**Maintaining American Bases Abroad: International Implications of Servicemembers’ Adverse Behaviors and Experiences**

1. **Introduction**

The fundamental basis of power projection, regional influence, and crisis management by global powers has been through the deployment and maintenance of a global military basing network (Harkavy 1982; 2007). While scholars and practitioners have used or proposed other models of regional influence (e.g. empire-building or off-shore balancing), the enduring model adopted by the United States, since the end of the 19th century, is the use of bases (Layne 1997; Ikenberry 2004). Having a military force present in a region allows immediate reaction to emergent threats, reassurance of allies, and effective extended deterrence (Schelling 1966). While capital-intensive technology has increased the capacity of the United States to respond to some threats at a distance, it is unlikely to replace the presence of forward, globally deployed military personnel in the near future. However, diplomatic tensions that arise from servicemember behavior and changing political climates jeopardizes the viability of long-term bases overseas (Moon 1997, Calder 2007, Cooley 2008). In particular, criminal offenses by U.S. military personnel have sparked national conversations across host-states such as Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. In several instances, negative interactions have sparked or fueled protests that have encouraged host-states to remove U.S. personnel, in part or in whole, from host-states. Despite these pivotal interactions having large-scale global effects, we know very little about the frequency and the cause of them.

This project goes beyond previous scholarship by surveying military personnel directly about their interactions with foreign populations. The project interviews veterans about their previous deployments, stateside bases to compare domestic deployments to overseas deployments, and a subset of the thirty-five major U.S. bases deployed overseas. Our approach, using traditional and experimental survey methodology, allows for a direct measure of latent and blatant social interactions that reported statistics fail to capture. Instead, we draw upon literature in criminology, international relations, and political psychology to examine the nexus of offending and victimization behavior between two distinct populations (U.S. servicemembers and host-state civilians) and draw upon opportunity theories to assess the cause of negative interactions between military personnel and foreign civilians. Our research will provide improved understanding on the conditions where the opportunity for criminal offenses could occur and prove important to both the U.S. government as well as any of the over 150 governments that host U.S. servicemembers on their soil. The analysis in this project provides answers to research questions across research domains while also providing public data that will fuel the research of scholars in multiple disciplines.

1. **Background and Theory**

The project draws upon multiple theories and is interdisciplinary at its core. At the macro-level, the importance of this project is clear to scholars and policy makers in areas of international relations, security studies, and foreign policy. At the micro-level, the area that our project directly interacts with, theory from criminology, with roots in sociology, psychology, and economics, offer the foundation for our hypotheses. We first discuss the macro-level context in this section and transition to how theories of the individual behavior and social interactions provide useful hypotheses to understand these processes.

1. **International Relations Theory**

World War II marked a turning point in US military and diplomatic history where, through the Lend-Lease program of the 1940s and the maintenance of overseas operations of the evolving Cold War, the U.S. established and continues to maintain a historically unprecedented number of troops overseas. In very real ways, the overseas troops of the United States serve not only as the forefront of U.S. hard power, but also the forefront of diplomacy and soft power that are unrivaled by other U.S. agencies solely devoted to those tasks. Foreign nationals are more likely to interact with a U.S. servicemember in their home territory than any other U.S. government official. Only now has research delved into the positive and negative externalities of U.S. deployments abroad in quantitative ways. Starting in 2004, with Kane’s work on providing global, annual estimates of troops, an emergent literature has begun to tally the total security and non-security effects of deployments. Researchers now link the presence of U.S. troops with increased economic growth (Jones and Kane 2012), development (Kane 2012), foreign direct investment (Biglaiser and DeRouen 2007), trade activity (Biglaiser and DeRouen 2009), decreased defense spending among non-allies (Martinez Machain and Morgan 2013), increased defense spending among North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies (Allen, Flynn, VanDusky-Allen 2016; 2017), lower respect for human rights (Bell, Clary, Martinez Machain 2017), and increased internal stability (Braithwaite and Kucik 2017). While this literature provides an encouraging base for work, it is far from complete in understanding the full effects of deployments as much of it examines aggregate data and makes inferences based on those data. Such ecological inferences are problematic, especially when we consider a topic as important as the servicemember participation within crime (King 2013).

Beyond ecological inference issues, this initial and pivotal point of contact between the United States and other countries is fundamental in shaping relations between two countries, the security dynamic within a country, and the United States’ long-term objectives regionally and globally. There is some qualitative research on the topic that examines news reports of events, government policy, limited interviews, or aggregated data (Bryant 1979, Enloe 1989, Moon 1997, Allen and Flynn 2013, Arévalo 2016). While these projects provide insight, reliance upon news reports or government policy focuses on egregious cases and may be sensationalized. One recent study uses aggregate data to evaluate the implications of servicemembers, crime, and victimization, but relies on highly aggregated data that makes inference problematic (King, Rosen, and Tanner 2004). In essence, we have small snapshots of the issue, but not enough information to fully understand the scope, implications, or causes of servicemember victimization and offending. Additionally, while there have been some surveys of existing military personnel regarding risky and self-harming behaviors (Bray, Pemberton, Lane, Hourani, Mattiko, & Babeu 2010; Thomsen, Stander, McWhorter, Rabenhorst, & Milner 2011), and criminal offending/victimization between US service members (Bostock & Daley 2007; Sparrow, Dickson, Kwan, Howard, Fear, & MacManus 2018) there remains a gap in regards to surveys directed at service member-local civilian interactions. Such data would address important questions that are fundamental to basic research that intersect areas of international relations, criminal justice, economics, and sociology.

Beyond the direct substantive area of crime, there are projects just beginning to use surveys to look at interactions between these two populations. Specifically, Allen et al. (2020)[[1]](#footnote-1) surveys 14,000 respondents across 14 countries and finds that interpersonal contact between U.S. servicemembers and host-state civilians and civilian economic reliance on the military increases host-state civilian support of the U.S. military presence within that country. Flynn et al. (2019) find that humanitarian missions improve views of the U.S. military and U.S. government. These articles examine positive interactions between the two populations and find positive results, but do not offer novel insight into negative interactions.

In this project, we propose to better understand one form of deleterious interaction between U.S. servicemembers overseas and local community members. This project focuses specifically on crime victimization and offending that occurs between a U.S. servicemember and a member of the local community. This is a notable departure from previous research in both policy and academia as most research focuses on offending within the military (Valente and Wright 2007, Turchik and Wilson 2010, Thomsen and Stander 2011, Trevillion et al. 2015, Stander and Thomsen 2016) or offending by former military as civilians (Bouffard, 2003; Craig & Connell, 2015; Sampson & Laub, 1996). Much media attention has focused on high profile cases of servicemembers’ victimization of local citizens and has mobilized popular opinion against the presence of troops in key states such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and others (Calder 2007, Cooley 2008). These incidents have had varying effects on the long-term durability of U.S. bases, such incidents are likely to continue to occur and garner more attention given social media. While media attention has highlighted some instances of criminal behavior, there remains little data on U.S. servicemembers’ engagement in criminal behavior against host-state civilians and/or experiences of crime victimization at the hands of local civilians. These interactions may signal relational issues with the potential to impact perceptions of the legitimacy and authority of the U.S. presence.

1. **Criminological Theory**

Theoretically, there are many explanations as to why some servicemembers may engage in crime or be the target of criminal victimization during interactions with host-state civilians. The theoretical framework we adopt in this project is derived from the opportunity perspective. Theories in the opportunity perspective evolved from fields such as human ecology, sociology, and economics and focus on identifying the circumstances that increase the likelihood of crime (and thus victimization) occurring. This framework has been used to explain both offending and victimization through emphasis on the intersection of time, place, people, and circumstances. Developing from the opportunity perspective, lifestyle-routine activities theory is potentially well suited to contextualizing crime and victimization between military and civilians. The theory has been prominent in the discipline since the 1970s and has been developed and refined over time with focus on articulation of the key concepts and their measurement. Review of the theory’s status concludes that “empirical evidence testing the theory’s applicability to multiple types of crime is generally supportive […and] it can be widely used as a basis for successful crime prevention efforts,” (McNeely 2015, p. 40). Uniquely, the theory is adaptable to explain crime at both the individual and structural level depending on application. Given the interpersonal nature of adverse interactions between persons, and the broader situational context of military bases in foreign countries, theory that can consider multiple levels of opportunity is advantageous.

Lifestyle-routine activities theory is the integration of routine activity explanations of crime and lifestyle-exposure explanations of victimization. Cohen and Felson (1979) proposed a routine activities theory of crime in order to explain U.S. crime rate trends in the decades following the end of World War II. Amidst increasing access to education, lowering unemployment and reductions in poverty, crime rates had trended upward. Cohen and Felson argued that focus on the circumstances of crime rather than individual characteristics could provide an explanation for such trends as “structural changes in routine activity patterns can influence crime rates by affecting the convergence in space and time of the three minimal elements of direct-contact predatory violations: (1) motivated offenders, (2) suitable targets, and (3) the absence of capable guardians against a violation” (Cohen & Felson 1979, p. 589). The case of rising rates of household property crime exemplified their hypothesis: changes in patterned behavior during this time period, e.g., increases in out-of-town travel, access to employee vacation time, and women’s increased participation in the labor force, created more opportunity for property crimes as homes were less likely to be attended by their inhabitants during the day. At the same time, valued consumer products became more affordable, transportable, and common in the home (e.g., televisions, small appliances) leading to an expansion of suitable targets. Thus, the opportunity for theft and burglary (patterns of activity resulting in unattended homes and valuable items to take) expanded during this period resulting in increased property crime rates. Routine activities theory has since been used to explain a wide range of offenses in home, work, school, and other social settings.

During the same era, Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo (1978) published a theory of personal victimization based on analysis of the first National Crime Survey[[2]](#footnote-2) (NCS) in the United States. NCS data revealed that victimization was not random but patterned, resulting in Hindelang and colleagues proposition of a lifestyle-exposure theory. The theory proposes that a person’s demographic characteristics, moderated by societal expectations and structural constraints, influence lifestyle, which influences the likelihood of victimization. Hindelang and colleagues defined lifestyles as routine daily activities, and specified that these routine activities or lifestyles influence a person’s exposure to “times, places, and people conducive to criminal activity” (Fisher, Reyns, & Sloan 2015). Given similarities in routine activities theory and lifestyle-exposure theory’s core concepts it is perhaps not surprising that within a decade theoretical development led to a merged lifestyle-routine activities theory (see Garofalo 1987) emphasizing four concepts: exposure to risk, proximity to motivated offenders, target attractiveness, and lack of capable guardianship. The theory has been the subject of numerous empirical analyses across disciplines and, though not without caveats, analyses indicate the theory has empirical validity (Spano & Freilich 2009).

The relationship between military and crime is of interest to the criminological discipline, though it has not received as much attention as other government, political, and social institutions. Studies in criminology that consider military service have primarily examined the impact that service has on life-course trajectories of offending, specifically the influences of service on crime involvement post-service (Bouffard 2003; Craig & Connell 2015; Sampson & Laub 1996). In addition, studies across disciplines have increasingly focused on the influence of military service as a risk factor for interpersonal violence including sexual victimization and domestic violence (e.g., Jones 2012; Stander & Thomsen 2016; Trevillion, Williamson, Thandi, Borschmann, Oram, & Howard 2015; Turchik & Wilson 2010; Valente & Wight 2007). These bodies of research, while critically important, do not address questions about the occurrence of crime and victimization *during* service and in interaction with host-communities. Lifestyle-routine activities theory provides a theoretical backdrop for beginning to examine and understand the opportunity and risk for such events.

Four advantages to utilizing lifestyle-routine activities theory in this project have been identified. First, exploring offending and victimization that may occur between these two groups through the lens of opportunity makes sense given the demarcation in time when servicemembers are on base and away from the local community versus when they are off base and interacting in the local community. Many aspects of military life are highly routine and thus exploring explanations for the occurrence of crime and victimization among servicemembers abroad is well served by considering variation in opportunity. Second, lifestyle-routine activities theory allows for consideration of how environment shapes individual opportunity. This flexibility in the theory provides avenues for understanding individual crime events in a larger environmental context, such as individual victimization and offending in the context of international relations. Third, much crime theorizing has focused on offending exclusively, but opportunity theories have been used to explain both offending and victimization. Utilizing lifestyle-routine activities theory allows for exploring offending, victimization, and the oft-neglected nexus of offending and victimization. The later is particularly important, as research has documented that one is often correlated with the other (Jennings, Piquero, & Reingle 2012). Fourth, applications of lifestyle-routine activities theory have been wide ranging and the theory has developed over time in response to critiques and changes in society. Applying lifestyle-routine activities theory to better understanding the adverse interactions between service members and host-state civilians represents a novel test of the theory, which has implications for the theory’s continued assessment and extension in the criminological discipline and related social sciences.

1. **Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

To understand these important dynamics, we propose a three-year project to build a comprehensive survey database related to servicemember behavior abroad. In the first year, we will deploy a targeted nation-wide survey of current servicemembers and recent veterans to build a data set on remembered experiences of U.S. servicemembers. Additionally, we will survey 1-2 stateside bases to build a baseline database to compare to our overseas findings. These surveys will serve as independent research projects that will become peer-reviewed articles; additionally, they will serve to establish a comparison for our overseas research. Through year 1, we will contact a set of thirty-five military base commanders and work on establishing a subset of overseas bases that we can survey during year 2. In year two, we will deploy our survey to a subset of major U.S. military installations globally (conditional upon permission from base commanders). This survey will provide the backbone to our research and will give us a current condition examination based on servicemember self-reporting. We devote year three to analysis and publication of research gained from the project as well as a site visit(s) to foreign deployed bases. Below is a list of research questions and hypotheses that will guide this research.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Prevalence

* What is the prevalence of criminal offending by U.S. servicemembers?
* What is the prevalence of criminal victimization by U.S. servicemembers?
* Among those servicemembers involved in crime, what proportion report offending-only, victimization-only, and both offending and victimization experiences?
* Among U.S. servicemembers What forms of criminal offending and victimization are most common?
* Are media accounts emblematic of an underlying trend or focused on isolated incidents?

Theoretical

* Service members that experience higher levels of guardianship will have a lower likelihood of criminal offending and victimization.
* Service members that present as more attractive targets will have a higher likelihood of criminal victimization experiences.
* Service members that engage in deviant lifestyles will have a higher likelihood of criminal offending and victimization.
* Service members that have more exposure to potential offenders will have a higher likelihood of criminal offending and victimization.

1. **Preliminary Findings**

In Fall 2019, we deployed a preliminary survey among former military to both examine our survey instruments and to examine if our hypotheses have support in a trial. Contracting out to the survey firm Bovitz, Inc., deployed the survey to a panel of 516 individuals that self-identified as military veterans. We recruited a diverse, but not representative, sample of veterans. About 46% were Army veterans, 24% Navy, 18% Air Force, 12% Marines, and 1% Coast Guard. The average age of respondents was 53 years old, with ages ranging from 19 to 96. Thirty-three percent of respondents saw combat, while 67% did not. The sample was 85% male, and 72% white.

The survey included numerous items about types of criminal offending, including larceny, burglary, assault, occupational theft, sexual assault, drug use, prostitution, public intoxication, and driving under the influence. For criminal victimization, we ask about larceny, burglary, assault, sexual assault, drug sales, and solicitation of prostitution.[[3]](#footnote-3)

We first examine the prevalence of overall offending and victimization among military veterans. A majority of respondents reported at least one of these offenses while they were active duty members of the military – 62.98%. Most reported only 1 offense, but 3 or more offenses were reported by 9.69% of all respondents. Victimization was rarer, with 32.56% reporting at least one instance of crime victimization (but note that there are fewer potential categories for victimization). Of these, 5.04% reported being victimized by 3 or more offenses. We see that offending and victimization are also correlated – 26.94% report both offending and victimization, while only 5.62% report victimization-only and 36.05% report offending-only.

We next examine which types of offending are most common. By far the most common offending behavior was public intoxication, reported by 54.8% of all respondents. Next was driving under the influence, reported by 22.6% of all respondents, followed by prostitution, reported by 12.8% of all respondents. Other behaviors were rarer, with 5.8% reporting committing assault, 3.1% reporting illegal drug use, 2.1% larceny, 1.9% sexual assault, 1.7% occupational theft, and 1.2% burglary. Significant correlations between these offenses also emerge. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest correlation (*r* = 0.33) emerges between public intoxication and driving under the influence. Drug use is significantly correlated with a host of other offenses, including larceny, assault, sexual assault, prostitution, public intoxication, and DUI. Burglary, larceny, and occupational theft offenses are all correlated with each other, perhaps unsurprisingly since all fall into a similar class of offenses.



Turning to victimization, the most common type of crime victimization for service members was larceny, with 38.4% reporting this victimization. Next was burglary, at 19.8%, followed by assault at 13.9% and drug sales at 13.4%, while only 1.6% indicate they were offered money for sex. Sexual assault was reported by 7.8% of all respondents, though gender differences emerge, with 17.1% of women (n=76) reporting victimization, compared to 6.1% of men (n=440). Here, the largest correlations between types of victimization are burglary and larceny, which are correlated at *r* = 0.31. Other correlations between types of victimization are only small in magnitude.

These results show that offending and victimization occur at relatively high rates among members of the military, and that there is variation between types of offenses. Next, we turn to analyses to determine how aspects of one’s situation while in the military influence the likelihood of offending and victimization. We first look at guardianship and target attractiveness. We use three measures of guardianship – the number of fellow service members one reports having while an active duty member of the military[[4]](#footnote-4), the strength of their sense of belonging with their unit[[5]](#footnote-5), and how often they were with other service members while off-base.[[6]](#footnote-6) Measures of target attractiveness include how often one carried cash with them off-base[[7]](#footnote-7), if their position gave them access to items that could be sold for profit[[8]](#footnote-8), and how welcoming they felt the local community was to them.[[9]](#footnote-9) These variables were then used to predict whether someone ever committed an offense, or was ever victimized, using logistic regression.

Recall that we predict that guardianship should reduce offending and victimization, and that target attractiveness should increase victimization (with no predictions related to offending). We find mixed evidence for the guardianship hypothesis. While a sense of belonging with one’s unit does indeed predict a decrease in both offending and victimization, the number of close friends predicts an *increase* in offending, while spending time off-base with other service members predicts an increase in both offending and victimization. Perhaps this is because spending time with groups of others off-base could increase social offending behaviors, such as public intoxication. Indeed, examining the effect of guardianship on each individual behavior demonstrates this pattern, where close friends and spending time off-base with others predicts an increase in public intoxication, but a sense of belonging predicts a decrease. Similarly, a sense of belonging predicts a decrease in DUI offending.

**Table 1.** *Effects of Guardianship and Target Attractiveness*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Offending | Victimization | Offending | Victimization |
| # Close Friends | 0.068\*\* (0.034) | -0.013 (0.033) |  |  |
| Belonging | -0.308\*\*\* (0.111) | -0.218\*\* (0.108) |  |  |
| With Others | 0.460\*\*\* (0.111) | 0.226\*\* (0.110) |  |  |
| Carry Cash |  |  | 0.371\*\*\* (0.104) | 0.254\*\* (0.111) |
| Access to Items |  |  | 0.747\*\*\* (0.239) | 0.595\*\*\* (0.220) |
| Community not Welcoming |  |  | 0.136 (0.114) | 0.236\*\* (0.114) |
| *N* | 494 | 494 | 492 | 492 |
| pseudo *R*2 | 0.1090 | 0.0518 | 0.1073 | 0.0693 |

Table entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis. All models include demographic controls for age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, education, branch, time served, combat status, and serving overseas. \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Next, we look at how target attractiveness influences offending and victimization. Here, we find that all three indicators of target attractiveness increase the likelihood of being a victim of crime. Interestingly, we also find that individuals who carry cash and have access to items they can sell for a profit are also more likely to offend – unsurprisingly, for access to items, as this predicts an increase likelihood to commit larceny, burglary, or occupational theft. When individuals are perceived as a more attractive targets by locals, or when tensions between the base and locals are high, individuals are more likely to report that they are victims of crimes.

Next, we examine how exposure to potential offenders and history of deviant lifestyles influence offending and victimization while serving in the military. To measure potential exposure, we ask how often individuals spent time off-base while remaining in uniform[[10]](#footnote-10), how many days per month they spent at local bars, on average[[11]](#footnote-11), how often they were recognized as a non-local while off-base[[12]](#footnote-12), and whether they spent more time off-base during the day or at night.[[13]](#footnote-13) To measure exposure to deviant lifestyle, we ask questions about whether an individual was ever convicted of a felony or misdemeanor, whether they suffered physical, sexual, or emotional abuse as a child, and whether or not they have ever been told to seek treatment for substance abuse.[[14]](#footnote-14) We again use logistic regression to predict the likelihood of any offending or victimization with these variables.

**Table 2.** *Effects of Exposure to Offenders and Deviant Lifestyle*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Offending | Victimization | Offending | Victimization |
| In Uniform | -0.365\*\*\* (0.114) | -0.014 (0.105) |  |  |
| Days at Bars | 0.224\*\*\* (0.042) | 0.089\*\*\* (0.022) |  |  |
| Non-Local | 0.283\*\*\* (0.098) | 0.223\*\* (0.095) |  |  |
| Off-base at Night | 1.188\*\*\* (0.320) | 0.096 (0.306) |  |  |
| Felony |  |  | 0.706\* (0.425) | 0.283 (0.351) |
| Misdemeanor |  |  | 1.373\*\*\* (0.305) | 0.594\*\* (0.248) |
| Physical Abuse |  |  | 0.200 (0.326) | 0.541\* (0.305) |
| Sexual Abuse |  |  | 0.411 (0.361) | 0.890\*\*\* (0.315) |
| Emotional Abuse |  |  | 0.053 (0.275) | 0.243 (0.279) |
| Substance Abuse |  |  | 0.486 (0.339) | 0.341 (0.283) |
| \_cons | -0.711 (0.827) | -1.267 (0.790) | 0.028 (0.694) | -1.352\* (0.703) |
| *N* | 490 | 490 | 490 | 490 |
| pseudo *R*2 | 0.2301 | 0.0930 | 0.1385 | 0.1027 |

Table entries are logit coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis. All models include demographic controls for age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, education, branch, time served, combat status, and serving overseas. \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

We predict that exposure will lead to greater offending and victimization, and find substantial support for this hypothesis. Spending more time at bars, being viewed as a non-local, and spending more time off-base at night all predict an increase in offending behavior. Wearing one’s military uniform off-base, in contrast, predicted a decrease in offending behavior – perhaps not surprisingly, as offenses committed while wearing one’s uniform would likely be easier to report back to the military base. For victimization, results are more mixed. Wearing one’s uniform, and spending more time off-base at night, do not predict a change in the likelihood of victimization. However, spending more time at bars, or being more easily viewed as a non-local, do predict an increase in victimization.

Last, we examine how exposure to deviant lifestyles influence offending and victimization, predicting that this exposure will increase both outcomes. We find less evidence here. Most strongly, those who have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor at some time in their lives are more likely to offend. Interestingly, those convicted of a misdemeanor are also more likely to be victimized. A history of childhood physical and sexual abuse predicts an increase in the likelihood of victimization while in the military, but not offending. There is little evidence to suggest a history of emotional or substance abuse influences either outcome.

These preliminary results provide some compelling evidence to give an initial description of offending and victimization among members of the military, and some important evidence to test key hypotheses. However, this study is not without limitations. Primarily, the sample is a convenience sample, not benchmarked to any representative standards of the community of veterans in the United States. While we can talk about descriptive statistics showing rates of offending and victimization within the sample, we cannot necessarily draw inferences to the population of veterans as a whole. While our hypothesis testing is on firmer ground, since we have no reason to expect that explanatory factors influence behavior differently in this sample than in the population at large, we are still limited by a small sample size. This is especially problematic given the overwhelmingly white and male characteristics of our sample, making it hard to draw inferences about gender or racial differences in offending and victimization. Further, we focus only on recalled experiences of veterans, some of them decades removed from service. This introduces potential bias into the results, where those who served more recently may be better able to recall their experiences than those who served farther in the past. By conducting a similar survey only on active duty military members, we will be able to alleviate these concerns.

1. **Implications**

The importance of this topic to both policymakers and researchers in fields of security, criminal justice, sociology, economics, and international relations is immense, but the research on the topic is lacking to a degree such that informed decision-making is not viable. As a basic science research project, we can answer questions regarding criminal offending and victimization of servicemembers with host-country populations deployed to a country. In international relations, foreign policy, and security studies, trust and acceptance by both civilian and military populations is fundamental to both U.S. and host-state foreign policies; understanding the context in which trust and acceptance may be damaged and the extent to which it actually may be happening is important. The current National Security Strategy has several broad areas that it covers, and the U.S. basing network is fundamental to each of these areas (including protection, prosperity, maintaining peace, and dealing with regional challenges). If interactions between U.S. servicemembers abroad and local citizens are negative, this can fundamentally undermine the pursuit of the other goals the U.S. has in national, regional, and global contexts. This research will allow us to answer specific questions as to the correlates and causes of servicemember interactions with crime and pave the way to test how these experiences track with national attitudes towards the U.S. in various countries and regions.

Beyond the direct implications of how servicemember behavior affects the long-term trajectory of U.S. power, deterrence, and escalation management, there are several other implications for basic research. In the field of criminology, understanding the interaction between the U.S. deployment of troops and a civilian host population lacks important depth, but this unique interaction can allow us to test important theories related to opportunity, as well as examining offending, victimization and the overlap (or nexus) of offending and victimization. In terms of sociology, we can get a better idea if the interactions that produce criminal outcomes are markedly different due to the interactions between these populations or if they are more sensationalized and reported upon because of the composition of the two different groups. Finally, in economics, crime offers an alternative utility path from non-criminal behavior and the avenues for crime to be profitable may be higher when there are interactions between populations with different social and political rules. Having self-reported data from U.S. servicemembers is important to several fields of academic inquiry, which do not have clear answers to these questions.

U.S. post-War primacy fell to the Cold War, but the U.S. regained it after the Soviet Union’s fall; however, the change in the National Security Strategy directly identifies the nascent challenges from Russia and the People’s Republic of China in a competitive world. Understanding the full extent of how micro-behavior by servicemembers magnifies and becomes national and regional issues that undermine extant security arrangements is fundamental in maintaining U.S. power projection capabilities.

In the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Germany, there have been notable incidents in which United States servicemembers’ criminal behavior has caused local outrage, grown to national news discussion, and invigorated a debate about a country’s utility in continuing to have U.S. forces deployed within their country. Understanding the dual dynamic of U.S. populations interacting with foreign populations is pivotal to understanding the likelihood of these cases continuing and the viability of long-term forever projection as a mainstay of U.S. foreign policy. Currently, the U.S. diplomatic situation that allows for the presence of U.S. troops is fragile and further points of contention can undermine current agreements. As such, having a servicemember perspective of the frequency of criminal acts both perpetrated by and perpetrated against U.S. servicemembers can both give us an understanding of how rocky the foundation of interpersonal contact is and what may be causing it. Ignoring these dynamics is perilous and threatens to undermine competing against other global powers (specifically China and Russia) as envisioned by the current National Security Strategy. Understanding the full extent of U.S. servicemember behavior is fundamental to address current challenges to U.S. deployments; if such challenges become successful, then the U.S. range of credible force projection and immediate response to militarized threats will wither. Finding new sites for alternative deployments is time consuming, enormously costly, rare, and rebasing troops domestically is even more expensive (citations).

1. **Technical Plan and Methodology**

The project is staged in three 12-month periods of execution. Year 1 focuses on refining existing questions to maximize their utility and responsiveness and deploying the survey to two samples that act as comparison cases: Veterans and soldiers in state-side bases. Both act as unique comparison groups to our primary target of troops deployed overseas. Year 2 executes the survey to a subsample of major bases globally. Year 3 finalizes data cleaning, analysis, and supplements the quantitative data with a base site visit, in-person interviews, and qualitative assessment.

1. **Survey Design and Experiments**

Our primary means of assessing these relationships is through survey methodology and experimental survey design. In criminology, we know that crime victims do not always choose to officially report crimes due to a variety of institutional, cultural, and social barriers to reporting; likewise we know that many more crimes occur than come to the attention of authorities. The comparison of crime and victimization surveys with official (most commonly police) records illustrates this gap between actual crime and officially reported crime commonly referred to as the “dark figure of crime”. Furthermore, crime is a relatively infrequent occurrence in the general population so it imperative to use a methodology that suits the collection of large samples. Survey methodology facilitates large sample collection, which has direct implications for the statistical power and generalizability of findings rooted in rare or low frequency events. Thus, survey data play an important role in examining crime and victimization. With surveys, we can anonymously ask individuals about their participation in offending behavior and their experience with victimization. Direct surveys evaluating interactions between military and civilian personnel that target servicemembers generally do not exist or are not publicly available for basic research. Thus, our strategy here marks an important step in creating data that researchers presently do not have. We have carefully designed an instrument that ensures a useful set of data for both our intended hypotheses and provides a base for future research as well.

We have developed an online survey and piloted a pilot study as discussed in section 3. The survey is a flexible instrument that expands or contracts the number of items based on respondent answers and assesses several measures including demographic, socio-economic, personality, ideology, experience, victimization, and criminal incident exposure. Additionally, we devote another fifteen questions that directly relate to theoretically derived hypotheses and variables. The survey takes between 20-25 minutes to complete. Thus far, we have deployed the survey to veterans using a panel provided by Bovitz, Inc. We have designed the survey to be flexible and deployable to different populations while providing cross-sample comparisons.

Directly asking about respondent participation in offending and victimizing behavior is a difficult task as there are several obstacles to getting truthful or useful responses. However, the barriers to reporting servicemember infractions in the military and to civilian governments is extremely high and we expect that official counts of such behavior to be biased downward substantially, especially in regards to more serious infractions like sexual assault. We expect that surveys will have a higher likelihood of getting truthful information than reporting alone. Additionally, we have taken several steps to increase the quality of information we get from respondents. First, when asking about particular interactions, we use descriptions of the illicit behavior instead of just the title of the offense. For example, when asking if a respondent ever witnessed another service member commit larceny, we ask “While assigned to/living on a base, did you ever witness another service member steal or take without permission something from a civilian that did not belong to them?” Using the technical term may obfuscate responses while a description will more effectively prompt the respondent. We use similar strategies for questions about burglary, assault, sexual assault, drug related crimes, and prostitution.

We also plan to collect detailed data from each individual who reports each type of offending or victimization. If someone answers they have not offended/been victimized to an initial question, they move on to a question about the next behavior. If they answer yes, they are then asked to estimate how many times they committed this act, if they did it to more than one person, their relationship with anyone they committed this offense against, whether the actions were ever reported, and what, if any, consequences there were for this action. This creates a rich dataset, focused not only on *whether* an individual committed an offense or was victimized, but important details about how various offenses were treated.

Additionally, the survey contains experimental questions to evoke how cross-cultural differences may elicit more or less permissive attitudes towards particular in- or out-groups relative to the U.S. military. One set of experiments include scenarios that examine reactions to bribery, the effect of wearing a uniform or civilian clothing, and domestic or abroad situations. The variation in the questions and the scenarios can facilitate understanding how particular circumstances make offending or victimization more likely. Additionally, there is a high likelihood that respondents will not openly admit to participating in some behaviors or being victims of crimes that they have been party to. A consistent method to elicit truthful accounts from people is to use list experiments, which have been implemented to study outcomes where social desirability influences responses, such as racial attitudes (Sniderman and Carmines 1997), drug use (Coutts and Jann 2011), and voting fraud (Ahlquist, Mayer and Jackman 2014) . For this research, we use this approach to include and exclude various kinds of offending behaviors that individuals would be likely and not likely to admit to directly, but instead list four to five items and ask them how many they have engaged in. By removing or adding a fifth item to a control and treatment group, we can estimate the frequency of respondents engaging in that behavior without asking them directly. We can use this data to both uncover data that is hard to observe (likelihood respondents are misrepresenting the truth) and compare that rate to the direct questions about similar behavior. This also allows us to compare our results with official data by the United States or other countries to get a better baseline of offending behavior by U.S. personnel. The researchers in this project have had considerable success both with online surveys regarding U.S. military matters (Allen et al. 2020), examining sensitive topics like prejudice (Rhodes-Purdy, Navarre and Utych 2020), victim services (Gillespie,King,Bostaph, & Goodson 2019; Richards, Gillespie, Kafonek, & Johnson 2019) and analyzing secondary survey data relating to the overlap of victimization and offending (Richards & Gillespie 2019), and experimental studies on discrimination (Utych 2018; Engelhardt and Utych 2019; Utych, Navarre and Rhodes-Purdy n.d.).

In Wave 1, after conducting focus group feedback on the pilot survey, we deploy it to a larger sample than the pilot and survey 1,000 veterans. In the first quarter of Year 2, we will deploy the survey to one to two (depending on commander willingness to participate) stateside bases to build a comparative sample of servicemember experiences while stateside. In the 2nd and 3rd quarter of Year 2, we then deploy the survey to a subset of the 35 major global installations. In our data analysis, we draw upon each survey individually and collectively to provide evidence for our theoretically derived hypotheses.

1. **Survey Wave I**

Survey Wave I will distribute the survey to a population of 1,000 veterans within the United States who are currently not on active duty. After getting quotes from relevant firms, we will distribute the survey online to the firm-solicited panel. We will balance the panel to mimic existing servicemember demographics to include approximate representation for gender, sexual orientation, and branch. This survey will provide a basis of comparison to examine both people’s recalled experiences as well as their relative rate of reporting compared to those who are engaged in active duty. This research alone may provide foundational work in criminology as it presents an unexplored, but important sample of the population.

1. **Survey Wave II**

In the first quarter of Year 2, we will deploy the second wave of the survey. The second wave focuses on servicemembers currently deployed stateside and asks them about their relationship with the local community within the United States. We will target up to two bases for comparative purposes and aim for geographically distinct parts of the United States. To encourage commander acquiescence for our surveying request, we will keep the base anonymous in our research and only refer to it by vague geographic description such as “a base located in the Southwest of the United States.” Additionally, as per recommend best practices by the Department of Defense, we will propose to email the survey to a random sample of possible respondents to minimize the sense of survey overload by servicemembers. We currently have one site in mind where we are developing a relationship to conduct a Wave II survey and have several potential options for a second location.

1. **Survey Wave III**

Survey Wave III occurs during the 3rd and 4th quarter of Year 2. We will contact the appropriate public relations person (or other relevant contact point if there is no PR position) at the 35 major U.S. bases globally and ask for permission to survey their servicemembers. Like with the stateside bases in Wave II, we will keep the bases anonymous barring larger geographic descriptions and also used randomized sampling to recruit respondents. We do not expect that all 35 bases will comply, but our research methodology and expense estimates are robust for any number of willing bases between one and thirty-five. As such, any subsample of the major bases will prove sufficient for analysis. This final research wave will allow us to assess the base rate of offending (as self-reported by military members across various ranks), compare it to what kinds of crimes receive national and international attention, and compare the rates to the two comparison groups of veterans and those deployed domestically.

1. **Data Analysis**

Our data analysis will use quantitative econometric modeling to test our hypotheses. The basic statistics from the surveys will provide useful analysis about the trends among the three different groups that we survey. This basic-level data will prove valuable in presenting the data to public audiences, especially for high-impact public articles like those found on *The Conversation* and *The Monkey Cage.* The second stage of our analysis will use various regression techniques, ranging from standard ordinary least squares to maximum likelihood estimation depending on the dependent variables we evaluate, to provide correlative evidence for our hypotheses. Finally, the experimental questions will allow us additional controls to provide causal evidence about the relationship in-group and out-group attitudes as well as the conditions that makes adverse behavior and experiences more likely to occur. The experimental questions present scenarios where a key item alternates a theoretically derived item that we think will elicit different responses based on which item we present. For example, one question we provide in the pilot asks about a servicemember’s willingness to assist someone in transporting stolen goods for payment. The question varies whether the servicemember is in uniform. Our expectation is that the rate of people answer positively to this question is low, but there are some people that would be willing to do this. Additionally, the rate at which people respond positively to the scenario is conditional upon whether they are in uniform or not due expectations from our criminology theories. While most survey methods can only provide observational and correlational data, experimental methods provide causal evidence with carefully worded questions and variation. Each of the five experimental questions here serve the potential of offering a standalone research manuscript dependent upon our findings.

1. **Dissemination Plan**

We will target dissemination of our research through both academic and popular channels. First, for academic channels, we will target one conference a year presenting the work to both criminology and international relations scholars. The conference presentations will provide both avenues for advertising the research and data to proper channels while also receiving critical feedback as we move towards finalizing data analysis. We propose conference presentations annually for the duration of the project.

Second, we will pursue publication in two journals, one targeting criminology audiences with the other targeting international relations audiences. The first avenue will allow us to demonstrate the novel data while also illustrating the critical theory testing we are able to do in a criminology framework by examining in-group/out-group behaviors in crime offense and victimization. This research is novel to criminal justice research and provides a ripe avenue for us to test theories about opportunity with potential implications for economic theories of crime as utility maximization and behavioral/political psychology.

For foreign policy and international relations audiences, the research offers an avenue in pursuing the microfoundations of power and power projections. Understanding the positive and negative externalities of U.S. troop deployments abroad is a subfield in its infancy and our contribution provides ample evidence and data for understand how servicemembers participate in and become victims of illicit activity. These interactions have proven to be catalysts for anti-basing movements in several countries and our research will provide insight to understanding those trends.

For broader audiences, we expect to pursue publishing our preliminary findings in high-impact online articles. Specifically, we will craft articles for online venues that target the nexus between basic research and contextualizing that information through current events like *The Conversation*. Pursuing such avenues will raise the visibility of our research for the general public, policymakers, and other researchers outside of criminology and international relations. Such pursuits, in addition to the basic research publications within academia, increases the likelihood that our data will reach other interested scholars who wish to build upon our foundational research.

1. **Deliverables**

Our goal is to provide the following deliverables. Any data published from the project will be made available publicly to allow researchers and community members to build from our research.

* The first nationally representative survey of serving and recent veterans that examines their self-reported involvement in criminal activities, both as offenders and victims.
* A new survey data set containing a survey deployed to stateside bases that mirrors the nationally representative sample but takes into account individuals’ experiences at their current deployment. This survey will be valuable on its own and serve as a baseline for our international survey.
* The first survey of cross-base experiences by U.S. servicemembers globally. The survey will be similar to the one deployed stateside but instead look at the context of interacting with non-American populations globally.
* Two articles that target high impact blog or newspapers sites such as the *The Conversation* or *The Monkey Cage.*
* Two peer reviewed articles submitted to journals in criminology and international relations.

1. **Project Management and Timelines**
2. **Relevant PI experience, education, and project management roles**
   1. **Gillespie**

Associate Professor (Fall 2019) in the School of Public Service, Boise State University. Research addresses victimization, gendered violence, and program evaluation. Gillespie has contracted with state government departments to provide research and evaluation relating to victimization, in addition to contributing peer-reviewed research on program evaluation, victim-offender overlap, media representations of crime victimization, and intimate partner homicide. Gillespie will co-manage the graduate student team, oversee instrument design and implementation, and coordinate the project’s academic output.

* 1. **Allen**

Allen is an Associate Professor at Boise State. Research addresses the positive and negative externalities of US troop deployments, and the conflict and cooperation between powerful and weak actors in the international system Allen has published widely in assessing the effects of troop deployments including on defense expenditures, regional influences on troop deployments and defense expenditures, service members effect on crime rates, and using surveys to demonstrate how troop deployments affect perceptions of the U.S. military, government, and people. Allen has served as Principal Investigator on funded work related to troop deployments (FOA#W911NF-18-1-0087). His methodological training is in quantitative methods.

* 1. **Utych**

Assistant Professor in the School of Public Service, Boise State University. Research addresses political psychology and behavior, with a focus on experimental and survey methodology. Utych will co-manage the graduate student team, oversee survey implementation, and manage data collection.

1. **Project Timeline**
   1. **Year One**

* Meet with relevant stakeholders and host virtual focus group.
* We will deploy a retrospective, online survey targeting the national population of currently serving service members as well as veterans.
* Cultivate contacts for year two surveys.
* Conference 1
* Begin analyzing and submitting year one work
  1. **Year Two**

- Continue publishing year one results if not published.

* Conference 2

- Target 1-2 high impact blog

- Deploy surveys to 1-2 domestic bases to survey as a comparison group for global surveys.

- Target approximately 35 bases to survey globally.

- Deploy to subset of 35 bases.

* 1. **Year Three**
* Site visit of one high profile military base and surrounding area relevant to the study.
* Continue survey of bases if additional site allow for it.
* Final cleaning of survey data.
* Analysis and dissemination of results
* Conference 3
* Target one high profile blog site for public facing discussion of results
* Target one academic journal in criminology for final publication of results
* Target one academic journal in international relations for publication of ancillary hypotheses

1. This particular manuscript is notable in terms of this project for additional reasons beyond substance. First, one of the co-PIs of this proposal, Allen, was on this project suggesting viability of this proposal, especially in regard to survey related work. Second, the manuscript was published in the *American Political Science Review*, suggesting both the novelty and importance of this research area. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Later renamed the National Crime Victimization Survey, this survey is administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics annually and remains the most prominent source of national victimization data in the U.S. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We created each question using terminology accessible to the average adult, and developed from national surveys on crime and victimization. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This ranges from 0-10, with all respondents who indicated more than 10 close friends recoded to equal 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Response options are not strong (1), somewhat strong (2), strong (3) and very strong (4). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Response options are never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Response options are never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Coded as Yes (1) or No (0). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Response options are always (1), most of the time (2), sometimes (3), only occasionally or only certain aspects of the community (4), and relations between the base and locals were unwelcoming or tense most of the time (5). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Response options are never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ranges from 0 days per month to 31 days. Mean = 4.37, s.d. = 5.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Response options are never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and always (5). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Coded as 0 for mostly during the day, 0.5 for about equal, and 1 for mostly at night. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Each of these variables is coded 0 for no, and 1 for yes. For substance abuse treatment, we code both those who have entered treatment and those who have been told they should enter treatment as 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)