Military Influences on Personality Characteristics of Sexual Offenders: An Examination of PAI Scale Scores

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Abstract
To date there is a lack of research looking at the influence of military background on sexual offending. The current study utilized retrospective data from a sample of sexual offenders referred for evaluation at a sex offender treatment facility in Oregon. The study participants were divided into two groups: those who endorsed prior military involvement and those who did not. A MANOVA was used to examine possible differences in scores on four scales of the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI): Anxiety, Antisocial, Aggression, and Stress. Although the results were non-significant, this study marks an important point in research with sexual offenders by noting possible influences of military involvement on sexual offending.

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MILITARY INFLUENCES ON PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF SEXUAL OFFENDERS: AN EXAMINATION OF PAI SCALE SCORES

A THESIS
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BY
UMA R. SANKARAM

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Abstract

To date there is a lack of research looking at the influence of military background on sexual offending. The current study utilized retrospective data from a sample of sexual offenders referred for evaluation at a sex offender treatment facility in Oregon. The study participants were divided into two groups: those who endorsed prior military involvement and those who did not. A MANOVA was used to examine possible differences in scores on four scales of the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI): Anxiety, Antisocial, Aggression, and Stress. Although the results were non-significant, this study marks an important point in research with sexual offenders by noting possible influences of military involvement on sexual offending.

Keywords: sexual offenders, Personality Assessment Inventory, personality characteristics, military masculinity, military sexual assault
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Introduction

In 2009 the Department of Defense reported that over 2000 service members had reported being the victims of sexual assault; of these reported assaults over 80% involved service members as alleged perpetrators of those assaults (United States Department of Defense FY09 Annual Report, 2009). Research has also demonstrated a possible link between military combat exposure and later antisocial behaviors (Barrett, Dansky, Foy, & Resnick, 1996; Resnick, Foy & Donahoe, 1989). These violent actions might be linked with a concept known as military masculinity. Military masculinity is described as emphasizing the importance of physical strength and aggression, detachment of emotions other than anger, use of anger as a means of control, and the objectification of women (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978; Higate, 2007; Karner, 1998; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). Through military training and duty the identity of a soldier can become synonymous with this type of masculine image, which represents the idealized military man (Karner, 1998).

The themes endorsed by prototypical military masculinity share commonalities with the characteristics of sexual offenders. There is not one particular personality profile of sexual offenders nor a singular motivation for this type of offending. However, common motivations behind these sexual assaults include anger, a desire for power and control, and devaluation of women (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Specific types of sexual offenders, regardless of whether they offend against adults or minors, use sexual assault to feel a sense of control that they do not otherwise feel in life, or that they feel has been threatened.

In 2007, there were 248,300 victims of attempted or completed sexual assault of individuals over the age of 12 years old (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). Fifteen percent of sexual assault and rape victims are under age 12, with seven percent of girls in grades 5-8 and
twelve percent of girls in grades 9-12 reporting that they had been sexually abused. Sexual assault is one of the most underreported crimes, with estimates that sixty percent of these crimes go unreported (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005). The effects of sexual abuse are very traumatic to the victim, costly to society, and carry a host of long term consequences. As such there is a need to explore both motivations behind sexual offending and better understand common characteristics of sex offender type in order to more effectively treat this type of offender and reduce the rate of sexual assault and recidivism.

The high rates of sexual assault within the military, coupled with similarities between prototypical military masculinity and common sex offender characteristics suggest an increased likelihood for sexual offending by military men as well as higher propensities for anger, aggression, and control than for non-military sex offenders. The current study examines archival data from sex offenders in an outpatient treatment setting both with and without a military background to describe similarities and differences between the two groups.

**Literature review**

*Military Sexual Assault*

There is an alarmingly high rate of sexual assault within the military. In 2010 the Department of Defense (DoD) released its most recent report on sexual assault in the military. This report stated that in 2009 2,670 service members reported being the victim of sexual assault. Of the restricted reports, 53% involved service members assaulting other service members, while 30% involved service members assaulting non-service members. Of the victims making restricted reports, 87% were female, while 11% were male, with the remainder being unknown. Unrestricted reports of crime type perpetrated upon service members contained 464 acts of rape and 552 acts of aggravated sexual assault (United States Department of Defense FY09 Annual
The United States Department of Defense Annual 2008 report showed that of documented sexual assaults involving service members with other service members, 1,864 involved a male perpetrator and female victim, 123 involved male perpetrator and victim, 23 involved an undocumented sex of the perpetrator and male victim, and 232 involved an undocumented sex of the perpetrator and female victim. The report of assaults involving service members on non-service members showed that 665 involved a male perpetrator and a female victim, with 10 involving a male perpetrator on victim. The total reports of service member on service member sexual assaults between unrestricted and restricted reports are 51% and 57%, respectively (United States Department of Defense FY08 Annual Report, 2008). Yet it is estimated that only 20% of unwanted sexual contact is reported to military authority (United States Department of Defense, 2008).

In 2003, Sadler, Booth, Cook and Doebbeling reported that 30% of female U.S. veterans identified themselves as being the victim of rape or attempted rape during their military service. The most frequently identified perpetrators of the assaults were non-commissioned officers and peers of a similar rank to the officer. The assaults were usually committed while on base, off-duty, and often in the barracks. These statistics demonstrate an alarmingly high rate of sexual misconduct perpetrated by members of the military upon other members of the military while active.

In 2009 the Department of Defense (2009) noted that 7% of sexual assault victims in the military were male. Male to male sexual assault does not seem to be primarily motivated by a desire for sexual intimacy. Rather, sexual contact is instigated as a form of control and degradation. A study by Kwon, Lee, Kim, and Kim (2007) define sexual violence as “a forceful sexual act, committed against the consent of an individual, including verbal, physical, and
psychological violence” (pg. 1026). They conducted surveys and interviews with perpetrators and victims of male to male sexual assault in the Korean military. According to their study, male to male sexual violence is often used in initiation ceremonies to demonstrate authority and power by the leaders. Victims are usually of a lower rank than their abusers, and thus find it difficult to refuse to comply with sexual advance. These assaults are accepted as part of everyday life and interpreted as playfulness and done ‘for fun;’ as such, there is a tendency to minimize any resulting emotional or physical injury. This abuse damages the victim’s identity as a masculine male, which must then be aggressively rebuilt. The soldiers in Kwon et al.’s study described the victims as being men who seemed ‘submissive,’ ‘cute,’ or ‘easily approachable’ (Kwon et al., 2007, pg 1036). The typical victim response was to quietly comply, watch, or pretend not to see sexual assault being perpetrated on himself or someone else, which reinforced the abuse as a regular practice (Kwon et al., 2007). This appears to be the sole study on male to male sexual assault in a military setting, and as it was conducted in Korea the results might not generalize to the United States military.

Military Experience & Antisocial Behavior

While sexual assault in the military seems to be a growing problem, military experiences, specifically combat exposure, have also been linked with the development of adult antisocial behaviors, even after controlling for such behavior prior to military service (Barrett, Dansky, Foy, & Resnick, 1996; Resnick, Foy & Donahoe, 1989). Barrett et al. studied combat exposure and adult psychosocial adjustment among 2441 Vietnam veterans. They found a significant association between combat exposure and pervasive adult antisocial behavior, even after controlling for both childhood antisocial behavior and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Adult antisocial behavior was measured by the Antisocial Personality Disorder scale of the
Diagnostic Interview Schedule and was broken into nine domains: violence, illegal activities, vocational difficulties, parental difficulties, relationship instability, indebtedness, vagrancy, frequent lying, and traffic offenses. Sexually violent acts were not specifically examined in this study. Of veterans categorized as meeting a ‘very high’ exposure level, 64.2% had significant problems with violence as an adult, compared with 53.8% in the ‘high exposure’ level, 43.3% in the ‘medium exposure’ level, and only 36% in the ‘no/low exposure’ level (Barrett et al., 1996, pg. 578 ). These findings lend credence to the possibility that some individuals in the military who are exposed to high levels of combat may be at increased risk for violence in adulthood.

Taking the relationship between combat and antisocial behavior one step further, researchers suggest a possible link between military-induced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and antisocial behavior. Estimates of the number of Vietnam veterans who suffer from PTSD range from 500,000 to 1,500,000 (Walker & Cavenar, 1982). In studies of Vietnam veterans with combat experience, it was observed that between 20% and 43% were later diagnosed with PTSD (Frye & Stockton, 1982). In a 1983 study in which Vietnam veterans were interviewed about their combat experience, nearly one third reported feeling guilt over committing a violent act such as rape (Hendin et al., 1983). Among a sample of 114 Vietnam veterans Wilson and Ziegelbaum (1983) examined veterans’ scores on the Vietnam Era Stress Inventory PTSD scale and post-Vietnam legal problems as indicated by self-reported arrest, acquittal, or conviction of any of nineteen criminal acts. They found a significant relationship between legal problems involving physical assault and the following three factors of the Vietnam Era Stress Inventory PTSD scale: depression, intimacy conflict, and stigmatization. They did not find a correlation between the PTSD scale and rape. A few years later, Kulka et al. (1987) performed a comparison study of Vietnam veterans who had actively served overseas versus
those who had not. They found a significant relationship between levels of long term PTSD symptoms and a 7-item measurement of hostility. In addition, there was a correlation between PTSD symptoms and an 8-item violence index. In contrast to these findings, Shaw et al. surveyed sixty one Vietnam veterans who had served between 1964 and 1975. The veterans were divided into two groups: an ‘incarcerated’ group of veterans currently housed in the Iowa Department of Corrections, and an ‘unincarcerated’ group of veterans residing in Iowa who had been stationed overseas while Agent Orange was being used. The researchers found that PTSD was no more prevalent among incarcerated veterans than a control group of non-incarcerated veterans (39% and 38% respectively). There was also no difference found between types of crime committed by the incarcerated veterans who were diagnosed with PTSD and incarcerated veterans without this diagnosis (58% violent for both groups). Given the results of these studies, it seems that combat exposure may be linked to later antisocial and criminal behavior. In regards to a diagnosis of military-induced PTSD, more research is needed before a definite link can be drawn.

A study by the Department of Justice (2000) found that among state prisons, military veterans (eighteen percent) were over twice as likely to be incarcerated for sexual assault as nonveterans (seven percent). Of incarcerated veterans, 35% were convicted of sexual assault or homicide compared to 20% of nonveterans (Mumola, 2000). Similarly, a 2004 survey by the Bureau of Justice reported that 23% of veterans in State prison were serving time for sexual assault, compared to 9% of non veterans (Noonan & Mumola, 2004); in Federal prison 3% of veterans were incarcerated due to sexual assault, compared to 1% of non veterans. Noonan and Mumola also reported that of active-duty military personnel being held in military prison, the most common offense was rape or sexual assault (20%) (Noonan & Mumola, 2004). Of the
violent crimes (including rape/sexual assault and homicide), committed by veterans and non-
veterans, 40% of veterans offended against minors, compared with 24% of non veterans and 60%
of veterans offended against females, compared to 41% of non veterans. Unfortunately, the
survey did not further break down these numbers into sexual assaults only, so the actual
percentages of minor and female victims of sexual assault is unknown (Noonan & Mumola,
2004).

Military Masculinity

One factor that might play a role in military sexual assault and antisocial behavior is a
phenomenon referred to as ‘military masculinity.’ The military constitutes a separate culture
within society at large, distinguished by its own power structure of rank, disciplinary action, and
values. Socialization into military culture begins with recruitment and continues through boot
camp, active service, and eventual discharge. Immersion in military culture sometimes leads to
the development of ‘military masculinity.’ A variety of factors might influence one’s propensity
to develop military masculinity, and these factors are currently unclear. The increase in the
number of women in the military might influence the prevalence of military masculinity;
however, further research is needed to describe the influence of this effect. The concept of
military masculinity is most commonly defined along themes of physical strength, detachment
from emotion, anger and aggression as methods of control, and the objectification of women as
purely sexual objects (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978; Higate, 2007; Karner, 1998; Shefer &
Mankayi, 2007).

Within the military culture “principles of competition, aggression, power, and control”
(Shefer & Mankayi, 2007, pg 192) are widely endorsed as a means of proving one’s value as a
soldier and creating one’s identity as a military man (Karner, 1998). This need to identify and
prove oneself to be a ‘real man’ begins as early as recruitment, which is advertised as a way of turning ‘boys into men” (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). Basic training further emphasizes the importance of manhood, which becomes the image of the ideal soldier and new recruits must strive to become (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). Physical strength is a primary method of proving this manhood (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007) because strength means that one is able to take care of himself and survive in combat. Maintaining a masculine image is the driving force behind military socialization and masculinity is viewed as being not only the core of one’s identity, but as an actual survival mechanism on the battlefield (Karner, 1998).

According to a survey of Vietnam veterans (Karner, 1998), the suppression of emotion during training and combat was imperative to maintain a masculine image; the only acceptable emotion was anger, which was used as a coping mechanism for the traumatic experiences of war. Emotions such as fear, confusion, and sadness were devalued because they could lead to an error in combat that could result in the death of a comrade or oneself. In this sense, shutting off all emotions but anger was a survival mechanism that helped soldiers feel in control on the battlefield. Anger and aggression were synonymous with respect because they proved that one could survive during war, which was a key component to the ideal male/soldier (Karner, 1998).

Another component of military masculinity is the objectification and devaluing of women. One way of proving masculinity in the military is by counting the number of ‘conquests,’ or sexual partners (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). The male sexual drive is viewed as an integral component of masculinity and an innate need of real men. In this way sex becomes a competition among soldiers to see who has the most partners and therefore is the most masculine, with masculinity equaling soldier hood (Higate, 2007; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). In an interview one soldier stated that “To be seen as somebody who can have as many ‘chicks’ as
possible . . . Maybe, there’s that thing that tells me that ‘I’m a man’” (Shefer& Mankayi, 2007, pg. 198). Higate (2007) interviewed both peacekeepers and UN civilian employees on common sexual practices committed while stationed overseas; these peacekeepers are usually combat trained military men. One UN employee talked about the common practice of soldiers to keep a tally of sexual partners and compare the numbers with each other. They also compared their tallies with the imagined number of partners of civilian men. This competitiveness about number of sexual partners could be understood as a way of proving superiority to civilian men, who they imagined typically have fewer sexual partners (Shefer& Mankayi, 2007).

According to Shefer& Mankayi (2007), soldiers feel pressured to engage in sexual activity with multiple women which leads to both an implied lack of control over their own behavior and negative views towards women. Their supposed lack of control is reinforced by commanding officers who hold a ‘boys will be boys’ attitude and a general tendency to blame the women as wanting sex for their own gain, as carriers of sexual diseases, and even as exploiting the men in cases of prostitution by charging them too much money (Higate, 2007). One UN civilian noted that local women would “go after peacekeepers” by acting overtly sexual around them, such as lifting up their clothing in view of the men. A peacekeeper also stated that the local women are very persistent in their desire for sex with stationed officers and view such sexual activity as a challenge. Arkin and Dobrofsky (1978) stated that during training chaplains warned soldiers to distrust women overseas as possible conspirators who would try and “entrap one into marriage and a monthly allotment check” (Arkin & Dobrosfky, 1978, pg. 162).

It is often taken for granted that in fulfilling their need for multiple sexual partners soldiers engage in coercive sexual practices (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). Exploitative sexual practices are especially associated with peacekeepers overseas (Higate, 2007). One peacekeeper
stationed in Kinshasa stated that several peacekeepers are curious about sex with underage girls and are able to satisfy this curiosity while stationed. Other study participants implied that overseas prostitution involved girls as young as twelve years old (Higate, 2007).

Throughout military training soldiers are taught to view the body as a weapon that is separate from emotion, and so for some soldiers the physical act of sex also undergoes this emotional separation, with the focus being conquest (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). Women are discussed only as targets for soldiers’ sexual drives; there is a de-emphasis on discussing intimate relationships left behind (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). As stated by one military officer “women are objects to make us feel good. Men use their body as an object. . . once we had our satisfaction, that body has . . . no value anymore” (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007, pp. 197). Basic training further emphasizes the idea of women as objects through training chants where women are compared with weaponry, as objects to be owned and used, and weapons are often given feminine names by soldiers (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). A consequence of this is a strengthened association between violence, conquest, and women.

*Sex offender characteristics*

These themes of military masculinity and the high number of military sexual assaults suggest a connection with ideas endorsed by sexual offenders. Cumming and McGrath integrate years of cumulative research on sex offender typologies for sexual offenses in their 2005 publication *Supervision of the Sex Offender*. Of sexual offenses that involve physical contact there seems to be a broad split into two basic offender groups: those who offend against adults and those who offend against children. Characteristics of those who target adults include holding a highly negative view of women, hyper-identification with the masculine role, low self esteem, and difficulty controlling aggression (Marshall, Laws, & Barbaree, 1990; Scully, 1990).
Motivation for sexual assault can be either sexual or non-sexual. Groth (1979) further breaks motivation down into four categories: power reassurance, power assertive, anger retaliation, and anger excitation. Power reassurance has a sexual motivation along with feelings of inadequacy, problems in normal courtship dating, and little/no use of force during offenses. Power assertive also has a sexual motivation and obtains sexual gratification through the infliction of pain and fear in the victim. Anger retaliation has a non sexual motivation that is highly aggressive and seeks humiliation of the victim. Anger excitation also has a non sexual motivation that is highly impulsive; this type often commits sexual offenses while committing a separate offense (Cumming & McGrath, 2005; Groth, 1979; Terry & Robertiello, 2007).

The characteristics of those who abuse children include feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, humiliation, and vulnerability (Terry, 2006). The two most fundamental breakdown of this group of offenders is two basic types: fixated (preferential) and regressed (situational; Groth, Hobson & Gary, 1982). Fixated offenders have a compulsive desire for children that often begins in adolescence (Finkelhor 1984). They have difficulty forming age appropriate intimate and sexual relationships, and so view children as appropriate sexual partners; assaults are typically premeditated and include a grooming period prior to any abuse (Conte, 1991). Regressed offenders prefer adult victims and abuse children as an exception to more appropriate sexual desires. These individuals often offend at times of situational stress that undermines their self esteem, rather than a desire for intimacy and sex (Schwartz, 1995).

Sex offenders comprise a heterogeneous group of individuals with various backgrounds, criminal histories, and attitudes. However, in terms of non-sexual motivation the sex offender types share the commonalities of power, anger, and control (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Likewise, the attitudes that are most commonly endorsed by sex offenders across type include
the endorsement of rape and abuse myths (i.e. “She was asking for it”; “It’s not hurting the child”).) A 2005 meta-analysis by Hanson and Morton-Bourgon of 82 recidivism studies describes the two most significant predictors of sexual recidivism as being deviant sexual interest paired with an antisocial orientation. Additional risk factors of sexual recidivism include a negative family background, problems forming affectionate bonds, and holding attitudes tolerant of sexual assault. Cumming and McGrath (2005) similarly state that risk factors for sexual offending include sexual preoccupation such as excessive sex talk and promiscuity, difficulty managing emotions, lifestyle instability, impulsivity, and low quality adult relationships.

**Personality Characteristics of Sexual Offenders**

Numerous researchers have investigated differences in personality characteristics of sexual offenders and non sexual offenders. Levin and Stava (1987) review thirty six studies that compared personality traits of sex offenders (rapists and child molesters) and non sexual offenders. They found that both sex offender groups had lower levels of aggression and higher levels of guilt and inhibition than non sexual offenders. Chantry and Craig (1994) used the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) to evaluate personality characteristics of recently convicted offenders who were likewise split into three groups: child molesters, rapists, and non-sexually aggressive offenders; they found that sexual offenders were more passive and submissive than other types of offenders. In a 2000 study by Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson on Icelandic prison inmates, they utilized the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire and demonstrated that two groups of sex offenders (rapists and child molesters) were more introverted than violent offenders.

In 2002 Fazel et al. interviewed a group of sex offenders (mixed child and adult victims) and a group of non-sex offenders over the age of fifty nine using the Structured Clinical
Interview for DSM-IV Personality Diagnosis and showed that the sex offender group had fewer antisocial traits than violent offenders. Additionally, a 2006 study by Craig et al. examined retrospective data of male offenders who had been assessed with the Special Hospitals Assessment of Personality and Socialization (SHAPS); they compared a group of sex offenders with violent offenders. Victim type of the sex offenders was unknown, but they were noted as having committed rape, attempted rape, or indecent assault. Their results showed that the sex offender group was significantly less aggressive than the violent offender group.

Similar to the study by Chantry and Craig in 1994, Ahlmeyer et al. (2003) examined personality traits of sexual and non sexual offenders using the MCMI and found that sex offenders (rapists and child molesters) demonstrated significantly more traits of emotional and social distress, while non sex offenders exhibited more antisocial traits. They additionally noted that the child molester group had higher levels of psychopathology than the rapist group. A 2009 study by Francia divided 858 male inmates into three offender groups: nonsexual, rapist, and child molester. Using the Coolidge Correctional Inventory (CCI) as a personality measure, they found that both sex offender groups (rapist and child molester) had higher rates of anxiety and depression than non sexual offenders, while both rapists and non sexual offenders had higher rates of antisocial personality disorder than child molesters. Child molesters had significantly higher levels of avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive traits than the other two groups.

Schechory and Ben-David (2005) utilized the Spielberger State Trait Anxiety Inventory along with the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory on a sample of child molesters and rapists and reported differences in aggression between rapists and child molesters, with rapists endorsing significantly higher levels of aggression. They also found that both groups suffered from sexual anxiety. These findings suggest that sex offenders, especially those who offend against children,
demonstrate lower externalizing personality traits such as aggression and antisocial traits than non sex offenders, while endorsing higher levels of internalizing factors such as guilt and anxiety.

Military Masculinity and Sexual Offending

Socialization into military culture leads to the development of military masculinity in some individuals. In examining military masculinity, there seems to be an overlap with common sex offender characteristics. This overlap includes using anger and aggression as a method of control, devaluing women, and using sex as a tool for increasing a feel of self-worth. In specific, military masculinity is very similar to the anger retaliation type of rapist who uses sex as a tool to gain control and to reinforce a masculine identity, especially if that identity has been threatened. Child sexual victimization also is similar to that of the victims of male to male sexual assault within the military. This similarity comes not only from the perpetrator’s need to commit abuse as stemming from a need to assert dominance, but from chosen victim type and victim response. The male victims of military sexual assault were chosen because they were of a lower rank, seemed submissive, and were easily approachable; victim responses were to comply due to the power hierarchy involved and the interpretation of abuse as playfulness. This is very similar to child victims who comply with abuse from adults because they feel that they cannot say no and are confused by the power differential.

Cumming and McGrath (2005) state that “higher rates of sexual aggression are found in cultures that emphasize male dominance, segregation of the sexes, and violence as an accepted strategy to solve interpersonal problems” (Cumming & McGrath, 2007, pg 152). Clearly the armed forces can be described as this type of culture, where the idealization of masculinity and soldier hood include a profound emphasis on anger, aggression, and sexual conquest. As such
there is a need to examine characteristics of sex offenders with and without a military background to note whether significant differences exist between the groups.

*The Current Study*

The combined results from the two studies by the Department of Justice (2000) and Bureau of Justice (2004) indicate that military veterans are over twice as likely to be in prison for committing sexual assaults as non veterans. In addition, veterans are almost twice as likely to commit violent crimes (including sexual assault) against minors as non veterans. There is also a tentative link between military experiences, especially levels of combat exposure, and later violent behavior. At present there is little to no research examining possible differences between veterans and non veterans that might begin to explain these significant differences in types of offense.

A military environment saturated with themes of military masculinity, such as aggression and sexual conquest, could very likely influence the personality of certain military men to be more prone to use anger and aggression as a means of getting what they want, more emotionally detached, and less able to handle stress in an emotionally appropriate manner than men without a military background. In addition, combat exposure might lead to high endorsement of antisocial behaviors. Therefore, sex offenders with a military background might endorse higher levels of aggression, antisocial behaviors and stress than sex offenders who lack such a background.

For the current study I will utilize retrospective data on a sample of male sexual offenders. First, I will examine the psychosexual histories of the sample, noting the presence or absence of self-reported military involvement. Second, I will utilize scale scores on the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) to determine if there is a relationship between military involvement and PAI scores. Specifically, I will examine the Anxiety, Antisocial, Aggression,
and Stress scales to examine whether differences exist within the sample as a function of military involvement. I hypothesize that the sex offenders who endorse a military background will have significantly higher scores on the chosen PAI scales than sex offenders with no military background.

Method

Setting and Sample

Client files of 352 clients referred to an outpatient mental health facility for evaluation of their sexual offending behavior were considered for use in the current study. Conviction status ranged from postconviction to involvement with the Department of Human Services only. The facility conducts psychosexual evaluations in which the clients are required to complete a lengthy psychosexual questionnaire, as well as personality, cognition, interpersonal functioning, and sexual fantasy scales. Evaluation clients participate in a polygraph examination in addition to a penile plethysmograph to assess appropriate and deviant arousal. Out of a total sample of 352 individuals, 202 had full PAIs on file. Those individuals without a PAI (n=150) were excluded from the study. Females (n=30) were also excluded from the study, as the military offenders were all male and it is believed that including females in the comparison group might confound the results. Also excluded were individuals under 18 years of age (n=2).

Of the remaining 170 individuals, 44 individuals with a military background were automatically included. These 44 were matched with appropriate non-military offenders on the type of index crime (rape, child sexual abuse, child pornography, exposure, abuse of child and adult, attempted sexual abuse, other, and combination), the age of the client (range 18-83), and the age of the youngest victim (all ages within 5 years). One of the military participants could not be matched by the crime type of ‘child pornography’; as an alternative the participant was
matched with a non-military participant with the crime type ‘other’ and with matched victim age. Twelve of the military participants could not be matched within 5 years of age; as an alternative they were matched with non-military participants with ages ranging from 6 to 25 years younger. Three of the military participants could not be matched within 5 years of victim age and were matched with non-military participants with victim ages ranging from 8 to 16 years older. Two of the military participants and two of the non-military participants had unknown victim ages; they were matched according to crime type, followed by closes age group only. See Table 1 for a description of participant characteristics used in the matching process.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Involvement</th>
<th>Youngest Victim Age (years)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Crime Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (N= 44)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Child Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Child Pornography</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Abuse of Child and Adult</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Attempted Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (N= 44)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Child Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Child Pornography</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Abuse of Child and Adult</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attempted Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethnicity of the military group was 77.3% Caucasian, 2.3% Latino, 6.8% African American, 2.3% Native American, 6.8% Multiethnic, 2.3% other and missing ethnic data on 2.3%; ethnicity from the non-military group was 77.3% Caucasian, 2.3% Latino, 11.4% African American, 2.3% Asian, 2.3% Native American, and 4.5% missing ethnic data. See Table 2 for descriptive data of the sample.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of participants according to military involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Military Involvement (N=44)</th>
<th>No Military Involvement (N=44)</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>45.09</td>
<td>41.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiethnic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Materials

Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)

The PAI is a self-report measure of personality that consists of 344 items with 22 nonoverlapping scales, including 4 validity scales, 11 clinical scales, and 5 treatment indicator scales. The validity scales assess for inaccurate reporting of symptoms due to Inconsistency, Infrequency, Negative Impression, and Positive Impression. The clinical scales assess the following domains: Somatic Complaints, Anxiety, Anxiety-Related Disorders, Depression, Mania, Paranoia, Schizophrenia, Borderline Features, Antisocial Features, Alcohol Problems,
and Drug Problems, while the treatment indicator scales assess Aggression, Suicidal Ideation, Stress, Nonsupport and Treatment Rejection.

The PAI was standardized on a sample of adults 18 years and older; it is written at a 4th grade reading level and takes around 50 minutes to complete. The PAI uses T-scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10; a T-score of 70 or higher indicates an area of clinical concern. The PAI demonstrated median internal consistency alphas of .81 and .86 across normative and clinical samples, respectively; median test-retest reliability was .83. The PAI has demonstrated utility with a forensic and correctional population in relation to violence and psychosis (Douglas et al., 2001), adjustment to prison (Walters, et al., 2003), utility as a measure of feigning or malingering (Rogers et al., 1998; Poythress et al., 2001; Edena et al., 2007), and correlations with other measures such as the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R: Hare, 1991) and Psychopathic Personality Inventory (PPI: Lilienfeld, 1990; Edens et al., 2001; Walters et al., 2003).

Anxiety (ANX; Morey, 1991). The Anxiety (ANX) scale provides information relevant to the assessment of degrees of tension and negative affect by looking at different ways in which anxiety is expressed.

Aggression (AGG; Morey, 1991). The Aggression (AGG) scale provides information relevant to the assessment of aggression, anger and hostility.

Antisocial personality (ANT; Morey, 1991). The Antisocial Scale (ANT) provides the evaluator with information regarding the subject’s level of antisocial thinking, attitudes and beliefs.

Stress (STR; Morey, 1991). The Stress Scale (STR) scale provides information relevant to the assessment of life stress.
Procedure

The agency has maintained records on their treatment and evaluation clients since 1982. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board a team of doctoral students including this author compiled the client files into a database. This extensive database included (a) factors related to psychosexual history obtained from a self-report questionnaire, (b) the offense committed, (c) information related to personality and psychopathology obtained by both subjective and objective measures, (d) risk assessment, and (e) clinical comments by clinical psychology doctoral students. All clients with both military involvement and a full PAI were included in this study. A matched sample of clients without military involvement and with a full PAI was also included. Data from the files was entered using SPSS for statistical analysis.
Results

A one way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the potential differences in personality characteristics of sex offenders between those with and without a military background. Retrospective data was utilized from a sample of sex offenders who had received a psychosexual evaluation, including assessment with the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI). This sample was split into two groups: offenders who endorsed prior military involvement and offenders who did not. To measure the effects of military involvement on personality, the following four scales of the PAI were examined: Anxiety, Antisocial, Aggression, and Stress. The independent variable was military endorsement (yes or no), and the four dependent variables were the scores on the chosen PAI scales. The mean scores and standard deviations for the PAI subscales are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Military Involvement Mean (n=44)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>No Military Involvement Mean (n=44)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>48.61</td>
<td>9.15</td>
<td>52.30</td>
<td>13.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial</td>
<td>50.98</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>53.86</td>
<td>9.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>45.68</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>47.23</td>
<td>12.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>59.14</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>58.43</td>
<td>11.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ages from the military group ranged from 18 to 83 ($M=45.09$, $SD=13.71$); ages from the non-military group ranged from 19 to 64 ($M=41.75$, $SD=10.99$). To evaluate whether military sexual offenders had significant age differences in age from non-military sexual offenders, an independent-sample $t$ test was conducted. The results indicated that the mean age, in years, for military sexual offenders was not significantly different from the mean age, in years, for non-
military sexual offenders $t(86) = 1.26, p = .21$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the age of military and non-military sexual offenders was -1.93 to 8.61.

Ages of the youngest victim from the military group ranged from 3 to 20 ($M = 9.62, SD = 4.71$); youngest victim ages from the non-military group ranged from 1 to 29 ($M = 9.71, SD = 5.43$). To evaluate whether military sexual offenders had significant differences in youngest victim age from non-military sexual offenders, an independent-sample $t$ test was conducted. The results indicated that the mean victim age, in years, for military sexual offenders was not significantly greater than the mean victim age, in years, for non-military sexual offenders, $t(81) = -.08, p = .94$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference between the age of military and non-military sexual offenders was -2.31 to 2.13.

There are no outliers in this sample as the maximum Mahalanobis Distance of 13.06 did not exceed the critical value of 18.47. Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrix was significant at a $p$ level of .025; therefore equality of variance is not concluded and I will interpret Pillai’s Trace. The MANOVA results indicate that military involvement (Pillai’s Trace = .059, $F(4,83) = 1.29, p = 0.28$) did not significantly effect the combined dependent variables of Anxiety, Antisocial, Aggression, and Stress. Univariate and Tukey post hoc tests were conducted as follow up tests. ANOVA results indicated that the PAI scale scores did not significantly differ as a function of past military involvement.
Discussion

Review of Findings

To date there has been no research that examines possible links between military involvement and later sexual offending. Given the high rates of sexual violence committed by military members and the link between military involvement and antisocial behavior, this seems an important area of research. Additionally, the concept of military masculinity has not previously been examined as a possible influence on sexual offenders. The current study is unique in that it was designed to investigate the influence of military background within a sample of sexual offenders. Differences in personality of sex offenders with and without a military background were examined as indicated by the Anxiety, Antisocial, Aggression, and Stress scales of the PAI.

Previous research suggests that military involvement might influence certain men to internalize the use of anger and aggression as a method of control and repress more passive emotions such as fear and sadness in favor of anger, leading to possible difficulties with emotional regulation. Additionally, a tentative link exists between military involvement and antisocial behavior, such as violence. In comparison to other offender groups, sex offenders typically demonstrate more psychopathology, such as anxiety and depressive symptoms, more passivity, and less antisocial attitudes. Therefore, it was hypothesized that the sex offender group endorsing a military background would report an increase in the personality domains of anxiety, antisociality, aggression, and stress in comparison to a sex offender group without this military influence.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in scores on PAI subscales among the sample of sexual offenders who endorsed military involvement and those who did not
report military involvement. The MANOVA showed a non-significant difference between the two sex offender groups based on the PAI scale scores. Therefore, this study did not suggest any evidence that sex offenders who endorsed military involvement were more anxious, antisocial, aggressive, or stressful than those who did not.

Implications

The findings of this study add to the literature on influences of military involvement with sexual offenders. Although my hypothesis was not supported, this study marks an important point in research in beginning to investigate the various ways in which a military background might influence sexual offenders.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, there was a noted lack of racial diversity among the sample, with the 77.3% being Caucasian, 9.1% African American, and 2.3% Latino. This might be indicative of the region where the data was collected and not accurately reflect the racial make-up of the United States as a whole. As such, the results of this study might not generalize to sex offenders in other regions. Second, study participants did not need to meet an *a priori* standard in order to be considered a sexual offender; participant referral to the treatment facility for evaluation varied from convicted of a sexual offense, to awaiting trial, to under investigation only with no substantiated claim. This might have caused certain participants to be included in the study as sex offenders who had not actually committed a sexual offense and so did not represent the target population. Additionally, the sample had a wide range of offenses including both contact (rape, child sexual abuse) and non-contact offenses (child pornography, exposure). Therefore the sample did not necessarily represent a homogenous group of convicted sexual offenders and differences between offender types might have confounded the results.
Also, the self-report method employed to determine military involvement and personality characteristics as measured by the PAI is subject to inaccurate reporting, which might lead to erroneous data. Finally, limited data was available on level of involvement with the military. Participants were able to endorse any prior military involvement, but did not describe the depth of assimilation into military culture, such as experience with and/or internalization of military masculinity or attitudes and awareness of military sexual assault. This information would have been useful in regards to describing the perceived impact of military culture on individual personality.

**Directions for Future Research**

The current study provided exploratory analysis regarding personality differences between sex offenders with a military background versus those without a military background. Further research should be done that addresses the limitations of this study, such as lack of a homogenous group of sexual offenders by offense type and conviction status and lack of ethnic diversity. In order to solidify a causal link between military influence and personality, future studies might also gather data on pre-military personality of the offenders to use as a comparison against personality factors post-military. This data could include levels of aggression and antisociality prior to military service, as well as endorsement of perceived assimilation into military culture. Other similarities and differences between these two offender groups need to be further assessed to help further our understanding of sexual offenses with and without a military background. Subsequent research will hopefully expand upon the comparison between these two groups of sexual offenders including psychosocial histories, personality traits, mental health concerns, and recidivism rates.
This study did not speak to reasons behind the high rate of sexual assault within military or possible explanations behind the link between military involvement and antisocial behavior. It would be useful to gather information on how military members perceive military sexual assault that was committed during their service and their feelings about sexual assault after leaving the service. An interesting domain might be attitudes towards victims who were assaulted while stationed overseas versus on homeland.
References


psychiatric unit and general population prison inmates: A comparison of the PAI, SIMS, and SIRS. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 88*(1), pp. 33-42.


