed to be officers. The promotion of officers tend to be highly political and extremely competitive causing some to believe that reporting an incident may slow their career due to an investigation or that it may reflect negatively upon them. As officers, they may also want to avoid appearing weak to the soldiers they command, especially if they are already feeling vulnerable from an incident.

While Mengeling et al. make interesting discoveries, their study is specifically focused on servicewomen hailing from Midwestern states at the time of joining the military or during their service. There may be a number of regional influences that could have affected their responses, especially since there is a high concentration of large military installations in the states selected by the authors (Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas) that are catered to male-dominated fields. For example, Missouri is home to Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base. Fort Leonard Wood is home to the Military Police and Combat Engineers where

⁷ Mengeling, Michelle A., Brenda M. Booth, James C. Torner, and Anne G. Sadler. "Reporting Sexual Assault in the Military." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 71, no. 1 (2014): 19.

⁸ Mengeling, Michelle A., Brenda M. Booth, James C. Torner, and Anne G. Sadler. "Reporting Sexual Assault in the Military." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 71, no. 1 (2014): 21.

only one-fourth of that force are women and Whiteman AFB is home to the 509th Bomb Wing, where almost all pilots are male. The Air Force has nearly 13,000 pilots, however only 676 are women. The women interviewed are already in a specifically male-dominated area for the Military. The authors also conducted their research primarily through telephone interviews—a method that gave them low response rates. The low response rate may not allow them to get a sample size that is reflective of the military, and only those who are particularly invested in the issue may make the effort to set aside time to conduct the phone interview. Additionally, this study can benefit from male service members' opinions on the reporting of sexual assault in order to see if their beliefs are similar to women.

Looking at the Roots of the Issue

Expanding beyond the Mengeling paper, Castro et al. look deeper into the root causes that potentially influence both sexual assault and the culture that promotes the norms that discourage reporting. They discuss a “Code of Silence” that persists within the ranks of the military where victims “do not report or seek help because they believe nothing will be done or they fear retaliation or negative repercussions.”⁹ Citing statistics from the Department of Defense, across the entire military, they found that a shocking 62% of women who reported sexual assault experienced retaliation of some sort. Yet, only 10% of reported assaults lead to any conviction at all.

The issue, they find, is the military culture that encourages service members to resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level, allowing for harassing behaviors to remain unreported and

⁹ Castro, Carl Andrew, Sara Kintzle, Ashley C. Schuyler, Carrie L. Lucas, and Christopher H. Warner. "Sexual Assault in the Military." *Current Psychiatry Reports* 17, no. 7 (2015):3.

to discourage soldiers from utilizing their chain of command. By acting against or beyond this norm of conflict resolution at the lowest level, those that do report tend to face social repercussions from their peers, singled out as someone unwilling to work things out or blamed for ruining the perpetrator's career. This stems from an overall concept of leadership responsibility where leaders feel that sexual misconduct that occurs within their command climate will be blamed on them, leading these leaders to "convince [victims] not to formally report the incident."¹⁰ If the victim does report, despite a leader telling them not to, it could lead to the leader encouraging the social isolation of the victim by assigning the victim extra duty or not including the victim in activities. With a discouragement from immediate supervisors such as NCOs or company leadership, those who break the "code of silence" by reporting their assault are seen as dissidents that betray the unit and therefore face a social isolation from those within their unit. The mechanisms of a report tend to be destructive to a unit, regardless of guilt or innocence. The accused or the victim (or both) is often transferred to another unit and trust and cohesion suffer a tremendous blow. Yet even then, it is up to the commander to even begin this process and initiate an investigation. For example, if a Private informs her immediate higher-up, such as a Sergeant, of an assault and the Sergeant does not believe the Private, then he can make the decision not to report it to the commander of their unit. Even if he does, the commander of the unit may just transfer the accused without initiating an actual investigation. This is why conviction rates may be particularly low.

Moreover, the "Military's emphasis on resiliency as a measure of personal strength can...serve to stop military personnel who have been sexually assaulted from reporting the

¹⁰ Castro, Carl Andrew, Sara Kintzle, Ashley C. Schuyler, Carrie L. Lucas, and Christopher H. Warner. "Sexual Assault in the Military." *Current Psychiatry Reports* 17, no. 7 (2015):5-6.

crime...[for] being weak and unable to solve his/her own problems.”¹¹ And while current sexual assault prevention training provided by the military seeks to change this perception, Castro et al. view the programs as too broad, only providing legal definitions for sexual assault and harassment and instructions how to use the reporting process as opposed to targeting specific gendered norms. Additionally, the training requirements force service members to “check the box”, fulfilling the training just for the sake of completing it, potentially failing to retain the knowledge provided.

Big Girls Don't Cry

Specifically focusing on the cultural impact of sexual assault in the military, “*Military Women, Military Culture, and Fear of Rape*” by Rose Weitz explores how a culture of fear can affect not only an individual’s belief of her place in her society, but how it can also continue to emphasize negative norms that already exist in the culture. The basic fear of rape “keeps women in their place” and intrinsically reinforces gender inequality by discouraging women from seeking out positions that are traditionally dominated by men.¹² This gender inequality is exacerbated by the constant view that women are sources of vulnerability—weak and incapable of defending themselves—in which males must serve as a “protector”. Weitz points out that the military’s popular policy of having “battle buddies” to prevent sexual assault holds women “responsible for preventing rape”. Especially after undergoing sexual assault prevention training, there is a reinforcement of the idea that male sexual predators are everywhere. These points of analysis continue to add to women’s sense of vulnerability where they feel constantly

¹¹ Castro, Carl Andrew, Sara Kintzle, Ashley C. Schuyler, Carrie L. Lucas, and Christopher H. Warner. "Sexual Assault in the Military." *Current Psychiatry Reports* 17, no. 7 (2015):6.

¹² Weitz, Rose. "Vulnerable Warriors: Military Women, Military Culture, and Fear of Rape." *Gender Issues* 32, no. 3 (2015): 165 .

under threat by the brothers they are serving beside. Yet, she also finds that for some, continually training and working with males may actually help women feel like they belong with males and may lessen fear of sexual assault. The issue, in a sense, boils down to refocusing the training of sexual assault prevention to the issue of male dominance and masculinity and helping women accept their role in military culture where they view themselves as equals to males in all aspects of their service.

By conducting in-depth interviews with a number of servicewomen, Weitz is able to explore much deeper into the personal experiences of women that have been subject to sexual assault and harassment. However, because of the depth of those interviews, Weitz's sample size consists of only 25 participants. While the data and experiences collected help shed light on the issues faced by women in uniform, there may be an inherent bias in her findings due to the number of participants and the semi-structure of her method. A sample size of only 25 females is unlikely to be representative of the military since about only 14.5% of the total forces are women and the majority of sexual assault by numbers. Additionally, the women who have taken the time to interview are more likely to have been more invested to participate in the subject of the study due to a previous negative experience. Additionally, due to the structure of her method, there is little quantifiable data provided that can be used to analyze the issue as a whole. While this paper allows us to see this issue in an illustrative manner, it prevents us from looking at the issue from a systemic point. Males may also bring a different perspective, since a significant number are also victims.

Moving Forward

Prior work suggests that current prevention programs are inadequate to solving the daunting issue of sexual assault and harassment. However, I believe that it will be difficult to

look at the Department of Defense as a whole. Each branch of the military has different objectives, cultures, norms, and perspectives that affect their respective members in their own way. While the issue of sexual assault is shared by the entire Department of Defense, it is the responsibility of each individual branch to reduce incidents within their own service. This report will look specifically at the United States Army, which has attempted to undergo extreme policy changes within the Department of the Army in the past decade to address this issue.

Additionally, SHARP is a program uniquely designed by the Army, for the Army. Other branches such as the Department of the Air Force and the Department of the Navy have prevention programs unique to their branches. Therefore, this study can only be applied to the U.S. Army. Like Mengeling and Castro, the bulk of my data comes from reports compiled by the Department of Defense, however, this paper also collects data separate from the DOD to ask more specific and qualitative questions, much like those found in the Weitz article.

The content of the articles also help frame the remainder of this paper. In order to evaluate how SHARP failed the Army, there must first be an understanding of the beliefs behind the cult of masculinity that is present in the Army today. Opinions from both men and women are equally important in order to gain a brighter picture of the culture of the Army seen from all perspectives, and not of those of just a single gender, as it may lead to certain biases in our research. Furthermore, as Castro et al. suggests, there must be a specific focus looking into the actual sexual assault prevention programs and look at how it affects views of soldiers and the norms of their culture in regards to these issues, a key focus of this paper's analysis. Though only providing a broad look at sexual assault in the military, the articles help highlight where to pinpoint more research to be conducted to better understand how to improve the culture of the

military, or in this article's case, the Army, and better provide a space that encourages reporting and reduces the gendered norms that allow these assaults to continue.

IV. Uncovering the Issues

Context

To get a feel for the general attitude towards SHARP, a survey of 54 cadets, enlisted soldiers (E1-E9), and officers (O1-O6) was conducted where individuals were asked to answer questions regarding their experiences with SHARP, the problems they see with the program, the benefits of the program, and how they would potentially change it. Additionally, participants were questioned regarding their perception of their chain of command. While the military conducts required annual climate surveys, the purpose of my survey was to pull subjects away from the official atmosphere and letterhead of the US Army so that soldiers have the space to comment openly and honestly without fear of reprisal.¹³ A personal interview of Lieutenant Colonel Shawn Schuldt was also conducted at the Harvard Kennedy School where he is a national defense fellow. He served as the Chief of Plans and Operations of the SHARP program from 2014-2015. While at the 2015 Army Leadership Conference at Harvard University, LTC Schuldt offered to answer questions and offer insight regarding his experience from his assignment to the SHARP program specifically for this study.

Participants responded to my emails and social media posts on Facebook¹⁴ requesting participation and did so upon their own initiative. These emails were sent to peers, a commander of a ROTC program, and officers with whom I have come into contact in my career as a ROTC

¹³ Department of Defense. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. *DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response*.

¹⁴ Posts were made in two different Facebook groups of Army members.

cadet. They were asked to share their link at their own discretion, if they could do so without violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice or the United States Army Public Affairs Guidelines. Additionally, the Facebook group where the survey link and information were posted is the site of a number of verified current soldiers and veterans where membership is granted through prior association with the unit. This site hosts Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard soldiers, most of whom are commissioned officers. I decided to contact people I have a personal connection to largely because an active dissemination of the survey link through official chain of command methods would require this study to be vetted and approved by Army Judge Advocate Generals (JAG) and the Department of Defense Institutional Review Board. The method of using personal and informal methods of contact circumvents this requirement. Due to this, the size of this study was somewhat limited. If the DOD had approved the study, commanders can issue the survey link officially to their soldiers and can require participation, which would increase the sample size. However, the benefits of recruiting in this matter allows participants to provide more honest responses since they are not forced to take it. Additionally, because this is not an Army survey, respondents are more likely to feel more comfortable providing candid responses. The questions used in the survey are attached as Appendix A. The method in which the surveys were conducted were through the Boston University Qualtrics Survey Software.

The youngest participant is 18 while the oldest is 53, with the majority of respondents being in the 21-25 year old range, representative of the largest age group of the Army. In terms of gender, 64% were male while 36% were female. There is a higher rate of female response for this survey than what is represented in the Army. Females represent about 14% of the total

active-duty strength of the U.S. Army. There was a large response from the officer and cadet corps where 44% of responses came from cadets in the U.S. Army, 35% came from junior-grade officers (O1-O3), 10% came from field-grade officers (O4-O6), and only 12% came from strictly enlisted personnel (E1-E9). Officers only represent 16% of the military yet form the majority of this study and may therefore not fully capture the opinions and perspective of the enlisted corps. This study does not differentiate cadets have prior enlisted experience, which many may have. This breakdown may lead to a greater bias from the perspective of commissioned officers who are the ones who process SHARP incidents and lead SHARP training. (Refer to table 1 for a table of summary statistics.) Additionally, 13% of respondents indicate that they have been victims of sexual harassment and/or assault while serving in the U.S. Army which is greater than the 3.68% of all active duty Army personnel who experience sexual assault while in the Army and the 9.8% who have experienced harassment.¹⁵ However, this is most likely due to the small sample size of 54 participants compared to the DOD's study that involved over 500,000 soldiers.¹⁶

The data collected from individuals are used both quantitatively and qualitatively to see if there is a common trend of major themes and ideas. Since I do not have a completely representative sample, there is likely to be a more positive bias in the assessment of SHARP since this study is mostly comprised of officers, who are far less likely to experience assault than those who are enlisted. Because of this, we are more likely to learn about how SHARP is perceived by leaders who are responsible for implementing SHARP training, rather than those who only experience the training by itself. While this does contribute a bias to my results, it is

¹⁵ *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study.* Pg. 21, 34.

¹⁶ *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study.* Pg. 6.

still relevant to the overall question since officers would be better suited to oversee the overall effectiveness of SHARP to begin with. These findings, however, still serve as an illustration to help recognize the social effect of SHARP.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Preliminary Findings

“Is sexual assault a problem in the Army?” A staggering 86% of respondents in my survey believe that sexual assault is a problem in the U.S. Army. This shows that these soldiers are aware that issues exist. Yet, when questioned “Do you believe enough is being done to combat sexual harassment and assault in the Army?” 46% of those respondents believe that the Army is doing enough to combat this issue, leaving 54% convinced that the Army can make more of an effort to respond to this community issue. Looking at Figure 1, “Do you believe the Army's Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP) is effective?”. Two-thirds of respondents in this study's survey have little to no confidence in the efficacy of SHARP, and 48% stated they have a low confidence in the program and 18% stated they have no confidence in it at all. In contrast, about 34% of respondents feel that SHARP is the right response to the issue, stating they have a moderate or high confidence—although it is important to note that only 10% actually rated SHARP with high confidence. Figure 1 also highlights that women are less likely to believe that SHARP is effective. 73% of females stated they have low or no confidence in the program. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to believe that SHARP is effective where 37% of males stated a moderate to high confidence. Yet the majority of males, still have little confidence that SHARP is effective. While a significant

amount of participants feel the Army is doing enough and that they have confidence in SHARP, there is an issue when at least half of the soldiers surveyed, regardless of gender, think that SHARP and the issue of sexual assault in the military needs to be looked at closer. Moreover, with more women believing that SHARP is ineffective, it may speak to the programs inability to address issues of gender that persist in the Army.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

When asked to identify the root cause of sexual assault and harassment in the Army, the respondents for my survey were given the following options and asked to mark all they thought were appropriate: Low Education, Low Economic Standing, Individual Predispositions, Culture of Masculinity, and Other. Referring to Figure 2, Individual Predispositions, was the most popular choice chosen by 66% of all respondents. However, 58% of respondents also thought that the Army's culture of masculinity is a root cause of SHARP incidents, underlining that while an individual may be predisposed towards behaviors of sexual assault or harassment, the Army's culture may encourage some to act on their predispositions of violence and control. This also indicates that the belief that a culture of masculinity exists due to norms that allow gender inequality to exist. In fact, 72% of women believed that a culture of masculinity is to blame for sexual assault and harassment whereas 50% of men chose the same answer, suggesting that women feel they are vulnerable in a culture very much dominated by concepts of masculinity. 28% consider that a low amount of education (in an academic sense) may play a role and an even smaller 14% believe the socioeconomic status of an individual plays a role in their behavior that leads to sexual assault and harassment.

For the 24% of those who responded with "other", they were asked to elaborate. Many of the responses still play into an issue of masculinity. For example, one respondent wrote "*The*

dominance and power struggle of masculinity make a lot of women seem like a less superior group. Women are normally fairly treated while performing duty, but after hours and on down time, a lot of women are downgraded and talked about like whores”, continuing to point out that gender inequality plays a large role in how women are viewed and treated. Other responses such as “*Bad examples/Toxic leaders*”, “*Army Culture*” and “*Command Climate*” also bring up the point that, beyond a cult of masculinity, the failure of good role models may also be a root cause as to why sexual assault and harassment persist despite increased training and awareness.

Leading by Example

When conducting SHARP training, leadership fails when they do not properly educate soldiers and do not enforce the standard. According to a participant, “*Online training is difficult to police, ie. Ensure everyone has taken, understood it.*” Moreover, as another soldier simply puts, “*It’s just done to check the box.*” While the Army states that SHARP is a vital component to soldier readiness, it lacks the accountability that other required training has, such as physical fitness tests and weapon qualifications. Even the online training is being disregarded by those who take it. The online training consists of a set of videos lasting about 40 minutes and a brief quiz on the material. Participants of the survey were asked “Do you pay 100% attention to the SHARP Online training while completing it?”. 89% of soldiers said “NO”, they we’re not paying 100% attention to the training. Especially with the majority of the respondents being officers and cadets¹⁷—if the leaders who enforce the standard cannot give their full attention to the training, how can they expect their soldiers to do the same?

¹⁷ Cadets will commission as Army officers upon graduation and is a future leader in the Army organization.

With just barely one-tenth of the sample size actually giving their full attention to the online training, it is obvious that the training is not engaging enough to completely hold a soldier's attention. Yet, with the current program, there are no further checks that hold soldiers accountable for the information they were supposed to learn during their online training or during the required classes. This means that information regarding the reporting process—such as who to contact, where you can find them, what number to call, and your rights as a victim—could be ignored or misunderstood. Other things potentially missed by a soldier not paying attention to the training can also include bystander intervention tactics and situations that often lead to sexual assault. While there is a multiple-choice assessment at the end of training where one must obtain an 85% or higher to pass, the answers can be found through a simple Google search and plugged in very quickly, allowing the soldier to pass, whether or not anything was truly learned.

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Shawn Schuldt, Chief of Plans and Operations of the SHARP program from 2014-2015, made clear that while senior leaders are aware of the push needed to achieve the change in culture they want to see, lower level leaders, particularly from battalion commanders and below, need to “*keep pressing SHARP*” and enforce the standards. With leadership possibly neglecting on their duties as educators by rushing through the training and not checking to see if discussions are being conducted properly, there is no way see how systemic of a problem this is in the Army since commanders can essentially just check a box to say that SHARP training was completed. Doing so further impresses upon the next generation of leaders and soldiers in general that SHARP is a burden, not a necessary tool for creating cultural change in the Army. As a result, there is an absence of understanding to the effects of how the

prevalence of sexual commentary and objectification as a norm can affect a society in a way that allows sexual assault to continue.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

Reporting Incidents

According to Figure 3, sexual assault reports in the Army from 2012-2014 have risen to 2,525 reports from 1,572, but this does not necessarily indicate that sexual assaults are actually increasing. Instead, “The Army believes...Army leaders since FY (Fiscal Year) 12 have seemingly encouraged victims, who heretofore were reluctant, to come forward and report.”¹⁸ The initiatives by the Army to encourage soldiers to report sexual assault and for soldiers to motivate peers who have experienced assault to come forward have actually had modest success in encouraging the reporting of offenders. Yet with an estimated 8,500 sexual assault victims in the Army, over three-fourths of victims are still not reporting that they have been assaulted.¹⁹ Soldiers surveyed pointed out that a culture of trust and active leadership is important in the encouragement of reporting an incident.

[Insert Figure 4 here] [Insert Figure 5 here]

When asked about their trust in their chain of command’s ability to properly handle a SHARP report, 42% of soldiers who participated in the survey stated they had complete trust in

¹⁸ Department of Defense. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. *DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response*. Enclosure 1-Army. Pg 39.

¹⁷ Department of Defense. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. *DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response*. Enclosure 1-Army. Pg 39.

their chain of command. Another 42% also stated that they had a moderate amount of trust for their chain of command, while only 14% had low trust, and 2% had no trust at all. Similarly, 40% of soldiers stated that their chain of command completely promotes a positive culture, while again, only 2% did not think their chain of command did so at all. Looking at Figure 4 and Figure 5, it is surprising that both genders responded similarly with the trust and belief they have in their chain of command. With high ratings in trust and promotion of a positive culture, one would think that reporting rates would match more similarly to the number of estimated assaults that occur.

However, LTC Schuldt commented, *“The problem isn’t necessarily with their chain of command, but it can be with their immediate supervisors.”*²⁰ For example, if a Private or Specialist wanted to report an incident, the NCO that supervises them might dissuade them from reporting for a number of reasons—fear of breaking unit cohesion, not believing the victim, etc.²¹ One survey respondent wrote:

I reported that incident over 3 separate times to my commander and he did nothing. My battalion commander also did nothing. That made me choose to leave the Army (I was on over 11[years] at the time). Finally, my brigade commander listened to me and took action on his own accord and acted as my advocate - this led to me trusting IN the Army. I can't help wonder if he was afraid of getting fired if he did nothing or if he actually cared. Either way, it doesn't matter. I would have left had my brigade commander not took action.

²⁰ Reviewing the SHARP Summit of 2014 with LTC Shawn Schuldt. Personal Interview.

²¹ An immediate supervisor is part of a hierarchy in a unit or by virtue of rank. Being in the chain of command would require the officer to have direct Uniform Code of Military Justice capability over the specific soldier. For example, an NCO would not have this authority nor would a Lieutenant Colonel in charge of cadets despite being an immediate supervisor.

While at a senior level the chain of command is taking the issues of sexual assault and harassment seriously, it took much more effort than it should have for the victim to file a report. This initially caused disdain and bitter feelings not only towards her commander, but the Army as a whole, perceived through her initial decision to leave despite 11 years of service.

For the participants that indicated that they were sexually assaulted or harassed when asked²² (13% of total participants), they were asked, “If Yes, did you report your harassment and/or assault to your chain of command?”, 33% of them chose not to report the incident. Despite the positive command culture being fostered at a higher level, there are still factors that dissuade a victim from reporting such as fear of social and professional retaliation, shame, or just the need to move on with life. When asked for additional comments, a soldier described the experience with a superior officer after informing the officer of an assault that had occurred, “*I was accused by the officer for bringing it up. She made me feel like it was my fault for doing something wrong that caused me to be assaulted.*” Victim blaming can fuel the feelings of shame and helplessness that ultimately lead to non-reported incidents.

While the fear of shame or retaliation accounts for some instances of non-reporting, it would be incorrect to say that a failure to report stems from an absence of information. In fact, SHARP training openly provides the information necessary to report an incident and clearly defines the rights of the victim during the reporting process. An integral part of the program is knowing what to do if you become a victim of an assault or subject to harassment. Additionally, tactics of how to motivate other soldiers who are victims to make a report are involved. In being a vehicle to deliver information in order to increase awareness, SHARP is very effective. And

²² Participants were asked, “Have you been or are you a victim of Sexual Harassment and/or Assault while serving in the U.S. Army?”.

with the number of reports increasing, it seems to be having that effect. Yet, as stated earlier, SHARP training is not being taken seriously nor given full attention by soldiers who are taking the training. The Army themselves recognizes this issue stating that most soldiers, when doing online training, just “clicked through it”, meaning that training can be continuously clicked through without reading any of the content until the very end.²³ Moreover, the Army does not quantify how many victims filed a report due to the information provided by SHARP specifically, or if the information of the reporting process was gained through other means such as informational posters or pamphlets, or if a report was filed by going straight to their chain of command, military police authorities, chaplains, or medical personnel out of their own judgement instead of doing so because of training received under the SHARP program. This study fails to differentiate this as well. While the program may explain how to report, it does not include advice on how to overcome the fear of reporting beyond asking a “battle-buddy” for help, putting the burden on the victim to seek help themselves.

Despite having the all the proper information, a large number of sexual assaults remain unreported by soldiers emphasizing that the stigma of reporting is still prevalent in military culture. Although many feel that their chain of command will properly handle a report, the struggle to motivate victims to report in the first place is still ongoing. SHARP currently lacks any real training on the issues of social retaliation or victim blaming that a soldier may experience upon reporting and how the fear of being ostracized by his or her unit may force the victim to withhold a report. By not doing so, the norm of shunning or blaming a victim may be

²³ Department of Defense. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. *DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response*. Enclosure 1-Army. Pg. 30.

incentive enough to deter future victims from reporting, showing their assailants that they can get away with their behavior.

Sexual Harassment: A Bigger Problem Than We Think

Many think of sexual harassment as harmless talk, banter, and a part of Army culture. SHARP itself has become a joke. Soldiers use “SHARP” as a phrase sarcastically to describe moments of sexual innuendo or sexual commentary. Doing so creates the perception that not only is SHARP a word for ridicule in certain occasions, but also that sexual harassment and gender discrimination are being down played by the members of the Army society. Nearly 30% of all active-component women and 8% of all active-component men in the Army are estimated to experience sexual harassment, largely due to repeated occurrences of sexual jokes or, particularly for women, being told that a man would be better suited for a certain job or being treated differently at their workplace.²⁴ Particularly in the case of male soldiers, reporting can be seen as weak and unmanly—a tool used by women, not men, further enforcing gendered norms. And even then, women who use the process are regarded in a similarly negative manner. Despite the prevalence of sexual harassment, 49% of men and women that experienced sexual harassment chose not to report it due to not believing it was serious enough to report.²⁵ Yet the practice of ignoring or brushing off gendered comments or sexual harassment perpetuates the culture that allows sexual assault to continually occur.

The continuation of this norm is especially harmful due to the fact that about 35% of sexual assault victims reported being sexually harassed prior to their assault. Another 35%

²⁴ *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study.* Pg. 36-39.

²⁵ *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study.* Pg. 53.

reported sexual harassment after the assault had occurred.²⁶ For the approximately 49,000 soldiers who have experienced sexual harassment, about 15% of those victims were sexually assaulted. While a small percentage, it still accounts for nearly 7400 soldiers—nearly all of the estimated 8500 sexual assaults in the Army. The amount of sexual assault experienced by those who did not experience sexual harassment was quite the opposite, representing only about 0.4%.²⁷

For the thousands of soldiers assaulted, sexual harassment preceded sexual assault. While SHARP addresses sexual harassment by educating soldiers what would be considered harassment (going over phrases, potential actions, etc.) the training needs to be more personal to get soldiers to listen. One soldier surveyed suggested “*Panels with victims would certainly force individuals to take the training more serious.*” Participants were asked to evaluate the following question “Do you take SHARP training seriously?” 56% of soldiers said “not seriously”, 33% said “moderately serious”, and only 17% said “seriously”. With over half of those surveyed affirming that the program used to tackle a topic as serious as sexual assault and harassment cannot be taken seriously, it highlights the need to reexamine how SHARP is taught to reinforce the importance of the training.. If soldiers cannot take the training seriously, they cannot be expected to see cases of harassment as something serious as well.

Looking at how each gender responded independently, 59% of male soldiers said they take the training “not seriously” compared to the 51% of females that responded similarly. Additionally, while 22% of females took the training “seriously”, only 13% of males said they

²⁶ These percentages are mutually exclusive. Respondents chose either before or after, not both. Department of Defense. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. *Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military*.

²⁷ *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study*. Pg. 23.

did, indicating that males, to some extent, take the training rather lightly. With the majority of women feeling that the culture of masculinity is a root cause of sexual violence, it is troubling when almost two-thirds of males do not take training seriously. This puts into question how much males are actually learning and if they unknowingly perpetuate the gendered norms behind sexual harassment. Moreover, it shows that women are slightly more invested in the training than the men, especially since it may most likely pertain to them.

By increasing engagement where soldiers have an opportunity to physically interact with victims and empathize with what went through would help them better understand the effect of sexual harassment. This would allow soldiers to see sexual harassment beyond being a joke in bad taste, and influence more victims of sexual harassment to be willing to report offenders before it has the potential to turn into an assault. By reducing harassment, thousands of cases of assault can be prevented. However, the failure to police harassment within the ranks has led many to think that they can get away with their behavior and even assault. SHARP has yet to instill this norm in the Army—and while it is focused on changing the culture, many believe it still focuses on intervention not prevention.

The characteristics of harassment such as the objectification of women, the emasculation of men, and sexually lewd conversation must become taboo and absent from normal conversation in order for this change to occur. LTC Schuldt explained how society barely bats an eye at the usage of “*whore*”, “*bitch*”, “*cunt*”, and younger men, especially, see their peers and immediate supervisors use this language without consequence, either in a professional or non-military setting. Referring to how he would like to see SHARP evolve in the future, LTC Schuldt believed that, “*We need to create an environment where it’s completely unacceptable to use words like that. I want it to be where we think about it unconsciously. Where sexually*

derogatory words become as revolting as racial derogatory terms. The issue is male role-modeling because what they [young men] see is the norm.” Until the norm has changed where language such as this entirely prevented across all levels, there will be difficulty in containing the casual frequency of sexual harassment.

Evolving the SHARP Program

SHARP is in need of reform. However, this does not mean that it is a failure. In creating the program in 2008, the Army finally developed an institution capable of shifting culture and changing norms. LTC Schuldt specified, *“It hasn’t succeeded, it’s succeeding. You can’t put a past tense. It’s making changes. Tedious, but unless you’re relentless there will be no change.”* Though the program has been relentless in being constantly in the face of soldiers through mandatory training requirements, it has gained little ground in bringing about broad changes. Vital adjustments can be made to help SHARP evolve to better suit the needs and soldiers and influence more immediate progress in changing culture of the Army.

Many of the soldiers who participated in this study’s survey feel as if SHARP is one piece to a bigger solution—that society needs to work harder to address sexual assault in the civilian world. It is important to recognize that many soldiers believe that societal norms still apply to the Army, despite the vast differences between the military and civilian life. LTC Schuldt points out that one struggle they had in reforming SHARP in 2014 was that *“Cultural influences outside the Army affect the culture within the army that counter what should be right”*. In a sense, the military cannot control what soldiers are experiencing in the civilian world. And as stated earlier, some believe that the Army brings these norms out more than usual do to the unusual nature of the military and its culture of violence. In fact, women in the Army are being

assaulted at nearly twice the rate women are in the civilian world.²⁸ But by committing the training to bring about cultural change, the soldiers would be more likely to carry that mindset beyond a military environment.

A way of attacking the gendered norms that influence sexual assault and harassment and changing the overall culture is with small group education. A survey respondent urged for “*small group interactions. Online training feels like a checklist rather than training.*” And while small group discussions are a requirement, it is up to the commander on how to conduct that training. One soldier reveals, “*the live briefs are usually to a large crowd of soldiers*”, restricting the ability to facilitate in-depth and intimate discussions. There needs to be a greater accountability by leaders to ensure small group discussions are being properly conducted and facilitated. Commanders must use their intellect as leaders to prioritize SHARP training to fit in with their training schedules and, like all other training requirements, ensure that the standard is being properly met. For many, SHARP is just a matter of checking the box to show superiors that they have completed the training, regardless of whether or not they have comprehended the true message behind the program, something these discussions, under proper guidance, can help resolve.

Beyond the format, the content also must be revised. While a focus on prevention is still important and necessary to reducing sexual assault and harassment, there needs to be a greater discussion as to the culture and the norms within that allow it to occur. At the current moment SHARP targets the perpetrator and tries to tell them to stop. However, the Army needs to focus more on ensuring soldiers understand the issues and more importantly the behavior behind

²⁸ Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. Annex to Volume 2.

sexual assault. As one soldier puts it, “*Change the conversation. Stop talking about how to avoid or address sexual assault and start talking about why it happens and how to prevent it.*” By familiarizing soldiers to the conditions in which gender inequality and male hegemony thrive and how those conditions may later lead to a SHARP incident, they are more likely to question their behavior and examine if they contribute to this culture or passively allow it to exist.

While there are is no shortage of ideas of how SHARP can be improved, the bottom line soldiers have voiced is that the program needs to evolve from its current status to be less about administrative satisfaction and more about reaching out to soldiers more personally and educating them beyond intervention. In order to do so, there must be a greater push by leaders to motivate their soldiers to discuss these issues openly. However, there are some obstacles when it comes to potentially changing the program to fit the mold of small group discussions. With an active Army with over 500,000 personnel, there needs to be a way to have measurable and identifiable goals. LTC Schuldt points out, “*Small group discussion is the best, however, there is a technical aspect. What roles are there, what are my rights, who do I call. All of these fit online training.*” Online training is not only measurable, but it is also a necessity in a bureaucracy such as the Army. It provides them with data that is easy to measure and quantify—something that would be extremely difficult to do with small group training. Additionally, online training can be completed at various times throughout the day and at the soldier’s freedom. Group discussions can take soldiers away from doing their occupational training or tasks that are vital to national security.

Despite this, the Army must take the criticism at hand by its soldiers as it moves into its next phase of changes for the SHARP program. There is no excuse as to why the training cannot be not only more engaging, but also more focused on prevention through changing norms.

However, no true change can be brought about without confronting an issue often indirectly mentioned, but rarely ever focused upon in discussions of SHARP: gender inequality.

V. Effects on Gender Inequality

While sexual assault and harassment and its high rate of occurrence among females are indicative of gender inequality already existing in the Army, this section will explore how SHARP impacts existing norms in Army society, both negative and positive. It is easy to see where gender inequality exists in the Army today. Just a short time ago, rules and regulations prohibited females from being placed in branches whose direct purpose is combat. Despite requests for integration, the continued forced gender separation was a restriction of women's negative liberties.²⁹ It creates external pressures that explicitly prohibit women from making the choice to become a soldier in specific professions while men are free to make that choice to be potentially placed in the combat arms branches. And while this has recently changed, there has yet to be full-scale integration where women feel socially accepted to join these branches in large numbers. Additionally, of the nearly 200 PTSD programs throughout the country, only six are designed to specifically handle diagnosed women. While many more instances of gender inequality continue to occur in the Army, the most problematic seems to be sexual assault and the Army's approach to resolve the institutional norms surrounding the issue.

[Insert Figure 6 here]

²⁹ Hirschmann, Nancy J. *The Subject of Liberty toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*. Pg 30.

It comes to no surprise that of all reported sexual assaults in the fiscal year of 2014, approximately 72% of victims were female. Of those females assaulted, 94% of the attackers were male, 4% were a group of males and females, and 1% of attacks were from other women.³⁰ This is shown very clearly in Figure 6. Despite nearly three-fourths of all assaults being against females, perpetrated almost entirely by men, the Army's SHARP program does not have a targeted approach to address issues surrounding gender, instead, it pursues a rather gender-blind strategy to prevent sexual assault. The following are the training topics currently included in the program³¹:

- The definition of sexual assault
- The effects/risks of alcohol use
- How to recognize sexual aggression
- Escape tactics during physically threatening situations
- The nature of consent and the differences between consensual sex and rape/sexual assault
- How to intervene in potentially dangerous situations
- What to do if a sexual assault occurs
- How Army Values relate to the issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment

Yet these topics do not cover the core reasons behind sexual assault—social constructs and norms that support male hegemony. Instead, the training topics prepare soldiers how to react during a situation and how to stop the present situation from occurring. In doing so, it also places the burden of responsibility on the victim to figure out a way to take themselves out of the situation or depend on the intervention of others to help them. Rather, the training should be

³⁰ Annex to Volume 2. Tabular Results from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study for Department of Defense Service Members. Table A.7.d. Pg. 22.

³¹ DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. Enclosure 1-Army. Pg. 8.

about addressing the issues for perpetrators to stop in the first place without the victim (who would not be one) having to do anything at all.

Although it is important to educate soldiers on the topics listed above, the Army must look more specifically at reducing gender inequality. While the Army ought to focus on the issue of gender inequality as it pertains especially to women, it does not mean that they should downplay sexual assault that occurs among male victims. Targeting male dominance is likely to reduce assaults among males as well. Male victims who participated in the RAND study were more likely to say that the assault intended to be abusive or humiliating. 34% of male victims describe their assault as “hazing”, compared to the 7% of female victims who responded similarly. While assaults against women are committed more commonly by an individual male service member outside of the workplace and more likely to describe the intent as sexual, males described their assault as bullying or hazing.³² However, men are generally unlikely to file an official report of sexual assault. Only 3% of men who have indicated they experienced sexual assault actually reported it through official channels. The RAND corporation wrote in a 2015 report to the Secretary of the Defense that:

Whereas men and women chose not to report sexual assaults for many of the same reasons (such as wanting to forget and move on, not wanting more people to know about it, not wanting to be perceived as weak, or because they minimized the seriousness of the crime), men were more likely to say they did not report the crime because they feared they would be viewed as gay or bisexual if others learned of it.³³

³² Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study. Pg. 80-90

³³ Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military: Volume 2. Estimates for Department of Defense Service Members from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study. Pg 90-91.

Sexual assault, whether seen as hazing, for humiliation, or for sexual intentions are all characteristics that fit within the culture of male dominance. Members of the Army come from general society, so it is no surprise that societal norms follow them into the Army. There has long been institutionalized thinking that “man” is the standard. Male superiority is often perpetuated through the notion that women and even physically weaker men need to conform to that ideal.³⁴ The failure of the Army to include this in SHARP is why sexual assault continues to persist at such high proportions. Rather than solely focusing on “What is Sexual Assault and How do I Stop From Being Assaulted/How do I Stop From Assaulting Someone”, it should be “How Can We Stop the Creation of Perpetrators”.

The presentation of SHARP information also reinforces the cult of masculinity. Take this poster distributed by SHARP for example³⁵:

[Insert Figure 7 here]

This poster alone highlights the negative norms present in the Army. First, the gendering of subjects such as a male being the perpetrator and a female being the victim in the phrase “when that **guy** tried to cross the line....I got **her** out of there”. Furthermore, the photo of a woman on the cover and the statement “Preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment is **my** duty” further enforces the gendered norm that women, who are primarily the victims, are the ones who the burden of prevention will fall on. While the Army certainly meant well by this informational poster, it highlights the thought process that those in the SHARP program go through to make this poster in the first place. If the Army wanted to use SHARP to change the culture in the Army, they could have avoided assigning gender roles to perpetrator and victim such as, “, I got

³⁴ MacKinnon, Catharine A. Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination. Pg. 18

³⁵ http://www.sapr.mil/public/images/posters/2009/army/img_army1_lrg.jpg . Poster. 2009.

my battle buddy out of there before the line was crossed”. Instead of using “my” the Army could have also used “our” to imply that SHARP is what it should be—a team effort. Language, while subtle, can have an influencing effect in how gender is perceived.

One of the biggest issues with SHARP is that it enforces the idea of masculine roles. Training almost always portrays a drunk woman being preyed on by a male offender before another male or group of males rescue the female. The depiction of males in the most recent SHARP training video, a male at the party is seen successfully using prevention techniques to avoid being sexually assaulted by another male. However, when it came to the vignette with the female, the appearance showed signs of a sloppy and drunk female that was barely conscious. This caricature poses a stereotype that is already widely believe—that females are often weak and vulnerable.

[Insert Figure 8 here]

Despite all the negative norms SHARP may perpetuate, the program has done some good that would not have happened if not for its implementation. The unceasing and repetitive training soldiers receive have made soldiers more aware and conscious of the problem than before. Respondents for my survey were asked, “Would you be aware of the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault without SHARP?” As seen in Figure 8, 32% of soldiers participating stated that they would not have been aware if it had not been for the SHARP program. While it has yet to lead to a systemic change of society in the Army, at the very least, more soldiers are questioning what is right and wrong, perhaps challenging the social constructs and norms they follow. Awareness will help soldiers become more willing to support change, having known the problem exists and needs to be fixed. SHARP has also started to bring into the light that cultural and normative change must occur in order for sexual assault and

harassment to be prevented. While the current training may be improved, it has undoubtedly laid a foundation for a future and evolving SHARP program that is adaptable to the needs of the Army and capable of bringing about effective change in the gendered norms of the Army.

VI. Contributions and Limits

Unlike previous literature, this study looks specifically at the prevention program found within a particular branch of the military. While it is important to view sexual violence from a global perspective as it effects the military, since each branch is responsible for formulating their own response to these problems it is much more effective to look at each of the branches uniquely and critically analyze the efficacy of their current course of action. A solution to sexual assault and harassment and the military cannot be applied blindly to the Department of Defense, as the branches have similar but different cultures and norms influencing their respective societies. By looking at the Army specifically, this study provides valuable insight into SHARP at a time when gender roles are being challenged as the Army begins its integration of women into male-dominated occupations.

Continuing to expand on prior studies, this study also includes men and women in the survey and looks at how they responded to different questions. For example, it reveals that men tend to be less invested in training than women and that women strongly feel very strongly that a culture of masculinity is behind sexual assault and harassment. However, by isolating and comparing genders, we also discover that half of the male respondents also agree that masculinity is a root cause. This note has not been specifically articulated by other studies where only women were included or even mentioned as a cause in the Army's report to the President. Although research into the motivations and behaviors behind assault has been previously

conducted by others, this study analyzes that data through the lens of gender inequality, finding that the Army needs to seriously address the way gender and masculinity are perceived.

However, this study is not without limitations. More specific questions regarding the amount of information retained during SHARP training should have been asked. With victims, those who have reported an incident should also have been asked in SHARP motivated their decision to do so. The survey population is also limited to personal connections I have. This narrows the amount of people the survey has reached and led to a bias that leans towards the perspective of officers, as opposed to the enlisted, where most assaults occur. For a greater, more representative study there needs to be a greater incorporation of enlisted personnel in this data. This, I believe, may lead to a greater skew in data along gendered lines.

VII. Conclusion

The Army has come a long way in its effort to address its sexual assault and harassment problem since the Aberdeen scandal first brought it to light. From the barebones operations of a single hotline to an entire program staffed by hundreds of soldiers, contractors, and civilians, the Army is armed with an institution with resources ready to bring about significant cultural and societal change within its ranks. However, we have yet to see significant change.

By failing to identify male hegemony as one of the root causes behind the prevalence of sexual assault in the Army, the duty of prevention falls heavily on the victim. The behavior of blaming the victim and social isolation is creating a culture of mistrust where soldiers, especially former victims, would rather not report sexual harassment or assault. Just the fact that three-fourths of sexual assault incidents are going unreported highlights that this is not just a series of isolated incidents but a culture issue. This is an especially harmful trend as it allows perpetrators to continue their career in the Army where they could assault other victims. It also sends the

message that SHARP does not have the strength to rein in sexual assault and prevent the current culture from existing. If anything, SHARP has become an institutional burden to the average soldier who, every year, passively completes required training. Even then, sometimes training doesn't occur at all. Leaders must take SHARP more seriously and hold each other more accountable to lead by example in enforcing the standard of learning.

If SHARP is to become the weapon against sexual assault and harassment the Army envisioned it to be, the program needs to reform not only how it teaches, but what it teaches as well. It should be a process that soldiers continually learn from, not a chore they passively click through. While educating soldiers how to prevent sexual assault and be active bystanders would help solve immediate problems, soldiers need and often, crave, the information that look at the roots of sexual assault. Learning how to foster a more sustainable and positive *esprit de corps* will be far more effective in breaking down the cult of masculinity that has existed for so long as a tradition of the U.S. Army.

As leaders call for a more professional fighting force, capable of being warrior diplomats, the Army must be able to solve, or at the very least, recognize the problems that persist within their own community. In targeting the norms behind sexual assault and harassment, SHARP has the opportunity to drastically decrease the level of gender inequality in the Army, a feat leaders have been trying to do for over two decades. As SHARP continues, leaders must continue to supervise and refine its processes to ensure the program continues to grow constructively. If the SHARP program evolves to better focus on gender inequality, there is no doubt it will have great success in creating a healthier and more positive army for other institutions to learn from.

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Table of Summary Statistics

		What is your current rank category? (Please choose most current rank category)							Mean		Total		How many years have you served in the U.S. Army?				Mean		Total	
		Cadet (1)	E1-E4 (2)	E5-E9 (3)	W1-W4 (4)	O1-O3 (5)	O4-O6 (6)	O7-O11 (7)					1-3 (1)	4-6 (2)	7-10 (3)	10+ (4)				
What is your gender?	Male (1)	38.24%	11.76%	2.94%	0.00%	35.29%	11.76%	0.00%	3.18	100.00%	67.65%	17.65%	5.88%	8.82%	1.56	100.00%	65.38%			
	Female (2)	55.56%	0.00%	5.56%	0.00%	33.33%	5.56%	0.00%	2.72	100.00%	66.67%	16.67%	5.56%	11.11%	1.61	100.00%	34.62%			
	Total	44.23%	7.69%	3.85%	0.00%	34.62%	9.62%	0.00%	-	100.00%	67.31%	17.31%	5.77%	9.62%	-	100.00%	100.00%			

What is your gender?	Chi Square	3.61*	0.07*
	Degrees of Freedom	6	3
	p-value	0.73	0.99

*Note: The Chi-Square approximation may be inaccurate - expected frequency less than 5.

Figure 1:

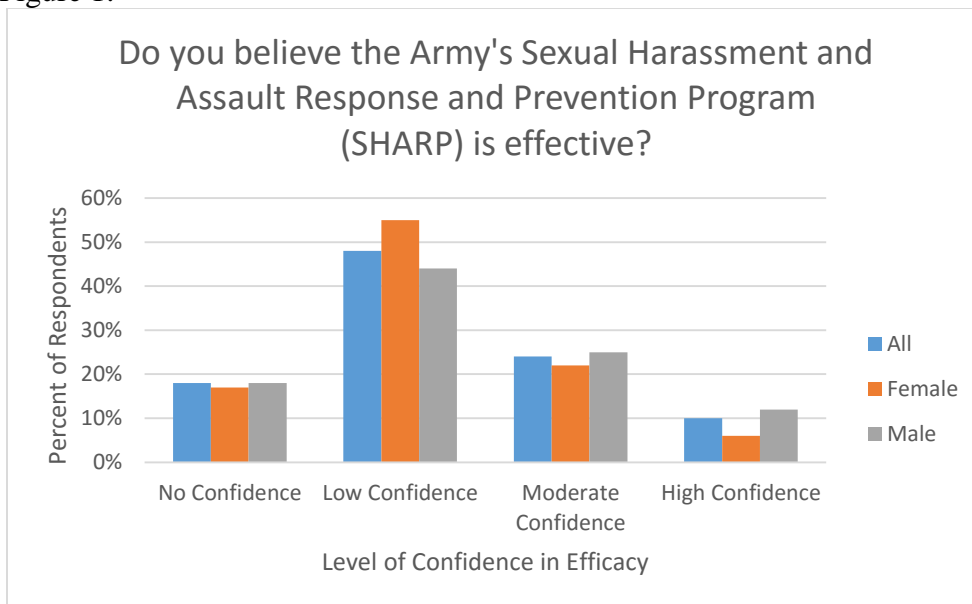


Figure 2:

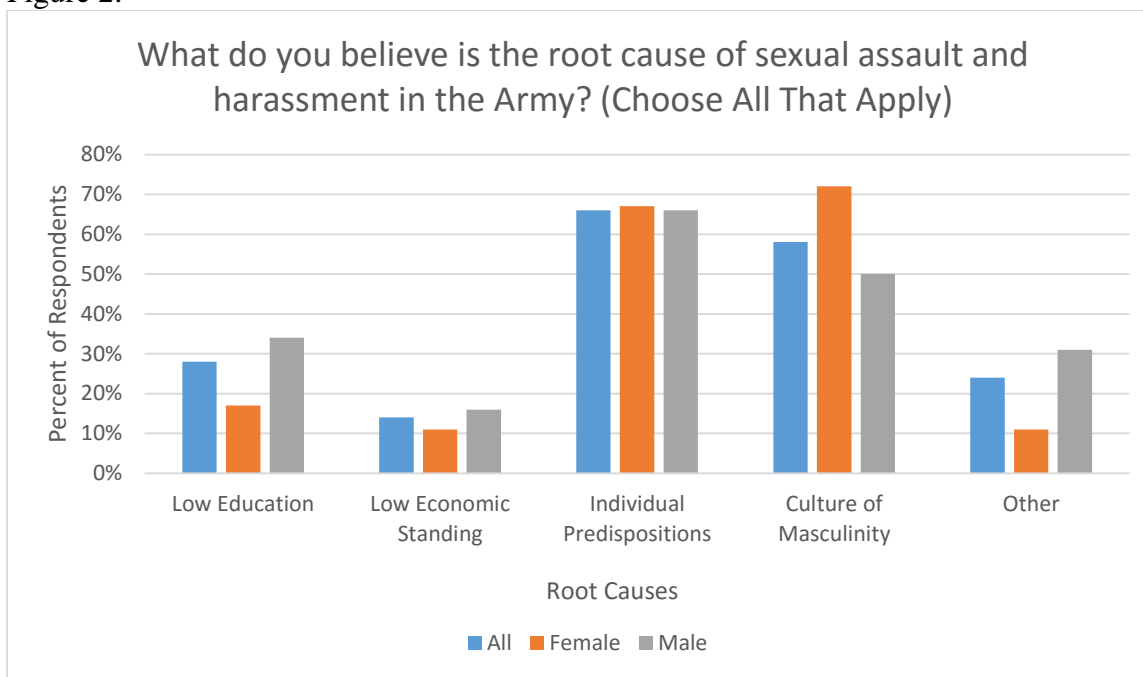
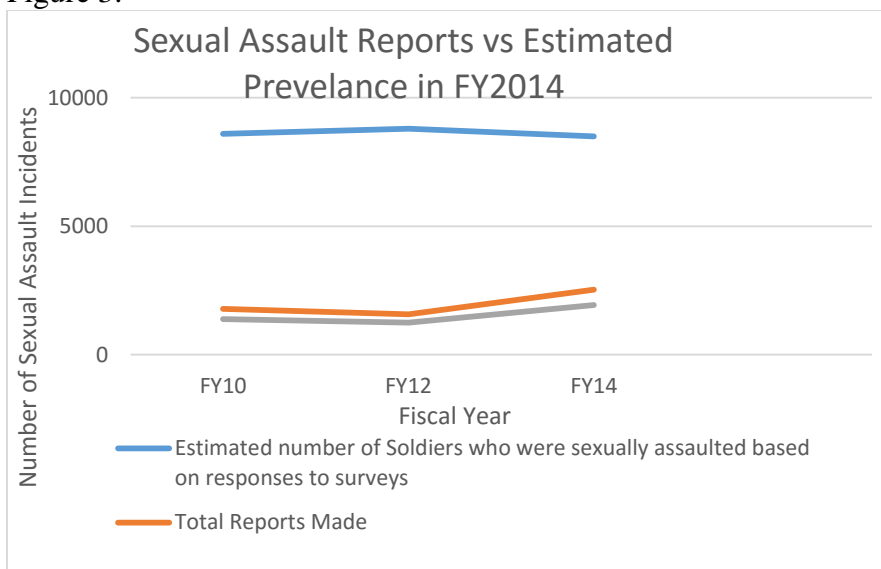


Figure 3:



Source: Department of Defense. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. DoD Report to the President of the United States on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. Enclosure 1-Army. Pg 39.

Figure 4:

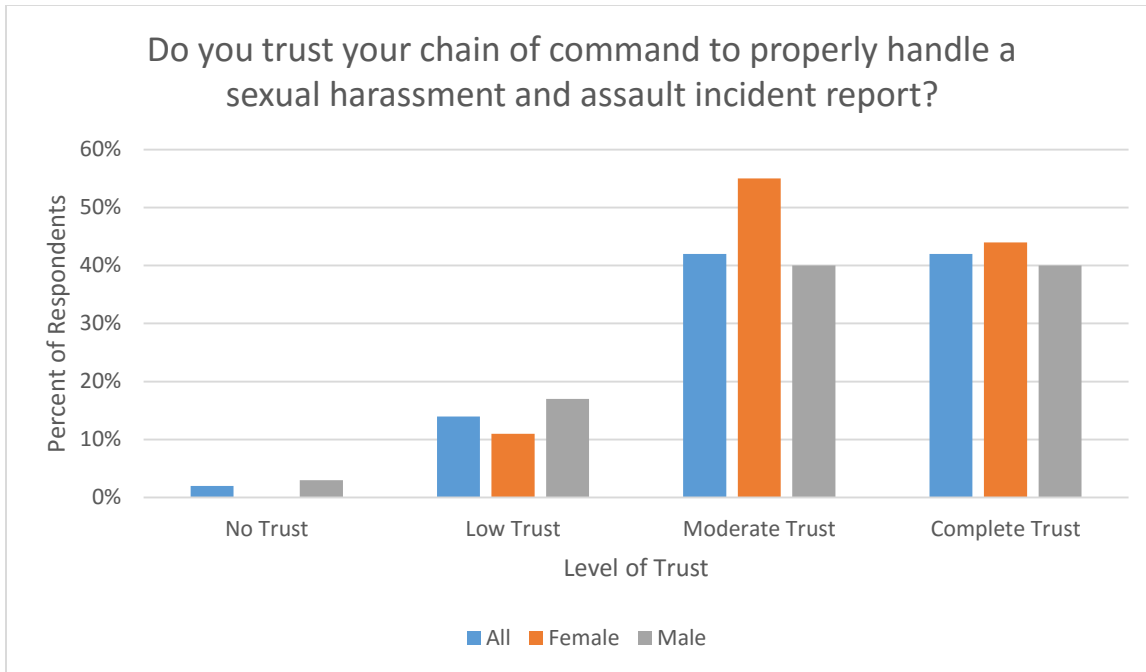


Figure 5:

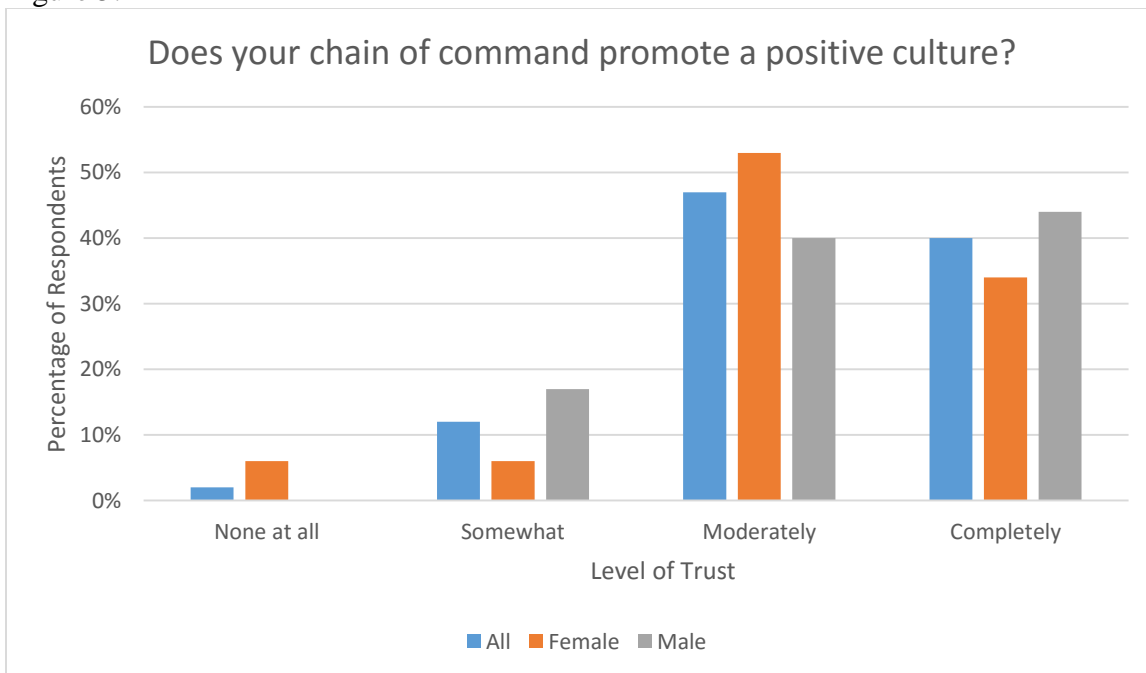
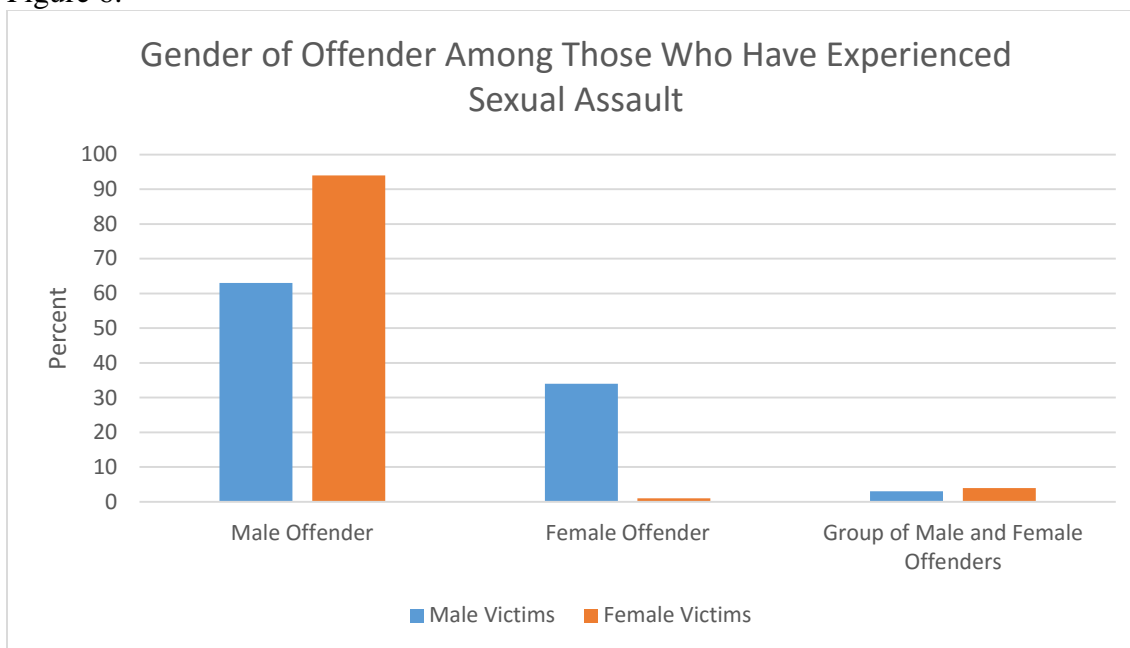


Figure 6:



Source: Annex to Volume 2. Tabular Results from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study for Department of Defense Service Members. Table A.7.d. Pg. 22.

Figure 7:

MY STRENGTH IS FOR DEFENDING.

So when that guy tried to cross the line with my battle buddy, **I GOT HER OUT OF THERE.**

PREVENTING SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS MY DUTY.

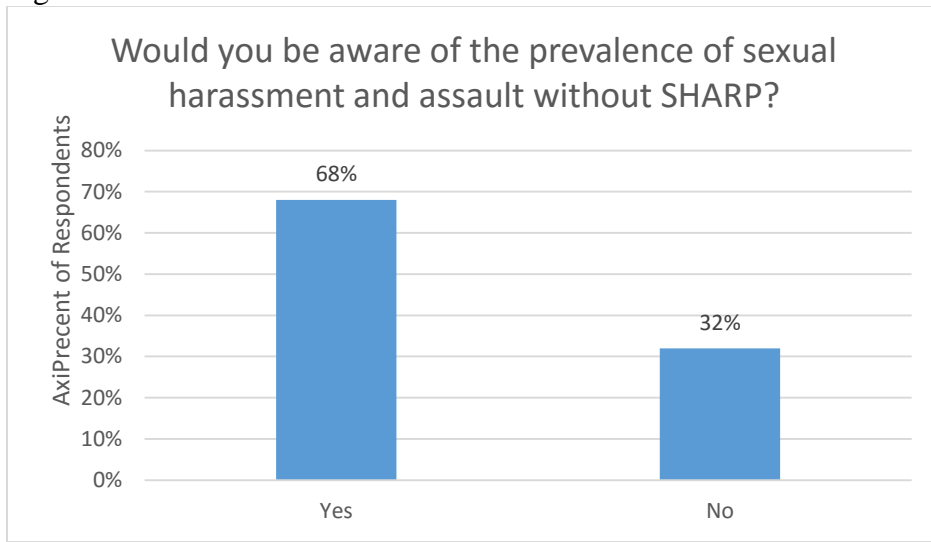
Military OneSource • 1-800-342-9647

I AM STRONG

www.preventsexualassault.army.mil

Loyalty Duty Respect Selfless Service Honor Integrity Personal Courage

Figure 8:



Appendix A:
US Army SHARP Climate Survey

Welcome. You are being asked to participate in a survey for a student-conducted research. Your responses to this survey will be anonymous. Because this is an academic survey, we need your consent before we can begin. Please read the following carefully and select a response below: Investigators: Justin-Ryan Abueg (Student) and Kate Krimmel (Faculty Advisor) Purpose: We are conducting a study to examine the effects of the United States Army's Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention Program on how soldiers view the norms and behaviors that are present in their society. Procedures: Participation in this study will involve completing a survey. We anticipate that your involvement will require about twenty minutes. You must be an active duty, reserve, National Guard, or retired Army service member to participate. Confidentiality: All of your responses will be anonymous. Neither your name nor your email will be recorded. No identifying information about you will be made public. Findings from this study may be reported in scholarly journals, at academic seminars, and at research association meetings. The data will be stored at a secured location and retained indefinitely. Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You are free to stop the survey at any time without penalty. Risks and Benefits: Although this study will not benefit you personally, we hope that our results will add to general knowledge and will help in creating a more complex and in-depth response to sexual harassment and assault in the United States Army. If you have experienced sexual harassment and/or assault, this survey may trigger uncomfortable memories and feelings. If at any time you feel at risk, please close the survey and if needed, contact the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. This service is 100% Free and Confidential and available to all service members regardless of component or active status. Questions: If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Justin-Ryan Abueg, student at Boston University, at jrabueg@bu.edu or Kate Krimmel, faculty advisor, at kkrimmel@bu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the conduct of this study, you may contact the Charles River Campus Institutional Review Board at Boston University at 617-358-6115 or irb@bu.edu.

Q1 What is your Age? (please enter a numerical response i.e. "21")

Q2 What is your current rank category? (Please choose most current rank category)

Q3 What is your gender?

Q4 How many years have you served in the U.S. Army?

Q5 If you are a veteran, have you been less than honorably discharged from the United States Army for any reason?

Q6 Is sexual harassment and assault a problem in the Army?

- Q7 Do you believe enough is being done to combat sexual harassment and assault in the Army?
- Q8 What do you believe is the root cause of sexual assault and harassment in the Army? (Choose All That Apply)
- Q9 If you answered "Other", please write in your response:
- Q10 Do you believe the Army's Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP) is effective?
- Q11 Does the SHARP program affect your perception of women?
- Q12 Does the SHARP program affect your perception of men?
- Q13 Would you be aware of the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault without SHARP?
- Q14 Do you believe your chain of command is active in preventing sexual harassment and assault incidents from occurring?
- Q15 Does your chain of command promote a positive culture?
- Q16 Do you trust your chain of command to properly handle a sexual harassment and assault incident report?
- Q17 Do you take SHARP Online training seriously?
- Q18 Do you pay 100% attention to the SHARP Online training while completing it? (i.e. no multitasking or on another tab while videos are playing)
- Q19 How can SHARP training be improved? (write below:)
- Q20 Have you been or are you a victim of Sexual Harassment and/or Assault while serving in the U.S. Army?
- Q21 If Yes, did you report your harassment and/or assault to your chain of command?
- Q22 How has your experience affected your view of the Army and your place in the army? How did your experience affect your future/plans/where you see yourself going in the military? (Please describe)
- Q23 How does your understanding of Sexual assault/harassment in the Army affect your future, your plans, and where you see yourself going In the Army? (Please describe)
- Q24 Do you believe the reporting process is easy to use?
- Q25 Additional Comments?
- Q26 Estimate the percentage of sexual harassment and/or assault where the victims are women vs men:
- _____ Women
_____ Men
- Q27 Do you believe the inclusion of females in the combat arms will cause an increase in SHARP related incidents in the future?
- Q28 What issues do you see with the SHARP program?
- Q29 How can the SHARP program be improved?
- Q30 What other comments regarding your experiences with SHARP do you have to add?

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