

Focus Group Protocol: Junior Enlisted (E1-E4) and Junior Officers (O1-O2)

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INTRODUCTION (to be read aloud to the group) [5 minutes]

Hello, my name is _____ and I am accompanied by [INTRODUCE OTHERS IN THE ROOM AND THEIR ROLES]. We are from RAND, a non-profit, nonpartisan research organization that does public policy research. Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. We are here to learn about soldier and leader perspectives on their experiences with sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the Army. For more information about the study and how the findings will be used, please refer to the information sheet. This discussion is designed to last no longer than 60 minutes.

This discussion is part of a study funded by the Army G-1 to develop a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to gender discrimination and sexual harassment, leadership response to these incidents, use of (and barriers to use of) existing programs and services, gender integration and the general climate and culture in your unit. The findings from this study are intended to help the Army develop more effective training, a key component of prevention efforts for gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

CONSENT (to be read aloud to the group)

We will be taking notes during all discussions, but we will not record the name of anyone present or mentioned in this session. We will not use the names of individuals or units in any reports. There should be no discussion of open cases or investigations so as to respect the privacy of individuals involved. It is possible that someone may feel obligated to report information discussed in the group, that someone may face retaliation for speaking negatively about a supervisor or others, or that someone discussing challenging situations may be seen weak or a complaining. It is also possible that someone may become upset discussing sexual harassment or gender discrimination experiences. To minimize these risks, please do not include names of individuals or supervisors or provide any information that could put yourselves in jeopardy.

Participating in this focus group is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to answer any (or even all) of the questions. You may refuse to participate or discontinue

participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have questions about your rights as a participant or need to report a participation-related injury or concern, you can contact RAND's Human Subjects Protection Committee using the contact information provided to you in the read ahead. [*HAND THEM/REFER TO THE INFORMATION SHEET PROVIDED*]

We are each walking into this room with different histories and life experiences. Given the topic of our discussion today, it is possible that our discussion could bring up difficult feelings for some of us. Please remember that you can step out of the room [or take breaks] at any time.

Please do not discuss anyone else's comments after the group is over. Although we are asking everyone in the group to keep each other's answers confidential, we cannot guarantee that the other participants here will do so. Please do NOT answer any questions in the discussion that you do not feel comfortable sharing in front of the group. You will have an opportunity to provide written comments after the group discussion.

Additionally, we also want to emphasize to you that this is not an official channel for reporting abuse, discrimination, or misconduct. If you would like to talk to someone about any abuse, discrimination, or misconduct in order to get help or file an official report, you should contact one of the following directly: someone in your chain of command, a chaplain, a medical provider, the Equal Opportunity (EO) Counselor, the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC), or a Victim Advocate [*included on handout*]. You should also consider these resources if you are distressed by anything we discuss today.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do you agree to participate in this discussion?

[SHOULD PARTICIPANTS ASK ABOUT SELECTION INTO THE STUDY: We used data from prior Workplace and Gender Relations Surveys (WGRA) and data from the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) to select installations and units (usually at the battalion level) to include in our study. These installations include those that fell above and below the overall Army average rate of sexual harassment and units that fell in the top and bottom quartiles in terms of various climate measures.]

A. Introductions [5 minutes]

[Objective for this section of the protocol: The purpose of this section is to learn about the backgrounds of the participants in the focus group.]

We'd like to start off by having you introduce yourselves.

1. Let's go around the room and have each of you tell us about:

- a. Your MOS (or CMF, career management field)
- b. How long you've been at this installation or in this unit (and if it this is your first unit/installation) (When we say "unit" we are generally referring to a small group of soldiers who work together, probably a squad, though it could be larger like a platoon or company.)

B. Understanding gender discrimination and sexual harassment [15 minutes]

[Objective for this section: The purpose of this section is to explore unit members' perceptions of gender discrimination and sexual harassment and to understand to what extent gender discrimination and sexual harassment may occur in their unit and more broadly in the installation and Army.]

To ensure we're all on the same page, we note that AR 600-20 defines **gender discrimination** as "the act, policy, or procedure that arbitrarily denies EO or EEO because of sex, including gender identity... to an individual or group of individuals."¹ Please also refer to the full definition provided on the handout.

2. To what extent do you feel **gender discrimination** is happening in your unit?
 - a. (If applicable) For those who have been at other units, how do you think this compares to your prior unit(s)?
 - b. Without providing names of individuals or details that could identify someone involved, what examples of gender discrimination have you seen or heard about? *(If needed, probe for in your unit or installation or in the Army)*

AR 600-20 defines **sexual harassment** as "conduct that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments of a general nature".² Please also refer to the full definition provided on the handout. *[Definition will also be included on a handout]*

3. To what extent do you feel **sexual harassment** is happening in your unit?
 - a. (If applicable) For those who have been at other units, how do you think this compares to your prior unit(s)?
 - b. Without providing names of individuals or details that could identify someone involved, what examples of sexual harassment have you seen or heard about? *(If needed, probe for in the Army or in your unit or installation)*

C. Discussion of Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Behaviors [30 minutes maximum]

¹ Army Command Policy AR 600-20, 24 July 2020, p. 202:
https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=1020451.

² Army Command Policy AR 600-20, 24 July 2020, p. 208:
https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=1020451

[Objective for this section: The purpose of this section is to show participants a list of gender discrimination and sexual harassment behaviors from the UCMJ and to ask them to what extent these behaviors are occurring, the role and response of leadership, and likeliness of reporting. Note that the questions are structured so that we do not use the terms gender discrimination or sexual harassment purposefully in order to understand whether the responses in this section are different from in Section B.]

We would now like to show you a list of behaviors and then we will ask you a series of questions about these behaviors to understand how often these behaviors are happening in your unit and why you think they may be occurring.

[Facilitator shows first set of behaviors—*gender discrimination*—on handout].

- Mistreated, ignored, excluded, or insulted you because you are a [man][woman]
- Said that [men][women] are not as good as [men][women] at your particular job, or that [men][women] should be prevented from having your job
- 4. Thinking about these behaviors [*gender discrimination behaviors listed above*], which behaviors do you feel are occurring in your unit?
 - a. Probe for: which of the above behaviors are occurring most frequently
 - b. Probe for: extent to which these behaviors are happening at this installation, Army in general

[Facilitator shows list of second set of behaviors—*sexual harassment*—on handout]

Group A: Sexual Harassment Verbal Actions

- Repeatedly told sexual “jokes” that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
- Repeatedly made sexual gestures or sexual body movements that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
- Repeatedly told you about their sexual activities in a way that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
- Repeatedly asked you questions about your sex life or sexual interests that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
- Made repeated sexual comments about your appearance or body that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
- Embarrassed, angered, or upset you by repeatedly suggesting that you do not act like a [man][woman] is supposed to

Group B: Sexual Harassment Other Actions

- Made repeated attempts to establish an unwanted romantic or sexual relationship with you that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
- Intentionally touched you in a sexual way when you did not want them to
 - Repeatedly touched you in any other way that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset

- Displayed, showed, or sent sexually explicit materials like pictures or videos that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
 - Took or shared sexually suggestive pictures or videos of you when you did not want them to that made you uncomfortable, angry, or upset
 - Sexual Quid Pro Quo Behaviors
 - Made you feel as if you would get some workplace benefit in exchange for doing something sexual
 - Made you feel like you would get punished or treated unfairly in the workplace if you did not do something sexual
5. Thinking about these behaviors [*first ask Group A: Sexual Harassment Verbal Actions and then ask for Group B: Sexual Harassment Other Actions*], which behaviors do you feel are occurring in your unit?
- a. Probe for: which of the above behaviors are occurring most frequently
 - b. Probe for: which of these behaviors are happening in person vs. online
 - c. Probe for: extent to which these behaviors are happening at this installation, Army in general
6. **[For behaviors that ARE identified in the above questions]** Thinking about [*gender discrimination and sexual harassment behaviors participants noted in above questions—facilitator restates these behaviors*], what do you think contribute to these types of behaviors occurring in your unit?
- a. Are there unique factors of your unit that make these behaviors more likely to occur as opposed to in other units? If so, what are they?
 - b. How, if at all, does the *gender composition* of your unit factor into why these behaviors may be occurring?
 - c. How, if at all, does *rank* factor into why these behaviors may be occurring?
 - d. How, if at all, does *working closely with civilians* (in addition to active-duty members) factor into why these behaviors may be occurring?
7. **[For behaviors that are identified as NOT happening in the above questions]** Why do you think these behaviors are not occurring in your unit?
- a. From your perspective, what are some of the reasons these behaviors are not occurring?
 - b. [*If applicable*] Are there unique factors of your unit that make these behaviors less likely to occur as opposed to in other units? If so, what are they?
8. How, if at all, does *leadership* factor into whether or not these behaviors are occurring?
- a. Let's start with your immediate supervisor. What do you think your immediate supervisor (for example, your NCO) is doing, to prevent these behaviors from occurring?

- b. How well do you think unit leadership prevents these behaviors from occurring?
 - c. What do you think your immediate supervisor (for example, your NCO) should be doing differently, to more effectively prevent these behaviors from occurring?
 - d. If leadership in your unit received a report of any of these behaviors, how do you think they would handle it?
9. If someone in your unit **saw or became aware any of these behaviors**, what would they do? How would they respond?
- a. How likely do you think they may be to intervene? Why or why not?
 - b. How likely do you think they would be to report it? Why or why not?
10. If someone in your unit **experienced** any of these behaviors themselves, how likely do you think they would be to report it? Why or why not?

D. Conclusion/Training [5 minutes]

[Objective for this section: The purpose of this section is to understand perspectives on existing training on sexual harassment and/or gender discrimination including perceptions around utility, effectiveness, and areas for improvement.]

We'd like to gather your feedback and suggestions on how training around sexual harassment and gender discrimination can be improved.

11. What information is important to highlight as part of training and preventing gender discrimination and sexual harassment?
- a. What should training look like in terms of the content or information that is discussed?
12. Lastly, we know that gender discrimination and sexual harassment have been well-known problems in the Army for many years, and there have been many efforts to prevent these behaviors from occurring. Why do you think these behaviors are still happening (i.e., why do you think gender discrimination and sexual harassment are still a problem in the Army?)
13. Before we close today's discussion, is there anything else that we did not discuss that you would like to share?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We are very appreciative of your responses and your time.

If you would like to provide us with additional feedback directly and privately, please feel free to send us any additional comments at our email which can be found on the information sheet at XXXX@rand.org. This information will not be shared outside the research team. Research team members will monitor this email and will incorporate your feedback in our project notes without your name or unit name attached.