"West Point Rugby Team Benched Over Improper E-Mails"

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"Three U.S. Navy Football Players under Investigation for Alleged Sex Assault, Sources Say"

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"Fort Campbell Sexual Harassment Manager Arrested"

—USA Today

"Suspect in Fort Hood Prostitution Ring Identified: Accused Sergeant 1st Class is a Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Coordinator"

—Army Times

"Head of U.S. Air Force's Anti-Sexual Assault Unit Arrested for Sexual Battery"

—Reuters[1]

Can Trust Be Restored?

Keith H. Ferguson

(Photo by Mike Strasser, West Point PAO)

Wearing blindfold goggles, a U.S. Army West Point team works together to hoist sandbags up and over the wall 16 April 2011during the 45th annual Sandhurst Military Skills Competition.

The U.S. armed forces have a problem with sexual harassment and assault. One look at the headlines seems to tell it all.

The problem of sexual harassment and assault is not just a perception; it is a reality. The *Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2012* reveals that there was a 1.7 percent increase in unwanted sexual contact reported by women in our armed forces compared to the 2010 report. Although there has been no similar increase in the number of assaults on men since 2010, 1.2 percent of active-duty men indicated that they were subjected to unwanted sexual attention in the 2012 report. This indicates that the Department of Defense is faced with a significant problem.[2]

Loss of Trust

Each case of unwanted sexual contact results in a loss of trust by the American people—not only in the individual service members and leaders of the armed

forces but in the armed forces as a whole. Making matters worse, in some instances those entrusted to guard against sexual harassment and assault have become the alleged abusers themselves.

Can this trust be restored? What does it take to rebuild trust once it is broken or lost? Most important, what will our armed forces do to regain the trust of the American people, service members, and civilians in regard to preventing sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact in the military? This paper will show how training and education can help reduce these crimes and restore America's trust in its armed forces.

Education and Training

It is not an easy process for any institution or organization such as the military to restore a level of trust once it has been lost. However, a good place to start is by assuring Americans that their military is receiving the training and education necessary to prevent such actions. Although many variables shape an individual's behavior within an institution, only the most impactful variables related to education and training aimed at stopping sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact will be addressed here.

Education and training challenges are especially great for the military because it is so big. It makes up 1 percent of the U.S. population and is the largest employer in the United States, employing 3.2 million individuals.[3] Regardless of how large the military organization is, the problem of sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact needs to be eliminated. Education and training are means to combat this issue.

Difference Between Education and Training

Many people assume that education and training are the same. They are not. Training is defined as "organized activity aimed at imparting information and or instructions to improve a recipient's performance or help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill."[4] Another definition of training is "the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge that relate to specific useful competencies. Training has specific goals of improving one's capability, capacity, productivity, and performance."[5]

These two definitions provide us insight into how the Department of Defense understands and mandates education or training, or education and training.

Education, on the other hand, is "the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally the preparing of oneself or others intellectually for mature life … the development of the abilities of the mind (learning to know)."[6]

The distinction between training and education is important when developing a plan to combat problems like sexual harassment and sexual assault. Education can be used to create awareness of a problem; training can be used to create preventive behaviors.

The military has developed some of the most professional, cutting edge training and education programs available to address sexual-assault-related issues. However, as with all programs, it is necessary to evaluate them for their effectiveness. Since sexual assault is still happening, one might question the effectiveness of either the content of the training curriculum or the delivery of that curriculum.

Understanding Education

Since military leadership has determined that part of the solution for eliminating sexual harassment is education and training, it is necessary to understand how they can be used as deterring tools.

A part of education is a transactional relationship. Instruction is not just a communication of ideas or information; it also inculcates values into students. The transaction occurs as instructors transfer knowledge and values to students. Consequently, there are always at least two entities in this educational relationship, the first being the student. Although maturity, learning style, cultural background, and ability may vary between individuals, the student is the central focus of education.

The second component of the relationship is the teacher or instructor. The variables associated with teaching have dramatically changed in the last 20 years. Prior to the computer age, the look of classrooms was standardized and the model of education relatively consistent from state to state, from school to school, from institution to institution, and from

year to year. This educational model brought both students and instructors to a centralized place to deliver education in person. The ability to form an actual relationship with the instructor was common because people interaction often creates a relationship. Through that relationship, credibility and trust were cultivated, and students were motivated to learn or not learn as a result of the relationship. This model of education has changed significantly over the last 25 years, especially since 1987 when online education became a practical reality as introduced by the University of Phoenix. Our student bodies, our methodologies, and our common practices have changed to accommodate the new generation of learners. Today, 73 percent of students are nontraditional students.[7] The military, being very aware of the new model in the classroom, has developed a multifaceted approach to educating and training to end harassment and sexual misconduct. If the two transactional education models were juxtaposed as mathematical equations for comparison, they would look something like the equations below:

Old Educational Model Transactional Equation

(Teacher + Values + Curriculum + Delivery + Actions) x (Student + Sense of Purpose + Values [Reactions to Curriculum + Instructor]) = Education

New Educational Model (for the Millennial) Transactional Equation

(Teacher + Values + Curriculum + Delivery + Actions) x (Student + Sense of Purpose + Values [Reactions to Curriculum + Instructor]) x (Mobile Technology + Social Networking) = Education

Challenge of Teaching Millennial Generation

Changing the hearts and minds of service members through instruction will assist in eliminating the serious problem of sexual harassment and misconduct. However, a new generation of learners has necessitated a change in how educational materials are presented.

Understanding the educational paradigm of millennials is the key to educating and training them. Millennials constitute a unique learning population with very distinctive trust and credibility issues as compared to previous generations.[8] Unlike their

predecessors, millennials have grown up with technology. Full digital literacy and competence are very significant characteristics of the millennial. As a result, training and educational practice have changed. One consequential behavioral change of the technology-savvy generation is that they tend to trust human beings less than previous generations.[9]

Previous generations have usually looked to their elders as an authoritative source where knowledge, competence, and values could be gained. The millennials have often found nontraditional anchors for their social structure and the icons of who or what can be trusted.[10] This impacts the classroom and interactions within it.

Although the military has made great strides to make any place where technology can be accessed a classroom, it has not addressed the challenge to the "trust factor" in education that modern technology has imposed. Millennials will check their devices, whether it be smart phones, tablets, laptops, or computers, to verify what an instructor is saying. Using any one of these devices can quickly verify the "truth" of the words an instructor speaks. If a student finds any discrepancy, he or she will quickly challenge the instructor. The way in which the instructor responds to the challenge will greatly affect the entire class. A poor response can diminish both the credibility of, and trust in, the instructor.

Credibility and Trust: Keys to Effective Education

Although there have been many changes to the model of education, there are some things that have not changed. Two unlisted components that are essential to education and training are present in both transactional equations. These components are credibility and trust. It does not matter where the classroom is; without credibility and trust, effective education can be seriously diminished. The need for these components has not changed. No matter what the educational goal, a student who does not trust the curriculum or the teacher will not learn the necessary objectives.

Establishing credibility. New teachers in many venues are usually told to initiate and maintain credibility in the classroom through discipline. Keep the class orderly, take charge right away. Let your students know who is boss. This control reputedly establishes

An instructor teaches a class on facilitation techniques during the Sexual Harassment Assault/Response and Prevention (SHARP) pilot course, 22 April 2014.

credibility, which then enables the teacher to demonstrate competence as a subject matter expert to build student confidence and trust in him or her.

One of the greatest credibility builders in the armed forces is the uniform.[11] For men and women initially entering the all-volunteer armed forces, there is a built-in respect for the uniform that clearly identifies a branch of service and reveals rank, expertise, and excellence. Although many new recruits may not understand the significance of each patch or bar on the uniform, they immediately understand that the color, shape, number of stripes, and number of decorations indicate experience and position. It is instant credibility for any instructor.

A student measures an instructor's credibility based upon what he or she hears and sees based upon the uniform and the bearing of the instructor. This evaluation is not a gut reaction but a careful, informal thought process and, as result, an intellectual decision. A student sizes up the instructor and course material very quickly. This sizing up is accomplished through thought. Students evaluate the instructor, the location of training, and the quality of materials, and they make

a judgment. In Bloom's Taxonomy, this thinking is in the cognitive learning domain.[12] Students evaluating credibility of instructor and material is a continuous process. The loss of credibility can create a synergy that impacts other variables that operate in a classroom.

It is the instructor's responsibility to maintain and grow credibility in the classroom. The most essential component of credibility maintenance is competence. It does not require an instructor to do much to maintain credibility other than demonstrate competence over and over again. However, credibility is challenged when an instructor demonstrates inconsistencies in behavior or mistakes.

One new danger instructors face is that their reputations, whether good or bad, can spread far beyond their organizations as millennials use social media to express observations and judgments about individuals. When perceptions of incompetence proliferate, they diminish credibility. If credibility is undermined, trust is also.

The problem of credibility can be solved easily. If instructors are incompetent, make them competent. Notwithstanding, often, once credibility is totally lost

it cannot be regained. If the incompetent instructor cannot be made competent, he or she must be removed to preclude further damage to an organization's credibility.

Building trust. The second component to effective education is trust. Trust can be defined as "the willingness of a party (trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (trustee) based on the expectation that the trustee will perform an action important to the trustor, regardless of the trustor's ability to monitor or control the trustee."[13]

Unlike credibility, trust is not established in the cognitive domain; it is a visceral response and is part of the affective learning domain for each learner.[14] The response varies from learner to learner. It is not an instantaneous feeling but something that grows or diminishes as there is contact with the instructor over time. The affective domain regulates the quantity of the education and training that is retained by the student. A student buys into the learning process emotionally. Instructors and curriculum they view as unimportant will likely result in little long-term retention of the curriculum. Like credibility, trust can be grown or lost. If there is no trust, either in the educational material or the instructor, independently or collectively, learning can be diminished.

Over time, several factors have had an impact on these crucial components of credibility and trust. Today's Army is moving toward blended learning in the education and training process. While Army training is often exceptional, in order to fully develop its soldiers, the Army instituted a universal training program. Training provides a programmed response to a set of stimuli.

Programmed training results in a mechanized, universal answer to standardized problems. Part of the solution for combating sexual misconduct has been mandatory training, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many soldiers feel that training is a "check the block" type exercise. This mindset has a direct impact on the Army's mandatory training programmed response to sexual harassment. It does not require students to engage with the training. Attendance is often the only thing that is measured. Clearly this is not the desired outcome of those higher up in the chain of command. Whether you call it training or education is immaterial. Behavioral change within the student is the desired outcome.

Army Learning Model (ALM)

Making education better is the goal of every educator. With effective education, it is hoped that the military will make a significant reduction in improper sexual contact. To that end, the Army has embarked on an expensive but comprehensive plan to revolutionize the learning process by adopting a new educational model. It redirects every classroom to be learner-centric, to use facilitated discussion in small groups, and to use a blended learning curriculum making extensive use of a technology-based infrastructure.

This transformation has enabled substantial financial and space savings because much of the information that used to be printed in cumbersome books and manuals can now be stored on a device that can fit into a pocket. In addition, those devices can quickly access information from any place where wireless technology is available. Some training is delivered solely by distributed learning. However, many classrooms still have a living instructor who interacts with distributed-learning portions of courses but primarily delivers training and education live and on the platform.

Restoring Institutional Trust

The first step for a leader to begin to rebuild trust is through demonstrating the fourth tenet of the Army Values, selfless service, which is identified through the Army's LDRSHIP acronym.[15] Students must feel like the instructors are serving the student and the instructors' sole purpose is to serve the students by providing the best training or education possible.

In 30 years of instruction, this writer has seen some instructors who teach as if they were doing the class a favor by sharing what knowledge they have accumulated. Instructors serve students, not the other way around. Students should feel that the instructor is there to provide assistance and support in their endeavor to complete training and education. Selfless service means that inspirational leadership will be a conspicuous feature of instructor performance so students will be inspired to acquire information and values held by the instructor.

Second, instructional leaders must demonstrate professional managerial skills. It is paramount that instructors understand their actual duties. Humility is a part of this framework. Instructors should never develop a God complex but should recognize their personal fallibility. No instructor possesses all of the knowledge

of a certain topic. Instructors not only must impart their expertise and knowledge but also must be open to learning from the students.

Third, instruction leaders must demonstrate universal equity. Students must be treated with dignity and be treated fairly in every circumstance. Every student must be treated with respect, the third tenet of the LDRSHIP acronym. Instructors must recognize the individual value of every student, understand their personal perspectives, and take care to ensure that students are validated. Students are at different levels when they arrive for training; each needs to be molded into a functioning member of their personal professional discipline or military occupational specialty.

Last, the sixth tenet of the LDRSHIP acronym refers to integrity. As instructors treat students with equity and fairness, trust is grown. Ensuring fairness in the learning process allows students to grow in their knowledge and expertise. Instructors must do everything possible to make sure that credibility and trust do not erode as they perform their duties in managing and instructing students.

An old adage says that "familiarity breeds contempt." Unfortunately, this is true some of the time. As human beings are fallible, the loss of trust and credibility can be a natural occurrence and is a process. When loss is recognized, steps must be taken to prevent losing more. However, when credibility and trust are diminishing, with work they can be re-established. When instructional leaders adopt new practice in crafting both education and training, we will see a good return on that investment into students.

Conclusion

The Army is doing a lot to combat sexual misconduct. Education and training are a part of the solution, and they can lead to real changes in institutional and individual behavior. Education can be used to create awareness of the problem; training can be used to create preventive behaviors. Hard work, committed leadership, competent instructors, and meaningful education and training can help the Army achieve its goal of preventing sexual harassment and assault. ■

(Photo by Michael L. Lewis, *NCO Journal*)

Sgt. 1st Class Charles Daniels, the installation sexual assault response coordinator at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., presents his small group's work to the rest of the class during the new SHARP pilot course at Fort Belvoir, Va., in March 2014.

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Notes

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