Women, Peace, and Security in Professional Military Education

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Chapter 2
Closing the Capability Gap
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Close to half of the world’s population is female. Yet, while human rights for women has been a subject often noted in numerous documents, it usually only gains periodic attention during a conflict or humanitarian crisis. This passive stance started to change in the 1990s when UN member states began to reconsider international norms. The Fourth World Conference on Women hosted in Beijing, China, in 1995 was a turning point; it was one of the first events to trigger the establishment of an international agenda focused on “equality, development, and peace for women.” Regrettably, it would be another five years, on 31 October 2000, before the United Nations would draft and approve UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace, and Security. The Security Council’s adoption of this resolution was a landmark event as it recognized “the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women” in addition to emphasizing the “importance of women’s equal and full participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.” It would take two more decades after the Security Council’s action for the DOD to develop a framework and plan for implementing the WPS agenda.

Since the Security Council first acted, DOD has missed critical opportunities to implement the WPS principles, which it has since articulated in its Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan. Moreover, the armed Services perpetuate an environment steeped in controversy related to various forms of sexual misconduct, harassment, and abuse. Further, DOD struggles with diversity and inclusion policies that are focused, relevant, defined, and enduring. These issues are intrinsically linked, and one cannot be adequately addressed without awareness, understanding, and attention to the others. Nonetheless, mitigation of misconduct, harassment, and abuse can occur if DOD promulgates policies that address these problems. By focusing on the three equities indicated in the DOD plan, specifically diversity and inclusion, gender-based violence prevention, and sexual harassment and assault prevention, the department will promote successful implementation of its WPS objectives by fostering a gender perspective that raises awareness, changes its institutional culture, and decreases the capability gap that exists in the current Joint Force.

* The views expressed in this chapter are solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Marine Corps University, the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army, U.S. Army War College, the U.S. Air Force, or the U.S. government.

13 Witkowsky, “Integrating Gender Perspectives within the Department of Defense,” 35.
Background

UNSCR 1325 recognized “the urgent need to mainstream gender perspective into peacekeeping operations” in addition to identifying and reaffirming the significance of the role that women and girls play pre-, during, and post-conflict as it relates to peaceful resolution and stability.14 UNSCR 1325 established the following four principles that support the WPS model: 1) ensuring women’s participation at all levels of decision-making in the peace and security sphere; 2) protecting the rights of women and girls; 3) incorporating a gender perspective into conflict prevention initiatives; and 4) making certain that gender considerations are integrated into relief and recovery efforts.15

It was almost 11 more years before the United States took its first steps toward addressing this crisis at the national level in the form of an executive order and a plan. The United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security was published in December 2011 in response to President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13,595, Instituting a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. The plan highlighted the gender integration and perspective goals identified in the 2010 National Security Strategy and the 2011 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review.16 Yet, it would be another six years before President Donald J. Trump signed into law the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, the first statute of its kind, establishing policy, defining strategy, specifying training requirements, and identifying DOD, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of Homeland Security as the lead agencies.17 It would take another two years before the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security was published in June 2019.18 It would be still another year before DOD published its Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (WPS SFIP) in June 2020.

Defining Terms

Understanding the terms used in the WPS SFIP is critical to comprehending the issues it addresses and attaining its objectives. There are seven terms of importance for this paper. The first term is gender perspective. The DOD defines it as “an analytic view that examines how being treated as a man or a woman in society shapes a person’s

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needs, interests, control of resources, and security.”

Since this paper deals with equities, a definition of this term is warranted. Equity is “a situation in which everyone is treated fairly and equally.” DOD has also defined the three equities discussed in this paper. Diversity is “all the differing characteristics and attributes of individuals from varying demographics that are consistent with the DOD’s core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the nation we serve.” Inclusion is “a set of behaviors (culture) that encourages service members and civilian employees to feel valued for unique qualities and to experience a sense of belonging.”

Gender-based violence is “an umbrella term for any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. It is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalances.” This form of violence is “typically characterized by the use or threat of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social, and other forms of control and abuse.” It also “impacts individuals across the life course and has direct and indirect costs to families, communities, economies, global public health, and development.”

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are constituted as the third equity. DOD defines sexual assault as the “intentional sexual contact characterized by use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent.” In contrast, sexual harassment is defined as “conduct that involves unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature” by Section 1561 of Title 10, United States Code.

Aligning WPS with National Strategies
The WPS SFIP identifies three WPS defense objectives. These objectives seek to align the SFIP with the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) and the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (NDS). The first is that DOD “exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of...
the Joint Force.” The second is that “women in partner nations meaningfully participate and serve at all ranks and in all occupations in defense and security sectors.” And third, “partner nation defense and security sectors ensure women and girls are safe and secure and that their human rights are protected, especially during conflict and crisis.”

The relationship between the SFIP and its WPS principles and these two national strategies is clear.

The NSS identifies several priorities under pillar four, “Advance American Influence,” that exemplify the nation’s fundamental values and are related to WPS; notably, this includes “support the dignity of individuals” and “empower women and youth.”

The same is true for the NDS when it discusses “build[ing] a more lethal force.” This approach extends beyond the modernization of equipment, force structure and employment, and weapons systems. Included here is the people factor, including recruiting and retention, talent management, and professional education for both the military and civilian workforce.

Cultivating a thriving workforce requires a culture and environment infused in diversity, inclusiveness, trust, respect, and safety.

Aligning the WPS SFIP and the national strategies requires more than expressing such notions in a document. The three equities that this paper examines must be tied to the three defense objectives. The equities must be addressed through two actions: 1) leaders must emphasize them, 2) and awareness programs must be developed and implemented before the first objective can be achieved. It must be satisfied utilizing a top-down approach with senior departmental leaders underscoring the equities’ importance to the first objective.

The WPS SFIP indicates that defense objective one is a diverse and inclusive fighting force. This objective cannot be met in the current military culture in which divisiveness, fear, and mistrust are common. Accomplishing this objective will take a comprehensive approach to combat and mitigate concerns associated with diversity and inclusion, gender-based violence, sexual harassment and assault, and other behaviors that compromise the force’s cohesiveness.

Challenges to Implementing the WPS Plan and Framework

The DOD has established three objectives that support the 2020 Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan. The equity of diversity and inclusion is identified as a part of the first objective: “DoD exemplifies a diverse
organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force” and is further clarified in the document’s Intermediate Defense Objective 1.1: “DoD recruitment, employment, development, retention, and promotion efforts are informed by WPS initiatives, to ensure a diverse and inclusive fighting force.”

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) reported in 2019 that women comprised approximately 17 percent of the U.S. military’s active-duty force. Moreover, statistics demonstrate that diversity among the female population is considerably higher than the male population, with racial and ethnic diversity at 40 percent and 18 percent, respectively, for females, compared to 25 percent and 16 percent for males.

All the military Services reported increases in minority populations in the decade between 2008 and 2018, with an overall increase of 2 percent for all women, a 7 percent increase in Hispanic women, and a 1 percent increase in racial minorities. For example, the Army reports that in 2018, one out of every two females is a member of a minority group. While the numbers for minority-group members are significant among enlisted women (65 percent), the overall numbers in the officer corps for minority populations is 32 percent. Additionally, the number of minority women represented in the Army’s general officer population, as an example, has decreased in the last decade.

Despite improvements in overall numbers across the active-duty force, women continue to experience significant challenges compared to their male counterparts when getting married and starting a family, often choosing to leave the military. Further, despite efforts to accommodate needs specific to this population, women in general still feel that current DOD policies “do not support [their] roles as mothers,” forcing them to choose between motherhood and the military.

Recognizing the need to address this discriminatory practice prompted former secretary of defense Mark Esper to direct updates to the department’s equal opportunity policies to include pregnancy-based discrimination in his July 2020 memorandum to civilian and military leaders, “Immediate Actions to Address Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity in the Military Services.” Further, in his June 2020 message, “Actions for Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Department of Defense,” Esper had recognized that an institution that seeks to “embrace diversity and change” is also an enterprise that

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will have to undergo profound organizational and cultural changes. These cultural changes are themselves signs of a willingness to respect differences and not merely symbolic gestures. Instead, cultural changes should underscore the criticality of morale in building exceptional organizations and especially a “fighting force.” As an example, it has only been in recent years that modifications in the combat uniform were made to accommodate most women’s bodies; nonetheless, most equipment continues to be fashioned with the male physique in mind.

For instance, recent policy changes outlined to *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*, Army Regulation 670-1, address several challenges associated with women, particularly those associated with minority women: lifting restrictions on hairstyles and relaxing the standards on the length of hair will circumvent severe hair loss for women. Fashion aside, these revised standards offer more practical and more comfortable solutions for most women. As far as uniform standards (minus dress uniforms) are concerned, the Army has long practiced a gender-neutral standard. The addition of lipstick, nail polish, and earrings are welcome but do little to advance the diversity and inclusion agenda. Instead, the Department of the Army’s December 2020 report on the Fort Hood, Texas, command climate and culture underscores the difficulties inherent in promoting cultural change to achieve the aforementioned defense objective.

The Army’s independent review conducted at Fort Hood and the surrounding military community following the murder of Specialist Vanessa Guillén demonstrated that there is still a lot of work to do to make notable improvements related to the diversity and inclusion equity. Statistically, Fort Hood fell short in diversity management, inclusion, sex discrimination, and racial discrimination compared to other Army installations between 2014 and 2019. In the surveys conducted for the report, 54 percent of survey participants indicated that there were indeed concerns related to how women and minorities were treated in the Army, with 44 percent demonstrating that the Army still had not done enough to level the playing field in matters relating to the promotion of women and minorities.

Although survey participants were not required to provide remarks as a part of their response, some of the offered feedback was concerning. For example: “The contributions of female Soldiers in this command is still [sic] not appreciated as much as those of males—there is a definite ‘boys club’ among the staff and commanders.” Further remarks such as: “Females in this unit are not respected at all. We are often

36 Rea, “Unique Challenges Faced by the Powerful Women who Serve in the United States Military.”
taunted, teased and ridiculed for going to seek medical help for sickness injuries or other female health issues. We are often seen and verbally told that we are weaker than the males and that we should not be amongst males in a combat MOS, because we are not fit.”41 Finally, “I wake up now regretting I joined the military as a young minority female and do not feel as though I fit in with my current company. I feel like an outcast often, I come to work and just sit here and talk to no one. . . . I want to be somebody and I want to be utilized, but instead I am left to defend [sic] for myself at Fort Hood with no voice.”42 While these remarks are profoundly concerning and are specific to the Fort Hood report, they are indicators of prevalent thinking within the military Services. The Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (FHIRC) certainly took note of such viewpoints and their ramifications as the committee members concluded that the “findings and recommendations” were not only “intended to benefit Fort Hood,” but “the entire Army.”43 Thus, Fort Hood’s problems represented a microcosm of the challenges confronting the entire Army enterprise and not a single installation and are likely representative of the challenges the other services confront.

The previous secretary of defense’s policy changes and the FHIRC’s recommendations are a good start but may not yet go far enough. As an example, while current policy guidance requires the removal of official photographs and demographic information from all promotion board files, this process will not be entirely neutral until personnel files are viewed strictly by DOD identification number.44 This approach means that all demographic and defining characteristics are removed, enabling the various selection processes to be executed solely on merit. Such policy changes have ramifications well beyond promotion processes and affect how policies concerning diversity and inclusion are defined and implemented.

Gender perspective provides insight into the challenges ahead. The gender perspective is not about women, women’s rights, or feminism. Even as the department plans to revise policies emphasizing and supporting the equities of diversity and inclusion, the cultural environment continues to develop. The dynamics of today’s force have evolved. It is no longer binary, and the gender perspective dynamic also includes servicemembers who are gay, lesbian, and transgender. Leaders at all levels must understand how these changing dynamics will influence efforts to achieve diversity and inclusion objectives within the Services. Recognition of this change is already occurring, as the president has indicated. On 25 January 2021, President Joseph R. Biden signed Executive Order 14,004, Enabling all Qualified Americans to Serve their Country in Uniform. This executive order emphasizes that allowing transgender servicemembers to serve openly supports the national core values, strengthening the

44 Esper July 2020 memo.
United States and how other countries perceive it—stressing explicitly “that a more inclusive force is a more effective force.”45

The DOD has made worthy efforts to foster a diverse and inclusive culture over the last decade. However, leaders at all levels must continue to emphasize and support equity across the force. As the Fort Hood findings indicate, fostering an environment dismissive of racial, gender, and behavioral issues poses significant challenges in protecting at-risk populations within the Services. The potential to create a culture of intolerance may be further exacerbated by a leadership team that did not appear to acknowledge the risk associated with the high crime in and around Fort Hood.46

Further, the lack of awareness, inconsistent application of policy and sanctions, and inadequate accountability in applying diversity and inclusion programs and the failure to reduce or mitigate instances of crime imply a permissive environment that further increases potential victimization of the local population. These factors are associated with sexual harassment and sexual assault, (i.e., incidents of gender-based violence).

**Linking Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention**

The DOD must be successful in establishing an effective program focused on diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion will be the crucial first step in creating an environment rich in dignity and respect, two factors that are critically important in launching an equally effective sexual assault prevention and response program. Achieving proficiency through this program supports the prevention and protection principles cited as a part of the WPS SFIP.47 With this in mind, DOD has acknowledged that it is not uncommon that sexual harassment and assault result from progressive behaviors related to “sexually harassing and discriminatory language and behaviors.”48

The 2005 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 577, Public Law 108-375) directed the secretary of defense to develop a policy concerning the prevention of and response to sexual assault of servicemembers. *Department of Defense Directive 6495.01, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program*, provides the department-wide policy on sexual assault prevention and response to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment and assault in the military.49 The SAPR programs that Services have instituted use a framework focused on training, awareness, advocacy, reporting mechanisms, and personal and leadership accountability.50 However, 15

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years after its establishment, DOD’s program continues to fall under intense scrutiny at the government’s top echelons. At the direction of President Biden, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin instructed the combatant commanders to provide feedback on “the best plans and practices” utilized in combating the persistence of sexual harassment and assault incidents across the force.\(^{51}\) While Secretary Austin acknowledged that the department had undertaken numerous steps to combat the issues of sexual assault, a lot of work remains. In his memorandum to the combatant commanders, Secretary Austin emphasized that servicemembers cannot defend the United States, the department’s primary mission, “if we also have to battle enemies within the ranks.”\(^{52}\)

Today, more than 210,000 women are serving on active duty across the Joint Force. Despite the highest number reported since World War II, this population experiences various forms of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.\(^{53}\) Notwithstanding the persistent discriminatory behavior experienced by many women discussed previously, sexual assault is a significant reason why numerous women choose to leave the military.\(^{54}\)

The 2019 *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault* in the military reports that sexual assault cases increased during the fiscal year 2018 by greater than 3 percent from the previous reporting period; 7,825 incidents were reported across the force.\(^{55}\) Despite several years of awareness programs, annual training requirements, and emphasis at the highest level, it is overwhelming and concerning to note that during the 2018 reporting period, the number of restricted reports filed increased more than 17 percent.\(^{56}\)

This increase is disheartening given that while restricted reports ensure the victim is provided care and services, there is little notification and investigation by the chain of command. Incredibly, the perpetrator is never held accountable. Despite the increase in reported sexual assault cases, the 7 percent conviction rate for these crimes remained comparable to previous reporting cycles.\(^{57}\) Even as President Biden has ordered the Army’s Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program’s review, it is still undecided if the Biden administration will remove the trial and disciplinary process from the defendant’s military chain of command and instead place it under the supervision of the civilian courts.\(^{58}\)

The incident at Fort Hood was a tragedy in the wake of efforts to improve the life, health, equality, and wellbeing of servicemembers—more especially in view


\(^{52}\) Barron, “Biden Orders New Review of Sexual Assault Policies in the Military.”

\(^{53}\) Rea, “Unique Challenges Faced by the Powerful Women Who Serve in the United States Military.”

\(^{54}\) Castro et al., “Sexual Assault in the Military,” 2.


\(^{57}\) Steinhauer, “A #MeToo Moment Emerges for Military Women after Soldier’s Killing.”

\(^{58}\) Barron, “Biden Orders New Review of Sexual Assault Policies in the Military.”
of the DOD policies designed to enhance the equities described in the 2020 WPS SFIP. The circumstances surrounding the disappearance and murder of Specialist Vanessa Guillén at Fort Hood, Texas, on 22 April 2020, were the culmination of a toxic environment that permitted sexual harassment and assault to transpire without accountability. Her murder, in addition to other incidents resulting in the deaths or disappearances of other soldiers, were identified as factors that resulted from the significant deficiencies in the climate at Fort Hood, disinterest on the part of Fort Hood leadership, and failure to mitigate the risks to the soldier population related to criminal activity in the communities surrounding Fort Hood. The Fort Hood community had significantly higher numbers of “violent sex crimes and other sex crimes, violent felonies, assault and battery, drug offenses, drunk and disorderly, larceny and other misdemeanors, desertions and AWOL” than other U.S. Army Forces Command installations from 2016 to 2020.\(^{59}\) Most aggravating was the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault within the Fort Hood community, with Fort Hood reporting the most significant number of sexual assaults among all Army installations from 2013 to 2016, demonstrating a persistent and permissive environment lacking leadership and resources.\(^{60}\) The report further discussed a culture in which the soldiers and civilians at Fort Hood lacked trust in the leadership when reporting sexual harassment and assault, gender-based violence, and diversity and inclusion complaints and concerns.\(^{61}\) It is incredibly discouraging that despite years of awareness programs and annual training requirements, the installation reports the highest number of on-post sexual assaults.\(^{62}\)

As discussed earlier, prevention and protection are the two most prevalent WPS principles when talking about sexual harassment and assault. The Fort Hood leaders’ failure to acknowledge and mitigate the known risk at the installation meant that they did not protect the Army’s most vulnerable population: enlisted female soldiers, who are most likely to be the assault victims of male peer or near-peer acquaintances.\(^{63}\) This betrayal is further intensified by the lackluster attention that unit leadership paid to the components of the SHARP Program, deeming it a “perfunctory” rather than a “priority” task that focused on the team-centric safety, morale, dignity, and respect that defines the family aspect of military service.\(^{64}\) This pervasive and persistent behavior compromises the readiness, trust, and cohesion of units that will further compromise the force’s capabilities in meeting the objectives specified in DOD’s WPS SFIP.

**Escalating to Gender-Based Violence**

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60 Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 98.
Gender-based violence must be addressed within military formations before gender perspective can be institutionalized. The investigation into the death of Specialist Guillén exposed severe problems with the culture and environment at Fort Hood. The FHIRC uncovered evidence of an environment that tolerated sexual harassment and assault. However, the incident at Fort Hood revealed the prevalence of gender-based violence throughout the force. The findings indicated that the risk of violent sex crimes at Fort Hood “were known or should have been known,” and that the numbers reported from the investigation “were the highest, the most cases for sexual assault and harassment, and murders for our entire formation of the U.S. Army.” Guillén was just one of many victims at the installation, and her experience and, ultimately, her death, were symptomatic of a more significant, systemic problem. A considerable number of soldiers stationed at Fort Hood, male and female, reported a culture where incidents of sexual harassment, bullying, and worse, were tolerated.

Gender-based violence, which encompasses both sexual harassment and assault, is widespread throughout the U.S. military and society at large. It affects “families, communities, economies, global public health, and development.” Moreover, exercising power through the use of gender-based violence includes a wide range of activities to achieve its ends: “physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social and other forms of control and abuse” are commonplace, and while it is most commonly directed towards women and girls, gender-based violence with men and boys as victims should not be overlooked.

As discussed earlier, approximately 17 percent of the military’s active-duty population is female. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports that one in three female veterans experienced some form of sexual assault or harassment during their military service, with the victim being 28 percent more likely to leave or separate from service prematurely “citing sexual assault as a key factor.” There are concerns that the number of sexual harassment and assault incidents and incidents related to gender-based violence goes underreported during military service by many accounts. It is assumed these incidents go unreported because of individual concerns connected to fear of retaliation, adverse consequences on one’s career, or social stigma and discrimination by peers and superiors. Furthermore, the effects of gender-based violence are also included in the definition of gender-based violence and should not be excluded from the discussion as a source of power since it is often used to manipulate or coerce victims into compliance in return for sexual favors.

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67 Fernandez, “A Year of Heartbreak and Bloodshed.”
68 Dichter, True, and Tinney, “A Call to End Gender-Based Violence in the Military.”
69 Beth Lape, “Gender-Based Violence” (briefing presentation, Operational GENAD Course [OGC], Department of Defense, 10 February 2021), slide 3.
70 It should be noted that sexual exploitation is also included in the definition of gender-based violence and should not be excluded from the discussion as a source of power since it is often used to manipulate or coerce victims into compliance in return for sexual favors. Lape, “Gender-Based Violence,” slide 16.
72 Dichter, True, and Tinney, “A Call to End Gender-Based Violence in the Military.”
based violence follow victims well after the incident. Victims often suffer long-term effects associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, increased risks of suicide, and other mental health and social disorders.73

Sexual harassment is a gateway behavior. This means that often, it has been demonstrated before the behavior further escalates to sexual assault or gender-based violence. There is a correlation between sexual harassment and an organization’s environment; environments rich in dignity and respect mitigate escalation from sexual harassment to sexual assault and gender-based violence. The FHIRC report indicated that Fort Hood had a culture in which discrimination based on race and gender went unaddressed, cultivating an environment that was permissive in these behaviors and implying a culture in which sexual harassment was acceptable. In the months leading to her eventual death, Guillén indicated to family and friends that she had been sexually harassed within her unit.74 Unfortunately, without a formal complaint, the situation escalated and ended in Guillén’s death, the fatal result of gender-based violence.

Facilitating Cultural Change

Acknowledging the need for change and establishing and communicating a sense of urgency are essential to facilitating transformation within the DOD. Success requires a fundamental shift in how political leaders and military personnel approach the challenges associated with existing habits, attitudes, and beliefs. In other words, it is imperative to focus on behaviors that are unacceptable and contrary to the core American values described in the 2017 NSS and affirmed in President Biden’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, that is, the universal values that “have underpinned the U.N. system” and democratic values to include equal opportunity and respect for the rule of law.75 Military members cannot implement those values abroad if they cannot champion those values within the force’s formations and communities.76 In addition, two priorities detailed under the NSS’s fourth pillar—“Advance American Influence”—are the equities of supporting individuals’ dignity and empowering women and youth.77 Fostering a culture or environment rich in dignity and respect requires that the U.S. military practice these values at home to support the first defense objective of a diverse and inclusive fighting force.78 This also requires attention to organizational culture.

The Army People Strategy, as an example, outlines and describes culture as “the foundational values, beliefs, and behaviors that drive an organization’s social envi-

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73 Dichter, True, and Tinney, “A Call to End Gender-Based Violence in the Military.”
74 Steinhauer, “A #MeToo Moment Emerges for Military Women after Soldier’s Killing.”
76 National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 41.
77 National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 42.
Environment and culture plays a vital role in mission accomplishment.”

Culture is linked to performance and enriches the foundation and values upon which military service is evaluated. However, this culture is not always positive. The converse is those aspects of culture that imply an environment that is permissive of such behaviors as racism, sexism, extremism, and incidents of sexual harassment and assault, to name a few.

The sweeping change requires leader “commitment, trust, engagement and accountability.” Leaders can facilitate this change but need to embrace the fundamental principles that define leadership roles. For example, Army Command Policy, Army Regulation 600-20, specifically addresses the importance of leaders at all levels to promote a positive and constructive climate that treats soldiers and civilians with dignity and respect, provides training and professional development opportunities, and emphasizes integrity and a sense of duty. Army Leadership and the Profession, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, is also relevant. It defines leadership as “the activity of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”

As these documents underscore, leadership at all levels is critical if cultural change is to occur. Implementing organizational change of such magnitude will have to happen from the top down and from the bottom up simultaneously. In the U.S. Army, as an example, The Operations Process, ADP 5-0, can direct leaders in operationalizing the strategic guidance provided in The Army People Strategy down to the lowest level to ensure that the messaging and vision remains unadulterated yet still adaptable to meet the challenges specific to the smallest formations. Yet, DOD is well aware that the problems examined previously permeate the entire defense enterprise.

Recognizing that the U.S. military has problems with diversity and inclusion, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment and assault is the first step. However, recognition is insufficient, as the FHIRC report makes utterly apparent. The DOD must address, mitigate, and eradicate environments that seek to prevent diversity and inclusion and that foster gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and assault. Military doctrine, such as ADP 5-0, provides a foundation to assist civilian and military leaders in driving the change through an approach defined by the following six steps: 1) Understand: what is the problem? 2) Visualize: how do we fix the problem? 3) Describe: do we have a shared understanding of the problem? 4) Direct: what is the intent, and are the resources available? 5) Lead: are the leaders

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setting the standard, visible, motivated, accountable, and committed? and 6) Assess: are things improving, or do we need to do things differently?85 Using such a structure helps leaders focus on the critical steps in promoting a change in organizational culture. Yet these steps are only one element.

A second element of facilitating a change in culture is that leaders at all levels must be able to appreciate that their understanding of organizational “culture, ethics and values” may not be interpreted the same way by those under their orders.86 There will be other factors to consider, such as generational differences or organizational subcultures. Nonetheless, approaching change from the top and bottom simultaneously will ensure that the necessary cultural shift will reach all levels and be understood at all echelons of the organization.

Training and Leader Development

No matter the circumstance or crisis, the first response to eliminating adverse behaviors and addressing the current situation within the DOD is mandatory training. Training will support another of the department’s WPS equities: inclusive leadership development. Unfortunately, to date, the emphasis of this training is more focused on getting the training done rather than the quality or effectiveness of the training. Training is rarely tailored to the demographics of the unit and is executed as a one-size-fits-all scenario.87 When developing training packages, DOD fails to acknowledge that behavioral risks are not the same across servicemember populations.88 Furthermore, training required on an annual basis is rarely updated and, more often than not, is unchanged from the previous year, becoming a check-the-box requirement. It is seldom presented by a subject matter expert, as well. As a result, most servicemembers have offered that the training lacks variety, fails to capture their attention, and over time desensitizes them to the topic.89 Thus, creative and tailored training is required as current efforts favor standardization, but quality training can be ineffective if cultural change is not ongoing. The importance of training cannot be underemphasized. The FHIRC report underscored that sexual harassment and assault programs are ineffective when there is a lack of command attention to the issue or when a command climate tolerates misconduct or fails to implement protocols to minimize risk. In sum, leadership matters.90

Conclusion

In the end, senior leaders must take the lead in promoting a gender perspective,

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89 Castro et al., “Sexual Assault in the Military,” 2.
which encompasses the equities discussed, within the Services, leading by example and reinforcing gender perspectives in their organizations. However, leadership is only one component. The introduction and reinforcement of gender perspective concepts must occur at all levels of professional military education (PME) across the five armed forces. A gender perspective can be introduced as early as possible, starting with basic training for enlisted members and reinforced with the appropriate content through to education for senior noncommissioned officers. Officer education should begin in precommissioning courses and continue through senior service college.

Moreover, the training provided during PME must be tailored to the audience. If the military Services can combine leadership attention and training and act from the top and bottom of the organizational chain of command, then the likelihood of successfully implementing DOD’s WPS objectives improves exponentially.