



2021 Academy Climate and Networking Study

Executive Report

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Executive Report

Introduction

The Health and Resilience (H&R) Research Division within the Office of People Analytics (OPA) has conducted congressionally mandated gender relations assessments at the Academies since 2005.¹ Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.), Sections 4361, 6980, and 9361, as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2007, codified an assessment cycle at the Military Service Academies (MSA) that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. This requirement applies to the DoD Service Academies (U.S. Military Academy [USMA], U.S. Naval Academy [USNA], and U.S. Air Force Academy [USAFA]). These regular assessments are known as the *Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR)* project.

Despite years of concerted effort, results from the *SAGR* have found that many cadets and midshipmen experience sexual assault and/or sexual harassment at the Academy (Davis et al., 2019), highlighting the need for a continued focus on prevention of sexual assault and harassment specifically, as well as violence and harm more generally. Importantly, results from *SAGR* focus groups have consistently identified student leaders/influencers as critical, but unequipped, prevention messengers (Barry et al., 2020). This is consistent with “social diffusion” theory, whereby influential individuals within social networks are key to the diffusion of new ideas and behaviors. Indeed, numerous effective public health interventions leverage the outsize impacts that influencers have within their social networks to promulgate information and norms and ultimately change behaviors (Kelly, 1991; Bush et al 2019, Coker et al 2017, Rogers, 1983; Strang & Soule, 1998).

In order to provide actionable insights to inform prevention efforts at the Academies, and building on ideas from social diffusion theory, OPA, in conjunction with the Department of Defense’s (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), conducted the *2021 Academy Climate and Networking Study (2021 ACNS)*. This study departed from the traditional *SAGR* focus group methodology and employed a mixed-methods approach, which included an online survey and virtual focus groups. The survey assessed norms relevant for prevention of violent or harmful behaviors and asked participants to identify influential students (and why they are considered influential). We then conducted virtual focus groups with influential students who were nominated by their peers to learn more about what makes these students influential, and assessed what training, messaging, and programs resonate or do not resonate with participants. Our results detail the characteristics of influential students at each of the Academies, the norms that are promising targets for prevention activities, and the strategies for engaging with students that are most likely to resonate.

These results are designed to equip the Academies to continue to enhance and refine their prevention efforts in three ways. First, these findings will allow the Academies to better identify students who are likely to be highly influential in order to leverage these students in prevention

¹ The first assessment in this series was conducted in 2004 by the DoD Inspector General (IG). Details are reported in the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (2005).

efforts. Next, these findings highlight norms on campus that can contribute to risk of violence and harm; targeting these norms is a promising intervention avenue. Finally, these findings highlight ways to engage students that are more likely to be effective. We recommend that the Academies employ these strategies within their prevention activities, formally evaluate their effectiveness, and modify as needed until the desired effect is achieved.

The purpose of this executive report is to describe the statistical and study methodology employed on the *2021 Academy Climate and Networking Study (2021 ACNS)* and provide topline findings.

Methodology

The *2021 ACNS* used a mixed-methods approach, employing both a web-based survey and virtually administered focus groups. The survey contained questions about perceived acceptability and commonality of behaviors associated with harmful outcomes (such as alcohol abuse) and positive factors (like standing up to sexist jokes), hereafter referred to as “social norms.” Social norms include the behaviors that cadets and midshipmen actually do, those behaviors they expect from others at their Academy, and any incongruence between these actual and expected behaviors. The survey also used a social network analysis (SNA) approach to identify influential cadets and midshipmen according to particular criteria. For a more thorough view of the results on social norms, please see the Topline Report.²

Survey participants were asked to nominate individuals from their Academy in five distinct categories shown to the right. Participants could only nominate one person per category and there were no limits for nominating the same person for more than one category. Participants were then asked to nominate an additional five peers that they felt particularly close to or spent significant time with in the past six months. Additionally, participants were asked to describe the connections between their nominated peers (e.g., influencer 1 is connected to influencer 2, but influencer 1 is not connected to influencer 5).

Influencer Nomination Survey Questions: ***“What cadet/midshipman at your Academy...”***

- *...do you look up to?*
- *...do you respect?*
- *...do you think is a good leader in sports, clubs, extracurricular groups, and other group activities?*
- *...would you want to command the military unit you commission into?*
- *...has a presence on social media that you like, follow, or enjoy?*

The survey fielded online from February 22, 2021 to March 22, 2021. A census of all cadets and midshipmen at all MSAs (with the exception of those under 18 years old and foreign exchange students) were invited to participate. The survey email announcement explained the purpose of the survey, how the information would be used, why participation was important, and information on how to opt-out. Throughout the survey field period, five additional email reminders were sent to those who had not completed the survey to encourage participation. A

² The Topline Report can be found on <https://opa.mil/research-analysis/health-well-being>

total of 3,044 cadets and midshipmen completed the survey,³ resulting in a total MSA response rate of 23%. Using an industry-standard process, data were weighted to reflect each Academy’s population as of January 2021. The estimated number of students, the number of respondents, and the portion of total respondents in each reporting group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Population, Respondents, and Response Rates

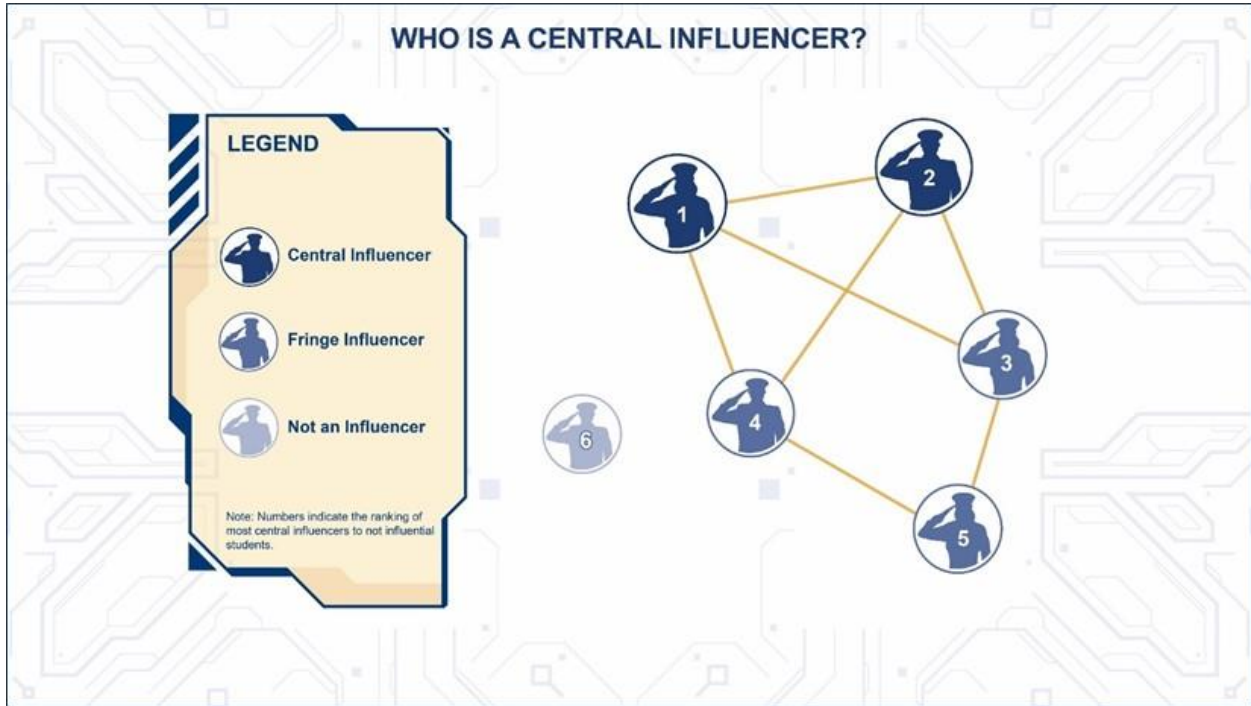
	Population	Respondents	Response Rate
Total MSA	13,248	3,044	22.9%
USMA	4,518	885	19.6%
USNA	4,511	1,310	29.0%
USAFA	4,219	849	20.1%

Focus groups were conducted with those identified as influential by their peers on the survey (regardless if the nominated influencer participated in the survey themselves). The focus groups posed questions to participants about the qualities of influential cadets and midshipmen, how the informal networks at the Academies disseminate information, and what helps Academy messaging on safety and prevention issues to resonate with cadets and midshipmen (see Appendix B for the focus group protocol).

Influence was measured not only by capturing these ties, but also by calculating the centrality to the network of each individual, hereafter referred to as “central influence” or “centrally influential.” The more central a person is to a group, the more connections they have with highly connected people. Figure 1 illustrates this concept and potential relationships among individuals at various levels of influence.

³ Completed surveys were defined as answering 50% or more of the social norms items.

Figure 1.
Influencer Connections and Centrality



The focus groups were conducted virtually from March 25, 2021 through April 16, 2021. Participants were recruited via email until group session size reached six to ten participants. A total of six focus groups were conducted at each Academy. The groups were comprised based on survey nominations, as shown to the right and in the footnote below.⁴ Experienced facilitators trained in focus group moderation and sensitive topics led the sessions. Gender-specific groups were led by facilitators of the same gender (i.e., male groups were led by a male facilitator; female groups were led by a female facilitator). For mixed-gender groups, the facilitator was either male or female. The sessions were recorded and transcribed, with recordings then destroyed to preserve anonymity of responses and participation. A total of 128 cadets and midshipmen participated in the focus groups. The participant breakouts by Academy and gender are shown in Table 1.

Focus Group Participant Composition

Influencer Category Groups:

- Admired/Respected: Mixed Gender, Any Class
- Military: Mixed Gender, Any Class
- Social Media: Mixed Gender, Any Class

Nominated Influencer Groups:

- Nominated Influencers: Male, 1C/2C
- Nominated Influencers: Female, 1C/2C
- Nominated Influencers: Mixed Gender, 1C/2C

⁴ Participants assigned to the “Nominated Influencer” groups were those who received nominations for any category of influencer and prioritized survey participants who volunteered to participate in such focus groups, and were specific to class year and gender, unlike the “Influencer Category” groups.

Table 2.
Focus Group Participants by Academy and Gender

	Total	Women	Men
Total MSA	128	45	83
USMA	43	16	27
USNA	50	16	34
USAFA	35	13	12

Data from the focus groups were analyzed using a multistep analytic induction method (Erickson, 1986). First, the data were organized by Academy, removing any personally identifiable information (PII) or other identifying information. Next, using qualitative analysis software (NVivo), the team coded data into key themes, and analysts developed assertions, which stated possible findings. Transcripts were coded and verified by two independent analysts to avoid individual bias. Once the data were compiled for each assertion, researchers determined whether to keep, revise, or eliminate the findings based on the support, and contradictions for the assertion. If an initial finding did not have evidence of support, it was eliminated as a potential assertion.

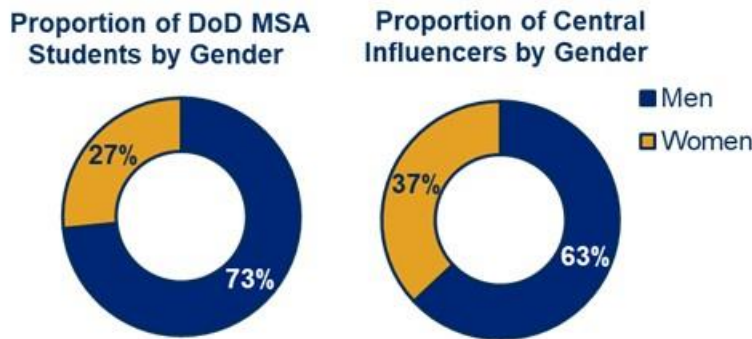
Influential Cadets and Midshipmen

Cadet and midshipmen peers have been consistently identified in past SAGR research as critical messengers for prevention efforts regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment (Barry et al., 2020). Furthermore, civilian research has shown that the use of influential students can better drive culture and behavior change (e.g., Bush et al., 2019; Coker et al., 2017). Understanding the characteristics of influential students at the Academies is an important first step in understanding what factors make up the profile of an influential cadet or midshipman. Providing the MSAs with the demographics and traits of influential students will allow Academy prevention personnel to use this information as part of an assessment tool or strategy to identify cadets and midshipmen for participation in prevention programs and activities.

Leveraging Influential Cadets and Midshipmen

A minority of cadets and midshipmen were found to be centrally influential at their Academies (17%). Central influencers tended to be men, though women were more likely to be centrally influential; only 27% of Academy students are women, but 37% of centrally influential cadets and midshipmen were women (Figure 2). Centrally influential cadets and midshipmen also tended to be upperclassmen, with first class cadets and midshipmen making up nearly half (43%) of all central influencers, despite all class years being approximately the same size. Representation among central influencers' declines with class year; specifically, second class cadets and midshipmen made up 24% of central influencers, third class made up 19%, and fourth class made up 15% of central influencers.

Figure 2.
MSA Gender Proportions Overall and of Influential Cadets and Midshipmen



In addition to these demographic factors, central influencers were also identified by category of influence at different rates. For example, central influencers were more often categorized as “Military” (32%), “Respected” (32%), or “Admired” (31%) influencers, whereas “General Leadership” (26%) and “Social Media” (20%) influencers were less common. Further examination of type of influence by demographics revealed key differences between influential Academy men and women. Specifically, male influencers made up a large majority of the “Military” (74%) and “Respected” (70%) categories, and female influencers made up a disproportionately large amount of the “Social Media” (41%) category. With regards to class year, “Social Media” influencers stood out from all other categories of influence, with a much lower proportion of first class cadets and midshipmen (48%), compared to the proportion of first class cadets and midshipmen that made up “Admired” (67%), “Respected” (62%), “General Leadership” (63%), and “Military” (70%). All other types of influencers followed the same overall pattern of being largely made up of first class cadets and decreasing as class year becomes more junior.

“I think that the difference is that the influential people will take the time to interact with anybody... They’ll stop if they have time and ask how somebody’s day is going, or if somebody needs help, they’ll stop and help them or something like that... I think that’s the difference between somebody who lives within their circle, and somebody who’s really influential.” –USMA Female Group

Through open-ended survey questions, cadets and midshipmen provided several reasons why they considered the peers they nominated influential. Like the aforementioned demographic differences by influencer category, a pattern was found in which “Social Media” influencers were perceived differently than influencers in other categories. Specifically, the common qualities of non-“Social Media” influencers centered around the qualities of “work ethic,” “interpersonal skills,” and “competence,” but “Social Media” influencers were chosen because of the nature of their social media presence, namely “student experience” (those illustrating unique elements of cadet and midshipman life), “positive,” and “engaging” social media content. These qualities were similar to those responses provided by Academy men and women who

participated in the focus groups, although “authenticity” was more commonly found in men’s responses, and “empathy” was more common in women’s responses.

Influencer-to-Influencer Ties

Understanding how influencers are tied to each other allows for a better understanding of the unofficial structure of the Academy student body, as opposed to its formal structures like class year, chain of command, and Academy unit. Examining influencer-to-influencer ties by key demographics reveals that gender plays a significant role in the structure of these unofficial social networks. Namely, influencer groups appear to be somewhat insular with regards to gender, with male influencers having more connections to other male influencers, and vice versa for female influencers (Table 3). However, this insularity appears to be greater for Academy men, where 82% of male influencer-to-influencer ties are to other men vs. 55% of female influencer-to-influencer ties with other women. When examining influencer-to-influencer ties through the lens of class year a similar insularity can be found where the majority of influential cadets and midshipmen in any given class year are connected to other influential students in the same class year, however, the second-most common class year connection for second class, third class, and fourth class influential cadets and midshipmen was to first class influential cadets and midshipmen. In other words, although influential students in any given class year tend to be connected to other influential peers in the same class year, influential first class cadets and midshipmen maintain a strong presence throughout all levels of their Academy.

Table 3.
Proportions of MSA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Gender

Influencer A Gender	Influencer B Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Female	54.6%	45.4%	100%
Male	17.8%	82.2%	100%
Total	27.3%	72.7%	100%

Note. $\chi^2 = 353.764 \cdot df = 1 \cdot \phi = 0.361 \cdot p = 0.000$

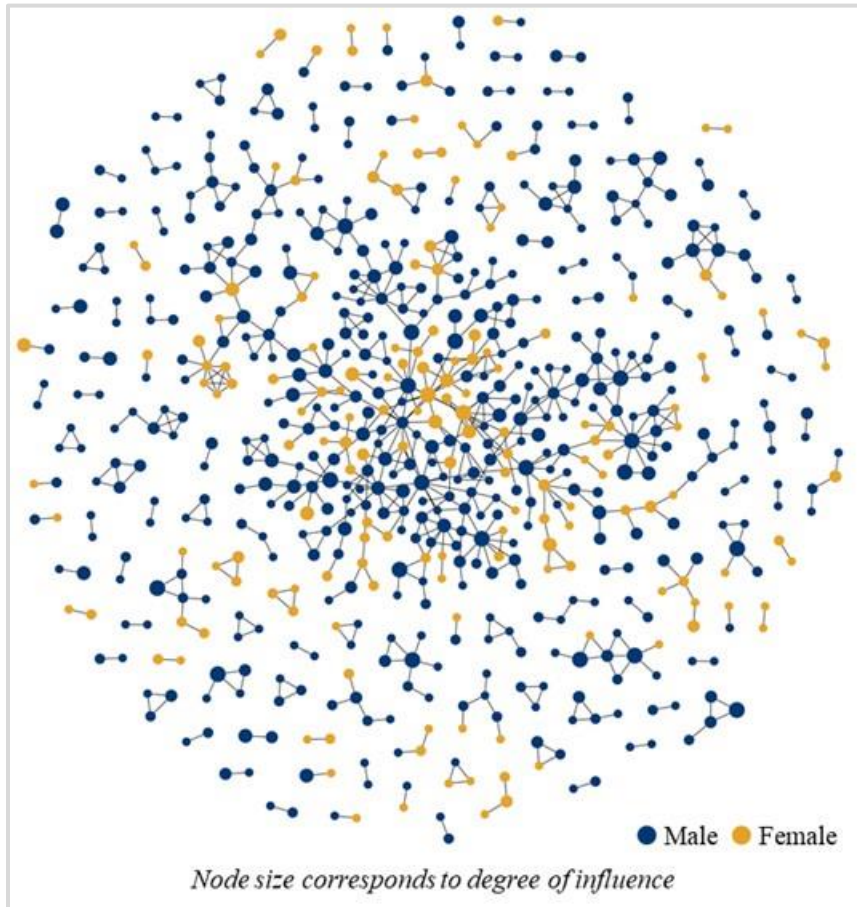
This indicates a significant, positive interaction ($p < 0.001$, $\phi = 0.361$) for gender as it pertains to influencer-to-influencer ties.

Each individual Academy’s network of influencer-to-influencer networks are visualized and discussed in greater detail below.

U.S. Military Academy

At West Point, the influencer-to-influencer ties formed a network with one central cluster and several branches. Approximately 33% of cadets at USMA were nominated as influential at least one time, and among those who were nominated, nearly half (48%) were in the largest network component. With regards to gender, the network appears to be well integrated, with both male and female cadets present throughout the network and many mixed-gender clusters (Figure 3).

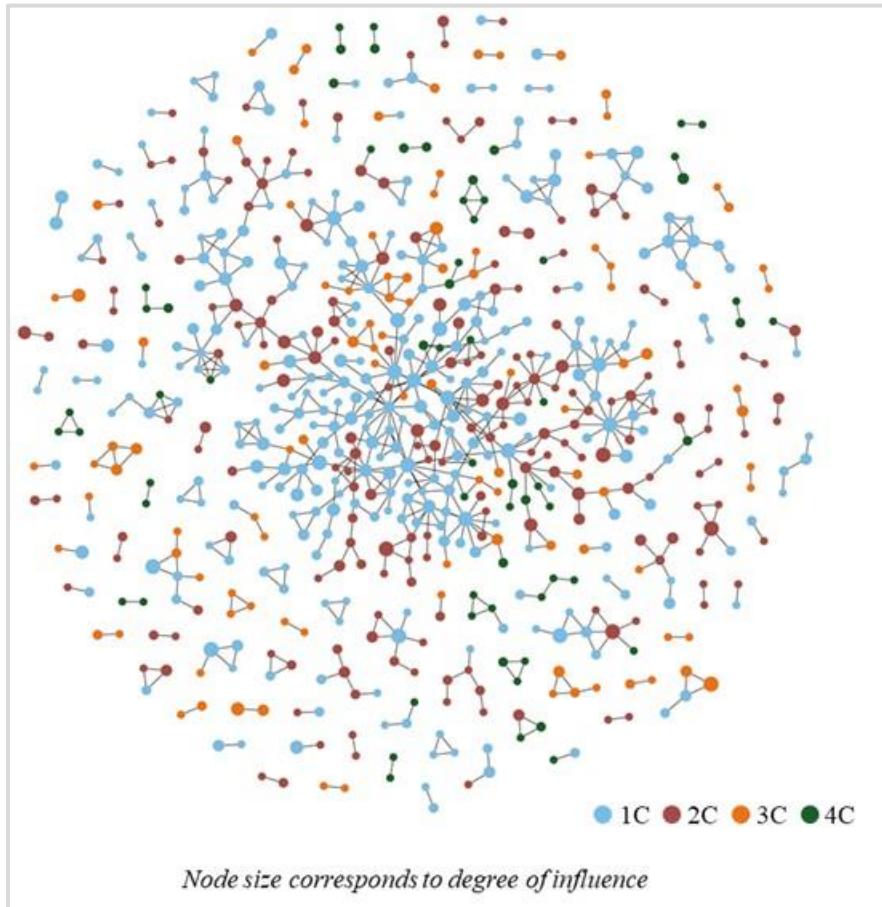
Figure 3.
USMA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Gender



Note. The network map is made up only of influencers who were nominated as influential by a survey respondent. It is not representative of the whole USMA population.

When examining the network by class year we see first class cadets to be highly central to the network, making up the majority of the central cluster (Figure 4). The network also illustrates how second class cadets appear to be “bridge” nodes in the network, connecting separate parts of the network to the center. Some mixed class year clusters also appear outside the central network.

Figure 4.
USMA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Class Year

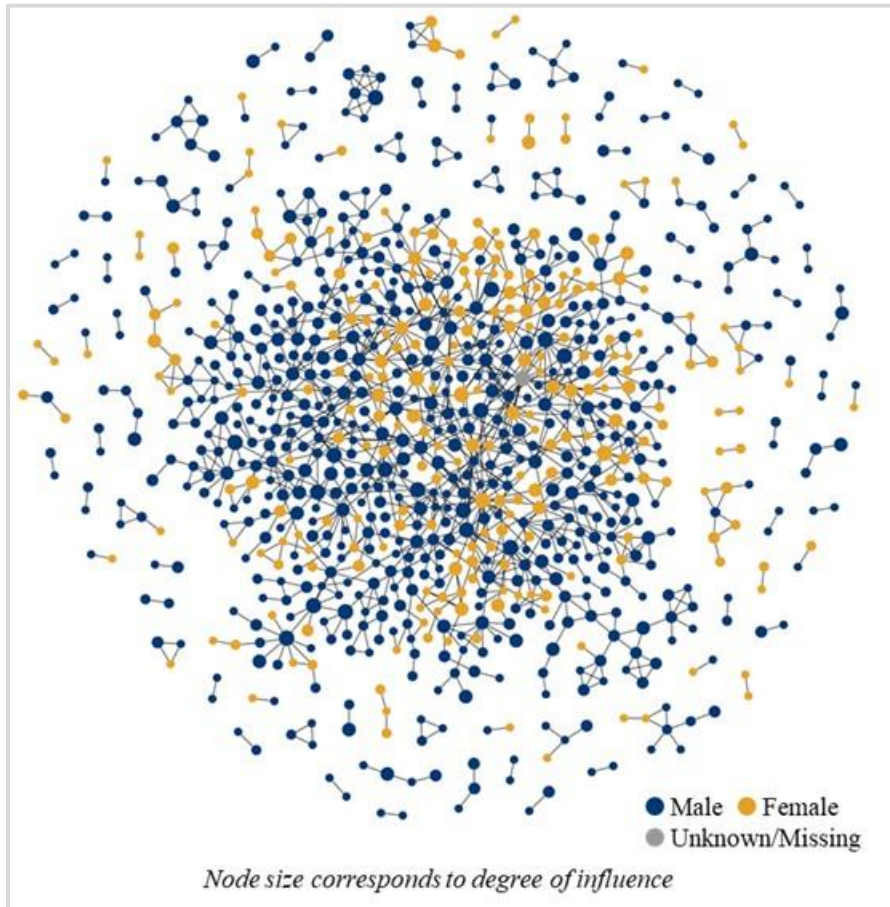


Note. The network map is made up only of influencers who were nominated as influential by a survey respondent. It is not representative of the whole USMA population.

U.S. Naval Academy

The influencer-to-influencer network at the Naval Academy shows a very dense group of interconnected midshipmen. At USNA, 37% of midshipmen were nominated as influential at least once, and among those nominated, 72% were in the largest network component. When examining the network by gender, there appears to be a significant amount of clustering within gender (Figure 5). In other words, male influencers tend to surround themselves with other male influencers, and vice versa. This suggests that only some influential midshipmen are perceived as interacting with influential midshipmen of the opposite sex.

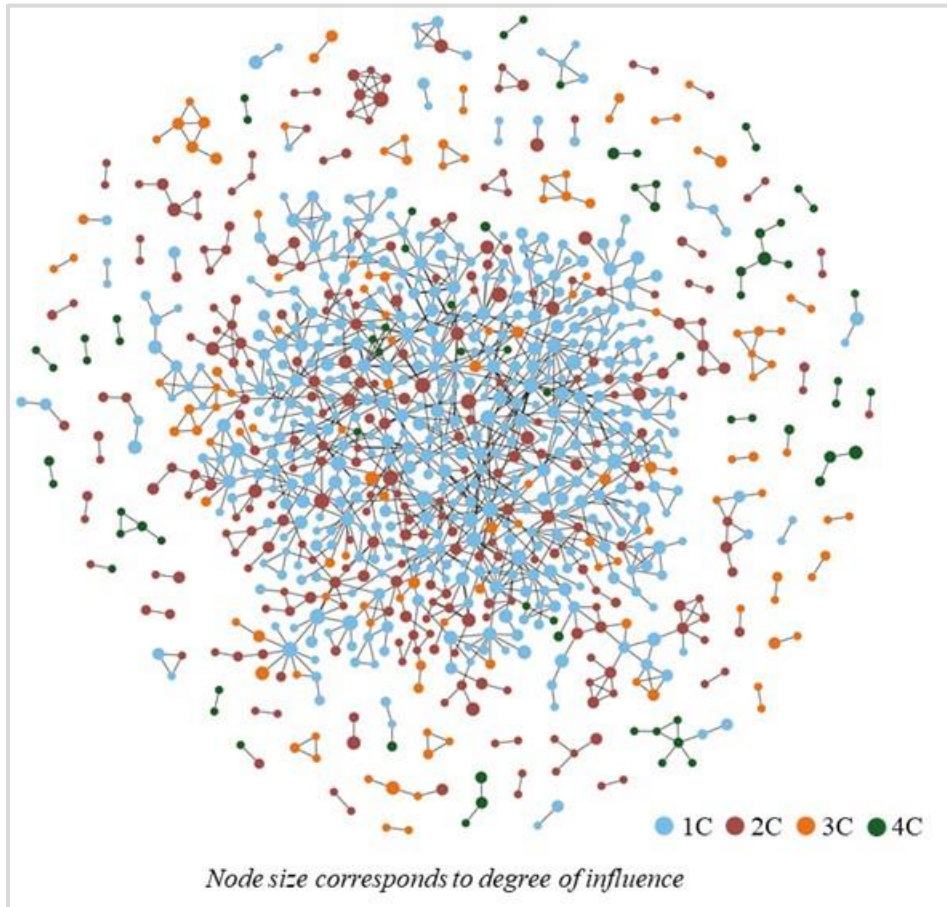
Figure 5.
USNA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Gender



Note. The network map is made up only of influencers who were nominated as influential by a survey respondent. It is not representative of the whole USNA population.

With regards to class year, first class midshipmen are highly central in the network, although second class midshipmen are also highly present and embedded in the network (Figure 6).

Figure 6.
USNA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Class Year

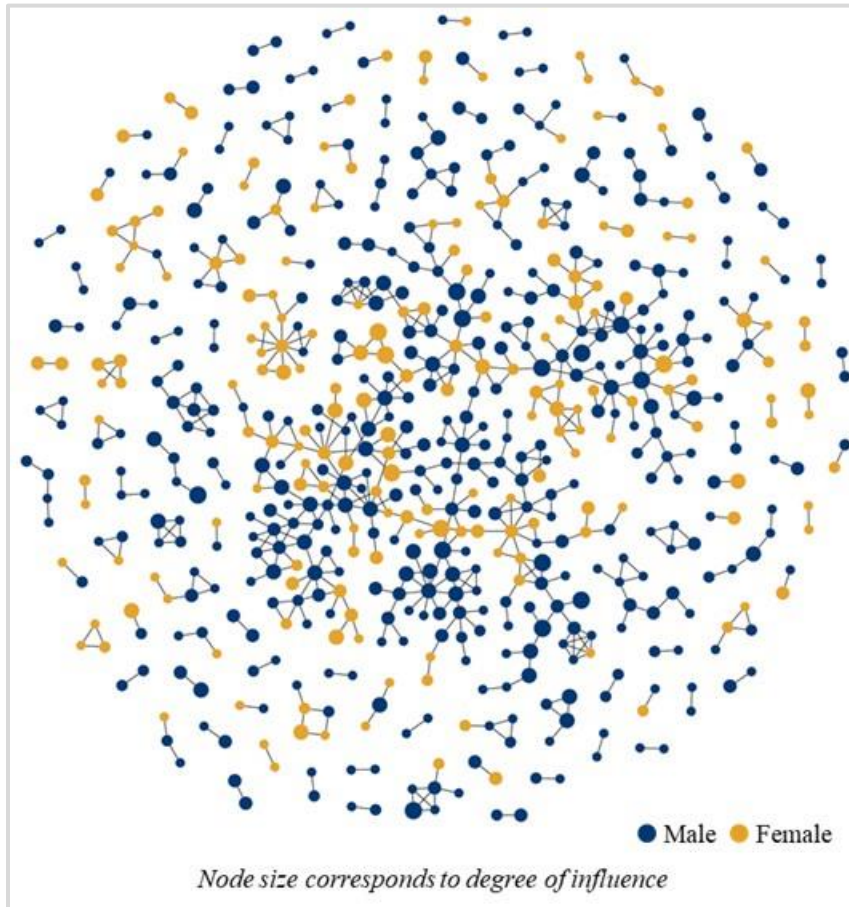


Note. The network map is made up only of influencers who were nominated as influential by a survey respondent. It is not representative of the whole USNA population.

U.S. Air Force Academy

The USAFA influencer-to-influencer network appears to have one large network component made up of two main clusters, connected by two “bridges” of influencers, with multiple branches leading off from these two clusters. At USAFA, 31% of cadets were nominated as influential at least once, and of those that were nominated, 46% were present in the largest network component. In examining this network by gender, it appears that the network is well integrated with male and female influencers present and central to the network (Figure 7). Outside the largest component, there are several mixed gender clusters.

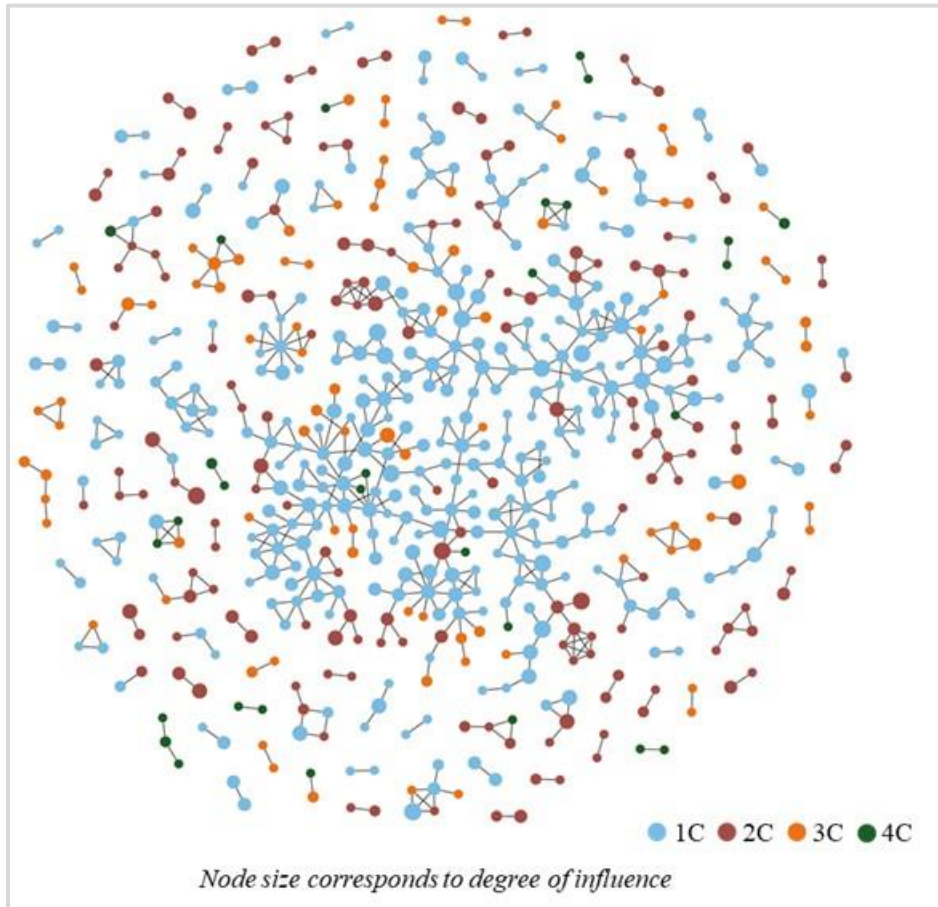
Figure 7.
USAFA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Gender



Note. The network map is made up only of influencers who were nominated as influential by a survey respondent. It is not representative of the whole USAFA population.

Concerning class year, the network fits the overall DoD level profile; first class cadets are highly central to the network and appear to control all major branches through the largest network component and the two “bridges” between the two clusters of this largest component (Figure 8). Second class cadets appear to be less involved in the influencer-to-influencer networks at USAFA, as they more frequently appear at the edges of the network.

Figure 8.
USAFA Influencer-to-Influencer Ties by Class Year



Note. The network map is made up only of influencers who were nominated as influential by a survey respondent. It is not representative of the whole USAFA population.

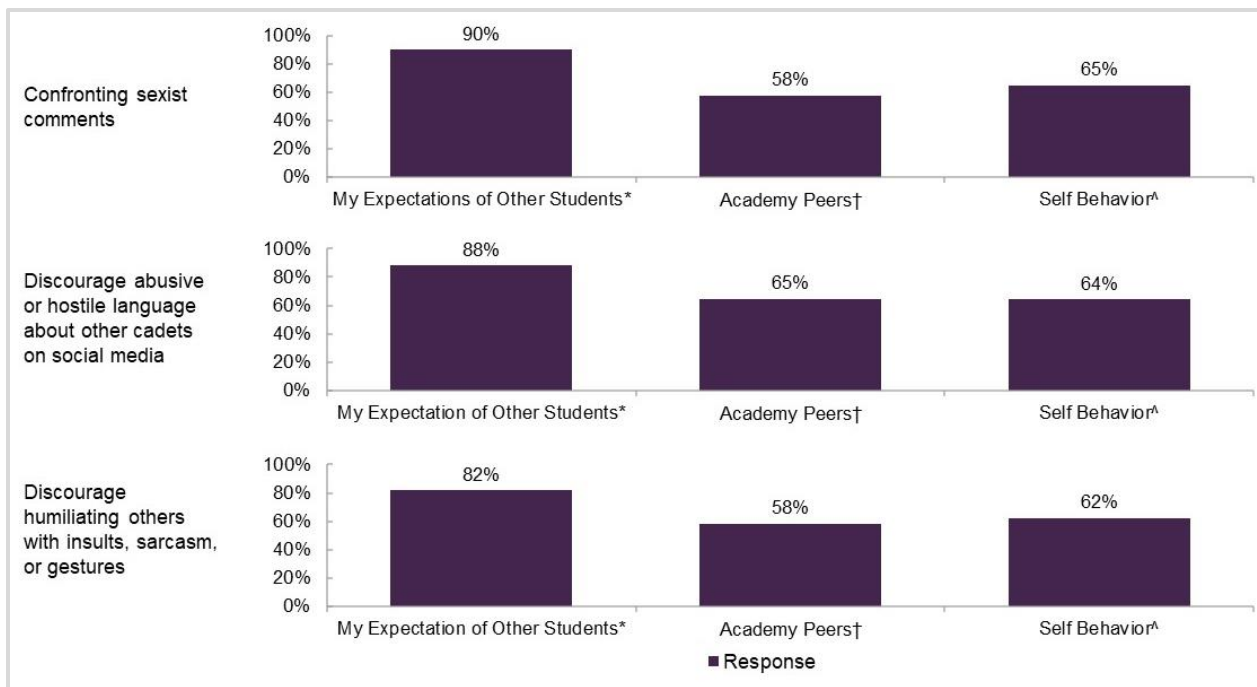
Social Norms

The survey portion of this study contained questions about perceived acceptability and commonality of behaviors associated with harmful outcomes (such as alcohol abuse) and positive factors (like standing up to sexist jokes), hereafter referred to as “social norms.” Social norms in this study are prevention-oriented behaviors and are measured by understanding what cadets and midshipmen actually do, what they expect from others at their Academy, and any incongruence between these actual and expected prevention-oriented behaviors. These findings highlight norms on campus that can contribute to risk of violence and harm; targeting these norms is a promising intervention avenue to be addressed in various prevention and character building programs. Here we examine two sets of findings regarding social norms at the Academies: 1) mismatch between expectations and actual behavior and 2) persistent problematic behaviors with low expectations.

Social Norms Focus One: Expectation vs. Reality Mismatch

An exploration of how social norms (the actual, expected, and incongruent behaviors of cadets and midshipmen) are perceived within the MSA student body illuminated a critical mismatch between cadet and midshipman perceptions of themselves and their peers, as compared to their expectations of other students' behaviors. Specifically, reports of self-behavior, peer behavior, and expectations of other cadets and midshipmen revealed significant discrepancies across norms between what cadets and midshipmen and their peers do as compared to the standards to which they hold other students. The mismatch between expectations and perceptions of behaviors within the Academy may contribute to a culture of diffused responsibility. In other words, cadets and midshipmen erroneously thinking that a harmful behavior is common may make it more socially acceptable for them to enact that behavior themselves. These behaviors may contrast with Service values—those of honor, duty, courage, integrity, and respect—among others. Figure 9 illustrates these differences.

Figure 9.
Discrepant Expectations for Self, Peer, and Other Students' Behavior



Note.

* Percent of students who indicated agree/strongly agree.

† Average percent

^ Percent of students who indicated often/very often

For norms related to sexist comments, roughly two-thirds of cadets/midshipmen (65%) reported that they confront sexist comments “often/very often” when they observe them, and believe that slightly fewer of their peers (58%) do so; however, 90% agree or strongly agree that they expect other students to do so. Similarly, 64% of cadets/midshipmen discourage abusive or hostile language about other cadets/midshipmen on social media, and 65% believe that their peers do the

same, but 88% expect other students to discourage these social media behaviors. A slightly lower percentage of cadets/midshipmen (62%) report discouraging the humiliation of others with insults or sarcasm, and 58% believe that their peers also discourage these forms of humiliation, though 82% expect other students to intervene against students humiliating one another in these ways.

“I think there's a lot of social norms here that it doesn't necessarily encourage these types of sexist comments, but it doesn't stop them. And if you act against those social norms in a way of calling it out, you are automatically putting yourself on the out group instead of the in group.” –USMA Female Group

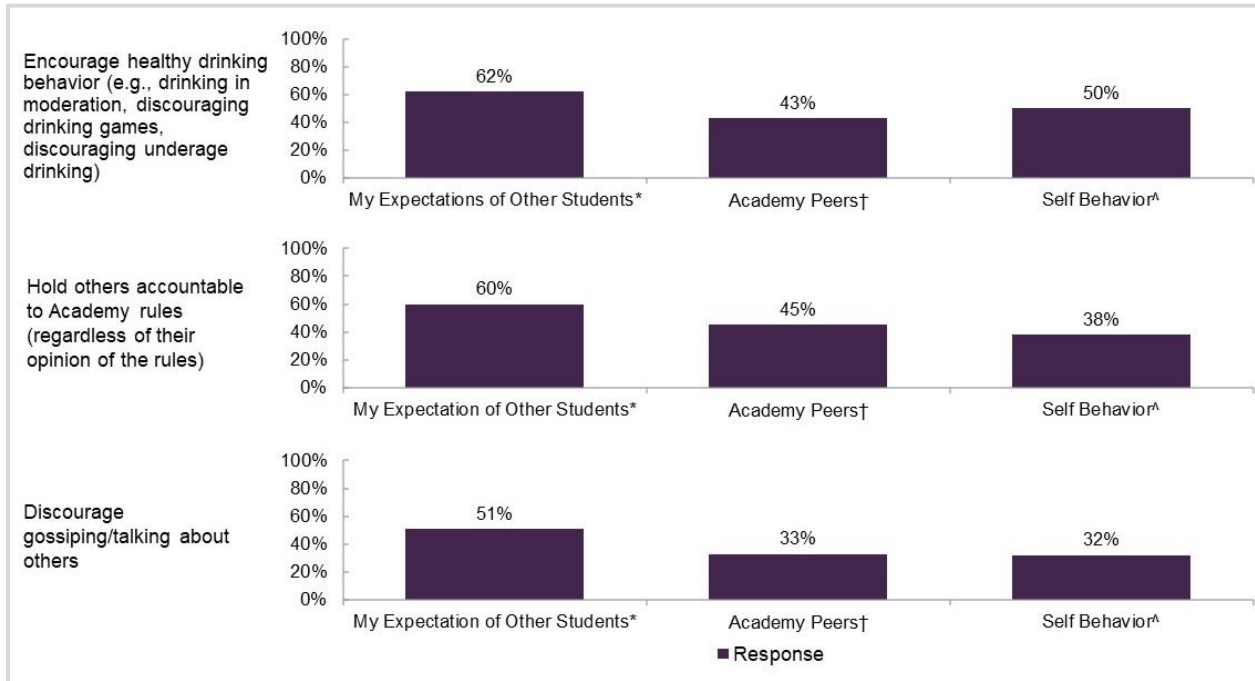
“I think most cadets would know to stop those kind of [sexist] jokes if it ever came to it but personally I don't think most would. I think there'd be a good amount of cadets out there that probably will let the joke slide or just kind of brush it off, wouldn't really address it. They probably wouldn't continue it but they I don't think they would necessarily stop it either.” –USAFMA Male Group.

In summary, most cadets and midshipmen have high expectations of one another, but they are not behaving in kind, nor do they believe that the behaviors of their peers align with their expectations. Instead, cadets and midshipmen are doing what they believe others do, even when their behaviors are not consistent with their own views about what they expect from each other. This incongruity characterizes a key component of how social norms are adopted and how they might be changed; what would happen if students knew that their peers expected them to behave differently than they believe they do?

Social Norms Focus Two: Persistent Problematic Behaviors

Also illuminated in cadet and midshipman reports of self and peer behavior and their expectations of other students are the relatively low standards set for norms around alcohol use, holding others accountable to Academy rules, and discouraging gossiping about other students. Figure 10 illustrates reported expectations and discrepancies.

Figure 10.
Low Expectations for Self, Peer, and Other Students' Behavior



Note.

* Percent of students who indicated agree/strongly agree.

† Average percent

^ Percent of students who indicated often/very often

For norms related to alcohol use, less than half of cadets/midshipmen report that they (50%) and their peers (43%) encourage healthy drinking behavior (such as drinking in moderation and discouraging underage drinking), and only 62% report that they expect other students to do so. Similarly, less than half of cadets/midshipmen report that they (38%) and their peers (45%) hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of whether they agree or disagree with the rules, and only 60% report that they expect other students to do so. As for gossip or talking about others, only one-third of cadets/midshipmen report that they (32%) and their peers (33%) discourage these behaviors, and only half (51%) expect other students to do so. This is relevant in the context of prior SAGR focus group findings, which have highlighted the rumor mill as a barrier to reporting an unwanted gender-related behavior due to fears of ostracism.

“This is a tough question because I think mids enforce the rules in two different ways, like we talked about. They're the people who enforce it just by sending you an email, that you're going into conduct with them. And then they're the people who explain to you why you're wrong.” –USNA Mixed-Gender Group

Because expectations surrounding these behaviors are relatively low, these norms are not good candidates for traditional norms interventions. Instead, as these behaviors are counter to good

order and discipline, character development programs are one potential avenue to address these issues.

“It’s unpopular to enforce standards. And so that often puts people in a position where they’re ostracized by peers or by their company. And then, they often find themselves without other outlets or feeling abandoned by teammates, even though in their mind, they’re trying to do the right thing.” –USMA Mixed-Gender Group

How to Address the Problems: Ways to Reach Cadets and Midshipmen

As there is likely not one single factor that drives these problems, there are likely multiple potential ways of addressing them. One potential avenue of addressing these problems that was explored in the ACNS focus groups was to better engage cadets and midshipmen through currently existing channels, specifically, the safety and prevention messaging, trainings, and programs that exist at the Academies. When discussing in the focus groups, participants not only identified specific messaging, trainings, or programs that they perceived to resonate and those they perceived as not resonating but explored what qualities of those messaging, trainings, and programs led the participants to feel that way. Understanding not only self-reported reasons for why these messaging, trainings, or programs did or did not resonate, but also using tangible examples of these trainings allows Academy staff to ensure the prevention personnel have the opportunity to learn from one another and tailor all elements of the MSA’s safety and prevention to their own student body.

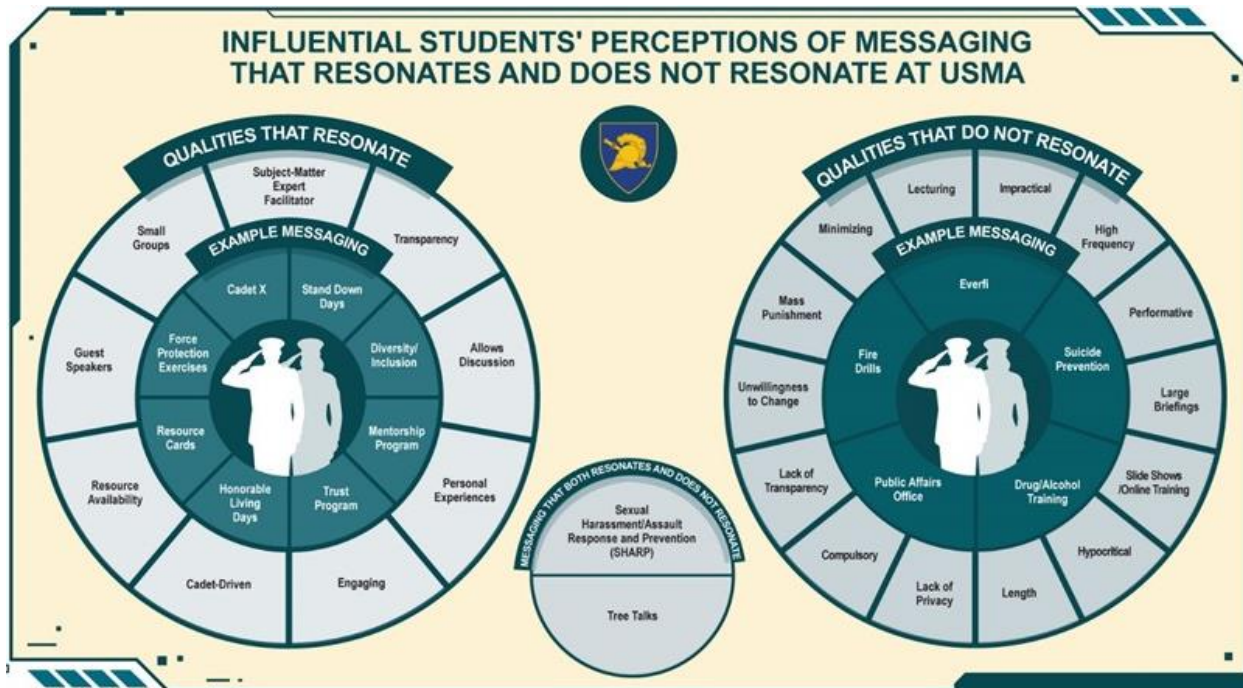
Overall, the most common themes of Academy messaging perceived as resonating well with cadets and midshipmen were those that were delivered in small groups that allowed discussion, involved cadet and midshipman peers sharing personal experiences, and were cadet/midshipman-driven (however, this last factor was not found at USAFA). Each of these elements was said to drive buy-in of cadets and midshipmen receiving the messaging or participating in the program, as it allowed them to have a personal and authentic experience with the subject, especially when a peer could speak to the issue with personal experience, which participants said aided in making the issue real to them. As for messaging that did not resonate, common qualities included large briefings, slide shows and online messaging modes, perceived minimization of problems, and perceived hypocrisy. Any of these factors built a barrier between cadets and midshipmen and their ability to engage with the issue.

U.S. Military Academy

The most often discussed qualities of messaging that resonated with cadets at West Point were those that were delivered in small groups and that allowed discussion, were cadet-driven, and used the most of personal experiences to drive home the message of the specific messaging or program. For example, some cadets discussed the Stand Down day for sexual assault as an example of resonating and impactful messaging, specifically because of some personal stories shared by their peers. When it came to messaging that cadets found less helpful, discussion

uncovered several specific qualities; the most common being messaging that minimized an issue, large briefings, slide shows/online training, and messaging perceived as hypocritical. A full illustration of these qualities and examples of training programs and messaging can be seen in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11.
Influential Students’ Perceptions of Messaging that Resonates and Messaging That Does Not Resonate at USMA



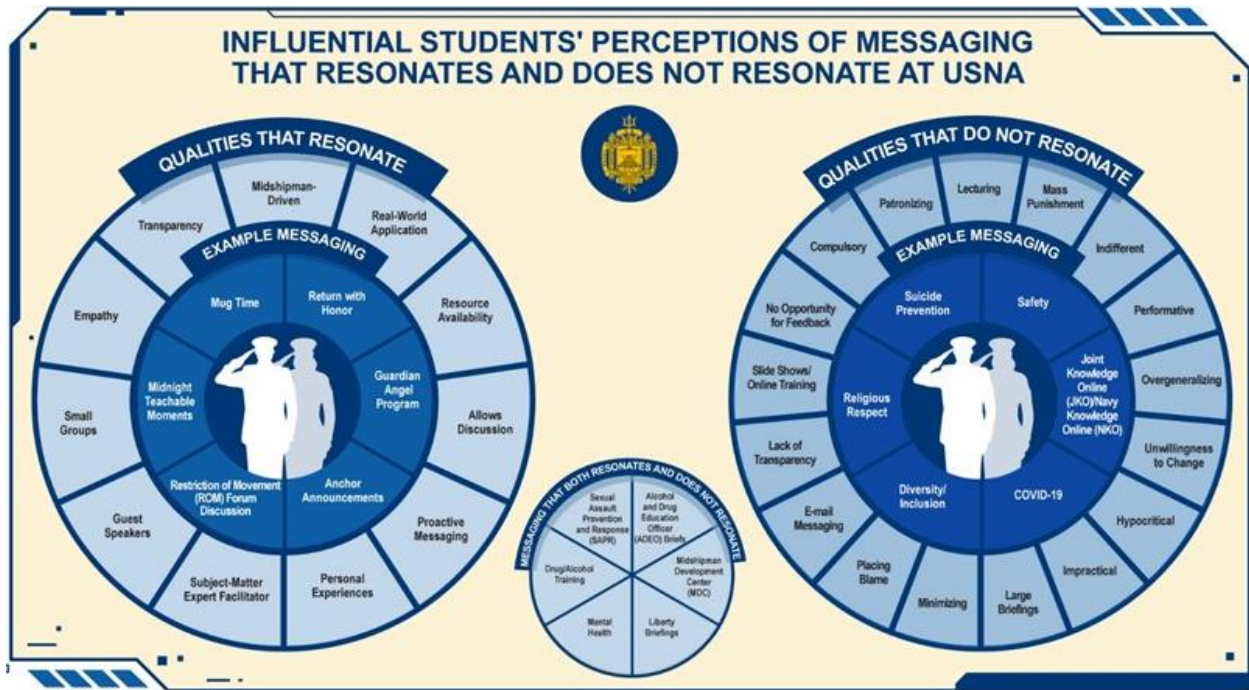
“I think the effective messages that we have had here is like when we have personal stories...at our last Stand Down Day for sexual assault and sexual harassment, we had a cadet who is very well-liked within the corps come up and talk about her personal experience of being sexually assaulted.” –USMA, Female Group

“The Firsties, they’ve probably gotten the same sexual assault training for four years in a row. I think that breeds a lot of cynicism if we’re getting the same things over and over. And so I think what’s really important is that you tailor, and I think we’re definitely starting to move into this now, but if you tailor certain things for the experiences that these... different cadets have had, then I think it becomes a lot more palatable.” –USMA, Mixed-Gender Group

U.S. Naval Academy

Discussing messaging with midshipmen at the Naval Academy revealed similar themes to those at West Point about the qualities of resonating and non-resonating messaging. Namely, the most common qualities of messaging that resonates that were discussed were those that were delivered in small groups and that allowed discussion, were midshipman-driven, and used personal experiences. These qualities were said to help increase the buy-in of participants as they felt heard and were able to better relate to and engage with the messaging content. Less resonating messaging was described very similarly as that by USMA cadets; the most common qualities of these less resonant messages were anything that minimized an issue; delivered via large briefings, as slide shows, or online; and perceived as hypocritical. The full list of these qualities and instances of programs described with these qualities can be found below in Figure 12.

Figure 12.
Influential Students’ Perceptions of Messaging that Resonates and Messaging That Does Not Resonate at USNA



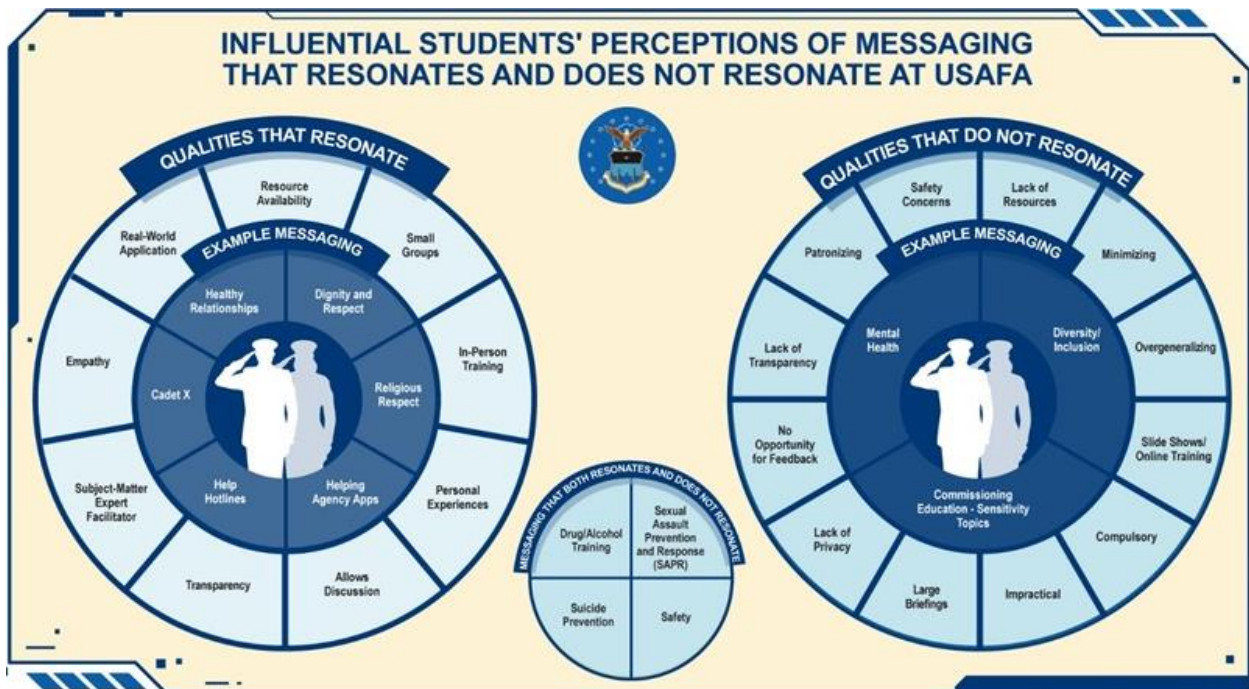
“Mug time was an opportunity that happened... the dot came on and answered midshipmen's questions... being able to actually ask questions and hear the tone of his voice as he's answering them, or actually be able to ask poignant questions where you feel like you're being heard and you actually know you're being heard because you're saying it out loud was really helpful.” –USNA, Mixed-Gender Group

“The SHAPE sessions or SAPR training sessions that we have, being taught by the midshipmen that have either experienced things personally or know friends that have, in conjunction with their training, allow them to put the topic in a relatable context for us.”
 –USNA, Male Group

U.S. Air Force Academy

Focus group discussion with cadets at the Air Force Academy on their perceptions of training and messaging that they receive was found to be generally similar to those findings for USMA and USNA. Cadets’ most frequently discussed qualities of resonating training included small-group-based messaging, programs that involved discussion, and programs that involved personal experiences. Also, like discussion at West Point and the Naval Academy, USAFA cadets discussed most frequently that trainings that did not resonate were those that were based on large briefings, that used slide shows/online training, and that minimized the issue. The full list of these qualities and instances of programs described with these qualities can be found in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13.
Influential Students’ Perceptions of Messaging that Resonates and Messaging That Does Not Resonate at USAFA



“In large groups, you're not going to stand up there and necessarily be vulnerable... and it's harder to talk about those topics where it's like, "Hey, where's that line of consent? Where can you actually tell... in the heat of the moment, how do you say no?" Whereas in big groups, you're not going to talk through that because it's a taboo topic. Whereas in small groups you can get a lot more personal, but honest, honest about what's happening.”
 –USAFA, Mixed-Gender Group

“So I guess just generally from the ineffective messaging, all of them have this impersonal feel to them. I think that these kinds of, especially with these kinds of sensitive topics, they come across a whole lot better when the presenter or the facilitator can make a personal appeal and having large briefings or large amounts of people on an online platform, you can't do that.” –USAFA, Mixed-Gender Group

Conclusion

Despite years of concerted effort, cadets and midshipmen remain at risk for sexual assault and sexual harassment (Davis et al., 2019). Additionally, results from SAGR focus groups have consistently identified MSA student leaders/influencers as critical but unequipped prevention messengers. By revising the traditional SAGR focus group methodology to a mixed-methods approach in 2021, this study provided valuable insights for the Academies to consider in their integrated prevention programs.

The results of this study can be taken into consideration as the Academies review their comprehensive prevention plans and look to modify prevention programs or activities based on the information gained from this study. For example, by examining social norms, the results of this study found that while cadets and midshipmen have accurate expectations regarding how other cadets and midshipmen should behave with regard to confronting sexual comments, discouraging abusive/hostile language on social media, and discourage humiliating others, the actual behavior of cadets and midshipmen does not live up to these expectations. These behaviors are promising targets for a norms intervention within an existing prevention activity. For other behaviors such as encouraging healthy drinking behavior and holding others accountable to Academy rules, cadets and midshipmen have lower expectations of one another. These behaviors are counter to good order and discipline at the Academies and character development programs are an opportunity to address these norms to drive behavior change.

The focus groups with influential cadets and midshipmen as nominated by their peers provided greater insights into how cadets and midshipmen view the messaging, trainings, and programs around problematic behaviors at the Academies. Cadets and midshipmen felt that messaging, trainings, and programs that were delivered in small group settings, were led by fellow cadets/midshipmen, allowed for discussion, and included personal stories were particularly impactful in their assessment of whether they thought the training was effective.

Cadet and midshipmen peers have been consistently identified in past SAGR research as critical messengers for prevention efforts regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment (Barry et al., 2020). Research has shown that the use of influential students can better drive culture and behavior change (e.g., Bush et al., 2019; Coker et al., 2017). Understanding the characteristics of influential students at the Academies is an important first step in understanding what factors make up the profile of an influential cadet or midshipman. The results of this study found that cadets and midshipmen who are viewed as influential are widely looked up to at the Academy, are respected, and excel in applying military knowledge. Academy prevention personnel could use this information as part of an assessment tool or strategy to identify cadets and midshipmen for participation in prevention programs and activities. Academies can review current prevention activities and programs and consider changing how they are delivered and leverage these influential students to enhance their prevention programs and activities to better resonate with cadets and midshipmen.

If a prevention program or activity is modified by an Academy, an important step is to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in reducing the harmful behavior the program is targeting. Without evaluating the program, it will be hard for the Academies to know if the program is making an impact on actual behavior change overtime. Upcoming SAGR projects and the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) are two opportunities to assess progress at the Academy, in concert with more targeted program evaluation efforts.

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Appendix A. Survey Instrument

DATA
DRIVEN
SOLUTIONS
FOR
DECISION
MAKERS



2021 ACNS

About the Academy Climate and Networking Study

- 1) **Purpose:** The Academy Climate and Networking Study (ACNS) research project is conducted by the Department of Defense's (DoD) Office of People Analytics (OPA) and contracted through an external research company (Fors Marsh Group [FMG]) to provide Department and Academy leadership with information about culture and life at the Military Service Academies (MSAs). For the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), or Department of Transportation (DOT) officials, those survey results will be aggregated separately. This survey asks all Academy cadets and midshipmen to answer the same questions about their beliefs, perceptions, and understanding of normal standards (hereafter norms) at their Academy. The combined responses to this survey give leadership valuable and important feedback about policy, training, reporting, and dissemination of messages that help ensure safe and supportive training and education.
- 2) **Confidentiality:** No one at your Academy (leadership, faculty, staff, nor cadets/midshipmen) will see how you personally answered any questions on this survey. Responses are combined from everyone at your Academy and the other MSAs to produce aggregate, confidential results. Protecting the confidentiality of your responses is of utmost importance to us.
- 3) **Voluntary Participation:** This survey is voluntary. You may skip any questions you choose not to answer, and you can stop participating at any time. However, participating in this short survey (approximately 15 minutes) is your opportunity to have your opinion heard by Academy, Service, and department leaders. Results of past research have resulted in improvements to training and education at your Academy, so the short 15 minutes you spend on the survey will have immeasurable impact on the lives of cadets and midshipmen at the Academies today and the lives of future cadets and midshipmen. If you choose not to participate after your survey is submitted, you have the right to withdraw your information retroactively at any time by contacting SA-Survey@mail.mil.

Thank you! We understand your time is valuable and we appreciate the time you spend taking this survey. The ACNS is most valuable when *everyone* participates to get the most accurate understanding of life at your Academy. Thank you for doing your part!

Academy Culture

*In this section, you will be asked about your perceptions of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors at your Academy. Please select the response closest to your opinion: there are no wrong answers. We are interested in what **you** think and feel.*

1. What is your class year at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy]?

- First Class
- Second Class
- Third Class
- Fourth Class

2. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively set positive examples with their own behavior toward others?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

3. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] in your [company|squadron] do you believe actively set positive examples with their own behavior toward others?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

4. What percent of your [cadet|midshipman] friends do you believe actively set positive examples with their own behavior toward others?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

5. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively set positive examples with their behavior toward others.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[Cadets|Midshipmen] in my [company|squadron] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively set positive examples with their behavior toward others.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. How much do you agree with the following statement?
My [cadet|midshipman] friends expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively set positive examples with their behavior toward others.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. How much do you agree with the following statement?
I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively set positive examples with their behavior toward others.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. How often do you actively set positive examples with your behavior toward others?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

10. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules?

- 0%
- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%
- 60%
- 70%
- 80%
- 90%
- 100%

11. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] in your [company|squadron] do you believe actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules?

- 0%
- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%
- 60%
- 70%
- 80%
- 90%
- 100%

12. What percent of your [cadet|midshipman] friends do you believe actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules?

- 0%
- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%
- 60%
- 70%
- 80%
- 90%
- 100%

13. How much do you agree with the following statement?
 [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. How much do you agree with the following statement?
 [Cadets|Midshipmen] in my [company|squadron] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. How much do you agree with the following statement?
My [cadet|midshipman] friends expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

16. How much do you agree with the following statement?
I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of their opinion of the rules.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

17. How often do you actively hold others accountable to Academy rules, regardless of your opinion of the rules?

- Very often
 Often
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 Never

18. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

19. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] in your [company|squadron] do you believe actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

20. What percent of your [cadet|midshipman] friends do you believe actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them?

- 0%
 10%
 20%
 30%
 40%
 50%
 60%
 70%
 80%
 90%
 100%

21. How much do you agree with the following statement?
 [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

22. How much do you agree with the following statement?
 [Cadets|Midshipmen] in my [company|squadron] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

23. How much do you agree with the following statement?
 My [cadet|midshipman] friends expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

24. How much do you agree with the following statement?
 I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when they hear them.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

25. How often do you actively confront someone making sexist comments if and when you hear them?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

26. What percent of [cadets/midshipmen] at [West Point/the Naval Academy/the Air Force Academy/the Coast Guard Academy/the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets/midshipmen]?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

27. What percent of [cadets/midshipmen] in your [company/squadron] do you believe actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets/midshipmen]?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

28. What percent of your [cadet/midshipman] friends do you believe actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets/midshipmen]?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

29. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[cadets/midshipmen] at [West Point/the Naval Academy/the Air Force Academy/the Coast Guard Academy/the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets/midshipmen] to actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets/midshipmen].

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

30. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[Cadets|Midshipmen] in my [company|squadron] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets|midshipmen].

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

31. How much do you agree with the following statement?
My [cadet|midshipman] friends expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets|midshipmen].

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

32. How much do you agree with the following statement?
I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets|midshipmen].

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. How often do you actively discourage gossiping/talking about other [cadets|midshipmen]?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely

Never

34. What percent of [cadets/midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively discourage humiliating other [cadets/midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening?

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

35. What percent of [cadets/midshipmen] in your [company/squadron] do you believe actively discourage humiliating other [cadets/midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening?

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

36. What percent of your [cadet/midshipman] friends do you believe actively discourage humiliating other [cadets/midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening?

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

37. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[cadets/midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets/midshipmen] to actively discourage humiliating other [cadets/midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

38. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[Cadets/Midshipmen] in my [company/squadron] expect other [cadets/midshipmen] to actively discourage humiliating other [cadets/midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

39. How much do you agree with the following statement?

My [cadet|midshipman] friends expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively discourage humiliating other [cadets|midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

40. How much do you agree with the following statement?

I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively discourage humiliating other [cadets|midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when they see it happening.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

41. How often do you actively discourage humiliating other [cadets|midshipmen] with insults, sarcasm, or gestures if and when you see it happening?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

42. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively discourage abusive or hostile language¹ about other [cadets|midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

¹ "Abusive or hostile language" was defined for all items as follows: "Abusive or hostile language includes unwanted comments about someone's behavior or appearance intended to cause harm to that person or intended to increase others' negative perceptions of that person." This definition was shown when participants hovered their mouse over the underlined question text.

43. What percent of [cadets/midshipmen] in your [company/squadron] do you believe actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets/midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

44. What percent of your [cadet/midshipman] friends do you believe actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets/midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it?

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
-

45. How much do you agree with the following statement?

[cadets/midshipmen] at [West Point/the Naval Academy/the Air Force Academy/the Coast Guard Academy/the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets/midshipmen] to actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets/midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

46. How much do you agree with the following statement?

[Cadets/Midshipmen] in my [company/squadron] expect other [cadets/midshipmen] to actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets/midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

47. How much do you agree with the following statement?

My [cadet/midshipman] friends expect other [cadets/midshipmen] to actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets/midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Strongly disagree

48. How much do you agree with the following statement?
I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets|midshipmen] on social media if and when they see it.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

49. How often do you actively discourage **abusive or hostile language** about other [cadets|midshipmen] on social media if and when you see it?

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

50. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] do you believe actively encourage healthy drinking behavior? Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

51. What percent of [cadets|midshipmen] in your [company|squadron] do you believe actively encourage healthy drinking behavior? Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

52. What percent of your [cadet|midshipman] friends do you believe actively encourage healthy drinking behavior? Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

53. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively encourage healthy drinking behavior. Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

54. How much do you agree with the following statement?
[Cadets|Midshipmen] in my [company|squadron] expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively encourage healthy drinking behavior. Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

55. How much do you agree with the following statement?
My [cadet|midshipman] friends expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively encourage healthy drinking behavior. Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

56. How much do you agree with the following statement?
I expect other [cadets|midshipmen] to actively encourage healthy drinking behavior. Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

57. How often do you actively encourage healthy drinking behavior? Examples of healthy drinking behavior include drinking in moderation, discouraging drinking games, and discouraging underage drinking.

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Influential Peers

The next few questions will ask about [cadets|midshipmen] at your Academy. Consider interactions with all [cadets|midshipmen] at your Academy, including those outside your class year, [company|squadron], and immediate [cadet|midshipman] chain of command. Please identify only one [cadet|midshipman] for each of the following questions, but you can name the same person more than once. Please enter this person's full first and last names in the fields on the following items. As you type, the survey will display the best match in a drop-down list for you to select. Do not use nicknames. If there are multiple people with the same first and last name as the person you wish to nominate, please enter the person's name in the field and select the correct person in the pop-up list identified by their class year and/or [company|squadron].

For example, if you want to nominate [Cadet|Midshipman] John Smith class of 2021 in [company|squadron] D, and there are multiple "John Smith"s at your Academy, type out "John Smith" in the appropriate field, and select the entry with "class of 2021, [company|squadron] D."

*Please remember **your responses will be kept completely confidential.***

Thank you for your patience as the survey loads the list of your Academy peers. If you encounter difficulty filling out the field, please wait a few seconds for it to load.

58. What [cadet|midshipman] do you look up to at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy]?

a. **(If Q58 = Complete)** Why do you look up to this person?

59. What [cadet|midshipman] do you respect at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy]?

a. **(If Q59 = Complete)** What makes this person respectable?

60. What [cadet|midshipman] is a good leader in sports, Academy clubs, extracurricular groups, and other group activities at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy]?

a. **(If Q60 = Complete)** What makes this person a good leader?

61. What [cadet|midshipman] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] would you want to command the military unit you commission into?

a. (If Q61 = Complete) What about this person would make a desirable commander?

62. What [cadet|midshipman] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] has a presence on social media that you like, follow, or enjoy?

b. (If Q62 = Complete) What about their presence on social media do you like?

63. Looking back over the last six months (since September 2020), who are the [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] you have felt particularly close to or spent significant time with?

This can include [cadets|midshipmen] outside your class year, [company|squadron], and immediate [cadet|midshipman] chain of command. When answering this question, consider [cadets|midshipmen] at your Academy with whom you socialize, hang out, or are personally close to. They can be [cadets|midshipmen] you listed in the previous section or other [cadets|midshipmen]. Please enter these peoples' full first and last names in the fields on the following items. As you type, the survey will display the best match in a drop-down list for you to select. Do not use nicknames. If there are multiple people with the same first and last name as the person you wish to nominate, please enter the person's name in the field and select the correct person in the pop-up list identified by their class year and/or [company|squadron]. You may identify up to five people.

For example, if you want to nominate [Cadet|Midshipman] John Smith class of 2021 in [company|squadron] D, and there are multiple "John Smith"s at your Academy, type out "John Smith" in the appropriate field, and select the entry with "class of 2021; [company|squadron] D."

Thank you for your patience as the survey loads the list of your Academy peers. If you encounter difficulty filling out the field, please wait a few seconds for it to load.

Please enter the first of up to five [SLTNPL].

1.

Looking back over the last six months (since September 2020), who are the [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] you have felt particularly close to or spent significant time with?

So far you have selected:

1. Q63a

For example, if you want to nominate [Cadet\Midshipman] John Smith class of 2021 in [company\squadron] D, and there are multiple "John Smith"s at your Academy, type out "John Smith" in the appropriate field, and select the entry with "class of 2021; [company\squadron] D."

Thank you for your patience as the survey loads the list of your Academy peers. If you encounter difficulty filling out the field, please wait a few seconds for it to load.

Please enter the second of up to five [SLTNPL].

2.

Looking back over the last six months (since September 2020), who are the [cadets\midshipmen] at [West Point\the Naval Academy\the Air Force Academy\the Coast Guard Academy\the Merchant Marine Academy] you have felt particularly close to or spent significant time with?

So far you have selected:

1. Q63a
2. Q63b

For example, if you want to nominate [Cadet\Midshipman] John Smith class of 2021 in [company\squadron] D, and there are multiple "John Smith"s at your Academy, type out "John Smith" in the appropriate field, and select the entry with "class of 2021; [company\squadron] D."

Thank you for your patience as the survey loads the list of your Academy peers. If you encounter difficulty filling out the field, please wait a few seconds for it to load.

Please enter the third of up to five [SLTNPL].

3.

Looking back over the last six months (since September 2020), who are the [cadets\midshipmen] at [West Point\the Naval Academy\the Air Force Academy\the Coast Guard Academy\the Merchant Marine Academy] you have felt particularly close to or spent significant time with?

So far you have selected:

1. Q63a
2. Q63b
3. Q63c

For example, if you want to nominate [Cadet\Midshipman] John Smith class of 2021 in [company\squadron] D, and there are multiple "John Smith"s at your Academy, type out "John Smith" in the appropriate field, and select the entry with "class of 2021; [company\squadron] D."

Thank you for your patience as the survey loads the list of your Academy peers. If you encounter difficulty filling out the field, please wait a few seconds for it to load.

Please enter the fourth of up to five [SLTNPL].

4.

Looking back over the last six months (since September 2020), who are the [cadets|midshipmen] at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] you have felt particularly close to or spent significant time with?

So far you have selected:

1. Q63a
2. Q63b
3. Q63c
4. Q63d

For example, if you want to nominate [Cadet|Midshipman] John Smith class of 2021 in [company|squadron] D, and there are multiple "John Smith"s at your Academy, type out "John Smith" in the appropriate field, and select the entry with "class of 2021; [company|squadron] D."

Thank you for your patience as the survey loads the list of your Academy peers. If you encounter difficulty filling out the field, please wait a few seconds for it to load.

Please enter the fifth of up to five [SLTNPL].

5.

64. Thinking of the individuals you named, please explain all the ways in which you are connected with them. Some people can be connected to you in more than one way. For example, someone might be a classmate, a friend, and a teammate.

Please indicate how you are connected to each person by selecting the appropriate cell(s) with a check mark.

	Current/ Former Roommate	Take/Took Academic Class Together	Friend	Extracurricular Club Member (e.g., Academic, Cultural, Recreational, Military, etc.) <i>Please do not count sport teammates here.</i>	Sport (intramural, club, or intercollegiat e) Teammate	Current/ Former Superior in [Cadet/Midsh ipman] Chain of Command	Connected on Social Media (e.g., Jodel, Instagram, Snapchat, TIKTok, Reddit, Facebook)	Other <i>Please specify how you are connected.</i>
[INDIVIDUAL 1]								
[INDIVIDUAL 2]								
[INDIVIDUAL 3]								
[INDIVIDUAL 4]								
[INDIVIDUAL 5]								
[INDIVIDUAL 6]								
[INDIVIDUAL 7]								
[INDIVIDUAL 8]								
[INDIVIDUAL 9]								
[INDIVIDUAL 10]								

65. Thinking of the individuals you named, please identify how you interact with them. There can be multiple ways you can interact with each person. For example, you might hang out with, study with, and discuss personal issues with the same person.

Please indicate how you interact with each person by selecting the appropriate cell(s) with a check mark.

	Socialize/ Hang Out With	Talk About Classwork /Study Together	Discuss Life Plans	Discuss Personal Issues	Go to for Advice	Interact/T alk on Social Media (e.g., Jodel, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Reddit, Facebook)	Other <i>Please specify how you interact.</i>
[INDIVIDUAL 1]							
[INDIVIDUAL 2]							
[INDIVIDUAL 3]							
[INDIVIDUAL 4]							
[INDIVIDUAL 5]							
[INDIVIDUAL 6]							
[INDIVIDUAL 7]							
[INDIVIDUAL 8]							
[INDIVIDUAL 9]							
[INDIVIDUAL 10]							

66. Please think about the people you listed, shown below. Which of these individuals spend significant amounts of time with one another?

Please indicate if you think the people listed in each row spend significant amounts of time with the people listed in each column by selecting the appropriate cell(s) with a check mark. For example, if the person in the first row spends a significant amount of time with the people in columns 2, 5, and 6, please select the cells where row 1 intersects with columns 2, 5, and 6 with a check mark. Repeat this process for each row. Please see the example illustrated below. Any cells where an individual intersects with themselves will be pre-populated with a check mark.

	John	Sam	Mary	Frank	Rob	Erica
John	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	ID 1	ID 2	ID 3	ID 4	ID 5	ID 6	ID 7	ID 8	ID 9	ID 10

[INDIVIDUAL 1]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>									
[INDIVIDUAL 2]		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
[INDIVIDUAL 3]			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
[INDIVIDUAL 4]				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						
[INDIVIDUAL 5]					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
[INDIVIDUAL 6]						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
[INDIVIDUAL 7]							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
[INDIVIDUAL 8]								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
[INDIVIDUAL 9]									<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
[INDIVIDUAL 10]										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

67. Please rank how important [cadets/midshipmen] in the following groups are to you personally in your experiences at [West Point|the Naval Academy|the Air Force Academy|the Coast Guard Academy|the Merchant Marine Academy] where the *most important group* is at the top and the *least important group* is at the bottom by dragging and dropping each into the list.

Class year	
[Company Squadron]	
Academic major	
Those you have classes with	
Sports groups you belong to	
Extracurricular clubs (excluding sports) you belong to	
Those you have military training with	
Informal social groups (e.g., friendships, cliques, etc.)	
Digital communities on social media platforms (e.g., Jodel, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Reddit, Facebook)	

68. Over the last six months (since September 2020), on average, how frequently did you communicate with the individuals you named? *Include interactions that are face-to-face, by phone, Zoom, text, mail, or on the internet.*

	At Least Once a Day	At Least Once a Week	At Least Once a Month	Less Than Once a Month
[INDIVIDUAL 1]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 2]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 3]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 4]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 5]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 6]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 7]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 8]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 9]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
[INDIVIDUAL 10]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

69. How many sports teams, clubs, and extracurricular groups at the Academy do you belong to?

Academy sports teams/clubs/extracurricular groups.

70. Would you like to participate in a virtual follow-up focus group to help improve [cadet/midshipman] life at your Academy? These groups will be conducted approximately in early April.

- Yes
- No

We appreciate your participation in this survey! In the event you would like to discuss issues related to this survey with someone from OPA, please contact Dr. Ashlea Klahr at (571) 372-1789 or DSN 372-1789.

Appendix B. Focus Group Guide

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Academy Climate and Networking Study 2021 Focus Group Protocol

Focus groups will be conducted with groups of cadets and midshipmen at the Military Service Academies (MSAs) identified as influential by other cadets and midshipmen, and those nominated via snowball sampling for individuals making up social networks. These individuals will be nominated/identified in a survey fielded approximately one month before the focus group. Each group will consist of a “category” of influential person. These categories include “academic,” “athletic,” “leader,” “military culture,” and “social media.” Other groups will consist of survey participants who indicated being interested in participating in a follow-on focus group in their questionnaire responses.

Project Objective: Conduct focus groups with MSA cadets and midshipmen identified as influential with other Academy students to explore how influential students impact the dissemination of information and establishment/reinforcement of norms. These groups also aim to discuss participants’ understanding, perceptions, and attitudes toward sexual assault prevention messaging to better tailor prevention efforts at the Academies.

NOTES TO REVIEWER:

This discussion guide is not a script and therefore will not be read verbatim. The moderator will use these questions as a roadmap and probe as needed to maintain the natural flow of conversation. Question probes are *italicized*.

Moderator instructions are highlighted in yellow. Materials are highlighted in blue.

Session Overview: Total time—90 minutes

SECTION A: Introduction and Icebreaker (8 min.)

The interviewer will explain the purpose of the focus group, present the ground rules, and allow participants to ask any questions.

SECTION B: Friendships at the Academy (15 min.)

The purpose of this section is to assess the characteristics of friendships to warm up the group, explore what it means to be an influential cadet or midshipman, and identify how influential people interact with others.

Activities

- Sub-group identification (identifying, characterizing, and exploring what sub-groups or cliques exist at the Academy) and their relative influence on behavior and thought

<p>SECTION C: Characteristics of Influential Students (25 min.) The purpose of this section is to identify what the characteristics of influential cadets and midshipmen are through two activities.</p> <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stick figure characteristics (ask participants to identify and discuss the characteristics of an influential person at the Academy by projecting onto a neutral illustration) • Character profile discussion (exploring profiles of cadets/midshipmen according to characteristics, and exploring their influence on others)
<p>SECTION D: Norms and Behavior (15 min.) The purpose of this section is to identify what norms exist around risk of negative outcomes, to explore perceptions of those norms, and identify what factors create/reinforce those norms.</p> <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vignettes of risky incidents (describing vignettes of potential risky incidents at the Academy, how they may play out, and reactions to intervention/non-intervention)
<p>SECTION E: Academy Messaging around Safety (15 min.) The purpose of this section is to identify what messaging strategies, language, and methods work best to reach and resonate with those influential people.</p> <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy messaging topic generator (what things are messaged by the Academy, what makes them effective/ineffective, and how to improve ineffective messaging)
<p>SECTION F: Social Networks (10 min.) Discussion of the characteristics of social networks through an ego network mapping activity.</p> <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner-circle/outer-circle mapping (describing participants' social networks, their characteristics, and how information flows through them)
<p>SECTION G: Conclusion (2 min.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator ensures that all questions are answered, and all comments have been heard.

Section A. Introduction and Icebreaker (8 minutes)

Thank you all for coming to talk to us today, I understand you are all busy people and your time is greatly appreciated. My name is _____, and I work for Fors Marsh Group, a government contractor that conducts hundreds of groups like these each year, and I'm here today to conduct this group on behalf of the DoD's Office of People Analytics, or OPA. I'm here to listen to you and what you have to tell me; I have no stake in how you respond. Today, we would like to hear from you about how you socialize with other [cadets [midshipmen], how you get messages about preventing risky behaviors from the Academy, and general culture here at your Academy.

[MODERATOR: *If asked, provide definition of risky behaviors - Risky behavior is defined as any consciously or non-consciously controlled behavior with a perceived uncertainty about its outcome, and/or about its possible benefits or cost for the physical, economic or psycho-social well-being of oneself or others.*]

We will have about 90 minutes for our discussion. Before we get started, I want to go over a few things:

- First, I want to emphasize that we are here today because each of you were identified as someone with valuable insights about your Academy. There are no wrong answers here and we are not here to evaluate or judge each other. Our whole purpose is to hear your perspectives, opinions, and experiences.
- What we talk about here is confidential. That means that you will not be personally identified in any of the summary reports or other materials we might prepare based on our discussions today.
- Likewise, we respect the privacy of everyone here, and would therefore ask that you please not share any of our discussions with others.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the group at any time.
- You don't have to answer every question, but I do want to hear from everyone, so I might call on you at some point. Please speak one at a time and clearly so I may hear you.
- You might have already noticed others in our meeting. There are some people from my team who are taking notes and helping with our discussion activities so I can be present in our discussion. Even though people are listening, please speak openly about your opinions and experiences. We want to learn from you, so it is important that you share your honest opinions.
- We are also recording this session. I am part of a team that will be speaking with cadets and midshipmen at all the Academies, and it will be impossible for me to remember everything we talk about here today. The recordings will be transcribed, but any information that could identify you including video of the call will be removed from the transcripts and ultimately deleted. After these groups are finished, the researchers I am working with will write a report and will refer to these transcripts in doing so.
- Please turn your cellphone off or switch to silent mode.
- If you need to go to the restroom during the discussion, please feel free to do so.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Okay, great. First, I'm going to have everyone introduce themselves. Please tell us your name and something you like to do in your free time.

[Call on participants for their introduction alphabetically]

[*Introductions and Icebreaker*]

It's wonderful to meet you all—let's get started.

[Ask moderator assistant to begin recording]

[If asked about the purpose of the study]:

- These focus groups are designed to understand the climate and networks of Military Service Academy students. It also seeks to understand Academy life and what it is like to be a cadet/midshipman at a Military Service Academy.

[Briefing for late participants (to be placed into chat by moderator assistant as needed)]:

- What we talk about here is confidential, meaning that you will not be personally identified in any of the summary reports or other materials we might prepare based on our discussions today.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the group at any time.
- We are recording this session. These recordings will be transcribed and anonymized to remove any information that could identify you, including video of the call. After these groups are finished, the researchers I am working with will write a report and will refer to these transcripts in doing so. By remaining in the room, you consent to being recorded.

Section B. Friendships at the Academy (15 min.)

Purpose: This section focuses on identification of sub-groups at the Academies. The sub-group identification activity is designed to uncover what groups participants consider influential (those groups that determine what is normal, right, and expected), and to understand the network density of these groups (size, power, and interconnection among individuals in them). The activity is also designed to directly capture the ways in which social norms are set and disseminated by influential groups.

Now, I'd like to start us off by discussing what friendships look like at the Academy in your experience. My college experience was very different than what I imagine yours is, and I'd like to understand that a little bit better.

- How has COVID-19 impacted how you interact with other [cadets | midshipmen], if at all?

[Probe around social media and electronic communications in addition to in-person interactions.]

Thank you, COVID-19 has introduced a lot of changes in how we interact with people in every aspect of life. When I ask the following questions, I'd like you to think about your responses to them generally, outside of the impact COVID-19 may have had.

- How do you make friends here?
 - How did you make friends when you first started here?
 - How would you compare friendships at the Academy with friendships from high school?

Activity #1- SUB-GROUP IDENTIFICATION ACTIVITY

Thank you for that information, it's really valuable to hear what you have to say about friendships here. I'd like to shift our conversation from friendships to discussing social groups here.

[Moderator Assistant: share screen with Google Jamboard]

[Moderator Assistant: share Google Jamboard URL in meeting chat]

[Moderator: Ask moderator assistant to share Jamboard URL and share their screen, ask participants to click and join the Jamboard link, and for the moderator assistant to place sticky notes. Please note that the Jamboard is anonymous to participants and that the first activity is on slide 2. Participants can navigate to slides by clicking the "right" arrow at the top center of the page.]

Many large organizations have social groups within them, you might call them sub-groups, cliques, or other things, and I'd like to hear more about what groups you've seen here at the Academy. As a group, let's come up with a list of ways you would categorize [cadets | midshipmen] here at the Academy and then we'll discuss them. These can be official groups that are a part of the Academy structure or more informal groups. Are there any questions before we start?

[If asked for more information: a formal group might be class year, or company/squadron, and an informal grouping might be a clique or group of friends.]

[Generate a list of ways to categorize before moving into discussion. Moderator assistant document ideas generated on Activity 1 in activity platform on slide 2.]

- What is the first way you can think of how to categorize [cadets | midshipmen] here?

- What is another way?

[Repeat until approximately 10 groups are identified]

- Of the groups we listed, which ones determine how other [cadets | midshipmen] act in social situations?

- What about those groups influences others' behavior?

- In what ways do those groups influence others' behavior?

- How do people join these groups?

- [Influencer Group Question] How do you influence how other [cadets | midshipmen] act in social situations?

- [Influencer Group Question] What messages do you use?

- Of the groups we listed, which ones influence how other [cadets | midshipmen] think in social situations?

- What about these groups influences others' thoughts?

- In what ways do those groups influence others' thoughts?

- How do people join these groups?

- [Influencer Group Question] How do you influence how other [cadet | midshipmen] think in social situations?

- [Influencer Group Question] What messages do you use?

- Of the groups listed, what are the groups that 'set the tone' for [cadets | midshipmen] in social situations?

- Do these groups influence acceptable behaviors? How?

- Do these groups influence unacceptable behaviors? How?

[Probe around ways in which influential students positively and negatively impact others' behaviors]

- [Influencer Group Question] How do you 'set the tone' for [cadets | midshipmen] in social situations?

- [Influencer Group Question] What messages do you use?

- How do members of these groups interact with each other?
 - With members of other groups?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Probe around how they interact on/off campus, with instructors/coaches..]

- What other groups play a role here that we haven't discussed yet?
 - How do these groups influence others?

- [MODERATOR NOTE: Ask participants to click to next slide following this sub-group activity by clicking the "right" arrow at the top center of the screen. The next activity is on slide 3.]

Section C. Characteristics of Influential Students (25 minutes)

Purpose: This section seeks to identify the characteristics of influential cadets and midshipmen through two activities. The first one asks participants to project the characteristics of an influential person onto a stick figure, while the second provides characteristics and asks participants to build a profile of who that person might be. These activities mimic an exercise from the Oxfam Social Norms Diagnostic Tool, a set of exercises to help programmers identify and discuss social norms, perceptions, and expectations with community members.

Activity #2- STICK FIGURE CHARACTERISTICS

Thank you again for all your participation so far. For this next part, we're going to do a quick individual activity and then discuss as a group. For this activity, I'd like you to think about a particular [cadet/midshipman] whose opinions matter to others here at the Academy. Instead of sharing who you're thinking of or saying their name, I'd like you to think about them where I have this stick figure.

[Navigate to Activity 2 slide on activity platform].

[Please note this is slide 3 of the Jamboard to participants.]

When you have a person in mind, think about the characteristics of this person. Please click the "sticky note" button on the left-hand side panel, and type in characteristics of this influential person, whatever first comes to mind, and place it around this stick figure. Place as many notes as you like. Does anyone have any questions?

[Give participants at most 4 minutes to write out characteristics.]

Ok, let's look at some of the characteristics you wrote.

[Probe around responses and following questions.]

- Why does this person's opinion matter to others?
- Who do they socialize with?
 - How? (face-to-face, social media, etc.)
- What do they do in their free time?
- What extracurricular groups do they belong to?
- What varsity or club sport do they play?
- What is this person's academic major?
 - How do they perform academically?
- What is this person's role in the cadet/midshipman chain of command?
- How old is this person?
- How does prior service play a role?

- How does this person talk about official Academy information?
- How does this person talk about other [cadets |midshipmen]?
- What class year is this person?
- What is this person's race and/or ethnicity?
- What gender is this person?
- [Influencer Group Question] What characteristics does this focus group share with the stick figure we have here?
 - [Influencer Group Question] Are there characteristics of this focus group that are not represented on the stick figure?
- [Influencer Group Question] [MODERATOR NOTE: Brainstorm characteristics of the current focus group that make it particularly influential. Probe around responses.]

[MODERATOR NOTE: Ask participants to click to next slide following this stick figure activity. The next activity starts on slide 4.]

Activity #3- CHARACTER PROFILES ACTIVITY

Ok, we've talked about what the characteristics of an influential [cadet |midshipman] are, but I'd like to change things up a little bit and instead of asking you to describe the characteristics of our stick figure, I'd like to flip it around. I'm going to name a series of characteristics and I'd like you to create a "profile" of that person at the Academy for each one. Please click the "sticky note" button on the left-hand side panel, and type in characteristics of each character profile, whatever first comes to mind. Place as many notes as you like.

[Read the first characteristic and probe around how influential that person might be and how they interact with others.]

[MODERATOR NOTE: Ask participants to click to next slide following each character profile. Character profiles are on slides 5, 6, 7]

- What is the profile of someone who is academically talented here?
 - [MODERATOR NOTE: Probe around any mentions of gender or race.]
 - How influential is this person?
 - How do they interact with others?

- What makes this person influential?

[Repeat these probes as needed for the following questions/profiles.]

- Describe the profile of someone who naturally takes charge.
- What is the profile of someone who excels in military training?
- What is the profile of someone who enforces rules here?
- What is the profile of a star athlete here?
- Tell me about the profile of someone who has a following/presence on social media here.

[MODERATOR NOTE: Please note that the following items are intended to get at cadets/midshipmen involved in these programs. Emphasize the first question being around harassment only.]

- What is the profile of someone who is involved in [cadet|midshipman] programs on preventing sexual harassment?
 - What characteristics would you *want* this person to have?
- What is the profile of someone who is involved in [cadet|midshipman] programs on preventing sexual assault?
 - What characteristics would you *want* this person to have?
 - How would this person be different than the person you described as involved in sexual harassment prevention programs?
- What would motivate you to get more involved in SHARP/SAPR-related issues?
- How would an average [cadet|midshipman] in the "middle of the pack" be influential?
- What's the profile of the most influential person?
 - What is this person influential in?
 - How do they interact with others?

- If this happened here, what's most likely to happen next?
 - What are some other ways the scenario might end?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Redirect if discussion turns to Academy rules and regulations. We are looking for how participants think others should react irrespective of Academy guidelines.]

Scenario #2

A group of cadets/midshipmen are talking during lunch, sharing stories and telling jokes. One [cadet|midshipman] tells a rude or offensive joke about women.

- How would most [cadets |midshipmen] *actually* react if they saw this?
 - What would happen if a [cadet |midshipman] did the *opposite* of what most other [cadets |midshipmen] would actually do?
 - How would others respond to this person?
 - At the Academy, who sets the tone for how [cadets | midshipmen] would actually react to this scenario?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How does the reaction of most [cadets | midshipmen] differ from how you would react, if at all?
- [Influencer Group Question] Think of a time you saw something like this at the Academy. How did you react?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How did you talk about it with your peers?
- How do you think most [cadets |midshipmen] *should* react if they saw this?
- If this happened here, what's most likely to happen next?
 - What are some other ways the scenario might end?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Redirect if discussion turns to Academy rules and regulations. We are looking for how participants think others should react irrespective of Academy guidelines.]

Scenario #3

A few [cadets |midshipmen] are playing in the hallway, grappling or wrestling with one another and shouting as others walk by.

- How would most [cadets | midshipmen] *actually* react if they saw this?
 - What would happen if a [cadet | midshipman] did the *opposite* of what most other [cadets | midshipmen] would actually do?
 - How would others respond to this person?
 - At the Academy, who sets the tone for how [cadets | midshipmen] would actually react to this scenario?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How does the reaction of most [cadets | midshipmen] differ from how you would react, if at all?
- [Influencer Group Question] Think of a time you saw something like this at the Academy. How did you react?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How did you talk about it with your peers?
- How do you think most [cadets | midshipmen] *should* react if they saw this?
- If this happened here, what's most likely to happen next?
 - What are some other ways the scenario might end?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Redirect if discussion turns to Academy rules and regulations. We are looking for how participants think others should react irrespective of Academy guidelines.]

Scenario #4

A [cadet | midshipman] checks their social media apps and sees a post mocking or gossiping about another [cadet | midshipman]. It's clear from the context who the person is, but the post does not name the person specifically.

[If needed, social media can include but isn't limited to Jodel, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Reddit, Facebook, Twitter]

- How would most [cadets | midshipmen] *actually* react if they saw this?
 - What would happen if a [cadet | midshipman] did the *opposite* of what most other [cadets | midshipmen] would actually do?
 - How would others respond to this person?
 - At the Academy, who sets the tone for how [cadets | midshipmen] would actually react to this scenario?

- [Influencer Group Question] How does the reaction of most [cadets | midshipmen] differ from how you would react, if at all?
 - [Influencer Group Question] Think of a time you saw something like this at the Academy How did you react?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How did you talk about it with your peers?
 - How do you think most [cadets | midshipmen] *should* react if they saw this?
 - If this happened here, what's most likely to happen next?
 - What are some other ways the scenario might end?
- [MODERATOR NOTE: Redirect if discussion turns to Academy rules and regulations. We are looking for how participants think others should react irrespective of Academy guidelines.]

Scenario #5

A group of [cadets | midshipmen] are at a party with alcohol. One of the group members says they want to get drunk to unwind after a hard week, but another says they don't want to drink and just want to relax.

- How would most [cadets | midshipmen] *actually* react if they saw this?
 - What would happen if a [cadet | midshipman] did the *opposite* of what most other [cadets | midshipmen] would actually do?
 - How would others respond to this person?
 - At the Academy, who sets the tone for how [cadets | midshipmen] would actually react to this scenario?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How does the reaction of most [cadets | midshipmen] differ from how you would react, if at all?
- [Influencer Group Question] Think of a time you saw something like this at the Academy How did you react?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How did you talk about it with your peers?
- How do you think most [cadets | midshipmen] *should* react if they saw this?
- If this happened here, what's most likely to happen next?

- What are some other ways the scenario might end?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Redirect if discussion turns to Academy rules and regulations. We are looking for how participants think others should react irrespective of Academy guidelines.]

Scenario #6

A [cadet | midshipman] actively confronts someone making sexist comments.

- How would most [cadets | midshipmen] *actually* react if they saw this?
 - What would happen if a [cadet | midshipman] did the *opposite* of what most other [cadets | midshipmen] would actually do?
 - How would others respond to this person?
 - At the Academy, who sets the tone for how [cadets | midshipmen] would actually react to this scenario?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How does the reaction of most [cadets | midshipmen] differ from how you would react, if at all?
- [Influencer Group Question] Think of a time you saw something like this at the Academy. How did you react?
 - [Influencer Group Question] How did you talk about it with your peers?
- How do you think most [cadets | midshipmen] *should* react if they saw this?
- If this happened here, what's most likely to happen next?
 - What are some other ways the scenario might end?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Redirect if discussion turns to Academy rules and regulations. We are looking for how participants think others should react irrespective of Academy guidelines.]

Section E. Academy Messaging around Safety (15 minutes)

Purpose: This section seeks to identify what messaging strategies, language, flow of information, and dissemination styles resonate with influential individuals. The activity in this section asks the individuals to describe their perceptions on topics, programs, training, and messages aimed at cadet/midshipman safety. It is aimed at getting a greater understanding of what messages resonate with influential individuals and which do not.

[Direct participants to activity 5 on slide 11.]

Activity #5- SAFETY MESSAGING TOPIC GENERATOR ACTIVITY

Now I'd like to talk about something a little different. I would like to hear from you about any topics related to [cadet|midshipman] safety that the Academy gives training, programs, or messaging on and I'd like to start by brainstorming these with you. To be clear, I don't mean topics around defense, security, or military combat training, but topics aimed at keeping [cadets |midshipmen] safe in their time here at the Academy. These programs, training, or messages could be things you like or dislike, but we want to know what messages you found effective and which ones you did not. Right now we're just going to make a list so feel free to share as many ideas as you can think of. Please click the "sticky note" button on the left-hand side panel, type in a safety topic, and place it under effective or ineffective. Feel free to share as many ideas as you can think of.

[Navigate to Activity 5 in activities platform]

[Participants place the items on the Jamboard. Allow brainstorming for approx. 1-2 minutes or until group has exhausted options. Moderator then focuses on selection of items and uses prompts as needed to fully understand topic areas.]

Great, thank you. First, let's talk about the topics that really "click" with you.

- Which of these topics clicks with you the most?
- Why do these topics click with you?
- What are messages from the Academy on these topics like?
 - Probe around method, tone, messenger, frequency
- How have these Academy messages changed your or other [cadet's |midshipmen's] behavior?
 - How do those influential [cadets | midshipmen] we discussed message these safety topics among peers?

[MODERATOR NOTE: Ask the following question of influential student participants]

[Influencer Group Question] How do you message safety to other [cadets | midshipmen], if at all?

Now let's discuss the topics that don't "click," those that seem to miss the mark.

- Which of the topics we discussed earlier don't click?

- What about those topics doesn't resonate with you?

- How are Academy messages on these topics different from those on the topics we discussed earlier?

- Probe around method, tone, messenger, frequency

What is a better way these topics could be messaged to you? Are there any other topics we've missed?
[Probe as needed.]

[MODERATOR NOTE: Ask participants to click to next slide following this Topic Generator activity. This activity is on slide 12.]

Section F. Social Networks (10 min.)

Purpose: This section uses social network mapping to understand the dissemination of information and the flow through social networks. In addition, it will be used to understand and draw connections between influential individuals and their peers.

Activity #6- INNER-CIRCLE/OUTER-CIRCLE ACTIVITY

Before we finish our discussion today, I'd like to talk about friend groups. We talked earlier about what friendships at the Academy look like generally, but I'd like to focus on what your group of friends looks like. I don't want to discuss these people by name, but talk about what characteristics they may have and how you know each other. Please take a minute to think of the [cadets |midshipmen] you have regular contact with over the course of a given week. This can be in person, over text, social media, or other methods.

[Navigate to Activity 6 slide on activity platform.]

On this slide you can see a circle labeled "me" in the center, with rings around it like a bullseye. As you think of the people you regularly socialize with, please think of those you are closest with as on this "inner-circle" and those you socialize with but aren't as close with on this "outer-circle". Please do not write their names. Are there any questions?

- How do you socialize with these people on the inner circle?
 - In what contexts?
 - How do these people interact with each other?
 - How about those on the outer circle?
 - How did you meet these people?
- Are all these people on the inner circle in your [company |squadron]?
 - How do your relationships with people in your [company |squadron] differ from those outside it?
- Are all these people on the inner circle in your class year?
 - How is socializing with people in other class years different?
- How has this "inner circle" changed for you over your time at the Academy?

Think of a time where you heard a rumor through your fellow [cadets | midshipmen].

- How was that rumor disseminated?
- Where did the last rumor your heard start?
- What channels of communication do you use to discuss official Academy information?

- What channels of communication do you use to discuss non-Academy information?
- What channels of communication do you use to discuss sensitive topics?
- How do you discuss those messages around safety we discussed earlier with those you have in the inner-circle? [If asked for clarification, this can be information about upcoming events, trainings, or other information.]
 - How do you pass down messages around safety from the [cadet | midshipman] chain of command?
 - Is there anything else you would like us to know about safety messaging?

Section G. Conclusion (2 min.)

This has been a very helpful session. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to be with me and share your perspectives and experiences. Before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to share or that we might have missed?

As mentioned in the beginning, we respect the privacy of everyone here, and ask that you please not share any of our discussions with others. We've talked about some things today that are sensitive so please be reminded to not discuss this session with others who did not attend.

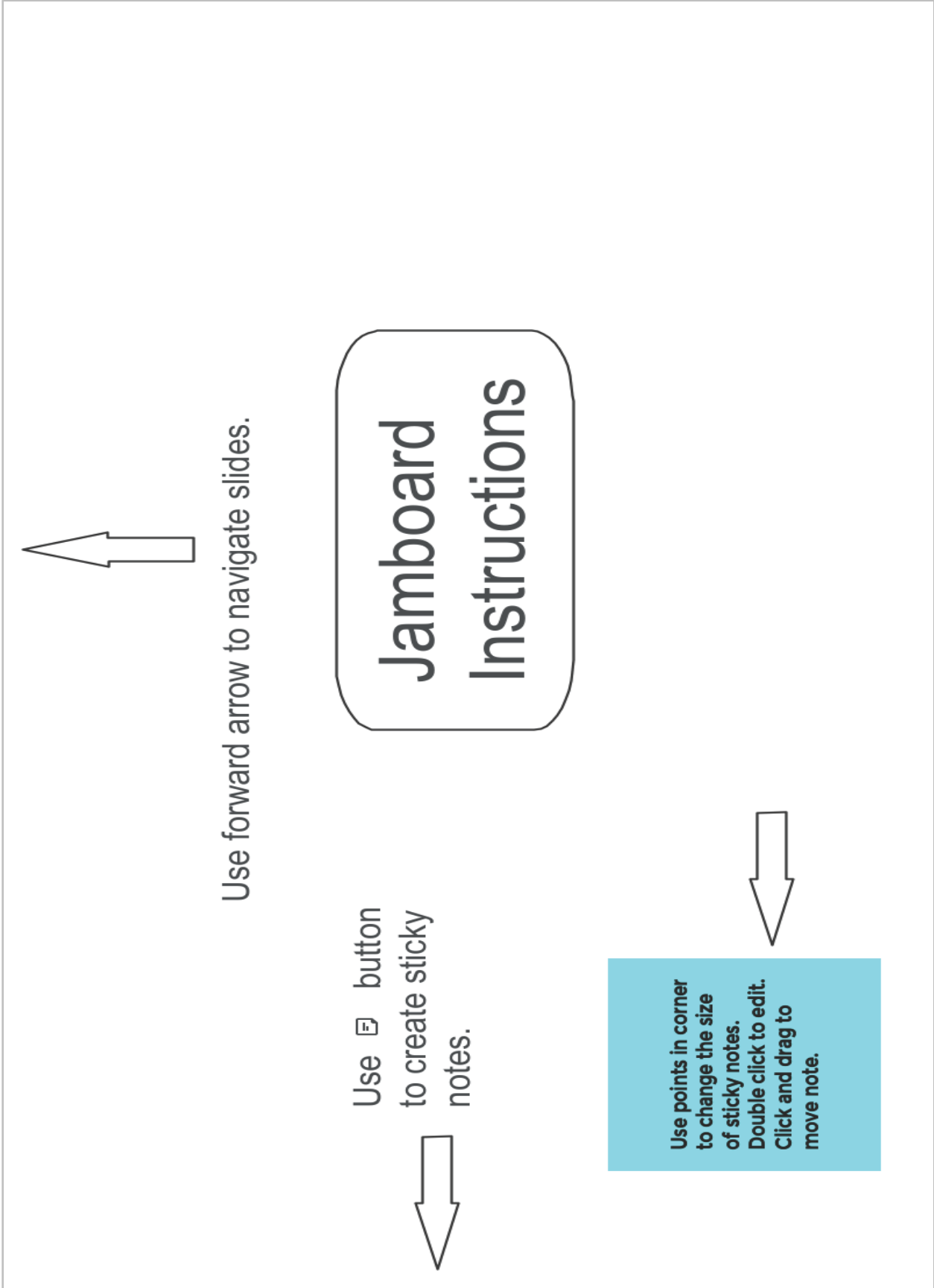
Ok, thank you again for your time. Are there any final questions? If not, you are free to go. Have a wonderful day/evening!

Appendix C.

Example Focus Group Exercises

DATA
DRIVEN
SOLUTIONS
FOR
DECISION
MAKERS





The diagram is enclosed in a large rectangular border. At the top center, the text "Jamboard Instructions" is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this text, there are three main instructional elements:

- Left side:** A large, hollow arrow pointing to the left. To its right, the text "Use forward arrow to navigate slides." is written vertically.
- Bottom center:** The text "Use [icon] button to create sticky notes." is written vertically. Below this text is a large, hollow arrow pointing to the right.
- Right side:** A light blue rectangular box containing the text "Use points in corner to change the size of sticky notes. Double click to edit. Click and drag to move note." To the right of this box is a large, hollow arrow pointing to the right.

Subgroup Identification

- Many large organizations have social groups within them, you might call them sub-groups, cliques, or other things, and I'd like to hear more about what groups you've seen here at the Academy.
- As a group, let's come up with a list of ways you would categorize cadets here at the Academy and then we'll discuss them. These can be official groups that are a part of the Academy structure or more informal groups.
- The moderator assistant will place sticky notes.

Stick-figure Influential Person Activity

- For this activity, I'd like you to think about a particular cadet whose opinions matter to others here at the Academy. Instead of sharing who you're thinking of or saying their name, I'd like you to think about them where I have this stick figure.
- Please click the "sticky note" button on the left-hand side panel, and type in characteristics of this influential person, whatever first comes to mind, and place it around this stick figure. Place as many notes as you like.



Character Profiles

Character Profiles

Describe the profile of _____

...someone who has a following/presence on social media here.

Please place a sticky note.

Character Profiles

Describe the profile of:

...someone who is involved in cadet programs on preventing sexual harassment.

Character Profiles

Describe the profile of:

...someone who is involved in cadet programs on preventing sexual assault.

Please
place a
sticky
note.

Situational Vignettes

A few cadets are playing in the hallway,
grappling or wrestling with one another
and shouting as others walk by.

A group of cadets are talking during lunch, sharing stories and telling jokes. One cadet tells a rude or offensive joke about women.

Topic Generator Activity

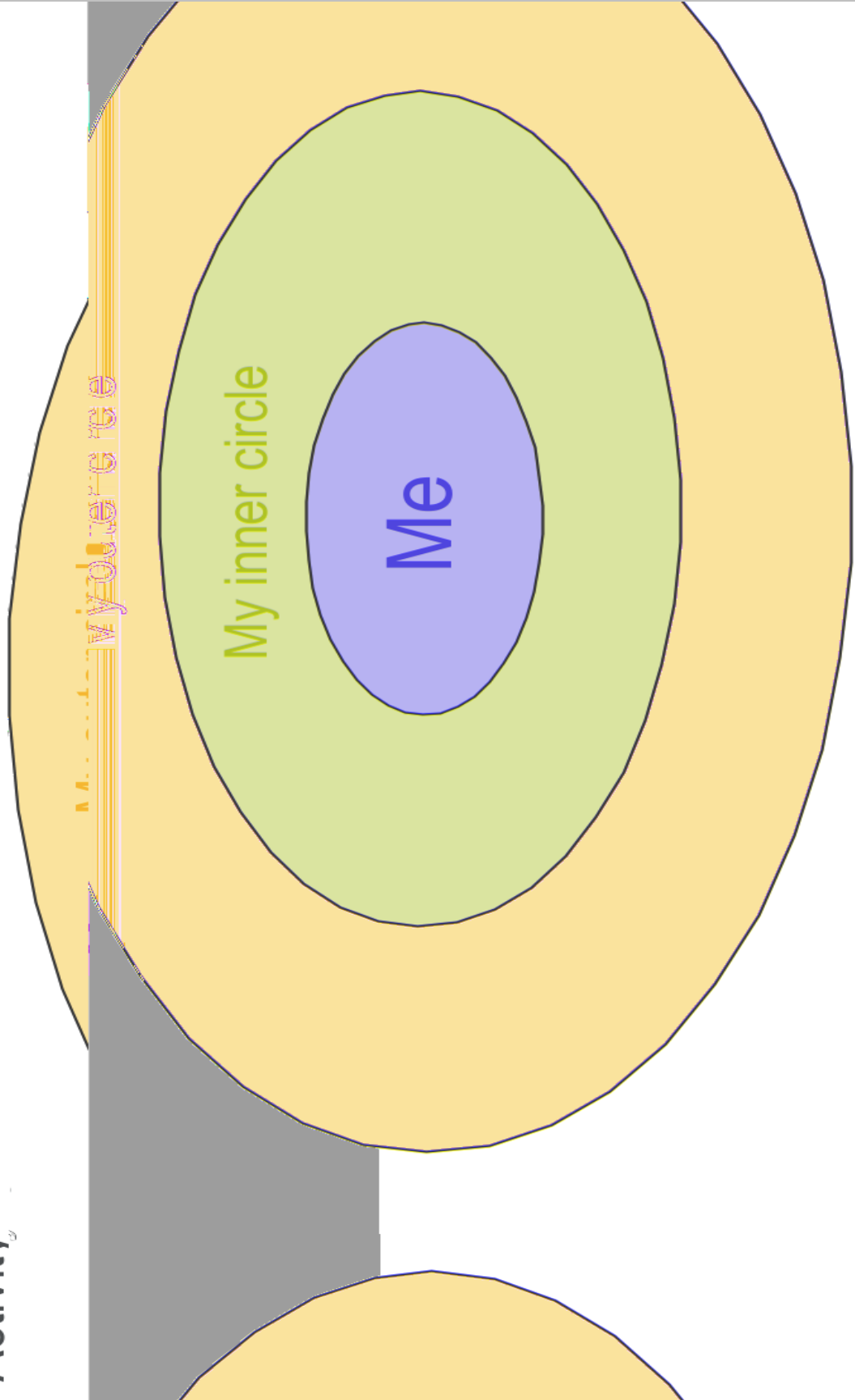
- I would like to hear from you about any topics related to cadet safety that the Academy gives training, programs, or messaging on and I'd like to start by brainstorming these with you. To be clear, I don't mean topics around defense, security, or military combat training, but topics aimed at keeping cadets safe in their time here at the Academy.
- These programs, training, or messages could be things you like or dislike, but we want to know what messages you found effective and which ones you did not. Right now we're just going to make a list so feel free to share as many ideas as you can think of.

Effective Messaging

Ineffective Messaging

Inner/Outer Circle Activity

- On this slide you can see a circle labeled "me" in the center, with rings around it like a bullseye. As you think of the people you regularly socialize with, please think of those you are closest with as on this "inner-circle" and those you socialize with but aren't as close with on this "outer-circle". Please do not write their names.



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