

# Double Veterans: An Analysis on Multiple Perpetrator Rape During the Vietnam War



## Content Warning:

This project deals with complex, sensitive, and graphic themes which may be triggering for readers. While many graphic details have been omitted out of respect for victims, there are still instances where details are presented, which might be difficult to emotionally navigate.



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*This project was created on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen, Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.*

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## 1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

Traditional historiographical understandings of the Vietnam War place an emphasis on the experience of American troops and while including violence, rarely touch on sexual violence during the war. Furthermore, when sexual violence is mentioned, it is deemed as confined to the **My Lai Massacre**, which narrows our understanding of the horrors of the war. This neglect is reflected in common understandings of wartime rape in history, as it is deemed to be collateral or purely individualistic (Lamb 2020, 3). Forms of wartime rape, such as Multiple Perpetrator Rape (MPR) were prominent throughout the Vietnam War and deserve further research; MPR is oftentimes more violent and possesses an inherent ability to produce bonds through ritualistic behaviour (Cohen 2016, 19). Additionally, especially in relation to the Vietnam War, MPR remains an understudied phenomenon (Wood 2013, 135).

## REFERENCES

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## 3. RESEARCH QUESTION

What role did MPR play in the Vietnam War and what does this mean for the historiography of the conflict and our conceptualizations of wartime rape?

## 4. METHODOLOGIES

**1: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA):** CDA is a qualitative methodology which aims to view how **discourse** underpins certain phenomenon (Dijk 1993, 448). Further, CDA analyzes the construction of power relations and the inequality that emerges from them (Dijk 1993, 448).

**2. Feminist Historiography:** A type of historiography that aims to challenge dominant male-centric narratives in history, by amplifying the **"taken-for-granted"** narratives and stories (Boncori and Williams 2023, 21). This method is especially useful when discussing the Vietnam War and the marginalized (and often forgotten) experiences of Vietnamese women.



## ADDITIONAL SOURCES

1. *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* **Nick Turse**
2. *Our Bodies Their Battlefield: What War Does to Women* **Christina Lamb**
3. *Facing My Lai: Moving Beyond the Massacre* **David Anderson**
4. *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* **Richard Stacewicz**
5. *Gender, War, & Conflict* **Laura Sjoberg**

**"EVERY UNIT OF BRIGADE SIZE HAS ITS MY LAI HIDDEN SOMEPLACE"**

(Berni 2019, 121)

## 5. KEY FINDINGS

- MPR *may* have been used for bonding and camaraderie among troops.
- During the Vietnam War, MPR was accompanied by large levels of mutilation and brutality.
- Acts seen during the My Lai Massacre were not isolated incidents and as displayed by discourse, were normalized and essentially indirect military policy.
- Yet, due to the lack of classification as a warcrime, high levels of victim mortality, and overall lack of documentation, MPR was not considered a serious issue during the war.

## 6. DISCUSSION

After conducting research and surveying the literature, it is evident that MPR played a pivotal role in Vietnam as an indirect strategic tool. Furthermore, its continual exclusion from the historiography of the war, other than the mention of the My Lai Massacre, ignores this factor. Conceptualizing MPR during the Vietnam War as strictly individualistic and for pure sexual gratification overlooks its significance as a systemic issue (Vickers 1993, 21). Additionally, considering MPR during Vietnam a byproduct of human nature still fails to address serious implications pertaining to the brutality of the acts which occurred. MPR, while an understudied field, is a prominent threat in conflict and it is vital to understand its impacts on women.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Therefore, utilizing my research I argue that MPR did play a pivotal role during the Vietnam War as an indirect strategic tool for bonding and camaraderie among American troops. The brutality, publicity, and frequency of these acts are vital to the construction of bonding rituals within the military. Furthermore, MPR during the Vietnam War asserted dominance and was used as a vessel to express masculine values into the realm of conflict. Finally, MPR and other forms of sexual violence were not only isolated incidents that occurred during the My Lai Massacre and were rather **everyday occurrences** during the war.