A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE MODUS OPERANDI OF
SERIAL RAPISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT
This article reflects research of which the aim is to increase our collective knowledge of the modus operandi of serial rapists in South Africa in an attempt to contribute to the prevention and prosecution of perpetrators. The sample consists of 22 convicted cases of serial rapists and reflects 204 victims. The authors note that a mere understanding of the modus operandi of serial rapists is not sufficient to fully understand the behaviour of these perpetrators. However, they draw attention to the argument that understanding the perpetrator's modus operandi has been recognised by both criminal investigators and academics as making a valuable contribution to understanding crimes, including that of serial rapists. A behavioural checklist was developed to provide assistance with accounting for the chronological pattern of the crime from the time of victim acquisition to the actual attack. The rational choice perspective and routine activity theory were then used as an organising framework within which to analyse the strategies of the perpetrator. The results indicated that the modus operandi exhibited by a group of serial rapists in South Africa differs from offenders in other countries. Aspects of the routine activity theory is contextualised and utilised to interpret the current findings. The authors highlight shortcomings of the current research and suggest how the current findings should form the basis of further research.

INTRODUCTION

Schreiner (2004) conceptualises rape within the South African society as a threat to human security. The fact that 27,750 incidents of rape were reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS) from the 1st of October 2008 to the 31st of March 2009, (Annual Report, South African Police Service, 2009) is confirmation that Schreiner is correct in her interpretation of the situation. She points out that many of these incidents may be committed by a serial rapist, but since South African law does not differentiate between serial rape and single-victim rape, the case files will only have the classification of "rape".

In keeping with international trends, De Wet (2008), De Wet, Labuschagne and Chiroro (2009), and De Wet, Potgieter and Labuschagne (2010) have defined a serial rapist as "... a person who engaged in a non-consensual sexual act with two or more victims during separate incidents over an extended period of time". The latter authors also conducted initial research on serial rape, and contributed very important baseline data and understanding to the South African phenomena of serial rape. The research indicated that serial rapists in South Africa differ in a number of ways from serial rapists in other countries. An alarming statistic that indicates one of the differences is

that many of the victims of serial rape in South Africa are girls (De Wet, Potgieter & Labuschagne, 2010).

The primary aim of this article is to increase the collective knowledge of the South African serial rapist by examining the modus operandi. This knowledge will contribute to crime prevention strategies and will aid investigators and prosecutors in their work. The researchers understand modus operandi to be a means of operating, which refers to the manner in which the crime was committed (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess & Ressler, 1992; Turvey, 2008). It also encapsulates all the behaviours required by a perpetrator to successfully commit a specific crime (Bartol & Bartol, 2005; Hazelwood & Warren, 2004). In addition, the way the crime was committed (modus operandi) also functions to protect the identity of the perpetrator and to ensure success and facilitate an escape (Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001).

The authors recognise that understanding the modus operandi is not sufficient for fully understanding the behaviour of the serial rapist. However, the value and importance of understanding the modus operandi in the identification and investigation of "sexual crimes" has been recognised by both investigators and academics (Ewart, Oatley & Burn, 2005). As with regard to serial rapists, an understanding of the modus operandi can contribute to identifying a cluster of unique behavioural characteristics, which could then be linked to a specific perpetrator (Hazelwood & Warren, 2004; Labuschagne, 2006). The study is descriptive but as Pollaschek, Hudson, Ward and Siegert (2001) emphasise, descriptive studies in relation to criminal acts are valuable if they capture and contribute to an understanding of how offenders go about committing the crime. In addition, law enforcement has long held the belief that the best way to investigate, identify, and ultimately apprehend perpetrators is by understanding the methods and techniques that criminals utilise during the commission of their crimes (Turvey, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

The cases selected for this study consisted of perpetrators who were convicted of multiple sexual offences and who were classified as "serial rapists" at the time of sentencing. The research data was obtained from primary documentation consisting of official police dockets, court reports, and additional relevant information such as medical examiner's reports, investigating officers' reports, or forensic reports, regarding each individual case of serial rape. A document case study methodology was deemed the most appropriate method to gather and analyse the data required for the study. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005), a document study involves an analysis of any written material that contains information on the phenomenon being studied. Formal permission was obtained from the SAPS as well as from the head of the Investigative Psychology Unit (IPU) in 2004 to gain access to the relevant documentation. The documentation was screened by the IPU to ensure that any identifying information had been removed to guarantee the anonymity of the participants.

Twenty-two cases of serial rape, consisting of 204 individual female victims, were selected for data analysis. The data set consisted of 23 perpetrators. Two of the perpetrators worked as a team. The oldest perpetrator in the data set was 45 years of age, and the youngest was 20 years of age at the time of the first incident. The mean

age of the perpetrators in the data set was 31.3 years. The majority of the offenders (74%) were black-African - the authors recognise that these are political constructs and not absolute biological categories - and were on average 33.5 years old at the start of their series of crime. Four of the perpetrators did not have a criminal record prior to the incidents. The 19 perpetrators who did have criminal records had multiple convictions ranging from burglary to rape. The majority of the offenders were employed as labourers (44%) or were unemployed (43%) at the time of the first incident, and 39% of the total number of offenders had medium (Grade 7 - Grade 12) education levels. Table 1 represent the characteristics of the entire data set.

Table 1
Data set characteristics (n=22)

		Data set	**Percentage**
Number of cases		22	
Number of perpetrators		23*	
Population distribution			
	Black	17	74%
	Coloured	4	17%
	White	2	9%
Age distribution			
	Oldest	45	
	Youngest	20	
	Mean	31.3 years	
Occupational distribution			
	Professional	3	13%
	Labourer	10	43%
	Unemployed	10	44%
Education level			
	Higher education	2	9%
	Medium (Gr 7 – Gr 12)	9	39%
	Lower (Gr 1 – Gr 6)	8	35%
	None/Unknown	4	17%
Previous criminal convictions			
	Attempted murder	1	
	Rape	8	
	Robbery	10	
	Assault	5	
	Burglary	7	
	Other	6	
	None**	4	

*Two of the perpetrators operated as a team
** Four of the 23 perpetrators had no previous criminal convictions

Data analysis
A behavioural checklist was developed as a measuring framework to collect the information from the police case files in order to ensure that all the relevant information would be collected. The framework, which consisted of behavioural variables and categories relating to the modus operandi, was constructed in order to examine the criminal behaviour of the South African serial rapist. The behavioural variables and categories utilised in the measuring framework were derived from the data itself by conducting a content analysis. Content analysis is defined as "...a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of verbal data" (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004). Content analysis was utilised in identifying variables reflecting general categories of behaviour in other similar types of research, for example Santtila et al. (2005), and Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto and Davis (2008). Existing categorical and behavioural models regarding the modus operandi of sexual offenders, such as the behavioural-orientated interview constructed by Hazelwood and Burgess (2001), were also examined. This ensured that the measuring framework incorporated and encompassed the full range of behavioural variables associated with the modus operandi.

The behavioural checklist was used to examine and describe the behaviour and the modus operandi of the perpetrator, along a continuum beginning with how the offender acquires the intended victims, to the actual attack. Figure 1 is a schematic representation of the measuring framework utilised during the research. All of the variables were treated as dichotomous; either present or absent. Research has shown that utilising such dichotomies as present or absent produce the most reliable content variables (Canter & Heritage, 1990; Bateman & Salfati, 2007). The instrument allowed frequency values to be obtained, which indicated how frequently the behaviours in question were performed across the data set. The reliability of the measuring instrument was assessed by conducting the test-retest method (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004). The test-retest method is derived directly from the conceptual definition of reliability. The method stipulates that the researcher administer the measuring instrument on the same group, respondent, or dataset, at different intervals, to determine whether the measuring instrument provides similar results. An independent criminologist and one of the members of the IPU of the SAPS were approached to test the reliability of the measuring instrument. They were asked to analyse four cases by applying the behavioural checklist to each case. The results of their analysis of the selected cases were compared to the authors' original analysis of the same four individual cases, and the results were almost identical.

The behavioural checklist also allowed the authors to examine the perpetrators' levels of criminal sophistication, specifically what, if any, forensic precautions the perpetrators took to hide their identities. Criminal sophistication correlates to aspects such as the perpetrator's adeptness at evading detection and apprehension, the skill levels illustrated by the offender in terms of the amount of planning observed on the part of the offender, as well as any precautionary measures taken by the offender to evade detection (Kocsis, Cooksey & Irwin, 2002; Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001).

Rational choice perspective and routine activity theory
The rational choice and routine activity theory provided an organising framework within which to analyse the strategies exhibited by the perpetrators during the crime commission. The rational choice perspective examines the decisions made by the

individual, while the routine activity theory deals with the situational context within which the individual has to make the decisions (Beauregard, Proulx & Rossmo, 2005; Clarke & Ferlson, 1993).

The routine activity theory contends that there are three areas of focus for a predatory criminal event to occur: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and absence of a capable guardian (Clarke & Felson, 1993). A suitable target can be a person, a place or an object. The motivated offender refers to an individual who possess the willingness to commit the predatory crime. Once a motivated offender identifies a suitable target, the presence or absence of a capable guardian becomes a determining factor in the deterrence or commission of a criminal event (Clarke & Felson, 1993; Boetig, 2006). A capable guardian in most instances has a "human element"; i.e. a person whose mere presence would deter potential perpetrators from committing a criminal act (Clarke & Felson, 1993; Williams & McShane, 1999).

In terms of criminal behaviour, the rational choice perspective contends that criminals offend because the offence affords the most effective means to achieve desired needs and serves a specific purpose for the perpetrator (Beauregard et al., 2007; Cornish & Clark, 2002). This perspective adopts the belief that an offender is a reasoning "actor" who weighs means and ends, calculates the probability of success, and then makes a choice (Dugan, Lafree, & Piquero, 2005). As such, the choice of specific methods for carrying out the crimes can be viewed as instrumental behaviours aimed at achieving specific goals (Clarke & Felson, 1993).

The behavioural elements observed within the modus operandi will be analysed by drawing on the rational choice perspective and routine activity theory to gain a better understanding of the perpetrator's modus operandi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following section the victim acquisition phase is presented together with an analysis of the attack phase.

VICTIM ACQUISITION PHASE

The methods utilised by the perpetrator to acquire his victims, as well as the locations where the perpetrators approached the victims, will be now examined.

Methods of approach
From the data analysis, four categories of "acquiring" a potential victim emerged. The first three categories, labelled as the con, surprise, and blitz methods of approach, were similar to methods identified by Hazelwood and Warren (1987; 1989a), and Savino and Turvey (2005). The categories were labelled in keeping with categories identified by previous researchers. However, the sample of South African rapists also used a method of approach that has not been utilised by perpetrators in other environments. This new approach was labelled the "delayed con" approach (De Wet, 2008). Table 2 provides a description of each of the categories that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 2
Methods of approach identified within the data set

Methods of Approach	Description
Con approach	Involves deception and is dependent on the perpetrator's ability to interact successfully with the intended victim. The perpetrator will openly approach the victim and, while maintaining constant contact, employ some form of subterfuge, for example, posing as a police officer or offering the victim employment.
Blitz approach	Direct physical force is employed in the form of assault, which subdues and can physically injure the victim. The perpetrator relies on his ability to physically overpower the victim.
Surprise approach	This approach involves the perpetrator "waiting" for the victim, for example in her home, or in a parking garage. It could also involve the perpetrator surprising the victim while she is sleeping. The approach presupposes that the perpetrator targeted the specific victim or the specific location where he knew the victim would be alone.
Delayed-con approach	Similar to the con approach, the perpetrator also employs some form of subterfuge to acquire his victim. Unlike the con approach, the perpetrator does not maintain constant contact with the victim. There is a delay of between one to five days between the initial contact and the second contact, which leads to the attack. In some instances, the perpetrator can have intermittent contact with the victim, for example calling her to remind her of their appointment. An offender would, for instance, approach a victim and offer her employment. She is unable to accompany him at that specific time and he arranges to meet her again two days later. During the second pre-arranged contact, he lures her away and attacks her.

The results indicate that the blitz (43%; n=88) and con (37%; n=75) methods of approach were utilised most frequently by the perpetrators. The surprise (16%; n=33) and delayed-con (4%; n=8) approaches were also employed by the perpetrators, but not as frequently.

In the incidents where the con and the delayed-con methods (n=83) were employed, the majority of incidents (66%) involved subterfuge, where the perpetrator offered the victims employment. In 34% of the incidents, the perpetrators approached the victims and engaged them by asking for directions, offering the victim food, or asking to use the victim's bathroom.

The findings suggest that when investigators screen cases to determine whether or not they form part of a series, incidents where the victims were blitzed or deceived by the promise of employment could be strong indicators that the case could form part of a series. According to the research conducted by Hazelwood and Burgess (2001), Hazelwood and Warren (1989b), and Park et al. (2008) in the United States, the surprise method of approach was the most frequently utilised method of approaching

the victims. This trend, however, differs from significantly from the findings of this study.

Approach location
Table 3 shows that the perpetrators approached their victims at various locations. The majority of the victims (34%; n=69) in this study were approached by the perpetrators while walking alone in isolated locations, while 22% (n=45) of the victims were walking with friends in isolated locations such as open fields or pedestrian bridges. Hence, 56% of the victims were approached at a location that the perpetrator deemed "fertile" to acquiring a victim. The findings suggest that perpetrators in South Africa have specific areas where they actively search for potential victims, and that the perpetrators selected areas where they were assured of finding a high number of suitable victims, who lacked guardians that could deter the perpetrator in committing the act. It should be noted that "lack of guardian" does not only mean the absence of another person. Many of the women were in fact walking with friends. Absence of a guardian should be interpreted as the absence of not having the information to be able to "make the cognitive decision" that a dangerous and in fact life threatening situation could be presenting itself. (The authors engaged with the latter under the conclusion, as the decision to "trust" the perpetrator should not be interpreted as prevention interventions within a "blaming the victim" discourse).

Table 3
Approach location (n=204)

Approach location	Total	Percentage
Taxi ranks	7	3%
Bus stops	2	1%
Walking alone in isolated locations[1]	69	34%
Home	46	23%
Shops	3	1%
Populated areas	13	6%
Workplace	5	3%
Other	14	7%
Walking with friends (outside isolated areas)	45	22%
Total	**204**	**100%**

The information in Table 3 could be utilised in crime prevention and in pro-active policing strategies. By identifying locations where potential victims, for example children, are at risk of being targeted by serial rapists, law enforcement agencies can increase their presence and visibility in those areas. It will also assist in creating a greater public awareness of the potential hazards facing individuals in a specific area.

The data illustrated that during the **victim acquisition phase,** the perpetrators had specific areas where they searched for victims. The areas afforded the perpetrators the best chance to find suitable victims, while also presenting them with the best opportunity to commit their crimes successfully. The methods utilised by the perpetrators to approach the victims were specifically chosen as they provided the

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[1] Isolated locations are defined as areas such as sugarcane fields and open areas or fields away from populated locations such as taxi ranks, bus stops and shopping centres.

best opportunity, within a specific situational setting, for the perpetrator to acquire his intended victim. For example, the perpetrators employed con and delayed-con methods when they approached their intended victims in populated areas such as taxi ranks or at the victim's home. A well-planned "story" would allow the perpetrator to lure the victim away from the location without arousing any suspicion.

ATTACK PHASE

Attack location
In the current study, the location where the perpetrator approached the intended victim and the location where the attack occurred differed in 78% (n=159) of the incidents. In 22% (n=46) of the incidents, the approach and attack locations were the same place, for example, in the victim's home. In 77% (n=157) of the incidents, the attack occurred outside in isolated locations such as open fields, next to freeways, or in sugarcane fields, where the perpetrator knew he would be alone with the victim for extended periods of time. Research conducted by Hazelwood and Warren (1998b), and by Hazelwood and Burgess (2001) in the United States, found that the majority of the attacks occurred inside the victim's residence. In comparison, during this research, the attacks occurred inside only during 19% (n=39) of the incidents. Table 4 shows the locations where the incidents of each perpetrator utilised in the data set occurred. The table shows that the majority of the perpetrators used the same location repeatedly to attack their intended victims.

Table 4
Incident location of the entire offender data set (n=23)

Perpetrator	Number of victims	Inside	Outside	Car
1	4	50%	-	50%
2	8	75%	25%	-
3	16	-	100%	-
4	17	-	100%	-
5	6	-	100%	-
6	6	-	100%	-
7	3	-	100%	-
8	8	87%	13%	-
9	7	-	14%	86%
10	7	-	100%	-
11	15	100%	-	-
12	8	25%	75%	-
13	10	-	100%	-
14	4	100%	-	-
15	18	-	100%	-
16	8	-	100%	-
17	7	43%	57%	-
18	4	-	100%	-
19/20 (team)	3	-	100%	-
21	6	-	100%	-
22	5	-	100%	-
23	34	-	100%	-
	204	39	157	8

The findings correspond with the research findings of LeBeau (1993), who indicated that rapists would repeatedly use the same geographical and ecological space when committing their crimes. The choice of specific location evolved out of four factors: spatial knowledge, time, distance, and the type of area. Canter and Larkin (1993) state that the security offered by a location with which the perpetrator is familiar, will influence his decision-making process in terms of where to commit the crime. This consistency of attack location can be used in linking cases within a specific series, and is useful in pro-active policing actions such as surveillance, and as preliminary screening criteria for identifying serial rape cases.

Methods of transportation utilised to get to the attack location
In 66% (n=134) of the incidents, the perpetrators and the victims walked to the rape location. In 25% of the incidents (n=51), the perpetrator and the victim utilised public transportation (e.g. taxi's, trains and busses) to get to a specific location, and then walked the rest of the way to the rape location. In 9% (n=19) of the incidents, the perpetrator used a vehicle to get to the actual rape location. In the incidents where a vehicle was utilised to get from the approach location to the actual rape location, the perpetrators used their own vehicles 11 times and the victims' vehicles five times. During the incidents where perpetrators utilised their own vehicles, these vehicles were constantly used and therefore this is an important indicator for investigators when comparing cases. Hazelwood and Warren (1989b) found that 62% of their respondents used their own vehicles during the incidents. This differs significantly with the findings in this study, where the perpetrators used their own vehicles in only 5% of the incidents. The obvious reason for not using own vehicles is that perpetrators did not have their own vehicles, and choice of transportation is context specific.

Methods of control during the attack
Various methods of control were utilised by the perpetrators in the data set during the commission of their crimes. The results in Table 5 illustrate that verbal threats (31%; n=63) and the mere presence of a weapon (32%; n=66), usually a knife or a firearm, was utilised in the majority of the incidents to ensure victim compliance. During 11% (n=22) of the incidents, the perpetrators accentuated their threats of physically harming the victim by showing the victims the weapon they would use to injure the victims if they did not comply. The perpetrators resorted to physical violence during 21% (n=42) of the incidents.

Table 5
Method of controlling the victims during the attack phase (n=204)

Method of controlling the victims	Frequency	Percent
Verbal threats	63	31%
Presence of weapon	66	32%
Verbal threats + presence of weapon	22	11%
*Physical violence	42	21%
N/A	11	5%
Total	**204**	**100%**

*Includes 2 murder victims

During the instances where physical violence was employed as the primary method of controlling the victim (n=42), the majority (76%; n=32) of the violence could be

described as what Fromm (1973), and Salfati and Bateman (2005) labelled "instrumental aggression". Instrumental aggression and behaviours relate directly to the offender attempting to gain or obtain what he set out to achieve with the crime. The victim is merely a "vehicle" through which he can gratify some need. For example, one offender in the current data set assaulted the majority of his victims with a pickaxe handle or a police baton. He would then drag them into some nearby bushes and proceed to rape them. There were ten instances where the physical violence was more expressive and excessive. According to Salfati and Bateman (2005), expressive aggression is aimed at harming the victim. The violence and aggression goes beyond what is needed to ensure victim compliance. For example, one offender kicked one of his victims in the chest, hit her with his fists, and then raped her. Afterwards he repeatedly hit her in the face with a rock.

The data set also included two victims who died as a result of the actions of the perpetrators during the commission of the rape. One victim suffocated when the perpetrator stuffed balls of cotton laced with chemicals into her mouth and down her throat. The other victim died in hospital from multiple stab wounds inflicted by the perpetrator when she attempted to resist him. Identifying the types and levels of violence employed by a perpetrator during the rape series can be a valuable investigative link and behavioural indicator. Consistencies that occur throughout a perpetrator's rape series in terms of violence and the methods utilised to control the victims can be utilised in determining common behavioural links in similar cases.

Research conducted by Beauregard, et al. (2007) found that the use of threats (verbal or implied threat with presence of weapon) serves to scare, intimidate, and control the victim. Physical violence was used mainly to prevent the victims from resisting and to control them during the assault. Stevens (2000) found that only a small percentage of perpetrators exhibited excessive use of force during the commission of an attack, and the perpetrators often lacked control of the victims. As can be observed, the results in this study are similar to the findings of Beauregard, et al. (2007), and Stevens (2000) in terms of the levels of violence and preferred methods of control used by the perpetrators.

Time of day and forensic precautions
The results of the research showed that the attacks occurred both during the day (n=100) and night (n=104). The results also indicate that during the majority of the incidents, the perpetrators were consistent in terms of the time of day they preferred to commit their attacks. Hazelwood and Warren (2004) state that features of the modus operandi will remain consistent if the behaviour has "worked" for the perpetrators and did not result in any unwanted or adverse outcomes. In this research, 11 of the 22/23 perpetrators consistently committed all their attacks at the same time of day, which supports the findings of Hazelwood and Warren (2004).

Only one of the 22/23 perpetrators in the data set exhibited any **precautionary behaviour** during the commission of his crimes. The perpetrator covered his face with a balaclava, which was aimed at hiding his identity from the victims. None of the other perpetrators took any precautionary measures in an attempt to remove or destroy any biological evidence that could lead to their identification and eventual arrest. The majority of the perpetrators also did not attempt to hide their identity from their victims, and the majority of the offenders returned to the same location to commit

other rapes. This could indicate a lack of concern regarding detection by the authorities because of arrogance, or the offender simply did not have faith in the abilities of the police. It could also indicate a lack of forensic and investigative knowledge. One of the perpetrators in the study told one of his victims that he was protected from the police by strong "magic" known as *muti*. Research on serial murders conducted by Labuschagne (2004) found that *muti* is often used by criminals in the belief that it would aid them in the commission of crimes and would deter detection. Davies, Wittebrood, and Jackson (1989) indicated that offenders in the United States with previous criminal convictions are more likely to attempt to conceal their identity, for example, through semen destruction and fingerprint precautions, in an attempt to evade detection. Yet, the same was not true in this study. Eight perpetrators were known to have had criminal records prior to the start of the series; yet, they took no forensic precautions to conceal their identities. In terms of future investigations and possible linkage analysis, this lack of any forensic precautions is significant, because the victim can give a detailed description of the attacker. There could also be an abundance of forensic evidence, which could be used to link the perpetrator to the crimes and to link the crimes together.

Sexual behaviour
One hundred and seventy victims were forced to engage in some form of sexual behaviour during the attack. The sexual behaviours (sexual assault, vaginal digit insertion, oral sex, anal penetration, and vaginal penetration) in which the victims were forced to engage during the incidents remained relatively consistent across all of the rapes. The most prevalent sexual behaviour during the incidents was vaginal penile penetration, which occurred 195 times. Forced oral sex (victim on perpetrator) and anal penetration also occurred, but was not as prevalent. Eleven of the 23 perpetrators forced the victims to engage in multiple sexual acts such as vaginal digit insertion, forced oral sex, anal penetration, and vaginal penetration during single incidents. Thirteen of the perpetrators engaged in multiple sexual behaviours with one or more of the victims multiple times during the same incident.

The types and frequency of the sexual behaviours of the perpetrators present a very valuable predictive behavioural indicator. The nature of the sexual interaction and the manner of engaging in the actual rape, for example, if the perpetrator gets sexually aroused by inflicting pain on the victims, can provide insight into the basic underlying motivation for the assault, and can provide invaluable behavioural information that can be used in linkage analysis as well as in classifying the criminal behaviour (Groth, Burgess & Holstrom, 1977; Turvey, 2008).

An examination of the criminal behaviour exhibited during the **attack phase** illustrated that the majority of incidents occurred in isolated locations chosen specifically due to the lack of guardianship and the knowledge that the specific locations would allow the perpetrator to be alone with the victim. The methods of control and levels of violence employed by the perpetrators were also aimed specifically at ensuring victim compliance during the rape. The perpetrators were willing to engage in a range of behaviours ranging from simple verbal threats to excessive levels of physical violence aimed specifically at achieving the desired goals. The lack of precautionary measures taken by the perpetrators would indicate a complete lack of respect for the police and an absence of concern on the part of the perpetrators that they would be apprehended.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings indicate that the modus operandi of the serial rapist is aided by what the routine activity theory would classify as the three factors conducive to the success of an offence. The first factor is that *a suitable target is easy to access* in the South African context, given that many women are in a physical space where the serial rapist has access to them, and secondly, they occupy a psychological space in the sense that they are desperate for a job or whatever else is promised by the attacker. Another factor that the routine activity theory argues aids in a crime is the *absence of a capable guardian*. For this article, the authors interpret a suitable guardian as being an environment that aids in the success of a crime. The environment could be the absence of a person or persons to protect the individual, or even a criminal justice system that the perpetrator knows will work against him and in the victim's favour. The results indicate that a large number of victims were young girls. The authors argue that, in the South African context, it is a fact that many children are often on their own. Equally important to note is that girls and women grow up in an environment where they are taught to respect and trust adult men. In this argument, the trust and respect for adult men means that there is "an absence of a capable guardian" and the perpetrator preys on this vulnerability.

The dynamics of Table 2 are important in terms of advocacy and thus raising awareness for the need of intervention and prevention measures. Women should be alerted to the fact that serial rapists approach victims in crowds, such as at bus stops. In addition, when approached in isolated sites such as rural farming areas, they may be approached when alone or with a companion. The interventions that government and other organisations implement should be engaged in from a paradigm of empowering the potential victim and not "victimising the victim or survivor". One is aware that the ultimate aim is to reduce the number of perpetrators as well as to have a more effective and efficient criminal justice system.

An examination of the modus operandi also showed that the group of perpetrators in South Africa differ in many respects from rapists in the United States. For example, it is believed that the modus operandi would protect or hide the perpetrators' identity, facilitate escape, and ensure a successful outcome. In this study, the perpetrators never took any forensic precautions, and the behaviour was aimed solely at ensuring a successful outcome.

In terms of the latter, the authors extend the routine activity theory's argument of the absence of a capable guardian and argue that the lack of forensic precautions illustrate that the perpetrators are aware that the criminal justice system in South Africa has had very low success in catching and convicting criminals, particularly rapists. This lack of "social guardianship" was also highlighted in the research by the fact that the perpetrators approached many of their intended victims in crowded locations such as taxi ranks and bus stops. Essentially, if South Africa had a system of which the perpetrators were "cautious", they would possibly operate in a less "careless" way and would take adequate forensic precautions. The routine activity theory also argues for the presence of a motivated offender. Given the high levels of violence against women in South Africa, which is supported by the current data set, and the manner in which the perpetrators go about accessing the victims (for example the elaborate delayed con method) it is clear that we have a cohort of motivated offenders.

At this point, a cautionary note in interpreting and generalising the results of this study: the data was obtained from official police files, and there are inherent problems when using data obtained from official police files. The main concern is that the information is often incomplete, and the relevant information is not recorded for research purposes. There are also possible distortions in how the information is summarised by the investigator, as well as misinterpretation of the information, or only recording what the investigator believes is important (Ainsworth, 2005; Alison, Snook, & Stein, 2001; Canter, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the article examined the modus operandi of the perpetrators from a pure behavioural point of view, and did not attempt to speculate about the perpetrators' underlying motivation (Godwin, 2002). To fully understand the criminal behaviour of the perpetrator, it is also important to go beyond the observable, to attempt to understand and examine both the modus operandi and the underlying motivations. For example, one could argue that the violence that was perpetrated by some of the perpetrators went "beyond" whatever was necessary to secure a "successful attack". Further research that engages the psychological aspects of the perpetrator in relation to the crime is therefore necessary to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the South African serial rapist.

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