Women, Peace, and Security in Professional Military Education

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Chapter Four
Analysis

A review of the concepts of culture and hegemonic masculinity is warranted to set the context for the case study analysis. Schein’s model of organizational culture contains three levels, and the deepest level is a culture’s basic underlying assumptions that guide behavior by telling group members how to perceive, think, and feel. These underlying assumptions are implicit norms that drive how a group or organization accomplishes core tasks ranging from how to solve problems and operate to organizational value statements and behavior standards. The specifics of the underlying assumptions are hard to identify, but the espoused beliefs and artifacts of a culture provide indications of those underlying assumptions. Schein describes artifacts as the visible, feelable level of culture, which can include language, values statements, rituals, and observable behaviors within a culture.

Nelson and Treviño add to Schein’s definition of culture by categorizing culture as both formal and informal. The public statements and ceremonies of the Army are visible elements of formal Army culture. Nelson and Treviño also describe an aspect of culture that is less defined, less codified as the informal culture. This informal culture is what members of the unit do or say or believe, not because of a policy or formal order but because that’s what everybody who wants to be part of the group is doing. An example in the Army are the traditions of the companies, platoons, and squads that are unique or specific to that unit. Most of those traditions and behaviors align with the espoused values of formal Army culture, but some may not, as in the case of hazing.

Hazing is one indication of the influence of hegemonic masculinity on Army culture. Connell and Messerschmidt define hegemonic masculinity as a distinguished form of masculinity that embodies the current, most honored way of being a man. Consciously or unconsciously, men and women position themselves to benefit from the social gains of hegemonic masculinity. From an ideological perspective, hegemonic masculinity is a version of manhood constructed on the idea that to be a “real man,” one must be dominating, heterosexual, display violent and aggressive behavior, and restrain outward displays of vulnerable emotions such as crying. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity requires men to exhibit strength and toughness to be competitive and successful. Connell’s hierarchy of masculinity identifies that multiple versions of masculinity exist within a culture, but only one form of masculinity is normative and the hegemonic masculinity. Further, those who embodied some or all of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity within a culture were the dominant group.
As previously stated, Connell’s extensive research in gender order theory states that hegemonic masculinity is normative. All cultures exhibit one if not multiple forms of hegemonic masculinities. Within sociological power structures such as the military, hegemonic masculinity is widely accepted as the pattern and practices within organizational culture, allowing men’s dominance over women and men who embody alternate forms of masculinity to continue. Military culture, specifically U.S. Army culture, is not immune to the effects of hegemonic masculinity within both formal and informal culture.

As described in chapter 2, Isbell traces the roots of hegemonic masculinities within the context of military service back to World War I, where government leaders in both Europe and the United States invoked masculine pride of society by challenging men to prove their manliness, patriotism, and citizenship through military service. Real men achieved their status in society by fighting the nation’s wars, thus interweaving idealized masculinities and social status with military service. This connection created popular images of masculinity within larger society displaying the soldier as the embodiment of male sex role behaviors. These associations influence larger society but also still exist within the organizational culture of the Army.

For example, General Douglas MacArthur was a domineering, aggressive, and authoritarian officer who emerged as a societal and organizational hero following his accomplishments in the Pacific theater during World War II. Following World War II, MacArthur was relieved of command by President Harry S. Truman in large part because of blatant insubordination and his aggressive approach to expelling the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA) and People’s Liberation Army of China from South Korea during the Korean War of 1950. MacArthur continually made contradictory statements to the press that undermined President Truman’s authority and ultimately thwarted the president’s attempt to negotiate a ceasefire when the general ordered his troops to invade North Korea and push the NKPA up past the 38th parallel. MacArthur’s actions yielded costly results with almost 1,500 casualties incurred at the hands of the Chinese and the total destruction of Lieutenant Colonel Don C. Faith Jr.’s task force.

Despite all this, MacArthur is still glorified within Army culture today. The General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award recognizes company-grade officers who demonstrate the ideals for which MacArthur stood: duty, honor, and country. This award is a longstanding Army ritual led annually by the Chief of Staff of the Army. The MacArthur Leadership award is an artifact that symbolizes the Army’s conscious and

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[80] Isbell, “Real Men.”
unconscious bias that idealizes leaders such as General MacArthur, who embodied hegemonic masculine leadership characteristics despite major flaws in his leadership style that cost significant loss of American life.

Indeed, some of the characteristics of hegemonic masculine leaders like MacArthur, such as aggressiveness and assertiveness, are necessary to achieve success in combat. The harm of hegemonic masculinities and organizational leaders and team members that embody the ideology are patterns of aggression and abuse enacted by these individuals and groups to pursue dominance, power, and social ascendency.\textsuperscript{84} The struggle for hegemony, not hegemonic masculinity itself, links hegemonic masculinities to violence and aggression. Patterns of sexual assault and harassment within organizational culture and climate are equivalent to patterns of aggression and abuse that can result from hegemonic masculinity. The analysis within this chapter identifies visible artifacts, espoused beliefs, and social norms of hegemonic masculinities within the climate and culture of Fort Hood that contributed to patterns of sexual assault and harassment.

The SHARP Continuum of Harm is a visual tool to understand the Army’s continuum of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors which may progress to sexual harassment and assault (figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3. U.S. Army SHARP Continuum of Harm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFESSIONAL WORK ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>EARLY WARNING SIGNS</th>
<th>SEXUAL HARASSMENT</th>
<th>SEXUAL ASSAULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Engaged leadership</td>
<td>• Excessive flirting</td>
<td>• Sending unsolicited naked pictures</td>
<td>• Rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Army Values</td>
<td>• Toxic atmosphere</td>
<td>• Indecent recording or broadcasting</td>
<td>• Abusive sexual contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good order and discipline</td>
<td>• Inappropriate jokes or comments</td>
<td>• Nonconsensual kissing or touching</td>
<td>• Aggravated sexual contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dignity and respect</td>
<td>• Disparaging comments on social media</td>
<td>• Indecent exposure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethical standards</td>
<td>• Inappropriate work relationships</td>
<td>• Indecent viewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cat calls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safe environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexual innuendas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Warrior ethos</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cornering or blocking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Civilian creed</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexually oriented cadence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unsolicited sexually explicit texts or emails</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEEP IT IN THE GREEN!

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are both criminal offenses under UCMJ. They reduce a unit’s overall mission readiness by destroying trust and unit cohesion.


\textsuperscript{84} Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 834.
As stated at the top of the graphic, sexual harassment and assault reduce a unit’s overall mission readiness by destroying trust, teams, and unit cohesion. This graphic and associated SHARP policies are examples of espoused beliefs of formal Army culture. The graphic then depicts and describes the continuum from professional behavior to sexual assault. This Continuum of Harm indicates the Army’s acknowledgment that attitudes and behaviors identified as early warning signs can lead to unacceptable behaviors such as sexual assault and other forms of violence. As shown in the graphic, soldiers are expected to “Keep it in the Green” and sustain a professional working environment consistent with all the characteristics described on the left-hand side of the continuum. Leaders must be engaged to sustain a professional working environment and intervene immediately to correct work environments that stray away from professionalism. Additionally, leaders and soldiers are told to report incidents of sexual assault and harassment to SHARP professionals. These espoused beliefs establish clear standards of behavior and provide leaders and soldiers within the U.S. Army guidance on preventing and handling instances of sexual harassment and assault.

By all accounts, Army formal culture is very clear on how soldiers and leaders are expected to think and behave to foster a culture free of sexual harassment and assault. To make things even more apparent, the Army Values and other positive behaviors such as engaged leadership are listed as artifacts that reflect a professional working environment or climate within the SHARP Continuum of Harm. This distinction of what Army formal culture communicates as acceptable culture and climate to prevent sexual assault and harassment serves as a reference throughout the analysis of the FHIRC report to frame misalignments between formal and informal culture.

The SHARP Continuum of Harm is a visible artifact the Army employs to create a foundational understanding that attitudes that allow or enable any forms of harassment are the foundation that can lead to more egregious behaviors such as sexual assault and harassment and other forms of violence. Essentially, basic underlying assumptions at the deepest level of culture ultimately influence observable behaviors such as sexual harassment and assault. The premise of this thesis is to explore why men, in particular, commit sexual harassment and assault within the Army. This warrants a discussion on the relationship between masculinity, which is constructed at the basic assumption level of culture, and its influence on both formal and informal culture.

The primary research question of this thesis is: How do hegemonic masculinities embedded in Army culture affect the occurrence of sexual harassment and assault? This section presents the author’s observations drawn from an examination of the cul-

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86 “Army Sexual Harassment/assault Response and Prevention Continuum of Harm.”
87 “Army Sexual Harassment/assault Response and Prevention Continuum of Harm.”
ture and climate of Fort Hood that illustrate the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and sexual assault and harassment.

**Observation 1**

There is an apprehension to address the relationship between hegemonic masculinities, gender integration, and sexual harassment and assault within the Army, even by an independent review committee established to find answers. FHIRC members immediately took an ambiguous stance addressing the relationship between gender integration and sexual harassment and assault within the context and purpose section with this statement:

> To be clear, this Report does not suggest—and, the Committee has not identified—a direct correlation between sexual harassment and sexual assault and the Army’s endeavors toward gender inclusion. However, in reviewing the atmosphere at Fort Hood as it relates to sexual harassment and sexual assault, the Committee is not oblivious to the context of gender integration in the Army.\(^88\)

While the FHIRC does not suggest a direct correlation between sexual harassment and assault and gender inclusion efforts, the committee asserts that a culture and climate that fosters a commitment to inclusion and diversity, freedom from sexual assault and harassment, and adherence to the Army Values is critical to achieving successful gender integration.\(^89\) However, the contents and findings of the FHIRC report reflect a culture and climate in complete contrast to what the committee deemed necessary for successful gender integration. The FHIRC failed to, at a minimum, recommend that culture and climate, sexual harassment and assault, and gender integration within the Army be examined in greater detail. Several observed behaviors and norms within the report’s findings indicate that hegemonic masculinities are adversely affecting gender integration and efforts to combat sexual harassment and assault. These problematic behaviors and norms are described and analyzed throughout this chapter.

As far back as 2014, Fort Hood was identified as a high-risk installation for sexual assault and gender hostilities against women by Rand’s Workplace and Gender Relations Surveys.\(^90\) Subsequent Rand surveys in 2016 and 2018 confirmed that a dangerous environment for women existed at Fort Hood. In all three surveys, Fort Hood was classified as having the highest risk of sexual assault against women and female gender discrimination. High levels of supervisor workplace gender discrimination against women paired with low levels of peer respect and cohesion were reported on all three Rand surveys over the four-year period. Additionally, the Rand

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\(^{89}\) Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 2.

survey reflected low levels of bystander support to intervene and respond responsibly to incidents of sexual harassment and assault, gender hostilities, and discrimination against women.  

Rand’s studies aim to understand the detail and frequency of sexual assault and harassment within the military. The studies do not attempt to understand the role of culture in creating opportunities for sexual harassment and assault to occur. Further, the studies did not seek to understand why men, in particular, are the primary perpetrators of sexual assault and harassment. This fact should have piqued the curiosity of Army leaders to explore these issues in greater detail following the completion of the surveys in 2014 and 2016 and begs for a recommendation from the FHIRC to suggest reexamining these surveys to create a greater understanding of the culture driving gender discrimination at Fort Hood.

Nonetheless, these risk inventories clearly described patterns of concerning behavior in how women were being treated by male peers and supervisors at Fort Hood as gender integration was in its infancy. The climate concerns also indicated a pattern of dominating and aggressive behavior exhibited by men against women, which is indicative of the pursuit of hegemony or dominance. Because men enacted the majority of these patterns of behaviors, this survey data indicates existing social mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity within the culture and climate of Fort Hood before gender integration. Connell and Messerschmidt note that pursuit of dominance paired with normalizing violent, abusive, and dehumanistic behavior from men and boys within a culture is the primary driver of harmful social mechanisms associated with hegemonic masculinity.  

Recall that hegemonic masculine ideals exist at the basic assumption level of culture, and basic assumptions are often automatic, meaning we are not aware of the influence they hold over our thinking and behaviors. Often men and boys’ aggressive and violent behavior and language is dismissed as “just locker room talk” or by the age-old saying “boys will be boys,” which allow unhealthy social mechanisms to continue without intervention. While it cannot be substantiated whether these patterns were conscious or unconscious, research indicates hegemonic masculinity was likely at play.

Further, drawing from Schein’s primary embedding mechanisms, leaders integrate the Army Values and tenets of the SHARP Program into organizational culture through what they pay attention to; how they react to crisis and allocate resources; and through deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching. These troubling patterns of behavior warranted more direct attention and resources from leaders. Unfortunately, the failure to directly confront these troubling patterns of behavior in the culture of Fort Hood condoned the normalization of deviant behavior within the informal culture.

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93 Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 183.
A similar pattern persisted within the combat brigades at Fort Hood because senior installation leaders ignored the patterns of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and assault. The FHIRC found the combat brigades within both 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division were struggling with promoting a climate of dignity and respect specifically toward women. Within both 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division, men outnumbered women by a 7 to 1 ratio, and junior enlisted women comprised most victims of sexual assault and harassment perpetrated by male soldiers. Within Fort Hood, the rates of violent sex crimes were 30.6 percent higher than U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) averages and 43.2 percent higher than the Army. In 2018 and 2019, sexual assault rates within Fort Hood were noticeably higher than in previous years, and data clearly identified young, junior enlisted female soldiers at high risk of sexual assault. Further, 3d Cavalry Regiment had the highest rate of sex crimes at the time of the investigation, with incidents increasing by 18.6 percent from the previous quarter of the fiscal year (FY) 2020.

Confidential interviews conducted with women in both 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division confirmed a culture tolerant of disrespect and abuse toward women. Several women held the belief that the Army only wanted women in combat units for show. This daily negative treatment of women contradicts the Army Values, causing further loss of trust and a sense of exclusion for these women. Many women cited NCOs openly sexually objectifying young female soldiers within their care. Observed behaviors ranged from male NCOs and peers running betting pools to see who could sleep with women first, male NCOs openly stating to an entire unit that “women are here for our entertainment,” to male NCOs openly discussing young female soldiers in sexually graphic terms. A senior female NCO told the committee that “sexual harassment and/or assault are ‘almost like an initiation to Fort Hood’,” and she believed “sexual harassment happens every single day. . . . Nobody stops it; leaders turn a blind eye or they themselves are the offenders.” The interviews further confirmed an absence of primary embedding mechanisms; leaders were not paying attention to and addressing behaviors that did not align with a professional work environment within the SHARP Continuum of Harm and were not role-modeling the behaviors they wanted to see.

Commentary by junior enlisted women confirmed this narrative. Particularly within 3d Cavalry Regiment, women reported a disregard for their safety and privacy. Young women living in the post barracks reported NCOs barging into their rooms without notice, often when they were partially dressed. In one instance, an

NCO attempted to sexually assault a female soldier after entering her room without permission. In another, a young female soldier discovered a particular NCO had forcibly entered rooms multiple times and was reported to the chain of command, but the behavior continued. One young soldier reported two counts of sexual assault to her platoon sergeant, who told her, “you can report it, but nothing will happen,” and nothing did happen. Women within 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division reported a daily struggle to get through their day peacefully without being relentlessly and aggressively pursued in a sexual manner by male soldiers. The FHIRC even noted, “This type of culture towards women in the Enlisted ranks if not addressed proactively creates breeding grounds for sexual assault.”

Throughout the interview sessions, the FHIRC uncovered a climate in which women believed they were not wanted and felt unsafe due to privacy violations. Further, the relentless and aggressive pursuit of women by male peers and the sexual objectification that persisted after women reported the behavior is indicative of the removal of autonomy, meaning the advances were unwelcome and imposed against their will. Removal of autonomy is a social mechanism associated with hegemonic masculine ideals often employed to subordinate women and other subordinate masculinities against their will. Revisiting the SHARP Continuum of Harm presented at the beginning of this chapter, the beliefs and climate experienced by these women completely contradict the basic assumptions and espoused beliefs of U.S. Army culture regarding the SHARP Program and the Army Values.

These damning statistics and narratives indicate a culture and climate hostile to women, especially young women who do not hold positional power of rank and authority. Problematic attitudes and violent and abusive behaviors enacted by men against women were quantified in multiple command climate surveys and confirmed through large samples of interview data. This data indicates that hegemonic masculine ideologies and associated social mechanisms were active within the culture of Fort Hood. Throughout the report, the FHIRC hints at connections between gender integration, male attitudes, and perceptions about women and subordinated males and sexual harassment and assault within the U.S. Army. However, the report falls short by failing to recommend further examination of the relationship between the three variables. Considering the sole purpose of the FHIRC was to review the command climate at Fort Hood, the cultural and climate issues discussed in the previous section are begging for actionable recommendations.

**Observation 2**

Widespread fear of retaliation, exposure, and ostracism for reporting a SHARP violation indicates the enforcement of hegemonic masculinity. The FHIRC identified that women were often silenced when attempting to report sexual assault and harass-

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ment, if they even chose to report at all. As discussed in the previous section, several women in 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division informed the committee that superiors routinely ignored reports ranging from sexual harassment to full-blown sexual assault during confidential interviews. Survey data collected by the FHIRC and the 2018–19 command climate surveys also indicated that fear of retaliation and ostracism was widespread, especially among women and enlisted soldiers. The FHIRC collected 31,612 survey responses, of which 28 percent of women believed that filing a sexual harassment complaint would result in ostracization; 22 percent believed a reporter would be labeled a troublemaker; and 18 percent of women believed a reporter would be discouraged from moving forward with the reporting process. 103

The same questions were asked of filing a sexual assault complaint, and the percentage of responses were 27 percent, 20 percent, and 17 percent. Once again, the percentages for these survey questions were higher within 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division. Further, approximately 1,112 of 5,942 women (19 percent) did not believe that a sexual assault and/or harassment complaint would be kept confidential by the chain of command. Within 3d Cavalry Regiment, 27 percent of female soldiers felt that a sexual assault and/or harassment report would not be kept confidential. 104

FHIRC individual interview data revealed that of the 507 females interviewed, 32 percent (164 total) would not be comfortable reporting sexual assault or harassment through the SHARP Program at Fort Hood. 105 Approximately 50 percent of the same group of women were not confident in their commanders or that they would take a SHARP report seriously. Regarding retaliation, 36 percent (184 total) of the women interviewed had witnessed or personally experienced acts of retaliation for reporting sexual harassment and/or assault. The overwhelming majority of women interviewed, approximately 70 percent (355 total), believed that Fort Hood’s leadership did not execute the SHARP Program effectively. 106

The survey data collected across Fort Hood confirms a climate of mistrust surrounding the reporting of sexual assault and harassment and demonstrates a misalignment with the espoused beliefs of Army formal culture established at the beginning of this chapter. Per the SHARP Continuum of Harm, leaders are to encourage and facilitate a climate that supports the free and uninhibited reporting of sexual assault and harassment. The FHIRC uncovered several beliefs held by many women at Fort Hood that misaligned with this directive. Women clearly believed that reporting sexual harassment and assault will result in more marginalization, embarrassment, and stress. Most importantly, women did not believe reports of sexual harassment and assault would be taken seriously.

The beliefs and narratives surrounding reporting sexual assault and harassment drove soldiers, both men and women, to not report sexual harassment and assault. Through individual and group interviews and the installation-wide survey, the FHIRC confirmed that sexual assault and harassment at Fort Hood were grossly underreported. During interviews with 507 female soldiers, FHIRC discovered 93 counts of sexual assault and 135 instances of sexual harassment. Only 59 of 93 accounts of sexual assault were reported through the SHARP Program. Subsequently, only 72 of the 135 incidents of sexual harassment were reported. The results of the FHIRC installation-wide survey further confirmed widespread underreporting of sexual harassment and assault. Of the 3,100 responses, 1,339 respondents indicated personally witnessing sexual assault within the last 12 months, and 2,625 respondents indicated observing sexual harassment. The results of the FHIRC report starkly contrasted with the cases of sexual assault and harassment known by the SHARP Program at Fort Hood, which recorded 336 counts of sexual assault from 2019 through August 2020. Only 71 reports of sexual harassment were filed from 2019 through August 2020.

The FHIRC uncovered evidence of existing norms, further promoting the silence of victims of sexual assault and harassment. In multiple interview sessions, NCOs revealed the belief that adjudicating sexual harassment and assault was within their realm of responsibility. Further, NCOs exhibited the belief that leadership needed to be shielded from SHARP issues. This dynamic was prevalent within 3d Cavalry Regiment, where approximately 131 male NCOs within the ranks of E5 through E6 expressed a preference and regular practice of informally resolving sexual harassment instead of reporting issues to SHARP personnel for adjudication. While this practice could potentially originate from the common practice of NCOs handling business at the lowest level and could potentially be unconscious, the dynamic contradicts the espoused belief of U.S. Army formal culture and the SHARP Continuum of Harm that charges leaders to report SHARP violations to qualified victim advocates (VAs) and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs).

Further, this practice exposes a power dynamic of male leaders preventing women and potentially some men from reporting sexual harassment and assault. Consciously or unconsciously, by handling SHARP complaints at their level rather than allowing VAs and SARCs to handle complaints, these young male NCOs removed the autonomy of the young men and women within their care, taking away the power of victims to seek formal justice and adjudication to complaints. Essentially, young male NCOs took it upon themselves to decide how, if, and on what terms sexual misconduct was handled, forcing women and subordinated masculinities to adapt to...
the environment imposed on them. This social mechanism is indicative of hegemonic masculinity because by removing victims’ autonomy to report sexual harassment and assault, these young NCOs maintained power over those within their care.

All too often, the FHIRC discovered through group interviews that leaders were ignoring and improperly adjudicating instances of sexual harassment and assault. As previously discussed, NCOs within 3d Cavalry Regiment often chose to address sexual assault and harassment reports instead of allowing the reports to be adjudicated by SHARP professionals per Army policy. Often, the FHIRC found leaders were perpetrating sexual harassment and assault, which is itself a behavior that erodes trust in the SHARP reporting system and the leadership at Fort Hood, especially within 3d Cavalry Regiment and 1st Cavalry Division.

Observation 3
The influence of hegemonic masculinity on Army culture is preventing a large portion of male soldiers from understanding how and why culture needs to change. Male NCOs and leaders within the combat brigades at Fort Hood often downplayed the magnitude of the sexual harassment and assault there, which indicates the influence of hegemonic masculinity on the culture of Fort Hood. The FHIRC conducted interviews with 131 junior male NCOs in 3d Cavalry Regiment. During the interviews, most NCOs expressed that they had no concerns about sexual harassment and assault, nor did they take any responsibility or acknowledge the prevalent issues at Fort Hood or within the Army. Interviews with 48 senior male NCOs (E7–E9) within 3d Cavalry Regiment revealed a similar belief that Fort Hood did not have sexual harassment and assault issues, with many expressing that Fort Hood does a better job taking care of soldiers regarding sexual harassment and assault than most colleges.

It is important to note that Specialist Vanessa Guillén was assigned to 3d Cavalry Regiment. In the fallout following Guillen’s murder and the accusations of sexual harassment that sparked a national conversation about sexual assault and harassment in the military, and considering the FHIRC report statistics of systemic sexual assault and harassment, these leaders still did not consider sexual assault and harassment a problem. The inability to see sexual harassment and assault as a major problem is likely a side effect of hegemonic masculinity’s favorable social conditions, also known as benefits from a patriarchal gender system.

Connell and Messerschmidt identified that dominant forms of masculinity often result in the construct of a patriarchal gender system. All men and even women who enact subordinate masculinities position themselves to receive benefits of this patriarchal system. A common analogy used to define this patriarchal system is the “boys

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114 Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 42.
115 Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 832.
club." Men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity and even women often strive to be a part of the boys club because of the social status and benefits that come with club membership. A potential explanation of why the male soldiers in 3d Cavalry Regiment struggled to see the magnitude of the sexual assault and harassment problem at Fort Hood is that these men unconsciously minimized the problems with sexual assault and harassment at Fort Hood to maintain their achieved social status as a member of the boys club, or to maintain complicity with the system in hopes of gaining social credibility. Speaking out against sexual assault and harassment by publicly refuting a norm of locker room talk or objectification of women in the workplace would likely result in ostracism from the boys club, especially if the norm being refuted is a preferred social mechanism of the dominant group.

An alternate explanation of why young leaders within 3d Cavalry Regiment soldiers struggled to understand the magnitude of the sexual harassment and assault problem at Fort Hood could be because senior leaders were inconsistent in employing primary embedding mechanisms to drive the tenets of the SHARP Program to the lowest levels. When leaders pay attention to too many things or their pattern of attention is inconsistent, subordinates will often use other signals or their own experiences to determine what is important and develop their own set of basic assumptions on how to understand and manage themselves within organizational culture. The commentary from more-senior leaders within the organization suggests that both hegemonic masculinity and leadership failures to consistently apply primary embedding mechanisms contributed to this dynamic.

The most senior male leaders (WO1–O4) interviewed by the FHIRC expressed mixed views acknowledging the problem of sexual harassment and assault at Fort Hood. Some of the leaders expressed that they did not believe Fort Hood was safe for junior enlisted female soldiers, especially in the barracks. However, most of the group did not believe Fort Hood’s issues were different from the rest of the Army. The group expressed concerns about professionalism and articulated that they were doing what they could to educate soldiers on appropriate conduct but struggled to understand what constituted “unwanted” behavior in the workplace. Many leaders stated they take the responsibility of mandatory reporting of sexual assault and harassment seriously but felt that many junior enlisted soldiers do not trust field grade leaders because they witness field grade officers committing misconduct.

Following suit to the groups of NCOs, the majority of the officers minimized the problem of sexual assault and harassment with the false justification that Fort Hood was like the rest of the Army. Data showed Fort Hood having the highest rates of sexual assault and harassment within FORSCOM. However, the officers also publicly acknowledged their role in setting the standards for acceptable conduct. Both of

117 Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 189.
118 Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 42.
these observed behaviors likely coalesce to the preferred social mechanisms of the hegemonic masculine ideals within the officer corps at 3d Cavalry Regiment.

As officers, not publicly acknowledging on some level their roles and responsibilities to sustain a professional work environment and support the SHARP Program would be damaging to their social status as leaders. Further, the officers acknowledged a lack of trust in field grade leadership due to “other” field grade officers committing sexual misconduct around junior enlisted soldiers. The FHIRC did not expand on this comment; however, this comment is indicative that the majority of men believe the underreporting of sexual assault and harassment is primarily because of the individual behavior or a few “bad eggs” rather than understanding that attitudes, beliefs, and unit climate and culture are the primary drivers of sexual assault and harassment.

This demonstrates a cultural misalignment with the SHARP Continuum of Harm discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The officers expressing a lack of understanding regarding what behaviors were unwanted or inappropriate also indicate that a disconnect exists between what the leaders were expected to know about formal culture regarding the SHARP Program and how that knowledge failed to be applied at the informal level of culture.

Across several levels of leadership, male soldiers struggled to acknowledge the magnitude of the sexual assault and harassment problem at Fort Hood and to understand the real challenges faced by female peers. They did not acknowledge their responsibility, nor were they aware of their power to change the situation. This reinforces the previous notion that favorable social conditions created by hegemonic masculinity are unconsciously preventing men from seeing how and why culture needs to change and that men are the primary drivers to make positive changes to make conditions better for everyone. Further, the failure of senior leaders to consistently drive the tenets of the SHARP Program to the lowest levels using primary embedding mechanisms may offer some explanation as to why so many of these leaders developed alternate explanations not necessarily grounded in truth to justify and understand the magnitude of sexual harassment and assault at Fort Hood.

The narrative during mixed-gender group interviews with soldiers from 1st Cavalry Division and 3d Cavalry Regiment further indicates the influence of hegemonic masculinity’s favorable social conditions or boys club mentality on the culture of Fort Hood. On multiple occasions, female soldiers would speak up during group interviews to share experiences or flaws with the SHARP Program, only to be undermined, contradicted, and sometimes ridiculed by male members of the group.\(^{119}\) Male soldiers were comfortable publicly demonstrating hardened attitudes toward female peers in the presence of outside investigators and a Judge Advocate General officer, both of whom were recording transcripts of the session. The vast majority of male

soldiers believed that Army culture did not need to change and that women need to adjust to a male-dominated culture since they chose to join the Army.\textsuperscript{120}

The social mechanisms of male soldiers actively undermining female peers could be enacted by the men to prove their masculinity and social status to the other men in the room and FHIRC while simultaneously reinforcing that women speaking out did not have the social status to do so. This dynamic nests with Connell’s assertion that the struggle for hegemony or dominance is the true harm of hegemonic masculinities as it can lead to the aggressive behaviors the FHIRC witnessed in the group interviews.\textsuperscript{121}

Further, many men publicly expressing the belief that women need to assimilate to the male-dominated culture indicates that the men believe women need to play along with the cultural rituals and norms of the boys club or social conditions of hegemonic masculinity. Consciously or unconsciously, this type of behavior sends the message that if women want to be a part of the team, they must tolerate problematic norms and behaviors within the culture and even sexual harassment and assault. This dynamic enforces compliance among women while allowing hegemonic masculinity’s norms and cultural rituals to escape scrutiny.\textsuperscript{122} In other words, the problematic attitudes and belief systems that create the climate for sexual harassment and assault in Army culture will only be required to change when men decide to change it. This speaks to the power of hegemonic masculinity within Army culture. What prevents Army leaders from seeing the signs and symptoms of sexual harassment and assault, such as hostile work environments to women, minorities, and some men?

\textbf{Observation 4}

Soldiers who do not feel physically and psychologically safe will not report abusive behavior to superiors, causing leaders to underestimate the scope of the problem with sexual assault and harassment at Fort Hood. While answering the primary research question of this thesis, it became clear that soldiers at Fort Hood, especially female soldiers, did not feel physically safe within their work and living spaces. Through multiple platforms, women informed the FHIRC that reports of hostile work environments and sexual harassment and assault were often blatantly ignored, and if actioned, the women who filed reports faced retaliation and ostracism by peers and superiors. Often, soldiers told the FHIRC they felt physically safer in Kuwait and Afghanistan than at home or work during their service at Fort Hood.\textsuperscript{123} Of important note, if Congress had not mandated the review of Fort Hood, none of this information would have ever come to light.

The FHIRC identified that leaders at Fort Hood allowed mission readiness to overshadow integrating the elements of the SHARP Program to the lowest levels.

\textsuperscript{120} Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 41.
\textsuperscript{121} Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 834.
\textsuperscript{122} Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 835.
\textsuperscript{123} Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 106.
Leaders did not view the SHARP Program as a critical tool to promote soldier safety and morale and to foster a climate of dignity and respect. Additionally, the number of leaders who chose to ignore their responsibility to report sexual assault and harassment through the SHARP Program or who committed acts of sexual misconduct themselves further degraded trust and confidence in both the SHARP Program and within the ranks.\textsuperscript{124}

Many soldiers, especially women, at Fort Hood were in survival mode, constantly fearing for physical safety, and they expressed hopelessness in having a safe place to report abusive behavior. Fort Hood’s leaders failed to provide a safe working environment that resulted in extreme underreporting of sexual assault and harassment. This made an already dire situation at Fort Hood even worse because a large number of abuses were hidden from view.

While the SHARP Program certainly has flaws, the Department of the Army Inspector General (DAIG) Special Interest Inspection of the Army SHARP Program conducted in 2014 found that commanders who strive to implement the core elements of the program to the lowest levels and take personal ownership of promoting climates of dignity and respect in their units on a daily basis have consistently demonstrated success in reducing—even eliminating—sexual harassment and assault.\textsuperscript{125} This research is consistent with the basic assumptions and espoused beliefs of the Army formal culture regarding the SHARP Program, as illustrated using the SHARP Continuum of Harm. Leaders that employ primary embedding mechanisms to integrate the Army Values and tenets of the SHARP Program into organizational culture through what they pay attention to; how they react to crisis and allocate resources; and through deliberate role-modeling, teaching, and coaching sustain a professional work environment and reap the benefits of happier and healthier units.\textsuperscript{126} How can Army leaders eliminate behaviors that contribute to sexual harassment and assault and erode trust within the organization?

**Observation 5**

The research conducted by the FHIRC indicates leaders view sexual assault and harassment as an unsolvable problem, creating a numbness to the occurrence of sexual assault and harassment within the force. To improve U.S. Army culture, leaders must realize their power and authority to positively impact and shape culture.

In answering the primary research question of this thesis, it became clear that social norms existed at Fort Hood that created a permissive climate of sexual harassment and assault and rampant disrespect to women. In the previous sections, female soldiers communicated to the FHIRC that they were openly and aggressively approached in a sexual manner and objectified by fellow male soldiers daily. Further, the women

\textsuperscript{124} Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 18.
\textsuperscript{126} Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 183.
articulated reporting this behavior to leadership only for leaders to tell them they have no way to stop it. The FHIRC shared the interview dialogue with the senior installation commander at Fort Hood, who quickly responded, “What can I do about it?”

If the senior installation commander at Fort Hood believes that he does not have the agency to address these problematic behaviors, one could speculate this sentiment likely adversely affected subordinate leaders’ confidence in their authority to correct the behavior. Certainly, leaders should not set an expectation for women that they should expect to be sexually harassed by male peers at work. Dismissing one’s power as a leader to address and correct behaviors that violate the SHARP Continuum of Harm, such as objectification, catcalling, and excessive flirting, is a form of victim-blaming. The statement made by the senior installation commander unconsciously blames the presence of women in the military for systemic sexual harassment and assault rather than the lack of discipline and order that far too often creates the breeding grounds for sexual harassment and assault. Army leaders most certainly can influence the discipline and order necessary to foster a healthy and safe workplace free of sexual harassment and assault. As discussed in the previous section, the DAIG found that commanders who used primary embedding mechanisms to drive the tenets of the SHARP Program and the Army Values into the climate and culture of their units demonstrated success in preventing and reducing sexual harassment and assault.

Further, research by Treviño and Nelson states that socialization, the process of learning how an organization does things, can make or break the sustainment of ethical organizational culture. The broad theory of socialization identifies that generally, people behave in ways consistent with cultural norms because they are expected to, especially in social settings such as work. Further, internalization is when individuals adopt cultural standards as their own. Socialization and internalization are important in understanding ethical and unethical behavior because employees can be socialized into behaving unethically, especially when they do not have the life experience to know the difference between ethical and unethical behavior. When leaders do not correct aggressive, abusive, and violent behavior of men, such as hypersexuality, dehumanistic language, and objectification of women, those behaviors become ingrained as accepted norms and standards of conduct within an organization’s informal culture. In the case of Fort Hood, the normalization of hypersexual behavior and language within the informal culture prevented even the most senior leaders from understanding the risk for sexual harassment and assault to the Army’s culture and led to their failure to address that risk directly.

Further, leaders’ ignorance of patterns of hypersexual behavior, objectification, and use of dehumanistic and aggressive language toward women within the informal

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127 Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 109.
128 Treviño and Nelson, Managing Business Ethics, 158.
129 Treviño and Nelson, Managing Business Ethics, 158.
culture of Fort Hood indicates the influence of hegemonic masculinity. Often, the dismissal or ignorance of aggressive and violent behavior by men within organizations allows systemic issues of sexual harassment and assault to pervade.\textsuperscript{130} For example, young men sexually objectifying women is often dismissed as locker room talk or through the boys will boys mentality. Leaders must recognize the danger in allowing the visible mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity to go unchecked. Both men and women certainly deserve to be held to higher standards of behavior in a professional working environment.

**Observation 6**
The SHARP Program’s primary goal is to address culture change that facilitates discipline and respect; however, addressing attitudes and beliefs and sexual assault and harassment is largely ignored as a prevention strategy. A notable trend the FHIRC report identified is that many leaders still view sexual harassment and assault as individual behavior and climates that are permissive of sexual harassment as isolated incidents. The FHIRC substantiated this assertion noting that the primary focus of the SHARP Program at Fort Hood was response to incidents and victim support rather than emphasizing prevention, which undermined the efficiency of the program at large.\textsuperscript{131} This finding explains why so many leaders failed to understand the SHARP Continuum of Harm and the role of attitudes and beliefs underpinning culture and climates that can lead to sexual misconduct. Prevention is undoubtedly separate from response to sexual harassment and assault and requires dedicated time and attention. The FHIRC noted that effective prevention requires data-informed modification of cultural norms to improve group dynamics and social mechanisms by first acknowledging attitudes and beliefs that promote instances of sexual harassment and assault.\textsuperscript{132}

In previous sections, it was noted that the FHIRC documented multiple incidents within mixed-gender group interviews where men openly used language to ridicule, contradict, and undermine the concerns female peers had regarding the SHARP Program at Fort Hood. Suppose these men held the basic assumption that women do not matter in the same way that men do, which drove them to disrespect female colleagues publicly. The basic assumption in this instance is problematic, but can Army leaders force someone who holds this belief to change it? Perhaps, but it would take a significant amount of time and buy-in from the individual who holds this basic assumption to change it. A more powerful way Army leaders can foster a climate of prevention is to strictly enforce zero tolerance of disrespectful and dehumanstic language of any kind within the workplace. This strategy sends a clear message that espousing disrespectful attitudes and beliefs is unacceptable. While Army leaders cannot control and change attitudes and beliefs that soldiers carry with them from

\textsuperscript{130} Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity,” 834.
\textsuperscript{131} Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 52.
\textsuperscript{132} Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 52.
In answering the primary and secondary research questions of this thesis, clearly, a pattern of disrespect and aggressive and violent behaviors enacted by male soldiers toward women exists at Fort Hood. This pattern of disrespect and aggression toward women was quantified within surveys that predated the FHIRC investigation and was confirmed within the large samples of survey and interview data collected by the FHIRC. This artifact alone is indicative of the influence of hegemonic masculinity within the culture and climate of Fort Hood and requires further examination across broader Army culture.

The influence of hegemonic masculinity was indicative through beliefs and norms discovered by the FHIRC through group and individual interviews. Many women and men across Fort Hood believe that reporting sexual harassment and assault would result in marginalization and stress and that reports would not be taken seriously. This belief drove significant underreporting of sexual assault. The underreporting and silence surrounding sexual assault and harassment was perpetuated by leaders who either ignored or mishandled SHARP complaints or were offenders of sexual harassment or assault themselves, and it further degraded trust in the SHARP Program. Further, male NCOs within 3d Cavalry Regiment report a common practice of adjudicating SHARP reports rather than allowing reports to be handled by qualified victim advocates. This practice, paired with a low-trust climate, actively prevented the reporting of sexual harassment and assault. Further, these practices were likely unconsciously enforcing hegemonic masculinity by men deciding how and on what terms sexual assault and harassment would be handled, forcing women to subordinate to the patriarchal environments imposed on them.

Most notably, across all interviews and all levels of leadership, male soldiers struggled to understand the magnitude of the sexual harassment and assault problem at Fort Hood even when presented with mounting evidence of its pervasiveness. This dynamic indicates the influence of the favorable social conditions of hegemonic masculinity. A potential explanation is that minimizing or downplaying the magnitude of sexual harassment and assault allows men to maintain complicity with the preferred social mechanisms and norms of the patriarchal gender system or boys club. Speaking out against the problematic norms within the Fort Hood culture contributing to sexual assault and misconduct such as objectification of women or locker room talk could result in ostracization from the boys club. The logic follows Connell’s construct.
of hegemonic masculinity, as all position themselves consciously and unconsciously to continue to attain the benefits of hegemonic masculinity. Even the fear of being ostracized may unconsciously sway some men and women from calling out the boys club behaviors and norms. Lastly, none of the male soldiers interviewed took responsibility for the systemic problems of sexual harassment and assault at Fort Hood. This justification among men indicates the influence of hegemonic masculinity because favorable social conditions and benefits created by hegemonic masculinity unconsciously prevent men from seeing how and why culture needs to change. Further, the justification prevents men from understanding their power to facilitate positive cultural changes to make conditions better for everyone.

Hegemonic masculinity and other problematic attitudes and beliefs possibly underpinned observed patterns of sexual harassment and assault at Fort Hood. The FHIRC missed an opportunity when executing this review by not conducting personal interviews with male soldiers to obtain a deeper understanding of attitudes, belief systems, and masculinities within Fort Hood’s culture. Such an analysis could have created an understanding of foundational ideologies and behaviors that cause disrespect between genders. Such a deep level of understanding of the relationship between attitudes and beliefs, culture, and climate will be necessary to design future approaches to true violence prevention and character development in the Army.

133 Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity," 832.