PART 6

Hegemonic Masculinity
The Effect of Hegemonic Masculinities on the Endemic of Sexual Misconduct in the U.S. Army
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Sexual assault and harassment have been a cancer within the U.S. military for decades. DOD and Congress have struggled to adjudicate the problem for years with very little success. Congressional officials have charged the U.S. armed forces of perpetuating a “rape culture,” yet very little literature exists that actually examines what rape culture looks like within the U.S. military. Further, the preponderance of offenders of sexual harassment and assault within the military are men. However, American society and military and government leaders continue to label sexual harassment and assault predominately a women’s issue rather than seeking to understand the role of men and masculinity in perpetuating rape culture.1

This study seeks to understand the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and sexual harassment and assault within the U.S. Army’s organizational culture. Additionally, this thesis examines formal and informal organizational culture to understand what aspects of Army culture may be preventing leaders from seeing the signs and symptoms of sexual harassment and assault. With a thorough understanding of underlying aspects of Army culture that create opportunities for sexual harassment and assault to occur, Army leaders can be armed with the knowledge to effect positive cultural change that is long overdue.

For the last 30 years, sexual harassment and assault scandals within the U.S. Army have persisted despite the establishment of formalized programs to prevent its occurrence. In 1988, the DOD conducted the first Survey on Sex Roles in the Active-Duty Military prompted by the U.S. Merit System Protections Board identification of large-scale sexual harassment occurring within the public sector and government.2 The survey estimated that upwards of 22 percent of active-duty military personnel (64 percent of women and 17 percent of men) reported one or more incidents of unwanted, uninvited sexual attention in the workplace.3 These appalling figures drew outrage among the

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1 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.


public and lawmakers, prompting DOD to create the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program with the charge of prevention of workplace sexual harassment.

In 1996, two major sexual harassment and assault scandals within the U.S. Army unraveled, surrounding Sergeant Major of the Army Gene C. McKinney, and advanced individual training (AIT) instructors at Aberdeen Proving Grounds (APG). The scandals followed formal sexual harassment complaints filed by a female trainee against an APG instructor. Following the initial report, approximately 34 women came forward to file sexual harassment and assault reports against APG instructors. The incidents prompted the U.S. Army to set up a sexual assault hotline, which would soon receive more than 6,000 calls alleging widespread abuse across the Army.

The Army immediately launched internal investigations into these incidents, focusing on the events occurring at APG. During the investigation, what became known as the “The Game” scandal was uncovered. “The Game” was a competition created by AIT leaders to see who among the leadership could have sex with the most trainees. Amid the scandal, the newly appointed Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) McKinney visited installations around the Army urging soldiers that the equal opportunity system would work but that in order for it to work, soldiers should come forward and report claims of abuse. McKinney soon became exposed as a perpetrator of sexual harassment and assault as six women filed reports claiming he made unwanted sexual advances toward them on multiple occasions.

The Army ultimately punished AIT leaders at APG and McKinney, however in comparison to the gravity of offenses committed by these perpetrators, the consequences were mild. Of the three individuals involved in “The Game,” one received a 25-year military prison sentence and the others received six to four months in military prison. McKinney, the most senior non-commissioned officer in the U.S. Army, faced no criminal charges for his misconduct. The court system demoted Sergeant Major of the Army McKinney to the rank of master sergeant (E8), issued him a letter of reprimand for obstructing justice, and permitted him to retire. The reduction did not stand, as it violated U.S. Code, so McKinney retired as a sergeant major (E9), allowing the collection of a pension at his current rank.

These incidents were clear indicators that the Army had a severe and widespread problem with sexual harassment and assault, especially considering that many of the perpetrators were male leaders with positions of trust and confidence. These incidents occurred almost eight years after establishing the EEO Program, the

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5 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 51.
6 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 52.
7 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 54.
8 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 54.
9 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 53.
10 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 59.
11 Webster, “Resisting Change,” 57.
sole focus of which was conducting organizational training to prevent sexual harassment and assault in the workplace. Lastly, the judicial system undermined the likelihood of victim reporting, as offenders of sexual harassment and assault continued to receive mild to no punishments for grave abuses of power and ranks that violate all Army values.

Instead of focusing on the cultural issues leading to the abhorrent behavior occurring within the Army, major conflicts captured the attention of Army and congressional leadership from the late 1990s to present date. U.S. involvement with conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the attacks of 11 September 2001, and the beginning of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts dominated the narrative and the Army’s focus. However, like any cancerous behavior within an organization, it did not take very long for the systemic occurrence of sexual harassment and assault to resurface.

In 2004, several years after the start of conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, servicemembers began reporting sexual abuses occurring in combat. The reporting of sexual harassment and assault significantly increased, prompting media reports and deep criticisms that military leadership was not taking the misconduct seriously. In response, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld formally established the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program with the primary mission of tracking reports of sexual assaults, supporting victims with medical attention, counseling, and reporting options, and conducting sexual assault prevention training.

Before the SAPR Program establishment, victims of sexual assault had no medical care resources or mental health support. Subsequently, congressional mandates to report sexual assault began in calendar year 2004 and became an annual requirement in the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It appeared the DOD was finally trending in the right direction to address sexual harassment and assault by all accounts.

Shortly after the U.S. Army established the SAPR Program, Chief of Staff of the Army General Raymond Odierno directed the SAPR Program to reorganize, absorbing the Military Prevention of Sexual Harassment training responsibility formally owned by the EEO Program. General Odierno recognized that sexual harassment and sexual assaults were not happening independently of one another. The reorganization resulted in the creation of the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response Prevention (SHARP) Program, known today as the proponent of sexual harassment and assault prevention and response in the U.S. Army. The program’s goal remained the same but simply added the responsibility of providing victims of sexual harassment the same support and reporting options available to victims of assault.

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13 Andrew, Leading Change, 4.
14 Andrew, Leading Change, 3.
15 Andrew, Leading Change, 5.
16 Andrew, Leading Change, 6.
As conflict raged on in the Middle East, reports of sexual harassment and assault continued to rise as the Army integrated the SHARP Program. Reports from 2004 through 2011 more than doubled, rising from 725 to 1,695.\textsuperscript{17} Army leaders quickly justified the reporting increase as the program working and more and more victims being confident in reporting sexual harassment and assault. This rationalization soon was proved inaccurate as major flaws within the SHARP Program became magnified.

In 2014, Sergeant First Class Gregory McQueen, a victim advocate for the SHARP Program in Fort Hood, Texas, was exposed for organizing a prostitution ring consisting of female junior enlisted soldiers under his command. McQueen essentially groomed the subordinate soldiers to participate in the ring by promising them they could make serious money at the parties he was organizing. McQueen organized the parties for senior officers to have sex with the women. McQueen rented out hotel rooms where the prostituted soldiers would meet higher-ranking officials for paid sex. Additionally, McQueen hosted parties where he put the soldiers on display and pimped them out to attendees, who were senior officers. McQueen was court-martialed on multiple charges, which amounted to 40 years in prison. Instead, McQueen pleaded guilty, resulting in his actual punishment being much less severe. He was reduced to private (E1), sentenced to two years in prison, and given a dishonorable discharge from the Army.\textsuperscript{18} Additionally, few details on the consequences of the senior officers known to have frequented these parties are publicly available.

The typical public, DOD, and congressional reactions followed McQueen’s court-martial. The event triggered major changes to the screening of victim advocates within the SHARP Program, requiring more stringent training standards, rank requirements, and background checks for program appointees. The 2014 Fort Hood Prostitution Ring Scandal drew further scrutiny to the SHARP Program’s effectiveness and the U.S. Army’s ability to effectively deliver justice to victims. Following this incident and rising statistics across DOD, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a member of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, began introducing legislation to remove the prosecution of sexual harassment and assault from military commanders’ discretion.\textsuperscript{19}

Following the 2014 Fort Hood Prostitution Ring Scandal, congressional inquiry into sexual assault within the U.S. Army became more frequent. From 2008 through 2019, the U.S. Army reports of sexual assault saw an upward trend with slight variances between years (table 6.1).

\textsuperscript{17} Andrew, Leading Change, 3.
Regarding sexual harassment, the DOD has collected top-line estimates of the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace since 1988 and quantifies the number of formal reports received annually across the services. Formal reports of sexual harassment collected by the Army and DOD gender relations survey data on sexual harassment have significant disparities. The 2018 and 2019 DOD Gender and Workplace Relations Survey for Active Duty Forces estimated sexual harassment rates of 6.3 percent for men and 24.2 percent for women, while only 1,021 formal sexual harassment complaints were filed across the entire DOD. Further, DOD estimates that only 1
in 3 servicemembers report sexual harassment and assault to a DOD authority. This disparity is cause for speculation that the occurrence of sexual harassment and assault is far greater than DOD estimates and perhaps may not have changed much from the first DOD survey in 1988, which estimated that upwards of 60 percent of women and 20 percent of men experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The events of 2020 have been a clear example that the Army’s current approach to addressing sexual harassment and assault is not working and that its occurrence is indeed much more widespread than survey data estimates. In April 2020, Specialist Vanessa Guillén disappeared from Fort Hood without a trace. Guillén was a hardworking, dedicated soldier whose disappearance was out of character. After her family could not reach her, they contacted her leadership at Fort Hood, alleged to have responded to the family’s concerns apathetically. Vanessa’s family eventually secured a lawyer, generated media attention, and approached congressional leaders in Texas to help find her. During the investigation, Guillén’s family claimed that fellow soldiers were sexually harassing her, but she was afraid to report the abuse out of fear of not being believed. Two months after her disappearance, Guillén’s body was found in a shallow grave by the Leon River in Texas. Investigators soon discovered that a fellow soldier, Specialist Aaron Robinson, brutally murdered Guillén on post and transported her body to the Leon River, where he and his girlfriend dismembered and disposed of her body. Guillén’s family claimed that Robinson was one of the men sexually harassing her and believed that Guillén was going to report him. Unfortunately, Robinson’s motive will remain unknown as he escaped police custody and was killed during a subsequent altercation.

In August of 2020, Sergeant Elder Fernandes died by suicide at Fort Hood after reporting a sexual assault committed by a superior. Fernandes reported a superior for inappropriately touching him and was subsequently transferred to another unit. Peers reported Fernandes to be suicidal after being hazed and bullied for reporting the assault. He was found dead hanging from a tree in Temple, Texas, shortly after seeking behavioral health for the mental distress caused by being assaulted.

The cancer of sexual harassment and assault in the Army metastasized in 2020, igniting a military social justice movement. The deaths and alleged sexual abuses of both Fernandes and Guillén drew outrage within the military and veteran community, igniting a #MeToo social media movement. Hundreds of thousands of victims flocked to social media to share stories of sexual abuses endured in the military, reflecting a culture tolerant of sexual harassment and assault. The national outrage sparked by

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24 Steinbauer, “#MeToo Moment Emerges for Military Women After Soldier’s Killing.”
the deaths of Guillén, Fernandes, and other soldiers at Fort Hood prompted Congress to direct the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee to examine the culture and climate that lead to these tragic incidents.

In the words of Ryan McCarthy, former secretary of the Army, “The murder of Specialist Vanessa Guillen shocked our conscience and brought attention to deeper problems within the culture of the US Army.” In the wake of 30 years of sexual misconduct scandals, 2020 has clearly demonstrated that the U.S. Army can no longer forgo an in-depth examination of organizational culture.

**Problem Statement**

The Army has more resources at its disposal than ever to combat sexual harassment and assault, yet statistics continue to increase, and abuses remain largely unreported. Sexual harassment and assault misalign with the Army’s formal culture. Sexual harassment and assault violate every Army value and are a punishable offense within the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The time and resources devoted to the SHARP Program across the Army are visible evidence of the Army’s dedication to prevent sexual harassment and assault. However, over the past 30 years, sexual harassment and assault scandals in the Army continue to make national news headlines while leaders blame the incidents on individual behavior.

With a narrowed focus on individual behavior, Army leaders fail to examine the aspects of Army culture that enable the behavior in the first place. For instance, in 2019, nearly 4,000 men committed a confirmed act of sexual assault within DOD, which does not even account for unreported incidents. Sexual harassment and assault in the U.S. Army is a men’s issue more than a women’s issue. However, the role of men and masculine attitudes and belief systems within the Army often escape in-depth scrutiny.

To overcome an endemic of sexual harassment and assault, the U.S. Army must understand the aspects of its culture that have enabled behaviors contributing to an engrained pattern of sexual harassment and assault within the organization. Attitudes and belief systems drive organizational behavior. Thus, the relationship between masculine attitudes and belief systems and sexual harassment and assault within the Army must be explored. Programs, policies, procedures, and resources allocated to the SHARP Program will continue to be a band-aid solution to the Army’s sexual harassment and assault endemic until organizational culture change occurs.

**Purpose and Scope of Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand how hegemonic masculinities embedded in Army culture influence the occurrence of sexual harassment and assault. This study

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seeks to understand the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and patterns of sexual harassment and assault in U.S. Army organizational culture through a case study analysis of the Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee. Additionally, this study seeks to understand what aspects of Army culture and climate prevent Army leaders from seeing signs and symptoms of sexual harassment and assault, such as hostile work environments to women. Finally, it recommends strategies to help Army leaders eliminate behaviors that contribute to sexual harassment and assault and erode trust within the organization. It does not provide a quantitative assessment of sexual harassment and assault data in the U.S. Army, nor does this study analyze current sexual harassment and assault prevention programs in the U.S. Army.

The most significant limitations of this study are time and resources. It seeks to understand the influence of hegemonic masculinities on patterns of sexual harassment and assault observed within the climate and culture of Fort Hood. Different installations within the Army may have variances in how culture and climate contribute to sexual harassment and assault. Due to time and resource factors, this study focuses solely on the culture and climate of Fort Hood to understand the role of hegemonic masculinities in perpetuating culture and climate that tolerate sexual harassment and assault. Further research is required to validate if this culture and climate are systemic across the Army. This study does not include new interview or survey data. The research timeline only allowed for a case study analysis of the independent review of Fort Hood’s command climate and culture.

Sexual harassment and assault within the U.S. Army is an abhorrent violation of all that the Army values, yet its existence continues systemically within the organization. The military #MeToo movement has taken root within the public, military and veteran communities, Congress, and DOD, demanding accountability and justice for victims and an end to sexual abuses endured as a price for military service. Sexual harassment and assault endemic within the Army is a great risk to losing public trust and confidence. This study intends to provide Army leaders with an analysis of organizational culture, climate, social norms, and behaviors that contribute to sexual harassment and assault. These insights can potentially inform program and policy design and provide a platform to facilitate the organizational culture change necessary to eliminate sexual harassment and assault and restore trust within the profession.

Definitions of Terms
Artifacts: Visible products of a group, such as architecture, language, technology, style, clothing, manners of address, myths, stories, published lists of values, and observable rituals and ceremonies.

Climate: The feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers, or

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27 Steinbauer, “#MeToo Moment Emerges for Military Women After Soldier’s Killing.”
with other outsiders. Climate is sometimes included as an artifact of culture and is sometimes kept as a separate phenomenon to be analyzed.  

**Culture**: A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.  

**Espoused beliefs or values**: Ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies, and rationalizations.  

**Hegemonic masculinities**: Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that originated in the 1980s to highlight the existence of social norms and cultural rituals that promote a favorable social condition of men over women. Further, the concept presents the idea that all men position themselves culturally to benefit from these favorable social conditions by subjugating themselves to behavior codes that allow social dominance to continue, even if it is to others’ detriment. 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 and be competitive and successful.  

**Sexual assault**: Intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. The term includes a broad category of sexual offenses consisting of the following specific UCMJ offenses: rape, sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, forcible sodomy (forced oral or anal sex), or attempts to commit these offenses.  

**Sexual harassment**: Conduct that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature that includes:  

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person’s job, pay, or career;  
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person; or  
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creates

29 Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.  
30 Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.  
31 Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.  
an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; and
• is so severe or pervasive that a reasonable person would perceive, and the victim does perceive, the environment as hostile or offensive.
• any use or condonation, by any person in a supervisory or command position, of any form of sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, pay, or job of a member of the armed forces or a civilian employee of the DOD.
• any deliberate or repeated unwelcome verbal comment or gesture of a sexual nature by any member of the armed forces or civilian employee of the DOD.\textsuperscript{34}

Underlying assumptions: Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, and values.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Army Command Policy, AR 600-20, 7-7.
\textsuperscript{35} Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 17.