

OPA Healthy Masculinity Discussion Guide

Focus Groups Round 1: Initial Draft Message Frame Testing

Purpose: This discussion guide will serve as an outline for focus group discussion regarding the testing of potential campaign draft messages that aim to reduce the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) in the military by promoting healthy behaviors and bystander intervention.

Note: This discussion guide is not a script and therefore will not be read verbatim. The interviewer will use these questions as a roadmap and probe as needed to maintain the natural flow of conversation.

NOTES TO MODERATOR:

- No one other than the focus group team may observe the groups. Please be firm with any base officials who suggest otherwise and note that it is part of our protocol.
- If your POC or any participants want to know what the study findings will be used for, please respond that OPA is going to use it to inform the work that they do, but we don't know anything more than that at this time.
- If your POC asks to see the study findings, respond that sharing them is OPA's decision.
- Your instructions for carrying out this focus group are in brackets [*] and are not read to the participants. Anything not in [*] is said out loud to the participants.

Session Overview: Total time — 90 minutes

Section I: Introduction to Study/Verbal Consent/Icebreaker (10 minutes)	The moderator will explain the purpose of the focus group and allow participants to ask questions. After receiving consent, the moderator will lead participants through an icebreaker activity.
Section II: Knowledge, Attitudes, Values, Perceived Norms (20 minutes)	The moderator will ask about the participants' knowledge, attitudes, values, and perceived norms as they relate to SASH and bystander intervention to gain further insight into military culture and SASH perceptions in light of formative research.
Section III: Message Concept Testing (35 minutes)	The moderator will present 3-5 message frames to participants in a randomized order and will facilitate discussion around initial reactions, message frame comprehension, relatability, memorability, and intentions.
Section IV: Comparison of Message Concepts (10 minutes)	The moderator will ask participants questions to help them determine which of the message concepts they perceive to be most effective.

Section V: Communication Channel Preferences (10 minutes)	In this section, participants will discuss the preferred communication channels they think would best facilitate and effectively disseminate the campaign materials.
Section VI: Conclusion (5 minutes)	The moderator will complete the session by answering any participant questions and thanking them for their time.

Section I: Introduction (10 minutes)

- Hello. Welcome and thank you for participating today! Your time is greatly appreciated. My name is [NAME], and I work for a company called Fors Marsh, which is an independent research company.
- I am conducting this group on behalf of the DoD Office of People Analytics and the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, but as I mentioned, I do not work for them or the government. This means that I'm here to listen to you and what you have to tell me, and I have no stake in how you respond.
- I am not a part of the military, so please keep that in mind when sharing your thoughts and opinions, as I may ask for clarification on specific acronyms or terms.
- For this project, we are speaking with men from across the Services to gain perspective, feedback, and insight on draft messages and materials for a new DoD campaign. This campaign aims to reduce experiences of sexual assault and harassment in the military by encouraging positive actions and healthy behaviors and promoting strategies like bystander intervention among military men.
- Today, we will be doing some message testing, which is an important process in campaign development to ensure messages resonate with you, our audience. We have initial ideas for campaign messages that we would like to get your feedback on. Your input will be very important and helpful as we move forward.
- I want to discuss how the messages we will review today can potentially influence or promote healthy behaviors that can lower rates of sexual assault and harassment.
- This focus group will last 90 minutes. Although we will be discussing sexual assault and harassment and bystander intervention today, we will **not** be asking you to discuss your own experiences or history with sexual assault or harassment. Rather, what I do want to discuss is how the messages we will review today can potentially influence or promote healthy behaviors that can lower rates of sexual assault and harassment. That being said, if at any point you need to step out of the room, please feel free to do so.
- Before we get started, I want to go over a few general rules for our discussion today:
 1. First, there are no wrong answers, and we are not here to evaluate or judge you. Our whole purpose is to hear your perspectives, opinions, and experiences.
 2. What we talk about here is confidential. Your individual responses will not be reported back to the DoD or your command and your name will not be associated with anything you say in our reports. On that note, we ask that you (1) only use your first names during the group today and (2) refrain from discussing anything we talk about today outside of this room.

3. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw or leave at any time. You don't have to answer every question if you don't want to. If you need to take a break during the discussion, please feel free to do so.
 4. We are not here to come to a consensus, and we recognize that you all may have different perspectives on the issues we discuss. And that's OK! Please keep an open mind as we talk today and respect each other's opinions.
 5. There are some people from the study team who are observing and taking notes so I can give you my full attention during our discussion. Even though people are observing, please speak openly about your opinions and experiences. We want to learn from you, so it is important that you share your honest opinions.
 6. We are also audio recording this session. At the end of our discussion, our study team will write a report and refer to the recordings and notes when writing the report. The report will not personally identify you and all findings will be reported in a combined summary that does not include any identifiable information about you.
 7. During our discussion, we will show you portions of draft message concepts for the campaign. ***These materials and messages are not in their final state, and we ask that you not share them with anybody outside of this focus group.***
 8. Please turn your cell phone off or switch it to silent mode.
- I would like to confirm a few questions: [receive verbal confirmation from all]
 1. Do you consent to being audio recorded?
 2. Do you consent to taking part in this focus group?
 3. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Icebreaker

- To start things off, I'd like to get to know you all a bit better. Please tell me your first name and share the most memorable poster, advertisement, or other similar message that you have seen come out of the military and why it was memorable to you.
- [Moderator can introduce himself.]
- Thank you everyone. If there's no other questions, let's get started.

Section II: Knowledge, Attitudes, Values, Perceived Norms (20 minutes)

[Begin with questions to help understand military culture and personal-level motivations and priorities in the participants.]

Let's start today's conversation talking about your experience in the [BRANCH]. I want to get a general understanding of what motivated you to join the military and what motivates you to stay.

1. What motivated you to join the military?
 - a. **Probe:** As you think about your experience in the military, what do you value the most? [in your role, in serving, on a personal level]
2. How do you define success in your role?
 - a. **Probe:** How long do you intend to serve?
3. How would you describe the general culture and climate of the [BRANCH]?
 - a. **Probe:** What makes the culture positive?

- b. **Probe:** Who influences culture?
- c. **Probe:** Who has the ability to inspire change?

[Next, exploratory questions to understand current knowledge and attitudes towards SASH prevention and bystander intervention behaviors.]

- 4. What comes to mind when I say “bystander intervention”?
 - a. **Probe:** Are there any behaviors or individuals that come to mind?
- 5. What do you remember from sexual assault/sexual harassment and bystander intervention training?
 - a. **Probe:** What aspects of the training(s) resonated with you the most?
- 6. What does engaging in bystander intervention behaviors look like to you?
 - a. **Probe:** What makes it easy to engage or what makes it difficult to engage?
 - b. **Probe:** What role do you think [junior enlisted/mid-level enlisted/senior enlisted/junior officers] should have in bystander intervention?
 - c. **Probe:** What other kinds of behaviors could be helpful for men to engage in to reduce sexual assault/sexual harassment?
- 7. Do you remember seeing any previous materials or messages for campaigns related to bystander intervention or sexual assault and harassment prevention behaviors?
[Examples include: 2016 Campaign “Courage Fuels Change”, or the most recent 2019-2021 Campaign “Protecting our People Protects our Mission”]
 - a. *If Yes,* **Probe:** What resonated with you? What made you remember those materials or messages?
 - b. *If Yes,* **Probe:** Where did you see these materials or messages?
 - c. *If Yes,* **Probe:** What could be improved in a future campaign to make it more effective?
 - d. *If No,* **Probe:** Why do you think you don’t remember seeing any messages or materials? [Examples: Have not seen any, have seen materials but they were not memorable]
 - e. *If No,* **Probe:** Where would you imagine seeing campaign materials related to bystander intervention or sexual assault and harassment prevention behaviors? [physical locations, like a bulletin board on base, or digital locations, like on social media]

Great, thanks for all your input. This leads us into what the major part of our day today is going to be about – promoting healthy and helpful behaviors to prevent sexual assault and harassment.

Section III: Message Concept Testing (35 minutes)

As I mentioned at the beginning, the DoD is developing a campaign to help prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military by encouraging healthy behaviors among military men and promoting bystander intervention behaviors that align with the [BRANCH] core values. At this point in time, we have come up with initial ideas for the messages of this campaign. I am going to show you written descriptions of a few basic messages and ask for your feedback to determine which you feel would be the best starting place for a campaign. Please keep in mind

that what I am going to show you are merely written descriptions of messaging approaches and do not represent the actual words that you might see online or on a flier or poster. With that in mind, we ask that you try to provide feedback on the messages overall and not get too bogged down on specific words or small details. These messages will later be combined with visuals. For now, please respond to the questions based on the text you will be seeing.

Please feel comfortable being as honest as possible. We want to make sure we create a campaign that is useful for Service members. Therefore, your feedback, both positive and negative, is important for us to know.

I am going to pass out a worksheet with the first message that we will be discussing. Please highlight what you like about the message in GREEN and what you do not like in YELLOW. Please feel free to write down any notes at the bottom of the sheet if you find it helpful. After you finish the worksheet, we will discuss your reactions to the idea as a group. Later, after we have seen all the ideas, we will then compare them to each other. [Hand out worksheet and highlighters]

Any questions? Before we start, again, please remember that what we are about to look at doesn't represent actual words that you might see on social media or a flier or poster. These messages are a summary of future campaign language. So please try to provide us with feedback on the idea overall and not the exact wording. Alright, let's look at the first message.

[Message Concepts are presented in a randomized order. The moderator will introduce the first message concept and allow time for participants to complete the sheet. The moderator will then lead a group discussion about the idea. Then the next message concept will be shared, reviewed, and discussed. Each discussion will use the following set of questions:]

Initial Reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your initial thoughts about this message? • What did you like about this message? • What did you dislike about this message? • How does this message make you feel?
Main Point/Take Away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is this message trying to say? • What do you think the message wants you to do? • What, if anything, is confusing or unclear about the message?
Relatable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How relevant does this message feel to you? Your branch of Service? How so? • What would you change to make this feel more relevant to you? Others in your branch? • What parts of the message, if any, are unappealing or make you feel uncomfortable?

Believable/Compelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How true or believable is this message? What are some reasons you feel that way? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What, if anything, would you change or add to make it more believable?</i> How compelling is this message? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some reasons you feel that way? <i>What, if anything, would you change or add to make this message more compelling?</i> How well does the message motivate you to engage in [the desired behavior]?
Grab Attention/Memorable	<p>If you saw this message somewhere...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How likely is it that it would grab your attention? How so? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How easy would it be for you to not pay attention to this message?</i> How likely would you be to remember this message? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>What about it would stick with you?</i>

Section IV: Comparison of Message Concepts (10 minutes)

Now, I would like you to think back to all [three-five] messages we reviewed. I'd like for us to compare the different message that we walked through by first having you complete this Ranking Worksheet. We will discuss what you have filled out once everyone has finished.

[Hand out worksheet for ranking activity]

- The first question asks which message was your favorite.
- The second asks which message would stick with you the most.
- The third question asks which message you think would be most likely to change your peers' behaviors.

[Review Responses] Who would like to share which message they selected for...?

Outside of the messages we shared, are there other messages you think could motivate male military members in particular to engage in healthy and helpful behaviors?

Section V: Communication Channel Preferences (10 minutes)

As I mentioned, our goal is understand how to better promote healthy behaviors related to bystander intervention in line with [BRANCH] core values to prevent sexual assault and harassment. I'd like your input on where and how to share these messages. We're also interested in understanding who should deliver this message to make it most effective.

- What information would be helpful to include so that Service members are more informed about the relationship between healthy behaviors and preventing sexual assault and harassment?
- Who would be most effective at delivering these messages?

- a. **Probe:** Who do you want to hear from in these messages? Officers or leadership? [BRANCH] who have experienced this issue before? Someone outside of the military?
3. Where would be the most effective place for these messages?
 - a. **Probe:** Where would you be most likely to see or receive these messages?
 - b. *If via social media*, **Probe:** Which social media sites? Are there any restrictions that you may have on base with any of these channels (e.g., accessing certain suggested websites)?
 - c. *If not via social media*, **Probe:** Where on base (e.g., in the barracks? The exchange/restaurants/bars? Newspapers? Websites/portals)?
4. Where would most of your fellow [BRANCH] see these messages?
5. Where would you pay the most attention?
6. Where do you think is NOT a good place to put messages like this?
7. Are there words or phrases that we should use that would grab your attention the most?
8. What about words or phrases that we should use that would hit home the most for you?
9. Any words or phrases that we should avoid using because they will immediately offend or confuse you?

Section VI: Conclusion (5 minutes)

This has been a very helpful session. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences. Your time is greatly appreciated. Before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to share or that you would like us to consider?

If you don't mind, I am going to take just a moment to see if my team has any additional follow up questions for you.

[Ask any additional questions]

Before you go, we would like to share a handout with you that contains resources to get support for yourself or others. Even if you are not struggling, we ask that you take one of these and read through the resources. Someone that you know could be in need of these resources and sharing these with them could help save a life.

Thank you again for your time.