

Public Health Approach to Sexual Violence in Military Communities

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Dedication

In dedication to my loving and supportive husband, Ryan, and daughter, Ella. Without your continuous support through everything, this dissertation would not be possible. I love you both with all of my heart.

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Abstract

Sexual violence in U.S. military communities is a serious public health problem. The Department of Defense with significant recommendations and enforcement by Congress has taken step to address the problem. However, the effort has not captured the true magnitude of the problem. Current reports of sexual violence in military communities focus on sexual assault of military members and fail to account for military family members, DoD employees, and their family members who form military communities. In order to combat sexual violence in military communities, a comprehensive approach to sexual violence must be used that includes all community members and all types of sexual violence. The overall purpose of this study was to examine how military programs are executed, if current policy related to sexual violence are meeting stated goals and recommendations, and to understand how perceptions of sexual violence in military communities could be affecting Americans and military recruitment efforts. To better understand sexual violence in military communities, three distinct studies were undertaken. These studies are related in that they examine the associations between current military sexual violence program approaches, the most associated policy, and their potential effects beyond military communities.

The first two studies, a scoping review and policy analysis, show that current military sexual violence programs are disjointed and confusing for those who experience sexual violence in military communities, and that the most current sexual harassment policy fails to incorporate recommendations from the Government Accountability Office and meet their intended goals. The third study reports a survey conducted to explore to what extent perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affect their decision to not join the U.S. military and how gender influences their decision. Overall, this study found more than a quarter of participants,

regardless of their gender, stated that their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affects their decision to not join the U.S. military.

This dissertation presents an innovative approach to understanding sexual violence in military communities. By looking at sexual violence from three different perspectives, it furthers our understanding of current approaches, policies, and the effect of sexual violence in military communities.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the United States sexual violence affects millions of people every year. Sexual violence is a non-legal term defined by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that embodies sexual assault and sexual harassment of individuals.¹ However, the majority of sexual violence cases are not reported.² The reasons for not reporting sexual violence can stem from a variety of concerns such as embarrassment, fear, self-blame, and feeling ashamed. Sexual violence in the United States happens often. Current statistics from the CDC state that “1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experience sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes”.³ However, some populations can be at a greater risk for sexual assault than others based on risk factors.

There are many risk factors that can contribute to the perpetration of sexual violence, but they are not always the direct cause.⁴ Risk factors can come from individual, relational, community, and societal levels, but it is the combination of risk factors that can increase the chance a person will perpetrate an act of sexual violence.⁴ One population with a concerning amount of risk factors is the U.S. military community.

The U.S. military community has deeply rooted traditions and a culture that raises concern for multiple risk factors. At the individual level, military members must have an acceptance of violence and general aggressiveness at some level in order to serve and protect. Many military traditions are grounded in the use of alcohol. Younger military members, both male and female, are more likely to engage in heavy drinking compared to civilian counterparts.⁵ Despite efforts by the Department of Defense (DoD), hyper-masculinity is still present in the U.S. military with significant emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality.⁶ At the relationship level, male military members had a higher prevalence of adverse childhood experiences when compared to those with no military service.⁷ Military members, because of

military culture, have an increased association with hyper-masculine peers. At the community level, risk factors include tolerance of sexual violence within parts of the military community, and lack of support from some police and judicial systems. At the societal level, the military culture has norms that are silently supportive of sexual violence such as the “hazing” of military members. The military has a history of norms and policies that maintained an inferiority of women and a lack of gender equality. With many risk factors grounded in tradition and culture, it is a critical factor in describing the severity of sexual violence in the military.

Statement of the Problem

Sexual violence in U.S. military communities is a serious public health problem. As previously defined, sexual violence embodies both sexual assault and sexual harassment. The use of the term sexual violence has also been accepted by the (DoD). In the highly publicized Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, there were 6,769 reports of sexual assault and 696 reports of sexual harassment.⁸ However, these numbers do not reflect the true magnitude of the problem. The 2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members reports that sexual assault occurred at a rate of 1.2% and occurred at a rate of 27.1% for active duty population.⁹ Based on these rates, the incidents of sexual violence in 2016 would approximate 15,463 cases of sexual assault and 349,210 cases of sexual harassments. Additionally, these numbers do not reflect the true magnitude of the problem as they exclude most military family members, DoD employees, and their family members- all who form military communities. To combat sexual violence in military communities effectively, all military community members must be included in the prevention and response efforts mandated by DoD.

The U.S. military has a culture of its own that includes military members and their families as well as DoD civilians and their families. This culture is characterized by hyper recognition and obligation of fellowship unlike other professions. Often, these members form tight-knit groups where people work and socialize creating relationships that foster, out of necessity, interdependence. These relationships are complex and cross multiple areas of life as members of military communities often work, live, shop, attend school or church, and socialize together.

A family new to a military installation is required to designate emergency contacts in the area for their children at school, but often they do not know anyone. They are forced to trust and designate another military or DoD family out of necessity. A military child may attend a school where their teacher is the spouse of their parent's superior. A civilian spouse may work within the same chain of command as their active duty spouse. Family Readiness Groups, Key Spouse Program, Work/Life programs, and various clubs are all formal and informal groups designed to assist military families but come with their own set of unspoken rules that align much like the military hierarchy. Deployments force military families to trust and depend on the military members left behind to help in times of need. Military communities foster bonds that are similar to family bonds.

These close relationships are why the DoD must include the entire military community in their fight against sexual violence. Sexual violence in military communities go beyond the service members who experience sexual violence. It includes military family members, and DoD employees and their family members as they also experience sexual violence within military communities. Perpetrators of sexual violence in military communities can be intimate partners, military members (both familial and non-familial), military spouses, military family members,

DoD employees, or their family members. Military children may experience sexual violence perpetrated by military members and other military children.¹⁰ These crimes are committed by the very people they are being encouraged to trust and rely on. Little is known about the physical, mental, social, and economic consequences of sexual violence on the entire military community, but consequences of sexual violence in general are well described in literature.

The damage caused by sexual violence in the military varies but can include undesirable social conditions, severe emotional or physical effects, impaired productivity, and lower organizational commitment.¹¹ The psychological effects of sexual violence are well documented and include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and sexual dysfunctions.¹² They may also include problems with interpersonal relationships, increased suicidal ideations, and poorer functioning leading to a decrease in work performance.¹² Physical effects of sexual violence can manifest in the form of muscle pains, headaches, or even chronic health problems such as high blood pressure and blood sugar. Considering the effects of sexual violence, it is not surprising that it contributes to an increase in absenteeism, low productivity, low morale and unit cohesion, retention problems, and increased healthcare costs. Of particular significance for the military community is how these effects of sexual violence go beyond the military member, but little research exists describing this.

The effects of sexual violence are not limited to the victims but extend to families, friends, co-workers, military units, and even the effectiveness of the U.S. military both domestically and internationally. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2013 showed that 81% of Americans viewed sexual assault in the military as an extremely or very important problem.¹³ With 38% saying allegations of sexual misconduct was sufficient reason to discourage a female friend or family member from joining the military.¹³ Meeting recruitment

levels and quality of recruits has been a struggle in the past years and particularly in 2018 as the National Defense Authorization Act required an increase of 16,600 military active duty personnel above the 2017 personnel levels.¹⁴ Even with 38% of Americans who would discourage a female friend or family member from joining, the perceptions of Americans regarding sexual violence could be significant enough to threaten an all-volunteer force.

Currently, the approach to sexual violence prevention and response by the military is difficult to navigate. There does not appear to be one comprehensive plan that considers all forms of sexual violence and all victims of sexual violence within the military communities. Current DoD programs addressing sexual violence in military communities include the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR), Equal Employment Opportunity, Military Equal Opportunity, and Family Advocacy Program. The four military sexual violence programs are independent of each other and only provide service for specific populations. This makes it difficult for victims of sexual violence to access the programs designed for them and gaps in services are a significant concern. The isolation of these programs also can lead to missed connections that exist on a continuum such as how sexual harassment can lead to sexual assault. These missed connections decrease understanding of the interconnections of different types of sexual violence. It is imperative that efforts be coordinated to improve prevention and response efforts for military communities.

Purpose and Research Questions

The overall purpose of the study was to examine how military sexual violence programs are executed, if policies are meeting stated goals and recommendations, and how perceptions of sexual violence in military communities could be affecting Americans and the all-volunteer force. To understand sexual violence in military communities, the investigator took a three-prong

approach. The report of the results and findings can be found in three individual manuscripts. These studies are related in that they examine the association between current military sexual violence program approaches, the most current associated policy, and their potential effects.

Manuscript 1

Research question 1: How does the Department of Defense respond to sexual violence in military communities? A scoping review was used to address this research question. By using Arksey and O'Malley's framework, this scoping review helped to examine the extent, range, and nature of sexual violence programs in the military.¹⁵ This scoping review followed five stages of Arksey and O'Malley's framework; identification of research question, identification of relevant studies, study selection, charting data, and collating, summarizing, and reporting results.¹⁵ The scoping review provided information on the most current military sexual violence programs, the associated response approaches, and the population they serve. This scoping review helped detail findings of each program and identify gaps in research.

Manuscript 2

Research question 1: How does the new Harassment Prevention and Response policy correlate with stated goals? Research question 2: How does the new Harassment Prevention and Response policy incorporate recommendations by the Government Accountability Office? A policy analysis was used to address the research question by evaluating the most current harassment prevention and response policy, Department of Defense Instruction 1020.3. This policy relates to the Military Equal Opportunity program that covers sexual harassment of military members. The policy was developed in order to establish a prevention and response program specific to sexual harassment. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) provided recommendations to the DoD before the release of the policy in 2018. The analysis examined the

inputs and outputs, the goals of the program, previous recommendations by the GAO, and provided a guide for future planning regarding policy and programming.

Manuscript 3

Research Question 1: To what extent do perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affect their decision to not join the U.S. military? Research Question 2: How does gender influence a decision by an individual to not join the U.S. military? We conducted a cross-sectional study and responses were analyzed using a multivariable logistic regression to answer these research questions. First, this study helped determine to what extent perceptions of sexual violence in military communities influenced the decision to not join the U.S. military. Second, this study allowed us to explore how gender influenced their decision to not join the U.S. military. This study population included individuals 18-30 years of age, no prior military service, and located in the United States within 300 miles of a U.S. military installation. We developed an online survey that looked at multiple factors related to reasons a person would not join the military and demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status. Specific emphasis was placed on determining if sexual assault perceptions are associated with not joining the military and then stratified by gender. We used multivariable logistic regression with backward elimination of non-significant variables for all analyses. All analysis were done in SAS version 9.4.¹⁶ This study was funded and conducted for Protect Our Defenders (POD) as part of my Advanced Field Placement experience. It is presented in a report format and subject to additional editing by the funder. *Access to final report must be obtained through Protect Our Defenders at www.protectourdefenders.com.*

Significance of the Study

These studies have been developed in order to contribute to the body of evidence that informs programming and policies related to sexual violence in military communities and the all-volunteer force. Sexual violence in the military is not a new or emerging public health problem but has only received attention after high profile news stories, documentaries like the Invisible War, and support from influential people such as New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. Despite the attention on sexual violence it is essential to understand the focus has been primarily on sexual assault of military members. Sexual violence in the military cannot be examined through a narrow lens that compartmentalizes sexual violence response and reports.

Currently, no literature has been found that examines sexual violence in military communities in its entirety. This fact may be due to a large number of programs, unavailable information, a large number of policies, or inconsistency of data. Despite the challenges related to understanding the entire picture of sexual violence in military communities, efforts must be made to describe the problem more comprehensively. Defining the problem is step 1 of the CDC's public health approach to violence prevention.¹⁷ To comprehensively define the problem, military sexual violence programmers need to understand the who, what, when, where, and how of each military sexual violence program to realize the full magnitude of the problem. Understanding all types of sexual violence in military communities helps the field of public health understand the problem, identify interconnected risks and protective factors, and develop coordinated and integrated programs and policies.

Policies addressing sexual violence in military communities vary in their procedures, guidance, and scope and provide an unbalanced approach to the issue including prevention. To

date, there has not been a policy analysis of the most current Harassment and Prevention and Response Policy, and no literature has been identified that has examined military sexual violence policies with a public health emphasis. Policies and regulations issued by the DoD directly affect sexual violence programs. A public health approach to policy analysis is necessary to understand if policies meet intended goals. Goals in sexual violence policies help establish programming and standardization of data. It also can address recommendations from governing federal agencies that include the social-ecological model, primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention, and an overall public health approach.²

Public health focuses on the health, safety, and well-being of an entire population making a public health approach to understanding sexual violence in military communities imperative for the future of the military and our nation. The media has reported sexual violence in the military for years, exposing all Americans to this problem. The continued exposure is likely to have some degree of impact through all levels of society as described by the social-ecological model to include the very individuals who are being asked to join an all-volunteer force.

Only two studies have been found that look at perceptions of sexual violence in the military. One study looks at the general public, and one only looks at those who have already joined. As noted previously, the Pew Research Center (2013) asked Americans if the military sexual assault problem would discourage them from having their daughter or female friend join the military resulting in 38% stating they would deter them.¹³ Another study by RAND Corporation in 2017, found about half of the female new recruits who participated in focus groups expressed that one person of influence in their life was concerned about sexual violence in the military.¹⁸ This study also stated that half of the recruiter focus group participants had

experienced one or more person of influence in the life of a recruit who were concerned with sexual violence in the military.¹⁸

A better understanding of the perceptions of Americans and military sexual violence is necessary for national security. Military branches are facing significant challenges in recruiting high-quality individuals.¹⁹ The research that exists suggests that sexual violence in the military is a reason for not joining, but a more in-depth look at factors that influence the decision is warranted. The health and welfare of the nation require additional studies to understand the full scope of sexual violence in military communities, how the DoD is approaching the problem, if policies are being designed effectively, and how perceptions of sexual violence in military communities are affecting Americans choice to not join the all-volunteer force.

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Chapter Two: Understanding Sexual Violence Programs in Military Communities

Abstract

Sexual violence in U.S. military communities is a serious public health problem that continues to affect many individuals in military communities. The complexities of sexual violence in military communities have had little attention from research. Research has primarily focused on military members or veterans, excluding military family members, Department of Defense employees and their family members, and others who form military communities. The lack of inclusion and understanding of sexual violence in military communities impedes efforts to understand sexual violence in its entirety and develop effective programs that address the problem. This scoping review aimed to understand how the Department of Defense responds to sexual violence in military communities. Results show that four main programs provide response and prevention for sexual violence in military communities. However, these programs fail to comprehensively address sexual violence in military communities.

Introduction

Sexual violence in U.S. military communities is a serious public health problem that affects many individuals in military communities. However, most sexual violence research in military communities has focused on sexual harassment and sexual assault of military members or veterans. This approach does not include sexual violence related to military family members, Department of Defense (DoD) employees and their family members, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Cadets, and Military Academy Cadets, all of whom form military communities. The lack of inclusion limits our understanding of sexual violence in military communities and our ability to develop effective programs to address the problem.

The term sexual violence is a non-legal term defined as “a sexual act committed against someone without that person’s freely given consent”.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) describes types of sexual violence as: attempted or completed forced penetration; attempted or completed drug or alcohol facilitated penetration; attempted or completed forced act where a person is forced to penetrate; attempted or completed drug or alcohol facilitated forced act where a person is forced to penetrate; forced penetration by non-physical acts such as verbal, intimidation, or misuse of authority; unwanted sexual contact, and non-physical unwanted sexual experiences.² The definition of sexual violence does not exclude any particular type of sexual violence or a group of people. It is an umbrella term that includes various forms of sexual violence such as intimate partner violence, child sexual abuse, rape, elder sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and others. In fact, many forms of violence such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child sexual abuse, and elder sexual abuse have similar common root causes and are interconnected.³

Communities have a significant impact on risk and protective factors related to sexual violence.³ This fact is particularly true for military communities as they offer a tight-knit community, unlike many others. Military communities can be defined as a group of individuals who have a feeling of fellowship and shared experiences with a direct connection to the military. This type of community shares intense experiences with each other, such as deployments, that most other communities will not experience. Furthermore, being a part of a military community is not always a choice, but an expectation of the military member, family member, and DoD employee or family member. Individuals who reside in military communities are brought together by necessity and expectation due to lack of traditional family supports, deployments, and military culture.

Some of the most significant examples of community risk factors are strict social beliefs surrounding gender roles, lack of job opportunities, and family conflict.³ All three of these

community risk factors have a significant presence in military communities. The military still struggles with gender roles. Military spouses struggle to find jobs when they move, and family conflict is a reality with constant deployments and separations that disrupts family cohesion. Although military communities have many risk factors innate to military life, the same communities can increase resilience to violence. Increasing resiliency to sexual violence can be facilitated by community-coordinated resources and services through community programs.³

Currently, it is difficult to understand how the Department of Defense responds to sexual violence as a whole in military communities. The military communicates through policies that provide direction on organizational function, goals, authority, guidelines, responsibility, and most importantly, programs.⁴ Policies direct programs that outline a response to sexual violence. The term policy in relation to the military can include informal and formal signed documents. Military policies can also stretch through Congressional Law, Presidential Executive Orders, Supreme Court Rulings, Department of Defense, service levels (i.e., branches), large organizations within a service, installation-level command, or within small units.⁴ These policies are complex and do not always provide a full understanding of responses to sexual violence in military communities. For this scoping review, we examined military responses of sexual violence at the DoD level. By examining the DoD level of response and programming, we hope to gain a better understanding of the alignment of responses and programs.

Methodology

Identifying the Research Question

Understanding the response to sexual violence in military communities demanded: 1) examination of the extent, range, and nature of research and policies; 2) identification of response programs for policy makers and practitioners; and 3) identification of gaps in research

surrounding responses to sexual violence in military communities. Utilizing Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework, we sought to conduct an extensive and systematic exploration of the literature related to the response from the DoD to sexual violence in military communities.⁵

Search Process

The search process for this scoping review included a search of three bibliographic databases for literature published from January 2008 through February 2019 and the DoD Directives Divisions Issuances database. The DoD Directives Division maintains all DoD policies that outline DoD programs and provides public access to these policies. We included PubMed, Web of Science, and Military & Government Collection (EBSCO). The PubMed search was conducted on February 6 and 7, 2019, the Web of Science search on February 22 and 23, 2019, and the Military & Government Collection (EBSCO) search on March 1 and 2, 2019. These databases were selected based on their extensive coverage of different disciplines involved in working with sexual violence and military families. The search strategy included key terms related to military, DoD, and sexual violence combined with Boolean Operator AND (Table 2.1; tables and figures are located in the Appendix following each chapter). The DoD Directives Divisions Issuances database was searched by issuance type: DoD Directives, DoD Instructions, and DoD Publications and Manuals. Within each issuance type, key search terms were used (Table 2.2).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

This scoping review included all policies and research studies related to military sexual violence response programs mandated by the DoD. Only programs designed for active duty, reserve, or National Guard military members, family member, civilian employees, civilian employee family members, Military Academy Cadets, and ROTC Cadets were included. Policies

and research studies were excluded that focused on military branch-specific programs or responses, military veteran programs, non-DOD related civilian programs, and military law. Exclusion criteria were determined based on the significant variation across branches of the military in the response to sexual violence in military communities, focusing instead, on the DoD level response.

Study selection

Three screening phases were utilized for each search, including title, abstract, and full-text screening, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria in all steps. A total of 2,225 citations and policies were identified from all searches. Fig. 1.1 outlines the flow diagram of the search and selection process.

Charting

In order to ensure systematic extraction of the data, a charting spreadsheet was developed utilizing a basic outline from Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework, and enhanced to address this specific research question.⁵ Data included author/year of publication, population, type of sexual violence, and program services.

Results

Description of Studies

Table 2.3 outlines the characteristics of the 27 studies and policies. The majority of the results were DoD policies or registries (n=21), with the remaining being primary research studies (n=6). The sub-population with the most studies or policies was military members (n=22), followed by military families (n=8), adult family members (n=5), DoD civilians (n=3), and finally military children (n=2). Sexual assault (n=10) and sexual harassment (n=10) account for the two largest types of sexual violence found in this scoping review, followed by child sexual

abuse (n=9) and interpersonal violence (n=9). The remaining types of sexual violence were vague (n=2) due to a lack of explicitly expressed type of violence (n=1) as the policy was not clear on the definition of violence. We found four DoD programs found in this scoping review related to sexual violence in military communities. These programs are Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (n=8), Family Advocacy Program (n=11), Equal Employment Opportunity (n=4), and Military Equal Opportunity (n=3). We explored the study and policy response results within these four program areas.

Sexual assault prevention and response. Six studies and two policies fell within the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (SAPR). Of the six studies, four were directly related to the SAPR program. The population included in these studies and policies were military members, military family members 18 years of age and older, DoD civilian employees and family member 18 years of age and older stationed in overseas locations, DoD contractor personnel when stationed overseas, and Military Academy Cadets.

DoD Directive (DoDD) 6495.01 and DoD Instruction (DoDI) 6495.02 are two of the more inclusive policies providing responses to sexual violence in military communities. These policies cover all military members, family member 18 years of age and older, DoD civilian employees and family member 18 years of age and older stationed in overseas locations, and DoD contractor personnel when stationed overseas that do not meet the criteria for intimate partner violence. Both policies limits services to DoD civilian employees and family member 18 years of age and older stationed in overseas locations, and DoD contractor personnel when stationed overseas.⁶ DoDD 6495.01 policy outlines the SAPR program and responsibilities for the program, whereas DoDI 6495.02 provides guidance and procedures of the SAPR program.⁷

Both policies state the overall goals of the programs are achieving "a culture free of sexual assault, through an environment of prevention, education, and training, response capability, victim support, reporting procedures, and appropriate accountability that enhances the safety and well-being of all persons covered in this Instruction and Reference".⁷ Although these two policies provide a comprehensive outline of a response to sexual assault, they only cover sexual assault and a limited segment of the military population. Response to prevention for non-military members is also limited.

Included in the SAPR program is policy DoDI 6495.03, Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program (D-SAACP). This policy outlines responsibilities and states procedures of the management of the D-SAACP.⁸ This policy mandates a certification process for all individuals who fill roles of SAPR program managers, sexual assault response coordinators, and SAPR victim advocates. It also helps define suspensions, revocations, or reinstatement of certifications. These certifications only apply to individuals who work within the SAPR program which include military and civilians.

Another accompanying policy for the SAPR program is DoDI 5505.19. However, this policy also assists those who have experienced intimate partner violence in the military community. This policy established and assigns responsibility for specially trained investigators, judge advocates, paralegals, and victim witness assistance personnel.⁹ These services are for sexual assault perpetrated on military members and their spouses over the age of 18.

The first research article related to the SAPR program was "Sexual Assault Training in the Military: Evaluating Efforts to End the 'Invisible War.'" The authors aimed to assess whether sexual assault training exposure was a predictor of resources and protocols related to sexual assault; if exposure varied by branch and rank; and if gender, experience, or branch changed

opinions of the training.¹⁰ This study found that the DoD used SAPR training programs to eliminate sexual assault in the military, but they differed across the different branches of the military. Overall, these training programs indicated low incidents of sexual assault and improved knowledge of sexual assault, but there was a significant difference between branches, gender, military rank, and past experience. Considering the significant differences found in this study, the authors were “hesitant” to conclude that most members of the U.S. military receive effective sexual assault training.

The article “See Something, Do Something: Predicting Sexual Assault Bystander Intentions in the U.S. Military” reviewed bystander interventions, a training tool used by DoD in stopping sexual harassment and sexual assault incidents. The authors wanted to explore intrapersonal, microsystem, and exosystem factors that predicted the assumptions of service members’ personal responsibility in intervening during an alcohol involved sexual assault and how predictors play a role in how to intervene.¹¹ This study found that that majority of service members would take some action. However, the choice of intervention was significantly different between gender, understanding of the problem (among service members), and military rank.

The final article that looked at the SAPR program was “Sexual Assault in the Military: Trends and Responses.” This article evaluated trends in prevalence of sexual assault, compared rates of sexual assault in the military compared to civilian populations, and examined prevention and response efforts in the military.¹² This study found that there was no identifiable trend, i.e., if sexual assault is increasing, stable, or decreasing. Furthermore, this study stated military rates of sexual assault were not statistically different than those in the general population. Finally, this study looked at the education and training efforts of the DoD. The authors found that efforts by

the DoD were significantly limited to eliminating sexual assault in the military, outlining reporting options, and resources for individuals and military commands and only targeted a small percentage of military communities.¹² Recommendations for improving prevention efforts include education related to characteristics of sexual assault with emphasis on gender and improve reporting channels for efficiency.

Family Advocacy Program. The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) had the largest amount of policies and articles included in this scoping review. The Family Advocacy Program covers military members and their family members under certain circumstances related to sexual violence. DoD Instruction 6400.1, *Family Advocacy Program (FAP)*, assigns responsibilities and procedures for FAP. It is DoD policy to increase public awareness, establish prevention methods, provide reporting options, promote early identification, provide assessments, rehabilitation, and appropriate referrals for individuals not covered under the FAP program.^{13,14} The DoD is also responsible for developing DoD-wide FAP policy, coordinating and collaborating with other military programs and federal and state agencies regarding FAP-related issues and overall strategic program management of FAP. Each military branch is responsible for the execution of their service program. This policy addresses both intra- and extra-familial child sexual abuse and domestic abuse.

The *DoD Manual 6400.01 Volume 1* is one of four supplemental volumes for DoD Instruction 6400.01. This manual discusses the implementation of FAP to eliminate child sexual abuse and domestic abuse.¹³ This policy establishes reinforcement programs and operations that ease social links and shared aid between programs. It also outlines resources for families that align with current best practices. This manual provides guidelines for reporting options and management of information. Furthermore, the manual outlines support services for eligible

military members and their families who report child or domestic abuse. Finally, this policy addresses prevention efforts that must include primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions, but the development and implementation of prevention strategies are the responsibility of each installation.

The *DoD Manual 6400.01 Volume 2* examines the use of FAP by the DoD to eradicate the prevalent cases of sexual abuse of children and spouses. This policy meets the goals by maintaining a central child abuse and domestic abuse database that helps analyze the scope of abuse, information about victims and alleged perpetrators, and to identify emerging trends.¹⁵ This policy has also allowed the DoD to perform background criminal and character checks for individuals offering services to military members and their families. Overall, this policy assists the DoD in minimizing risk factors that could lead to sexual abuse of children and spouses.

The *Department of Defense Manual 6400.01 Volume 3* discusses the FAP programs implemented by DoD to address child abuse and domestic violence in the context of the Clinical Case Staff Meeting (CCSM) and the Incident Determination Committee (IDC). The CCSM generates clinical recommendations for services, treatment, case management, and ongoing treatment for victims of child sexual abuse or domestic violence.¹⁶ The Incident Determination Committee (IDC) is a military community committee with the authority to decide if reports of suspected child abuse or domestic abuse meet the DoD definitions of abuse and require entry into the Service FAP Central Registry.¹⁶ The IDC may differ from civilian child protective service determinations and it is not a disciplinary proceeding.

The final volume in the FAP manuals is the *Department of Defense Manual 6400.01 Volume 4*. This manual discusses FAP guidelines for clinical interventions for individuals reported as domestic abusers. Volume 4 outlines the program standards and procedures that

reflect a coordinated response to domestic abuse.¹⁷ This manual also allows for individualized and rehabilitative treatment as a supplement to disciplinary action for those reported as domestic abusers. Finally, the DoD has established strategies that cover all service members and their family from further harassment or abuse by family members creating immediate responses and training measures aimed at creating awareness.

FAP policies continue with *Department of Defense Instruction 6400.03*, which outlines the Family Advocacy Command Assistance Team (FACAT). The FACAT is used by installation commanders when alleged child sexual abuse is perpetrated by a care provider in a DoD-sanctioned activity and additional help is needed.¹⁸ A FACAT can assist in investigations, conduct medical and mental health assessments, develop and implement treatment plans, or coordinate with local officials for public affair tasks.¹⁸

An additional part of FAP is the New Parent Support Program (NPSP), which is outlined in *Department of Defense Instruction 6400.05*. This policy describes the support strategy the NPSP offers in aid to the DoD in providing training to military leaders, medical professionals, child caretakers, community service agencies, and providers.¹⁹ NPSP also utilizes a screening tool that helps discover protective and risk factors linked with child abuse. This screening tool allows the program to assist expectant and new parents whose risk factors are high or lack protective factors.

Department of Defense Instruction 6400.06 addresses the prevention and elimination of domestic abuse in the DoD, as well as provides provisions for victim safety, abuser accountability, and coordinated responses to domestic abuse.²⁰ This policy outlines access to advocacy at all times such as referrals to other agencies, safety preparations, and other support services. Furthermore, the policy outlines education programs to train victims in critical

decision-making roles regarding their welfare and safety. Finally, the policy calls for coordinated community response for the prevention of domestic abuse and intervention.

The final policy under FAP is the *Department of Defense Instruction 1342.24* which relates to transitional compensation for abused military family members. The main aspect of this policy addresses monthly payments for victims of child abuse or domestic abuse where the service member has been separated from the military due to the abuse.²¹ Under this policy, victims of domestic or child abuse are also offered medical and dental care. Benefits are offered monthly for 36 months.

In this scoping review, two journal articles were identified that addressed issues covered by FAP. In the first article, “Intimate Partner Violence Among Female Service Members and Veterans: Information and Resources Available Through Military and Nonmilitary Websites”, the authors examined FAP and their efforts to eliminate sexual abuse experienced by both female service members and veterans. For the purposes of the review, only information relevant to active duty service members was considered. The authors found that each branch had at least one article on a website that highlighted either domestic violence or intimate partner violence.²² Information was varied, but most articles focused on safety of the victim and justice. Each branch website was clear in communicating their zero-tolerance policy against domestic abuse and intimate partner violence. Although most websites were branch specific, Military One Source was a specific DoD initiative that provided information for service members and their families that focused on prevention and response.

The final article reviewed was “Child Maltreatment in United States Military Families,” which explored FAP and how it helps military families. The author provided a synopsis of the mission and goals of the program along with requirements for all military branches. However,

this author focused primarily on the maltreatment of children. The author stated the military has made significant improvements in their efforts to provide a clear definition and effective assessments for child maltreatment.²³ This has been done by use of empirically-validated interventions and evaluations, provisions of system-wide efforts to prevent child maltreatment, and continued efforts to explore new ways to prevent and help child maltreatment in military families.²³

Equal Employment Opportunity Office. The Equal Opportunity Office (EEO) for DoD civilian employees has policies to address sexual violence in the workplace. The *DoD Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Policy* is *DoD Instruction 1438.06*. This policy states the workplace must be free from violence, threats of violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behaviors.²⁴ Civilian employees are responsible for the prevention of these acts, and DoD will take all reports of violence seriously. Repercussions of such acts are immediate removal from premises, no re-entry until investigation is complete, and removal from federal service and/or criminal prosecution.²⁴ Furthermore, this policy assigns responsibility for policy development and oversight to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel and the development and implementation of a workplace violence prevention and response program to DoD component heads. Enclosure Three of this policy provides an overview of general provisions and program management of prevention. All supervisors must report threats of workplace violence, and information gained from reports may be used as evidence in administrative, civil, or criminal proceedings. All DoD components will establish a planning group to evaluate the ability to respond to workplace incidents and make recommendations.²⁴ Finally, the established planning group must ensure training for supervisors and employees that

includes stopping threats or workplace violence and reporting of all acts or incidents of workplace violence.

DoD Directive 1400.05 is the DoD Policy for Civilian Personnel. DoDD 1400.5 covers civilian employees located in overseas areas. The policy states that discrimination due to gender is not allowed, employees will be treated with dignity, and working conditions will be made as safe and healthful as possible.²⁵ The policy also states that employees who come forward with a grievance will not face reprisal, restraint, or interference and will be provided help by a representative.

Finally, DoD Directive 1440.1 is the DoD Civilian Equal Employment Opportunity Program that applies to all civilian employees and applicants worldwide within the DoD in both appropriated and non-appropriated positions.²⁶ This policy states that DoD will remove barriers and practices related to sexual harassment in the workplace and provide fair, impartial, and timely investigations of sexual harassment complaints. It also allows for establishing an Equal Employment Opportunity program that includes training for civilian and military personnel who supervise employees in the prevention of sexual harassment.²⁶ Finally, the policy goes on to state that procedures and implementation of a program to eliminate sexual harassment must be consistent with DoD Policy on Sexual Harassment. No research studies were identified that addressed this program.

Military Equal Opportunity. The Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) program provides service members with protections against unlawful discrimination and sexual harassment and is overseen by the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO). The MEO program is guided by *DoD Directive 1350.02*. This policy establishes DoD wide standards for the MEO program, assigns responsibility, outlines education and training, guides programing,

and provides standardized definitions and terms for MEO.²⁷ The MEO program is for military service members and is the responsibility of each service member to promote an environment free from discrimination and sexual harassment and adhere to the MEO program guidelines. All military service members and DoD civilians assigned to any human relation programs must receive training on policies and programs related to sexual harassment. This policy also provides for research regarding command climate and sexual harassment as requested by commanders and leaders in the DoD. All military branches must provide a central point of contact at the installation level or below such as the Brigade or Battalion level, as a toll-free line for complaints of sexual harassment, and ensure installation-level programs have victim support services.²⁷ Finally, this policy outlines actions that must be taken when a report of sexual harassment is initiated, as well as incorporating compliance of each service member in their official evaluations.

An additional MEO policy, *Department of Defense Directive 1020.02E*, further clarifies diversity management and equal opportunity for service members. Specific to sexual harassment, the DoD states sexual harassment conflicts directly with the obligations to treat other service members with dignity and respect.²⁸ The policy continues to state that leaders at all levels are accountable for prevention of sexual harassment, as well as not allowing retaliation against those who report sexual harassment. Furthermore, this policy reiterates that the MEO program is the vehicle for training and education as well as sexual harassment complaints and resolutions.

The final policy found in this scoping review regarding the MEO program was *Department of Defense Instruction 1020.03 Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces*. This policy is the newest policy related to sexual harassment in the military. This policy expanded previous sexual harassment policy into a full program focused on prevention, response,

and retaliation, but the focus still remains with service members only. This program resides with ODME and still allows each branch to execute the MEO program specific to them. The policy covers responsibilities, types of harassment, procedures and requirements for complaints, response, prevention and education, and data collection and reporting.²⁹ No research studies were found that had evaluated or assessed this program.

Discussion

Sexual violence in military communities is a serious public health problem, but little research has been done to fully examine it. Policies and research related to sexual violence in military communities fail to give consideration to all affected populations resulting in a less than comprehensive response. As demonstrated in Table 2.4, Organization of Military Sexual Violence Program and Related Article or Policy, victims of sexual violence must first determine their status within the military community, their age, what type of sexual offense was committed, and who committed the sexual offense in order to know where to go for help. Sexual violence is the most under-reported crime. Coupled with the unique military environment, this means the current programs are not operating in a manner that helps victims of sexual violence, but instead increase barriers to care.³⁰ In some instances, a program may not even exist to help a victim of sexual violence. To understand the gaps and concerns identified by this scoping review, we discuss the current programs separately, as these programs do not work in conjunction with each other.

SAPR

SAPR policy was designed to address the concerns of sexual violence in military communities. Specifically, the concerns related to active duty military members. The main website related to the DoD SAPR office states “a comprehensive policy was developed in order

to care for the safety, dignity and well-being of all military members”.³¹ The DoD explicitly states this program is for military members, but their leaders, military and civilian, are responsible for prevention, response, and accountability. This statement by the DoD ignores military family members over the age of 18, as well as DoD civilians and their families over the age of 18 in some areas, despite what their policies state. By ignoring large sections of military communities, the SAPR policy only fully implements a program for half of the population. This could provide an explanation as to the lack of understanding for other military community members beyond actual military members.

As further proof that SAPR only addresses half of their required population, the DoD Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military clearly addresses the prevention and response efforts focused on military member, but do not do the same for military family members. The annual report provides total reports of sexual assault broken down by military members, DoD civilians, DoD contractors, and foreign nationals, but provides no specifics for military family members as they are combined with other U.S. civilians. Again, the DoD SAPR office is only reporting on a portion of sexual violence within military communities.

FAP

FAP has expanded extensively in order to provide prevention and assistance to military families regarding sexual violence. The FAP program provides assistance to military members and their families when the sexual violence is intimate partner-related or child sexual abuse. However, there are still concerns related to how the program helps families when a child under the age of 18 has experienced sexual violence. The current policy does not provide for assistance regarding sexual harassment for children or family members, and does not address sexual violence when the offender is a juvenile. For example, the FAP program, designed for all

military family members, does not allow help for military children sexually assaulted by other military children. There are many documented cases where a military child sexually assaults another military child, but are not prosecuted, and typically receive no punishment allowing them to move on to other installations.³² Civilian resources are also not the answer as many military children reside in countries outside of the U.S. This is a significant gap in current programing that is causing serious harm to military children and their families. The current program also does not address prevention of sexual violence for family members beyond intimate partner or child sexual abuse.

MEO

The MEO program covers sexual harassment of military members. It is segregated from sexual assault and currently fails to appreciate the relationship between sexual harassment and sexual assault. Sexual violence should be viewed on a continuum, where sexual harassment is a part of the sexual violence spectrum that ends with sexual assault.³³ The MEO program still looks at sexual harassment as a discrimination issue and fails to view it as sexual violence.

The MEO program also only applies to military members and does not provide assistance for sexual harassment for military family members. An example of sexual harassment can be seen in the case of Maj. Gen. Harrington who was only removed from duty after a report in USA Today described the continued sexual harassment of a wife of a subordinate soldier via social media.³⁴ This example is evidence that the program does not support or respond to the needs of the military family member. By limiting the population, the DoD provides no prevention or response for military family members who are sexually harassed within military communities.

EEO

Similar to the MEO program, the EEO program fails to view sexual harassment as a form of sexual violence. In turn, the EEO program also fails to understand the continuum of sexual violence and provide successful prevention and response programming. Current policies are outdated and must be updated to include new and emerging research that helps address sexual violence comprehensively.

Limitations

This scoping review attempted to understand how the DoD responds to sexual violence in military communities. However, one main limitation exists. The DoD utilizes policies in order to develop and implement their programs, which presents a challenge in understanding the full scope of a program. Military policy comes in many forms. Locating all corresponding policy may not be possible due to the limited access to policies for researchers or the general public.

Conclusion

The DoD response to sexual violence in military communities is segregated and fails to offer a comprehensive approach to prevention of and response to sexual violence. Many programs serve only specific segments of the military communities while excluding others. The DoD must work towards providing an approach to sexual violence that decreases barriers to care and is inclusive of all military populations. This scoping review focused on programs only for the DoD. To better understand sexual violence response in military communities, future research should evaluate sexual violence programs at the individual service levels. Until there is a more robust comprehensive overhaul of military sexual harassment policies, we will never fully appreciate the complexity and reach of sexual violence in military communities.

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Appendix 2.A

Tables and Figure

Table 2.1. Research Strategy Bibliographic Databases

1	Department of Defense	13	1 AND 12
2	sexual violence	14	family advocacy
3	1 AND 2	15	1 AND 14
4	sexual assault	16	military
5	1 AND 4	17	16 AND 2
6	sexual harassment	18	16 AND 4
7	1 AND 6	19	16 AND 6
8	intimate partner	20	16 AND 8
9	1 AND 8	21	16 AND 10
10	child abuse	22	16 AND 12
11	1 AND 10	23	16 AND 14
12	equal opportunity		

Table 2.2. Research Strategy Executive Services Directorate

1	sexual
2	assault
3	harassment
4	intimate
5	child
6	equal
7	family

Table 2.3. Characteristics of Included Studies/Policies

Author or Policy #/ Year of Publication	Population	Type of Sexual Violence	Program Services
Rough & Armor/2017	Military/Academy Cadets	Sexual Assault & Harassment	Overview of SAPR Program
Milner/2015	Military/Military Families	Intimate Partner/Child	Overview of Family Advocacy Program
Brown & Joshi/2014	Military Only	Intimate Partner	Review of Military Program Websites
Holland & Cortina/2014	Military Only	Sexual Assault & Harassment	Review of SAPR Training Efforts
Holland, Rabelo, & Cortina/2016	Military Only	Sexual Assault & Harassment	SAPR Training Efforts/Bystander Intervention
DoDI 1438.06/2014	DoD Civilian Employees	Violence/Harassment	EEO/Program direction for prevention and response
DoDI 1400.5/2005	DoD Civilian Employees	Vague	EEO/Guidance on working conditions
DoDI 1440.1/2003	DoD Civilian Employees	Sexual Harassment	EEO/Program direction for sexual harassment
DoDI 6400.03/2017	Military Child	Sexual Abuse	Program direction for Family Advocacy Command Assistance Team
DoDI 6400.05/2012	Military Family	Vague/Child abuse	Program direction for New Parent Support Program and child abuse
DoDI 6400.06/2017	Military Family	Intimate Partner	Guidance for domestic violence in the military

Table 2.3. Characteristics of Included Studies/Policies (continued)

Author or Policy #/ Year of Publication	Population	Type of Sexual Violence	Program Services
DoDI 6400.01/2018	Military Child	Sexual Abuse	policy for response to child sexual abuse
DoD Manual 6400.01 V4/2015	Military Family	Child Abuse/ Intimate Partner	Guidelines for Clinical Intervention for Persons Reported as Domestic Abusers
DoD Manual 6400.01 V1/2018	Military Family	Child Abuse/ Intimate Partner	Outlines Program standards for family advocacy program
DoD Manual 6400.01 V2/2016	Military Family	Child Abuse/ Intimate Partner	Outlines program procedures for completion and submission of information on reported incidents of child abuse and domestic abuse.
DoD Manual 6400.01 V3/2016	Military Family	Child Abuse/Intimate Partner	Program operation of the CCSM and IDC in responding to reports of child abuse and neglect and domestic abuse, and procedures for determining whether these allegations meet criteria for entry into the Service FAP Central Registry
DoDI 1342.24/1997	Military Family	Child Abuse/ Intimate Partner	Program guidance for transitional compensation
DoDD 1350.2/2015	Military Only	Sexual Harassment	Department of Defense Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Program

Table 2.3. Characteristics of Included Studies/Policies (continued)

Author or Policy #/ Year of Publication	Population	Type of Sexual Violence	Program Services
DoDD 1020.02E/2018	Military Only	Sexual Harassment	Military Equal Opportunity Program policy to establish responsibilities
DoDI 6495.03/2017	Military and Adult Military Family	Sexual Assault	SAPR Defense Sexual Assault Advocate Certification Program
DoDI 1020.03/2018	Military Only	Sexual Harassment	Establishes a comprehensive, DoD-wide military harassment prevention and response program.
DoDI 6495.02/2017	Adults Military Community	Sexual Assault	Establishes policy and implements Reference and assigns responsibilities and provides guidance and procedures for the SAPR Program
DoDD 6495.01/2017	Adult Military Community	Sexual Assault	Implements DoD policy and assign responsibilities for the SAPR Program on prevention, response, and oversight to sexual assault.
DoDI 5505.19/2017	Military and Adult Military Family	Sexual Assault	Establishment of Special Victim Investigation and Prosecution (SVIP) Capability

Table 2.4. Organization of Military Sexual Violence Programs and Related Articles or Policies

Program	Individual Covered	Act Covered	Article/Policy
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)	Military Members Military Family Members 18 years and older, Limited Department of Defense Employees and Family Members 18 years and older	Sexual Assault (18 years and older, non-intimate partner)	Rough & Armor, Brown & Joshi, Holland & Cortina, Holland, Rabelo & Cortina, DoDI 6495.03, DoDI 6495.02, DoDD 6495.01, and DoDI 5505.19
Family Advocacy Program (FAP)	Military Members and Military Family Members	Sexual Assault (child sexual assault when offender is over 18 & intimate partner violence)	Milner, DoDI 1440.1, DoDI 6400.03, DoD 6400.05, DoDI 6400.06, DoDI 6400.01, DoD Manual 6400.01 V1-4, and DoDI 1342.24
Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO)	All DoD Civilian Employees	Sexual Harassment	DoDI 1438.06, DoDI 1400.5, and DoDI 1440.1
Military Equal Opportunity (MEO)	All Military Members	Sexual Harassment	DoDD 1020.02 and DoDI 1020.03

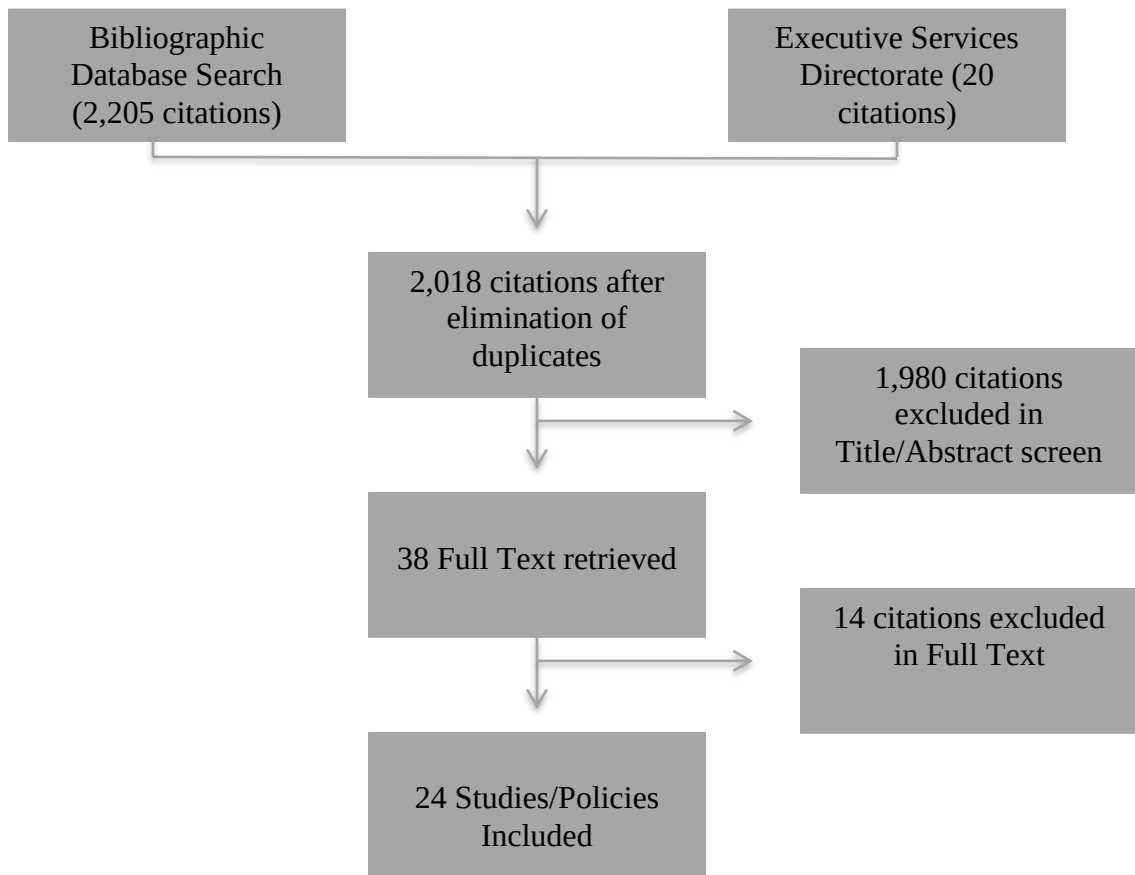


Fig. 2.1. Flow Diagram

Chapter Three: New DoD Sexual Harassment Policy Analysis

Abstract

Sexual violence in the United States military is a serious public health problem that has received a significant amount of attention. However, this attention has focused primarily on sexual assault neglecting other precipitating factors such as sexual harassment, which deserve as much attention. This policy analysis looks at the most current sexual harassment policy, the Department of Defense's (DoD) Harassment Prevention and Response policy, DoD Instruction 1020.3, dated February 8, 2018 and seeks to determine how the new Harassment Prevention and Response policy complies with the stated goals and how it incorporates recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO). In order to understand the existing policy, this analysis is based on the Walt and Gibson's policy triangle framework in order to go beyond content by considering actors, processes, and context. The analysis suggests the policy does not meet the intended goals and it does not incorporate recommendations from the GAO.

Introduction

Sexual violence in the United States military is a serious public health problem that has received a significant amount of attention. However, this attention has focused primarily on sexual assault neglecting other precipitating factors such as, sexual harassment that deserve as much attention. The Department of Defense's (DoD) latest Harassment Prevention and Response policy, DoD Instruction 1020.3, dated February 8, 2018, was developed with the purpose of establishing a comprehensive DoD-wide military harassment prevention and response program. The DoD Instruction 1020.3 also updated prevention and response policies and procedures that would elevate the commitment to eliminating sexual harassment, increasing prevention efforts, and establishing effective response strategies to sexual harassment¹. This policy brief seeks to determine how the new Harassment Prevention and Response policy complies with the stated

goals and how it incorporates recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Background

Sexual harassment creates a multitude of undesirable social conditions for the victims of sexual harassment and the military as a whole. The victims of sexual harassment may experience symptoms such as fear, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and even suicidal behaviors.² Military sexual harassment is explicitly associated with a fivefold increase for risk of suicide.² Physical problems can also manifest in the form of muscle pains, headaches, or chronic physical health problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes thus decreasing the productivity of the victim at work. The effect of sexual harassment may also include an increase in absenteeism, decreased productivity, decreased morale and unit cohesion, retention problems, and increased healthcare costs. All of the previously stated effects of sexual harassment affect mission readiness and overall national security.

A survey conducted by RAND Corporation in 2014 stated that 26% of active duty women and 7% of active duty men experienced sexual harassment or gender discrimination that year.³ In this same survey RAND found that sexual harassment and gender discrimination were not usually isolated experiences, but rather ongoing. Current tracking and measurement of sexual harassment does not include assessment of severity, which limits the understanding of the problem. Approximately half of the active duty men and women who experienced sexual harassment or gender discrimination stated it had been going on anywhere from a few months to a year or more.³ Even more concerning was the lack of reporting of these incidents by active duty members. Only 38% of those who experienced sexual harassment or gender discrimination reported to someone with authority to respond to the incident.³ Similar to sexual assault in the

military some barriers to reporting are due to personal blame, retaliation from offenders, co-workers, and supervisors, or a lack of trust that anything would be done. All of these barriers appear to be validated as some who did report sexual harassment reported experiencing retaliation (31% from offenders, 31% from co-workers, and 21% from supervisors), lack of action by supervisors (50% of men who reported were encouraged to drop the issue), and dissatisfaction in how they were treated once reporting (41% who reported sexual harassment).³

Despite the extensive evidence of sexual harassment in the military, it is essential to state that sexual harassment is not unique to the military. Sexual harassment happens in all organizations around the world, but due to culture or by design, the military community has elevated risk factors. Organizations that have a skewed gender ratio are at a higher risk for sexual harassment as well as those with significant power disparities.⁴ Organizations with a young workforce, different cultural differences, social discourse outside of the workplace, isolated workstations, and those that tolerate or encourage alcohol consumption are also at higher risk for sexual harassment.⁵ These are risk factors common in the military. They do not account for worksite-specific risk factors such as lack of conformity to workplace norms, workplaces with high value or ranking individuals, workplaces that perform monotonous or low-intensity jobs, or decentralized workplaces.⁵ With risk factors already present due to the inherent nature of a military culture and design it was imperative that the new harassment policy implement a program that focused on raising awareness of sexual harassment, implement a coordinated prevention plan, and develop standardized data elements, collection, and reporting.

Methods

Research Design

In order to understand the current state of sexual harassment in military communities, identifying the most current policy was necessary. It was also imperative to try to understand factors that may have influenced the most current policy. For analyzing the policy and influences, qualitative methods were utilized which included a search strategy for document reviews and stakeholder analysis.

Policy Framework

In order to understand an existing policy, this analysis is based on Walt and Gibson's policy triangle framework. Policy triangle framework go beyond content by considering actors, processes, and context when conducting the policy analysis.⁶ This framework provides a more simplistic way in which to look at the various factors that contribute to a policy as well as how they interact with each other.

Search strategy. A search of the most recent policy related to sexual harassment and the DoD was conducted using the DoD Directives Divisions Issuances database. This database maintains all publicly available DoD policies. Prior to the selection of key policy aspects, a search of related government documents was completed in conjunction with the most current sexual harassment policy to identify other policy influencers. Finally, searches of stakeholders were conducted utilizing the documents located in the initial searches.

Stakeholder analysis. A stakeholder analyses was conducted after a review of the documents generated by the initial search. Stakeholder analyses are rooted in the political and policy sciences that has expanded into a systematic tool helpful in health sciences by providing steps in generating knowledge about relevant actors.⁷ This analysis helped generate knowledge

related to the various actors or individuals and organizations, in order to understand their interest, thoughts, behaviors, and level of influence.⁷ The aim of this stakeholder analyses was to describe the wide range of actors involved, their contributions, and their level of influence. After extensive review of DoD policies, DoD organizational charts, job responsibilities, and media coverage determinations of stakeholders were made. A total of five characteristics of each stakeholder were examined; involvement in the issue, interest in the issue, influence/power, position, and impact of issue on the actor.

Involvement in the issue was based on the job description of the stakeholder. Interest in the issue was based on the job description of the stakeholder, action required by policy, and media coverage if available. Influence and power were determined based upon their position in the DoD organization chart or their coverage of influence. Position was based upon their past actions determined by policy, job requirements, or media coverage if applicable. Finally impact of issue on actor/stakeholder was determined by policy and if they were covered or should be covered by the policy. This analysis was primarily focused at the DoD level only.

Results

Document Review

The document review process follows the policy triangle framework by providing the foundation for understanding content, context, actors, and processes. DoD Instruction 1020.3 was located as the most current DoD sexual harassment policy through the DoD Directives Divisions Issuances database search. This policy was released February 8, 2018. The content, or purpose of the policy, is as follows:

- “Establish a comprehensive, DoD-wide military harassment prevention and response program.

- Updates military harassment prevention and response policies and program for Service members.
- Updates harassment prevention and response procedures for Service members to submit harassment complaints, including anonymous complaints; procedures and requirements for responding to, processing, resolving, tracking, and reporting harassment complaints; and training and education requirements and standards.
- Supplements the DoD Retaliation Prevention and Response Strategy (RPRS) Implementation Plan for sexual harassment complaints involving retaliation.”¹

The content of DoD 1020.3 is best understood when also considering context. Since the first creation of a DoD task force related to sexual violence in 2004 there has been increased attention from the media, sexual violence advocates, and Congress related to sexual violence in military communities. The attention has primarily been focused on service members and sexual assault, but an increase in reports of sexual harassment lead to more attention related to sexual harassment. In November 2017, Congress used the annual defense authorization bill to attach provisions that made “the non-consensual sharing of intimate images” by service members illegal.⁸ This was not the first time Congress has used the authorization bill to force the military, but it was one of the first times Congress had taken a strong stance in regards to sexual harassment. However, despite interventions by Congress, the population has been primarily focused on service members, neglecting the protection of military family members, DoD employees, and DoD employee family members.

A broad web search was then conducted to identify other government agencies or influences that may have guided the creation of DoD Instruction 1020.3. This search produced a report from GAO to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate outlining recommendations for DoD to

incorporate into what is now known as DoD Instruction 1020.3. These recommendations are as follows:

- “Recommendation 1. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should fully include in the new policy for sexual harassment the principles in the Centers for Disease Control’s framework for sexual violence prevention, including risk and protective factors, risk domains, and tertiary strategies.
- Recommendation 2. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should include in the new policy for sexual harassment mechanisms for anonymous reporting of incidents consistent with Section 579 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013.
- Recommendation 3. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should (1) direct the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity to develop standard data elements and definitions for maintaining and reporting information on sexual harassment incidents at the military service level, and (2) direct the military services to incorporate these data elements and definitions into their military service-specific databases.
- Recommendation 4. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness should direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness to incorporate in its continuum of harm prevention strategy all the elements that are key for establishing a long-term, results-oriented strategic planning framework. The elements are (1) a mission statement, (2) long-term goals, (3) strategies to achieve goals, (4) external factors that could affect goals, (5) use of metrics to gauge progress, and (6) evaluations of the plan to monitor goals and objectives.”⁹

The Principal Director of Force Resiliency, Elizabeth P. Van Winkle, Ph.D. responded

for the DoD to the above recommendations. Dr. Van Winkle concurred with all recommendations with a partial concurrence to Recommendation (3). Dr. Van Winkle communicated that each service collected data based on their unique needs and could not concur with standard data elements, but would conduct a review to ensure compliance to current DoD reporting requirements.⁹

However, when comparing DoD 1020.3 with recommendations from GAO, it is unclear how DoD 1020.3 incorporated the CDC framework for sexual violence prevention that includes risk and protective factors, risk domains, and tertiary strategies.⁹ DoD 1020.3 also fails to outline a continuum of harm prevention strategy as recommended by the GAO.

This report and recommendations from GAO were initiated by Senate Report 114-224 that included directions for the GAO to review the efforts of DoD specific to sexual harassment.⁹ The report was then sent to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate in December 2017. Senators serving on the Committee on Armed Services in 2017 included many key individuals who had brought about previous changes to policies related to sexual violence in military communities.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders or actors were identified by their interest in the policy, those affected by the policy, those involved in the decision-making process, and those who affect the implementation of the policy. Stakeholders were then listed along with their involvement in the issue, interest in the issue, influence or power over the issue, their position on the issue, and the impact directly related to them.

The stakeholder analysis indicates that many of the actors with a high amount of power or influence closest to those most affected by the policy have a neutral position and a medium

level of interest in the issue even when the impact to them is medium to high. Results also show the actors most affected by the policy, military members and their family members, have a low to medium level of influence, and their position on the issue is really unknown. Most programs associated with this analysis had a high level of interest, at least a medium level of influence, were supportive of the issue, and had a high level of impact. Family advocacy programs were the one exception with a low level of interest in the issue, a neutral position, and a medium level of impact. Table 3.1 highlights the results for each stakeholder.

Discussion

As previously discussed, the effects of sexual harassment on an individual and the reverberating effects on those around them should warrant significant attention. However, sexual assault remains the focus in military communities. The connection between sexual harassment and sexual assault is critical to note as one-third of service members who reported sexual assault experienced sexual harassment before the assault.³ The definition of sexual violence from the CDC includes sexual assault and sexual harassment.¹⁰ The DoD has accepted this definition of sexual violence as well as acknowledged connections that exist on a continuum when looking at unwanted sexual behaviors that include sexual assault and sexual harassment. However, the military continues to treat them in isolation, as the review of the policy shows no clear integrated effort. This disregard for the connection between sexual harassment and sexual assault has led to a lack of understanding of interconnections. The CDC clearly states to increase the resiliency of individuals and the community to all forms of violence, coordinated resources and services must exist within a community, and the continuous work within silos must cease.¹⁰ By looking at the shared risk and protective factors related to violence, plans for the prevention of different types of violence can be addressed with a coordinated effort.¹⁰ The new policy fails to outline a clear,

comprehensive prevention plan and only states in Section 6b that "to the extent practicable" to provide training to the same audience and venue as sexual assault trainer.¹ By not taking action against the connection between sexual harassment and sexual assault, the military has taken a passive and often reactive approach to both sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The new policy also fails to incorporate the CDC framework for sexual violence prevention that includes risk and protective factors, risk domains, and tertiary strategies as suggested by the GAO in 2017.⁹ The new policy includes very vague prevention training and education instructions in Section 6 that speaks to roles and responsibilities of service members to include promoting a culture void of harassment, how to identify harassment, bystander intervention, and how to submit complaints.¹ This policy fails to address risks and protective factors and consider the complex interactions between different levels of influence such as individual, relationship, community, and societal factors defined by the CDC as best practice for violence prevention.¹¹ It also should be noted that this policy fails to provide a comprehensive explanation of steps to make anonymous reports. Failure to provide clarification of reporting steps adversely affects military members as well as those who must provide educational training.

There are also concerns that mirror those of the GAO regarding data collection. The new policy fails to address a lack of standardized data collection and reporting for sexual harassment. Sexual assaults are governed by clear policy guidance that outlines data collection and reporting of all incidents. This establishes data collection and maintenance standards necessary for quality data. Unlike the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID), there is no sexual harassment database. Data standardization would allow for all users to have a shared understanding of the data. Data standardization is a process where all users must collect specific data, adopt standard terminology, and characteristics of the data element.¹² Although the new

Harassment Prevention and Response policy addresses data collection in Section 7 by providing data elements to be captured, they fail to deliver clear characteristics to standardize their data. With this glaring omission, the required annual reporting through an approved automated data collection interface has a significant potential for poor data quality once data is merged. It is lack of quality data standards that has been a substantial obstacle in merging different data sources to produce quality data.¹² Even if data standardizations are improved there are still concerns regarding reporting that helps inform awareness, prevention, and advocacy efforts.

The most current report of sexual assault was released in May 2018 from the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. The report, issued annually to Congress, encompassed over 800 pages, and three annex reports specific to military sexual assault. Only four pages located in an appendix provided a summary of sexual harassment in the military. As previously stated, at least one-third of service members who reported sexual assault experienced sexual harassment before the assault and the lack of attention to sexual harassment is concerning.³ The new policy requires an annual report of sexual harassment but is only distributed to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Concerns exist regarding the distribution of the report, quality of the report, and the usefulness of the report for future planning.

Recommendations

The new Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces policy attempted to expand the problem of harassment into a full prevention and response program but failed to meet the stated goals specifically related to sexual harassment. In order to address gaps in current policy, a policy revision must be completed. Recommendations for changes in policy include incorporating findings from the 2017 GAO report which with the DoD had previously concurred with. Policy changes must include prevention approaches that incorporate the continuum of harm and recognizes sexual harassment as a potential precipitating factor to sexual assault. The addition of more clearly stated coordinated efforts at tactical, operational, and strategic levels between entities responsible for sexual assault and sexual harassment is necessary to design a comprehensive prevention plan. It is imperative that a coordinated prevention plan adopts the CDC framework for sexual violence prevention. Prevention plans must also address risks and protective factors across all levels of the social-ecological model.¹¹

Required by Section 579 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013, anonymous reporting is indicated as an option, but a revision of the policy must provide clear steps individuals can take to make anonymous reports.⁹ Data standardization must be addressed by providing specific characteristics, so to not adversely affect the quality of data. Improving data standardization will improve reports generated by providing a sounder representation of sexual harassment in the military and be of great value in future programming. Finally, requirements for annual reports should be aligned with sexual assault requirements in a coordinated effort to present a comprehensive view of sexual violence in the military. Evaluation efforts should be developed across those responsible for sexual harassment and sexual assault to show an overall evaluation of efforts for combating sexual violence in the military.

Chapter Three References

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Appendix 3.A

Table

Table 3.1. Stakeholder characteristics around the development of DoD 1020.3

Stakeholders/ Actors	Characteristics				
	Involvement in the Issue	Interest in the Issue	Influence/ Power	Position	Impact of Issue on Actor
Commander-in-Chief	Head of the U.S. Military	Low	High	Neutral	Low
Congress	Top Administrator of U.S. Military	Medium	High	Supportive	Low
Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate	Maintains Legislative oversight of U.S. Military	Medium-High	Medium-High	Supportive	Medium
Government Accountability Office	Independent nonpartisan agency working for Congress	Medium	Medium	Supportive	Low
Secretary of Defense	Head of Department of Defense/Chief advisor to the President on military and national security	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium
Office of the Inspector General	Initiates and conducts independent investigations and assignments	Medium	Medium	Neutral	Low
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness	Principal staff advisor to the Secretary of Defense related to Equal Opportunity and SAPR	Medium	High	Supportive	Medium-High

Table 3.1. Stakeholder characteristics around the development of DoD 1020.3 (continued)

Stakeholders/ Actors	Characteristics				
	Involvement in the Issue	Interest in the Issue	Involvement in the Issue	Position	Involvement in the Issue
Office of Force Resiliency	Development of policies, oversight and synchronization of Equal Opportunity and SAPR	Medium-High	High	Supportive	Medium - High
Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Develops and executes policies related to sexual harassment	High	High	Supportive	Medium - High
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office	Execution of SAPR policy, planning, and oversight across all DoD	High	Medium-High	Supportive	High
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff	Highest ranking and most senior officer and principle military advisor to the President, Homeland Security Council, and Secretary of Defense	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium
Chief of Staff of the Army	Senior uniformed U.S. Army officer, principle military advisor and deputy to the Secretary of the Army	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium - High
Secretary of the Army	Senior civilian official responsible for all matters relating to the U.S. Army	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium - High

Table 3.1. Stakeholder characteristics around the development of DoD 1020.3 (continued)

Stakeholders/ Actors	Characteristics				
	Involvement in the Issue	Interest in the Issue	Influence/ Power	Position	Impact of Issue on Actor
Secretary of the Navy	Senior civilian official responsible for all matters relating to the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High
Chief of Naval Operations	Senior uniformed Navy officer, Navy advisor to U.S. Secretary of the Navy	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High
Commandant of the Marine Corps	Senior uniformed Marine Corps officer, Marine Corps advisor to U.S. Secretary of the Navy	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High
Secretary of the Air Force	Senior civilian official responsible for all matters relating to the U.S. Air Force	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High
Chief of Staff of the Air Force	Senior uniformed Air Force officer, advisor to U.S. Secretary of the Air Force	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High
Chief of the National Guard Bureau	Senior uniformed National Guard officer, advisor to Secretary of Defense and state Governors	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High
Secretary of Homeland Security	Head of Homeland Security that provides oversight to U.S. Coast Guard	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium -High

Table 3.1. Stakeholder characteristics around the development of DoD 1020.3 (continued)

Stakeholders/ Actors	Characteristics				
	Involvement in the Issue	Interest in the Issue	Influence/ Power	Position	Impact of Issue on Actor
Commandant U.S. Coast Guard	Senior uniformed Coast Guard officer, advisor to Secretary of Homeland Security	Medium	High	Neutral	Medium - High
U.S. Military Members (Active or Reserve)	Active duty, reserve, or guard members presently enlisted or commissioned in the U.S. military	Medium- High	Low-Medium	Unknown	High
U.S. Military Family Member	Family member of an active duty, reserve, or guard member presently enlisted or commissioned in the U.S. military	Medium - High	Low	Unknown	High
DoD Government Employee	Civilian employed by the DoD	Medium – High	Low-Medium	Unknown	High
DoD Government Employee Family Member	Family member of a civilian DoD employee	Medium	Low	Unknown	Medium
Military Prevention and Response Programs	Military branch specific programs that provide prevention and response to military members and military family members over age 18 related to sexual violence	High	Low-Medium	Supportive	High

Table 3.1. Stakeholder characteristics around the development of DoD 1020.3 (continued)

Stakeholders/ Actors	Characteristics				
	Involvement in the Issue	Interest in the Issue	Influence/ Power	Position	Impact of Issue on Actor
Equal Opportunity Programs	Military branch specific program that provide prevention and response to military members related to sexual harassment	High	Low-Medium	Supportive	High
Family Advocacy Programs	Military branch specific program that provides some assistance in domestic and child abuse	Low	Low-Medium	Neutral	Medium
Military Sexual Violence Advocacy Groups	Provides assistance to military member and their families and raises awareness related to sexual violence in the military	High	Medium	Supportive	High
Media	Brings awareness to sexual violence in the military community	Medium	High	Neutral	Low

Chapter Four: Missing the Mark; Sexual Violence in Military Communities
Affects Recruitment

Abstract

Funder for this survey retains publishing rights. As such, this report should not be cited as further edits may be made by funder, Protect Our Defenders. Access to final report must be obtained through Protect Our Defenders at www.protectourdefenders.com. As the U.S. military continues to face sexual violence in their communities, the extent of this public health problem is not fully understood. To gain a better understanding of the effects of sexual violence in military communities this study explored the effects of the perceptions of sexual violence in military communities on recruiting. To better understand the association between sexual violence in military communities and recruitment, we conducted a cross-sectional survey to determine the impact of perceptions of sexual violence and the decision to not join the U.S. military. This study aimed at understanding to what extent perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected the decision not to join the U.S. military. Overall, more than a quarter of the respondents stated their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision to not join the U.S. military.

Executive Summary

As the U.S. military continues to face sexual violence in their communities, the extent of this public health problem is not fully understood. To gain a better understanding of the effects of sexual violence in military communities, Protect Our Defenders partnered with the Department of Public Health at the University of Tennessee to explore one aspect of this problem. The focus of this study was to explore the effects of the perceptions of sexual violence in military communities on recruiting. In this report the term sexual violence includes sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The Department of Defense (DoD) failed to meet the FY 2018 recruiting goals. As the number of military personnel increases, it is likely that recruiting will remain a challenge. Despite attempts at understanding the factors a person considers when contemplating joining the U.S. military, limited research exists regarding the perceptions of sexual violence in military communities as a factor.

The sexual violence in U.S. military communities has been gaining media attention for several years. The media attention has raised awareness among potential recruits of the problem of sexual violence in military communities. In 2013, the Pew Research Center examined the view of the general public regarding sexual assault in military communities; and in 2017, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) also expressed concerns that sexual violence in military communities may impact recruiting. The two studies indicate there were concerns about the effects of sexual violence in the military on recruitment, but recommended further research. To better understand the association between sexual violence in military communities and recruitment, we conducted a cross-sectional survey to determine the impact of perceptions of sexual violence and the decision to not join the U.S. military. The survey consisted of one open-ended question, eight questions related to sexual violence, 17 questions related to other factors that could affect the decision not to join the U.S. military, and 12 demographic questions. Study participants were between the ages of 18 and 30 years old, resided within 300 miles of a U.S. military installation based in the 50 states or Washington D.C., and had never served in the U.S. military. The main outcome variable was based on the following survey item: “*My perceptions of sexual violence in the U.S. military community affected my decision to NOT join the military.*” Our final sample included 936 individuals.

Results

This study aimed at understanding to what extent perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected the decision not to join the U.S. military. Overall, more than a quarter of the respondents stated their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision to not join the U.S. military. With a shrinking number of eligible recruits, the effect of sexual violence in military communities on potential recruits demands serious attention and actions.

We found the strongest predictor of not joining the military was the frequency of seeing sexual assault in military communities discussed in the media. Perceived likelihood of sexual harassment or sexual assault if a respondent joined the U.S. military were also significant predictors of not joining. When perceptions of vulnerability increase for individuals so does their fear of the risk.¹

The belief that sexual assault in military communities occurs more frequently than in the general population was a significant predictor of not joining the U.S. military. A better understanding of why respondents believed sexual assaults in the military communities occurred more often is necessary. Some factors to consider are media exposure, past sexual violence experiences, and perceived likelihood of sexual violence.

Ethnicity was also a significant predictor for not joining. Respondents who identified as Hispanic or Latino were more likely to say their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision to not join the U.S. military. Research has found that Hispanic or Latino women experience higher rates of sexual violence. This could increase perceived risk and explain why perceptions of sexual violence in military communities would affect their decision to not join the U.S. military.

We analyzed the data by gender. From this analysis one of the most surprising results was for males. Males who believed it was very likely they would be sexually assaulted if they joined the U.S. military were almost 10 times as likely to not join compared to females. This finding could be explained when we explore the differences between the effect of sexual assault on males and females. Although males and females both experience similar feelings such as fear, anger, and confusion, and have a higher risk for anxiety and depression males have unique issues to consider e.g. sense of being an inadequate man.

Observing sexual violence in military communities in the media ‘very frequently’ appears to be a strong predictor of the decision to not join the U.S. military. As well, females who believed sexual violence occurred more often in military communities or even about the same frequency were more likely to not join. This also held true for females that identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Based on the findings, in order to decrease victimization in military communities and increase recruiting overall recommendations are as follows:

- Sexual violence is a problem in military communities. Until the problem is met head on, will all aspects being addressed, from prevention to response, negative perceptions will persist. A true comprehensive approach to sexual violence is necessary.
- Sexual violence in the media has shown to be a predictor of not joining. In conjunction with addressing the sexual violence problem head on, full transparency for recruits and influencers is necessary. This must include a comprehensive approach to sexual violence in military communities that includes all members of the community, reporting all sexual violence in military communities, and finally policies and approaches that are grounded in research.

We have taken the first steps in closing the gap in understanding this public health problem, but future research is greatly needed. Research in this field is limited and a better understanding is needed. A qualitative approach should be included to explore possible unknown factors. Overall the findings in this study affirm both the previously discussed concerns of OSD and the Pew report. The perception of sexual violence in military communities is a deterrent to choosing the military as a career path; the implication of which have far reaching consequences.

Introduction

For many years, the U.S. population has faced widespread media reports regarding sexual violence in military communities. These reports are not without basis as verification of sexual violence in military communities is evidenced. As the only national organization dedicated to ending the epidemic of sexual violence in the military, Protect Our Defenders seeks a comprehensive understanding of sexual violence in military communities and its effect on the nation. To gain a better understanding, Protect Our Defenders partnered with the Department of Public Health at the University of Tennessee to explore one aspect of this epidemic. The research team brought a combined 30 plus years of experience with expertise in the area of military sexual violence, community health, social and behavioral theory, qualitative analysis, and epidemiology. The focus of this study was to explore the impact of the perceptions of sexual violence in military communities on recruiting. Our main research question was to what extent do perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affect the decision to not join the U.S. military?

The lack of previous studies and sample limitations addressing a similar research question designates this study as a pilot study. We conducted a cross-sectional survey and analyzed the responses using multivariable logistic regression in order to determine the combined impact of possible predictors on the decision to not join the U.S. military. Based on our results, Protect Our Defenders present recommendations for changes to recruiting practices and continual cultural changes within the military.

Background

The fiscal year 2019 (FY 2019) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) marked the second year of a substantial increase in authorized active and reserve personnel for the U.S. military. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, Congress increased authorized personnel strengths to meet the demand from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.² However, at the beginning of 2012, Congress began to decrease those numbers of active duty with the withdrawal from Iraq and drawdown of forces in Afghanistan. This decrease in active duty personnel continued until FY 2018, when Congress authorized an increase of 16,600 total active duty and an increase of 9,700 reserves.³ Again, in FY 2019, Congress authorized increases of 15,600 active duty personnel and 800 reserve personnel.²

However, the Department of Defense failed to achieve the FY 2018 target. The U.S. Army missed its recruiting goals for the first time since 2005 by approximately 6,500 soldiers.⁴ Though other branches met their recruiting targets, all branches of the military appear to be suffering from a low number of recruits. The Air Force reports their overall number of recruits continues to drop from previous years.⁵ As Congress increases the number of military personnel, it is likely that recruiting will remain a challenge, not just for numbers, but for quality individuals.

In one study by RAND Corporation, only 26% of individuals who indicated a desire to join the military actually joined.⁶ The decision whether or not to join the U.S. military is complex and typically influenced by many internal and external factors,⁷ including financial assistance with education, job training, steady employment, benefits, and propensity to serve.⁷ However, understanding the motivating factors does not fully address current recruiting challenges.

Military recruitment experts offer several reasons for these recruitment challenges. Many potential recruits are pursuing educational opportunities beyond high school.⁸ Continued conflict, both internationally and domestically, also detour potential recruits from not joining.⁸ The current job market offers more opportunities to potential recruits. The Heritage Foundation found that 71% of Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 do not meet eligibility criteria for joining the military.⁹ For example, height and weight or body fat standards are used as qualifiers for all potential recruits. With obesity prevalence increasing in the U.S., the number of potential recruits continues to decline.¹⁰

Despite attempts at understanding the factors that influence the decision to join the U.S. military, limited research exists regarding social factors. Of significant interest is sexual violence in military communities and how it relates to recruitment. Sexual violence, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and accepted by the Department of Defense, encompasses sexual assault and sexual harassment.¹¹ The *DoD Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military* reported 6,769 sexual assaults and 696 reports of sexual harassment.¹² This represents only reported acts of sexual violence. The *2016 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members* reports that 1.2% of active duty members experience sexual assault and 27.1% experience sexual harassment.¹³ Therefore, an estimated 15,463 sexual assaults and 349,210 sexual harassments occurred in 2016.

Sexual violence within military communities has been gaining attention in the media for several years. A few of the more notable military sexual violence cases were the 1991 Tailhook Scandal, 1996 Aberdeen Proving Grounds assaults, 2003 United State Air Force Academy Sexual Assault Scandal, 2013 Army Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Coordinator Prostitution Ring, and 2017 Marines United. These cases reflect only a tiny portion of the sexual

violence that occurs in military communities, but they gained significant media attention. In 1991, at least 83 women were sexually assaulted at a conference attended by Naval personnel, and investigative reports indicated this was not the first year for this behavior.¹⁴ Only a few years later in 1996, male drill sergeants preyed on young female soldiers in a game referred to as GAM (Playing the Game).¹⁵ A special hotline was set up for complaints resulting in thousands of abuse complaints.¹⁶ In 2003, an Air Force cadet emailed several news outlets to bring awareness to sexual assaults and the cover ups that were prevalent at the Air Force Academy.¹⁷ In 2013, an Academy Award nominee documentary, the “Invisible War”, highlighted the epidemic of rape within the U.S. military.¹⁸ Also, in 2013, an Army Sexual Harassment Response and Prevention Coordinator solicited economically-disadvantaged female soldiers to join a prostitution ring.¹⁹ This soldier was convicted and served time in military prison, but when released his conviction was never reported to civilian authorities. His conviction would have disqualified him as a foster parent, but because it was unknown, he was approved. Finally, in 2017, in a scandal known as “Marines United”, members of the military shared nude photos of female Marines online without their consent.²⁰ The aforementioned instances represent only some of the cases reported in the media over the past 26 years that have exposed potential recruits to the sexual violence that occurs in military communities.

After years of military sexual assault cases shown in the media, the Pew Research Center, in conjunction with the Washington Post, was the first to examine the view of the general public on sexual assault in the military. The 2013 survey found that “81% of Americans saw sexual assault in the military as an extremely or very important issue”.²¹ Additionally, 40% of respondents indicated sexual assaults were a result of military culture.²¹ Most importantly, 38%

of Americans stated that concerns about sexual assaults in military communities were sufficient enough to dissuade a female friend or daughter from joining the military.²¹

In 2017, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) also expressed concerns that sexual violence in military communities portrayed in the media may impact recruiting.⁶ To understand this, OSD asked the RAND Corporation to explore if sexual violence in the military was a factor in recruiting women.⁶ RAND conducted a qualitative study that included in-depth interviews and focus groups. The study was focused on new recruits, recruiters, and recruiting leadership. The results obtained by RAND confirmed many of the Pew study findings. RAND reported that sexual violence in military communities did not appear to be a strong factor for female recruits when considering joining the U.S. military.⁶ However, family and friends of recruits were more likely to worry about sexual violence in military communities. Several limitations existed in this study. First, the U.S. military branches requested that RAND not ask about sexual violence in the military directly, but only if it emerged organically.⁶ Second, it looked at females only and failed to consider males. Finally, this study only included those who joined and excluded those who decided not to join the U.S. military.

With mounting concerns from many sectors and declining military recruitment, it is imperative that the impact of sexual violence in military communities be examined. It is also important to understand motivating factors among those who ultimately chose *not to join* the U.S. military. We found no previous study examining how perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affect decisions among individuals who did not join the U.S. military. Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine to what extent perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected the decision to not join the U.S. military. The term “join” refers to both enlisting and commissioning in the U.S. military.

Methods

Survey

We conducted a pilot study using an online survey to address the research question. To create the survey, we conducted a literature review to identify variables related to recruitment and sexual violence in military communities. We conducted semi-structured interviews with three experts in the fields of general military affairs, military sexual violence, and military recruitment to further our understanding of factors related to joining the U.S. military.

To test the content validity of the survey, we conducted a three-step assessment. First, we used Survey Quality Predictor, a free online tool, to help determine the quality of the survey questions.²² SQP is a tool that helps design better questions for surveys, by providing a prediction of the reliability, validity, and quality of individual questions by examining the formal and linguistic characteristics of survey questions.²² We made adjustments as needed to address quality or reliability concerns after validation. Second, three practice experts provided an analysis of the survey that focused on characteristics that were likely to present problems when administered. The final step included cognitive interviews to examine the question-response process and the degree of difficulty participants may experience as they form their answers. This step is particularly useful when asking sensitive questions, as it examines how a person considers their thoughts and feelings in their responses. We interviewed three individuals who were representative of the target population to evaluate the questions against their measured objectives, and we adjusted survey questions based on the results of the interview.

The survey was administered online using the survey software system QuestionPro.²³ The survey consisted of one open-ended question, eight questions related to sexual violence, 17 questions related to other factors that could determine the decision not to join the U.S. military,

and 12 demographic questions (see Appendix 4.C for the full survey). The research team hosted and administered the survey. However, Research Now Survey Sampling International[®], described below, directed all eligible participants to the survey.

Participants

Study participants were required to meet three eligibility criteria: between the ages of 18 and 30 years of age, reside within 300 miles of a U.S. military installation based in the 50 states or Washington D.C., and never served in the U.S. military. The age requirements were based on the lowest age eligibility to serve in the U.S. military without parental consent and current military demographics. Given the eligibility criteria, our target population was difficult to access (i.e., no specific recruitment venue). We obtained a robust sample from Research Now Survey Sampling International (RN SSI[®]). RN SSI[®] is a leading provider of first-party consumer and professional data based on extensive proprietary market research panels.²⁴ RN SSI[®] recruits and maintains a cohort of more than 60 million people globally, equating to the largest consumer panels in the industry.²⁴

Variables

Because of the novel and sensitive nature of this research, it was important to obtain a spontaneous and unbiased response from participants regarding their main reasons for not joining the U.S. military. Therefore, an open-ended question was included as the first item in the online survey. See Appendix 4.B for the results of the Qualitative Analysis of the Open-Ended Question.

Sixteen potential predictor or confounding variables were selected for analysis with the main outcome of interest. The main outcome variable was based on the following survey item: *“My perceptions of sexual violence in the U.S. military community affected my decision to NOT*

join the military.” For the purposes of analysis, Strongly Agree and Agree responses were coded as Yes (i.e., those with the outcome of interest), and Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree responses were coded as No. To simplify discussion, our main outcome is henceforth referred to as “not join due to perceptions”.

We examined eight demographic variables, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, income, employment status, and marital status. Due to the low response rate in specific categories of some variables, recoding was required for analysis of the following variables. For gender, Transgender, Do Not Identify, and Prefer Not to Answer responses were recoded as Other. Because multiple responses were possible for race, we recoded race as White/Caucasian, Black/African American, and Other (including Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other, multiple races, or Prefer Not to Answer). Education was recoded into High School or Less, Less than 4 Years of College, and Bachelors or Higher. We recoded employment status as Employed and Not Employed. We recoded annual family income as <\$25,000 -\$34,999, \$35,000-\$74,999, \$75,000+, and Prefer Not to Answer. Finally, we recoded the responses for marital status into Do Not Belong and Belong to a Couple (henceforth, referred to as “coupled”).

There were eight survey items related to sexual violence. We assessed the frequency of media exposure to sexual harassment and sexual assault in military communities. Next, we assessed perceptions related to the frequency of sexual harassment in the U.S. military community compared to all other U.S. workplaces and sexual assault in the U.S. military compared to the general population. We also asked individuals their perceptions of how likely they would be to experience sexual harassment or sexual assault if they joined the U.S. military. Finally, we asked about past experiences with sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Analysis

We first conducted descriptive statistics on the variables of interest. To begin to explore the associations between perceptions of sexual violence in military communities and the decision to not join the U.S. military due to perceptions, we conducted bivariate analyses. Next, we incorporated all significant potential predictors from the bivariate analyses into a multivariable logistic regression. We used backward elimination of non-significant variables to determine the final predictive model. We used the likelihood ratio test and the Hosmer-Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit test to assess model performance. Based on previous knowledge, we considered gender a potential effect modifier based on its association with other sexual violence exposure variables. Therefore, we conducted logistic regression models that included gender-sexual violence variable interaction terms. Because significant interaction was identified, we stratified our main predictive model by gender and present results separately for male and female participants. We conducted all analyses in SAS version 9.4.²⁵

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 1,093 participants started the survey, and 941 (86.1%) completed the entire survey. Of the 941, two (0.2%) participants were removed due to prior military service and three (0.3%) due to country codes outside of the 50 states and Washington D.C. Our final sample included 936 individuals. The mean age of participants was 25 years (SD: 3.6). There were 293 (31.1%) males, 626 (66.8%) females, and 17 (1.8%) listing other gender choice. There were 698 (74.6%) White/Caucasians, 97 (10.4%) Black/African Americans, and 141 (15.1%) other race included in the sample. Among participants, 149 (15.9%) identified as Hispanic or Latino. Additional demographic characteristics are provided in Table 4.1.

Exposure to and Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

Among respondents, 28.6% observed media reports of sexual harassment and 24.5% observed media reports of sexual assault in military communities very frequently or frequently (Table 4.2). Compared to other workplaces in the U.S., 29.9% of respondents indicated sexual harassment occurred more frequently in U.S. military workplaces and 21.4% indicated sexual assault occurred more frequently in U.S. military communities. A large proportion of respondents indicated they believed they would be very likely or somewhat likely to experience sexual harassment (48.6%) or sexual assault (44.7%) if they joined the U.S. military. **Almost one-third of participants indicated that their perceptions of sexual violence in U.S. military communities influenced their decision not to join the military.** Of the 936 respondents, 41.1% indicated past sexual harassment and 29.4% indicated past sexual assault experiences.

Bivariate Associations with Not Joining Due to Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

In bivariate analyses (Table 4.3), 12 of the 16 variables were significantly associated with the decision not to join based on perceptions of sexual violence in military communities; age, gender, race, and coupled were not. Among significant associations, 36.2% of Hispanic participants did not join because of their perceptions of sexual violence compared to 26.1% of non-Hispanic participants ($p = 0.01$). Those with a bachelor's degree or higher (35.6%) were more likely not to join because of their perceptions compared to those with less than four years of college (24.1%) or high school diploma or less (23.4%; $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, more employed participants (30.8%) indicated not joining because of their perceptions of sexual violence compared to those not employed (22.0%; $p < 0.01$). Individuals earning an annual income of \$75,000+ (35.1%) were more likely than any other income bracket to indicate that

their perceptions influenced them to not join ($p = 0.04$). Participants frequently exposed to media reports of sexual harassment (65.3%) or sexual assault (79.8%) were more likely to not join based on their perceptions of sexual violence than those with less media exposure (both p -values < 0.01). Belief that sexual harassment occurred more often in the military community compared to other U.S. workplaces was associated with not joining due to perceptions of sexual violence ($p < 0.01$). The same held true among participants who stated they believed sexual assault occurred more often in military communities compared to the rest of the U.S. (43.5%). Participants who believed they were very likely to experience sexual harassment or sexual assault if they joined the military were more likely to indicate their perceptions of sexual violence influenced them not joining than others (both p -values < 0.01). Finally, participants with past experience of sexual harassment (36.7%) or sexual assault (36.7%) were more likely not to join because of their perceptions than those with no history of sexual violence (both p -values < 0.01).

Multivariable Associations with Not Joining Due to Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

After backwards elimination of non-significant variables, only five variables remained significant in the final predictive model; perceived personal risk of sexual harassment if joining the military, perceived personal risk of sexual assault if joining the military, frequency of observing media coverage about sexual assault in military communities, frequency of sexual assault in military communities, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (Table 4.4). This final reduced set of variables was the best fitting model of all those considered based on goodness-of-fit tests. Participants who believed they were very likely to experience sexual harassment if they joined the U.S. military were 4.7 times (CI: 2.18, 10.06) as likely to not join because of their perceptions than those who believed it was not likely to happen. Those who indicated they were

somewhat likely to experience sexual harassment in the military were 2.5 times (CI: 1.38, 4.53) as likely to not join compared to the reference group. Those who believed it was very likely they would experience sexual assault if they joined the U.S. military were 3.3 times (CI: 1.46, 7.62) as likely to not join because of their perceptions than those who believed it was not likely to happen. Those who believed they were somewhat likely to experience sexual assault in the military were 2.2 times (CI: 1.23, 3.85) as likely to not join compared to the reference group. Participants who indicated they saw military sexual assault in the media very frequently were 12.3 times (CI: 4.69, 32.03) as likely to not join the military because of their perceptions of sexual violence. Even those who said they saw military sexual assault in the media only frequently were 7.7 times (CI: 3.32, 17.95) as likely to not join because of their perceptions. Participants who indicated they saw military sexual assault in the media occasionally were 2.8 times (CI: 1.27, 6.34) as likely to not join. Participants who stated they believed sexual assault in military communities occurred more frequently than in the general U.S. population were 2.2 times (CI: 1.33, 3.54) as likely to not join. Those who believed sexual assault occurred at about the same frequency were 2.1 times (CI: 1.28, 3.28) as likely to not join. Finally, participants who identified as Hispanic or Latino were 1.9 times (CI: 1.15, 2.99) as likely to not join the U.S. military because of their perceptions of sexual violence in the military.

In Summary, the strongest association was seen with participants who indicated they saw military sexual assault in the media very frequently were 12.3 times (CI: 4.69, 32.03) as likely to not join the military because of their perceptions of sexual violence. Followed by those who saw military sexual assault in the media only frequently were 7.7 times (CI: 3.32, 17.95) as likely to not join because of their perceptions.

Bivariate Associations with Not Joining Due to Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities – Stratified by Gender

As previously discussed, we considered gender a potential effect modifier based on its association with other sexual violence exposure variables. Therefore, we explored sexual violence variable interaction terms by gender.

Males. Among males, nine of the 14 predictors were statistically significant (Table 4.5). In stratified bivariate analysis by males, 38.5% of males with a bachelor's degree or higher did not join based on their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities ($p=0.02$). Male participants with a high school diploma or less had a higher percentage of males (28.2%) not joining because of their perceptions compared to those with less than four years of college (20.4%). Male participants who were very frequently exposed to sexual harassment (70.7%) or sexual assault (89.5%) in the media had a higher percentage of participants not join because of their perceptions ($p<0.0001$). Males who believed sexual harassment occurred more often (59.5%) in the military community compared to other U.S. workplaces were more likely to not join the U.S military based on their perceptions than other categories ($p<0.0001$). The same holds for participants who believed sexual assault occurred more often (56.3%) in military communities compared to the rest of the U.S ($p<0.0001$). Males who believed they were very likely to experience sexual harassment (81.8%) or sexual assault (89.7%) if they joined the military indicated their perceptions influenced them not joining ($p<0.0001$). As perceived risk of experiencing sexual harassment or sexual assault decreased so did the percentage of participants that indicated not joining because of their perceptions. Finally, males who had experienced sexual harassment (50.0%) or sexual assault (60.6%) in the past had a higher percentage of

individuals not join because of their perceptions ($p=0.0001$). Race, ethnicity, employment, annual income, and relationship status were not statistically significant.

Females. Among females, 11 of 14 predictors were statistically significant; ethnicity, education, employed, frequency of observing media coverage about sexual harassment in military communities, frequency of observing media coverage about sexual assault in military communities, frequency of sexual harassment in military communities vs. other workplaces, frequency of sexual assault in military communities vs. general population, perceived personal risk of sexual harassment if joining the military, perceived personal risk of sexual assault if joining the military, past experience of sexual harassment, and past experience of sexual assault (Table 4.6). Among females, 41.0% of Hispanic participants said they would not join because of their perceptions compared to 23.6% of non-Hispanic participants ($p=0.0003$). Those with a bachelor's degree or higher had the highest percentage who would not join at 34.0% compared to less than four years of college (24.8%) and High School or less (21.4%; $p=0.0123$). Furthermore, a higher percentage of participants who were employed (30.5%) indicated not joining compared to those not employed (20.5%, $p=0.0049$). Female participants who indicated they were very frequently exposed to sexual harassment or sexual assault in the media had a higher percentage of participants not join (sexual harassment =60.4%; sexual assault=76.1%; $p<0.0001$). Participants who stated they believed sexual harassment occurred more often in the military community compared to other U.S. workplaces had a higher percentage (47.9%) not join ($p<0.0001$). The same holds true from females who stated they believed sexual assault occurred more often in military communities compared to the rest of the U.S. (55.8%; $p<0.0001$). Female participants who believed they were very likely to experience sexual harassment or sexual assault if they joined the military indicated their perceptions influenced them not joining (sexual

harassment=65.2%; sexual assault=67.1%; $p<0.0001$). Finally, participants who indicated they had experienced sexual harassment (34.3%) or sexual assault (33.1%) in the past had a higher percentage of individuals not join ($p=0.0112$). Table 4.6 provides results of bivariate analyses by females. All p -values for the reported bivariate associations were <0.05 .

Multivariable Logistic Regression- Stratified by Gender

In the final multivariable logistic regression model by gender, five variables remained significant. Similar to the main outcome model, based on goodness-of-fit tests, this final reduced model was the best of all models considered. Female participants who believed it was very likely they would experience sexual harassment if they joined the U.S. military were 6.94 (CI: 2.56, 18.84) as likely to not join. Both male and female participants who believed they were somewhat likely to experience sexual harassment if they joined the U.S. military were 4.14 (CI: 1.48, 11.57) and 2.75 (CI: 1.20, 6.32) as likely to not join, respectively.

Males who believed it was very likely they would experience sexual assault if they joined the U.S. military were 12.42 (CI: 2.21, 69.76) as likely to not join the U.S. military. Female participants who believed it was very likely they would experience sexual assault if they joined the U.S. military were 2.85 (CI: 1.04, 7.80) as likely to not join. Female participants who believed it was somewhat likely they would experience sexually assault were 2.86 (CI: 1.36, 5.99) as likely to not join the U.S. military.

Male and female participants who indicated they saw sexual assault in military communities in the media very frequently were 6.30 (CI: 1.12, 35.48) and 16.74 (CI: 4.79, 58.50) as likely to not join, respectively. Females who indicated they saw sexual assault in military communities in the media frequently or occasionally were 11.78 (CI: 3.87, 35.83) and 5.06 (CI: 1.75, 14.64) as likely to not join the U.S. military, respectively.

Female participants who believed sexual assault in military communities occurred more frequently than the general population were 2.98 (CI: 1.66, 5.34) as likely to not join. Female participants who believed sexual assault in military communities occurred about the same frequency were still 2.63 (CI: 1.45, 4.75) as likely to not join the U.S. military.

Female participants who identified as Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity were 2.63 (CI: 1.46, 4.77) as likely to not join the U.S. military due to their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities. Table 4.7 provides results of adjusted odds ratios for both males and females for all significant predictor variables included in the final model.

Discussion

Main Outcome

Our study aimed at understanding to what extent the perception of sexual violence in military communities affected a decision not to join the U.S. military. **Overall, more than a quarter of the respondents stated their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision.** With a shrinking number of eligible recruits, the effect of sexual violence in military communities on potential recruits demands serious attention and action.

Not surprisingly, we found the strongest predictor of not joining the military was the frequency of seeing military sexual assault in the media. Media exposure has been widely researched. As potential recruits and others are exposed to more sexual violence in military communities via the media, the less likely they are to join the U.S. military. In the RAND study, it appears that the OSD was correct in worrying about the effects of media attention and the impact on recruiting.

Frequency of exposure to sexual harassment in the media was not a significant predictor of not joining in the final model, but it was significant in the bivariate analysis. One explanation for this could be the acceptance of the sexual harassment myth. The sexual harassment myth embodies several societal beliefs including 1) that women invite the sexual harassment, 2) that sexual harassment in the workplace is normalized or accepted as inevitable, and 3) that sexual harassment is fun and harmless.²⁶ This explanation is further supported by the previously discussed RAND study. Female recruits were quoted as saying “Sexual harassment doesn’t just happen in the military” and that they used different tactics to mitigate sexual harassment.⁶ Although exposure to sexual harassment in the media was not statistically significant for our study, it does raise more questions about our society’s acceptance of sexual harassment. Perceived likelihood of sexual harassment or sexual assault were both significant predictors of not joining. Given the previous findings of media exposure and sexual harassment in military communities it was interesting to find that sexual harassment along with sexual assault was a significant predictor. However, we start to understand if we consider the differences in the questions posed to respondents. The basic difference in the questions is observing versus experiencing sexual violence. We asked respondents to go beyond seeing how sexual violence affected others. We wanted them to imagine themselves joining the military and to indicate how likely they were to experience sexual violence. The perceived risk for respondents when imagining themselves in the military could have been higher making sexual harassment and sexual assault significant predictors. Furthermore, this can be explained by the vulnerability hypothesis. The vulnerability hypothesis is a person’s perception of the probability of being victimized in combination with their own evaluation of their control, defensive mechanisms, physical abilities, and level of resistant.¹ When perceptions of vulnerability increase for

individuals so do their fear of the risk. This theory, together with our society's acceptance of the sexual harassment myth, could help to explain why perceived likelihood of sexual harassment was higher.

The belief that sexual assault in military communities occurred more frequently than in the general population was a significant predictor of not joining the U.S. military. This finding, although not surprising, is an important area to consider for future research. A better understanding and approach to risk factors associated with sexual violence in the military is imperative to ending sexual violence in military communities.

Ethnicity was also a significant predictor for not joining. Respondents who identified as Hispanic or Latino were more likely to say their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision to not join the U.S. military. Research has shown that ethnic minorities have a higher level of fear of crime than Caucasians.¹ Also, nationwide prevalence studies have consistently found higher rates of sexual violence experiences among Hispanic or Latino women.²⁷ This could increase perceived risk and explain why perceptions of sexual violence in military communities would affect their decision to not join the U.S. military.

Stratified by Gender

In our bivariate analysis, we found gender was not significant. However, based on previous knowledge, we wanted to examine if gender was an effect modifier of the association with other sexual violence exposure variables. By using multivariable logistic regression, we were able to determine that four sexual violence variables (perceived personal risk of sexual harassment if joining the military, perceived personal risk of sexual assault if joining the military, frequency of observing media coverage about sexual assault in military communities, and frequency of sexual assault in military communities vs. general population) and one non-

sexual violence variable (Hispanic or Latino ethnicity) were significant predictors of not joining the U.S. military based on perceptions of sexual violence.

Males who believed it was very likely they would be sexually assaulted if they joined the U.S. military were almost 10 times as likely to not join based on their perceptions compared to females. We found this surprising, as females in the military and in the general population experience sexual assault at a higher rate than males. We expected females who believed they were very likely to be sexual assaulted if they joined the U.S. military to have higher odds of not joining. This result could be partially explained when we explore the differences between the effect of sexual assaults on males and females. Although males and females both experience similar feelings such as fear, anger, and confusion, and have a higher risk for anxiety and depression males have unique issues.

Males have a higher rate of under-reporting, which can give the appearance that male sexual assaults are rare. Under-reporting can be attributed to many social and cultural factors that negatively affect males who experience sexual assault.²⁸ Some myths that perpetuate under-reporting involve seeing male sexual assault as rare, believing men should be able to resist, men should be able to deal with the assault, and if sexually assaulted by a women they are lucky.²⁸ Many of these myths can be viewed through societal perceptions of masculinity.

Although females may also have similar experiences, males often struggle with their physiological responses such as arousal and/or ejaculation during the assault. Although these physiological responses are normal, it can negatively affect males and perpetuate the rate of under-reporting. Sexual assault response services are often nonexistent for males or unprepared to work with the unique needs of males.²⁸ Considering the military is a hyper-masculine culture,

it should not be surprising that males with past sexual assault experience would be less likely to join the U.S. military.

Not surprising was that frequency of observing sexual violence in military communities in the media had a greater odds ratio for females (16.74; CI: 4.79, 58.50) compared to males (6.30; CI: 1.12, 35.48). This variable appears to be a strong predictor for both females and males when they indicate sexual violence in military communities affected his/her decision to not join the U.S. military.

Of the five variables in the final multivariable logistic regression, not joining the military based on perceptions among males was only significantly associated with perceived personal risk of sexual harassment if joining the military, perceived personal risk of sexual assault if joining the military, and frequency of observing media coverage about sexual assault in military communities. This outcome among females was significantly associated with all five predictor variables. Females who believed sexual violence occurred more often or even at the same frequency in military communities vs. other workplaces or the general population were more likely to not join. Finally, females that identified as Hispanic or Latino were more likely to not join based on their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities.

This analysis by gender is an exploratory analysis and not the main objective of the study. Further research is needed to specifically examine males and perceptions of sexual violence in military communities. Research in this field is limited and a better understanding is needed. A qualitative approach should be included to explore possible unknown factors.

Recommendations

Based on all findings, in order to decrease victimization in military communities and increase recruiting overall, we recommend the following:

- Sexual violence is a problem in military communities. Until the problem is met head on, will all aspects being addressed, from prevention to response, negative perceptions will persist. A true comprehensive approach to sexual violence is necessary.
- Sexual violence in the media has shown to be a predictor of not joining. In conjunction with addressing the sexual violence problem head on, full transparency for recruits and influencers is necessary. This must include a comprehensive approach to sexual violence in military communities that includes all members of the community, reporting all sexual violence in military communities, and finally policies and approaches that are grounded in research.

Limitations

With no prior research that considers recruitment and sexual violence in military communities, this study is in the beginning stages. This study has some limitations. This study required the development of a new survey as well as the use of new technology for recruiting participants. For these reasons, this study is designated as a pilot study. Given there was no recruitment venue for our population, we used a robust online convenience sample. As such, our sample does not necessarily represent the population of 18 to 30-year-olds not in the military. Therefore, our results are not generalizable. Our sample size was sufficient based on the limited previous research, but future research should include a larger sample size in order to increase power and detect any differences in the presence of potential confounding factors.

Conclusion

We believe this study is the first attempt to look at public perceptions of sexual violence in U.S. military communities and how it affects recruitment. We have taken the first steps in closing the gap in this research, but more research is greatly needed. Overall, the findings in this

study affirm both the previously discussed concerns of OSD and the Pew report. Perceptions of sexual violence in military communities has a negative effect on some individuals when considering the military as a viable option.

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Appendix 4.A

Tables

Table 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Total N (%)
Age, years (mean [SD])	25.00 [3.58]
Gender	
Male	292 (31.30)
Female	626 (66.88)
Other	17 (1.82)
Race	
White/Caucasian	698 (74.57)
Black/African American	97 (10.36)
Other	141 (15.06)
Ethnicity	
Not Hispanic or Latino	787 (84.08)
Hispanic or Latino	149 (15.92)
Education	
High School or Less	308 (32.91)
Less than 4 Year College	319 (34.08)
Bachelors or Higher	309 (33.01)
Employed	
No	336 (35.90)
Yes	600 (64.10)
Annual Income	
<\$25,000-\$34,9999	359 (38.35)
\$35,000-\$74,999	336 (35.90)
\$75,999+	214 (22.86)
Prefer Not to Answer	27 (2.88)
Coupled	
Do Not Belong to Couple	427 (45.62)
Belong to Couple	509 (54.38)

Abbreviations: SD (standard deviation).

Table 4.2. Exposure to and Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

Characteristic	Total N (%)
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage About SH in Military Communities	
Very Frequently	95 (10.15)
Frequently	172 (18.38)
Occasionally	309 (33.01)
Rarely	233 (24.89)
Never	127 (13.57)
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage About SA in Military Communities	
Very Frequently	84 (8.97)
Frequently	145 (15.49)
Occasionally	145 (15.49)
Rarely	232 (24.79)
Never	157 (16.77)
Frequency of SH in Military Communities (Compared to Other Workplaces)	
More Frequently	280 (29.91)
About the Same Frequency	228 (24.36)
Less Frequent	295 (31.52)
Undecided	133 (14.21)
Frequency of SA in Military Communities (Compared to General Population)	
More Frequently	200 (21.37)
About the Same Frequency	244 (26.07)
Less Frequent	350 (37.39)
Undecided	142 (15.17)
Perceived Personal Risk of SH if Joining the Military	
Very Likely	163 (17.41)
Somewhat Likely	292 (31.20)
Not Likely	309 (33.01)
Do Not Know	172 (18.38)
Perceived Personal Risk of SA if Joining the Military	
Very Likely	122 (13.03)
Somewhat Likely	297 (31.73)
Not Likely	338 (36.11)
Do Not Know	179 (19.12)
Past SH Experience	
No	503 (53.74)
Yes	387 (41.35)
Prefer Not to Answer	46 (4.91)
Past SA Experience	
No	614 (65.60)
Yes	275 (29.38)
Prefer Not to Answer	47(5.02)

Abbreviations: SH (Sexual Harassment); SA (Sexual Assault).

Table 4.3. Bivariate Analysis of Not Joining Due to Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

Characteristic	Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Influenced Decision to Not Join		Chi-Square p-value
	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	
Age, years (mean [SD])	25.16 [3.58]	25.49 [3.47]	0.3648
Gender			0.2609
Male	87 (29.69)	206 (70.31)	
Female	165 (26.36)	461 (73.64)	
Other	7 (41.18)	10 (58.82)	
Race			0.5219
White	187 (26.79)	511 (73.21)	
Black	31 (31.96)	66 (68.04)	
Other	41 (29.08)	100 (70.92)	
Ethnicity			0.0108
Not Hispanic/Latino	205 (26.05)	582 (73.95)	
Hispanic/Latino	54 (36.24)	95 (63.76)	
Education			0.0007
High School or Less	72 (23.38)	236 (76.62)	
Less than 4 Year College	77 (24.14)	242 (75.86)	
Bachelors or Higher	110 (35.60)	199 (64.40)	
Employed			0.0039
No	74 (22.02)	262 (77.98)	
Yes	185 (30.83)	415 (69.17)	
Annual Income			0.0385
<\$25,000-\$34,999	90 (25.07)	269 (74.93)	
\$35,000-\$74,999	89 (26.49)	247 (73.51)	
\$75,000 +	75 (35.05)	139 (64.95)	
Prefer Not to Answer	5 (18.52)	22 (81.48)	
Relationship Status			0.9013
Do Not Belong to Couple	119 (27.87)	308 (27.87)	
Belong to Couple	140 (27.50)	369 (72.50)	
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SH in Military Communities			<0.0001
Very Frequently	62 (65.26)	33 (34.74)	
Frequently	91 (52.91)	81 (47.09)	
Occasionally	74 (23.95)	235 (76.06)	
Rarely	23 (9.87)	210 (90.13)	
Never	9 (7.09)	118 (92.91)	
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SA in Military Communities			<0.0001
Very Frequently	67 (79.76)	17 (20.24)	
Frequently	81 (55.86)	64 (44.14)	

Table 4.3. Bivariate Analysis of Not Joining Due to Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities (continued)

Characteristic	Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Influenced Decision to Not Join		Chi-Square p-value
	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	
Occasionally	79 (24.84)	239 (75.16)	
Rarely	23 (9.91)	209 (90.09)	
Never	9 (5.73)	148 (94.27)	
Frequency of SH in Military Communities (vs. Other Workplaces)			<0.0001
More Frequently	145 (51.79)	135 (48.21)	
About the Same Frequency	57 (25.00)	171 (75.00)	
Less Frequent	42 (14.24)	253 (85.76)	
Undecided	15 (11.28)	118 (88.72)	
Frequency of SA in Military Communities (vs. General Population)			<0.0001
More Frequently	87 (43.50)	113 (59.50)	
About the Same Frequency	174 (71.31)	70 (28.69)	
Less Frequent	287 (82.00)	63 (18.00)	
Undecided	129 (90.85)	13 (9.15)	
Perceived Personal Risk of SH if Joining the Military			<0.0001
Very Likely	113 (69.33)	50 (30.67)	
Somewhat Likely	104 (35.62)	188 (64.38)	
Not Likely	27 (8.74)	282 (91.26)	
Do Not Know	15 (8.72)	157 (91.28)	
Perceived Personal Risk of SA if Joining the Military			<0.0001
Very Likely	90 (73.77)	32 (26.23)	
Somewhat Likely	121 (40.74)	176 (59.26)	
Not Likely	33 (9.76)	305 (90.24)	
Do Not Know	15 (8.38)	164 (91.62)	
Past Experience of SH			<0.0001
No	109 (21.67)	394 (78.33)	
Yes	142 (36.69)	245 (63.31)	
Prefer Not to Answer	8 (17.39)	38 (82.61)	
Past Experience of SA			0.0003
No	147 (23.94)	467 (76.06)	
Yes	101 (36.73)	174 (63.27)	
Prefer Not to Answer	36 (76.60)	11 (23.40)	

Abbreviations: SH (Sexual Harassment); SA (Sexual Assault).

Variables in bold are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05).

*P-value for independent pooled t-test.

Table 4.4. Significant Associations with Not Joining the Military because of Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

Characteristics	Unadjusted OR	95% CI	Adjusted OR	95% CI
<i>Perceived Personal Risk of SH if Joining the Military</i>				
Very Likely vs. Not Likely	23.60	14.08, 39.56	4.68	2.18, 10.06
Somewhat Likely vs. Not Likely	5.78	3.64, 9.17	2.50	1.38, 4.53
Do Not Know vs. Not Likely	1.00	0.52, 1.93	1.52	0.62, 3.74
<i>Perceived Personal Risk of SA if Joining the Military</i>				
Very Likely vs. Not Likely	25.99	15.15, 44.61	3.34	1.46, 7.62
Somewhat Likely vs. Not Likely	6.35	4.15, 9.74	2.18	1.23, 3.85
Do Not Know vs. Not Likely	0.85	0.45, 1.60	1.10	0.46, 2.64
<i>Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SA in Military Communities</i>				
Very Frequently vs. Never	64.81	27.48, 152.83	12.26	4.69, 32.03
Frequently vs. Never	20.81	9.85, 43.99	7.72	3.32, 17.95
Occasionally vs. Never	5.44	2.65, 11.16	2.83	1.27, 6.34
Rarely vs. Never	1.81	0.81, 4.02	1.54	0.65, 3.70
<i>Frequency of SA in Military Communities (vs. General Population)</i>				
More Frequently vs. Less Frequently	5.92	4.00, 8.74	2.17	1.33, 3.54
About the Same Frequently vs. Less Frequently	1.83	1.24, 2.70	2.05	1.28, 3.28
Undecided vs. Less Frequently	0.46	0.24, 0.86	0.91	0.43, 1.91
<i>Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity</i>				
Yes vs. No	1.61	1.12, 2.34	1.86	1.15, 2.99

Abbreviations: SH (Sexual Harassment); SA (Sexual Assault).

Variables in bold are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05).

Table 4.5. Not Joining Based on Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Among Males

Characteristic	Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Influenced Decision to Not Join		Chi-Square p-value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Age, years (mean [SD])	25.32 [3.80]	25.37 [3.61]	0.9140
Race			0.5246
White	58 (29.59)	138 (70.41)	
Black	16 (35.56)	29 (64.44)	
Other	13 (25.00)	39 (75.00)	
Ethnicity			0.4956
Not Hispanic/Latino	75 (30.49)	171 (69.51)	
Hispanic/Latino	12 (25.53)	35 (74.47)	
Education			0.0147
High School or Less	22 (28.21)	56 (28.21)	
Less than 4 Year College	20 (20.41)	78 (79.59)	
Bachelors or Higher	45 (38.46)	72 (61.54)	
Employed			0.6539
No	19 (27.54)	50 (72.46)	
Yes	68 (30.36)	156 (69.64)	
Annual Income			0.2739
<\$25,000-\$34,999	23 (25.84)	66 (74.16)	
\$35,000-\$74,999	29 (28.71)	72 (71.29)	
\$75,000 +	35 (35.35)	64 (64.65)	
Prefer Not to Answer	0 (0.00)	4 (100.00)	
Relationship Status			0.7018
Do Not Belong to Couple	49 (28.82)	121 (71.18)	
Belong to Couple	38 (30.89)	85 (69.11)	
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SH in Military Communities			<0.0001
Very Frequently	29 (70.73)	12 (29.27)	
Frequently	29 (58.00)	21 (42.00)	
Occasionally	20 (20.41)	78 (79.59)	
Rarely	4 (5.97)	63 (94.03)	
Never	5 (13.51)	32 (86.49)	
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SA in Military Communities			<0.0001
Very Frequently	32 (89.49)	5 (13.51)	
Frequently	28 (57.14)	21 (42.86)	
Occasionally	18 (18.37)	80 (81.63)	
Rarely	5 (7.81)	59 (92.19)	
Never	4 (8.89)	41 (91.11)	

Table 4.5. Not Joining Based on Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Among Males (continued)

Characteristic	Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Influenced Decision to Not Join		Chi-Square p-value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Frequency of SH in Military Communities (vs. Other Workplaces)			<0.0001
More Frequently	47 (59.49)	32 (40.51)	
About the Same Frequency	28 (30.11)	65 (69.89)	
Less Frequent	10 (12.50)	70 (87.50)	
Undecided	2 (4.88)	39 (95.12)	
Frequency of SA in Military Communities (vs. General Population)			<0.0001
More Frequently	36 (56.25)	28 (43.75)	
About the Same Frequency	30 (32.26)	63 (67.74)	
Less Frequent	18 (19.15)	76 (80.85)	
Undecided	3 (7.14)	39 (92.86)	
Perceived Personal Risk of SH if Joining the Military			<0.0001
Very Likely	36 (81.82)	8 (18.18)	
Somewhat Likely	32 (53.33)	28 (46.67)	
Not Likely	17 (10.63)	143 (89.38)	
Do Not Know	2 (6.90)	27 (93.10)	
Perceived Personal Risk of SA if Joining the Military			<0.0001
Very Likely	35 (89.74)	4 (10.26)	
Somewhat Likely	34 (53.13)	30 (46.88)	
Not Likely	17 (10.97)	138 (89.03)	
Do Not Know	1 (2.86)	34 (97.14)	
Past Experience of SH			0.0003
No	57 (24.36)	177 (75.64)	
Yes	26 (50.00)	26 (50.00)	
Prefer Not to Answer	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)	
Past Experience of SA			0.0001
No	64 (25.30)	189 (74.70)	
Yes	20 (60.61)	13 (39.39)	
Prefer Not to Answer	3 (42.86)	4 (57.14)	

SH (Sexual Harassment), SA (Sexual Assault)

Variables in bold are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05)

Table 4.6. Not Joining Based on Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Among Females

Characteristic	Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Influenced Decision to Not Join		Chi-Square p-value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Age, years (mean [SD])	25.22 [3.44]	25.41 [3.41]	0.5369
Race			0.4884
White	124 (25.25)	367 (74.75)	
Black	15 (30.00)	35 (70.00)	
Other	26 (30.59)	59 (69.41)	
Ethnicity			0.0003
Not Hispanic/Latino	124 (23.57)	402 (76.43)	
Hispanic/Latino	41 (41.00)	59 (59.00)	
Education			0.0123
High School or Less	48 (21.43)	176 (78.57)	
Less than 4 Year College	53 (24.77)	161 (75.23)	
Bachelors or Higher	64 (34.04)	124 (65.96)	
Employed			0.0049
No	53 (20.46)	206 (79.54)	
Yes	112 (30.52)	255 (69.48)	
Annual Income			0.228
<\$25,000-\$34,999	64 (24.43)	198 (75.57)	
\$35,000-\$74,999	59 (25.43)	173 (74.57)	
\$75,000 +	38 (33.93)	74 (66.07)	
Prefer Not to Answer	4 (20.00)	16 (80.00)	
Relationship Status			0.7997
Do Not Belong to Couple	67 (26.91)	182 (73.09)	
Belong to Couple	98 (25.99)	279 (74.01)	
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SH in Military Communities			<0.0001
Very Frequently	32 (60.38)	21 (39.62)	
Frequently	58 (50.00)	58 (50.00)	
Occasionally	52 (25.24)	154 (74.76)	
Rarely	19 (11.73)	143 (88.27)	
Never	4 (4.49)	85 (95.51)	
Frequency of Observing Media Coverage about SA in Military Communities			<0.0001
Very Frequently	35 (76.09)	11 (23.91)	
Frequently	49 (53.26)	43 (46.74)	
Occasionally	58 (27.49)	153 (72.51)	
Rarely	18 (10.78)	149 (89.22)	
Never	5 (4.55)	105 (95.45)	

Table 4.6. Not Joining Based on Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Among Females (continued)

Characteristic	Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities Influenced Decision to Not Join		Chi-Square p-value
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Frequency of SH in Military Communities (vs. Other Workplaces)			<0.0001
More Frequently	93 (47.94)	101 (52.06)	
About the Same Frequency	28 (21.21)	104 (78.79)	
Less Frequent	32 (15.17)	179 (84.83)	
Undecided	12 (13.48)	77 (86.52)	
Frequency of SA in Military Communities (vs. General Population)			<0.0001
More Frequently	72 (55.81)	57 (44.19)	
About the Same Frequency	40 (26.49)	111 (73.51)	
Less Frequent	43 (17.20)	207 (82.80)	
Undecided	10 (10.42)	86 (89.58)	
Perceived Personal Risk of SH if Joining the Military			<0.0001
Very Likely	75 (65.22)	40 (34.78)	
Somewhat Likely	69 (30.40)	158 (69.60)	
Not Likely	10 (6.76)	138 (93.24)	
Do Not Know	11 (8.09)	125 (91.91)	
Perceived Personal Risk of SA if Joining the Military			<0.0001
Very Likely	53 (67.09)	26 (32.91)	
Somewhat Likely	84 (37.00)	143 (63.00)	
Not Likely	15 (8.29)	166 (91.71)	
Do Not Know	13 (9.35)	126 (90.65)	
Past Experience of SH			<0.0001
No	51 (19.39)	212 (80.61)	
Yes	112 (34.25)	215 (65.75)	
Prefer Not to Answer	2 (5.56)	34 (94.44)	
Past Experience of SA			0.0112
No	80 (22.66)	273 (77.34)	
Yes	78 (33.05)	158 (66.95)	
Prefer Not to Answer	7 (18.92)	30 (81.08)	

SH (Sexual Harassment); SA (Sexual Assault).

Variables in bold are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05).

Table 4.7. Multivariable Logistic Regression Analysis by Gender of Not Joining Based on Perceptions of Sexual Violence in Military Communities

Characteristic	Male Adjusted OR	95% CI	Female Adjusted OR	95% CI
<i>Perceived Personal Risk of SH if Joining the Military</i>				
Very Likely vs. Not Likely	2.92	0.69, 12.37	6.94	2.56, 18.84
Somewhat Likely vs. Not Likely	4.14	1.48, 11.57	2.75	1.20, 6.32
Do Not Know vs. Not Likely	1.56	0.20, 12.19	1.70	0.54-5.36
<i>Perceived Personal Risk of SA if Joining the Military</i>				
Very Likely vs. Not Likely	12.42	2.21, 69.76	2.85	1.04, 7.80
Somewhat Likely vs. Not Likely	2.18	0.7, 6.21	2.86	1.36, 5.99
Do Not Know vs. Not Likely	0.20	0.02, 2.58	2.02	0.71, 5.72
<i>Frequency of Observing Media coverage about SA in Military Communities</i>				
Very Frequently vs. Never	6.30	1.12, 35.48	16.74	4.79, 58.50
Frequently vs. Never	2.66	0.60, 11.67	11.78	3.87, 35.83
Occasionally vs. Never	0.75	0.19, 2.90	5.06	1.75, 14.64
Rarely vs. Never	0.49	0.11, 2.28	2.48	0.80, 7.68
<i>Frequency of SA in Military Communities (vs. General Population)</i>				
More Frequently vs. Less Frequently	0.57	0.19, 1.77	2.98	1.66, 5.34
About the Same Frequency vs. Less Frequently				
Frequently	0.90	0.37, 2.26	2.63	1.45, 4.75
Undecided vs. Less Frequently	0.52	0.11, 2.46	1.13	0.47, 2.70
<i>Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity</i>				
Yes vs. No	0.90	.034, 2.34	2.63	1.46, 4.77

SH (Sexual Harassment); SA (Sexual Assault).

Variables in bold are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05).

Appendix 4.B

Qualitative Analysis of an Open-Ended Question

Methods

Survey

As previously discussed, a review of the literature established that no previous survey had been conducted to examine to what extent perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected the decision to not join the U.S. military. Given that this area of research is in its infancy, all factors related to not joining the military are unknown and it was important to obtain a spontaneous response from participants. An open-ended question, the first item in the online survey, was included to meet this need. Each participant was asked, “What are three reasons that affected your decision to NOT join the U.S. military?” Respondents were allowed to provide up to three responses.

Analysis

Responses from participants were extracted from the survey and analyzed using NVivo 12 plus.²⁹ The auto-coded function was used to conduct a sentiment analysis and word frequency count. A sentiment analysis gives a general overview of the attitudes of respondents towards not joining the military. The word frequency count numerates how often specific words were used by respondents and included weighted percentages. Finally, a frequency query was done on specific words/phrases that describe sexual violence.

Results

Similar to the main analysis, a total of 1,093 participants initiated the survey but only 941 (86.1%) completed the entire survey. Of the 941, two (0.002%) participants were removed due to prior military service and three (0.003%) due to country codes outside of the 50 states and

Washington D.C. Of the 936, 55 (5.9%) participants were removed for indicating n/a or responding with random letters. Our final sample included 881 participants and 2,505 words and phrases were auto-coded.

The sentiment analysis showed that 366 (14.6%) responses were negative, 2086 (83.3%) were neutral, 48 (1.9%) were positive, and 5 (0.2%) were mixed. The word frequency analysis revealed that the most frequently used word was *family* (273 references, 5.8%). *Family* was followed by *scared/fear* (111 references, 2.3%), *away* (82 references, 1.75%), *war* (72 references, 1.5%), and *health* (57 references, 1.2%). The following table depicts the frequency query results of specific words/phrases related to sexual violence.

Specific Words/Phrases	References
“Female” “Being a female and feeling unsafe in a male dominated environment” “Being female”	11
“Women” “Corruption by men on women” “History of assaults on women in the military” “Low respect for women” “Women are not encouraged to join”	4
“Gender” “Transgender identity”	4
“My mother raped in the Army” “Rape” “Being mistreated/abused/raped”	3
“Prevalence of sexual harassment”	1

Discussion

There is limited research on factors that influence a person’s decision to not join the U.S. military. For this study, we wanted to explore if sexual violence in military communities was a factor in the decision to not join the U.S. military. The sentiment analysis provided a basic

understanding of attitudes of respondents towards not joining the military. Overall, the sentiment analysis showed attitudes of respondents were neutral. This highlights that the majority of respondents did not have negative feelings towards the U.S. military. This could be used to help recruiters transition from neutrality to positivity with potential recruits.

The results from the word frequency analysis was not surprising as family has been highlighted in many other studies that look at why people choose to join the U.S. military. Being either geographically away from home or physically away from friends and family are known factors that influence joining the U.S. military. Recruiting practices already include working with family and friends, as they are known influencers. Since 9/11 the U.S. military has been continuously engaged in conflict that utilizes military troops both domestically and internationally. Potential recruits are keenly aware of these conflicts and future recruitment practices that assuage these fears need to be taken into consideration.

Although the words used for the frequency query were not the most commonly used words, the results are still significant for this study. Having a connection to the U.S. military through family and friends is a positive predictor of joining the military. However, with the media attention and open discussions regarding sexual violence in military communities, the experiences of family or friends may inverse the relationship between having a connection to the U.S. military and joining the military. As one participant noted, “My mother was raped in the Army” is something the U.S. military and their Sexual Assault Prevention and Harassment programs must consider. Prevention and response programs of the U.S. military’s not only affect the current military members and their retention, but also potential recruits.

The analysis of one open-ended question does not constitute a true qualitative analysis. Future qualitative research with individuals who did not join the U.S. military and a focus on

sexual violence in military communities is warranted. Results from this open-ended spontaneous question substantiate the concerns expressed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and findings from the Pew Report.

Appendix 4.C

Survey

The following survey asks questions related to factors one would consider when thinking about joining the U.S. military.

1. What are three reasons that affected your decision to NOT join the U.S. military?

2. Do you have any friends who joined the U.S. Military?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

3. Do you have any parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts or uncles who joined the U.S. Military?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

There are many factors that influence a person's decision to join or not join the U.S. military. The following questions are related to your personal reasons for ultimately NOT joining the U.S. military. Please read each question carefully and indicate your agreement to each possible factor in this decision.

4. My religion influenced my decision.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. Travel required by the U.S. Military influenced my decision.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. My family would NOT support my decision to join the U. S. military.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. My closest friends would NOT support my decision to join the U. S. military.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree

- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. Please indicate how important attending a technical school or college is/was to you.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Slightly Important
- ☐ Not Important
- ☐ Undecided

9. Please indicate how important the cost of education beyond high school is/was to you.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Moderately Important
- ☐ Slightly Important
- ☐ Not Important
- ☐ Undecided

Employment benefits are non-cash compensation paid to an employee that consists of healthcare, retirement, tuition assistance, gym membership or other non-cash compensation.

10. Please indicate how important these benefits are to you.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Moderately Important
- ☐ Slightly Important
- ☐ Not at all Important
- ☐ Undecided

Job stability is the ability to keep a job for a long time.

11. How important is job stability to you?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Moderately Important
- ☐ Slightly Important
- ☐ Not Important
- ☐ Undecided

12. The salary provided for U.S. military service would meet your salary expectation.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ I do not know the salary amounts for U.S. military service.

13. Lack of opportunity for job training in the U.S. military influenced my decision.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. My career goals influenced my decision.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. How important is it for you to serve in the U.S. military?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Moderately Important
- ☐ Slightly Important
- ☐ Not Important
- ☐ Undecided

The term “belong” is when a person feels as though they fit in with a particular group.

16. When thinking the U.S. military does any of the following make you feel as if you would NOT belong in the U.S. military?

- ☐ Ethnicity
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Medical Reasons
- ☐ Mental Health
- ☐ Physical Requirements
- ☐ Politics
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Race
- ☐ Sexual Identity
- ☐ Weight
- ☐ None of these

17. What media sources do you get your current events from?

- ☐ Print Newspapers
- ☐ Online News Sources
- ☐ TV
- ☐ App News Notifications
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Print Magazines
- ☐ None

Sexual harassment in the U.S. military community involves unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when a person’s job, pay, or career is put at risk and/or it creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

18. Based upon the definition of sexual harassment above, how often have you seen information about sexual harassment in the U.S. military community in any media source?

- ☐ Very Frequently
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Undecided

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

RAINN: <https://www.rainn.org> or 800-656-4673

1in6: <https://1in6.org> for 24/7 helpline

Translifeline: <https://www.translifeline.org> or 877-565-8860

19. Comparing sexual harassment in all other U.S. workplaces to sexual harassment in the U.S. military community, do you believe sexual harassment in the U.S. military happens:

☐ More frequently than other workplaces in the U.S.

☐ Less frequently than other workplaces in the U.S.

☐ About the same frequency as other workplaces in the U.S.

☐ Undecided

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

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20. If you joined the U.S. military, how likely do you think it is that you would experience sexual harassment?

☐ Very likely

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Not likely

☐ Undecided

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

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Sexual assault in the U.S. military can occur in several ways. It is any sexual activity where a military member is involved against their will. It can occur when they have been pressured into any sexual activity, unable to consent to sexual activity, or physically forced into sexual activities. Sexual assault in the U.S. military can fall into categories that include unwanted sexual touching or grabbing and threatening and unwelcomed sexual advances to include rape.

21. Based upon the definition of sexual assault above, how often have you seen information about sexual assault in the U.S. military community in the media?

☐ Very Frequently

☐ Frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

☐ Undecided

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

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22. Compare sexual assaults in the U.S. to sexual assaults in the U.S. military community. Do you believe sexual assault in the U.S. military happens:

- ☐ More frequently than the rest of the U.S.
- ☐ Less frequently than the rest of the U.S.
- ☐ About the same frequency as the rest of the U.S.
- ☐ Undecided

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

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23. If you joined the U.S. military, how likely do you think it is that you would experience sexual assault?

- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Not likely
- ☐ Do not know

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

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Translifeline: <https://www.translifeline.org> or 877-565-8860

24. My perceptions of sexual violence in the U.S. military community affected my decision to NOT join the military.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Undecided

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

RAINN: <https://www.rainn.org> or 800-656-4673
1in6: <https://1in6.org> for 24/7 helpline
Translifeline: <https://www.translifeline.org> or 877-565-8860

25. In the past have you experienced sexual harassment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

RAINN: <https://www.rainn.org> or 800-656-4673

1in6: <https://1in6.org> for 24/7 helpline
Translifeline: <https://www.translifeline.org> or 877-565-8860

26. In the past have you experienced sexual assault?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If at any time these questions cause you concern, evoke feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following:

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27. How old are you today?

- Age ____
Prefer not to answer ____

28. What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed?

- ☐ Did not graduate from high school
- ☐ High School Graduate, or GED
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ Technical school
- ☐ 4-year college graduate, with BA, BS, etc.
- ☐ Some graduate work
- ☐ Graduate degree, Masters or higher
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

29. Are you currently enrolled in school?

- ☐ Full Time
- ☐ Part Time
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

30. Please select the category that best describes your employment status outside of the home.

- ☐ Employed, working 40 or more hours per week
- ☐ Employed, working 1-39 hours per week
- ☐ Not employed, looking for work
- ☐ Not employed, NOT looking for work
- ☐ Disabled, not able to work
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

31. Are you currently married, separated, divorced, widowed, member of an unmarried couple, or not married?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Member of an unmarried couple
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

32. Currently, do you have a child or children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

33. With whom do you currently live with? Please check all that apply:

- ☐ Alone
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Spouse
- ☐ My child or children
- ☐ Other family members (grandparent, brother, sister, etc.)
- ☐ Roommates
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

34. Are you currently homeless?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

35. In 2017 what was your annual family income?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ 25,000 to 34,999
- ☐ 35,000 to 49,999
- ☐ 50,000 to 74,999
- ☐ 75,000 to 99,999
- ☐ 100,000 to 149,999
- ☐ 150,000 or more
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

36. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

37. Do you consider yourself to be:

	Yes	No
White or Caucasian	☐	☐
Black or African American	☐	☐
Asian	☐	☐
American Indian or Alaska Native	☐	☐
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐
Prefer not to answer	☐	☐

38. How do you most closely identify?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Do not identify as male, female, or transgender
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

This completes the survey.

Please remember if at any time the questions from this survey caused you concern, evoked feelings, or emotions and you need to speak to someone please reach out to any of the following services:

RAINN: <https://www.rainn.org> or 800-656-4673

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

As previously discussed, sexual violence in military communities is a serious public health problem. There has been limited research aimed at fully understanding the complex military community and sexual violence within. The design of this three-manuscript dissertation was meant to address the lack of research. It helps further our knowledge related to sexual violence in military communities by examining how military sexual violence programs are executed, if policies are meeting stated goals and recommendations, and how perceptions of sexual violence in military communities could be affecting Americans as a whole. These three areas begin to give us a more comprehensive look at sexual violence in military communities.

The first manuscript, *Understanding Sexual Violence Programs in Military Communities*, sought to understand the complexities of sexual violence in military communities by asking the question “How does the Department of Defense respond to sexual violence in military communities?” Through this scoping review, a basic understanding of the response to sexual violence in military communities was established. It was confirmed that response to sexual violence in military communities are complex and increase barriers to care. It was found that in some instances, programs were not equipped to help victims of sexual violence, or did not exist.

By following the five stages of Arksey and O’Malley’s framework, 4 main programs were identified and examined; SAPR, FAP, MEO, and EO.¹ Each program provided services to a specific population with a specific type of incident. No overlap was found that would highlight a comprehensive approach to sexual violence prevention as outlined by the CDC. All 4 programs failed to recognize the continuum of sexual violence and provide successful prevention and response programming.

This scoping review also found an unbalanced approach to the response and prevention of sexual violence in military communities. Military members had access to more program

assistance than military family members, DoD civilians, and DoD civilian family members. The same held true for data reporting and monitoring with a particular gap in reporting for military family members. Military family members over the age of 18 were not identified in the DoD Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. Reports of sexual violence from military family members under the age of 18 as well as DoD family members were also not captured when committed by a person under the age of 18. This scoping review helped to provide a comprehensive view of how the DoD currently responds to sexual violence in military communities. This scoping review is likely the first to review literature focused on all types of sexual violence in military communities in one review. However, some limitations exist. The DoD utilizes policies in order to develop and implement their programs. This presents a challenge in understanding the full scope of the programs as not all policies are readily available for public review.

In the second manuscript, *A New DoD Harassment and Response Policy*, a policy analysis was used to answer the question “How does the new Harassment Prevention and Response policy align with stated goals?” and “How does the new Harassment Prevention and Response policy incorporate recommendations by the Government Accountability Office?” This policy analysis assessed the most current sexual harassment prevention and response policy, DoD 1020.3.

The analysis found that DoD 1020.3 was developed with clear goals after the GAO made recommendations in 2017. The DoD concurred with almost all recommendations, but failed to incorporate them into the design of the new policy. The DoD also fails to incorporate the GAO recommendations to follow guidelines set by the CDC stating that sexual violence exist on a continuum.² Nor does it explicitly include the CDCs framework for sexual violence prevention to

include risk and protective factors, risk domains, and tertiary strategies. Finally, DoD 1020.3 failed to meet the stated goals specific to the creations of a sexual harassment prevention and response program. This policy continues to exist as it always has, isolated with a lack of inclusion.

The following recommendations are offered to revise the existing policy. Revisions must include a comprehensive program that works with current programs to incorporate the continuum of harm and recognizes sexual harassment as a potential precipitating factor to sexual assault for everyone in military communities. The revisions must also include guidelines by the CDC. The lack of standardized data and reporting across military branches is a concern. A concerted effort to develop and utilize both is strongly recommended. This policy analysis looked at the most current sexual violence policy addressing military communities and included a stakeholder analysis. This stakeholder analysis allowed for a larger understanding of the context of the policy e.g. actors involved in the development and implementation. However, the stakeholder analysis also is a limitation as it is subjective. Other limitations include only exploring DoD level policies to sexual harassment. This approach does not capture military branch specific policies such as the Army policy on sexual harassment that aligns closer to the goals of DoD 1020.3.

In the third manuscript, *Missing the Mark: Sexual Violence in Military Communities Affects Recruitment*, a cross-sectional study was conducted in order to understand “to what extent do perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affect the decision to not join the U.S. military?” and “how gender influence the decision to not join the U.S. military?” This study found that overall, more than a quarter of the participants, regardless of their gender, stated their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision to not join the U.S. military.

The strongest predictor of not joining the military for all genders was the frequency of seeing sexual assault in military communities discussed in the media. Also, perceived likelihood of sexual harassment or sexual assault if a respondent joined the U.S. military were significant predictors of not joining. Ethnicity was also a predictor for not joining in both genders. Participants who indicated they were Hispanic or Latino were more likely to say their perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affected their decision to not join.

When analyzing the data by gender, males who believed it was very likely they would be sexually assaulted if they joined the U.S. military were almost 10 times as likely to not join compared to females. This was a surprising find as females in all populations experience sexual assault at a higher rate than males. This result could be partially explained due to unique issues associated with males after experiencing sexual violence. Exposure to sexual violence in the media was also a strong predictor when stratified by gender, and females who believed sexual violence occurred more often in military communities were more likely to not join.

This study was the first attempt in closing the gap in understanding sexual violence in military communities and how it may affect recruitment. With the numbers of eligible recruits decreasing, the effect of sexual violence in military communities on potential recruits demands serious attention and action. The perception of sexual violence in military communities is a deterrent to choosing the military as a career path, which can have far-reaching consequences.

There are several limitations of this study. No previous research had examined recruitment and sexual violence. As such, a survey was developed. Testing of the survey was limited to three approaches; more extensive validation should be conducted. This population of interest is a hard-to-reach population (young adults 18-30). Recognizing this challenge the study employed an

online platform for recruiting participants. This provided limited control of participants or ascertaining truthfulness. Due to these limitations, the results are not generalizable.

These manuscripts together have implications for future practice. All three manuscripts identified a lack of a comprehensive understanding and approach to sexual violence in military communities. Programs and policies fail to identify and incorporate the entire population that constitutes a military community. With an initial understanding of how military sexual violence programs work, how policies direct programs, and the far-reaching effects of sexual violence in military communities, practitioners can develop policies and programs that provide for the entire current military community and associated members.

Future research must include a qualitative approach to understanding sexual violence in military communities. A qualitative approach will help give a better understanding of experiences, perspectives, and meaning of sexual violence in military communities. Research related to military dependents and the DoD family members are currently lacking leaving a significant gap in understanding the full scope of sexual violence in military communities. Finally, future research should include an expanded sample size for understanding of how perceptions of sexual violence in military communities affect the decision not to join the U.S. military. This study was the first attempt in understanding perceptions of sexual violence in military communities that affect recruitment, but a larger sample size would allow for a better understanding of the problem within certain variables such as gender.

Overall, this dissertation presented an innovative approach to understanding sexual violence in military communities. The combination of these three studies into one dissertation helps to further our understanding of current approaches to sexual violence in military communities, if policies around sexual violence are meeting the intended goals and

recommendations, and if sexual violence in military communities has an effect beyond the military. This dissertation clearly shows the military does not offer coordinated responses and equal policies for all community member and fails to provide adequate programs that affect current and future military communities.

Vita

Brandy Fuesting is a former military sexual assault response coordinator and military spouse of 21 years currently living in Knoxville, TN. She graduated from Troy University with a B.S. in Psychology and a minor in Business, and earned a M.P.H. in Social and Behavioral Studies from Capella University. Brandy Fuesting will graduate with a Doctor of Public Health degree with the guidance from Dr. Kathleen Brown. Her doctoral concentration is focused on sexual violence in military communities with a cognate in policy.