

Analysis & Reflection Paper

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Question 1

This was an intense movie with a very strong story line. For me, one of the things that consistently went through my mind was the thought, “How can these people be so cold and heartless.” From the men who had raped Sarah to the medical examiner, police, the prosecutor, her friend, her boyfriend, and the bystanders. Everyone seemed to lack all form of empathy when interacting with Sarah and that made me extremely irritated. It would seem to be common sense for people to treat those who had gone through such a terrible experience with warmth and kindness, not doubt, indifference, or annoyance.

Something else that I felt was interesting and also caused a visceral reaction, was the depiction of the judicial process. Even though this was an oversimplification of how the judicial process goes, it is still baffling that someone can get away with rape since it would be easier to prosecute them with another charge. I felt that Sarah’s reaction to the updated charge of rape to reckless endangerment was quite justified. Even though they were all sentenced for the same amount of time a rape sentence would be, they avoid having “rape” on their record and had a much higher chance of getting out of prison earlier.

Question 2

I think one of the main impacts that movies such as this portray to the viewer is that evil always prevails and that there is no hope. Most people view the judicial system as a way to make sure that law and order prevail and that the good in our world is protected. However, as can be seen in the movie and as I mentioned on the previous section, it is much easier to pursue another conviction other than rape. So, the very system put in place to help bring justice to Sarah, was the same system that treated her experience and her story as falsifiable. Overall, these movies do not leave the viewer with much to hope in good prevailing against evil.

On the other hand, a different reaction is also possible. Rather than seeing the lack of hope and justice in these movies, they can also insight people to advocate for change. *The Accused* helps to highlight areas in our society that need to change to better help protect and bring people to justice. So, instead of losing all hope, these movies also have a potential to inspire radical change in our communities and the way we address different problems.

Question 3:

In my opinion, there is a pretty clear connection between pornography and violence against women. There have been several studies conducted that show the correlation to the depiction of violent sexual acts committed against women in pornography and the connection to an increase in violence against women (Bridges, et. al., 2010; Focus For Health, 2019; Shor, et. al., 2018). For example, “almost 90% of scenes contained physical aggression, while nearly 50% contained verbal aggression, primarily in the form of name-calling” (Bridges, et. al., 2010; Focus For Health, 2019). These are only a few articles and research studies that I was able to find on the subject but considering that the data is present and is not a new phenomenon, it shows how dangerous pornography is against women.

Question 4

For both drugs and alcohol, neither should be considered as mitigating circumstances, especially for cases of rape or murder. In comparison to other offences that can be committed under the influence of alcohol or drugs such as being intoxicated in public, or consuming alcohol in public, rape and murder are much more violent and destructive. And due to this nature, it should be treated much more severely as live(s) are put in danger by this kind of behavior. If both of these substances can be used as mitigating circumstances, it disregards the harm that was caused and leaves the victims without justice.

Question 5:

A person's dress or provocative behavior should not be treated as extenuating circumstances in a rape case. As every person is an autonomous being, their right to dress and act as they want does not warrant unwanted sexual advances, especially that of rape. Since rape is, in and of itself, a violent action that ignores the consent of the survivor, and is instigated by the attacker, it is not the responsibility survivor to change their actions to prevent a rape. The responsibility lies with the attacker since they are the one who start the action. By focusing on the dress and actions of the survivor, you discredit the actual rape itself since all the focus is removed from the incident and placed on the person who was violated.

Question 6:

There were several things that the police and the hospital could have done differently to have made Sarah's experience be more compassionate and respectful. The first thing that I think could have been handled differently was the interrogating process while she was at the hospital. The questions that she was asked were irrelevant such as when the last time she had sex, or if she had had sex with multiple men in the past. All of these questions were degrading and offensive. The doctor was also very cold and seemed to want to be somewhere else rather than attending to the patient. However, not only was the doctor cold, so was the lady from the rape center. She seemed to want to keep her distance, did not seem very knowledgeable about the effects of rape and even casually asked Sarah, "How are you doing" during her examination for rape. Both reactions left a bad taste in my mouth and I cannot even imagine how humiliating and embarrassing it must have been for Sarah.

For the police, something that was baffling to me was how they actively re-traumatized Sarah by taking her back to the place she was raped only hours before. They also dismissed her

fears and concerns about going back there saying things like, “We’ll be right there with you,” or “You have nothing to be afraid of.” She had just experienced an extremely violent, traumatizing event, and was forced to go back and face her rapists. The police were also very cold and uncaring in the situation and seemed to not believe that she was actually raped.

Overall, some of the key things that both the hospital and police could have done differently would have been to embed more empathy throughout the whole process. In the hospital, the doctor and representative from the rape center could have been kinder and more compassionate and look at Sarah as a human being rather than another case to deal with. The questions asked should have been changed to be more appropriate and relevant to the situation she had experienced. The person from the rape center should have been able to help connect with her to provide outside resources that Sarah could have utilized such as individual or group therapy. For the police, they should not have taken her back to *The Mill* and have brought in a photo lineup where she would not have had to go back to the location of her rape and could also avoid seeing her rapists in person. They could have also treated her with respect and dignity no matter her prior offenses or her personal background.

Question 7

If I were assigned to work on Sarah’s case, one of the first things that I would work on to help build upon with her would be her strong will and perseverance. Throughout the whole movie, you could see how Sarah’s will and determination were some of the key elements that helped to propel her forward in addressing her situation. Being able to help Sarah to tap into that personal strength of hers could help her even more. Something else that I would work to help build with Sarah would be her social support network. Her relationship with her mother was

strained, so being able to help rebuild that connection could help Sarah be able to cope with her situation.

While it did not seem that Sarah had many protective factors to handle her situation, there were some subtle clues throughout the story. One protective factor that she had was her dog, Sadie. This was a companion that she was able to go to for comfort and a sense of normalcy. Sarah also had several coping skills that helped her throughout her experience. She utilized music to help her feel calm when she was anxious or nervous. For example, when her friend Sally was meeting with the prosecutor, you could see that Sarah was nervous and to help herself, she started listening to music to calm down.

Question 8

One of the key conformity studies that helps to explain the behavior of the bystanders in *The Mill* would be that of Solomon Asch. In his experiments in the 1950s, Asch had a mix of actors and participants and would have the actors behave in specific ways to see if the participants would follow the same behavior (Cherry, 2020b). Essentially, the results of the study showed that if enough people in the group behaved in a specific way, others would conform to that same behavior. For example, even though Kurt did not seem to want to participate in the rape, the crowd that had gathered and were goading on the rape convinced him to join in even if he knew it was wrong.

Another social psychology concept that could be applied to this situation is the bystander effect. This concept explores how when there are more people involved in a situation, the less likely they are to help a person in distress (Cherry, 2020a). So, even though Sarah was in clear distress, since there were a good number of people present, the diffusion of responsibility was

higher. This can be seen when Ken Joyce witnessed Sarah's rape and only acted after the third man had been raping her.

Question 9

In the NASW Code of Ethics, one of the core responsibilities that we have for our clients is to be culturally aware and sensitive. However, social workers are also called to help reduce the risk of harm for our clients and people in general. This is one of the reasons that there are limitations to confidentiality especially when abuse of a vulnerable population is disclosed. So, while some cultures have practices that are harmful or degrading, these actions should not be respected as they breach a high standard of care that social workers are to provide.

Question 10

By the end of the movie, I had a much clearer understanding for how we can help a client who is going through a crisis. One of the main elements that I took away from the movie was the importance of being genuine and empathetic. There were several situations in which Sarah was completely ignored or treated as if she did not matter. This caused her to become defensive and lose trust in those who were supposed to help her. For example, when Kathryn Murphy chose to make a deal with the defense team for a conviction of reckless endangerment instead of rape, this was a betrayal to Sarah. She was not even allowed to testify for her own rape case since Ms. Murphy did not feel that Sarah was a strong enough witness due to Sarah's history. This is all to say that our role is to not make assumptions about what our clients want and to actually listen to them and respond with empathy.

References

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