Rape Allegations in the Military: An Examination of the Effects of Rank and Alcohol on Blame and Accountability

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Abstract

The occurrence of rape of female servicemembers in the United States military continues to be a problem even as the Department of Defense has instituted a task force and subsequent policy to address this problem. The current study sought to further approach an understanding of this issue with its 2 (rank: equal or different) by 2 (alcohol: present or not present) design examining the blame assigned to parties in an alleged rape case in the military. It was expected that the greatest amount of plaintiff blame and least amount of defendant blame would be assigned in the equal rank and alcohol present condition. Results indicate that three factors emerged including plaintiff focused blame, defendant focused blame, and plaintiff’s perceived intention. Findings revealed a main effect of alcohol on plaintiff blame approaching significance and no significant differences or interactions among the groups for defendant blame or plaintiff’s perceived intention.
Rape allegations in the military: An examination of the effects of rank and alcohol on blame and accountability

As a twenty-one year old woman, you joined the military at the age of eighteen, right out of high school. You made it through boot camp and even found yourself enjoying the challenges as well as the camaraderie and teamwork that were engrained in you every step of the way. Graduation was a moment you experienced with great pride and confidence in your new family. A few short years later, while stationed on base, you met several of your fellow soldiers in one of the barracks to have a few beers and celebrate a holiday weekend. What began as a fun night with friends culminated in an event that changed the rest of your life. You immediately went to the hospital to report the rape where everything from your ripped uniform to the bruises was documented. Thinking the worst was surely over you’re shocked to be met with indifference from your chain of command and threats of punishment for alcohol violations. You’re accused of making false statements and some members of your platoon even portray you as being disloyal. As you’re forced to go back to work in the same building as your attacker or else face arrest for desertion you realize that you’re being treated as the criminal while your rapist walks free.

Sexual Assault in the Military

Sexual assaults occur in many situations and the military is not immune to these problems. Hoppen (2006) describes large-scale incidents that attracted public attention, including the 1991 Tailhook Association convention in which dozens of female soldiers were sexually assaulted by more than 100 naval officers who were never convicted, the 1996 Aberdeen Proving Ground sexual assault scandal in Maryland in which Army drill instructors were accused of raping trainees, and the 2003 Air Force Academy sexual assault scandal. Skinner, Kressin, Frayne, Tripp, Hankin, Miller & Sullivan (2000) reported that 23% of female veterans visiting a VA hospital between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1995 reported that they were sexually assaulted while serving in the military. A meta-analysis of 21 studies by Goldzweig, Balekian, Rolón, Yano & Shekelle (2006) yielded sexual assault rates in active duty military women from 4.2% to 7.3% and 11% to 48% in female veterans.

These disturbing statistics suggest that sexual assaults have been an ongoing problem in the military. There are, however, a number of important unanswered questions underlying these numbers. For example, do we perceive female military personnel differently than their male
counterparts and could this lead to differential treatment in evaluating sexual assault allegations? The purpose of this project is to explore how female victims and male perpetrators of a rape occurring in the military are perceived with regards to the amount of blame assigned to each person.

*Past Military Response to Sexual Assault Charges*

In 2003 the *Denver Post* presented the results of a nine-month investigation into how the military handles instances of sexual assault and domestic abuse conducted by Herdy & Moffeit. In their research they heard stories from 60 women, conducted interviews and reviewed thousands of documents such as court records, Department of Defense memos, medical records and databases. Army records were investigated as were the limited data released by the Air Force. The Navy and Marine Corps provided no records to the investigation. Among the results of this investigation was the finding that thousands of accused sex offenders have avoided being sent to prison and instead have received administrative action that carries no possibility of having a criminal record. Specifically, according to Army records alone, between 1992 and the time of investigation, 4,801 servicemen that were accused of offenses ranging from rape to indecent acts upon children received administrative punishments, 2,033 were sent to court-martial and for 1,283 cases commanders took no action. For 1,555 cases the outcome was not reported. Investigators also noted that while the Pentagon reported the number of women who were raped in the military to be in single digits, two surveys conducted by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the previous decade found 21% and 30% of women reported being victims of rape or attempted rape. “Sketchy military record-keeping” is pointed to as resulting in the inability to precisely quantify the number of rapes that have occurred (Herdy & Moffeit, 2003, p. 4).

In the majority of instances of rape that the Miles Foundation (a non-profit organization serving victims of military-related violence) has handled, executive director, Hansen, said that
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the assailant had a higher rank than the victim (Herdy & Moffeit, 2003). Also noted in numerous cases of sexual assault in the military is the presence of alcohol. In 2005 founder and president of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, Scott Berkowitz, told 60 Minutes ' Steve Kroft that in 70% of sexual assault cases alcohol is a factor. In 2008 Baker reported that the Department of Defense’s 2006 Gender Relations Survey indicated that alcohol and/or drug use by either the victim or offender was involved in about one third of cases.

Development of a Sexual Assault Policy

According to a Department of Defense news release (2005), in order to address the problem of sexual assault in the military, the Joint Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response was created in October of 2004. The first goal was to develop a sexual assault policy to put in place by January 1, 2005 as directed by the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2005, also called Public Law 108-375. The aim of the policy was to increase accountability as well as improve support for victims and work to prevent future sexual assaults. A key aspect of prevention was to implement education programs across all branches of the military. As a first step towards developing such a policy and to meet the January 1, 2005 deadline, the Department of Defense issued memorandums in January of 2005 outlining future plans (Department of Defense, 2005).

In the development of the policy the Department of Defense was committed to allowing sexual assault victims to report assaults in such a way as to remain anonymous, according to Pulliam (2005). The confidentiality was controversial and in the past was rejected by the Pentagon. However, the hopes were that being able to remain anonymous would enable women to come forward to receive medical help and therapy without committing to a legal investigation. This would also allow the chain of command to be alerted to the occurrence of an assault and the location; whereas previously, unless a victim pressed charges, there was no knowledge of an
assault, according to Brigadier General K.C. McClain, commander of the Pentagon’s Joint Task Force on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (Pulliam, 2005). The ability to maintain confidentiality in reporting a sexual assault is a part of current reporting practices (Baker, 2008).

The new policy also required the Department of Defense to report annually to Congress the number of sexual assaults in the military, according to Baker (2008). In addition, the policy included changes in the definitions of sexual assault crimes in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The UCMJ defines rape as:

Causing another person of any age to engage in a sexual act by – using force against that other person; causing grievous bodily harm to any person; threatening or placing that other person in fear that any person will be subjected to death, grievous bodily harm, or kidnapping; rendering another person unconscious; or administering to another person by force or threat of force, or without the knowledge or permission of that person, a drug, intoxicant, or other similar substance and thereby substantially impairs the ability of that other person to appraise or control conduct. (UCMJ, 2007)

The use of force referenced in this definition refers to actions used to prevent resistance or cause submission of another person either through use or suggestion of a dangerous weapon or object. These actions may also include “physical violence, strength, power, or restraint applied to another person, sufficient that the other person could not avoid or escape the sexual conduct” (UCMJ, 2007). The punishment for this crime is “as a court-martial may direct” (UCMJ, 2007). A court-martial is the military’s version of a criminal trial (Herdy & Moffeit, 2003).

The definition of rape differs from that of aggravated sexual assault in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Sexual assault involves causing another person to engage in a sexual act, but involves placing that person in fear “other than by threatening or placing that other person in fear that any person will be subjected to death, grievous bodily harm, or kidnapping” or causing
bodily harm other than that which is grievous ("serious bodily harm") (UCMJ, 2007). Additionally, causing the engagement in a sexual act with an individual unable to understand or decline participation in the act is also classified as aggravated sexual assault. This would include engaging in a sexual act with someone whose abilities were impaired by "drugs, intoxicants or similar substances" but were not administered by the person initiating the sexual act (UCMJ, 2007).

Although the UCMJ makes a distinction between rape and aggravated sexual assault, the Department of Defense is required to report the number of sexual assaults in the military each year as part of the new policy. The term ‘sexual assault’ is used to encompass numerous offenses including rape and indecent assault as well as attempts at these crimes (Baker, 2008).

*Rape and Sexual Assault: Current Statistics*

The most recent annual report by the Department of Defense of sexual assault occurrences in the military, as per the new policy, was released on March 14, 2008. The annual report was in the form of the 2006 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Active Duty Members and the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2007 Report on Sexual Assault in the Military findings. A notable aspect of the Fiscal 2007 report, according to Baker (2008), was a change by the Department of Defense from a calendar year to a fiscal year reporting window. Due to this change, the results could not be directly compared to the previous year, as about a quarter’s worth of data from the 2006 calendar year was included in the Fiscal 2007 report. However, taking this into account, officials still noted that the numbers remained about the same as those reported the previous year (Baker, 2008). According to the report, 2,688 reports of sexual assault were made across the services in fiscal year 2007. Just more than 2,000 were unrestricted reports and were sent to the chain of command to be investigated and 705 were restricted, meaning they were kept confidential. Of the restricted reports, approximately 70%
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were for rape and 102 eventually switched their status from restricted to unrestricted. One hundred and seventy-four of the sexual assault reports were from the U.S. Central Command, 105 were from Iraq and 43 were from Afghanistan. Also in fiscal year 2007, 2,000 investigations were completed with approximately 1,500 involving servicemembers as victims. Sixty percent of these involved rape. Action was taken against approximately half of those accused of the crimes (Baker, 2008). As the results of this recent report illustrate, the problem of rape in the military continues to exist and requires further exploration.

The 2006 Gender Relations survey asked 70,000 soldiers to respond regarding any experiences of sexual harassment or sexual assault in the previous year; 23,000 of the soldiers responded (Baker, 2008). Of those who completed the survey, 6.8% of women reported unwanted sexual contact, a number which is less than that reported in 1995 but up from the amount reported in 2002. Of the women who reported experiencing an assault in the previous year, 21% indicated rape as their most serious assault. Further, results of the survey found that women in the Army were most likely to report experiences of unwanted sexual contact and harassment and women in the Air Force were the least likely across the services (Baker, 2008).

In her July 31, 2008 congressional testimony, Representative Louise M. Slaughter addressed the issue of sexual assault in the military and results of the annual reports. Slaughter noted that while the 2007 fiscal report of 2,688 sexual assaults was down from the 2,947 reported the year before – by approximately 9% – it follows increases of about 40% in 2005 and 24% in 2006. These previous increases combined with the change from calendar year to fiscal year reporting make it difficult to conclude from the fourth annual report that an actual decline in the occurrences of sexual assaults has taken place. She pointed to inadequacies of the current reporting system, including lack of coordination among the services in their reporting methods.
and terminology used, that results in an inability for Congress and the Department of Defense to gain a full understanding of the current problem (Slaughter, 2008).

As illustrated from previous research and data collection, sexual assault has been an ongoing problem in the military. The Department of Defense is attempting to address the problem and has created a sexual assault policy to aid in reaching a solution. While the distinction between rape and other sexual assault crimes in the Uniform Code of Military Justice was made in conjunction with the new policy, the Department of Defense includes all sexual assault crimes in its annual reports to Congress. Results of the most recent annual reports illustrate that rape and sexual assault continue to be a problem.

Influence of Alcohol on Sexual Assault Claims

As mentioned previously, numerous cases of rape in the military involve the consumption of alcohol by at least the victim or the offender and sometimes both. Richardson & Campbell (1982) conducted research on the influence of drunkenness of the victim and offender on the amount of responsibility attributed to each party in an acquaintance rape. Their findings revealed that when a male offender was drunk, less responsibility was attributed to him and more was attributed to the situation than when he was sober. With regards to the female victim, she was assigned more responsibility and her character was derogated more when she was drunk than when she was sober. Norris & Cubbin (1992) expanded on previous research to study alcohol’s effects on the perception of a female drinking and judgments of acquaintance rape. Their results found that an acquaintance rape is judged more severely when only the woman has been consuming alcohol than when both members of a dating couple have been drinking. As this research involves rape between dating couples it may not directly apply to instances of rape in the military. However, it illustrates the perceived differences in circumstances when only one party was drinking as opposed to when both were consuming alcohol prior to a rape occurrence.
In contrast to the research by Norris & Cubbin (1992) and other previous research indicating that people’s perceptions of a sexual assault’s occurrence were nullified when both parties were intoxicated, Schuller (2003) found that a guilty verdict was more likely when both parties were drinking. Additionally, Schuller found that a case was more likely to be viewed as one of assault when the defendant was moderately intoxicated and he was also viewed as less credible and guiltier under these circumstances. When a complainant was moderately intoxicated her credibility was perceived to be lower and the defendant was perceived to be guiltier. One explanation for these findings, particularly those that contrast with previous research findings, is that the participants were placed in a legal context that emphasized intoxication as an invalid defense rather than asking for lay judgments of participants.

Influence of Prior Relationship on Sexual Assault Claims

As previously noted by Scott Berkowitz, instances of rape in the military generally involve people who are at least acquainted with each other. Quackenbush (1989) conducted a study using 90 male participants, ages 18-34, and found that stranger rape was considered to be more serious than acquaintance rape. Similarly, Golge (2003) found that acquaintance rapes are perceived as less severe and less criminal than stranger rapes and the victim is more at fault in an acquaintance rape compared to a stranger rape, according to participants’ perceptions. However, with regards to date rape, participant gender was found to have an effect on the amount of responsibility attributed to each party. Specifically, women attributed less responsibility to the victim and more to the assailant, viewed date rape as more of a crime, and recommended more severe punishment for the assailant. A study by Abrams et al. (2003) confirmed that the victim of an acquaintance rape is attributed more blame compared to the victim of a stranger rape.

With regards to the amount of blame assigned to each the victim and the perpetrator for three levels of acquaintance, Krahé (2007) found an inverse relationship. Specifically, the least
amount of perpetrator blame was present for rape between ex-sexual partners, followed by acquaintance rape. The most perpetrator blame was found for stranger rape. With regards to victim blame, the greatest amount was present for rape between ex-sexual partners, followed by acquaintance rape. Victim blame was lowest for a stranger rape.

After conducting a literature review of rape studies, Pollard (1992) concluded that people generally seem to judge the perpetrator of a date rape as deserving less punishment as a result of considering date rape to be less traumatic for the victim than a stranger rape. However, an alternate rationale presented to explain the relationship between how a rape is judged and the level of acquaintance of the victim and perpetrator may be rooted in the historical view of women as being sexual property of males. It could possibly be, as a result of this view, that the perception of a woman’s right to refuse sexual advances decreases as the extent of her relationship with the male prior to the attack increases, according to Pollard (1992).

Influence of Force on Sexual Assault Claims

The issue of force or coercive strategy used was a key component in the distinction between rape and sexual assault addressed in the Uniform Code of Military Justice and is reflected in some civilian research as well. Krahé et al. (2007) found that when force was used the perpetrator was viewed as more liable than when he exploited the incapacitated state of the victim. Further, victim blame was lower for situations in which force was used rather than exploitation.

Burt & Albin (1981) reflected a unique perspective on the way in which rape is studied by examining the way in which rape itself is defined. Specifically, their study pointed to the importance of the question of consent when researching rape definitions and the challenges of reaching these definitions in a culture harboring the underlying belief that “women never mean no” (Burt & Albin, 1981, p. 213). As a result of this, extreme instances of environmental
coercion, also referred to as “real rape,” are often required for a situation to fit the definition of rape, consequently leading to restrictive rape definitions. Findings of this study revealed that participants were more likely to label a situation as a rape when they perceived force to be used or a lack of choice for the victim.

Military as a Unique Context

While past research conducted using civilians depicted in vignettes and as participants may aid in understanding instances of rape in the military, numerous factors make the military a unique context in which to study rape and illustrate the need for additional research specific to the military setting.

In 2006 more than 204,500 American women were serving in the armed forces, composing 15% of the nation’s military (Hoppen, 2006). As these numbers portray, military women find themselves in a male-dominated environment with a hierarchical structure in which they live and work with their comrades. This situation creates a challenging environment after a rape as “sexual trauma usually occurs in the very setting in which the victim works and lives – a setting to which the victim must return. Depending on the circumstances, the woman might actually find herself still working with and taking orders from the man who raped her” (Hoppen, 2006).

Additionally, in a time of war the situation further resists comparison to civilian life. This is particularly true during the current wars in which Katz et al. (2007) noted that women are essentially serving in combat for the first time in American history. Women are serving alongside men and filling equivalent ranks in a conflict with no clear battle lines and are even being injured and killed. Unique situations such as these make the understanding of rape and its consequences on victims, perpetrators and all soldiers even more vital.
The need for additional research specific to the context of the military is further illustrated by the differences in the justice systems of the military and civilian population. As Herdy & Moffeit (2003) pointed out, in the civilian world prosecutors make the decisions to investigate and try offenders accused of sexual assault. In the military, however, it’s the soldiers’ superior officers, their commanders, who make those decisions.

Campbell (2008) found in her civilian research that post-rape distress may not be the result of only the rape, but may also be due to the way in which the social systems treat them after the assault. While this may also apply to military victims, the occurrence and the consequences of rape in the military are uniquely different from that which occurs in the civilian population in many ways. The consequences further portray the need for additional understanding. Katz et al. (2007) reported that readjustment was more difficult for women who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST). Additionally, Fontana & Rosenheck (1998) reported in their study of 327 female veterans that 48% had served overseas, 12% of whom had been exposed to enemy fire, and 43% of the women reported experiencing rape or attempted rape. While duty-related and sexual stresses contribute separately and significantly to the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), according to the findings, sexual stress was almost four times as influential as duty-related stress to the development of PTSD.

Additional health consequences of experiencing sexual assault in the military include the finding that rates of depression are three times higher and alcohol abuse twice as common for women who reported sexual assault while serving in the military (Hankin, Skinner, Sullivan, Miller, Fraybe, Tripp, 1999). Sexual assault has also been linked with eating disorders and a greater likelihood of obesity, smoking and sedentary lifestyles as well as having a hysterectomy before the age of 40 and indicating that they have experienced a “heart attack” (Harned &

Present Study

The present study seeks to address how rape cases that occur in the military are perceived. The majority of past research regarding aspects of rape and how it is perceived involves cases occurring within the civilian population. These studies do not address the unique context of the military, including important factors such as the hierarchical structure and consequently the potential differences in rank between female victims and male perpetrators. The current study seeks to apply findings from past research to cases within the military setting to expand the understanding of this violence within the military.

Hypotheses

By manipulating information about the relative ranks of the victim and perpetrator as well as the presence of alcohol, I expect to find an identifiable pattern of blame assigned to the victim and to the perpetrator. Specific hypotheses include:

- **Victim blaming will be greatest when the parties are equal in rank and alcohol is present.**
  With equal ranks and no alcohol present, victim blaming is predicted to be significantly less. The least amount of victim blame is predicted to occur when the perpetrator is of higher rank, regardless of whether alcohol is present.

- **There will be an inverse relationship between victim blame and perpetrator blame.** The greatest amount of perpetrator blame is expected when the perpetrator has a higher rank and no alcohol is present. The least amount of perpetrator blame is predicted when both parties are of equal rank and there is alcohol present.
Method

Participants

Ninety-nine participants completed this study (65 females, 33 males), with an average age of 19.33 years. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions and were drawn from a population of students from a small Midwestern liberal arts college. Seventy-three students (49 females, 23 males) completed the study as a requirement for their Introductory Psychology course. These participants had an average age of 18.75 years. Twenty-six students (16 females, 10 males) completed the study as part of their Intercultural Communication course. The average age of these participants was 20.92 years.

Twenty-five participants (19 females, 5 males) were randomly assigned to the first condition, which included a scenario in which ranks were equal and alcohol was present. The average age of participants in this condition was 19.38 years. Twenty-two of these participants have not considered joining the military, while two previously considered joining but are no longer considering it. Ten participants in this condition do not have family or close friends serving in the military, seven have a family member and six have a close friend currently serving in the military. One has a significant other who is currently serving. Two have both a family member and a close friend currently serving. One participant assigned to this condition provided no demographic information.

Twenty-five participants (13 females, 12 males) were randomly assigned to the second condition in which the ranks were equal and no alcohol was present. The average age of participants in this condition was 19.08 years. Nineteen of these participants have not considered joining the military, four have previously considered joining but are no longer considering it, and two are currently considering joining the military. Twelve participants in this condition do not have family or close friends serving in the military, six have a family member and seven have a
close friend currently serving. Three have both a family member and a close friend serving in the military.

Twenty-five participants (18 females, 7 males) were randomly assigned to the third condition in which the ranks were unequal and alcohol was present. The average age of participants in this condition was 19.48 years. Twenty-one of the participants in this condition have not considered joining the military, while four previously considered joining but are no longer considering it. Thirteen participants in this condition do not have family or close friends serving in the military, six have a family member and five have a close friend serving. One has a significant other who is currently serving. One has both a family member and a close friend serving.

Twenty-four participants (15 females, 9 males) were randomly assigned to the fourth condition in which the ranks were not equal and no alcohol was present. The average age of participants in this condition was 19.38 years. Twenty-two of these participants have not considered joining the military, while two previously considered joining but are no longer considering it. Thirteen participants in this condition do not have family or close friends serving in the military, four have a family member and seven have a close friend currently serving.

Materials

Survey folders were constructed for each of the four conditions. An informed consent form was included in the left pocket of each folder. Each folder contained a first page in the right pocket with a stop sign asking the participant to not proceed until the experimenter instructs them to do so. Following the stop page, each folder contained a page titled “Court Summons,” which addressed the participant as a juror selected to evaluate a case regarding a rape allegation that recently occurred in a branch of the military. This page also included instructions for completing the study. The following two pages, titled “Military Debriefing,” included
information about the rank structure and unit organization in the military, a list of military terms, as well as an excerpt from the Uniform Code of Military Justice regarding rape. A scenario presented as a firsthand account of the events in question by the plaintiff was included next. The scenario was the same for all conditions, including the plaintiff described as a specialist in rank, and minor alterations were made for each condition. In the conditions in which the parties were of equal rank, the defendant was also a specialist. In those in which the ranks were unequal, the defendant was a sergeant. The mention of drinking beer was omitted in the conditions in which alcohol was not present. In the back of each folder there were three pages for the participant to complete, the first two of which were labeled “Your Evaluation”. This form asked the participant to evaluate the case on ten different measures (defendant blame, defendant criminal liability, plaintiff’s decision to accompany defendant, defendant’s control, sympathy for plaintiff, plaintiff blame, defendant perceived consent, plaintiff control, plaintiff’s ability to avoid incident, party at fault) using a Likert scale from 1 to 7. Six questions were taken from Abrams, Viki, Masser & Bohner’s (2003) study to measure the extent to which the participants considered the victim to be responsible for the rape. These questions include: “How much do you think [victim’s name] should blame herself for what happened?” “How much do you agree [victim’s name] should not have walked with [perpetrator’s name] if she did not want to have sex with him?” “Whose fault do you think it is that things turned out the way they did?” “How much control do you think [victim’s name] had over the situation?” “Do you think this incident could have been avoided?” and “How much sympathy do you feel for [victim’s name]?” The last three items were also included by Krahé, Temkin & Bieneck (2007) in their study to measure the extent to which participants blamed the victim. Three questions from the study by Krahé et al. (2007) were included to measure the extent to which the participants blamed the perpetrator for the event. The three items were: “How much do you think [perpetrator’s name] is to blame for the incident?”
“How strongly do you think that [perpetrator’s name] ought to be held criminally liable for rape?” and “How likely do you think it is that [perpetrator’s name] thought [victim’s name] consented to have sex with him?” One item included in this study (“How much control do you think [perpetrator’s name] had over the situation?”) was used by Abrams et al. (2003) to measure victim blame and by Krahé et al. (2007) to measure perpetrator blame.

The last sheet in each folder requested demographic information about the participant including sex, age, year in school, whether they had considered joining the military and whether they had a family member or close friend currently serving in the military.

Procedure

Folders were spread out across the tables, one at each seat, prior to the participants’ arrival. When participants entered the room they were asked to take a seat at one of the folders and to leave them closed. Once everyone had arrived participants were asked to open their folders and remove the informed consent form. The experimenter explained that the participants would be participating in a study about an alleged rape in the military. Participants were asked to read and sign their informed consent forms, which were then collected. The experimenter informed the participants about the contents of the folders and explained that their task was to role-play a juror assessing the alleged rape case that occurred in the military.

The participants were asked to read through each of the documents carefully. While participants were informed that they might reference previous pages, they were asked to go through the packet in order. After reading through the information and completing the evaluation and demographic information participants were asked to close their folders and remain seated. When all participants completed the study and closed their folders they were thanked and debriefed and requested not to discuss the study with other students.
Results

Development of Evaluation Scales

It was hypothesized that identifiable factors underlying the specific items would exist. Specifically, although each item could potentially measure a unique quality, it is likely there are a few important dimensions that can parsimoniously explain how participants evaluate the cases. To test this assumption an exploratory factor analysis was employed. The purpose of a factor analysis is to uncover patterns in the relationships between the items. Using an eigenvalue cutoff score of one, three unique factors emerged in this dataset (see scree plot in Figure 1). These three factors accounted for 59.15% of the total variance in this dataset.

![Scree Plot](image)

Fig. 1 Scree Plot

Using a varimax rotation to maximize the variance (see Figure 2), the three factors identified were:
1. Plaintiff Focused Blame (3 items)
2. Defendant Focused Blame (2 items)
3. Plaintiff’s Perceived Intention (2 items)

A Cronbach Alpha internal reliability analysis was used to assess the consistency of each factor. The three items loading on the plaintiff focused blame factor yielded a Cronbach Alpha internal reliability score of \( \alpha = .69 \). High scores on this factor indicate that participants blame the plaintiff for the rape that occurred. Two items loading on the defendant focused blame factor yielded a Cronbach Alpha internal reliability score of \( \alpha = .74 \). High scores on this factor indicate that participants blame the defendant for the rape. Two items loading on the plaintiff’s perceived intention factor yielded a Cronbach Alpha internal reliability score of \( \alpha = .43 \). High scores on this factor indicate that participants perceived the plaintiff as intending to have sex with the defendant. Two items, including one asking how much control participants thought the defendant had over the situation and one asking how much sympathy they felt for the plaintiff, did not load on any factors or show any patterns. Additionally, the last item asking participants which party was a fault was discarded as it did not show any patterns and raised concerns as to its contributions to the current study.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Components</th>
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<td>Plaintiff Blame Herself</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plaintiff Control</td>
<td>.768</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plaintiff Could Have Avoided</td>
<td>.698</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defendant Blame</td>
<td>-.175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Criminal Liability</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaintiff Should Not Have Walked</td>
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<td>Defendant Thought Consent</td>
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<td>Defendant Control</td>
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<td>Plaintiff Sympathy</td>
<td>.447</td>
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Fig. 2 Factorial Table
Plaintiff Focused Blame

For the first scale measure of plaintiff focused blame, a main effect of alcohol approached significance, F(1, 99) = 3.794, p = .054. The trend indicated that when alcohol was present there was less blame (M = 2.81) than when no alcohol was present (M = 3.24). Interestingly, Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances indicated that less variance was present in the alcohol present group (S = 0.97), than in the no alcohol present group (S = 1.28, F = 5.44, p < .05). In all conditions the blame was significantly less than the neutral point of 4 on the 7-point Likert scale (See Figure 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Present</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>-8.68</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Alcohol Present</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>-4.13</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Rank</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>-7.08</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal Rank</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>-4.92</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3 Means Table for Component 1

Defendant Focused Blame

Analysis of the second component, defendant focused blame, found no significant differences or interactions among the groups. However, blame was consistently high (i.e. above the neutral point of 4). (See Figure 4).
Component 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Present</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>36.43</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Alcohol Present</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Rank</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>45.26</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal Rank</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>19.21</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4 Means Table for Component 2

* Plaintiff’s Perceived Intention*

Analysis of the third component, plaintiff’s perceived intention, found no significant differences or interactions among the groups. However, perceived intention was consistently low (i.e. below the neutral point of 4)(See Figure 5).

Component 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Present</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Alcohol Present</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Rank</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal Rank</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5 Means Table for Component 3

*Non-loading Factors*

As illustrated in the factor table (Figure 2), two variables (plaintiff sympathy and defendant control) did not load on any components and showed no patterns or differences between groups when analyzed independently. The last variable, measuring fault, showed no patterns and was not further included in the analysis.
Discussion

Recall the hypothesis for this study was that an inverse relationship between victim and perpetrator blame would occur. The greatest amount of victim blame was expected when the parties were equal and alcohol was present. The least amount of victim blame was expected when the perpetrator was of higher rank, regardless of whether alcohol was present. Conversely, the greatest amount of perpetrator blame was expected when the perpetrator had a higher rank and no alcohol was present. The least amount of perpetrator blame was expected when the parties had equal rank and alcohol was present.

The results reveal three factors that emerged including one that was unexpected, two questions that did not load, and one item that needs to be revisited as no significant results were found. Results of the factor analysis were surprising as the questions taken from Abrams et al. (2003) to measure victim blame were previously found to load on one factor with loadings ranging from .32 to .86 and to be reliable ($\alpha = .75$). Similarly, the questions used to measure perpetrator blame taken from Krahé et al. (2007) were previously found to have good internal consistency ranging from .69 to .90. Nevertheless, the factors that emerged were identified as measuring plaintiff focused blame, defendant focused blame, and plaintiff’s perceived intention.

**Plaintiff Focused Blame**

Findings regarding plaintiff focused blame revealed that participants tended to blame the victim less when alcohol was present than when no alcohol was present. While these findings were not statistically significant, but rather approached significance, they are worth examining. No effect of rank on victim blame was found. Results of this dependent measure do not support the hypothesis that the presence of alcohol would increase victim blame when the ranks were equal. This finding was also in opposition to the results of Richardson & Campbell’s (1982)
research that found that the female victim was assigned more responsibility and her character was criticized more when she was drunk than when she was sober during an acquaintance rape.

Notable aspects of this variable revealed during analysis include the findings of a split-sample, one sample t-test and Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances. The participants blamed the victim more when no alcohol was present than when it was present; however, the amount of victim blame was low (below the neutral point of 4) in both levels of the alcohol independent variable. Additionally, Levene’s test revealed less variance in the alcohol present condition. In other words, there was more agreement among the participants in the alcohol present group as to how much blame to assign to the victim. The responses varied more among the participants in the condition with no alcohol present.

These findings suggest that participants did not ascribe to the myths that “she should have acted more responsibly” or “she was asking for it by drinking,” which would have lead to higher victim blaming in the alcohol present condition. Instead, participants blamed her more when alcohol was not present, possibly because alcohol was not available to attribute her “misjudgment” to and thus they may have believed that she was in a position that she “should not have allowed the rape to happen”. This is a likely explanation as participants indicated that she had more control over the situation and could have avoided the situation more when there was no alcohol involved.

These results may have been partially due to the fact that, though alcohol was present in some scenarios, an excessive amount or level of the victim’s intoxication was not indicated in the scenario. The rationale for this was twofold. Emphasizing the presence of alcohol may have increased the presence of demand characteristics. In other words, the participants would have been able to quickly identify the hypothesis and that alcohol was a variable being measured, which would have tainted their responses rather than allowing sincere judgments to be measured.
The second reason that the victim was not portrayed as excessively intoxicated was that if she was considered incapacitated by the alcohol she willingly consumed, then the event would have been classified as an aggravated sexual assault by the Uniform Code of Military Justice definitions and therefore outside of the realm of the current study’s focus. This lack of explicit drunkenness of the victim may account for the incongruent findings of the current study and those of Richardson & Campbell (1982).

Defendant Focused Blame

The results of the current study with regards to perpetrator blame found no significant differences or interactions among groups. This is in contrast to the original prediction that there would be the greatest amount of perpetrator blame when the victim had a higher rank and no alcohol was present. Across all conditions participants placed a high amount of blame (above the neutral point of 4) on the perpetrator. This indicates that participants did not take into account, or there was no influence of, rank or alcohol on participants’ decision to blame the perpetrator for rape.

Plaintiff’s Perceived Intention

The results of the current study illustrate a third component emerging that was unexpected. This factor was interpreted as measuring the extent to which participants perceived the plaintiff as intending to have sex with the defendant. No significant differences or interactions were found among the groups. Across all conditions participants perceived that the plaintiff had little intention (below neutral point of 4) to have sex with the defendant. This is an insightful component as it may illustrate whether participants perceived the incident as rape; if the participants perceive the plaintiff as intending to have sex, this may be synonymous with consent and consequently would not fit the definition of rape (Burt & Albin, 1981).
Overall Findings

Results of the present study suggest that rank has no effect on the amount of blame assigned to either party in a rape case occurring in the military. Additionally, alcohol only had an effect on victim blame, which approached significance. Across all conditions participants assigned a high amount of blame to perpetrators and a low amount of blame to victims.

Interesting to note is that while there were consistently low ratings of plaintiff’s perceived intention, the means were at least 2. This may indicate that there was some doubt as to whether a rape had occurred or that there were different rape definitions present and some rape myths were held by participants (Burt & Albin, 1982).

Limitations

While the findings of the current study contribute to the understanding of rape in the military, some limitations must be acknowledged. Possibly the greatest limitation in this research was the participants studied. While college students are the same age as many individuals entering the military, they have not experienced the military culture as a soldier. In addition, there may be auxiliary characteristics that differentiate college students from young adults in the military, which may have affected their views of rape scenarios. By not having served in the military, participants may not have been as sensitive to the significance of the rank differences and the hierarchical distribution of power. Further, a soldier compared to a college student may perceive alcohol differently in the context of a military base.

The current study was also framed in a legal context, which may have affected the responses. Schuller (2003) suggested that this might have contributed to the findings that were contradictory to previous research in the civilian population.
Future Research

Many suggestions may be made for future research to continue to construct an understanding of rape in the military. In addition to using military personnel as participants, future research should examine the effects of different dimensions specific to the military. For example, perspectives of enlisted members, non-commissioned, and commissioned officers should be compared as well as how these different positions are perceived in scenarios. Different perspectives across military branches and job positions may also be considered. Further, the level of acquaintance in the vignettes may also be manipulated as the military presents relationships between individuals that are unique from the civilian context. How rape of a female victim of a superior rank is perceived should also be examined. Perceptions of rape cases on stateside bases, overseas, and in war zones may also be compared. Finally, differences between male and female servicemembers’ perspectives may also be considered including how rape is defined by various soldiers.

A suggestion for future research, also noted by Burt & Albin (1981), would be to frame the scenario as a participant responding to a friend who had just been raped. Extending this suggestion to the military, officers could be asked to respond to a subordinate officer reporting a rape occurrence to them.

The occurrence of rape in the military requires a substantial amount of further exploration in order to develop a more complete understanding of the issue. The current study illustrated that analysis of the problem is more complex than simply attributing responsibility to one or both parties. Additional aspects of the context in which a rape occurs must be considered along with underlying questions such as how rape is defined and how the decisions of whether to prosecute are made. Findings revealed that participants consistently attributed a low amount of blame to the victim, a high amount of blame to the perpetrator, and generally did not perceive the victim
as intending to have sex with the perpetrator. Utilizing military personnel as participants in future research may yield more significant effects of the independent variables. The ultimate goal of research surrounding rape in the military is to one day eliminate this problem.
References


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