



**Defense Manpower Data Center**

Serving Those Who Serve Our Country

**2015 U.S. Merchant Marine  
Academy Gender Relations  
Focus Groups  
Overview Report**





# **2015 U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS**

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## Acknowledgments

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) is indebted to numerous people for their assistance with the *2015 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Gender Relations Focus Group Report*. These focus groups are conducted under the leadership of Dr. Paul Rosenfeld, Director, Defense, Research, Surveys and Statistics Center (RSSC), and falls under the Health and Readiness (H&R) Survey Team. DMDC's H&R Surveys are conducted under the oversight of Dr. Maia Hurley, H&R Team Lead.

The lead analysts on this assessment were Dr. Laura Severance, Fors Marsh Group, and Ms. Natalie Namrow and Dr. Paul Cook, SRA International, Inc. Written transcripts of each of the sessions were provided by Gail Sherry Court Reporting Associates, Inc. Ms. Tamara Jell and CDR Andrew McCarthy of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy made all onsite arrangements for conducting the focus groups. We would like to thank all of the USMMA representatives who assisted us in organizing the focus groups.

## Executive Summary

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The *2015 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Gender Relations Focus Group* study aligns with a larger research effort, the *2015 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2015 SAGR)* study. The *2015 SAGR* is a focus group assessment conducted per U.S. Code 10 as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2007 (10 U.S.C. §4361). The *2015 SAGR* is part of an assessment cycle at the Military Service Academies (MSAs) that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups: the surveys provide valid statistical information about incidence rates and students' perceptions on a host of issues; the focus groups provide deeper insights into the dynamics behind the numbers. Together, they help Academy leaders and policymakers assess the effectiveness of programs and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, each type of assessment can inform the other. Survey results are used to identify topics for deeper discussion during the focus groups and, in turn, the focus groups identify new topics and questions to be asked on surveys.

This *2015 SAGR* focus group study assesses students' perception of issues related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-related topics at the MSAs: U.S. Military Academy (USMA), the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). USCGA joined the assessment program in 2008 and USMMA in 2012. USMMA, within the Department of Transportation (DOT), is not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USMMA officials requested that they be included, beginning in 2012, to evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment. Themes provided in this report are qualitative in nature and cannot be generalized to the full population of USMMA students, faculty and staff. Themes should be considered as the attitudes and opinions of focus group participants only and not the opinions of all USMMA students, faculty and staff.

### Focus Group Methodology

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) research team conducted nine focus groups of midshipmen, Academic faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre, scheduled in 90-minute sessions. In total, researchers collected comments from 43 midshipmen and 31 faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre. Focus groups were held in closed-door conference rooms or classrooms at USMMA. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary.

Data from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively to identify major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions.<sup>1</sup> For each theme, supporting comments from the focus group participants are included. Analysts used a combination of topical coding and repeated reviews to gather specific comments that supported the emerging themes. Where students and personnel

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<sup>1</sup> NVivo by QSR International Pty Ltd., Version 10. 2012. To analyze and categorize topics, the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo was used to code language in the transcripts into thematic nodes. NVivo is a grouping and validation tool that provides comprehensive coverage of topics for summaries of findings.

differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives were presented in separate findings. Although focus group findings cannot be generalized to all students and personnel at the Academy, findings serve as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by Academy officials as they review their programs.

In this report, findings are presented in separate chapters for midshipmen and Academy personnel. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments. Each comment identifies the student's gender and the personnel's affiliation (Faculty, Uniformed, Athletic). A conclusion chapter synthesizes major themes discussed by USMMA midshipmen and faculty members.

## **Summary of 2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group Themes**

The *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* study was conducted to understand how policies and programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment affect and support midshipmen at USMMA. The perspectives of midshipmen are invaluable in assessing how well the Academy is doing and identifying areas where it could improve. The perspectives of the staff members who interact daily with midshipmen are likewise important to understanding the social dynamics at the Academy and how best to continue to shape the safest environment. This section summarizes main themes heard across the focus groups.

### ***Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment***

Participants agreed that there is a greater level of awareness of sexual assault and harassment at the Academy than in previous years. When shown 2014 rates of unwanted sexual contact (USC) at USMMA, participants' opinions were divided, with some indicating they thought these rates were an underestimate, while others thought they were an overestimate, and still others thought these rates seemed accurate. Many indicated they thought a greater awareness of what constitutes USC underlies an increase in rates of USC between 2012 and 2014. Most agreed that reports of USC against males were likely underreported and noted that "locker room" behaviors were common on campus; however, participants disagreed as to whether male midshipmen would consider "locker room" behavior to be USC. Participants were also shown estimates of sexist behavior rates at USMMA in 2014. Participants were unsurprised by the high rate of sexist behavior toward females on campus and female midshipmen reported that they frequently encounter sexist behavior and sexual harassment. Midshipmen discussed that different physical and academic standards and expectations are applied to female and male midshipmen, with some saying that these standards and expectations are more difficult for women, and others maintaining that they are less difficult for women. Midshipmen and staff also noted that sexist jokes and jokes related to sexual assault or harassment are common on campus and that these jokes convey that the issue of sexual assault is not taken seriously. Finally, sea duty—and the maritime industry as a whole—present a difficult environment for midshipmen to navigate when it comes to gender relations. The midshipmen indicated that they understood the maritime industry is male-dominated and sailors are often characterized as using profane language, making sexist remarks and drinking heavily. This confluence of factors creates a situation that is unique to USMMA and facilitates an environment where USC may be especially likely to occur.

## ***Role of Alcohol in Sexual Assault***

Alcohol is often a contributing factor in USC because it impairs decision-making and lowers inhibitions. Midshipmen noted that it would be possible for someone to take advantage of someone who was already inebriated, but indicated that it was unlikely (but possible) that someone would get a midshipman drunk to facilitate USC. Others noted that midshipmen protect each other when in vulnerable situations and would thus try to prevent an already inebriated midshipman from becoming a victim of sexual assault. Further, midshipmen might be less likely to report USC if it occurred in conjunction with alcohol consumption for fear of collateral punishment. Others noted that there is a culture of drinking on campus, despite strict rules about alcohol consumption.

## ***Reporting***

Midshipmen are generally aware of resources for reporting USC, such as the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) and Sexual Assault Victim Advocates (SAVAs), who are midshipmen whose role is to help prevent sexual assault and support victims of sexual assault. Nonetheless, midshipmen and staff indicated that sexual assault is underreported and cited several reasons why midshipmen are hesitant to report. These reasons included victim-blaming, accusations being perceived as false, females' status as a numerical minority on campus, social retaliation, violation of expectations of loyalty between midshipmen (i.e., getting another midshipman in trouble), harm to professional reputation in the future, the maritime industry's lack of policies and procedures aimed at preventing or responding to sexual assault and harassment, the time-consuming and laborious nature of the reporting process, anonymity concerns, and lack of confidence that action will be taken after a report is filed. There was disagreement regarding perceptions of the Academy's encouragement of reporting. Some midshipmen and staff felt that the Academy makes adequate efforts to encourage reporting, while others felt these efforts could be improved.

## ***Retaliation***

Fear of retaliation is a key reason why survivors of sexual assault choose not to report. Participants indicated that they believe that midshipmen engage in social retaliation toward sexual assault reporters, but that faculty and staff do not participate in these behaviors. Ostracism was the most common type of social retaliation discussed, as other midshipmen might tend to avoid someone who reports sexual assault or harassment, sometimes because they believe claims of sexual assault are false, and sometimes because they perceive that the reporter has gotten another midshipman (i.e., the accused) in trouble. The other primary retaliation behavior that was frequently noted by participants was spreading rumors about someone who reported USC. Midshipmen were generally unaware of prohibitions against retaliation, but were not surprised when they learned that these behaviors were prohibited.

## ***Social Media***

Social media did *not* emerge as a particularly popular forum for retaliation directed at midshipmen who report USC. Rather, midshipmen indicated that social media sites are used for gender-related jokes or jokes about sexual assault or harassment. Both midshipmen and staff

expressed concern about USMMA monitoring social media sites and staff suggested that it might be beneficial for midshipmen to receive training on the proper use of social media.

### ***Perceptions of Leadership***

Many participants agreed that leadership makes honest and reasonable efforts to prevent sexual assault and harassment on campus, noting that they provide multiple trainings, resources devoted to sexual assault and harassment, and continued support for midshipmen who have reported sexual assault or harassment. However, others indicated that they thought leadership preferred to “stay out of” issues related to sexual assault and harassment. Some mentioned that instructors were permissive of sexist comments made by midshipmen and others noted that leadership had not responded to e-mails raising issues related to sexual assault or harassment. Staff noted that they believed that USMMA is underfunded and understaffed and thus has fewer resources than other MSAs to spend on sexual assault and harassment-related programs and trainings.

### ***Athletic Teams***

Sexual assault and harassment did *not* emerge as issues that are more prevalent among athletes at USMMA, partially because the majority of students are athletes and partially because the school is in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division III as opposed to Division I (so there is less of an emphasis on the performance of athletic teams). Athletic staff are generally perceived as being particularly sensitive to sexual assault and harassment behaviors at USMMA and are in a unique position to address sexual assault and harassment as an issue because they have close working relationships with midshipmen.

### ***Preventing Sexual Assault***

Many participants noted the increased emphasis on sexual assault and harassment prevention in recent years at USMMA and most midshipmen are aware of resources devoted to this goal (i.e., SARC, SAVAs). Bystander intervention training was raised by several midshipmen and staff who noted that they believed midshipmen would intervene on behalf of a midshipman who was in danger of being sexually assaulted. This aligns with and reinforces expectations of loyalty between midshipmen and the norm of midshipmen protecting each other. Staff suggested that training should focus more on sexual assault prevention and that security measures (e.g., blue boxes) be properly implemented on Academy grounds so as to prevent sexual assault. Finally, it is important to highlight that faculty and staff noted it might be especially difficult to prevent sexual assault at sea because USMMA cannot monitor what is occurring on ships and is instead reliant on civilian companies to prevent and respond to any sexual assault or harassment issues.

### ***Academy Culture***

Participants disagreed with respect to how seriously sexual assault and harassment are taken at the USMMA. Some midshipmen indicated that they constantly receive trainings on sexual assault and harassment, which conveyed to them the seriousness of the issue. However, others indicated that midshipmen do not take the trainings seriously and often make jokes during the training. Others noted that the frequency of sexual assault-related jokes in general (i.e., not just in training) conveys that midshipmen do not take the issue seriously. Still, others noted that midshipmen feel safe on campus and emphasized the close-knit nature of the student body. Both

midshipmen and staff agreed that midshipmen would need to be heavily involved in any efforts to change the culture around attitudes related to sexual assault and harassment. That is, trainings and other programs created by Academy leadership can only go so far. To truly change USMMA culture with respect to sexual assault and harassment, it was felt that midshipmen must adopt new attitudes and behaviors with respect to sexual assault and harassment.

### ***Training and Education on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention***

Trainings differ with respect to both how effective they are perceived to be and how seriously midshipmen take them. For example, many noted that the training focused on bystander intervention (Green Dot, Red Dot) was especially effective and female midshipmen noted that hearing from female upperclassmen about how to handle sexual assault and harassment at sea was helpful. However, training that takes on an accusatory tone toward males was not well-received because male midshipmen felt unfairly maligned. Midshipmen and staff had suggestions for training, such as using XYZ cases, small group discussions, assertiveness training, hearing from a speaker who had experienced USC and learning from upperclassmen. Some staff members noted that if a midshipman makes an inappropriate comment, it is important for the faculty or staff member to convey that such comments are unacceptable.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

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

One source of information for evaluating these programs and for assessing the gender relations environment at USMMA involves quantifiable feedback from students through a representative survey. Another source of information involves qualitative feedback from students and Academy personnel through focus groups with a moderator trained to facilitate discussion on these topics. This report presents findings from the *2015 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Gender Relations Focus Group* study. This introductory chapter provides background on why this study was conducted, a description of the focus group methodology, analysis methods, limitations and a brief overview of subsequent chapters.

U.S. Code 10 (10 U.S.C.), as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2007, codified an assessment cycle at the Academies that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. The first assessment in this series was conducted in 2004 by the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General (IG).<sup>2</sup> Responsibility for subsequent assessments was transferred in 2005 to the Defense Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center (RSSC)<sup>3</sup> within the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). This requirement applies to the DoD Academies—U.S. Military Academy (USMA), U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA). The United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10, but requested they be included in the study starting in 2008. USMMA, within the Department of Transportation (DOT), is also not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USMMA officials requested they be included, beginning in 2012, to similarly evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment. This report describes the second administration of the Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) Focus Groups at USMMA.

### Data Collection Methodology

RSSC follows standard, scientific methods that are widely used in the survey profession for data collections across a variety of domains. The program for assessments at the Military Service Academies (MSAs) is unique in that two different methodologies are used in a complementary, alternating cycle of surveys and focus group assessments. Each type of assessment provides

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<sup>2</sup> Details are reported in Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Before 2014, RSSC was called Human Resources Strategic Assessment Program (HRSAP). In 2014, DMDC reorganized and renamed HRSAP as RSSC to better capture the scope of work conducted by this group.

distinct insights into gender issues: the surveys provide valid statistical information about incidence rates and students' perception on a host of issues; the focus groups provide deeper insights into the dynamics behind the numbers. Together, they help USMMA leadership and relevant DOT policymakers assess the effectiveness of programs and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, each type of assessment informs the other. For example, survey results are used to identify topics for deeper discussion during the focus groups and, in turn, the focus groups identify new questions to be asked on the surveys.

During the survey years, RSSC uses scientific, state-of-the-art statistical techniques to draw conclusions from MSA students who choose to complete the survey, including USMMA. The survey administration takes into account the unique schedules of midshipmen and is administered several times throughout the academic year to ensure that all midshipmen have an opportunity to take the survey. A cornerstone of RSSC's methodology is the use of weighting procedures to ensure accuracy of estimations to the full student population at each MSA. The use of scientific sampling and weighting methods to construct population estimates are the same methods used by many federal statistical agencies (e.g., the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS]), private survey organizations (e.g., RAND, Westat and RTI), and well-known polling organizations (e.g., Gallup, Pew, and Roper).

### **Focus Group Methodology**

Unlike other research methods that employ 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 the 2015 focus groups was replicated for each session at USMMA. Although the results cannot be generalized to the full population of midshipmen, they provide insights into issues and ideas for further consideration. Procedures for selecting participants, developing the questions, and analyzing the data are described below. The focus group procedures were reviewed by a DoD Human Subjects Protection Officer before administration.

### ***Selection of Participants***

Participation in the 2015 focus groups was voluntary. Participants were selected at random and offered the opportunity to participate. To select participants, USMMA first supplied RSSC a roster of all midshipmen.<sup>4</sup> RSSC randomized the list of students within clusters defined by gender and class year. The rosters were then returned to USMMA and officials used the randomized list to identify the first 12 students who were available (e.g., did not have a class scheduled during the focus group) to attend the focus group appropriate for their gender and class year. Students were contacted and asked if they would voluntarily participate in the focus group. Additional students were selected from the randomized lists as necessary to achieve a minimum of 10 students committed to attending. In some cases, students who agreed to participate did not attend their scheduled session. For that reason, session sizes varied.

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<sup>4</sup> The roster excluded foreign national students, as well as exchange students.

For the sessions of faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre, USMMA officials advertised the sessions through the most appropriate forum and solicited volunteers until they received 12 participants committed to each session.

### ***Development of Questions***

To begin the collaborative effort of developing focus group questions for data collection at the Academies, RSSC analysts drafted potential questions by reviewing comments and findings from the *2014 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (2014 SAGR)* and reviewing topics of interest during the release of the 2014 SAGR.<sup>5</sup> Analysts identified follow-up topics that might clarify or expand upon findings from the previous year’s survey. A list of preliminary questions was generated and provided to the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), to the DoD Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO) and to each MSA. A revised set of questions incorporating comments was compiled and then returned to each for final revisions. The same questions were asked at USMMA as at the other Academies, while tailoring the language to be specific to USMMA terminology. Eleven question areas with detailed sub-questions (probing questions) were presented to student focus group participants and Academy personnel. The questions were specific to each group but asked about similar topics. The focus group protocol for students is included as Appendix A while the student handout is Appendix B. The focus group protocol for Academy personnel is included as Appendix C while the Academy personnel handout is included as Appendix D. The topics addressed were:

1. Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment—general discussion of the incidence rates for men and women at USMMA from the *2014 SAGR* survey and specific discussion of the “locker room” behaviors experienced by men.
2. Reporting—general discussion of reporting unwanted sexual contact (USC) and sexual harassment, leadership emphasis on reporting, reasons why someone would or would not report, and multiple experiences of unwanted sexual contact and reporting.
3. Retaliation—familiarity with the policies regarding retaliation as a result of reporting USC, how retaliation might look at USMMA, and ways to reduce retaliation.
4. Social Media—general discussion of the use of social media at USMMA and specific roles of social media that contribute to retaliation for reporting sexual assault.
5. Perceptions of Leadership—opinions about the degree to which leaders make honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment and whether leaders react appropriately and lead by example.
6. Athletic Teams—general discussion of perceptions about standards and conduct for some teams or individuals.

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<sup>5</sup> *2014 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey: Overview Report* (Report No. 2014-016) (DMDC 2014).

7. Academy Culture—general attitude among students about the focus on sexual assault at USMMA, ways to change the culture regarding attitudes toward sexual assault, and the role of the peer program in sexual assault.
8. Preventing Sexual Assault—general discussion of programs and resources USMMA has put in place for prevention of sexual assault.
9. Training and Education on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention—general discussion of training and educational activities received in the past year, perception of training in reducing sexual assault, examples of most effective training, and recommendations for improvement.
10. Role of Alcohol in Sexual Assault—general discussion of alcohol involvement in sexual assault and specific use of alcohol to facilitate having sex with someone.
11. Additional Recommendations—general discussion of steps to address sexual assault and sexual harassment. The questions ended with “What did we not ask that we should have?”<sup>6</sup>

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

For the *2015 USMMA Focus Group* study, RSSC conducted nine focus groups, scheduled in 90-minute sessions at USMMA. RSSC conducted six focus groups with midshipmen by gender and class year and three focus groups with USMMA faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre. In total, comments from these groups represent the attitudes and opinions of 43 midshipmen and 31 staff members. Focus groups were held in Melville Hall.

RSSC employed moderated focus groups with trained focus group facilitators leading single- or dual-moderated sessions. Facilitators followed a structured, approved script to ensure topics were covered in an adequate amount of time and conversations were appropriately contained. A male facilitator led the male focus groups and a female facilitator led the female focus groups. A male and female facilitator alternated in leading the sessions of Academy staff members. RSSC provided a female recorder who used a stenographic machine to transcribe all comments from participants and the facilitator. No audio or video recording was made of any focus group session.

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

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<sup>6</sup> The focus groups concluded with an open invitation to express any other thoughts regarding gender-related issues at USMMA and any additional recommendations for ways USMMA could reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment. Unless unique in context, these recommendations are not reported separately; rather they are integrated with other discussion points on similar topics.

## **Analysis Methodology**

Data from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively for major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions. The order of presentation in this report does not imply that any one theme is more important than any other. For each theme, supporting comments from the focus group participants are included. The supporting comments do not include every comment made on a particular theme; rather, they illustrate the theme in the words of the participants.

The results in this study are based on qualitative analysis—findings cannot be generalized to all midshipmen or Academy personnel. Findings should be viewed as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by USMMA officials as they review their programs. Findings may also be viewed as a general perspective on participants' views of sexual harassment and sexual assault at USMMA, but they do not portray a statistical report on incidence rates or performance of response and prevention programs. That information is provided by the *SAGR* survey conducted at USMMA in alternating years with the focus groups.

## ***Categorization of Topics***

Focus group analysts reviewed transcripts to identify major themes. To analyze and categorize topics, the qualitative data analysis software package produced by QSR International, NVivo—a grouping and validation tool that provides comprehensive coverage of topics for summaries of findings—was used.<sup>7</sup> Analysts used NVivo to code language in the transcripts into thematic nodes. Each thematic node represented a pre-determined question or topic discussed in the protocol. After initial coding, a second analyst coded the transcripts to ensure all coding was reliable. Once all language from the transcripts was coded into nodes, analysts exported individual nodes into separate documents. These nodes were then filtered further to identify and quickly capture the details within each thematic topic. Where focus group participants differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings. Analysts used an iterative review process to extract and classify comments that included different reviewers who verified that themes were supported by comments.

## ***Organization of Findings***

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

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<sup>7</sup> NVivo by QSR International Pty LTD., Version 10., 2012.



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## Chapter 2: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Midshipmen

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RSSC conducted six focus group sessions at USMMA on May 4–6, 2015. Each session was scheduled for 90 minutes. Sessions were held for female freshmen, male freshmen, female sophomores, male sophomores, female juniors and seniors combined, and male juniors and seniors combined. Sessions included a total of 43 participants and each had between three and 10 students.

### Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment

The 2015 USMMA focus groups began by sharing with the midshipmen the prevalence rates of USC at USMMA from the 2014 SAGR survey (see Appendix B). The midshipmen were asked whether they were familiar with those survey results, why they thought the rates increased from 2012 (noting that the increases in rates for men and women were not statistically significant), and whether they thought the rates would increase or decrease when measured in the next survey in 2016. Midshipmen were also asked about other behaviors experienced, specifically by men, as part of USC such as hazing and “locker room” behavior. Midshipmen further contributed comments on the role alcohol plays in USC.

Additional results from the 2014 SAGR survey were discussed regarding perceived sexual harassment and perceived sexist behavior, with questions asking about the familiarity of midshipmen with those results, whether the rates might be expected to change in the next survey, and the level of emphasis placed on these behaviors by USMMA officials compared to the emphasis on USC.

### *Familiarity with USC Incidence Rates from 2014 SAGR<sup>8</sup>*

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they had not seen the USC rates.**
  - “No.” (Female)
  - “That’s the first time I’ve seen it.” (Male)
- **Other midshipmen indicated that they might have seen the USC rates.**
  - “I think we heard about them at the last [Sexual Assault Victim Advocate] SAVA meeting in Ackerman.” (Female)
  - “Wasn’t there just an attorney general report that out came in the fall? I forget what the numbers were exactly, but it was a bunch of stuff that went unreported in the past couple of years.” (Female)

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<sup>8</sup> Participants were informed that 14.4% of women experienced USC in 2012 compared to 17.1% in 2014; 1.3% of men experienced USC in 2012 compared to 2.0% for men. Neither difference is statistically significant.

- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they expected the USC rates to be higher.**
  - *“I think females should be higher. I think males should be higher as well.”* (Female)
  - *“I think the numbers for females are—I don’t think it’s high enough.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they expected the USC rates to be lower.**
  - *“I didn’t think the number would have been that high for both women and men.”* (Male)
  - *“I’ve always felt protected by the boys here. I would not expect it to be so high.”* (Female)
  - *“I know like a large majority of the girls that go here, and I don’t think one in five of them experienced some kind of unwanted sexual contact.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen noted that they would like data on the estimates of USC to be more available to midshipmen.**
  - *“I don’t know how like [the Academy is] supposed to change [sexual assault and harassment], but it needs to be more so like they actually understand it and they’re not going to make fun of it, they’re actually going to realize we need to stop this, this is what’s happening. And I think we need to have access to these types of numbers. I think they told us the statistic, but it wasn’t put in front of us, we didn’t see it.”* (Female)

### **Reasons for Increase in USC Rates**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that increased awareness and attention to these types of behaviors might explain the increased rates on the survey.**
  - *“More people saying it, probably more honest.”* (Male)
  - *“There is a lot more emphasis on this training than there was when we first got here.”* (Male)
  - *“More people are aware of what sexual contact is.”* (Female)
  - *“I think in the past—ever since I’ve been here—I think the leadership that was here that was in charge of sexual assault and sexual harassment and human relations wasn’t very dedicated to stuff like this. I’ve been through [a lot] of these trainings in Ackerman.”* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the increase in female midshipmen at the Academy might be a factor in the increase of the USC rates.**
  - *“There are more women in the Academy today than there were in 2012, so I don’t know if that has any effect.”* (Male)
  - *“We’re the highest class at 18, 19%. Next year’s class is going to be 20% of women. So there is an increasing number of women at the Academy to have contact.”* (Female)
  - *“Our class had the highest percentage of women I guess in 2018. The freshman class had a higher percentage of women than us. That might have been it.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would expect USC rates to increase for the 2016 survey.**
  - *“Probably go up, if you look at the trend.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they hope that USC rates will decrease over time.**
  - *“I hope to see it stay the same if not lower, and over the course of the next several years drop off in time.”* (Male)

### ***Experiences of Unwanted Gender-Related Behaviors for Men***

- **Some midshipmen indicated that experiences of USC are different for men compared to women.**
  - *“There were times that somebody inappropriately touched me, but I was never truly threatened. As opposed to a woman who would feel threatened.”* (Male)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that the USC rate for men may be underreported.**
  - *“I feel like a lot of guys don’t want to talk about it or on a survey say something because they feel like it’s not a manly thing to say.”* (Female)
  - *“Or joking around when—it’s weird, but guys slap each other’s butts all the time... But some people take it too far.”* (Female)
  - *“If guys are raped or sexually assaulted, most of them won’t disclose until they’re 40 years old. So I think it’s embarrassing for them to say if it has. I think all the Service Academies are like a microcosm and it’s all about power and control, and that’s what sexual assault and rape is about. They’re intertwined. So I feel it should be higher than that.”* (Female)

- **Other female midshipmen indicated that they expected the USC rate for men to be lower.**
  - *“I’m surprised it’s even 2%. There are so many guys here; they joke around with each other a lot.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe “locker room behaviors” are common behaviors for men at the Academy to experience.**
  - *“I feel like as far as here is concerned, it’s more of a locker room behavior. The whole campus is a locker room because we’re such a small group.”* (Female)
  - *“I think a lot of people, especially you get thrown right into [indoctrination], and all showers for guys are group showers.”* (Male)
  - *“I know with any of the sports teams I’ve been on, [the male midshipmen] tell me what they do for fun in the locker rooms.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that “locker room” behavior is generally not discouraged at the Academy, but some mentioned that coaches might make an attempt to stop it.**
  - *“No, I don’t think so.”* (Female)
  - *“The coach might, but I don’t think any of the guys would say anything.”* (Female)

### ***The Perceived Role of Alcohol in USC<sup>9</sup>***

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe alcohol plays a major role in USC.**
  - *“Kids get cooped up here for a week and you want to blow off steam, but one too many and it’s downhill from there.”* (Male)
  - *“Just when they come back drunk. Between people like running through the halls, banging on people’s doors, like text messages, Facebook messages. I’m sure everyone has experienced at least one of those.”* (Female)
  - *“It seems more likely that someone went out and drank and came back and their inhibitions were too low to not know any better.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel like alcohol plays like the main factor in this sort of situation.”* (Male)

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<sup>9</sup> The role of alcohol typically emerged throughout each session during discussion of overall USC rates. Therefore, themes related to alcohol are included in this section.

- **Some midshipmen indicated they did not believe midshipmen would intentionally get a classmate drunk to facilitate USC.**
  - *“I don’t think so.”* (Male)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated it would be possible for a midshipman to get another classmate drunk to take advantage of the situation, but they did not think it happened frequently.**
  - *“Yes, a hundred percent.”* (Female)
  - *“There’s always a possibility, but personally I don’t know of anybody.”* (Female)
  - *“I don’t know. I haven’t seen that happen. Do I think it might happen, yeah. But I haven’t like seen anything get close enough personally.”* (Female)
  - *“Yeah. Like I don’t think you can say like out of the group of people that we can sit here and say that there’s not one person on campus who has intentions of doing that.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they do not believe their male classmates see them as “women.”**
  - *“I don’t think they would ever do it to us because we’re part of their class and they see us as guys. But I could see them doing that, going in a town, and trying to get a girl there. I could see that.”* (Female)
  - *“I don’t think the guys see us as girls. We’re just another set of boys.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated midshipmen might be more likely to take advantage of another classmate who is already intoxicated.**
  - *“It’s more if someone gets too drunk and takes advantage of someone else, or because they’re just not in their right state of mind and go too far is a more likely scenario at this school.”* (Female)
  - *“Since a lot of people drink, I think there’s judgments impaired on both sides. So I think a lot of unwanted actions happen because of that.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that male midshipmen would not take advantage of classmates because they take care of each other in those situations.**
  - *“I’ve also seen guys really protective of the girls.”* (Female)
  - *“We had an issue where one girl got really intoxicated, and the guys wouldn’t—they called to make sure she had a safe ride home, made sure she was in her bed. None of them would try anything, they were just worried she was okay.”* (Female)

- *“Calling a cab, making sure there’s someone back at school to take care of you.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that sea duty often involves a lot of alcohol consumption.**
  - *“Since we go out to sea, I think we drink more [than other Academies] probably, or we’re introduced to that more, and it’s sort of accepted. I mean, they want you to still be responsible, but they also want you to have a good time. But I think with the amount of drinking going on that ultimately something is going to happen. So I think it contributes to it a little bit.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that there is a culture of drinking at the Academy and that midshipmen are very unlikely to report each other for alcohol consumption.**
  - *“I feel it’s part of tradition a little bit, because everybody has done it before us so they want us to have a good time. But I think they’re getting a little better about it, with our alcohol rules and stuff like that. If you break the rules, you get in trouble for it; there are severe consequences.”* (Female)
  - *“There is a really strong community here, if you see a shipmate, you both lean on each other and you get each other back to the Academy at some point... I feel like it’s very, very pushed, ‘let’s go.’ It’s that mentality, we’re sailors... It’s not everyone, it’s just large enough to make an impact.”* (Female)
  - *“Also, there is a huge thing about loyalty to classmates, loyalty to shipmates. If you turn somebody in, you’re probably being hypocritical because most people can’t say they never went out and had a beer in the city, and they never went out and had a couple shots or something. I feel like the school is very favor oriented. I obviously am not going to tell on you because you know about that time that I did this, and the ‘I scratch your back, you scratch mine’ thing, which keeps the cycle going.”* (Female)
  - *“I think at this particular academy there is an underlying encouragement of binge drinking.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy has strict rules about alcohol.**
  - *“Yeah, you get a class one, a hundred demerits, and you need to go to AA meetings. So there’s really strict consequences if you get caught drinking, especially on campus.”* (Female)
  - *“They tried to control what midshipmen do off campus, which I think is a bit inappropriate, because I don’t see how, as long as you’re not getting actively in trouble, I don’t think anything off campus should be reflected on what you do on campus.”* (Male)

- *“No one can drink on campus. Seniors can at the pub on Wednesday nights.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that someone might not report sexual assault if it occurred in conjunction with alcohol consumption for fear of collateral punishment.**
  - *“I think maybe the victim might be afraid to report to the school or use the school resource because they'd fear getting in trouble themselves for either alcohol being involved, maybe being in someone's room with a door closed, which isn't allowed. You know, just they themselves being—you know, getting in trouble on top of being victimized. You just wouldn't want to deal with that.”* (Female)

### **Discussion of Perceived Sexual Harassment Rates<sup>10</sup>**

- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they expected the perceived sexual harassment rate to be higher.**
  - *“I wouldn't have been surprised if it was like 95%.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like it happens every day. At least multiple times.”* (Female)
  - *“At least multiple times a week. I'm surprised it's not a hundred percent, honestly.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they believed the rates for perceived sexual harassment were accurate.**
  - *“I think that's pretty accurate.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of girls here get hounded by guys. There a lot of guys trying to—because there are not a lot of us, so a lot of girls have people—like messages on Facebook all the time.”* (Female)
- **Some male midshipmen indicated that perceived sexual harassment rates increased on the survey due to more comfort and training on the subject.**
  - *“Maybe it's just a little more openness to the survey.”* (Male)
  - *“Maybe since we have had more training some people might view—where they might not have viewed a crude joke as harassment in the past, they might view it as it now. Their idea might have changed once they went to the training.”* (Male)

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<sup>10</sup> Participants were informed that for women, the estimated prevalence of perceived sexual harassment increased from 57% in 2012 to 63% in 2014. For men, the estimate increased from 8% in 2012 to 11% in 2014. Neither difference is statistically significant.

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the male-dominated Academy population might contribute to inappropriate language and jokes.**
  - *“It’s very tied into the masculinity thing.”* (Female)
  - *“There are a lot of jokes and talk that goes on, so I could see how that could be unwanted to somebody else if they heard it.”* (Male)
  - *“You just have to be able to tell when it’s serious enough and when they don’t realize that what they’re saying isn’t really appropriate.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it always just depends on the person, honestly. I know I can take a joke, but I know there’s someone next to me that can’t, and they’ll take it way too far, and that’s how statistics skyrocket or just increase a little.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like everyone needs to take [sexual assault and harassment] seriously. I feel like the commissioned officers do because, they’re older, they understand it more I guess. But like all of the midshipmen, they’re younger, they’re more joking around, more prone to joke around. I think they need to learn how to be more serious, understand it, take these situations more seriously.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe inappropriate comments are part of the Academy culture, and some mentioned that this is particularly important to prepare them for being at sea.**
  - *“I don’t want to say anything wrong, but it’s almost good because you get used to it, and then you go out to sea and you’re ready.”* (Female)
  - *“Out at sea they’re not your buddies. They’re old guys that have lived in an old guy world for 30 years.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s just the nature of the school too. There’s a lot more guys at the school than women. So when we’re among guys, we are very comfortable making cruder jokes. And say there’s a girl in the class. Men are just cruder or say rude jokes or something like that.”* (Male)
  - *“Being here I’ve heard several jokes, just comments. They’re inappropriate, but I let them slide because I don’t really want to comment about it because I’m quiet. I don’t want to comment about that and stand out. But I do feel there’s a lot of inappropriate comments made that shouldn’t be made.”* (Female)
- **Some female freshmen midshipmen indicated that there may be a phenomenon wherein older male students express sexual interest in new female freshman.**
  - *“The frat[ernization] line is kind of blurred. So as soon as you’re recognized, you get a bunch of Facebook requests, a bunch of messages, ‘Hey, what’s up, want to hang out sometime, let’s catch a movie.’”* (Female)

- *“Then at lunch they literally ask—upperclassmen at my table—about my sex life. That is not okay to talk to me—that’s like completely uncomfortable and uncalled for at lunch.”* (Female)
- *“It’s certain people who stand out and everybody knows get it from all over, and it’s really annoying. It seems like the more you put yourself out there as a person, the more you stand out, the more people know you, the more guys try and talk to you because the more guys seek... During recognition me and some other friends started calling it the ‘creepening,’ because right after you’re recognized, the fraternization line is blurred.”* (Female)

### **Discussion of Sexist Behavior Rates<sup>11</sup>**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believed the rates of sexist behavior were accurate.**
  - *“(Multiplies yeses.)”* (Female)
  - *“I believe it’s true.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that what might be perceived as unacceptable behavior to a woman might not be perceived the same way by men.**
  - *“I think at this school, guys may feel a little more comfortable around each other.”* (Male)
  - *“I think there’s also a factor that men are less affected by the comments.”* (Female)
- **Some male midshipmen indicated that they believe that academic expectations and punishments for men and women may not be equitable.**
  - *“Because it’s common knowledge, not published data on it or anything, but from what you see being here, you can know that a girl is much more likely to get in less trouble for any offense than a guy is.”* (Male)
  - *“If a guy does something wrong, the chances of him getting a three- to four-week restriction are more likely than her getting a three- to four-week restriction. She’ll get two instead. The punishments seem to be a higher severity for guys than girls. And more often I think girls are given more second chances, due to attrition rates, trying to keep the percentage of girls higher at the school, so grade-wise they are given more leniency as well.”* (Male)

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<sup>11</sup> Participants were informed that the estimated prevalence of sexist behavior for women was 93% in 2012 and 94% in 2014. For men, it was 41% in 2012 and 33% in 2014, which was a significant decrease.

- *“I think most of the guys here think that all the girls get special treatment. But I don’t think that’s true to the degree that they say it is.”* (Female)
- *“I know a little bit of that is frustration from a lot of guys academically. Females have a better chance of sticking around, getting better grades. In the past, there’s been a lot more females that have failed more classes than men and have stuck around. And a lot of it, it’s sometimes easier for a female to get into the school than for us so some of that is frustration from that.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that physical expectations for men and women are not perceived as equitable. Some midshipmen indicated that the perceived discrepancy in expectations is unfair, while others indicated that they were comfortable with different physical expectations set for males and females.**
  - *“I know there are a lot more girls who can make it through without passing any physical standards, and it’s a lot harder to kick them out for that reason. Whereas guys, if you fail, it’s a lot easier to give the guy the boot or keep the girl around. It’s just not fair.”* (Male)
  - *“Me personally, I can’t run very well so I like having how the Navy has the standardized rule, women’s strengths fitness-wise, the way their body muscle mass is built, this is what their times should be based on. If you can meet the guys’ standards, go ahead, run, but I can’t.”* (Female)
- **Female midshipmen indicated that they believe they constantly have to prove themselves physically and academically at the Academy.**
  - *“The thing is, we have to prove ourselves. During the PRT, for my mile I flew by guys in my company who were extremely good runners, and we all started at the same time. So that’s me showing I can beat your standards, I can be here too if my standards were just like yours.”* (Female)
  - *“So I had an idea of what I was getting into, so I think that’s why I ignore most of the stuff I hear. But I do recognize it’s a problem. I personally don’t say anything about it because as a girl I feel like they’re just going to brush me off.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like we have to go out of our way to prove like that we’re strong enough to be here, that we’re smart enough to be here, which I guess it comes along with coming here. I feel like there are quite a few people who look down on us because we are girls and maybe we got in easier, or because it’s harder to get kicked out as a girl. Which I’m not complaining about, but there are some girls here who have failed so many classes that if any guy failed they would be kicked out.”* (Female)
  - *“You have to combat what guys perceive women in this industry as. You have to combat the reputations of the women that came before you, good or bad.”* (Female)

- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they sometimes feel looked down upon and that they feel male midshipmen do not treat them with respect.**
  - *“It’s hard being a girl at this school. As I think it would be at all the other Academies too. But I like to keep my own stuff to myself, and people start saying stuff or Yik Yaking stuff or whatever.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like well, they call it the KP scale, the girls at Kings Point, how attractive they are, versus the girls out in the real world and how attractive they are. And there shouldn’t be two separate standards. So hearing that I feel it’s really demoralizing because you hear guys talking about how pretty this girl is, and then she’s a 10 on the Kings Point scale but she’s a seven in the real world.”* (Female)
  - *“They tell us that they go out and they see real girls and normal girls.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they believe that some Academy personnel express sexist attitudes and they believe some do not take women in the Academy or maritime industry as seriously as they take men.**
  - *“I think sometimes—they might not come right out and say it, but you can tell they might act a little different towards the girls. And they think that you’re not as good or that you shouldn’t be in the maritime industry.”* (Female)
  - *“[I see sexist behavior] not from midshipmen, though, more of the adults around here. Like because me telling them what my plans are and what I want to do and how I see my future, and I always get the ‘oh, don’t get ahead of yourself, what about a family, what about don’t you have to plan for kids, and why would you want to go to that school eventually, you can’t do that and have kids, you know, at the same time.’ But the guys never get the family pressures, it’s always ‘go for what you want to do,’ and it’s really frustrating that I can’t pursue something too.”* (Female)
  - *“So like during indoc, like we have a lot of stuff. So I had like a huge bag. And we were on flight decks, so like the third floor. So I mean I was getting prepared to like—I made sure I could carry my own bag. So I was getting ready to carry like my bag up there, and I mean, it was the gentlemanly thing to do, but like our drill instructor like carried the bag up for me. And he wouldn’t have done that for one of the guys.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe sexist behaviors and attitudes were common at sea, and that one midshipman’s behavior can affect how other midshipmen are perceived.**
  - *“I’ve heard out at sea, because you might be the only woman on your ship you get some unwanted attention. And if a girl who goes out at sea—I guess they described it as she ‘puts out,’ she willingly engages in sexual acts, then they think ‘Oh, all the girls from Kings Point do that.’ Just because one woman did that and she’s from here, that doesn’t mean all of us are going to do that. So I feel out at sea sometimes,*

*depending on what ship you're on, and who was on it before you, they may perceive you differently." (Female)*

- *"There aren't a lot of women in the maritime industry so sometimes they're not receptive to having females that may be taking their job at some point or working in the same work field as them." (Female)*
- *"[At sea] is where we hear things like that, because it's not a women-oriented industry." (Male)*
- *"I think that [sexist behavior] would be much more likely to be verbal and it would happen a lot more at sea." (Male)*

## Reporting

Midshipmen were asked a number of questions to help understand barriers to reporting experiences of USC. They were told the number of sexual assault and harassment reports made during the past year and that the number of reports could have been higher based on survey results (see Appendix B). Midshipmen discussed reasons why someone would report or not report an incident and leadership's emphasis on reporting. Midshipmen were provided survey results that showed survivors of USC often experience multiple incidents and then were asked whether that knowledge would influence more midshipmen to come forward to report if they believed their report would stop additional assaults. The section ended with midshipmen providing recommendations that might help to remove barriers to reporting.

### ***Awareness of the Number of Official Reports***

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they had not heard about any official reports.**
  - *"(Multiple no's.)" (Male)*
  - *"(Multiple no's.)" (Female)*
  - *"We generally don't hear about the reports at all. Which is probably better for the person who the report is about." (Male)*
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they were not surprised by the low number of official reports made at the Academy.**
  - *"I'm not surprised." (Female)*
  - *"No, not really." (Male)*
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they expected the number of official reports of sexual assault and harassment to be higher.**
  - *"I think it's low, but I also feel like people don't want the attention." (Female)*

- *“We don’t get taken seriously. They don’t think that harassment is—and they just tell you to suck it up. They think that if it’s not assault then it doesn’t really matter.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would not feel comfortable reporting.**
  - *“(Multiple head shakes.)”* (Female)
  - *“I personally wouldn’t feel comfortable.”* (Female)

### **Options for Reporting Sexual Assault**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would report to the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) or one of the Sexual Assault Victim Advocates (SAVAs).**
  - *“The R-SAVA [Regimental SAVAs], the company.”* (Female)
  - *“Company SAVAs.”* (Female)
  - *“Human relations officer and the SARC”* (Female)
  - *“SARC.”* (Female)
- **Some male midshipmen indicated that they were unsure who to report to and proper procedures for reporting assault on behalf of someone else.**
  - *“We have midshipmen who are the regimental sexual assault victims’ advocates and stuff like that. We have so many people on campus you can talk to.”* (Male)
  - *“I think you have to say that you want to follow up and file a report.”* (Male)
  - *“I think we have to respect their privacy if they don’t want it turned in.”* (Male)
  - *“You encourage them to fill out a report, but I don’t think we could turn it in for them, unless it’s something very serious, like rape.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would not likely go to Patten [Clinic] for help if they were sexually assaulted.**
  - *“If you go to Patten you are sitting there for two hours before you’re even seen.”* (Female)
  - *“They try to check you out for everything, so I wouldn’t feel comfortable talking to a doctor about sexual assault.”* (Female)
  - *“We do, but it’s all in your files, so it’s all in the medical stuff, and I don’t want them knowing.”* (Female)

- *“I wouldn't even go to Patten because you don't feel like it's— you don't feel like they will— patient confidentiality, like I don't feel like they would, you know. If I felt like I did not want anyone to know, I would definitely not go to Patten. Not that they're bad. It's just there's certain things that they have to report, and if you definitely don't want anyone knowing, you wouldn't even go there.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated the SAVAs are available, but expressed mixed perceptions about the usefulness of SAVAs.**
  - *“There's one guy and one girl per company, so if you don't feel comfortable talking to the guy, you can talk to the woman.”* (Male)
  - *“So there's the SAVA in each company, and then for the whole regiment then there's a human relations officer, which is also someone you can talk to confidentially.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it's hard to put midshipmen in those roles because if one person says one thing about what you said – you don't know if they're going to repeat what you tell them. Where if you're going to an adult, they're not going to sit there and say he said that. So I don't always think it's that helpful to have a midshipman in the role.”* (Female)
  - *“There used to be a human relations officer and there used to be an EEO and there used to be a SAVA. I think it's hard to distinguish like which one is the SAVA and SARC, the human relations, because a SAVA is just sexual assault. So if you have a harassment issue, then that's not assault. And if you have a human relations issue, that's completely different.”* (Female)

### **Reasons Why Someone Would Report**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that reporting would acknowledge the sexual assault occurrence.**
  - *“Because they feel it's right and they want to bring attention to it; they don't want to just let it go.”* (Female)

### ***Impact of Multiple Incidents on the Decision to Report<sup>12</sup>***

- **Some male midshipmen indicated that they believe knowledge about multiple incidents might influence a person to be more inclined to report.**
  - *“If it’s happening more than once and you’re not able to handle it yourself, you should be more than willing to go ask for help and find someone who can help you.”* (Male)
  - *“You could get a fellow midshipman to intervene too.”* (Male)
  - *“If something were to happen I probably wouldn’t report it the first time. But if it was a continuing thing, I’d be a lot more likely to report something.”* (Male)
  - *“You know, if 90% of males experience more than one incident, yeah, they may be like hey, I mean, I’m scared if I don’t stop this, it’s going to happen again.”* (Male)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that knowing people often experience multiple incidents by the same offender would not influence a person to be more inclined to report, partially due to a fear of being accused of “false reporting” and other consequences related to reporting.**
  - *“And there’s a double standard of guys thinking that girls are fake reporting to get people kicked out, because there have been issues of that before, of someone doing that multiple times.”* (Female)
  - *“I also feel that it’s a lot of ‘he said, she said.’ And then if they’re doing a ‘he said, she said’ and then they find out someone is lying, well, then they’re getting reported and then they are getting kicked out.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s a ‘protect yourself’ mentality, especially in this industry. If I report it’s coming down on me, it’s not coming down on the other people who I may or may not help.”* (Female)

### **Reasons Why Someone Would not Report**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would not make a formal report of sexual assault; some midshipmen would rather discuss the issue with friends.**
  - *“I even know the R-SAVA, the woman in charge of our sexual assault thing. And if something happened, I wouldn’t feel comfortable going to talk to her, to be honest.”* (Female)

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<sup>12</sup> Participants were informed that 81% of women who experience USC experience more than one incident, and that 90% of men who experience USC experience more than one incident. Participants were also told that 46% of multiple incidents of USC toward women involve the same offender.

- *“Even if you do know them, it’s not a comfortable subject.”* (Female)
- *“So even if you do know that person, it’s hard to talk about it. So I feel most people, if they do tell anyone, they’ll just tell their friends.”* (Female)
- *“I think I’d go the roommate route or the best friend route. She would comfort me, we’d get through it together. But I don’t know if I’d ever make a formal report.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they are more likely to go to a civilian resource, although others mentioned that civilian resources were difficult to access.**
  - *“I haven’t thought about that, but I would feel more comfortable going to a civilian resource than here. I feel like they’d understand it better.”* (Female)
  - *“I also feel a civilian resource, they’ve been specifically trained for that, that’s their job, that’s something they chose to do, that’s something they wanted to do. And they’ve been through all these situations. And I feel like they’d be more caring, more personal about it. Where here it’s more midshipmen-wise it’s ‘Oh, that’s just their job.’”* (Female)
  - *“If you just want to go talk to someone, just have someone to talk to who’s not a midshipman or someone here, not at Kings Point, there’s not that resource. And you can’t go off campus a whole lot. As a plebe we barely got off campus, and now we have a little bit more. But seniors get off campus at least once a week.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe reporting is not worth the anticipated consequences resulting from the report.**
  - *“The backlash from reporting is so severe, that reporting for harassment, even if it was very severe harassment, I don’t see many people reporting.”* (Female)
  - *“The repercussions of reporting your friend is that you’re not going to get commissioned, you’re probably getting thrown out, that’s on your resume forever, and at the very least you’re getting really horrible punishments here. And someone might say I know that he made a mistake and I wasn’t okay with it but it’s not worth ruining your entire life over it.”* (Male)
  - *“But I mean [the reporter] going to suffer repercussions after the fact if someone stays here that gets insulted. I mean, I’m not saying we actively go after [the reporter], but there’s been people here that may have used a sexual assault case to their advantage, and let’s just say that everybody kind of keeps their distance from them. We don’t want any chance of getting kicked out here, regardless of whatever it is.”* (Male)
  - *“Whereas women there’s, you know, so many things that kind of happen daily that it seems like the more minor stuff people wouldn’t report out of like fear of backlash or not being like legitimate.”* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe reporting would take too long.**
  - *“I think people maybe don’t want to come forward because it takes up a lot time, effort, and energy that they don’t have.”* (Male)
  - *“Time-wise, I feel some people think ‘is it worth me putting in for this?’ Just the harassment part—the sexual contact part I feel yes, they should report it. But the sexual harassment, I feel like I took care of it myself, I can take care of it myself, I don’t feel like reporting it because it’s going to take up too much time.”* (Female)
  - *“Because they already have a lot of stuff to do, so it’s just like more work, and then they’re going to—if you file the report, then you’re going to have to do all the stuff on top of it. Why even worry about it, just keep going.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would rather take care of the situation themselves.**
  - *“I know if I had an issue I would just take care of it myself probably or tell a friend or someone who I thought might be able to help them by talking to that person.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it’s a very low threat, that most situations can be handled just by talking to them. But then I know that there still are maybe a couple that just talking to them, maybe you tried that and it didn’t work, and if you try that and it didn’t work, then there’s really – someone is threatening you or something, then you need to go and do something else. But for the most part I think that most of them can be handled by yourself or with another midshipman’s help.”* (Female)
  - *“Probably the majority of the time it’s like something they feel they can work out themselves just talking to the person and not blowing it up into a full report and doing any paperwork.”* (Male)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they believe reporting would give them a bad reputation that might follow them for the rest of their careers.**
  - *“Then another thing, industry-wide it’s a small industry. If you’re known as a person who’s going to make those claims, a company is not going to hire you. A company is not going to hire you because they don’t want those charges on their company. If anything, they are going to label you as, ‘Oh, she made a report while she was at the Academy, we don’t want her anywhere near our company where she could make a possible report and get us in trouble.’”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like people also wouldn’t [report USC] because it brands someone if they find out someone did that. So that’s why a lot of people wouldn’t say it.”* (Female)

- **Some male midshipmen indicated that midshipmen may not report because they do not want to get classmates in trouble.**
  - *“We all live together, we’ve got to get along.”* (Male)
  - *“They don’t want to get that person in trouble.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that ostracism or other retaliatory behaviors might occur as a result of reporting.**
  - *“I think people might be afraid of reporting something, and the fear that other people will find out, maybe there will be a rumor about them.”* (Male)
  - *“As a girl, I feel like you don’t want the attention because as a girl the guys are going to be ‘Oh, she’s just complaining, she took it the wrong way.’ And then the guys don’t want the embarrassment of doing that.”* (Female)
  - *“Once you’re labeled as someone who is going to step forward as that, then all of your friends will treat you differently.”* (Female)
  - *“I think a lot of people don’t use it because they see what happened to other people and they don’t want retaliation, they don’t want people talking about them and labeling them, and they don’t want people assuming that they know what really happened and they have no idea what really happened.”* (Female)
  - *“Well, it’s the same thing for the guys too. If a guy makes a report then all his friends are going to see him as weak and then seeing him as ‘Oh, why did you go turn in your friend’ or something like that.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that victim-blaming might occur when someone reports sexual assault or harassment.**
  - *“I feel like retaliation—like people are going to be like ‘Well, no wonder it happened to you because you were doing these things.’ And so like they’re going to blame you for putting yourself in that situation for like reporting it, or they’re going to be like well, why did you do that to your classmate or shipmate or something like that.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s like any evidence—if you were in the real world you would be like ‘Oh, my gosh, let me help you, what can I do, here’s your resources, here’s what we should do.’ It would be like a ‘I’m so sorry this has happened to you,’ which is how it should be. But here it’s like one, you were probably asking for it. You were drinking, it’s your fault. It’s your fault, you were dressed like that.”* (Female)
  - *“There’s a stigma—if say a girl turned in a report and everyone knew who the girl was and they knew the guy that she turned the report in on. Some people are going to take the guy’s side, and so she’ll probably think that it’s going to be harder for her at*

*the Academy. And on the other side of it, nobody wants to get someone else in trouble.” (Male)*

### ***The Perceived Role of the Academy in Encouraging Reporting***

- **Some female midshipmen suggested that the Academy’s efforts to encourage reporting and/or responding to reports of sexual assault and harassment could be improved.**
  - *“I feel like they say [encourage reporting] because they have to. Not because they mean it.” (Female)*
  - *“I just feel like it’s something that they have to do, just to say okay, we’ve talked about [reporting], now we can move on, checking the box.” (Female)*
  - *“They encourage you to come in and talk about it, and then they tell you that okay, it will be okay, just deal with it and it will be okay. But if you look at statistics, and I think like 90% of assaults start as harassment. And so why do they have to wait until girls start getting assaulted to care.” (Female)*
  - *“And they know that people have brought up, not specifically sexual assault or harassment issues, but other major issues at the Academy leadership, and they don't do much for us, it doesn't seem like they're on our side or they understand where we're coming from or want to listen to where we're at. And so the fact that they don't involve themselves or seem to push to fight for us in issues that may be less emotionally or physically serious [than sexual assault and harassment], how would they be able to help in something like this, it's like a personal issue.” (Female)*
  - *“Well, I feel like we're very male run, so I feel like [the Academy is] not comfortable talking about this stuff themselves. And like the education part, like there's little to none.” (Female)*

### **Retaliation**

Survey results in active duty military and Academy populations as well as complaints from military Service members have indicated that the perception of retaliation from either a survivor’s leadership or peers is a barrier to reporting USC. Focus group participants were asked whether retaliation for reporting could occur at USMMA and what behaviors they believe might constitute retaliation. Midshipmen were read the DoD definitions of professional<sup>13</sup> and social<sup>14</sup> retaliation and asked if they were aware that there are specific prohibitions against retaliation.

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<sup>13</sup> Professional retaliation, or reprisal, was defined as taking or threatening to take an adverse personnel action, or withholding or threatening to withhold a favorable personnel action, with respect to a member of the Armed Forces because the member reported a criminal offense.

<sup>14</sup> Social retaliation was defined as ostracism and such acts of maltreatment, as designated by the Secretary of the Military Department, committed by peers of a member of the Armed Forces or by concerned other persons because the member reported a criminal offense.

They were also asked to whom a midshipman would report an experience of retaliation against them. The section ended with a discussion of recommendations for eliminating retaliation.

### ***Occurrence of Retaliation at the Academy***

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believed retaliation would occur at the Academy if they made a report.**
  - *“I feel like it would be retaliated against.”* (Female)
  - *“I wouldn’t report [USC because of the risk of retaliation].”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that the reporter may feel isolated based on others’ belief that accusations may be false.**
  - *“We’re going to avoid [the reporter] ... because we’re not quite sure of [the reporter’s] character.”* (Male)
  - *“There was someone that accused someone else of sexual assault as an excuse for their grades falling so they couldn’t necessarily remove the student from the school. But there was enough doubt where [the reporter] was isolated.”* (Male)

### ***Awareness of Prohibitions Against Retaliation***

- **Some midshipmen indicated they were not aware that retaliation was prohibited, but were not surprised that it is.**
  - *“I didn’t really ever think about it, but I see that [retaliatory behaviors] are [prohibited].”* (Female)
  - *“I haven’t really thought about it. I knew it was wrong, it’s sort of retaliation, but I didn’t know it was reportable. But I mean, it makes sense it is. But it’s not something I think about.”* (Female)
  - *“No, I didn’t know. I didn’t know you could get in trouble for, you know, ostracizing someone.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated they did not believe the Academy administration would engage in professional retaliation, but that professionals in the maritime industry or Armed Forces might.**
  - *“No, not at all.”* (Male)
  - *“They’d be too worried.”* (Male)
  - *“They would be happy if someone came forward to report something before it turned into something else.”* (Male)

- *“In the Armed Forces I can see that happening with like promotions and stuff, I can easily see that happening. But here, I don't know.”* (Male)
- *“I could see that happening with teams, because those are run by, like captain-ships and stuff, those are run by the individuals... But to the actual midshipmen leadership positions, it's from administration for the most part, so I don't think that would happen there.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that social retaliation would be more likely than professional retaliation to occur at the Academy.**
  - *“I think peer would be [more common].”* (Female)
  - *“Just the rumor mill... Just like talking, spreading, you've got 600 kids on campus. If you say one thing, everyone is going to know by lunch time.”* (Female)
  - *“I know it's not received well when someone messes one of your friends or causes a problem it's not perceived well, because we're so small and everybody knows about it.”* (Female)

### **Ostracism as Retaliation**

- **Some midshipmen provided examples of ostracism as retaliation.**
  - *“Someone is ostracized, not a lot of friends or—I haven't seen a lot of physical retaliation, but there's definitely hands off this person.”* (Female)
  - *“The school is run on favors. I think a favor runs the school. ‘Oh, I took your watch, okay, can you do this for me.’ And I think this plays right along into that. ‘Oh, you did this, so I can't, I'm not going to do this for you’ kind of thing.”* (Female)
  - *“Well, I feel like it's like slut shaming in a way, the ostracism part of it. But ‘Oh, you are friends with these people, oh, you dated these people, oh, you did this with this person, this with this person,’ whether it's true or not.”* (Female)
  - *“Not here, but I know that at the Naval Academy someone and a friend of his was turned in for sexual harassment because he told a joke to a kid that then repeated it to a plebe girl in class and she felt offended by that joke... And she found out who said it, which was him, and that kid got in trouble... And then later on they got in trouble again because she turned them in for ostracizing her because they just refused to talk to her, because if we say a joke and you don't like the joke you're going to turn us in, so why would we even talk to you... We're going to get in trouble for that. Why are we going to get in trouble for not talking to somebody who's going to get offended easily.”* (Male)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believed social retaliation might occur between midshipmen, not between midshipmen and Academy leadership.**
  - *“Other midshipmen. Your classmates.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel the faculty not as much, but not at all really.”* (Female)
  - *“If you accuse the person, that person’s friends are pretty much going to make your life hell, that’s what it’s going to be like.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believed ostracism would not occur at the Academy or would rarely occur.**
  - *“Not at all.”* (Male)
  - *“Only if somebody made what’s widely believed to be a false report to get someone else in trouble or something of that nature.”* (Male)

### **Examples of Perceived Retaliation**

- **Some female midshipmen indicated that they have seen other female midshipmen be moved to a different company after reporting sexual assault or harassment. Some indicated that they considered this to be retaliatory, while others did not because female midshipmen switch companies frequently.**
  - *“Oh, like if they want to get rid of you kind of? I’ve seen it happen.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like girls get moved around a lot.”* (Female)
  - *“People get moved for a whole bunch of reasons. So I don’t feel like people would know right away unless it was super obvious.”* (Female)

### **Reporting Retaliation**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would report retaliation to the Human Relations Officer or SARC or would seek advice from others on who to report to.**
  - *“The HR officer or something, our human relations officers I think are the ones.”* (Female)
  - *“I don’t personally know [my HR officer], so I would go straight to the SARC.”* (Female)
  - *“Probably an upperclass friend who would know who to go to.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would talk to their friends about retaliation instead of reporting.**
  - *“Maybe your friends.”* (Female)

- *“Your friends.”* (Female)
- **Some female midshipmen indicated that midshipmen are hesitant to report retaliation because it might make the situation worse.**
  - *“I don’t think a lot of people would report. The thing is, if we all as a whole, if no one reports as a whole, it can’t change from that to being – that would be great if the whole entire culture of the school was ‘yes, something happened, let’s report it, let’s get it taken care of,’ that would be ideal.”* (Female)
  - *“Knowing what I know about sexual assault and rape and getting help and them getting what they deserve, I would be more comfortable telling one of my guy friends about it and people knowing that it happened and people giving them [expletive] about it because—I don’t even know if I would report it myself, or even report retaliation.”* (Female)
  - *“But if you’re already getting retaliated against if you report them retaliating against you, it’s just going to make it even worse. You can’t force them [to like you]. Once it happens it’s—you’re screwed.”* (Female)

### **Leadership Awareness of Retaliation**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they had not heard of anyone being punished for retaliation.**
  - *“I haven’t heard of any cases [where someone was punished for retaliation] here.”* (Male)
  - *“Not to my knowledge.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they did not believe Academy leadership would do anything to stop retaliation.**
  - *“Nothing.”* (Female)
  - *“I think there used to be a big problem with the leadership partaking in it and encouraging it, and there’s still a couple of people here. But some of the leadership listened to the midshipmen instead.”* (Female)

### **Social Media**

As a follow-on to the discussion of retaliation, midshipmen were asked if social media is used as a vehicle for retaliation. The discussion started with a general inquiry of the use of social media among midshipmen and the rules for use of social media at the Academy. Midshipmen were asked to describe how social media could be used as a form of retaliation and what, if anything, the Academy could do to prevent such use.

### **Use of Social Media**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they do not use social media as often as they did before coming to the Academy.**
  - *“Compared to my high school career, I don’t think social media is even close to what it was.”* (Male)
  - *“Twitter was a much bigger deal as far as people saying stuff. I think that gives people a lot more freedom to do so.”* (Male)

### **Role of Social Media in Retaliation**

- **Some midshipmen indicated social media is not used for retaliatory purposes, as “joking” is much more common.**
  - *“So there’s social media, there’s not a whole lot of rape, sexual assault, retaliation but more just joking.”* (Female)
  - *“There’s a lot of joking around about it, like guy on guy, just joking around, like ha-ha-ha. They’ll have a meme with an old picture based from their old Facebook and be like ‘me coming to rape your ass’ or something like that, and you’re just like uh, okay. But you know that those two friends are just joking about it.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that sites like Facebook are not used to retaliate because they are not anonymous.**
  - *“Because then they would just get in trouble if their name was on it.”* (Female)
  - *“You can prove right there, verifiable evidence of someone being sexually harassed or assaulted or something, or retaliated against. So I don’t think anyone would—it would be stupid of them to retaliate openly.”* (Male)
  - *“People are smart. If I’m going to retaliate, I’m going to retaliate in a smart manner that I can’t get caught for it.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that certain types of anonymous social media, such as Yik Yak, might be used to retaliate.**
  - *“I think they use Yik Yak because they’re cowards.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s anonymous and so they think they can say anything they want, or they think they can.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s even worse than even slander.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s anything they want. It’s pretty cruel. It’s pathetic actually.”* (Female)

**Use of Yik Yak<sup>15</sup>**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that Yik Yak is no longer popular.**
  - “It was popular for like two to three months maybe at most.” (Male)
  - “It was big for a couple of weeks and it was gone.” (Male)
  - “There was a phase and it was like everyone was just putting a lot of jokes on there.” (Male)
  - “I think that died.” (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that Yik Yak was still popular.**
  - “A lot of people [use Yik Yak].” (Female)
  - “I’ve seen it recently.” (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they do not believe Yik Yak is anonymous.**
  - “Sometimes, yes. Sometimes you can tell who wrote it from the context.” (Male)
  - “You can at least tell the group of people where it came from. It’s an inside joke.” (Male)
  - “You pretty much know what company it came from directly as soon as you see it.” (Male)

**Restrictions on the use of Social Media at the Academy**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy restricted use of Yik Yak for freshmen.**
  - “They said plebes weren’t allowed on it at all. But there wasn’t really anything they could do to an upperclassman.” (Male)
  - “It’s very limited.” (Male)

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<sup>15</sup> Yik Yak was mentioned repeatedly in focus groups as a common way to retaliate. As such, facilitators inquired specifically about this form of social media. Yik Yak is a social media smartphone application where subscribers can post comments anonymously. It is geo-based with approximately a five-mile radius.

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy had shut down other social media sites.**
  - *“It was a joke Facebook page, I guess based off of something, it was ‘KP hookups,’ for those long cold nights at Kings Point. It was just a joke Facebook page that somebody made, and by lunch time they already had it shut down.”* (Male)
  - *“The commandant [watches the site].”* (Male)
  - *“Someone made some Kings Point anonymous page, and they were posting anonymous crap, and they shut down Facebook so no one could access Facebook until they deleted the page.”* (Female)

### **Monitoring Social Media Sites**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy does not monitor social media sites.**
  - *“There is no way they can.”* (Male)
  - *“I know someone asked them to in the fall and they didn’t.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy should not monitor social media sites.**
  - *“I don’t think they have the right to monitor it.”* (Female)
  - *“Honestly, that’s my personal and private life, you can’t have that. I choose who my friends are, I choose what pages I join. If I see anything on there, I can choose to report it or delete it.”* (Female)
  - *“They shouldn’t have the right to monitor our Facebook.”* (Female)
  - *“We’re already on this campus seven days a week, so to take social media, which is freedom of speech... It’s not going to end well at all actually.”* (Female)

### **Perceptions of Leadership**

Another area for discussion in the 2015 SAGR focus groups centered on perceptions of leadership with respect to being engaged in preventing USC. The 2014 SAGR survey asked if various levels of USMMA leadership made honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment. Midshipmen were provided the results of those questions and asked to discuss differences in perceptions of efforts by various leaders.

**Discussion of Confidence in Leadership**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the ratings for Academy leadership making reasonable and honest efforts to stop sexual assault and harassment were higher than expected.**
  - *“That’s kind of high.”* (Female)
  - *“I thought it would be lower.”* (Female)
  - *“I thought it would be a lot lower.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they do not believe Academy leadership would make honest and reasonable efforts to stop these behaviors.**
  - *“I feel like it’s all pushed under the rug, a lot of people don’t want to touch on the subject, a lot of people don’t want to talk about it.”* (Female)
  - *“If they are told to help with the training or something like that, then yes, they’ll go do it. But are they actively going to seek it out and do it themselves, most likely not.”* (Female)
  - *“Well, teachers don’t want to get involved with it either.”* (Female)
  - *“People just want to stay out of it.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated midshipmen in leadership positions take issues related to sexual assault and harassment seriously.**
  - *“I think if someone brought the issue up to a midshipman in that position, they would do I think anything to help out. And they take their job seriously; they’re going to obviously do something about it.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it’s been made clear to a lot of the seniors in leadership positions that if something comes to their attention and they don’t do something about it, they’re going to get in a lot of trouble.”* (Male)
  - *“Because most likely you either know them through a friend or they are a friend, so you have a more personal relationship with them. So if they have an issue, they would want to help them. Whereas in a bigger Academy, you probably have never heard of the person before.”* (Female)
  - *“Usually the midshipmen leaders in leadership positions, they’re seniors, so they’ve probably been through whatever you’re going through. They just did three years of the school.”* (Female)

**Efforts Made by Academy Leadership**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that Academy leadership takes stopping sexual harassment and assault seriously because they are under pressure.**
  - *“It’s the Superintendent under pressure.”* (Male)
  - *“Someone saw the statistics for the Academy, and they’ve mentioned that there’s an increased focus on it, so they’re trying to focus more on the school.”* (Male)
  - *“So the pressure goes on the Superintendent and then down to the midshipmen officers to try to get more training and awareness out there.”* (Male)
  - *“I know commissioned officers I feel are because our Deputy Superintendent is recently really been pushing for sexual assault and harassment awareness. At least they’re doing something to make it aware.”* (Female)
  
- **Some midshipmen indicated that Academy leadership’s involvement in stopping sexual harassment and assault shows that they take the issue seriously.**
  - *“They keep in contact with you, they keep replying to whatever—if you bring an issue up to them, and they make the effort to come ask them for help, and they make the effort to come give you the help back, then I feel it’s more effective than just sitting and not doing anything.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it’s just them being involved in showing they care about our lives in general.”* (Female)
  
- **Some midshipmen indicated that lack of action demonstrates that Academy leadership might not take this issue as seriously.**
  - *“If you bring something up to them and there’s nothing done, you can send an email and wait for weeks or you can bring up a topic and not see anything happen ever.”* (Female)
  - *“They’re ‘Okay, I’ll email you or I’ll email you back,’ and you never hear back from them”* (Female)
  - *“Even during the sexual harassment trainings and stuff like that it can get pretty rowdy, no one does anything about it, and I feel like everyone just treats it like a joke.”* (Female)
  - *“And I think everyone that works here would like to think that they really care and do their part, but it’s more about kind of opening the communication on that, because many people do believe that it’s not fully supported.”*(Female)

## Athletic Teams

Findings from the 2014 SAGR survey suggested that in some instances behaviors among athletic teams and/or specific athletes contributed to unwanted behaviors at the Academy. Midshipmen were asked to discuss whether they perceived any issues with teams or athletes and whether standards for conduct applied equally to athletes and non-athletes. The results of the 2014 SAGR survey were again shared regarding leadership's efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment, and midshipmen were asked to discuss whether efforts were the same or different for members of the athletic staff as other types of Academy leaders.

### *Opinions About Athletic Staff*

- **Some midshipmen indicated that athletic staff is sensitive to sexual assault and harassment issues, due in part to the close working relationships between students and athletic staff.**
  - *“A lot of our coaches teach our PE classes, so I think they’re aware of it. And they want to make sure to avoid any situations if at all possible. And so I feel as coaches they know what training we have gone through and so they know themselves, and I’m sure they’ve gone through some training. So they want to make sure nothing happens.”* (Female)
  - *“They’re really close to the midshipmen I think. They make an effort to be close to the midshipmen and make them comfortable.”* (Female)
  - *“Because of how few people we have, you’re closer with all the members of the athletic department.”* (Male)
  - *“I think the stat is two-thirds of our Academy plays a sport here or did play a sport here. So I think that’s why ours might be a little higher than the other Academies,<sup>16</sup> because we’re smaller and we have a smaller atmosphere, we have more athletes.”* (Male)
  - *“They don’t talk about it much, if at all. But I think there’s kind of a sense of openness where if it needed to be talked about, they wouldn’t hesitate to.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they might be willing to report to the athletic staff if they were allowed to.**
  - *“Maybe.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it depends on the person and what they feel comfortable with.”* (Female)

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<sup>16</sup> In this group, the facilitator informed participants that other Service Academies received lower ratings for the extent to which athletic staff make an effort to stop sexual harassment and assault.

### **General Perceptions About Athletes and Sexual Assault**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they do not believe that sexual assault is more common among athletes, partially because the majority of students are athletes.**
  - *“I don’t think there’s a strict sports team nature here, since everyone is an athlete. Once you’re not at your sport, you’re a midshipman again. It’s not somewhere where you’re just a football player and that’s what he is when he’s walking around.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it’s more of if you’re like older. It depends what age you are. I feel like if you’re a senior you’re held to a higher standard.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that athletes are held to the same standards as non-athletes when it comes to recruitment for the Academy.**
  - *“When a coach wants to get a player, they’re still going to play for four years. And if you’re that much lower on the academics, you’re not going to be here for even one year.”* (Male)
  - *“You can’t come here to play a sport, you have to come here to go to the Merchant Marines.”* (Male)
  - *“If you don’t focus on academics or you don’t like the sea, then you’re not going to stay.”* (Male)

### **Preventing Sexual Assault**

Midshipmen were asked several questions about the programs and policies in effect at the Academy to prevent sexual assault. They were asked to describe those programs and policies and to discuss their effectiveness.

### **Programs and Resources that Address Sexual Assault Prevention**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that fliers and posters were not effective.**
  - *“Patten [clinic] has little dating and sexual harassment and assault like pamphlets, but they look like the old ones where it’s the ones [where] the girls are the victims, guys shouldn’t be doing this. They look like those.”* (Female)
  - *“The consent posters, those are bad too. Those like make it—like they’re like funny to like everyone. It’s just the way it’s presented, the fliers and the consent posters of a couple lovingly looking into each other’s arms (sic) and dancing and asking if they really want to consent.”* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they were not familiar with the SARC, but could find out where to go for help.**
  - “We don’t even really see what she does.” (Female)
  - “I don’t even know where her office is.” (Female)
  - “I had no idea we had gotten one.” (Female)
  - “I feel like resources, they put up posters. And you’ve got your human relations officers in your companies, they’re just in an officer position. Whether they wanted it or not, you don’t know if they wanted that, whether they do their job well or not. And then you’ve got like R-SAVA. So like that’s a year-long position, so they wanted that job, so they do a little bit. And then you’ve got your SARC, who’s obviously in charge of everything.” (Female)
  - “I think if anything were to happen we all know there’s a poster in every company and we’d just refer to that and go from there.” (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe midshipmen would intervene if they saw a classmate at risk of sexual assault or harassment.**
  - “I feel like they would.” (Female)
  - “I know if anything ever happened to me personally, I know I’d have seven, eight guy friends trying to beat the guy up.” (Female)
  - “There’s definitely a brother, sister mentality. I know they wouldn’t let something happen to me.” (Female)
  - “You have your platoon in [indoctrination], so you know each other, and then the company, so you know each other, and then as a class you know each other. So if you see someone and you know them and they are going to get themselves in trouble, I should go help them out, I guess like a family, on different levels you’re going to go help them.” (Female)

## Culture

The culture or shared beliefs among members of an organization influences behaviors (Schein, 1985). Midshipmen were asked to describe the general attitude at the Academy regarding sexual assault. They were asked whether issues of sexual assault receive the same emphasis as other issues and ways to change the culture to reduce inappropriate behaviors.

**General Comments About Academy Culture and Emphasis on Sexual Assault**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that sexual assault as a topic is not visible and not taken seriously.**
  - *“It’s not taken seriously at all.”* (Female)
  - *“From all the jokes that are around, I feel like it’s not taken seriously. But if something happened to me and I was going to go tell my friend, yeah, they’d take it seriously. But overall in classes they just joke around all the time just about anything and stuff. We have the training and they’ll sit really quiet and listen, but then they will make fun of it and then go back to making same jokes.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s an oh, my gosh, here we go again I feel like for most people, since there’s no open reports I guess, and I’m not saying there should be, we don’t know what’s going on, what these people went through. So it’s just something—we keep getting told about it but we never see it. So unless you have an actual encounter with it, I don’t think it really makes a mark on it.”* (Male)
  - *“These four reports, I can’t name a single one of anything I heard about anything happening in the year of 2014. So I mean, it’s not visible.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that sexual assault is a serious topic at the Academy.**
  - *“Every couple of weeks at least yeah, we have some kind of [training on sexual assault and harassment].”* (Female)
  - *“It’s a common theme that we talk about a lot at the Academy. There are several trainings throughout the year.”* (Male)
  - *“It’s probably the number one topic.”* (Male)

**General Comments About Academy Culture and Emphasis on Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behaviors**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy does not take sexual harassment and sexist behaviors seriously and mentioned that training tends to focus more on sexual assault than harassment.**
  - *“The most recent training we got was more assault than harassment.”* (Male)
  - *“[The training] still was focused on assault, but there was a component.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel like if [Academy personnel] hear something they’re just like okay, guys, time to be serious, you know, stop talking. And then like they don’t really say hey that’s inappropriate, you guys shouldn’t be saying that or something like that.”* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that their Academy is as safe as or safer than any other campus.**
  - *“I do feel like our school is below the national average of occurrence of sexual harassment and sexual assault.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel like it’s just as safe as any other college.”* (Female)
  - *“Just because of the nature of the school and the structured living, all the people that are over us, the big emphasis that they can place on this. Contrasted with a school where everyone doesn’t all live in the same place and go to the same regimental functions every day and they don’t have the same control over students.”* (Male)
  - *“It’s just the amount of people we have. I could walk alone in the dark across campus and the only thing that would scare me would be a raccoon. If I saw somebody coming at me, I’d probably know them. If something happens at the Academy, everybody will know like instantly.”* (Female)
  - *“I’ve gotten calls from my friends at college on a Saturday night or Sunday morning, and they don’t know who they went home with or this guy wouldn’t leave them alone. I’ve never had that experience here.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like if anything does happen, it’s something within the Academy, it’s between two midshipmen. But at another college it can be between someone from the town or the city they’re in, but they’re a student. Where here it’s just, especially since there’s security on campus, you have to be able to show your ID to get in. We’re just so contained, the only people around are other midshipmen. Even when you go out you’re out with your friends, battle buddies, around other midshipmen.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy is doing a good job of providing sexual assault and harassment training.**
  - *“I think the Academy is doing a decent job. We get one sit down training a trimester I think.”* (Male)
  - *“They gave us the month of sexual assault training. But that was when we got back from sea, so everyone groaned and ‘Oh, my gosh, this is all we ever talk about.’ But I feel like that’s about the right amount. It just seemed like more because we didn’t talk about it for a lot of the school year.”* (Male)

### **Recommendations to Change Culture**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that they believe responsibility for culture change at the Academy lies with midshipmen.**
  - *“I feel like it would be a good idea to work together, but the only way [midshipmen] would work together is if they were presented a goal and they actually have to get it done.”* (Female)

- “[The Academy can] sit there and have as many assemblies as they want and tell people to do this, to do that, tell the guys to not say this, but it all depends on if that guy is really going to think about it before, you know, before they say something. Or I don’t think there’s really anything the school can do.” (Female)
- “If you tell another guy [about a male midshipmen behaving inappropriately] and he goes up to him and tells him you need to stop. I think it’s effective that way. But I think the Academy could definitely do better. When they do assemblies for sexual assault, I feel it would be better if they didn’t have the whole entire population of this Academy there, because they all are talking to each other all the time. When you’re talking in small groups I feel it’s more effective that way.” (Female)

## Training and Education

Training on sexual assault prevention and response is a recurring topic on surveys and focus groups. Midshipmen were asked for recommendations to improve training on topics of sexual assault and sexual harassment and to provide examples of training they had received that were most effective and least effective.

### General Discussion of Training and Sexual Assault

- **Some midshipmen indicated that Green Dot, Red Dot training was effective, even though some midshipmen made fun of it.**
  - “I think that one of the most effective trainings we’ve had is that Green Dot, Red Dot training.” (Female)
  - “It caught the attention of the people here. The fact that they still bring it up, they still remember it. They’re saying it jokingly, but if they’re being a green dot—I’ll take the humor in it. Because sometimes to cope with a bad situation people bring in humor.” (Female)
  - “Red Dot, Green Dot, because it was a funny presentation, and it kept us engaged, we listened to it more. So now they see stuff like that, so if something actually happens they’re now going to think about it.” (Female)
  - “It’s legitimately stuck in their minds. Now, whether they make fun of it or not, whether that’s appropriate or not is a whole other issue. But is the training getting the job done? I feel, now that I can compare my actions to something, I like working for gold stars, for stickers, for green dots.” (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that the training they received during indoctrination was not effective because they were too tired to pay attention to it.**
  - “I feel like [the Red dot, Green dot training] stuck in our minds. But during indoc we had like a little skit presentation, so we were exhausted to begin with.” (Female)

- *“So we were exhausted, trying to stay awake, and then they gave a presentation on what can—like situations, and I think most of us have heard or seen that before. So we were like yeah, we know this already, trying to get some sleep because we were exhausted.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that training may not be taken seriously by their fellow midshipmen.**
  - *“I feel like some [midshipmen] have been exposed to those types of trainings, but they completely shut it out. But it’s like any other class; learn, test, done, now I’ve got the certification.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s something that [midshipmen] were required to go do that they didn’t want to be at.”* (Female)
  - *“[Midshipmen] don’t think of it as training. They just think about sitting in a classroom listening to someone talk.”* (Female)
  - *“Someone shakes their finger to say not to do this, not to do that. But the thing is, it’s just the whole culture of making fun of it.”* (Female)
  - *“That’s the main thing that I see here is the amount of rape jokes, the amount of sexual assault jokes, like it just sends me through the roof. Like I could probably count five different times that like guys make rape jokes in one day. And that’s like -- I think it’s just the whole like culture of how they see it. They see all this training as - - well, okay, part of the training is not -- the training here is not good.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that training should not be led by other midshipmen.**
  - *“I could just picture someone getting booed off the stage if they were up there trying to talk about stuff like that. And even when it was one of the female deck teachers.”* (Female)
  - *“I remember people were making jokes the whole time that [a captain] was up there talking about being sexually assaulted. I don’t remember what exactly was happening, but she’s up there sharing her experience, and people were in the back row laughing. And if that is the way they’re treating a captain in the Merchant Marines, what do they do if one of us got up there.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they would only take training seriously if they or someone close to them had experienced USC.**
  - *“Unless they’re affected.”* (Female)
  - *“Unless they’re affected. But they just feed off each other. It’s disturbing for me—if this happened to one of your siblings or this happened to you or to one of your friends, you would not be saying any of that right now.”* (Female)

### **Recommended Improvements to Training**

- **Some midshipmen indicated that effective training would include small group discussion.**
  - *“Well, I think it was better in smaller groups versus everybody at once in Ackerman with the regiment. Because if you have everybody, there’s going to be side conversations, people aren’t going to pay attention. But if you do it by companies or classes, then I think then you’ll have time for more questions, more people are paying attention.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like small groups like this. But then when you have a whole room filled with small groups, then that just doesn’t work.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it has to be personal.”* (Female)
- **Male midshipmen conveyed that they disliked training that took on an accusatory nature.**
  - *“We do say here we go again when we have a new sexual assault training, but there’s a difference between them sometimes. Like last fall I remember we had ours, it was basically we sat there and they kind of looked at all the guys and said you are rapists, if you touch a girl you’re a rapist, if you had sex with a girl four years ago, completely consensual, you’re a rapist. It was ridiculous. And the one in the spring wasn’t quite oriented that way, we walked out of that with a much more positive attitude. It was not like taught, it was more like... It was less accusatory.”* (Male)
  - *“We had lecturers that are sitting there accusing us of all being rapists and promoting this culture and stuff.”* (Male)
  - *“I think a lot of it is speakers try and go for that, like that last one in the spring, I thought that was pretty good because they just came in and talked and left. There was no men here are this, this, this and this, and women are this, this, this and this. It was just like this is what happens, this is how you can stop it, don’t do it.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that using XYZ cases would be helpful.**
  - *“(Multiple yes’s.)”* (Female)
  - *“I think that would make it real. Because I feel like all the time it’s hypothetical things, there’s really nothing that makes it real for them. I thought the guest speaker that did the alcohol thing was pretty good because he was an actual—he had been an alcoholic, and I took it pretty seriously because, you know, it was a real—he was giving us like real examples of real things that happened, real people he met, where it’s not just so hypothetical you’re trying to imagine it.”* (Female)

- **Some female midshipmen indicated they received training before going out to sea from alumni, which was useful.**
  - *“Before we went out to sea there was a graduate who came.”* (Female)
  - *“We had the option to go and listen to what she had to say. And she had some pretty good examples I think about how to deal with being out at sea as a minority. I thought that was really interesting.”* (Female)
  - *“I thought about that sometimes when I was at sea. I think that helped a lot. But I think it could have been advertised more, I think there could have been more girls that had gone to it, because that was actually really helpful. But if they could bring in—I know she’s come in before, but if they could bring in multiple alumni to come in, because they know what we’ve been through, they know what it’s like to be here. So if the school could start implementing that, I’d go.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that potentially having a speaker or alumni who had experienced USC come to talk to them might be useful.**
  - *“Maybe, if they’re okay with that. But I know a lot of people who know other people who have gone through this. And here I feel like it’s hushed. I don’t know how that would work, especially having not a lot of kids here. But I feel sometimes they’ll be ‘Oh, I didn’t know that about you,’ or ‘Oh, we shouldn’t joke about that.’”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like it should be more a victim should have to come talk to us. But not everyone wants to share their story, but I think it’s more effective that way than having someone like oh, my sister. I feel like if it actually happened to them, they would have been more mature.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like once they realize it’s someone in front of them who’s gone through something like that, then they won’t make those jokes in front of that person. But once they’re with their friends and that person is not around, I still feel like they’d still make the same jokes.”* (Female)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that learning from upperclassmen is useful.**
  - *“I think we learn most of those things by talking with upperclassmen, we don’t need like a formal training. Because if you have a problem, you’re more than likely going to talk to an upperclassman who you trust to see if they’ve gone through the same thing, and more than likely they have. So that’s how we get most of our advice here is through talking to the senior members of the Academy.”* (Male)
- **Some midshipmen indicated that they felt the trainings are difficult for men.**
  - *“If you’re a guy you’re a rapist and if you’re a girl you’re a victim. All the guys think it’s their fault.”* (Female)
  - *“It’s one sided.”* (Female)

- **Some midshipmen indicated that training focused on respecting others and developing interpersonal skills might be useful, while others indicated that those are things a person learns through experience.**
  - *“That’s the basis of it all. So it starts there with the respect part of it, respecting each other. But I feel like any of the training as a whole doesn’t do much. And like I’ve never felt so like powerless when it comes to this type of stuff.”* (Female)
  - *“Because you are in charge of someone doesn’t mean you can’t treat them with respect. So I feel because of the hierarchy of where you are, if you’re on top, everybody should respect you, yes, but that means you need to respect them too. Even if you’re just respecting them as a person, that’s what should happen, and then they should respect you as a person and as like your position. So I think we’re told respect, but I don’t think that they really touch upon it.”* (Female)
  - *“I think you just get[interpersonal skills] naturally. You can’t teach a class on something like that.”* (Male)
  - *“Especially at sea you learn how it works and how to deal with people, and you know at sea people don’t get along but you have to make things work because you’re on a ship with them for four months anyway, so you learn to put up with each other and not be like.”* (Male)
  - *“You know if you don’t [figure out how to get along with others] that you don’t make it. You just kind of have to learn how to.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel like having a class with these issues really wouldn’t help people learn about them. Plebe year, it’s hands-on, it’s practical, and it’s not something that someone is telling you, it’s something you’re finding out for yourself and it’s the only way you can really effectively learn to deal with the situation.”* (Male)

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

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Three focus group sessions were conducted at USMMA on May 4–6, 2015. Each session was scheduled for 90 minutes. There were three sessions conducted with staff members: faculty members, coaches and athletic staff, and uniformed staff. Each session had between eight and 12 participants (31 total).

### **Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment**

The 2015 USMMA focus groups began by sharing with the faculty and staff participants the prevalence rates of USC from the 2014 SAGR survey. The faculty and staff participants were asked whether they were familiar with those survey results, why they thought the rates increased from 2012 (noting that the increases in rates for men and women were not statistically significant), and whether they thought the rates would increase or decrease when measured in the next survey in 2016. They were also asked about other behaviors experienced, specifically by men as part of USC, such as hazing and “locker room” behavior. Faculty and staff participants further contributed comments on the role alcohol plays in USC.

Additional results from the 2014 SAGR survey were discussed regarding perceived sexual harassment and perceived sexist behavior, with questions asking about the familiarity of faculty and staff participants with those results, whether the rates might be expected to change in the next survey, and the level of emphasis placed on these behaviors by Academy officials compared to the emphasis on USC.

### ***Familiarity with USC Incidence Rates from 2014 SAGR<sup>17</sup>***

- **Some staff members indicated that the USC rates were higher than expected.**
  - *“I think it’s high. One in five women here. We don’t have that many women, so that’s a large portion of our population.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that the USC rates should be zero.**
  - *“They should be zero.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I didn’t think there would be any for men.”* (Faculty)
- **Other staff members indicated that they were not surprised by the USC rates.**
  - *“I’m not surprised at all.”* (Faculty)

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<sup>17</sup> Participants were informed that 14.4% of women experienced USC in 2012 compared to 17.1% in 2014; 1.3% of men experienced USC in 2012 compared to 2.0% for men.

- **Other staff members indicated that USC rates for men might be underreported.**
  - *“I think it’s reported low for the guys, to be honest with you.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated they were surprised so many male midshipmen participated in the survey.**
  - *“I actually thought the 58% who answered was high.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I thought that some would. I didn’t think it would be over 50% only because there’s the persona on the men’s side, which I won’t get into. Although I do think with some of the changes in society, that’s probably a little bit more concerning to some.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think for that issue, I can’t speak for all men, but some of these guys may think this doesn’t pertain to me, so I’m just not going to take it.”* (Uniformed)

### **Reasons for Increase in USC Rates**

- **Some staff members indicated the increased USC rates might be due to the absence of a SARC during the past year.**
  - *“Not that I’m attributing it to anything, but our SARC just came on board in the December, November time frame.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“None of us were here in 2012. The woman we have now is wonderful, I think she takes an active approach. Whereas in the past I think it’s been not as well-known or as active as we would like.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Isn’t 2012 when the initiative started on campus, when they started doing a lot more training and briefing and bringing SARCs on?”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that the increased USC rates might be due to increased attention from high-profile cases at other Academies.**
  - *“Well, the other thing I would say is especially at the Naval Academy, a couple years ago they had the big case with three midshipmen who were facing charges for sexual misconduct with their peers. And I think that that could contribute greatly to why those numbers have dipped, especially why it’s probably a more proactive environment. But it really depends on who you have at the forefront at the point who leads the emphasis on educating the students.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members thought that people might be willing to say they experienced USC given the focus on the topic now.**
  - *“In the past they may not even filled it out on a survey. So it’s two years later they do it. My point was people may be more forthcoming now, given the attention.”* (Faculty)

- *“Probably a lot more emphasis now.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated there is an overall lack of emphasis on the issue of sexual assault and harassment within the maritime industry.**
  - *“Unlike the other Federal Service Academies where their students might be going into their Service for a summer internship or summer training, and the industry that they’re in, Department of Defense, by and large has a tremendous amount of emphasis on the subject right now, versus the maritime industry as a whole, which, for those of us who have been in it recently, I wouldn’t say that they have anywhere near the kind of emphasis, support, training. I think that the disadvantage we have is that our industry, the maritime industry itself, isn’t necessarily placing that same emphasis that we place here or that in comparison with the other Academies that, the Air Force or the Army, is placing on those cadets when they go do their training.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“The other academies throw a lot more resources at this.”* (Faculty)

### ***Experiences of Behaviors Associated with USC for Men***

- **Some staff members indicated that male midshipmen would most likely experience unwanted touching rather than attempted or completed rape.**
  - *“I would say unwanted touching.”* (Faculty)
  - *“People grab ass.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that they did not think hazing explained male USC rates.**
  - *“No.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I don’t think so.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated they did think hazing explained male USC rates.**
  - *“I would think yes, that it’s, locker room stuff. Or the barracks.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that Academy’s lack of control during sea duty might explain the increase in USC rates.**
  - *“We don’t have control at sea.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“When they go out to sea it’s pretty much they’re on their own.”* (Athletic)
  - *“That might have to do with the sea.”* (Faculty)

***The Perceived Role of Alcohol in USC<sup>18</sup>***

- **Some staff members indicate that they believe alcohol plays a role in USC on campus.**
  - *“The more you drink, the more stupid things you’re likely to do.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Oh, yeah. Less inhibitions.”* (Faculty)
  - *“You’d be naive to think that doesn’t happen here. I would just assume based on human nature and what you’ve seen other places.”* (Athletic)
  - *“And mix that with, the power structure, maybe an upperclassman or someone in a position of power using their power to influence a younger person or someone.”* (Athletic)
  - *“It is at every college, let’s get that straight.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that alcohol policies are strict at the Academy.**
  - *“It’s supposed to be a dry campus.”* (Faculty)
  - *“[Students are] very aware of the alcohol policy.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that certain students are allowed to drink on campus.**
  - *“Yes. We have a pub. It’s for first class [seniors]. And there are social events, dinners that we have alcohol approved.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“There’s a midshipmen pub that’s open, that’s controlled under the commandant, and open maybe once or twice a week at the most. But they’re very—the kids get hammered for underage drinking. It doesn’t stop them and they’ll go out in town and they’ll be in uniform and kids have gotten in trouble because they see them in uniform, they buy the kid a drink, somebody else buys the kid a drink, and the next thing you know you’ve got some nineteen year old that’s never had that much booze in them before.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that alcohol involvement might be linked to fewer reports of sexual assault.**
  - *“I think with women it’s likely that alcohol will inhibit their reporting of incidents. Because they’re going to be blamed. There’s a culture of blame the victim.”* (Faculty)

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<sup>18</sup> The role of alcohol typically emerged throughout each session during discussion of overall USC rates. Therefore, themes related to alcohol are included in this section.

- *“Maybe that’s the reason why it’s coming off as 50%, because kids don’t have that thought behind their brains that I’m not supposed to be drinking, I’d get thrown out of here, so I’m not going to report that.”* (Athletic)

### **Discussion of Perceived Sexual Harassment Rates<sup>19</sup>**

- **Some staff members indicated that the increase in the perceived sexual harassment rate was accurate.**
  - *“I think that’s accurate. I think coming here, percentage-wise, you’re a small number. So I think it really does depend on your own personal level of tolerance. But I think from the level of being a freshman to a senior you’d be more tolerant as a freshman versus a senior.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Twelve percent or whatever females—not that I’m saying it’s all guys, but it pretty much happens daily.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated other cultural and situational factors might explain the increase.**
  - *“I think we have a particular demographic of students here. We have a high religious base here as well, conservative religious base. That could influence these numbers because they might not have the exposure where they come from to these things. So their threshold may be different.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think it’s also the industry, like we were saying before. Salty sailor or really anything you say goes. And if you are to speak up, you’re looked down upon. That’s just how it is.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that experiencing sexual harassment would not lead students to leave the Academy.**
  - *“No, I don’t think so. Most of the attrition is due to academics.”* (Uniformed)

### **Discussion of Sexist Behavior Rates<sup>20</sup>**

- **Some staff members indicated that they felt the sexist behavior rates were accurate.**
  - *“That sounds about right.”* (Faculty)

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<sup>19</sup> Participants were informed that for women, the estimated prevalence of perceived sexual harassment increased from 57% in 2012 to 63% in 2014. For men, the estimate increased from 8% in 2012 to 11% in 2014. Neither increase is statistically significant.

<sup>20</sup> Participants were informed that the estimated prevalence of sexist behavior for women was 93% in 2012 and 94% in 2014. For men, it was 41% in 2012 and 33% in 2014, which was a significant change.

- *“I would say by and large the sexist behavior, I agree with that. Because that goes from anything like ‘Oh, that’s what she said’ to comments like that, so just a laundry list of things. But I would agree with that number.”* (Uniformed)
- *“I think part of [the sexist behavior rate] is we have such a low female percentage of the population compared to all the other schools. I think a lot of males here just don’t even live with a female on their deck. We keep the females on one deck in each barrack, so they wouldn’t even live with a female.”* (Uniformed)
- *“Just walking down the hall on a daily business basis I’ve heard stuff and had to pull midshipmen aside.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated sea duty is a different experience from the Academy.**
  - *“On the ships it’s a lot different than being in the structured military environment. I would assume people that have been out at sea are going—it’s probably going to be a little bit worse than it is here.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that women are a minority at the Academy and, therefore, a target for discrimination.**
  - *“I think you could definitely look at there’s a connection. I also think that, in a place where there’s 12% women, there’s going to be a certain percentage of that that are more likely to be targeted because of physical appearance or whatever behavior, so those people will be more likely to experience both.”* (Athletic)

### Safety Concerns

- **Some staff members indicated they were concerned about an Academy policy that they had heard about that indicates that freshman women are unable to lock their doors at night.**
  - *“It’s very distressing to me [to] know that the freshman females can’t lock their door at night. And that’s something you guys should bring up to the regiment.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I do remember one woman talking about how ridiculous it was that she couldn’t lock her door, and the terrible insecurity about that.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I question that. They don’t let them lock their door. You just need one upperclass to go to a plebe, female room, he’s been drinking and go walk right in and that girl is sleeping and forget about it.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that female midshipmen do not feel safe while on sea duty.**
  - *“I was concerned about this, and I asked them, I said ‘Do you feel safe here?’ It’s probably 95% said yes. I said ‘Do you feel safe at sea?’ It was a lot different answer.”* (Athletic)

## Reporting

Faculty and staff participants were asked a number of questions to help understand barriers to reporting of USC experiences. They were told the number of reports made during the past year and that the number of reports could have been higher based on survey results. Faculty and staff participants discussed reasons why someone would report or not report an incident and leadership's emphasis on reporting. Faculty and staff participants were provided survey results that showed survivors of USC often experience multiple incidents and then were asked whether that knowledge would influence more midshipmen to come forward to report if they believed their report would stop additional incidents. The section ended with recommendations to remove barriers to reporting.

### ***Awareness of Official Reports***

- **Some staff members indicated that they were not surprised by the number of reports made at the Academy and indicated that they thought students were underreporting instances due to fear of retaliation or the lack of victim advocacy.**
  - *“Without a SARC being on campus, and no real push for a victim advocate program during that time frame, that sounds about right.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think also a large portion of the actual number of reports versus the percentage is fear of reprisal. So they're not going to want to say anything, because even if they are the victim, then they'll be looked down upon by the regiment.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“That's probably the most concerning, not that it's happening but that they're not reporting it, that they don't feel comfortable enough or we don't have the resources available to report it.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated it was unclear whether students would use staff members because they are mandatory reporters.**
  - *“If they do come to us, because it's automatically unrestricted.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“We would have probably turned it over to our director of public safety.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that the lack of formal complaints of sexual harassment at the Academy did not indicate the absence of sexual harassment but rather a lack of reporting.**
  - *“That I find amazing.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Just because of the Academy. I don't think the student thinks that they're going to take it seriously.”* (Faculty)

**Reasons Why Someone Would not Report**

- **Some staff members indicated that midshipmen might not report because they believe that a “reputation” might follow them into the industry.**
  - *“I would say because we are a Service Academy—we should be largely geared towards how the other academies are approaching it. Because of our industry, it’s very small. And if person B was to say something and something were to happen here, good or bad, and their name could get out elsewhere, and then they could get on a ship and someone will say ‘Oh, I heard about that or I heard about you.’”* (Uniformed)
  - *“It has happened previously, where incidents that happened here or even on their sea year have carried over into the industry years afterwards.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think the rumor mill and the fact that you’re now known, whether you’re male or female, and not necessarily in a good way in the industry, it just increases pressure and anxiety to an already strange and not normal way of life. You’re already putting yourself into a position where you’re either weeks or months away from home, away from a support network, and now you are either hearing or people know of you, that you have no idea who they are, but they now know you, for one reason or another, whether it’s true or not. That does happen.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that the small size of the Academy might lead to lower rates of reporting.**
  - *“This is the smallest of the Academies, and there are a thousand students, a quarter of whom are at sea at a given time. Everyone knows each other here. It’s not like Annapolis where there can be some anonymity. And once somebody says something, everyone knows about it the next day.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe the maritime industry lacks appropriate policies and procedures to prevent sexual assault and/or harassment.**
  - *“Most of the employers are for-profit companies. So they have internal regulations, but there’s no industry wide push.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think the student programs at the other Academies are so far ahead because they know where they’re going it’s important that they’ll be a leader in that. Our kids know, 90% of them, I’m going to do my job, and sexual harassment reported to me is not part of my job, that will not affect me. So it doesn’t interest them.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that because there are few women, reporting an incident at sea would cause them to stand out more.**
  - *“You’re different enough that I don’t want to stand out, I want to stand out for my work.”* (Uniformed)

- *“Honestly, the chances of somebody knowing that you reported something are very slim. But it doesn’t mean that the regiment is not going to find out if you’re a midshipman and you reported it.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe midshipmen would not report because they fear it might ruin a classmate’s career.**
  - *“We have guys and girls that live here for four years together. They’re not just students, they’re friends, they’re family. So it’s not just someone made an offense, it’s you’re trying to get my brother kicked out and ruin his life. So basically people back each other up, regardless of what this other person says about what you did.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“There was one case about twelve years ago, where it became a criminal investigation. The hostility that she had to put up with. And I think just, humanly you don’t want to think about, no matter what was done to you, the possibility of ruining a young man’s life. I think that’s part of it as well.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I think, if you don’t make it here, especially if you’re a first classman and you put all the work in, such an accomplishment, and it’s a career and life changer for them to graduate from here. They’re not looking at it as their buddy just got thrown out of here, and his life just got dramatically changed for the worse, as being someone who committed a crime. And they look at the female perhaps as someone who over-reported something and got them thrown out.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated midshipmen might not report if they had been consuming alcohol for fear of collateral punishment.**
  - *“I think for the most part, even if it’s not sexual assault related, people will not come forward for anything if they think they’re going to get in trouble.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“There is a lot of times when we do hear cases it’s related to another offense by an individual that was assaulted or whatever. Basically let’s say there was alcohol linked to it. If they bring the case up, then the fact that they were drinking or doing something else that was wrong, they’re nervous. I’ll just suck up it and not say anything about this part so I don’t get in trouble for any alcohol offense.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Sexual assault would come first, and that would be seen to its conclusion. And then after that there could be additional charges.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“And if they’re under 21 they’re breaking the law, in order to report you have to admit you were breaking the law.”* (Faculty)

- **Some staff members indicated that fear of retaliation might be a major concern when reporting.**
  - *“Well, you’re afraid specifically of the hostility that will then be directed at you for reporting. I think that’s the major factor.”* (Faculty)
  - *“This place, it’s very tight knit, it’s not like a regular college or maybe even some of the larger Academies where there’s a bunch of little pockets. It just seems like the class for the most part is pretty much together. It’s small as far as gossip and it’s small as far as everything. If a female reports someone and he’s a popular guy or he’s a well-liked guy and he gets thrown out, that female is not going to experience a very good time here. And it’s not like a regular university where it doesn’t matter because they’ll never see those people again. She has to live with those people in the dorms.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that midshipmen might lack confidence that action would be taken as a result of reporting.**
  - *“If someone believes that nothing will come of it, why waste their time.”* (Faculty)
  - *“If you feel you’re not going to get the justice you deserve. Why go through all those hoops.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated concerns with midshipmen reporting to other midshipmen.**
  - *“Well, I just think it’s interesting now, each company has a midshipman SARC, so that midshipman is supposed to help through the chain of command. The midshipmen body is so small. Personally I think the stupidest thing the school did was allow reporting to another midshipman. That’s the fastest way of everything is going to get spread by wild fire.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe that reporting is time consuming, which might deter reporting.**
  - *“There’s one other thing, and that is that with anything that you get involved in in terms of reporting, there’s always more demands on your time. And, I know one particular case where the individual, it was at sea that this happened, but she wound up getting in academic difficulty, she wound up with a setback, and frankly she found the academic division not very sympathetic, in fact, quite the reverse. So I think part of it is all the mess that it creates.”* (Faculty)
  - *“The consumption of time on top of it too. There is no time to do all the things you have to do as part of the training here as to time management, and now we’re going to give you this major legal stuff on top of it.”* (Faculty)

- **Some staff members noted that the previous SARC was a male, which might have impacted reporting.**

- *“Before that we had a male SARC, which changes things.”* (Athletic)

### ***Impact of Multiple Incidents on the Decision to Report<sup>21</sup>***

- **Some staff members indicated that in cases of multiple incidents of sexual assault, the system is failing repeatedly.**

- *“The trouble is, it happened, and it happened again, so either we didn’t do anything or they didn’t say anything, or nobody else saw it. We’re failing multiple times there.”* (Uniformed)

- **Some staff members did not believe that students knowing the percentages of multiple incidents would encourage more reporting.**

- *“Intuitively I don’t think so. Because, these are young people. It’s very private, and to actually come forward and think about themselves as future victims, I think that’s asking too much. I remember at one point in the Academy we had some very good assertiveness training.”* (Faculty)

- *“My assumption is that, it’s a very small campus, and I would assume that they’re probably afraid of whatever kind of kickback they would get from being discovered that they ratted somebody out, and they don’t want to deal with those consequences.”* (Athletic)

### ***The Perceived Role of the Academy in Encouraging Reporting***

- **Some staff members indicated they would want to know about ongoing cases.**

- *“We absolutely would.”* (Uniformed)

- **Some staff members indicated that some company officers do not allow midshipmen to post information on their doors, which is problematic.**

- *“They’re all supposed to have on the back of their doors all the emergency numbers and who they’re supposed to report to. But I also know there’s a few company officers who say you can’t have anything posted on the back of your door. So you have company officers not following the school policy.”* (Faculty)

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<sup>21</sup> Participants were informed that 81% of women who experience USC experience more than one incident, and that 90% of men who experience USC experience more than one incident. Participants were also told that 46% of multiple experiences of USC toward women involve the same offender.

- **Some staff members indicated they believe more efforts should be made to encourage reporting.**
  - *“I think talking about it in a positive light. Not that we haven’t already done that, but I mean making it a comfortable topic. Because a lot of times people will go to a required training or they just think of sexual assault as rape. But when we have leadership discussions or trainings, like having a small group discussion based focus on hey, what do you guys think about this and let them talk about it, instead of being talked to you.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members noted that the Merchant Marine Academy is different from other Academies in terms of individuals available for midshipmen to report to.**
  - *“The difference between here and at the other Academies, but they have a large support staff, where the company officer there, the second lieutenant, is a mentor and role model. And that here we do dual, we do five different things, and discipline is part of that thing. And they don’t really do the discipline of midshipmen. We do the discipline. So why should I come to the person that disciplines me? Where at West Point they don’t really see that side of the house, not that they don’t, but they’re more there for their maturation point.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“When you have five people in your company staff, I can pick what officer I want to go to report, great. You have one person to go to in your company here.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members agreed that if collateral punishment for alcohol infraction was not a concern, it would encourage more people to report.**
  - *“Yes.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that whether someone else reports the offender depends on the person’s support group.**
  - *“It just depends upon that person’s support group. But they’d have to really convince them. Or, if the coaches or someone else, if they confide in someone like us, we would have to go try to persuade them that hey, look, you need to do the right thing, you need to go and report this person.”* (Athletic)
- **Staff members indicated that the statistics related to USC should be shared with the SARC and midshipmen.**
  - *“I think this number would be an important number to share with the midshipmen focus groups and with the SARCs, that if you don’t report it, it can happen again to you or to someone else then.”* (Athletic)

- **Some staff members indicated that they believe that the maritime industry’s emphasis on sexual assault and harassment is improving.**
  - *“But now I think with the industry the numbers are also increasing, the percentage-wise of women in the industry. And a lot of times, companies have their own sexual assault, sexual harassment response. And they’re not tolerating that either.”* (Uniformed)

### ***Training on Reporting***

- **Some staff members noted that midshipmen have been trained how to report, but might not have paid attention.**
  - *“I think they’ve been trained on it, because [leadership has] also trained the faculty. Now, whether or not, they pay attention is another thing. Because these kids have the ability to fall asleep at the drop of a hat.”* (Faculty)

### **Retaliation**

Survey results in Active Duty and Academy populations as well as feedback from Service members in focus groups have indicated that the perception of retaliation from either a survivor’s leadership or peers is a barrier to reporting USC. Focus group participants were asked whether retaliation for reporting could occur at the Academy and what behaviors they believe might constitute retaliation. Faculty and staff participants were read the DoD definitions of professional<sup>22</sup> and social<sup>23</sup> retaliation and asked if they were aware that there are specific prohibitions against retaliation. They were also asked to whom a midshipman would report an experience of retaliation against them. Participants were then asked about recommendations for eliminating retaliation.

### ***Occurrence of Retaliation at the Academy***

- **Some staff members did not think that someone in their position would retaliate against someone who made a report due to the trouble it caused.**
  - *“I can’t see that.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I can’t imagine staff engaging in that.”* (Faculty)

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<sup>22</sup> Professional retaliation, or reprisal, was defined as taking or threatening to take an adverse personnel action, or withholding or threatening to withhold a favorable personnel action, with respect to a member of the Armed Forces because the member reported a criminal offense.

<sup>23</sup> Social retaliation was defined as ostracism and such acts of maltreatment, as designated by the Secretary of the Military Department, committed by peers of a member of the Armed Forces or by concerned other persons because the member reported a criminal offense.

- **Some staff members indicated that retaliation after reporting a sexual assault would occur by other students.**
  - “By other students.” (Faculty)
  - “But I think the path of least resistance is the ostracism path.” (Faculty)

### **Perceptions of Retaliation**

- **Some staff members indicated that some students might perceive actions by officials intended for their own protection as retaliatory.**
  - “[A victim being moved to a different company for their own protection might be perceived as retaliatory] because again of our smallness. Smallness of size. So everything is very personal.” (Faculty)
  - “And it will raise questions, ‘Why did you move companies?’” (Faculty)
- **Some staff members noted that it is difficult to physically separate survivors from their offenders due to the small size of the Academy, and that contact with perpetrators might be difficult for survivors.**
  - “With all the cases going on, the perpetrator and the victim may have to be sitting next to each other. That must be traumatic.” (Faculty)
  - “There’s also the presumption of innocence. Just because you’re accused, you’re still innocent, and that’s a very fundamental principle of our society.” (Faculty)
  - “Another issue is, our school is so small, it would be very difficult to try to keep midshipmen in different classrooms at the same time. It would be nearly impossible. Trying to separate them that way is just [an] impossibility at the Merchant Marine Academy.” (Faculty)

### **Awareness of Prohibitions Against Retaliation**

- **Some staff members indicated they were aware of such prohibitions.**
  - “The Whistle Blowers law.” (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that the Academy is not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).**
  - “Since we’re not technically under a military requirement, these kids are not, like at the other Academies, subject to the UCMJ. I think civilian rules follow more—you’re casting everything from a military standpoint. So that’s the problem. We’re military but we’re not.” (Faculty)

### ***Ostracism as Retaliation***

- **Some staff members indicated they were aware of cases of ostracism.**
  - *“You know, it doesn’t matter to us, it matters among the group, because that group think attitude is a lot more powerful than us. I know there was an incident, and a midshipman did something and that person suffered greatly, and he was ostracized his last year and he was miserable.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members were unsure how to deal with someone experiencing ostracism.**
  - *“How do you deal with ‘I don’t want to go out to lunch with you, I don’t want anything to do with you,’ how do you force people—‘I don’t want to help you with your project, even though I could help you pass that course that you’re having trouble with.’”* (Faculty)

### ***Suggestions to Address Retaliation***

- **Some staff members indicated that restricted reporting might avoid many of the problems with retaliation; however, midshipmen might not use the resource.**
  - *“What about restricted reports? If you have a restricted report, the reason that’s there is to prevent all those things we just talked about.”* (Uniformed)

### **Social Media**

As a follow-on to the discussion of retaliation, faculty and staff participants were asked if social media is used as a vehicle for retaliation. This section started with a general discussion of the use of social media among midshipmen and the rules for use of social media at the Academy. Faculty and staff participants were asked to describe how social media might be used as a form of retaliation and what, if anything, the Academy could do to prevent such use.

### ***Use of Social Media by Midshipmen***

- **Some staff members indicated that midshipmen use a lot of social media.**
  - *“Everyone has a thousand friends on Facebook.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that coming to the Academy is a difficult cultural shift in terms of social media use.**
  - *“It’s a hard, hard cultural shift for them, though, because they post their lives on social media. Everything that they do, think, say, wear, everything. And to come here and then all of a sudden with the cultural shift say hey, hit the brakes, we have to figure out a way—this is my opinion—figure out a way for them to systematically get them to shift how they do things, and I just don’t know how to do that, to be honest with you.”* (Uniformed)

- *“To see this particular fourth class [freshmen], that the time that they had away from social media, it was like watching drug addicts withdraw. So I don’t know if that’s the time to begin that shaping and that education piece of that, or if it’s after they get everything back.”* (Uniformed)
- *“I know in the process of their plebe year, after indoc we somehow gradually move them through responsible social media and how people treat each other I guess.”* (Uniformed)
- *“We’re trying to get them spun up on just basic time management. One of the things we tell them is you’re going to get your computer and your phones and all this other stuff back. Don’t spend hours on email or chat or social media when you need to be studying. So we battle with that up front.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that there is a cultural basis for social media use.**
  - *“I think culturally it comes here. There’s a culture base for that. This is a generation that’s grown up in a social media flood. And that’s how many of them have expressed themselves, through social media instead of face-to-face contact. And institutionally across the board, DoD, DOT, we have not figured out how to deal with that.”* (Uniformed)

### **Role of Social Media in Retaliation**

- **Some staff members indicated that they believe social media is a vehicle for retaliation, but that it is not unique to the Academy.**
  - *“Social media, our kids kill each other on social media. That happens daily.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Yeah, but that’s with everything. Everything, it’s not just here.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated they do not believe social media is used as often as it was in the past.**
  - *“Not anymore, not so much anymore. They did probably six, seven years ago when it first started, Facebook.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe social media definitely plays a role in retaliation.**
  - *“Social media gives a level of safety from afar. It gives a distance and, the anonymous postings.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“From the midshipmen, absolutely, yes.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Yeah. I mean, it’s as easy as updating your status and saying yes.”* (Faculty)

- **Some staff members indicated that they believe midshipmen know not to say something sexist out loud, but might when they are anonymous.**
  - *“When the person who reported is around, they’ll be Eddie Haskell.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Put on a good face.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“But when they’re online and amongst their peers, they might fall into the locker room mentality.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated they were not aware of any DOT or Maritime Administration (MARAD) policies for social media.**
  - *“No.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated hearing anecdotes of midshipmen using social media to retaliate or act in a hostile manner toward each other.**
  - *“Well, there was an incident last year between midshipmen, and one midshipmen got pissed off at another group of midshipmen so she posted a bunch of photos of them all drinking, and there was underage people in the background. And then printed it out and took it to the Commandant’s office. One of the people got kicked out.”* (Faculty)

### **Use of Yik Yak<sup>24</sup>**

- **Some staff members indicated that Yik Yak posts may represent more sexist behaviors and attitudes than references to sexual assault and sexual harassment.**
  - *“I think it would probably lean more towards the sexist behavior of like saying stuff anonymously and having no reprisal because they’re anonymous. So then the courage comes out and they’re able to say whatever they want.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that they personally do not monitor Yik Yak or other forms of social media, partially due to lack of resources.**
  - *“I don’t think we have the resources to do that or the personnel resources to do that.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Or the financial or information technology structure.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Some have brought it up and complained and said that was said about me, but mostly it’s been—it’s not illegal. They ignore it. It’s just difficult, it’s not a good answer, but there’s not much we can do.”* (Uniformed)

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<sup>24</sup> Yik Yak was mentioned repeatedly in focus groups as a common way to retaliate. As such, facilitators inquired specifically about this form of social media. Yik Yak is a social media smartphone application where subscribers can post comments anonymously. It is geo-based with approximately a five-mile radius.

- **Some staff members indicated that blocking sites is not a reasonable solution.**
  - *“It doesn’t address the issue, it just passes it down the road.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Right, it just masks it.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“The thing is, and we went to a conference on this with another Academy about two weeks ago, if you try to outlaw it, they’re just going to find something else. So what they’re doing is they’re trying to use it as a positive to announce stuff that’s going on, or hey, you know, so and so did a good thing over the Yik Yak network.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members mentioned that they should join Yik Yak to get an idea of what is occurring.**
  - *“We should all be on Yik Yak.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I know they use it down at Annapolis for even getting a pulse on the meals and stuff.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members thought that use of Yik Yak was on the decline.**
  - *“I thought it was on the decline. I haven’t heard about it in like six months.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I asked, and the midshipmen will say they don’t really use it anymore. Last year it was roughly toward the end of the year, but being honest, it was actually a lot of the outgoing seniors.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“It’s anonymous and there was a problem with that. And I’m not so sure it is still going on.”* (Athletic)

### ***Role of Training in Use of Social Media***

- **Some staff members indicated that they were not aware of trainings regarding the responsible use of social media for midshipmen.**
  - *“No, we don’t. But it’s on the radar.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that potential freedom of speech issues might be raised during training on use of social media.**
  - *“I think the difficult part is you start getting into the area of freedom of speech.”* (Uniformed)

- **Some staff members indicated that there is a need for social media training at the Academy.**
  - *“I think the cyber-hygiene has to be part of the training at the Academy. It’s just like they come in and all other aspects of their life here we help train and guide and learn. But because social media is such a large part of their lives, it should be part of it.”* (Uniformed)

### **Monitoring Social Media Sites**

- **Some staff members indicated that they do not monitor any of the sites.**
  - *“No.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that the Academy has a right to monitor social media sites.**
  - *“They’re out in the open.”* (Faculty)
  - *“An employer will do that. And these kids are their employees. This college is free.”* (Faculty)
  - *“They can monitor the use of the network because remember if you log in there, there’s no expectation of privacy whenever you log on. If they use their phone then they are not.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I know at the other academies they’ll block, like at least for their first—their plebe year they can’t get on Facebook or any of those other sites. And so then most of them, they don’t use it for a year and they never really go back on it.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that students do not appear to be aware of how future employers might view their social media use.**
  - *“But they will stick things on Facebook, and you’ll see them and you’ll take them aside and say you’re going to be going up for a job shortly, do you really want to have your spring break photos of the body shots down in Cancun on this site. And they have no clue. They don’t realize that the Internet is forever. They don’t realize that.”* (Faculty)

### **Perceptions of Leadership**

Another area for investigation in the 2015 SAGR focus groups centered on perceptions of leadership with respect to being engaged in preventing USC. The 2014 SAGR survey asked if various levels of leadership made honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment. Faculty and staff participants were provided the results of those questions and asked to discuss differences in perceptions as well as efforts by various leaders.

### ***Discussion of Confidence in Leadership***

- **Some staff members indicated that a lack of confidence in leadership is due to perceptions by women, especially those who are survivors, that leadership is not very active.**
  - *“I would expect that the women would probably think there’s a less active role. Especially the ones that were victims. When you have almost one in five that were reporting it anonymously, then yeah, there’s going to be a lack of feeling that it’s a proactive approach, until the numbers start to go down, and then it could go up.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think it’s interesting on the midshipmen not in leadership positions because, especially from my observation, they don’t understand that just because they don’t have a title here their senior year, they’re going to be walking out the door as leaders in their community, in the Armed Forces, in the maritime industry. And it’s pretty low on the women’s side. But if they were to go a non—a midshipman not in a position that they may or may not do anything about it, I think that’s pretty interesting.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members felt that having a bad experience with one person in leadership might lead to overall negative feelings.**
  - *“It could be something as simple as they had a run-in with a particular person and then therefore all of that category, all of that class, you just can’t trust them.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members felt that midshipmen leadership might have had such a high ranking due to their involvement with the Honors Board and because they are well known.**
  - *“Maybe they’re more involved with the honors. Generally, the leaders can be involved with the honor board. And you know, so possibly they’re—they self-identify with leaders on campus.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Maybe the midshipmen leaders are higher because of our size as they’re more well-known to everybody.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members thought that confidence in leadership would depend on the midshipman’s class.**
  - *“Also, you’re talking underclass and stuff too. With midshipmen not in leadership positions. Third class—I would think confidence that makes efforts to stop sexual harassment, if you were comparing a fourth classman with a senior, you’d think you’d have a stronger person as a senior.”* (Athletic)

### **Perceptions of Seriousness**

- **Some staff members indicated that the perception of seriousness might be lacking because they feel that the Academy is underfunded and understaffed.**
  - *“But I think there is a general lack of awareness on a daily level. True, we have other business to discharge than that. But, I think that there are many, many, years of ignoring these problems. And we are very underfunded and understaffed.”* (Faculty)

### **Athletic Teams**

Findings from the 2014 SAGR survey suggested that, in some instances, behaviors among athletic teams and/or specific athletes contributed to unwanted behaviors at the Academy. Faculty and staff participants were asked to discuss whether they perceived any issues with teams or athletes and whether standards for conduct applied equally to athletes and non-athletes. The results of the 2014 SAGR survey were again shared regarding leadership’s efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment, and participants were asked to discuss whether efforts were the same or different for members of the athletic staff as compared to other types of Academy leaders.

### **Cultural Differences from other Academies**

- **Some staff members indicated that students generally view themselves as midshipmen first and athletes second.**
  - *“I think it depends. I think you have to look at most other colleges across the country, kids go there for athletics. You come here, we preach you’re a midshipman first, you play, let’s say, football and represent the school on the side, that’s an extracurricular. But here we try and develop individuals as a whole. And the athletic department, they try and do that as well because they’re so close with the individuals and they just try and look after them. I think it really comes down to just care of the athletic department.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“They meet a minimum qualification that all students meet. They can’t be looked at unless they meet that qualification. I think other academies are different.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“We tell the coaches you recruit a midshipman first, then an athlete.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that since USMMA is a Division III school for athletics, there is less pressure to win, which may create a different culture than Division I schools.**
  - *“Division I versus III.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Well, involved in athletics compared to Navy and Army? We’re definitely higher because you’re talking 4,000 students in number. I think we have more, a higher percentage of students involved. Everybody has academic faculty, they all have*

- teachers, but they all don't have coaches. So they might see oh, this guy, he's someone who only cares about this thing and they don't know him or her at all. I think that's why we definitely have a higher percentage than Navy, Army and Air Force, because that's also elite, being Division I.*" (Athletic)
- *"Those guys are paid to win games. We teach courses, we're involved with the kids, we actually teach the mission of the Academy as well. And they're worried about one thing, beating Army and that kind of stuff. Big difference. And those coaches know that the kids are getting this kind of training in the barracks. They're worried about winning games, that's it."* (Athletic)
  - **However, some staff members indicated that sports have become a much bigger focus at the Academy in recent years.**
    - *"And sports the last 12, 13 years I'd say sports has taken on a really major role here."* (Faculty)
  - **Some staff members indicated that a difference might be that until recently the USMMA athletic director was a woman.**
    - *"The one thing you have to remember is that up until recently our athletic director was a woman. And had been for 25 years. So I'm sure she, having grown up in the athletic culture, is sensitive to that and made sure her staff was sensitive to that."* (Faculty)
  - **Some staff members do not seem to think that athletes at USMMA receive as much special treatment as athletes at other Academies.**
    - *"They get special treatment compared to what they got at the other academies. They get early registration, they get training tables."* (Faculty)
    - *"Well, in the last few years we don't have what we used to call picks anymore for athletic teams. They all compete; they're just in the general population. In the old days you would have a state slate, and if there was a great linebacker down here, you got so many picks. And that doesn't happen anymore, they were all taken back by MARAD several years ago, and they're being used for diversity."* (Faculty)
    - *"I think at the other academies, not so much the Coast Guard, I think there's a big divide between the athletes and the student body. And the athletes think they can probably get away with more. Here I don't believe that there's that divide as there is at the DoD academies."* (Athletic)
    - *"There's an academic standard and then there's an athletic standard at the other academies. At us it is everyone must be at this standard. There is no giving us extra points here or there. It's just this is—they have to have that."* (Athletic)

- **Staff members did not think that athletes are held to a different standard in terms of unwanted sexual contact or sexual harassment behaviors.**
  - *“I don’t think so.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Especially under the current leadership, the [football] coach has no tolerance for that. And he’s kicked kids off the team for being disciplinary problems in the regiment. And that includes that type of thing. But he also happens to be a grad of this place. So he gets it.”* (Faculty)
  - *“And there’s no tolerance here. The best athlete screws up, he’s gone. Where I don’t know about the other academies because there may be more pressure, at Navy not to throw their starting quarterback out of school. And there’s that feeling of big time programs getting away with whatever they want at schools like that. It’s not like that here.”* (Athletic)
  - *“I know a lot of the coaches, it’s not zero tolerance but it’s pretty close. If you don’t fit with the culture of the team we’re trying to run, and it’s doing the right things across the board, regimentally, academically and in for our case our room, then that’s the—at some point it doesn’t matter how good you are. I know Coach has got a lot of guys who don’t make it through because they’re not making the grade as far as doing the right thing across the board. And I think a lot of the other sports are like that.”* (Athletic)

### **Engagement of Athletic Department in Gender Relations Issues**

- **Some staff members felt that the athletic department is engaged in addressing such issues.**
  - *“Yes, I would say they do.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Yes. I think everybody should be. You can get engaged. If anyone feels comfortable with their mentor, whoever they see as their mentor, yeah, there’s engagement.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“And our department briefed the athletic department last week specifically on this and thanked them for their continued support and participation in leadership development and character development of their student athletes.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think our coaches are very engaged in their students’ day-to-day life here. I don’t know, I can’t speak for the other academies, but I think we’re small enough here where our coaches are—they’re vested in each student that gets in their program.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“And that’s why I think the numbers are where they’re at, because we are so much more involved with the kids on a day-to-day basis rather than just at practice.”* (Athletic)

- **Staff members felt that coaches are in a unique position that might allow them to be effective in addressing topics of sexual assault and harassment.**
  - *“I think one of the things that the coaches have here is they’re dealing with smaller units. Many of the COs have 150 midshipmen at any time. A coach has 20 to 30.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“And you separate them from the regiment; you get them in their off periods or their off time, off hours. A coach can interact with a midshipman a lot easier or an athlete student rather than COs or the military leadership I guess you could say.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members did not think that sexual assault and sexual harassment were issues that the athletic department discusses with athletes regularly.**
  - *“I don’t necessarily think that sexual assault and sexual harassment is a hot topic for the athletic department. But with that I don’t think that they’re ‘anti’ it, I just think it’s not spoken.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I think they’re actively on the same plan as all of us in providing character and leadership development. But I don’t think before the practice they’re all going to sit around and huddle and talk about sexual assault.”* (Uniformed)

## Preventing Sexual Assault

Faculty and staff participants were asked several questions about the programs and policies in effect at the Academy to prevent sexual assault. They were asked to describe those programs and policies and to discuss their effectiveness.

### *Discussion of Strategies to Prevent Sexual Assault*

- **Some staff members noted positive changes in preventing sexual assault within the last five years.**
  - *“Before, five, six years ago we didn’t have a SARC. The problem’s always existed, but it’s got a lot more attention over the last five, six years where we have our second SARC now. It has gotten more attention of course on the Congressional level as well as—which of course filters down through here.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that dependence on civilian companies for problems at sea might be an issue in prevention.**
  - *“Because we really need to rely on the companies for any problems that take place at sea, so that is an issue.”* (Faculty)

- **Some staff members indicated that training should have an increased focus on sexual assault prevention.**
  - *“Also, I think a lot of the tenor of the questions and comments have been about sexual assault and reporting. I think more could be perhaps directed to questions of prevention.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that while security measures were taken on Academy grounds, they were not always properly implemented.**
  - *“Well, they have those blue boxes that were—but they weren’t working for—so you could see the blue light driving over the Throgs Neck, but they didn’t work for months.”* (Faculty)

## Culture

As noted, the culture or shared beliefs among members of an organization influences behaviors. Faculty and staff participants were asked to describe the general attitude at the Academy regarding sexual assault. They were asked whether issues of sexual assault receive the same emphasis as other issues and ways to change the culture to reduce inappropriate behaviors.

### ***General Discussion of Culture at the Academy***

- **Some staff members indicated that midshipmen look out for each other.**
  - *“All sexual assault, I think they inherently look out for each other, just based on what they do for a living.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I believe they’d respond to one of their classmates, shipmates, midshipmen. I believe they would.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I’m very impressed about women talking about feeling that a lot of midshipmen are like their brothers. In class, when I have the female midshipmen with the guys, I’m very impressed and interested. Their interaction is so much like brothers, the way they talk to each other, and even in a class where they’re doing something physical, whether it’s self-defense, first aid when they’re working with each other as far as doing the wraps—the way they go about and the way they talk to each other, I’m very impressed at the men and women, the way they interact. I think it takes a special woman to go through here and make it. And I just enjoy watching the way, and it is a brother, sister environment.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe that midshipmen would intervene if they knew someone was sexually assaulting or harassing others.**
  - *“There was a case last year where there was a guy who was a predator, and his male classmates reported him. He’s no longer here.”* (Faculty)

- *“I would like to think that if anybody saw anything like that going on that they wouldn’t use their whistle, they’d physically intervene, I would like to believe that.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe the Academy culture is such that midshipmen do not view some potentially offensive behaviors as sexual harassment.**
  - *“I think there’s a culture of jocularly around here that maybe men may not perceive as well can constitute an atmosphere of harassment.”* (Faculty)
  - *“This generation has—they say things in front of faculty—that I would not say in front of my professors even at my age today. And you’re always nipping it in the bud, you’re always trying to rein it in. And it’s one of these things where it seems to be a generational shift in what’s acceptable and what’s not to talk about in a business or school setting.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I think they think differently, young people think differently. They’re much more open than us.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated they were displeased that the Academy sanctioned the midshipmen to create a video with sexually suggestive content.**
  - *“They made this video, this Gangnam style video. They had this girl—the school actually allowed this girl in this video to gyrate, and it was very sexual in nature. And the school sanctioned it.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Yeah, the Naval Academy as well as West Point too. It was disgusting.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that the culture at sea might make it seem more permissible for midshipmen to say inappropriate things at the Academy.**
  - *“It’s a larger problem dealing with the culture at sea. We’re not dealing with that here.”* (Faculty)
  - *“But they’re using that as an excuse for the students to say inappropriate things. That’s not an excuse.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that there is a culture of loyalty between midshipmen at the Academy.**
  - *“It’s the culture too. You don’t build your classmates, which means you don’t turn in your classmate. And that culture is very strong.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members noted that they believe a cultural change is necessary to teach midshipmen what constitutes unacceptable behavior.**
  - *“I think that’s the biggest cultural change. I agree that people should be reporting stuff that is happening. But it should be a culture change for everyone that this is*

*unacceptable, nobody should be doing this and everyone should be standing up against it. It can't be just the people that are victims and just the people that are doing the offenses. There has to be a complete overhaul of this is an attitude that we are going to have as an Academy that this is not okay, regardless of whether it's harassment, verbally, physically, whatever it is, it's you don't treat other people with disrespect and/or whatever it is. We should be doing our job as a community at the Academy to prevent that from happening.” (Athletic)*

- **Some staff members noted that they believe survivors might not want to be viewed as a victim and any reputation associated with it.**
  - *“I think they feel like they're depicted as the victim and they hate that sense of it, because they have to overcome as much as they do, and now to throw in that—every time they do a sexual assault or whatever meeting, it's always this many guys and this guy is going to rape this girl, and it always makes the female feel like she's the victim. And she's like I'm not a victim, I'm not going to get whatever. And I think that they get frustrated with that. It's just the way it's presented, I think they're tired of that and they want change.” (Athletic)*
  - *“Because they're saying we are the rapists and females are the victims. And the females are like I'm tired of it, being told I'm a victim when I'm not. And I know that my friends are not going to do anything and they're not rapists like that. Because the girls and the guys here, since there are so few females, they are very close with a lot of the guys. Like a lot of them are like brothers, you know, they actually do protect them and look after them. These are the kids that they are living with that they trust with everything. So they don't feel like it's fair to call that person this because he's not, and it's not fair to call me a victim when I'm not.” (Athletic)*
- **Some staff members did not think students would feel safer at USMMA than at a civilian college, especially given the isolation at the Academy.**
  - *“They can't lock their door. I keep saying that.” (Faculty)*
  - *“Also, you know, this is testosterone city, these are young men, they're locked up.” (Faculty)*
  - *“There's not as much for them to do as at other academies.” (Faculty)*
  - *“At the Naval Academy, the Naval Academy is loved by Annapolis. There are people who adopt midshipmen there. Here there's nothing to do with the Kings Point or Great Neck—I've met people in Kings Point who don't even know this place exists. That's a big difference in the isolation here.” (Faculty)*

**Discussion of USC in Classrooms**

- **Some staff members indicated that in courses where such topics are discussed, it is up to the instructor to turn an inappropriate comment into a teachable moment.**
  - *“I think it also depends on the nature of what you’re teaching is. If you’re teaching courses that bring up gender and sexuality as part of the course content, it can be part of a teachable moment. But also I think a more possibly influential time, if you don’t shut the conversation down, sometimes I think it’s necessary to pull that into some kind of discussion, a framework about gender relations.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members noted that certain staff members are more permissive of such comments, which does not teach midshipmen that such behavior is unacceptable.**
  - *“I’ve heard from actually like faculty members saying that they overhear things from the students, ‘Oh, well, they go out to sea, that’s what sea life is about.’ Well, they’re not here at sea and they are going to be commissioned officers and that’s not acceptable. So I’ve heard professors like say it’s okay basically.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I think one of the most disturbing moments here is at a faculty forum meeting when our former EEO was speaking up in a forum and said that she had overheard language that was inappropriate and then corrected the language. And someone in the faculty forum said ‘Well, obviously you’ve never been to sea.’ So I think that’s a real problem.”* (Faculty)
  - *“And I think it’s also, when some of us who are older were growing up, the terms, you used it, throws like a girl, no one would have thought a thing about it. And now that’s something that some people would really take offense to. And whether it’s hurtful or not, obviously it’s different views, but it’s a cultural change.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that it did not seem that issues of sexual assault and/or sexual harassment are taken seriously at the Academy.**
  - *“My students have said—they were laughing, they thought it was a joke because they were given a whistle, and they are like this is our defense, a whistle. The ‘rape whistle.’”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members noted that the new SARC is trying to change the culture on campus.**
  - *“We are in the midst of doing something with the SARC in putting a program together to help change that culture.”* (Athletic)

### ***Presence of Peer Programs***

- **Some staff members differed in whether they knew of active student programs at USMMA, but agreed that these programs were lacking compared to other academies.**
  - *“We have a sexual assault victims’ advocate.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“I don’t know how active they are.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Not compared to the other academies, no.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“We don’t have anything like that.”* (Faculty)
  - *“That would be something our SARC should come up with.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members noted that although midshipmen are interested in the topic, they do not seem to be taking action on their own.**
  - *“There’s not as much interest. They seem interested in the topic and want to get involved, but we have to pull some help. They’re not volunteering, in other words, to do this.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated some groups of midshipmen take the issue more seriously than others.**
  - *“There was a spectrum group. But it has died for lack of support. Spectrum is LGBT.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated they expect students would respond to a peer-led program.**
  - *“Yes.”* (Faculty)

### **Training**

Training in sexual assault prevention and response is a recurring topic for surveys and focus groups. Faculty and staff participants were asked for their perceptions about the training the midshipmen receive on sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention. They were asked for recommendations to improve the effectiveness of training.

**Discussion of Current Training and Sexual Assault**

- **Some staff members indicated that they conduct the same trainings as other Academies.**
  - *“We’re doing the same thing. We just brought a guest speaker in for the green dot training. That was an all hands, so she spoke to everyone, but it was about sexual assault bystander intervention really.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that there are plans to break students down into smaller groups (20 or 30) to talk about sexual assault.**
  - *“Yeah, it’s in the plan.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated training does occur in a large group format, but should occur in smaller groups.**
  - *“In a large group format typically, either a company or a class, and the SARC will get up and talk to them.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“The second classmen just did training on a free form basis at the beginning of this trimester with the SARC. So that was about roughly 20, 25, 30 maybe at a time for about an hour.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members noted that midshipmen do not have much time to devote to learning more about these issues.**
  - *“One of the other things we deal with is actually time management. To form groups like that, peer groups and stuff, midshipmen here have such a little amount of time.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that training is offered regularly.**
  - *“It’s expected, that’s their training time, so it’s expected.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that assertiveness training was effective and could prevent incidents.**
  - *“Assertiveness training. It was when we had a colleague who was actually assigned to work with women on campus. Now of course we don’t have that anymore. They would do role playing. It was designed for sea. If you’re out at sea and you’re given an order to close the door or whatever, they would learn how to talk their way out of situations. I think that was very helpful.”* (Faculty)
  - *“I would look into that assertiveness training. I think that was very helpful to some midshipmen.”* (Faculty)

- **Some staff members indicated that they do not believe sexual assault is the topic most discussed, but rather alcohol is.**
  - *“I don’t think—not the most.”* (Uniformed)
  - *“Alcohol.”* (Uniformed)
- **Some staff members indicated that although students receive training, they might not pay attention.**
  - *“But whether or not they pay attention or not or take it seriously.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that midshipmen receive training on how to act as a professional and leader and that this training must continue.**
  - *“We try to teach them—remember, they’re 18, 19, they’re legally adults, some of them are still in the high school mode and we try to teach them that they are going to be professionals, and it’s part of the teaching. It doesn’t happen overnight. And what’s acceptable, it’s a process.”* (Faculty)
  - *“Regarding sea training, it’s part of the leadership training they get here. Hopefully they get the leadership training to know that they need to take care of those people that are just in their sphere of influence or something. To do the right thing. Now, if they see someone not being taken care of on a ship, they’re using the leadership to go to make it stop or to talk.”* (Athletic)
  - *“How about just general courses about what it means to be a professional, and manners and dressing and language, and just a general course on manners and interacting with people. You’re professionals and you’re expected to behave in a certain way.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that they believe training is superficial.**
  - *“I feel that it’s superficial. There’s very little follow through or that it’s just a box that we have to check and sit here for an hour and you’re the victim and you’re the perpetrator and done.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated that some training from the SARC has been highly effective.**
  - *“I’m with guys, so it’s certainly different than the people coaching female sports. But it’s interesting, I want to say in the spring there was a one day regimental period that they did that they had a SARC presentation. Actually, the guys I had were actually positive about the way that that program in particular went.”* (Athletic)

- **Some staff members indicated that there might be resentment after receiving so many trainings.**
  - *“I suspect that the vast majority of guys and I think certainly girls are not the type of people who would do these things. And here they’re getting all this training, training, and training. And I don’t know, but if it was me, I would sort of resent it.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members thought that the new SARC’s focus on bystander intervention was beneficial.**
  - *“I have noticed that the new SARC, her major focus has been on bystander intervention, and so that’s a new initiative. And I think a very successful one, because it’s the idea of taking care of your shipmates. She’s only just started, so it’s a new initiative. She’s focusing on it, so hopefully it will be more successful.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members indicated that students responded well to hearing from a faculty member who had been a survivor of sexual assault.**
  - *“Basically we had a faculty member that was extremely brave. She’s been a victim of sexual assault, and she talked to the regiment about it, and that made an impression on them because they talked about that without sarcastic overtones. And that made an impression. But it was an incredibly brave thing to do...”* (Faculty)

### **Suggestions for Training**

- **Some staff members indicated that there should be a focus on early training.**
  - *“What’s being done in indoc? I don’t exactly know what program they have for indoc, but what’s being done to train them then, because that’s when it starts, when they show up as plebes. That’s the time to start planting these seeds, you know.”* (Athletic)
  - *“Well, I think the plebes take etiquette during the plebe summer. And I think it’s just part of the leadership training. However, with social media there is no training or guidelines or anything.”* (Athletic)
- **Some staff members indicated they would like to have input in training.**
  - *“No, it never seeks input from us at all.”* (Faculty)
- **Some staff members recommended asking midshipmen for ideas on training content.**
  - *“Maybe on the surveys could be do you think this is important as a leader? Would you want to learn more about it? Also, how could the training be improved, like a caveat, ‘so this has happened, this is what you’ve experienced, so how could we better it and get their opinion from it?’”* (Uniformed)

## Chapter 4: Discussion

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The purpose of the *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* study was to better understand how the policies and programs in place at the Academy affect midshipmen and provide for their wellbeing with regard to sexual assault and sexual harassment. As noted, themes provided in this report are qualitative in nature and cannot be generalized to the full population of USMMA students, faculty and staff. Nonetheless, the themes represent important ideas for consideration. This discussion chapter summarizes the themes expressed by focus group participants and presents potential opportunities for action.

### Common Themes

#### ***Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment***

Participants had mixed reactions to *2014 SAGR* survey estimates of USC at USMMA—some thought they were underestimates, while others thought they were overestimates, and still others believed they were accurate. Participants were generally in agreement that sexist behavior is a relatively frequent occurrence at USMMA and discussed how sea duty might contribute to a sexist environment. We found an increased awareness of what constitutes sexual assault and harassment—partially due to the presence of a new SARC, which might help to explain increases in estimates of USC on campus.

- Reactions to USC incident rates varied substantially across both midshipmen and staff. Some midshipmen and staff indicated that USC incidents rates were lower than they would have expected, while others indicated that rates were higher than they expected, and still others indicated that rates seemed accurate. There was more consensus when specifically discussing rates of USC toward males, which many midshipmen and staff agreed was underreported.
- *SAGR 2014* survey results showed that there was an increase in USC between 2012 and 2014, although it was not statistically significant. Increased awareness and attention to USC behaviors might explain this potential tendency because midshipmen might be more familiar with what constitutes USC than in the past, and might feel more comfortable engaging in dialogue about sexual assault. Further, the absence of a SARC at USMMA in previous years might also underlie the relatively lower rate of USC in the past due to lower levels of awareness of USC.
- Many midshipmen and staff noted that males might have different beliefs regarding what constitutes sexual assault or harassment than females. More specifically, participants indicated that a female might interpret an unwanted behavior as sexual assault or harassment, but a male might evaluate the same behavior as less serious or threatening and would not consider it to be sexual assault or harassment. In this sense, females might evaluate a wider range of behaviors as sexual assault or harassment, while males might only consider especially serious acts to be sexual assault or harassment.

- “Locker room” behaviors are common behaviors for men at the Academy to experience and are generally accepted as part of Academy life (although they are not encouraged by leadership). Some midshipmen and staff thought that “locker room” behaviors would be perceived as sexual assault or harassment by midshipmen, while others did not.
- *SAGR 2014* survey results showed that there was an increase in sexual harassment rates between 2012 and 2014, although the difference was not statistically significant. Many female midshipmen noted that they routinely experience or observe sexual harassment, often in the form of jokes or inappropriate comments. The male-dominated nature of USMMA might contribute to these types of jokes, as focus group participants noted that such environments tend to be less sensitive to the offense that sexual harassment might cause. It is also worth noting that midshipmen are in male-dominated environments when they are on sea duty and that the maritime industry was said by some to be hostile towards women, which might influence midshipmen’s behavior while on campus.
- *SAGR 2014* survey results showed that 94% of females and 33% of males at USMMA experienced sexist behavior. Midshipmen and staff were largely unsurprised by the high rate of sexist behavior toward females. Male and female midshipmen presented slightly different perspectives on the issue of sexism, with some males indicating that females are not held to the same academic or physical standards as males—thus implying that females have it easier—and females indicating that they have to prove themselves to overcome the perception that they don’t deserve to be at the Academy—implying that females have it harder.
- Sea duty, and the maritime industry overall, present a difficult environment for midshipmen to navigate when it comes to gender relations. This observation was reinforced by comments made in the focus groups. The maritime industry is male-dominated and sailors have been characterized as using profane language, making sexist remarks, and drinking heavily. This confluence of factors might create an environment where USC might be more likely to occur. Some staff members indicated that they believe female midshipmen do not feel safe while on sea duty, although female midshipmen did not explicitly discuss this in the focus groups. This might be an important area for consideration and potential action as behavior and culture at sea might also impact how midshipmen are treated at the Academy.

### ***Role of Alcohol in Sexual Assault***

Focus group participants noted that alcohol is often a contributing factor in USC because it impairs decision-making and lowers inhibitions. Further, midshipmen indicated they might be less likely to report USC if it occurred in conjunction with alcohol consumption for fear of collateral punishment for drinking.

- Midshipmen and staff indicated that alcohol plays a role in USC on campus due to impaired decision-making and lower inhibitions. Midshipmen noted that it would be possible for someone to take advantage of someone who was already inebriated, but noted that it was unlikely (but possible) that someone would get a midshipman drunk to facilitate USC. Others noted that midshipmen protect each other when in vulnerable

situations and would thus try to prevent an already inebriated midshipman from becoming a victim of sexual assault.

- Midshipmen and staff noted that there are strict alcohol policies at USMMA. However, some midshipmen indicated that there is a culture of drinking at USMMA and that this might be partially influenced by the prevalence of drinking while at sea.
- Midshipmen and staff noted that midshipmen might be less likely to report USC if it occurred in conjunction with alcohol consumption for fear of collateral punishment for drinking and/or the possibility of victim blaming (i.e., implying that the survivor invited the attack by drinking too much).

### **Reporting**

The reporting of sexual assault and harassment is one of the most challenging areas for the USMMA to navigate, as many survivors choose not to report, despite being aware of available resources. This is due to numerous reasons that generally fall into one of four categories: (1) victim-centered reasons, (2) relational reasons, (3) professional reasons, and (4) procedural reasons. There was disagreement regarding perceptions of the Academy's encouragement of reporting, with some midshipmen and staff agreeing that the Academy makes adequate efforts to encourage reporting, and others indicating that they believe the Academy should do more.

- Midshipmen and staff agreed that the number of formal reports of sexual assault and harassment filed in 2014 were an underestimate of the true prevalence of these incidents and acknowledged that many survivors of sexual assault or harassment do not report it for many different reasons.
- Midshipmen and staff are generally aware that there are several avenues for reporting sexual harassment or assault, including the SARC or one of the SAVAs. However, many midshipmen indicated that they would not feel comfortable reporting to one of these resources—especially SAVAs, since they are fellow midshipmen. Some male midshipmen indicated confusion regarding the reporting process, especially with respect to their responsibility to report sexual assault incidents that they were aware of but not involved in. Some female midshipmen indicated that they would prefer to discuss a USC incident with their friends or with a civilian resource, but noted that civilian resources can be difficult for midshipmen to access.
- Participants were informed that the *2014 SAGR* survey found that survivors of USC often experience more than one incident, and that the same offender is involved much of the time. There was disagreement about whether knowledge of multiple incidents of sexual assault would make midshipmen more likely to report sexual assault. Some midshipmen indicated that this knowledge would make them more likely to report because reporting could help prevent future instances of USC. Other midshipmen and staff indicated that the pressure not to report is so intense that the knowledge of multiple incidents would not make a difference.

- Midshipmen and staff offered many reasons why someone would choose not to report. These reasons can be classified into four distinct, yet related, categories:
  1. Victim-centered reasons:
    - Victim blaming—The fear that the survivor will be construed as somehow inviting the sexual assault, perhaps because they were drinking alcohol or wearing suggestive clothing when the incident occurred.
    - Accusations being perceived as false—The fear that others will think the survivor is lying about being sexually assaulted as a means to either get another midshipman (i.e., the accused) in trouble or as a means to excuse poor academic or other performance (because of the perception survivors of sexual assault will be given leniency by faculty, staff or other administrative personnel).
    - Females' status as a minority on campus—Some female midshipmen indicated that they already stood out on campus because they are members of a numerical minority (versus the male majority) on campus and did not want to invite further attention to themselves.
  2. Relational reasons:
    - Ostracism—Midshipmen and staff noted that individuals who report sexual assault or harassment often incur social retaliation, most often in the form of ostracism or spreading rumors (retaliation is further discussed below).
    - Violation of expectations of loyalty between midshipmen—Midshipmen indicated that when a midshipman chooses to report a USC incident perpetrated by a fellow midshipman, there is a fear that the perpetrator might incur punishment such as a tarnished reputation and eventual expulsion. There are strong norms of loyalty between midshipmen at USMMA, meaning that there is an expectation not to “turn on each other,” and focus group participants indicated that survivors might fail to report incidents to avoid getting another midshipman in trouble.
  3. Professional reasons:
    - Harm to a female midshipman's professional reputation in the future—Midshipmen and staff indicated that there is the perception that having a reputation as someone who filed a claim of sexual assault in the past might harm a female's future career if companies avoid individuals who have filed such claims out of fear that the individual would file a report while working for the company.
    - The maritime industry's lack of policies and procedures aimed at preventing or responding to sexual assault and harassment—Staff noted that they believe the maritime industry lacks adequate policies and procedures geared toward preventing and responding to sexual assault and harassment, which might convey to midshipmen that sexual assault is not an issue that is taken seriously within their chosen industry.

## 4. Procedural reasons:

- The time-consuming and laborious nature of reporting—Some midshipmen indicated that reporting is a time-consuming process and that it is simply easier not to report.
  - Anonymity concerns—Some staff noted that because the USMMA is so small, they believe it would be difficult for a reporter to remain anonymous despite his or her desire to do so.
  - Lack of confidence that action will be taken after a report is filed—Some midshipmen and staff expressed concern that they do not believe the administration would take appropriate action after a report was filed, so they do not see a point in reporting.
- Midshipmen may be hesitant to report sexual assault that occurred in conjunction with drinking because they will incur punishments for drinking. Staff agreed that if collateral punishment for alcohol infraction were removed, it would encourage more people to report.
  - There was disagreement regarding perceptions of the Academy's encouragement of reporting. Some midshipmen and staff felt that the Academy makes adequate efforts to encourage reporting (e.g., offering training on how to report, supporting students who have reported USC), while others felt these efforts could be improved (e.g., allowing midshipmen to post reporting-related information on their doors, sharing USC statistics with midshipmen and staff). Some staff indicated the USMMA might have fewer resources than other MSAs in terms of individuals to whom midshipmen can make a report of sexual assault and harassment.

**Retaliation**

Social retaliation, such as ostracism, is perceived to be a common consequence of reporting USC, but focus group participants indicated it is perpetrated by a midshipman's peers and not by faculty and staff. In addition to ostracism, spreading rumors is another common retaliatory behavior cited by midshipmen.

- Other students are likely to retaliate against midshipmen who report sexual assault, but faculty and staff are not. Midshipmen were generally unaware of prohibitions against retaliation, but were not surprised when they learned that it was prohibited. There was little awareness of midshipmen being punished for engaging in retaliatory behaviors and midshipmen expressed ambivalence with respect to whether they believed leadership would stop retaliation.
- Ostracism was the most common type of retaliation discussed. Midshipmen indicated that they might avoid someone who reports sexual assault or harassment, sometimes because they believe claims of sexual assault are false, and sometimes because they perceive that the reporter has gotten another midshipman (i.e., the accused) in trouble. Staff noted that they were unaware of how to combat ostracism when it occurs.

- The other primary type of retaliation that was noted in focus groups involves spreading rumors about someone who reported USC. Midshipmen and faculty noted that the small size of USMMA might facilitate the quick spreading of rumors.

### ***Social Media***

Social media did not emerge as a particularly popular forum for retaliation directed at midshipmen who report USC. Rather, midshipmen indicated that social media sites are used for gender-related jokes. Both midshipmen and staff expressed concern about the USMMA monitoring social media sites and staff suggested that midshipmen receive training on the proper use of social media.

- Midshipmen reported that social media sites are more often used for gender-related jokes (e.g., male midshipmen making homophobic jokes about other male midshipmen) than retaliation directed toward individuals who report sexual assault, but staff indicated that they believe social media sites *are* used for retaliatory purposes. Yik Yak, in particular, is of interest because of its anonymous nature. Most midshipmen and staff agreed that Yik Yak had been popular in the past and had been used for retaliatory purposes, but was not used as frequently anymore.
- Midshipmen noted that they believed that USMMA monitored some social media sites and had previously shut down sites (such as a Facebook site geared toward connecting midshipmen for the purposes of “hooking up”). Some expressed that they had concerns about USMMA monitoring sites because it might infringe upon freedom of speech. Staff noted that blocking sites was not a reasonable solution because it simply masks issues and does not solve them. Instead, staff suggested that midshipmen receive training on the appropriate use of social media.

### ***Perceptions of Leadership***

Midshipmen and staff varied with respect to the degree they believe that Academy leadership makes honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and harassment. While many agreed that leadership makes several efforts (such as providing training and reporting resources), others were under the impression that leadership was reluctant to engage in issues related to sexual assault and harassment. One finding particular to USMMA is that midshipmen leaders were perceived particularly favorably in comparison to peer leaders at other MSAs.

- There was disagreement regarding as to whether Academy leadership is making honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and harassment. Some midshipmen indicated that the Academy provides trainings regarding sexual assault and harassment, reporting resources, and continued support for midshipmen who do report a sexual assault or harassment incident. However, others indicated that leadership prefers to “stay out of it” when sexual assault or harassment does occur at the Academy. For example, some midshipmen provided examples of instances where they voiced concerns about sexual assault or harassment-related issues to leadership via e-mail and did not receive a response. However, other midshipmen noted that leadership had been very responsive when sexual assault- or harassment-related issues were brought to their attention.

- Staff noted that female midshipmen, especially those who are sexual assault survivors, might believe that leadership is not very active in sexual assault- and harassment-related matters, and noted that instructors' permissiveness of sexist comments might help perpetuate this impression. Staff also noted they believe that USMMA is underfunded and understaffed and thus may have fewer resources than other MSAs to spend on sexual assault- and harassment-related initiatives.
- Midshipmen generally have a favorable impression of other midshipmen in leadership positions (a finding that is unique to USMMA when compared to other MSAs) and believe peer leadership takes their roles seriously. Some staff members felt that midshipmen leadership might have such a high ranking due to their involvement with the Honor Board and because they are well known among their peers.

### ***Athletic Teams***

Sexual assault and harassment did not emerge as issues that are more prevalent among athletes at USMMA. Participants communicated their belief that athletes are considered midshipmen first and athletes second. Athletic staff were perceived as being particularly sensitive to sexual assault and harassment issues at USMMA and participants indicated they are in a unique position to address sexual assault and harassment.

- Sexual assault or harassment is not perceived to be perpetrated by athletes to a greater extent than non-athletes at USMMA, which might be due in part to the fact that the majority of students are athletes. Staff indicated that athletes consider themselves to be midshipmen first and athletes second and reiterated that athletes are held to the same standards as non-athletes at USMMA—both in terms of recruitment and for engaging in behaviors related to sexual assault or harassment. Staff also indicated that they thought athletes at other MSAs might receive special treatment, but that athletes at USMMA did not (partially because they are a Division III, as opposed to Division I, school).
- Some midshipmen indicated they believed that athletic staff is sensitive to sexual assault and harassment issues, due in part to the close working relationships between students and athletic staff. Many midshipmen communicated that athletic staff make an effort to develop good relationships with midshipmen and make efforts to prevent sexual assault and harassment. Staff agreed that coaches are in a unique position that might allow them to be effective in addressing sexual assault and harassment because they are responsible for a small number of midshipmen. However, some staff did not think that sexual assault and sexual harassment were issues that the athletic department discusses with athletes regularly.

### ***Preventing Sexual Assault***

There has been an increased emphasis on sexual assault and harassment prevention in recent years at USMMA and midshipmen are generally aware of resources devoted to sexual assault and harassment issues. Staff suggested that training focus more on prevention and that security measures (like blue boxes) should properly function. Many raised the issue of bystander intervention and noted that midshipmen would intervene on behalf of another midshipman who

was in danger of being sexually assaulted. One issue of particular interest to USMMA is that the Academy has no involvement in prevention-related measures while students are on sea duty.

- As mentioned, midshipmen are generally aware of resources to turn to for sexual assault or harassment issues—namely, the SARC and the SAVAs. However, some midshipmen indicated that they were unfamiliar with who the SARC was or the location of her office. Midshipmen noted that they did not believe the fliers and posters aimed at preventing sexual assault were effective. Staff noted that issues of sexual assault have received more attention over the last five years and that prevention efforts at USMMA have improved. Staff also suggested that training focus more on sexual assault prevention and that security measures on campus (e.g., blue boxes) be properly implemented so as to prevent sexual assault. Staff communicated that it might be especially difficult to prevent sexual assault at sea because USMMA cannot monitor what is occurring on ships and is instead reliant on civilian companies to prevent and respond to any sexual assault or harassment issues. This is an issue specific to USMMA that merits further consideration.
- Bystander intervention was raised by several midshipmen and staff who noted that they believed midshipmen would intervene on behalf of a midshipman who was in danger of being sexually assaulted. This is related to the expectations of loyalty between midshipmen and fosters a “brother, sister mentality” that dictates that midshipmen should protect each other.

### ***Academy Culture***

Participants disagreed with respect to how seriously sexual assault and harassment are taken at USMMA. Many noted that the Academy provides several trainings and other resources devoted to sexual assault and harassment. However, others noted that sexist comments are ubiquitous on campus and that midshipmen frequently make jokes about sexual assault, which conveys that they do not take the topic seriously. Still, others noted that midshipmen feel safe on campus and emphasized the close-knit nature of the student body. Both midshipmen and staff agreed that midshipmen would need to be heavily involved in any efforts to change the culture around attitudes related to sexual assault and harassment.

- There was disagreement regarding whether sexual assault as a topic is taken seriously at USMMA. Some midshipmen indicated that they constantly receive trainings on sexual assault and harassment, which conveys the seriousness of the issue. However, others indicated that midshipmen do not take the trainings seriously and often make jokes during the training. Others noted that the frequency of sexual assault-related jokes in general (i.e., not just in training) conveys that midshipmen do not take the issue seriously.
- Some staff members indicated that midshipmen do not view some potentially offensive behaviors as sexual harassment, thus implying that behaviors must be highly offensive to be considered sexual harassment. Moreover, staff members indicated that the culture at sea (which is permissive of sexist remarks and comments that would be considered sexual harassment) makes it seem more permissible to midshipmen to say inappropriate things at the Academy. In all, many agreed that the culture at USMMA is generally permissive of comments that might be construed as sexist or as sexual harassment.

- Many midshipmen indicated that they felt safe on campus and that they considered USMMA to be as safe or safer than other campuses due to the close-knit nature of the midshipmen and because of the expectation that midshipmen will look out for each other (a sentiment echoed by staff). However, some staff noted that the isolation and male-dominated nature of USMMA might make it less safe because there is little contact with members of the surrounding community (which translates into limited contact with women) and fewer things for students to do.
- Some midshipmen and staff indicated that responsibility for culture change at the USMMA lies with midshipmen. That is, trainings and other programs created by Academy leadership can only go so far. To truly change USMMA culture with respect to sexual assault and harassment, staff suggested that midshipmen must adopt new attitudes and behaviors with respect to sexual assault and harassment.

### ***Training and Education on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention***

USMMA provides several trainings on sexual harassment and assault. Midshipmen noted that the bystander intervention training was especially effective, and female midshipmen noted that hearing from upperclassmen on how to handle sexual assault and harassment at sea was extremely effective. Midshipmen and staff offered several suggestions for training and noted that instructors should turn inappropriate comments made by midshipmen into teachable moments.

- Trainings differ with respect to both how effective they are perceived to be and how seriously midshipmen take them. For example, many noted that the training focused on bystander intervention (Green Dot, Red Dot) was especially effective and female midshipmen noted that hearing from female upperclassmen about how to handle sexual assault and harassment at sea was helpful. However, training that midshipmen received during indoctrination was not as well-received because midshipmen indicated that they were too tired to pay attention. Training that takes on an accusatory tone toward males was also not well-received because male midshipmen felt unfairly maligned. Midshipmen and staff noted that many midshipmen do not take any trainings seriously, but some do (especially if they, or someone close to them, has been affected by sexual assault).
- Midshipmen and staff had multiple suggestions for training, such as using XYZ cases, small group discussions, assertiveness training, hearing from a speaker who had experienced USC, and learning from upperclassmen. Some midshipmen indicated that training focused on respecting others and developing interpersonal skills might be useful, while others indicated that those are things a person learns through experience.
- Some staff members noted that informal training on sexual assault and harassment can occur in the classroom and noted that if a midshipman makes an inappropriate comment, it is important for the faculty or staff member to convey that such comments are unacceptable.

## Conclusion

During the focus groups, both midshipmen and staff expressed a variety of different perspectives on sexual assault, harassment and sexist behaviors at USMMA. One core theme is the increased awareness of these issues at USMMA, which is supportive of the Academy's efforts to prioritize sexual assault and harassment response and prevention on campus. Nonetheless, some midshipmen and staff voiced concern over issues such as the consequences of reporting sexual assault, midshipmen's sometimes irreverent attitudes toward sexual assault and harassment, and leadership's level of engagement in sexual assault and harassment issues. While the results of the USMMA focus groups found that progress and improvements have occurred, work remains to be done. The present findings indicate that USMMA is making concerted efforts toward raising awareness of and preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus. For these efforts to be ultimately successful, it is imperative that they continue.

## References

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**Appendix A.**  
**2015 Student Focus Group Guide**



## 2015 Student Focus Group Guide

### Introduction to the Focus Group

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

**Time for briefing  
and introductions:  
5 minutes**

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

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

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. While the press and others may claim to know what is going on at the Academies, members of Congress and your senior leaders want to hear directly from you about the issues that affect you. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. [For U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Merchant Marine say – While this Congressional requirement does not cover your Academy, your leadership asked to participate because they know these are important issues]. This is an opportunity for you to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.
- Focus group participants sometimes say “I have not experienced any of these behaviors, so why should I stay for this session?” The purpose of this focus group is to understand these issues at your Academy. You're the experts on what it's like to attend 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 other's opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.
- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.

- I will lead the discussion and \_\_\_\_\_ 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.
- My role as facilitator is to keep the session moving and to guide the discussion. This might mean that I will move on to another topic in the interest of time.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, to the extent allowed by law DMDC does not publish nor share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. In some instances, DMDC may receive requests for the unedited comments collected at these sessions; this information will only be provided to the extent required by law. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session by not saying anything that would identify you or other participants. For example, do not state your name, your roommate's name, or your company identification. In addition, we also ask that you do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave. Additional information about protecting your anonymity is shown in the box on your handout.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Does anyone have 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).

Please turn to page 5 of your handout. Here you will see some of the results from our 2014 survey that we will discuss today.

- **Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment**
  - Let's begin by looking briefly at some of the results from the survey we conducted in Spring of 2014. Please take a look at the first section of the handout we provided to you. [Review 2014 estimated prevalence rates in handout. Also describe the composition of the USC rates – they include unwanted touching, attempted sex, and completed sex. And emphasize these are not official reports made – they are based on survey results and reflect the percentage of students who experienced one or more incidents of USC in the past year.] Have you seen these estimated prevalence rates? Why do you think the estimated prevalence rates increased between 2012 and 2014? [Note that the increase for women and men is not statistically significant. Probe for reasons for upward trends or why someone might not have an opinion.]
  - What are the possible drivers for the increase in rates? What happened that might have resulted in the lower prevalence rates in the 2013-2014 school year? Do you think the lower rates are sustainable? Will they stay the same or go up or down the next time we do the survey in Spring 2016? Why?
    - For juniors and seniors: Is the emphasis on sexual assault and sexual harassment similar this year to that in 2013-2014?
  - For Seniors: A lot has happened between 2012 and 2015. What changes have you seen? Has the focus on preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment been consistent over the years? Have the changes been positive or negative? How so?

- Are experiences of sexual assault different for men? For example at the other Academies men indicated on the survey that some of their unwanted behaviors were associated with horseplay, locker room behavior, hazing or initiation rites, someone being dared to do it, etc. Results here at USMMA are not reportable due to small numbers. Are these potentially the drivers of sexual assault with male survivors? What can be done to reduce this type of unwanted behavior?
- We also measure perceived sexual harassment on our survey. In 2014 the estimated prevalence rate for women at USMMA went up from 57% in 2012 to 63% in 2014, although it was not a statistically significant increase. Were you aware of this increase? It also increased for men – 8% in 2012 to 11% in 2014, but this was not significant. Why do you think it remained essentially the same for both?
  - Do you think midshipmen have a better understanding of sexual harassment now than say a year ago? Is there any more emphasis on sexual harassment than in the past?
- Also, sexist behavior remained unchanged for women at 93% in 2012 and 94% in 2014. For men it went down from 41% in 2012 to 33% in 2014 [significant]. Why do you think it stayed the same for women? Why did it go down for men?
- **Reporting**
  - Now let's switch to a related topic about reporting sexual assault. Please see the third section of the handout. [Share statistics from the MSA report at each Academy.] These are the number of reports last year. Are you aware of this number of reports? Note that these are the actual number of reports filed. Across all three DoD Academies this represents 16% of the reports that could have been filed based on the percentage of students who indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact. Would you think it would have been higher or lower? Why?
  - Does Academy leadership encourage reporting? [If no response: Does Academy leadership talk about reporting sexual assault?] At what level (senior leaders like the Superintendent and Commandant, uniformed officers/CPOs, midshipman)? Do your coaches and academic faculty talk about reporting? Anyone else [for example, counselors, SARCs]? Do your peers encourage reporting?
  - What are some reasons why someone would report?
  - What are some reasons why someone would not report?
  - One thing we have learned from our surveys is that survivors of sexual assault often experience multiple incidents of unwanted behaviors. Please take a look at the fourth table in your handout [Share results on more than one experience and the same offender involved.] Reporting could reduce multiple incidents by identifying the offender and halting criminal behaviors before they continue with that same person or someone else. Would knowing that make a difference in someone deciding to report?
  - What more can be done to encourage reporting?

- **Retaliation**

- I would like to shift the discussion now to a topic related to reporting sexual assault. Complaints of retaliation against someone who reports sexual assault have received considerable attention by leadership and in Congress.
- DoD policies specifically prohibit retaliation. Retaliation, as defined by the Department, includes two distinct types of actions:
  - 1) taking or threatening to take an adverse personnel action, or withholding or threatening to withhold a favorable personnel action, with respect to a member of the Armed Forces because the member reported a criminal offense; [if asked for an example, for midshipmen, actions that affect a midshipman promotion; a disciplinary or other corrective action; a transfer or reassignment to another company; a military performance evaluation; a decision on training opportunities; referral for mental health evaluations, or any other significant change in duties or responsibilities inconsistent with their current situation].
  - 2) ostracism and such acts of maltreatment, as designated by the Secretary of the Military Department, committed by peers of a member of the Armed Forces or by concerned other persons because the member reported a criminal offense.
- Were you aware that these prohibitions exist?
- What kinds of behaviors would you consider “ostracism” or “maltreatment” in response to reporting a sexual assault here at the Academy?
- Do you think retaliation might occur here at this Academy if someone were to report a sexual assault?
  - Who do you think would retaliate? Peers? Academy leadership? Midshipman leadership?
- What do you think retaliation would look like? What specific types of actions would you consider to be retaliation?
  - What would motivate someone to do that?
- Can retaliation also occur against someone who steps in to help someone or openly supports someone who reported?
  - Would such a supporter ever be retaliated against? What would that look like?
- Can retaliation occur against someone accused of being the alleged perpetrator of sexual assault?
  - What would that type of retaliation look like?
- Could retaliation or the perception of retaliation affect relationships within your company? How?
- Do you believe your officer and CPO leadership know when retaliation is happening? How do you think they deal with retaliation? Would they actively address it? How would they do so?
- We have heard that in some instances people perceive actions by officials that they consider retaliation but the actions were not retaliation and were not intended to be retaliatory, but were taken in an attempt to support the survivor [example,

expedited transfer]. In other words, the leader was trying to be helpful but the person who reported the sexual assault perceived the action to be negative.

- Can you think of any examples where that might happen?
- From a survivor's perspective, do you think they would see that type of action as positive in helping them deal with a stressful situation or negative as action against them [if asked, give examples such as how counseling or placement on limited duty would]?
- What could be done to reduce or eliminate any form of retaliation or perceptions of retaliation?
- To whom would you report an instance of retaliation?
  
- **Social Media**
  - The Department has taken a hard look at social media across the force. How do Academy students view the use of social media in general? Is this a venue students use to communicate with each other? Please describe.
    - What are the most commonly used social media sites among midshipmen here at this Academy?
    - What are the positive aspects of the use of social media?
    - What are the negative aspects?
  - Going back to our discussion about retaliation or reactions to reports of sexual assault at the Academy, does social media ever play a role? If yes, how so?
  - How do you think the Academy can address the negative use of social media?
    - Are there any particularly negative uses the Academy should actively address?
    - Should the Academy monitor these sites? Should midshipmen be held accountable for negative comments made on social media if the comments are made with the specific intent to discourage reporting relating to a criminal offense of sexual assault?
  
- **Leadership Perceptions**
  - Let's shift to a new topic now. Each year in the survey we ask if midshipmen think their leaders make honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment. Please see the section in the handout on leadership. [Share results of survey on confidence in leadership at the various levels: Academy leadership, Faculty/Staff, Midshipman leadership, students]. Are those about right?
    - How do these levels of leaders show they are serious? What do they do or say? Can you provide examples?
  - Do any of these levels of leadership demonstrate they are not that serious? Can you provide examples?
  - What type of statement or actions would impress you?
  
- **Athletic Teams**
  - Athletic staff consistently had the least positive ratings among the levels of leadership. [Emphasize this is athletic staff, not student athletes.] Why do you

think that is? For those who do not have much contact with athletic staff, how do you think they form their opinions about this?

- We also heard on the survey that there might be more problems with unwanted gender related behaviors such as sexual assault and harassment by athletes and within athletic teams. Without naming specific teams or individuals, do you think this is something that happens more among athletes? Does leadership hold them to the same standards on these issues as other students? Do peers hold athletes to the same standards?
- What is the general perception of athletic teams and sexual assault?
  - “Bad apples” and stricter admission policies were brought up in the survey comments in 2014. Do students believe that recruitment for athletic purposes is fair? Is there a need for a change in admission procedure?
- What recommendations do you have for improvement?

- **Culture**

- Now let’s talk for a few minutes about the culture here at the Academy regarding sexual assault. What is the general attitude among students about the focus on sexual assault?
  - Is sexual assault an important issue at the Academy?
  - Is it taken seriously by students, faculty, and athletic staff?
  - Does sexual assault have the same emphasis as other areas, such as use of alcohol, safety, or suicide prevention?
  - Are there any aspects of other programs that grab your attention? Could they be used to increase emphasis on sexual assault?
- Sexual assault has surfaced as a national issue. How does it reflect at the Academy? Are there similar issues? Are issues of sexual assault worse or better here? Is there anything the Academy could do better that is done at civilian universities?
- Are there groups within the Academy where it is taken more or less seriously? [If asked, give examples of groups like sports teams, clubs, class years, companies, upperclassmen.]
  - Is there any general feeling that the genders should be separated? In the dormitories? In training sessions?
- How can the culture be changed to improve the way sexual assault is addressed at the Academy?
  - Students indicated that training on respecting one another would be useful in changing culture. Do you agree? What would that look like?
  - Is there a need to address gender equality? How can the genders be made to feel more equal at the Academy?
- What peer program is in place here? Please describe. Is it effective? Why or why not? How could it be improved?
  - Many students have indicated these programs were beneficial. Would students prefer to receive training, notices, small, open-group discussions led by members of these programs?

- **Preventing sexual assault**
  - Your Academy have taken many steps to prevent sexual assault. I would like to ask you a few questions about the programs and resources the Academy has put in place for prevention.
  - First, what are some of the programs and resources here at your Academy that address sexual assault prevention? Please describe.
    - What makes these programs effective? What more could be done?
    - Think for a minute about other prevention-related programs at the Academy such as smoking, drinking, suicide, etc. What about those programs do you see as particularly successful? Could those features be adapted to sexual assault prevention?
  - Do students feel they can discuss situations where they see someone at risk either with the person directly or with Academy officials [if asked, clarify that if a student sees a fellow student in a risky situation that they can speak up and warn the fellow student or alert an official.]
  - Does your Academy seek input from students when they design or implement a new prevention program? Do you have any examples? How could the Academy use student input better?
  - Are you aware of any local community resources that help in preventing or responding to incidents of sexual assault? How are those resources publicized to the Academy?
  - What role could the alumni play in sexual assault prevention? Why?
  
- **Training**
  - We receive numerous comments in our surveys and focus groups on the training the Academies provide in sexual assault prevention and response. We will not go into detail today on these topics, but in general, what is your opinion about the training you received in the past year?
    - Is it effective in reducing sexual assault?
    - Has the training changed in any way from previous years? How?
  - What could be improved in terms of training?
    - Would information such as case studies or XYZ reports be beneficial to give you more details about incidents that have occurred?
    - Does your training having an adverse effect on reporting?
    - Would publicizing disciplinary outcomes to students/faculty help in prevention?
    - Would sharing the life-long impact of experiencing a sexual assault help students recognize the serious nature of sexual assault? Does the Academy already do this? [If asked, clarify that training could include examples of the psychological impact on a person. Students sometimes tell us that they have never experienced sexual assault nor do they know anyone who has experienced it, therefore it is not particularly relevant to them. Would hearing more about the impact help raise awareness of the serious nature of sexual assault?]
    - Should there be different trainings for sexual harassment and sexual assault? Is the Academy focusing on one over the other?

- Are there opportunities to improve the training? How? What should be included? How should it be delivered?
  - Does your sexual assault curriculum prepare you personally to combat sexual assault? [Clarify that training helps them avoid risky situations, intervene when they see a threat to fellow students, and/or deal with a situation where unwanted behaviors have happened to them.] Are these issues discussed in classes or leadership training, or only in specific sexual assault training sessions?
  - Does your training effectively prepare you to prevent or respond to sexual assault as a leader? Where do you receive that type of training?
  - “Preventative training” was mentioned as something that students wanted. What would this look like?
  - In our 2013 focus groups, many students indicated that they wanted teachers, military personnel, etc., to share their experiences dealing with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Do these individuals do this at all?
  - To make training more meaningful, students indicated that addressing the situation in a “professional” way would be beneficial. What would this look like?
  
- **Use of Alcohol**
  - Our surveys indicate that alcohol is frequently involved in incidents of sexual assault. Do you think that is the case here at your Academy?
  - Aside from what we might call normal social use of alcohol, do you think someone might use alcohol to facilitate having sex with someone? How so? [If asked for clarification, say someone might pre-plan using alcohol to make it easier to have sex.]
    - Are there specific locations or activities that facilitate the use of alcohol? On campus? Off campus?
  - What would you recommend to reduce the use of alcohol in situations that lead to unwanted sexual behaviors?
    - Are current policies enforced?
    - Are there any policy changes you would recommend?
  
- **Additional recommendations for addressing unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment**
  - What else would you recommend to address sexual assault and sexual harassment?
  - What did we forget to ask you about?

### **Concluding Comments**

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

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

Thank you again for your participation.



**Appendix B.**  
**Handout for Midshipman Participants**





Defense Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center (RSSC)

**2015 Service Academy Gender  
Relations Focus Groups:  
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy**

**Handout for Midshipman Participants**



**2015 SERVICE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS  
FOCUS GROUPS: U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY  
HANDOUT FOR MIDSHIPMAN PARTICIPANTS**

**Purpose**

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

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

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. While the press and others may claim to know what is going on at the Academies, members of Congress and your senior leaders want to hear directly from you about the issues that affect you. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. This is an opportunity for you to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.

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

## Ground Rules for Discussion

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

- Please respect each other's opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.
- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.
- I will lead the discussion and our recorder will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report. If you would like to see how comments are being recorded, please examine what is being typed.
- My role as facilitator is to keep the session moving and to guide the discussion. This might mean that I will move on to another topic in the interest of time.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, to the extent allowed by law, DMDC does not publish nor share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. In some instances, DMDC may receive requests for the unedited comments collected at these sessions; this information will only be provided to the extent required by law. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session by not saying anything that would identify you or other participants. For example, do not state your name, your roommate's name, or your company identification. In addition, we also ask that you do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave. Additional information about protecting your anonymity is shown in the box below.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Does anyone have any questions?

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

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

There will be no collection or use of personally identifiable information (PII), and no one will be able to determine the responses of any given individual. Access to the unedited record of comments is limited to DMDC analysts and contractors under their direct supervision. In limited circumstances where an organization such as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is performing an audit or analysis, the unedited record of comments can be shared to the extent disclosure is required by law. The organization must agree in writing to protect the data and subscribe to all provisions of the Privacy Act, including destroying the data when the specific audit or analysis is concluded. In addition, no data can be used to contact a focus group participant or link responses back to a participant. Access to the edited record of comments where potentially identifying information has been removed is limited to Academy senior leaders and staff working in sexual assault response and prevention activities, or as otherwise required by law. Selected comments that have had all identifiers removed will be included in the final report to illustrate findings. Finally, no audio or video recording will be done in order to further protect your anonymity.

## Discussion Resources

On the next several pages are results from the 2014 survey that we will use as part of the discussion today. I will call your attention to the specific item as we reach that part of the discussion.

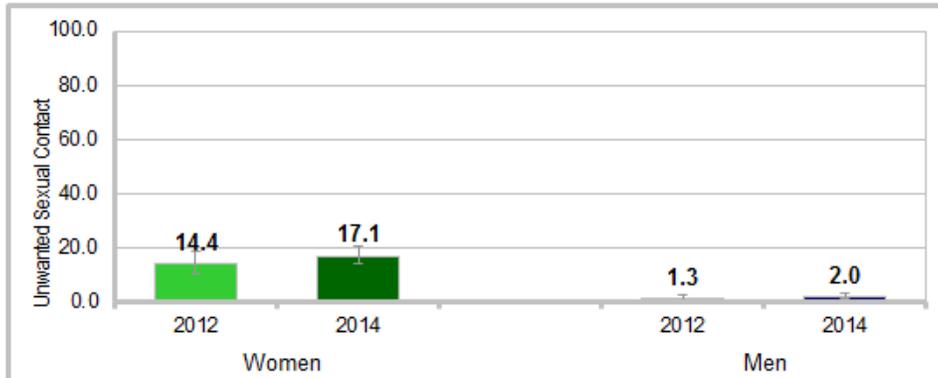
Please note that the results I will share with you come from the 2014 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey. This survey was conducted in the spring of 2014 with results reported to your Academy and Service leadership as well as Congress in February 2015.

To assure statistical reliability of the survey results, we surveyed all of the midshipmen. The full report is available on the Defense Manpower Data Center web site at: [https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp\\_surveys.jsp](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_surveys.jsp) Select the 2014 SAGR Overview Report.

## 2014 Survey Results: Unwanted Sexual Contact

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

### Unwanted Sexual Contact Rates for USMMA Women and Men



### Number of Incidents Reported in 2013-2014

Type of Report	Number of Reports
Unwanted Sexual Contact (Sexual Assault) – Unrestricted	3
Unwanted Sexual Contact (Sexual Assault) – Restricted	1
Sexual Harassment – Formal Complaints	0

### Multiple Offenses and Number of Offenders

Of those who experienced USC since June 2013:	Women	Men
Experienced more than one incident	81%	90%
Same offenders were involved	46%	NR

### Confidence in Leadership

<b>Leadership Makes Efforts to Stop Sexual Harassment and Assault</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Midshipman leaders	79%	86%
Academy senior leaders	78%	82%
Commissioned officers in charge of their unit	75%	79%
Civilian academic faculty	73%	77%
Athletic staff	72%	75%
Uniformed academic faculty	70%	79%
Midshipmen not in leadership positions	58%	79%
CPOs in charge of their unit	53%	58%



We appreciate your participation in this survey. In the event you would like to discuss issues related to the survey with someone from DMDC during (or after) our visit to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, please contact Dr. Paul Rosenfeld at 571-372-0987 or DSN 372-0987.

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

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

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

**Patten Health Clinic: (516) 726-5680**

**LI Safe Center Hotline: (516) 542-0404 (Hotline)**

**Academy EMS Ambulance: (516) 726-5858**

**North Shore Hospital: (516) 562-4125 (Emergency)**

**Academy Public Safety: (516) 773-5309**

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





**Appendix C.**  
**2015 Faculty/Activity/Uniformed Focus**  
**Group Guide**



## 2015 Faculty/Activity/Uniformed 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 understand issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response. You might recall that last year students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year, as was done two years ago, a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide information to DOT and Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted at all three DoD Service Academies. Focus groups will also be done at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

**Time for briefing  
and introductions:  
5 minutes**

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

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

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. Your Academy leadership decided to participate in this program. This is an opportunity for you and students to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.
- This is the second year we have invited members of the faculty, athletic and activity staffs, and uniformed staff to participate. Because you interact with the students, we believe you are in a position to share valuable insights with us on these important issues. We do not want to discuss any specific cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment. We do want to discuss issues in general so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for the students.

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 other's opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.
- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.
- I will lead the discussion and \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

- My role as facilitator is to keep the session moving and to guide the discussion. This might mean that I will move on to another topic in the interest of time.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, to the extent allowed by law DMDC does not publish nor share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. In some instances, DMDC may receive requests for the unedited comments collected at these sessions; this information will only be provided to the extent required by law. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session by not saying anything that would identify you or other participants. For example, do not state your name, duty title, or your company or regimental identification. In addition, we also ask that you do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave. Additional information about protecting your anonymity is shown in the box on your handout.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Does anyone have 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).

Please turn to page 5 of your handout. Here you will see some of the results from our 2014 survey that we will discuss today.

- **Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment**
  - Let's begin by looking briefly at some of the results from the survey we conducted in Spring 2014. Please take a look at the first section of the handout we provided to you. [Review 2014 estimated prevalence rates in handout. Note that these rates are for students only and do not include faculty or staff members. Also describe the composition of the USC rates – they include unwanted touching, attempted sex, and completed sex. And emphasize these are not official reports made – they are based on survey results and reflect the percentage of students who experienced one or more incidents of USC in the past year.] Have you seen these estimated prevalence rates? Why do you think the estimated prevalence rates increased between 2012 and 2014? [Note that the increase for women and men is not statistically significant. Probe for reasons for upward trends or why someone might not have an opinion.]
  - What are the possible drivers for the increase in rates? What happened that might have resulted in the higher prevalence rates in the 2013-2014 school year? Will they stay the same or go up or down the next time we do the survey in Spring 2016? Why?
    - For those of you who have been at the Academy for several years, is the emphasis on sexual assault and sexual harassment similar this year to that in 2013-2014?
    - A lot has happened between 2012 and 2015. What changes have you seen? Has the focus on preventing sexual assault and sexual harassment

been consistent over the years? Have the changes been positive or negative? How so?

- Are experiences of sexual assault different for men? For example at the other Academies men indicated on the survey that some of their unwanted behaviors were associated with horseplay, locker room behavior, hazing or initiation rites, someone being dared to do it, etc. Results here at USMMA are not reportable due to small numbers. Are these potentially the drivers of sexual assault with male survivors? What can be done to reduce this type of unwanted behavior?
- We also measure perceived sexual harassment on our survey. In 2014 the estimated prevalence rate for women at USMMA went up from 57% in 2012 to 63% in 2014, although it was not a statistically significant increase. Were you aware of this increase? It also increased for men – 8% in 2012 to 11% in 2014, but this was not significant. Why do you think it remained essentially the same for both?
  - Do you think midshipmen have a better understanding of sexual harassment now than say a year ago? Is there any more emphasis on sexual harassment than in the past?
- Also, sexist behavior remained unchanged for women at 93% in 2012 and 94% in 2014. For men it went down from 41% in 2012 to 33% in 2014 [significant]. Why do you think it stayed the same for women? Why did it go down for men?
- **Reporting**
  - Now let's switch to a related topic about reporting sexual assault. Please see the third section of the handout. [Share statistics from the MSA report at each Academy.] These are the number of reports last year. Are you aware of this number of reports? Note that these are the actual number of reports filed. Across all three DoD Academies this represents 16% of the reports that could have been filed based on the percentage of students who indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact. Would you think it would have been higher or lower? Why?
  - Does Academy leadership encourage reporting? At what level (senior leaders like the Superintendent and Commandant, uniformed officers/CPOs, midshipman)? Do you talk about reporting with your students? Do students encourage each other to report?
  - What are some reasons why someone would report?
  - What are some reasons why someone would not report?
  - One thing we have learned from our surveys is that survivors of sexual assault often experience multiple incidents of unwanted behaviors. Please take a look at the fourth table in your handout [Share results on more than one experience and the same offender involved.] Reporting could reduce multiple incidents by identifying one offender who repeats. Are you aware that some survivors experience multiple incidents? Would knowing that make a difference in someone deciding to report?
  - What more can be done to encourage reporting?
  - Survey results show that students say they know how to report. Yet when asked to whom would they report, they often identify individuals who are not authorized

to accept a restricted report and do not know to report. Why? Are the two types of report, being restricted and unrestricted reports, helpful?

- Could there be additional types of report or recipients?
- What are you told about discussing an incident of sexual assault with one of your students? What guidance would you like to have?

- **Retaliation**

- I would like to shift the discussion now to a topic related to reporting sexual assault. Complaints of retaliation against someone who reports sexual assault have received considerable attention by leadership.
- Do you think retaliation might occur here at this Academy if someone were to report a sexual assault? Why?
  - Who do you think would retaliate? Peers? Academy leadership? Midshipman leadership?
- What do you think retaliation would look like? What specific types of actions would be retaliation?
  - What do you think would motivate someone to do that?
- Do you think retaliation also occur against someone who steps in to help someone?
  - Could a bystander ever be retaliated against? What do you think that would look like?
- Can retaliation occur against someone accused of being the alleged perpetrator of sexual assault?
  - What do you think that type of retaliation would look like?
- Are there any other side effects of a situation where retaliation may occur?
  - For example, do people take sides, either for or against the survivor? Can retaliation affect relationships within a company (or team)? How?
- How do members of the faculty/staff deal with retaliation complaints? Do they know when it is happening? Do they actively address it?
- DoD policies specifically prohibit retaliation. Retaliation, as defined by the Department, includes two distinct types of actions:
  - 1) taking or threatening to take an adverse personnel action, or withholding or threatening to withhold a favorable personnel action, with respect to a member of the Armed Forces because the member reported a criminal offense; [if asked for an example, for midshipmen, actions that affect a midshipman promotion; a disciplinary or other corrective action; a transfer or reassignment to another company; a military performance evaluation; a decision on training opportunities; referral for mental health evaluations, or any other significant change in duties or responsibilities inconsistent with their current situation].
  - 2) ostracism and such acts of maltreatment, as defined by the Secretary of the Military Department, committed by peers of a member of the Armed Forces or by concerned other persons because the member reported a criminal offense.
  - Were you aware that these prohibitions exist? Would the type of retaliation we discussed a minute ago fit these criteria?

- We have heard that in some instances people perceive actions by officials that they consider retaliation but the actions were not retaliation and were not intended to be retaliation, but were taken in an attempt to support the survivor [example, expedited transfer]. In other words, the leader was trying to be helpful but the person who reported the sexual assault perceived the action to be negative.
  - Can you think of any examples where that might happen?
  - From a survivor’s perspective, how would actions such as counseling or placement on limited duty be seen? Would survivors see that type of action as positive in helping them deal with a stressful situation or negative as action against them?
- Do you or the students know what to do or who to report a complaint of retaliation?
- Last question in this section. What could be done to reduce or eliminate any form of retaliation?
- **Social Media**
  - The Department of Defense, for example, has taken a hard look at social media across the force. How do Academy students here view the use of social media in general? Is this a venue students use to communicate with each other? Please describe.
    - What are the most commonly used social media sites among students here at this Academy?
    - What are the positive aspects of the use of social media?
    - What are the negative aspects?
  - Going back to our discussion about retaliation or reactions to reports of sexual assault at the Academy, does social media ever play a role? If yes, how so?
  - How do you think the Department and the Academy can address the negative use of social media?
    - Are there any particularly negative uses the Academy should actively address?
    - Are there any “underground” web sites the Academy should be aware of?
    - Should students be held accountable for negative comments made on social media if the comments are made with the specific intent to discourage reporting relating to a criminal offense of sexual assault?
  - Why do fellow students turn to social media to say negative things about each other? What is the motivation?
- **Leadership Perceptions**
  - Let’s shift to a new topic now. Each year in the survey we ask if students think their leaders make honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment. Please see the section in the handout on leadership. [Share results of survey on confidence in leadership at the various levels: Academy leadership, Faculty/Staff, Midshipman leadership, students]. Are those about right?
    - Do you think these ratings are accurate? Why?
    - How do these levels of leaders show they are serious? What do they do or say? Can you provide examples?
  - Do any of these levels demonstrate they are not that serious? Can you provide examples?

- **Athletic Teams**

- Athletic staff consistently had the lowest ratings among the levels of leadership. [Emphasize this is athletic staff, not student athletes.]. Why do you think that is? For those students who do not have much contact with athletic staff, how do you think they form their opinions about this?
- We also heard on the survey that there might be more problems with unwanted gender related behaviors such as sexual assault and harassment by athletes. Without naming specific teams or individuals, do you think this is something that happens more among athletes? Does leadership hold them to the same standards on these issues as other students? Do peers hold athletes to the same standards?
- What is the general perception of athletic teams and sexual assault?
  - “Bad apples” and stricter admission policies were brought up in the survey comments in 2014. Do students believe that recruitment for athletic purposes is fair? Is there a need for a change in admission procedure?
- What recommendations do you have for improvement?

- **Culture**

- Now let’s talk for a few minutes about the culture here at the Academy regarding sexual assault. What is the general attitude among students about the focus on sexual assault?
  - Is sexual assault an important issue at the Academy?
  - Is it taken seriously by students, faculty, and athletic staff?
  - Does sexual assault have the same emphasis as other areas, such as use of alcohol, safety, or suicide prevention?
  - Are there any aspects of other programs that grab your attention? Could they be used to increase emphasis on sexual assault?
- Sexual assault has surfaced as a national issue. How does it reflect at the Academy? Are there similar issues? Are issues of sexual assault worse or better here? Is there anything the Academy could do better that is done at civilian universities?
- Are there groups within the Academy where it is taken more or less seriously? [If asked, give examples of groups like sports teams, clubs, class years, companies, upperclassmen.]
  - Is there any general feeling that the genders should be separated? In the dormitories? In training sessions?
- How can the culture be changed to improve the way sexual assault is addressed at the Academy?
  - Students indicated that training on respecting one another would be useful in changing culture. Do you agree? What would that look like?
  - Is there a need to address gender equality? How can the genders be made to feel more equal at the Academy?
- Does the Academy solicit input from you when they develop policies and programs for preventing sexual assault? Should they? Can you give some examples where your input was considered?
- What peer program is in place here? Please describe. Is it effective? Why or why not? How could it be improved?

- Many students have indicated these programs were beneficial. Would students prefer to receive training, notices, small, open-group discussions led by members of these programs?
- **Preventing sexual assault**
  - The Department and your Academy have taken many steps to prevent sexual assault. I would like to ask you a few questions about the programs and resources the Academy has put in place for prevention.
  - First, what are some of the programs and resources here at your Academy that address sexual assault prevention? Please describe.
    - What makes these programs effective? What more could be done?
  - Are there other steps the Academy might take to prevent sexual assault?
    - Are there any barriers to implementing these steps? Are you aware of any prevention programs at other Academies or colleges that might work here?
  - Think for a minute about other prevention-related programs at the Academy such as smoking, drinking, suicide, etc. What about those programs do you see as particularly successful? Could those features be adapted to sexual assault prevention?
  - Do students feel like they can discuss situations where they see someone at risk either with the person directly or with Academy officials [if asked, clarify that if a student sees a fellow student in a risky situation that they can speak up and warn the fellow student or alert an official.]
  - Does your Academy seek input from you when they design or implement a new prevention program? Do you have any examples? How could the Academy use student input better?
  - What role could the alumni play in sexual assault prevention? Why?
- **Training**
  - We receive numerous comments in our surveys and focus groups on the training the Academies provide in sexual assault prevention and response. We will not go into detail today on these topics, but in general, what is your opinion about the training students received in the past year?
    - Do the students talk about their training with you? Is it effective in reducing sexual assault?
    - Has the training changed in any way from previous years? How?
  - What could be improved in terms of training?
    - Does your training have an adverse effect on reporting?
    - Should there be different trainings for sexual harassment and sexual assault? Is the Academy focusing on one over the other?
  - Are there opportunities to improve the training? How? What should be included? How should it be delivered?
    - Does the sexual assault curriculum prepare the students personally to combat sexual assault? [Clarify that training helps them avoid risky situations, intervene when they see a threat to fellow students, and/or deal with a situation where unwanted behaviors have happened to them.] Is this type of training included in classes and leadership training?

- Does their training effectively prepare them to prevent sexual assault and response to sexual assault as a leader? Where do they receive that type of training?
    - “Preventative training” was mentioned as something that students wanted. What would this look like?
    - Many students indicated that they wanted teachers, military personnel, etc., to share their experiences dealing with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Might this be an opportunity to get more top-down training?
    - To make training more meaningful, students indicated that addressing the situation in a “professional” way would be beneficial. What would this look like?
  - Do you know if the Pre-Command Course for seniors includes any discussion on how to handle issues of sexual assault when they have leadership responsibilities?
    - Do you think students feel prepared to address issues that might arise with their subordinates? Please discuss.
- **Use of Alcohol**
  - Our surveys indicate that alcohol is frequently involved in incidents of sexual assault. Do you think that is the case here at your Academy?
  - Aside from what we might call normal social use of alcohol, do you think someone might use alcohol to facilitate having a sexual relationship with someone? How so?
    - What type of circumstances would that involve?
    - Would that be more likely to occur on or off campus?
    - Are there specific locations or activities that facilitate the use of alcohol?
    - Can you describe a typical situation where alcohol and sexual behaviors occur (no names)?
    - How do people typically obtain alcohol?
  - What would you recommend to reduce the use of alcohol in situations that lead to unwanted sexual behaviors?
    - Are current policies enforced?
    - Are there any policy changes you would recommend?
- **Additional recommendations for addressing unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment**
  - What else would you recommend to address sexual assault and sexual harassment?
  - What did we forget to ask you about?

### **Concluding Comments**

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

One last comment – on the last page of the handout you will see a list of resources available to you if you would like to follow up with us or have any questions. It also lists Academy

resources if you know of a student who would like to talk to someone about any experiences they might have had with unwanted gender-related behaviors.  
Thank you again for your participation.



**Appendix D.  
Handout for Faculty, Athletic Staff,  
Uniformed Military Participants**



Handout for Faculty, Athletic Staff, Uniformed Military Participants



Defense Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center (RSSC)

**2015 Service Academy Gender  
Relations Focus Groups:  
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy**

**Handout for Faculty, Athletic Staff,  
Uniformed Military Participants**



**2015 SERVICE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS  
FOCUS GROUPS: U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY**

**HANDOUT FOR FACULTY, ATHLETIC STAFF,  
UNIFORMED MILITARY PARTICIPANTS**

**Purpose**

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

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

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. Your Academy leadership decided to participate in this program. This is an opportunity for you and students to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.
- This is the second year we have invited members of the faculty, athletic and activity staffs, and military cadre to participate. Because you interact with the students, we believe you are in a position to share valuable insights with us on these important issues. We do not want to discuss any specific cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment. We do want to discuss issues in general so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for the students.

## Ground Rules for Discussion

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

- Please respect each other's opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.
- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.
- I will lead the discussion and our recorder will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report. If you would like to see how comments are being recorded, please examine what is being typed.
- My role as facilitator is to keep the session moving and to guide the discussion. This might mean that I will move on to another topic in the interest of time.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, to the extent allowed by law DMDC does not publish nor share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. In some instances, DMDC may receive requests for the unedited comments collected at these sessions; this information will only be provided to the extent required by law. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session by not saying anything that would identify you or other participants. For example, do not state your name, duty title, or your squadron identification. In addition, we also ask that you do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave. Additional information about protecting your anonymity is shown in the box below.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Does anyone have any questions?

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

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

There will be no collection or use of personally identifiable information (PII), and no one will be able to determine the responses of any given individual. Access to the unedited record of comments is limited to DMDC analysts and contractors under their direct supervision. In limited circumstances where an organization such as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is performing an audit or analysis, the unedited record of comments can be shared to the extent disclosure is required by law. The organization must agree in writing to protect the data and subscribe to all provisions of the Privacy Act, including destroying the data when the specific audit or analysis is concluded. In addition, no data can be used to contact a focus group participant or link responses back to a participant. Access to the edited record of comments where potentially identifying information has been removed is limited to Academy senior leaders and staff working in sexual assault response and prevention activities, or as otherwise required by law. Selected comments that have had all identifiers removed will be included in the final report to illustrate findings. Finally, no audio or video recording will be done in order to further protect your anonymity.

## Discussion Resources

On the next several pages are results from the 2014 survey that we will use as part of the discussion today. I will call your attention to the specific item as we reach that part of the discussion.

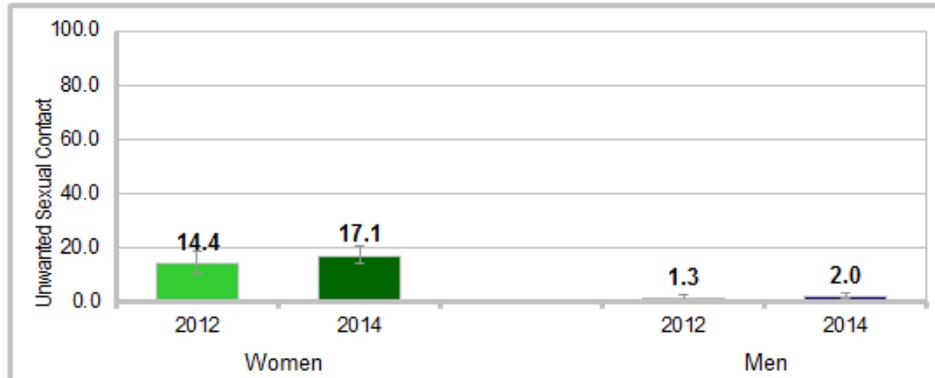
Please note that the results I will share with you come from the 2014 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey. This survey was conducted in the spring of 2014 with results reported to your Academy and Service leadership as well as Congress in February 2015.

To assure statistical reliability of the survey results, we surveyed all of the midshipmen. The full report is available on the Defense Manpower Data Center web site at: [https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp\\_surveys.jsp](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_surveys.jsp) Select the 2014 SAGR Overview Report.

## 2014 Survey Results: Unwanted Sexual Contact

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

### Unwanted Sexual Contact Rates for USMMA Women and Men



### Number of Incidents Reported in 2013-2014

Type of Report	Number of Reports
Unwanted Sexual Contact (Sexual Assault) – Unrestricted	3
Unwanted Sexual Contact (Sexual Assault) – Restricted	1
Sexual Harassment – Formal Complaints	0

### Multiple Offenses and Number of Offenders

Of those who experienced USC since June 2013:	Women	Men
Experienced more than one incident	81%	90%
Same offenders were involved	46%	NR

### Confidence in Leadership

<b>Leadership Makes Efforts to Stop Sexual Harassment and Assault</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Midshipman leaders	79%	86%
Academy senior leaders	78%	82%
Commissioned officers in charge of their unit	75%	79%
Civilian academic faculty	73%	77%
Athletic staff	72%	75%
Uniformed academic faculty	70%	79%
Midshipmen not in leadership positions	58%	79%
CPOs in charge of their unit	53%	58%



We appreciate your participation in this survey. In the event you would like to discuss issues related to the survey with someone from DMDC during (or after) our visit to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, please contact Dr. Paul Rosenfeld at 571-372-0987 or DSN 372-0987.

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

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

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

**Patten Health Clinic: (516) 726-5680**

**LI Safe Center Hotline: (516) 542-0404 (Hotline)**

**Academy EMS Ambulance: (516) 726-5858**

**North Shore Hospital: (516) 562-4125 (Emergency)**

**Academy Public Safety: (516) 773-5309**

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





**Appendix E.  
Frequently Asked Questions**



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### 2015 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) Gender Relations Focus Groups

#### Defense Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center (RSSC)

#### Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC)

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Research, Surveys, and Statistics Center (RSSC) has been conducting surveys and focus groups of gender-related issues at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) since 2012. RSSC uses scientific, state-of-the-art statistical techniques to draw conclusions from populations within the purview of the Department of Defense (DoD), such as active duty, Reserve components, and Military Service Academies (MSA). For the *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Groups* study, RSSC used industry-standard methods to plan, execute and report results. The following details some common questions about the methodology and results.

#### **1. *What was the population of interest for the 2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Groups?***

The population of interest for the *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* study consisted of midshipmen, Academic faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre at the USMMA.

The *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* study aligns with a larger effort, the *2015 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2015 SAGR)* study, which assesses the perception of issues related to sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other gender-related topics at the MSAs: U.S. Military Academy (USMA), the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA). The *2015 SAGR* is conducted per U.S. Code 10 as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (10 U.S.C. §4361). USMMA, within the Department of Transportation (DOT), is not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USMMA officials requested that they be included, beginning in 2012, to evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment.

#### **2. *How were the participants selected?***

Participation in the *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* study was voluntary. Participants were selected at random and offered the opportunity to participate.

To select student participants, USMMA first supplied RSSC a roster of all midshipmen that RSSC randomized by gender and class year. USMMA then used their randomized list to identify the first 12 students who were available (e.g., did not have a class scheduled during the focus group) and volunteered to attend the focus group appropriate for their gender and class year. The

randomization process follows industry standards to ensure a balance of opinions on the topics of interest based on unbiased feedback.

For the sessions of faculty, uniformed cadre and athletic staff, Academy officials advertised the sessions through the most appropriate forum and solicited volunteers until they received 12 participants committed to each session.

### **3. *Who participated in the focus groups?***

RSSC conducted nine focus groups of midshipmen, Academic faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre at USMMA. Six midshipmen focus groups were conducted—female freshmen, male freshmen, female sophomores, male sophomores, female juniors and seniors combined, and male juniors and seniors combined. A total of 43 midshipmen participated and each session had between three and 10 midshipmen. Three faculty and staff focus group sessions were conducted. A total of 31 faculty and staff members participated and each session had between eight and 12 participants.

### **4. *Who led the focus groups?***

RSSC provided trained facilitators to lead sessions. In all cases, a female facilitator led the all-female sessions. A male facilitator led the all-male sessions. Either a male and female facilitator led or co-led the faculty and staff sessions. Other than the court reporter and participants, no one other than RSSC staff was present during the sessions.

### **5. *How many sessions were conducted?***

RSSC conducted nine focus groups of midshipmen, Academic faculty, coaches and activity leaders, and uniformed cadre scheduled in 90-minute sessions. Six midshipmen focus groups were conducted and three faculty and staff focus group sessions were conducted.

### **6. *What questions were asked?***

Eleven broad areas, with probing questions, were addressed in the focus group sessions covering the following topics:

1. Perceptions About Unwanted Sexual Contact and Perceived Sexual Harassment—general discussion of the incidence rates for men and women at USMMA from the 2014 SAGR survey and specific discussion of the “locker room” behaviors experienced by men.
2. Reporting—general discussion of reporting unwanted sexual contact (USC) and sexual harassment, leadership emphasis on reporting, reasons why someone would or would not report, and multiple experiences of USC and reporting.

3. Retaliation—familiarity with the policies regarding retaliation as a result of reporting USC, how retaliation might look at USMMA, and ways to reduce retaliation.
4. Social Media—general discussion of the use of social media at USMMA and specific roles of social media that contribute to retaliation for reporting sexual assault.
5. Perceptions of Leadership—opinions about the degree to which leaders make honest and reasonable efforts to stop sexual assault and sexual harassment and whether leaders react appropriately and lead by example.
6. Athletic Teams—general discussion of perceptions about standards and conduct for some teams or individuals.
7. Academy Culture—general attitude among students about the focus on sexual assault at USMMA, ways to change the culture regarding attitudes toward sexual assault and the role of the peer program in sexual assault.
8. Preventing Sexual Assault—general discussion of programs and resources USMMA has put in place for prevention of sexual assault.
9. Training and Education on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention—general discussion of training and educational activities received in the past year, perception of training in reducing sexual assault, examples of most effective training and recommendations for improvement.
10. Role of Alcohol in Sexual Assault—general discussion of alcohol involvement in sexual assault and specific use alcohol to facilitate having sex with someone.
11. Additional Recommendations—general discussion of steps to address sexual assault and sexual harassment. The questions ended with “What did we not ask that we should have?”

## **7. How were the questions developed?**

The *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* study aligns with a larger effort, the *2015 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2015 SAGR)* study, as described in Question 1. For the *2015 SAGR* focus groups, RSSC analysts drafted potential questions by reviewing comments and findings from the *2014 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (2014 SAGR)*, looking for follow-up topics that might clarify or expand upon findings from the previous year’s survey. The DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), DoD Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO), and the MSAs each reviewed the proposed questions and provided additional comments to refine the questions. The same questions were asked at USMMA as the other Academies, tailoring only the language to be specific to USMMA terminology.

## **8. What if no one talks?**

The trained facilitators know how to generate discussion, but RSSC's experience over the years has been that participants appreciate the opportunity to be heard and are seldom shy about offering opinions. It is true in some cases that participants do not speak much and they are never directly called upon. But rarely do sessions end early; rather, the facilitators typically have to keep a fast pace going to hear everyone's thoughts on all of the topics included in the protocol.

## **9. How are the results summarized?**

Comments made during the focus groups were transcribed by a professional court reporter and were analyzed qualitatively by RSSC analysts for major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions. .

RSSC analysts used NVivo by QSR International—a powerful grouping and validation tool that provides comprehensive coverage of topics for summaries of findings—to analyze and categorize topics. They then refined themes that were then consolidated into a report and peer reviewed.

## **10. Who receives the results?**

The *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group* report is provided to USMMA and DOT. The findings are then incorporated into USMMA's annual report, which informs both Congress and DOT leadership.

## **11. Do these results represent the opinions of all cadets and midshipmen?**

No, the *2015 USMMA Gender Relations Focus Group Report* is not intended to produce results that represent all opinions. Findings should be viewed as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by DOT leaders and policymakers as they review their programs.

Findings might be viewed as a general perspective on participants' views of sexual harassment and assault at USMMA, but they do not portray a statistical report on incidence rates or performance of response and prevention programs.

## **12. How do the results compare to previous years?**

Results are not comparable across the years. While RSSC conducted focus groups at USMMA in 2013 using similar procedures, the questions asked in 2015 address new topics.

## **13. How were the identities of the participants protected?**

While the focus group questions did not ask for any personal information about experiences participants might have had, the privacy of each participant was

respected. To protect that privacy, RSSC did not take attendance nor record names. Obviously military personnel wear nametags, so identity was easy to see. To account for this, RSSC referred to each participant by letter, such as “Participant A,” during the focus groups.

RSSC used professional court reporters to transcribe sessions rather than audio or video recordings. In the event people self-identified in their comments, RSSC analysts redacted that information from the transcripts and report before approval/publication.

Focus group participants were also asked to respect each other’s privacy and not discuss what they heard after they left the session.

**14. *What if someone became distressed over discussion of sensitive topics?***

The facilitator stated clearly that there should be no discussion of personal experiences of sexual assault, sexual harassment or other negative experiences during the focus group sessions. However, if someone became distressed as they reflected on the discussions, the facilitators were trained to address this. A certified victims’ advocate was always available for the RSSC team to direct a distressed participant. Additionally, each participant was provided a handout to keep that contained the Academy resources available to them if they wanted to follow up on an issue.

**15. *How can I trust that the results are not biased for or against programs at the USMMA?***

Since qualitative research does not produce indices of accuracy and reliability, such as margins of error, RSSC relies on the selection methods to reduce the potential for bias among participants. For selecting student participants, the randomization process invites all potential participants equally, so no one is more or less likely to participate. Additionally, the nature of a focus group is to drive out diverse opinions on topics, so the randomization process helps select a wide diversity of opinions.

Nevertheless, RSSC cautions readers that the common themes and opinions expressed only represent the individuals who participated. Although the results cannot be generalized to the full population of USMMA, they provide many insights into issues and ideas for further consideration.

**16. *Do the results of the focus groups make a difference?***

Yes. DOT leaders and policymakers have used the results of focus groups as part of the process of changing policies, adding or changing trainings and programs, dispelling misinformation, and providing feedback to the midshipmen under their charge. The focus group efforts are not the only source of information for decision-makers, but they add to the accumulated body of understanding on

gender issues. The unique contributions of the focus group efforts are that they glean information from the perspective of the people affected by decisions. .





# Defense Manpower Data Center

