

An Examination of Serial Homicide in South Africa: The Practice to Research Link

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Abstract

In this paper, South African serial homicide cases will be used to illustrate how practice can inform research and how research can aid practice by highlighting key questions that need to be answered and practice-based assumptions that need to be empirically tested. The cases will also be used to highlight some of the unique features of series in South Africa. Copyright © 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

SERIAL HOMICIDE ACROSS THE WORLD

It is widely accepted that serial homicide occurs throughout the world (Gorby, 2000). Cases have been documented in academic literature in Australia (Gorby, 2000), Japan (Aki, 2003), Germany (Harbort & Mokros, 2001), Israel (Kallian, Birger, & Witztum, 2004; Kallian, Bar-El, Durst, & Witztum, 1996), Russia (Myers, Bukhanovskiy, Justen, Morton, Tilley, Adams, Vandagriff, & Hazelwood, 2008), Canada (Campos & Cusson, 2007; Keppel & Birnes, 2009), the UK (Jenkins, 1988), the USA (Jenkins, 1989), and Italy (Campobasso, Colonna, Carabellese, Grattagliano, Candelli, Morton, & Catanesi, 2009). Egger (2002) comments on cases occurring in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Turkey, Thailand, Nepal, Singapore, France, Nigeria, China, Sweden, and Hungary. Labuschagne (2010) also comments on cases in South Africa, Namibia, India, and Swaziland.

Serial homicide is defined by the South African Police Service (SAPS) as occurring when a suspect(s) murder two or more victims on at least two separate occasions and the motive for the homicides are not for primarily for material gain nor to eliminate a witness in another matter. This is consistent with the definition conferred at the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2005 Serial Murder Symposium. In South Africa, by 2007, the SAPS had identified 131 homicide series, of which 74% (97) were solved. The majority of these were identified since 1990. The earliest noted homicide series occurred in 1936 (Labuschagne, 2007). The Investigative Psychology Section of the SAPS has official court records of a

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series dating back to 1953 where the accused, Elifasi Msomi, killed 15 people in the province of KwaZulu-Natal after luring them with a con story of employment, a method still seen today. The highest number of homicide convictions is attributed to Moses Sithole who raped and killed 38 Black women from 1994 to 1995.

The predominant understanding of serial homicide in the academic literature is from a western point of view. In South Africa, a small but growing body of research exists, yet it is still only a handful of studies (Barkhuizen, 2006; Del Fabbro, 2006a, 2006b; De Wet, 2005; Du Plessis, 1998; Hodgskiss, 2001, 2004; Hook, 2003; Hurst, 2003a, 2003b; Knight, 2006; Labuschagne, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2010; Lemmer, 2003; Pistorius, 1996; Snyman, 1992). Most of these studies to date in South Africa have, however, been part of small-scale unpublished studies by masters and doctoral students, mainly performed at the University of Pretoria. Besides Labuschagne (2010), often, the studies lacked any practical applicability and held little investigative relevance.

Although many South African studies did involve interviewing the actual offenders and accessing to original police case files, the samples were small, generally two offenders, with the largest sample being that of Hodgskiss (2001), which included 13 South African serial offenders. Pistorius, in an unpublished 1996 study, was the first to conduct research on South African serial homicide and did so from a psychodynamic perspective, based on two investigations she had worked on. Thereafter followed Labuschagne (1998, 2001) who focused on a systemic interactional approach to understanding serial offenders based on interviews with offenders and, later (2006), a case study on the use of a linkage analysis as evidence during the trial of a serial offender based on an investigation and trial he was involved in, and a study on foreign object insertion that also commented on the occurrence of such insertions in serial homicide cases (2007).

Du Plessis (1998) explored serial homicide from a grounded theory approach, based on interviews with offenders. Later, Hodgskiss (2001, 2004) reviewed offender characteristics and behaviours of 13 incarcerated offenders whom he interviewed. Hook (2003) conducted a post-structural deconstruction of narratives of a person who committed serial homicide based on interviews with academics in the fields of criminology and psychology, media reports, and unpublished research. De Wet (2005) approached the topic from a psychosocial perspective based on interviews with offenders, and Barkhuizen (2006) used the same method for his intrapsychic object relations approach. Del Fabbro (2006a, 2006b) explored serial homicide from a family systems paradigm based on interviews with the offenders, and where available, their family members. Hurst (2003a, 2003b) conducted a philosophical analysis of discursive dynamics in the court trial of an individual who committed serial homicide. Her data source was court transcripts. Lemmer (2003) did a comparative document study between three South African and four American serial offenders. Knight (2006) published an article from an object relations point of view on the roots of the behaviour of serial offenders as narcissists. This paper appears to be based on a brief review of the literature and her own thoughts on this topic and not based on a research process. Snyman (1992) reviewed international literature on the topic of serial homicide. (For a more detailed review of South African perspectives on serial homicide studies, see Del Fabbro, 2006a, 2006b.)

Although there may only be a small body of South African serial homicide research, there is by no means a large body of international research on the topic. International research also suffers from limiting aspects such as lack of access to actual police records and interviews with offenders, and small sample sizes. This makes it difficult to determine baselines for behaviours and nearly impossible to create a comparative sample against which to compare any further research. In such situations, the individuals involved in the investigation of these

types of crimes become the informal database of experiential knowledge against which cases are compared. Although this is a valuable source of information, its unstructured nature, lack of accessibility to a larger audience, and fallibility of the human mind make it far from ideal. As a result, the need for large-scale studies, using police file information, is essential in creating an open, scrutinizable body of knowledge. This was a primary motivation for the collaborative research reflected in this special edition. Recently, the Investigative Psychology Section of the SAPS and the Investigative Psychology Research Unit at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York have completed a collaborative study on serial homicide in South Africa. This is to date the largest empirical study internationally on serial homicide making use of original police case files and using a thoroughly empirically validated data collection tool, the Homicide Profiling Index (Salfati, 2005, 2007). The study includes 33 of the total of 53 (62%) identified series between 1953 and 2007, the results from which are included as part of this special issue of the *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*. It is an attempt not only to develop a more intimate understanding of serial homicide in South Africa but also to create a body of knowledge against which other similar studies can be compared to determine similarities and differences.

In this paper, examples of South African serial homicide cases will be discussed, briefly illustrating some of the unique features of series in this context. The case studies will primarily be used to illustrate how these practical issues can inform key questions for a research agenda and how results from practice-led research can ultimately aid practice, providing a stronger empirically sound basis for evidence-led policing. In doing so, research can help confirm or refute the assumptions held by investigators gleaned from their experiences and can aid in providing an understanding of baselines and correlations that may help understand the type of crime at hand and inform investigations.

Each of the following case studies chosen aims to highlight unique questions and aspects of serial homicide cases, some of which are peculiar to the South African context.

CASE STUDIES

Case example: the Newcastle Homicide Series (state versus Themba Anton Sukude: case number cc34/2006 in the High Court of South Africa, Natal Provincial Division)

This case involved four separate incidents. In this series, the offender attacked his victims in a small geographic area bordering a small town. The offender lived nearby the crime scenes, a feature consistent with overseas experiences regarding geographic profiling (Rossmo, 2000). This offender took no precautions in hiding his identity, saving for committing his crimes in the evenings, nor did he take forensic precautions such as using a condom during his two rapes to prevent leaving DNA, a fairly common feature of South African serial homicide offenders¹ and serial rapists as experienced by investigators and supported by limited research (Woodhams & Labuschagne, 2012). All but one of the victims in this series, an Indian male, were Black. It is not uncommon for South African serial offenders to have victims of a different population group to themselves in their series. What was different about this series in comparison with what is often experienced with South African serial homicide is that the offender used a sudden violent approach to his victims, instead of the frequently used con story to lure victims away to a secluded place.

¹Other South African serial murderers who targeted couples include the Thohoyandou Serial Murderer, David Mbengwa, and the Wemmerpan Serial Murderer, Cedric Maake.

The first incident

At 1800h on Saturday, 14 February 2004, in the summertime, a young Black couple walked to a park bordering the town of Newcastle in the KwaZulu-Natal province. After consuming alcohol, they decided to engage in sexual intercourse. Whilst they were engaged in intercourse, the offender crept up to them and without warning struck the man on the head with a large rock. He pushed the male victim off the female victim and slapped the woman with an open hand whilst she tried to keep the offender at bay. The offender then hit the male victim with the rock for the second time before dragging the female victim away. When the female victim screamed, the offender displayed a knife to her, threatened to stab her, and dragged her to a nearby ditch approximately 10 m from where the initial attack occurred, where he raped her once. After the rape, he told her to dress and leave. The man died at the scene at the same location where he was struck. Cause of death was determined to be blunt force trauma to the head; there were no other wounds inflicted on the homicide victim. The bloodied rock was found at the scene, approximately 1 m from the head of the deceased, who was lying on his back. He was clothed, but his pants were unzipped and his belt undone. Nothing was stolen from either of the victims.

The second incident

On the evening of Wednesday, 27 October 2004, at approximately 2300h, in the summertime, at the same park as the first incident, a young Black couple decided to engage in sexual intercourse. The male victim, a mini-bus taxi driver, parked his taxi in an open space. Whilst engaging in intercourse on a blanket next to the mini-bus taxi, the offender crept up to them and struck the man on the head with a large rock. The offender told the female victim not to dress, displayed a knife, and took the female victim to the nearby river, approximately 20 m from the mini-bus taxi, where he raped her once. Afterwards, he returned to the deceased's vehicle with the female victim; he took the keys from the deceased's pocket, opened the vehicle, and took two cellphones. The victim asked for money from her purse for transport home, which the offender agreed to give to her. Thereafter, the offender set fire to the vehicle and fled the scene without giving the victim the promised money. The female victim then also fled the scene. The fire quickly burnt itself out and did not cause any significant damage to the vehicle. The man died at the scene at the same location where he was struck by the offender. The bloodied rock was found at the scene also approximately 1 m from the deceased's head. The cause of death of the male victim was determined to be blunt force trauma to the head; there were no other wounds inflicted on the homicide victim. The deceased was found lying on his back, next to the blanket the victim had placed on the ground. His shirt and shoes were on, and his pants were around his ankles. His underwear was in place with his penis exposed.

The third incident

In the early hours of Friday, 26 November 2004, nearby the scene mentioned in the second incident, the body of an adult Black man was found along a footpath by a passerby; he was wearing only his underwear and a shirt. A shoe was found approximately half a metre from his body. The pants and the other shoe were not found at the scene. At the scene, a large bloodied large rock was found approximately 1 m from the deceased's head. The cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head. No female victim came forward to report any rape or assault.

The fourth incident

On the evening of Friday, 7 January 2005, at about 2100h, the deceased, an adult Indian man, left his relative's residence with his sports bag containing his personal belongings. He then proceeded to the park mentioned in the first and second incidents. In the early hours of Saturday, 8 January 2005, he was found unconscious with severe blunt force trauma to the head and a large bloodied rock nearby, approximately 8 m away, down a small embankment next to where the victim was discovered. He was found wearing a yellow t-shirt and Black jeans but no shoes. One shoe was found nearby the body. This scene was nearby the second incident and in between the locations of the first and second incidents. A large roll of money, belonging to the victim, was found next to his body. He was taken to hospital by ambulance and died 2 days later without ever regaining consciousness. His sports bag was missing from the scene. No female victim came forward to report any rape or assault.

The state's evidence

The state's evidence was strongest on the first two incidents. Both the rape victims had pointed the offender out at either an identity parade (line-up) or a photographic identity parade. Unfortunately, there was no DNA evidence although both victims went for a medicolegal examination and a sexual assault evidence collection kit was taken for each rape victim. During interrogation, the offender admitted to killing the men in the first two incidents but refused to do a formal pointing-out of the crime scenes or a formal confession to an independent officer not previously involved in the investigation or a magistrate. Unfortunately, the investigating officer in this case was a non-commissioned officer, and in South Africa, a confession to a non-commissioned officer is not admissible as evidence. Confessions are only admissible in court if they are made to a commissioned officer (i.e. from the rank of captain and above) who was not involved in the investigation or to a magistrate. A confession must also be an 'unequivocal acknowledgement of guilt, the equivalent of a plea of guilty before a court of law' as indicated in *R v. Becker* (Schwikkard, 2009). In both instances, the confession must be in writing, after the necessary legal warnings have been given to the offender. Therefore, if an offender spontaneously confesses, even after having been warned of his rights in accordance with South African law (the equivalent of the Miranda Rights), this will not be admissible. The purpose of this is to build in safeguards to avoid false and coerced confessions. However, the offender had also admitted to a member of the public that he had killed people in the park. In South Africa, a confession to a member of the public is admissible as evidence in court, the weight thereof which will be determined by the court.

In the last two incidents, however, there were no eyewitnesses, surviving victims, nor physical evidence linking the offender to the crimes. It was here that the decision was made, in consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, to also charge the accused on the third and fourth counts of murder, relying on similar fact evidence. A linkage analysis was then compiled in support of similar fact evidence, which was accepted by the court. The offender was convicted on all counts. This was the first time that linkage analysis evidence had been presented in the trial of a serial homicide offender in South Africa (Labuschagne, 2006).

From questions in the field to research agenda

The first issue in this series was the targeting of two victims in at least two of the instances by one offender, in particular with regard to how common it is that offenders target couples. Although investigators have come across series where couples were targeted, there is no

research to inform how often this happens in South African serial homicides. As such, this highlights a key practice-led research question. A related issue that has clear practical utility for a possible linkage analysis relates to how often offenders only kill one of the two victims, if they start targeting couples. And if they start targeting couples, do they remain consistent across their series, or if they change, what is their pattern? Because of questions such as these, a recent study, aiming to provide baselines relating to the aetiology of serial homicide in South Africa, has specifically looked at detailing the nature of the victims targeted as part of these series and has shown that 48.5% of offenders target male and female victims during the course of their series and 40.6% had a mixture of single and multiple victims (Salfati, Labuschagne, Horning, Sorochinski & De Wet, 2015b). Salfati, Horning, Sorochinski, and Labuschagne (2015a) have additionally provided figures relating to consistency patterns and have illustrated that couples and live victims are not consistently targeted in South African series as a whole with couples being targeted in only 13.4% of incidents and a victim being left alive in 19.1% of incidents. Targeting of male victims is also not a common feature of South African serial homicide with men being victims in 36.4% of all incidents. In terms of consistency, their study illustrates that across the first three incidents, 42.3% (11/26)² consistently targeted a particular type of victim. Eleven per cent (3/26) of offenders selected men across the first three offences. Only 3% (1/30) of offenders targeted couples consistently across the first two offences, and none continued to target couples after the first two incidents. Of offenders, 3.8% (1/26) had live victims across the first three incidents, but this pattern did not continue past the third victim in the series if the series continued. Across the first three offences, 30.8% (8/26) of offenders consistently targeted vulnerable victims. Research, as stated earlier, could have been used to provide statistics to support the experienced-based assumptions in the linkage analysis presented in the court.

This offender took no precautions in hiding his identity, saving for committing his crimes in the evenings. He let the two female victims live, he did not make any efforts to destroy DNA evidence, he did not take fingerprint precautions, nor did he wear a mask to hide his face, a feature also seen in South African serial rapists (Woodhams & Labuschagne, 2012). Questions remain regarding whether these types of behaviours change over the series, so that offenders become more forensically aware, and thus only targeting one victim, leaving less evidence, and so on. Following up on questions like these, Sorochinski, Salfati, and Labuschagne (2015) found that South African serial homicide offenders rarely engaged in what are typically regarded in developed countries as post-offence planning behaviours, those being behaviours to cover up the crime and avoid detection.

All but one of the victims in this series, an Indian man, were Black. Questions regarding consistency in type of victim targeted remain uncalculated to date, and although investigators will state that it is not uncommon for South African serial homicide offenders to have victims of a different population group to themselves in their series, this needs to be backed up by more empirical derived numbers in order to hold as linking evidence. Salfati, Labuschagne *et al.* (2015b) found in their study that 31.2% of offenders had multiple racial groups as victims. This has obvious relevance for case linkage when using victim similarity as a criterion, illustrating the need for further research in this area. This is not only relevant when testifying about victimology during a trial as part of a linkage analysis, but this is also relevant during the investigation phase when deciding which cases to include as part of a serial investigation when other evidence, such as DNA, is being processed or is not available.

²One offender consistently targeted young boys. The breakdown of victim consistency by type includes his consistency in both targeting vulnerable victims and men across the first two, three, and four offences. However, in the total percentages for victim consistency, this offender is only counted once.

In this instance, the offender attacked his victims in a small geographic area bordering a small town. The offender living nearby the crime scenes is a pattern of behaviour that has been noted in international research on serial offenders (Rossmo, 2000), but as yet, there have been no studies to look at whether this is comparable with patterns in South Africa, although this has been observed by investigators.

As stated earlier, what differed in this series from other South African serial homicides is that the offender used a sudden violent approach to his victims, instead of a con story to lure victims away to a secluded place. However, the number of cases that fall into each of these categories is still only alluded to, and no research-based figures exist, nor do figures regarding whether an offender's pattern changes over time in relation to approach style. In this series, the suspect made exclusive use of what is often referred to as a blitz-style approach, something, as later research has shown, only seen in 25.9% of South African incidents (Horning, Salfati, & Labuschagne, 2015), which is comparable with figures seen in serial rape of 23% (Woodhams & Labuschagne, 2012). Furthermore, an offender, first watching a couple engaging in sexual activity, is only present in only 2% of serial homicide incidents (Horning *et al.*, 2015).

Case example: the Quarry Homicide Series (state versus Richard Jabulani Nyauza: case number cc97/2007 in the High Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division)

This series involved 16 separate homicide victims, in two separate time frames and place locations. From an investigator's point of view, this offender is perhaps a textbook example of South African serial homicide offender. He lured unsuspecting women, often with the promise of employment, to a secluded place where he raped and killed them, leaving their bodies at the same scene where they were killed. He also clustered his scenes around two designated geographical areas approximately 2.8 km from each other. In between his two series, he was in jail awaiting trial for an unrelated attempted rape of a child. Once he was found not guilty of the attempted rape and was released from custody, he continued his homicides within a few weeks of being released. In this series, the offender, Richard Nyauza, had three different methods of killing his victims; these were by means of stabbing, strangulation, and blunt force trauma. From an investigative experience perspective, it has been suggested that it is a fairly regular feature of South African serial homicide offenders to make use of more than one method of killing their victims, an important aspect to be aware of when assessing cases for linkage purposes (Labuschagne, 2010). As with the previous case example, the offender took no precautions to hide his identity; he committed his crimes during the day, was seen by witnesses with some of his victims, took no forensic precautions to prevent leaving DNA, and took traceable items from some of his victims such as cellphones—which played a role in leading the police to him.

The first series

From January to September 2002, the bodies of five unidentified adult Black women were found along a small river near to a highway just outside of Pretoria near a township known as Olievenhoutbos. These five cases were initially investigated as part of another series of bodies found along highways, known as the 'Highwayman' series, but were later treated as a separate serial investigation once the Highwayman, Elias Chauke, was linked to certain homicides but not those near Olievenhoutbos, which occurred whilst he was in prison for another matter. As a result, after all investigations were

exhausted for the 2002 Olievenhoutbos homicides, these cases were closed off as inquests before a magistrate.

The second series

Then, in early January 2006, two more bodies of adult Black women were found approximately 2.8 km from the nearest 2002 body. This sparked concerns that the same offender was again committing homicides after a 4-year hiatus. The 2002 task team was reformed with the first author of this paper as the head of the task team. This series was labelled as 'Quarry' homicide series because of the bodies being found in close proximity to a nearby open-pit mine known as a 'quarry'. From January to September 2006, a total of 11 adult Black women were found killed, and a 12th case, that of attempted homicide, also took place. To date, only six of the total 16 homicide victims have ever been identified, a common problem experienced in South Africa.

The state's evidence

In eight of the homicide cases, there was evidence linking that offender to the crimes. This evidence was in the form of either cellphone evidence in two cases (the offender was in the possession of two victims' cellphones) or DNA in four cases (from vaginal swabs) or a formal pointing-out of the crime scene in seven cases. A 'pointing-out' is a formal police procedure where the offender agrees to point out any locations that he wants to, to an independent member of the police who is a commissioned officer and who was not involved in the investigation; all locations indicated by the offender are photographed, and what is reported during this procedure is also written down and regarded as a confession. The legal warnings and requirements are similar to those described earlier in relation to a confession, except that a pointing-out is performed only to a member of the police and not with a magistrate. Only one case had all three of these evidential aspects.

Initially, the state prosecutor only intended to indict the offender on the eight incidents where there was one of the three previously mentioned evidential aspects and on the attempted homicide where there was eyewitness evidence and circumstantial evidence to link the offender to the offence. Consultations were held between the investigation task team and the prosecutor regarding indicting the offender on 16 murders and the attempted murder. Eventually, the prosecutor agreed to do so. The accused was subsequently found guilty on all counts, eight of the incidents' conviction relying solely on linkage evidence.

From questions in the field to research agenda

The offender in this series displayed behaviours that are often associated with South African murder series by investigators, notably the luring of unsuspecting women, often with the promise of employment, to a secluded place where he raped and murdered them, leaving their bodies at the same scene where they were murdered. Although this was the experience of investigators, there was no empirical research to support the experiences of the investigators of what per cent of offenders display this behaviour and how many are consistent in this behaviour throughout their series. Horning, Salfati and Labuschagne (2015) in a study following up on the issues relating to consistency of victim type showed that the offender, using a con story to lure his victims, occurred in 47% of incidents in South Africa. As many cannot afford a vehicle to use in the commission of their crimes, they have to lure the victim with

them by foot and public transport to the final crime scene and to the location of where the body was ultimately discovered.

The offender clustered his scenes for each series around a designated geographical area. The geographic pattern of the crime scenes was an aspect noted locally and internationally, thus indicating a feature that can possibly be regarded as a base-rate feature of serial murder behaviour throughout the world. The 2002 murders were grouped close by to each other, whereas the 2006 murders were grouped close by to each other approximately 2.8 km away. During the 4-year hiatus, housing construction had started to take place in the area of the 2002 murders, which most likely contributed to the offender relocating 2.8 km away when he began murdering again in 2006.

In between his two series, the offender was in custody awaiting trial for an unrelated attempted rape of a minor. Once he was found not guilty of the attempted rape, he continued his murders within a few weeks of being released. Questions regarding recidivism, as well as possible change in behaviour due to intervening time or experience, are key to understand, especially in relation to linking. This is also relevant in relation to the issue of recidivism. This period of incarceration did not deter nor modify the offender's behaviour upon release. It is often believed by practitioners that serial murderers cannot be rehabilitated. Salfati (2008) discusses the issue of what specific factors may influence consistency, especially with regard to issues relating to other events in the offender's life, including other crimes, and time in prison. However, this issue as yet has not been investigated in South Africa.

The offender had three different methods of murdering his victims: by means of stabbing, strangulation, and blunt force trauma. It is highlighted by investigators that it is a fairly regular feature of South African serial murderers to make use of more than one method of killing their victims in a series, an important aspect to be aware of when assessing cases for linkage purposes. However, no figures existed on this at the time of the series, nor of its relationship to differentiating offenders, or in relation to determining consistency patterns across an offender's series, an issue relevant for case linkage and signature analysis.

In this example, only five of the 16 murder victims were identified; Salfati, Labuschagne, Horning, Sorochinski, and De Wet (2015b), in their later study, showed that in South Africa, 18.2% of serial murder victims are never identified.

All victims were murdered outdoors and bodies recovered where the murders took place—a feature that Horning *et al.* (2015) later showed occurs in 78.1% of South African serial murder incidents.

As with the preceding case study, one of the key issues highlighted was the lack of forensic or identification precautions taken by the offender, despite having been previously arrested and put on trial for the attempted rape of a young girl.³ The offender took no precautions to hide his identity; he committed his crimes during the day, was seen by witnesses with some of his victims, took no forensic precautions to prevent leaving DNA, and took traceable items from some of his victims such as cellphones—which played a role in leading police to him. The role of forensic awareness or an offender's care to manipulate this aspect of the crime scene remains key for investigations and is thus essential to look at in further detail.

This was also the second time that a linkage analysis had been used as evidence during a trial for its probative value (Labuschagne, 2010).

³However, the attempted rape case involved his then girlfriend's daughter, which can possibly be one factor that later led to him choosing stranger victims for his murder series.

Case example: the Concordia Homicide Series (state versus Robin Cloete: case number ks35/2005 in the High Court of South Africa, Namakwaland Provincial Division)

In contrast to most homicides, serial offenders have been recorded as tending to target strangers as their victims (Hickey, 2006; Egger, 2002; Proulx, Beauregard, Cusson, & Nicole, 2007). However, the definition of serial homicide does not specify what the nature of the relationship must be between victim and offender. In this case example, the offender, Robin Cloete, targeted three victims, all known to him. His first homicide victim was his ex-fiancé; the second and third homicide victims were his ex-girlfriend and her mother. Most people who commit pre-planned intimate partner homicides receive lengthy sentences in South Africa, except in this case where the first homicide occurred in 1993 and the offender received a relatively short sentence and was out on parole in under 10 years. As described later in the text, this atypical victimology raised the question during the trial as to whether the offender could be classified as a serial homicide offender. What was also different in comparison with the two case examples discussed earlier was the large distance and time frame of the homicides. His first homicide was committed in Cape Town, whereas the second and third homicides (occurring at the same time) were committed in the small town of Concordia, which is in a different province and approximately 500 km away.

The first incident

In 1993, the victim, living in Cape Town in the Western Cape province of South Africa, had terminated the engagement with the offender after learning that he had fathered a child with another woman. In the ensuing 3 weeks, the offender tried to make contact with the victim but was refused. On the morning of the incident, the offender consumed a small amount of alcohol, took his brother's police issue firearm, borrowed a friend's vehicle, and drove 50 km to the victim's place of work, a university in Cape Town. He then entered her building, walked into her office, and proceeded to argue with the victim. Co-workers of the victim came to investigate and were fired upon without injury. The offender then proceeded to shoot the kneeling victim eight times. He was arrested on the scene. After he shot the victim, he told a bystander the following: 'I have shot her, I am satisfied'. The offender was found guilty of murder, one count of attempted murder, one charge of theft of ammunition, and illegal possession of a firearm. He was found fit to stand trial and found to have acted with premeditation. He was subsequently sentenced, and after 9 years and 10 months of his 14-year sentence, he was granted parole in September 2004.

The second incident

After parole from the 1993 case, the accused returned to his home of origin in the Northern Cape province, to a town called Concordia. He met the next victim a few months after his parole was granted, and he dated her for 2 years and 10 months prior to the homicide, which occurred in 2007, and fathered a child with the victim. Similar to the first incident, approximately 3 weeks prior to the incident, the victim terminated their relationship after the offender assaulted her one morning. There ensued a 3-week period where he attempted to have contact with the victim, which was unsuccessful. On the morning of the incident, he was under the influence of alcohol and attempted to contact her at her parental home twice. The third attempt was when the homicide occurred. The offender took a knife from his home, went to the victims' residence during the daytime, and, in the presence of numerous witnesses who were visiting, forced his way inside the house. The two victims then fled to a neighbouring house.

He kicked the door of the neighbour's house in and entered. He proceeded to stab both victims. The girlfriend was stabbed three times in the torso, and the mother was also stabbed three times in the torso. The offender then began to damage the interior of the house and remained on the scene until the police arrived and arrested him.

The offender was found guilty of assault with the intention to do grievous bodily harm (for the assault on the girlfriend 3 weeks prior to the homicide), assault common (on one of the witnesses at the deceased's home at the time of the homicide), two counts of murder, and two counts of malicious injury to property.

The state's evidence

In both incidents, there were eyewitnesses to the attacks, and the offender was arrested at the scene. In the first incident, the offender claimed to have been suffering from a dissociative disorder at the time of the actual homicide, and in the second incident, the offender claimed to be acting in self-defence. In both trials, the version of the accused was rejected. During the second trial, held in 2009, the first author testified that the accused now qualified as a serial homicide offender because of the second and third victims. This was hotly contested by the defence who stated that the accused's behaviour was not consistent with the 'mainstream' serial homicide offender in South Africa because of his victimology and modus operandi. The state argued that although the victimology and modus operandi of the accused were not similar to the typical South African serial offender, he did fulfil the criteria as he had killed at least two people and on at least two separate occasions and that the homicides were not primarily for financial gain nor to eliminate a witness in another case.

From questions in the field to research agenda

The definition of what constitutes serial homicide has been hotly debated and has been influenced by both clinical, investigative, legal, and statistical criteria. How cases are defined and included will have a large impact on the results of studies and needs to be taken into account in interpretation of results.

Like the Newcastle example earlier, the issue of multiple victims per offence was relevant. The offender had one homicide victim and two attempted homicide victims with his first incident and two homicide victims in his second incident, challenging the belief that serial homicide is always a one-on-one event. Finally, as was raised during the sentencing proceedings of the second trial, serial homicide classification issues were disputed, more specifically the required criteria versus the popular image of serial homicide as informed by the media. Linked to this was the issue of serial offenders targeting intimate partners and other victims with whom they have a close relationship. In South Africa, serial offenders target strangers as victims in 73.3% of incidents (Salfati, Labuschagne, Horning, Sorochinski, & De Wet, 2015b). This research therefore supports the practice-based assumption that serial homicide victims are known to the offender in many instances.

Unlike most serial homicides in South Africa (65.7% according to Salfati *et al.*, 2015b), there were no overt sexual themes observable on these crime scenes. This is similar to a South African study by Abrahams, Martin, Jewkes, Mathews, Vetten and Lombard (2008) who found that intimate partner femicides rarely have a sexual component to them. This hints towards the assumption that when serial homicide is committed in relation to intimates, there is less likelihood that it will have a sexual theme unless staged as such. This also contradicts the common misperception that serial homicide is always sexually motivated, as has even been mentioned in certain earlier definitions of serial homicide.

In contrast to most single homicide offenders, serial homicide offenders have often been described as more likely to target stranger victims (Hickey, 2006; Egger, 2002; Pakhomou, 2004), but it is not unheard of that South African and indeed overseas serial homicide offenders do have victims that are known to them. South African serial offender Stewart Wilken killed one young stranger runaway aged 12 years, four sex-workers, an ex-girlfriend's son aged 12 years with whom he was acquainted, and his own daughter aged 10 years (Hickey, 2006). The so-called Moffat Park serial offender Gcinumzi Richman Makwenkwe in Johannesburg killed five victims: the first victim was his ex-girlfriend, the second was the boyfriend of his ex-girlfriend, and the final three were strangers to him. Little is, however, known about the exact role of type of victim in different types of series and whether victim type is a consistent element as the series evolves, or whether it changes, and if so, in what way.

What was also different in comparison with the two case studies discussed earlier was the large distance and time frame of the homicides. The first homicide was committed in Cape Town, whereas the second and third homicides (occurring at the same time) were committed in the small town of Concordia, which is in a different province and approximately 500 km away. However, in both cases, as victims were known to the offender and in the offender's social circle, this added proximity. Proximity and geography must thus be looked at as a feature of the offender's own lifestyle. Although the offender was initially incarcerated for a number of years after the first incident, his second and third homicides occurred more than 2 years after being released on parole. Like with the Quarry case, a period of incarceration did not prevent the offender from committing subsequent murders after release.

In this series, the offender was an extreme example of not taking precautions to prevent identification. He targeted victims well known to him, during the day, either at their workplace or home, in the presence of multiple victims. Also, in each instance, the offender did not flee the scene and was arrested on the crime scene.

As with the previous case studies, the offender used multiple methods to kill his victims: first by a firearm and second by means of stabbing. This is one of the few South African serial offenders who used a firearm in his series, with this only generally occurring in 30.2% of overall incidents (Horning *et al.*, 2015; Salfati *et al.*, 2015b).

CONCLUSION

Serial homicide is a phenomenon documented throughout the whole world (Aki, 2003; Campobasso *et al.*, 2009; Campos & Cusson, 2007; Egger, 2002; Gorby, 2000; Harbort & Mokros, 2001; Jenkins, 1988; Jenkins, 1989; Kallian, Birger, & Witzum, 2004; Kallian, Bar-El, Durst, & Witzum, 1996; Keppel & Birnes, 2009; Myers *et al.*, 2008), yet to date, it has been predominantly defined from a western point of view. Definitions have been formulated to include the common features of the western presentation of serial homicide. These cases illustrate a sample of series from across the spectrum of serial homicide as it is presented in South Africa and illustrate how some practice-based assumptions made by investigators can, and must, be validated and improved by practice-focused research. Although some features are similar to serial homicide cases occurring outside of South Africa, other features are unique to South Africa. Other behaviours take on a different meaning in the South African context than they may have in Western contexts, highlighting the need for caution about generalising statements about serial homicide, this being especially relevant for offender profiling and linkage analysis.

Information relating to the issues discussed earlier is scant in local and international research; therefore, the frequency of these issues to date has been speculative in nature. It is these investigator or practitioner assumptions that have drawn the criticism of academics

and researcher. In an attempt to deal with these empirical shortcomings, the studies reflected in this special issue of the *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling* (Salfati, Labuschagne, *et al.*, 2015b; Salfati, Horning, *et al.*, 2015a; Horning *et al.*, 2015; Sorochinski *et al.*, 2015) and quoted earlier were performed as a response to practice-led questions and, in turn, have provided the first generation of studies that have aimed to answer some of these questions and support or refute these assumptions, and provide a basis for a more evidence-led investigation. In turn, this has also provided a comparison between experience-informed and empirically informed literature regarding the aetiology of serial homicide in South Africa.

It is through these initiatives that a growing, practice-relevant, body of knowledge gleaned from practice and research is being developed, contributing to the global view of serial homicide.

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