AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF SERIAL RAPE AND VICTIMISATION RISK IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Serial rape attracts much media attention and has become a topic of increased interest and concern. However, both locally and internationally, there is a paucity of empirically based research. The limited research which exists often does not focus on the victim as a "subject" which could contribute to solving existing cases or in curtailing the serial rapist. In this article, socio-demographic characteristics of 75 victims of serial rape, and how they were selected by the rapist were used to construct a general profile of the people who are the targets of the serial rapist. Factors or contexts which put women at risk are also identified and investigated. Comparisons are made between the characteristics of the victims of serial rapists in other countries, while comparisons are also made between the victims of single-victim rapists and those of the serial rapist. Of great concern is, amongst others, that the results indicate that in South Africa a large number of victims of the serial rapist are girl children. Limitations of the research are indicated, while a suggestion for future research concludes the article.

INTRODUCTION

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), 36 190 (thirty six thousand one hundred and ninety) reported cases of sexual offences were recorded for the period April 2007 to December 2007 (SAPS, 2007). South Africa's recent acceptance of the "re-definition" of the legal definition of rape is regarded as a step in the right direction, as the new law provides more support to the large number of rape victims Schreiner (2004), in a study focussing on issues surrounding rape as a human security issue in South Africa, indicated that the incidence of serial rape in South Africa is increasing. However, South African law does not distinguish between single-victim rapists and serial rapists except during sentencing, and the actual number of serial rapists incarcerated in South Africa is not known due to the fact that there are no statistics which differentiates serial rapists from those convicted of single-victim rape. In addition, there is a paucity of academic research both internationally and locally, which focuses on serial rape and specifically on the victims of serial rape.

Authors who have made contributions to selected aspects of serial rape include Canter and Larkin (1993); De Wet (2008); De Wet, Labuschagne, and Chiroro (2009); Hazelwood and Burgess (2001); Hazelwood and Warren, (1989); Kocsis, Cooksey, and Irwin, (2002); Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto, and Davis, (2008); Santtila, Junkkila, and Sandnabba, (2005);

Stevens, 2000; 2001; Warren, Reboussin, Hazelwood, Cummings, Gibbs, and Trumbetta, (1998). However, in their research on serial rape, only Hazelwood and Burgess (2001), Hazelwood and Warren (1989), De Wet, 2008, and Park et al., (2008) focused on the characteristics of the victims of the serial rapist.

This article "complements" or takes further the discussion on serial rapists in the earlier article by De Wet et al., (2009). However, the primary focus of the current article is on the victims of the serial rapists, with the primary aim of constructing a victim profile.

At this point it is necessary to slightly digress in order to provide the current definition of rape in South African law and clarify our understanding of what constitutes serial rape and the label "serial rapist." The rationale for a victim analysis is also discussed while the aims of the article are clarified.

Definition of rape
The new Sexual Offences Act, which was recently introduced into South African law, replaces the archaic law on sexual offences with a new expanded statutory definition of rape applicable to all forms of sexual penetration. In terms of the Criminal Law Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act 32 of 2007, "any person (A) who unlawfully or intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant (B) without the consent of (B), is guilty of the offence of rape". The act of sexual penetration is defined as follows in Chapter 1, subsection 1 of the Act:

> … Any act which causes penetration by any extent whatsoever by –
> (a) the genital organs of one person into or beyond the genital organs, anus, or mouth, of another person;
> (b) any other part of the body of one person or, any object, including any part of the body of an animal, into or beyond the genital organs or anus of another person; or
> (c) the genital organs of an animal into or beyond the mouth of another person.

Defining serial rape
A serial rapist is generally understood to be a perpetrator who has engaged in sexual contact with two or more victims, without their consent, in a minimum of two separate incidents over an extended period of time (De Wet, 2008; Graney & Arrigo, 2002; Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001; Park, et al., 2008). Stevens (2000) is to the point in his understanding of serial rape when he states: "Rape is carnal knowledge through the use of force or the threat of force. When it happens more than once by the same perpetrator I call it serial rape."

Victim analysis as an investigative tool
Hazelwood and Burgess (2001) indicate that incomplete information regarding the victim can compromise a case analysis. Victim analysis has emerged as one of the most beneficial investigative tools in solving violent crime. It "fills-in" the background and provides direction and links to the investigation (Savino & Turvey, 2005; Turvey, 2003). It is recognised as a tool which enables investigators of serial rape and other role-players to construct a basic victim profile of potential high-risk victims of the perpetrator. Labuschagne (2003) points out that victim profiling is crucial to "serial rape cases as victim selection might reflect something about the motives of the perpetrator." Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, and Ressler (1992) argue that by determining the reason why a specific victim was targeted the investigator could determine the motive which, in turn, could ultimately assist in the identification and eventual prosecution of the perpetrator.

The primary objectives of establishing a profile of victims of serial rape is to assist investigators in identifying potential serial rape cases and in differentiating between serial and single-victim rapists. A profile would also determine the breadth and depth of the investigation and would speed up arrest and prosecution (Savino & Turvey, 2005).

A comprehensive victim profile includes gathering information about the victim, the victim's lifestyle, profession, friends and acquaintances, home, biographic characteristics, physical appearance or features, socio-demographic information, the location of the attack, and the time of day when the victim was approached (Napier & Hazelwood, 2003; Palermo & Kocsis, 2005; Savino & Turvey, 2005).

In the methodology section details regarding victim risk and victim analysis as related to this article are provided.

Aims
The overall aim is to explore the victim characteristics, and in the process to lay the groundwork for determining the general victim profile of serial rapists in South Africa by posing the following questions:
- "Who is the likely target of serial rapists," or phrased differently, "Who is at risk of being a victim of a serial rapist?"
- "Does a serial rapist target a different 'category' of women as opposed to the single-victim rapists?"
- "Are the general characteristics of serial-rape victims in South Africa different from or similar to those in other countries?"

SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

The data set consisted of 75 individual cases (female victims) which involved nine individual perpetrators. The offences were committed between 2001 and 2006. The researchers obtained the data between 2007 and 2008 from the original SAPS case files on convicted serial rapists. The case files consisted of individual case dockets, victim statements, court reports, and other relevant case material.

No hypotheses or outcomes were set up to be tested in the study. Rather, the purpose of the study was to explore data on a previously unexplored phenomenon and to use the results as baseline data to form hypotheses and research questions for additional work in the area. Given the non-existence of such data locally, as well as its paucity internationally, it is asserted that this approach is appropriate for an initial baseline study.

Although demographic details of the nine convicted rapists will not necessarily contribute to the aims of the article, Table 1 provides the demographic details of the perpetrators. This information will assist with contextualising the article.

Table1
Demographic characteristics of offenders (n=9)

Racial group	Black African (6)	White (2)	Coloured (1)
Percentage	67%	22%	11%
Age distribution			
Average age	32.3	28	24
Occupation			
Professional	-	2	-
Labourer	5	-	-
Unemployed	1	-	1
Education level			
Higher education	-	2	-
Medium (Gr 7 – Gr 12)	1	-	1
Lower (Gr 1 – Gr 6)	5	-	-
None	-	-	-
Criminal history			
Attempted murder	-	1	-
Rape	3	1	-
Robbery	4	-	-
Assault	2	-	-
Burglary	2	-	-
Other	1	-	1

Source: De Wet (2008); De Wet et al., (2009)

Given the nature of the area being researched, the sample (nine rapists and 75 victims) could be regarded as relatively large, although from a quantitative point of view this is not the case. Consequently, it was decided not to set any hypotheses for testing and also not to conduct additional statistical analyses (such as regression), as the sample size would possibly render the results of such an analysis questionable.

Published literature as well as case files reflecting offender and victim information were investigated in order to develop a "checklist" which would reflect the demographic characteristics of both victim and perpetrator as well as the modus operandi of the perpetrator. Table 1 reflects the demographic characteristics of the perpetrator as categorised in the checklist. The demographic information of the victim was also recorded on the checklist and is reflected in Table 2. The checklist furthermore included information describing the modus operandi of the perpetrator such as the time and place of the crime.

The selected demographic categories incorporated in the checklist reflects the social and demographic information commonly recorded in official police files in South Africa and refers to information that is generally utilised in the construction of victim profiles (Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001; Savino & Turvey, 2005). The researchers also examined selected aspects related to victim vulnerability and the victim-selection techniques utilised by the perpetrators, such as the time of day the incidents occurred, as well as the locations where the perpetrator approached and attacked the victims.

The test-retest method, derived directly from the conceptual definition of reliability, was determined as the most viable method to determine the reliability of the proposed checklist

(Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004). Reliability is the extent to which the measuring instrument limits variable errors; in other words, it refers to the measuring instrument's ability to produce consistent results each time it is applied (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2005; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004). The method stipulates that the researcher should administer the measuring instrument to the same group or dataset during a retest to determine whether the measuring instrument provides similar results. In terms of the current research, an independent criminologist not associated with the original research project, and one of the members of the Investigative Psychology Unit of the SAPS, were approached to test the reliability of the behavioural checklist. Four case studies were selected from the original dataset and were given to both of the re-testers. They were asked to analyse the four cases by applying the behavioural checklist to each of the cases. The results obtained from the retest method were compared to the findings of the original analysis of the same four cases. The results achieved by the re-testers and researcher were almost identical.

Ethical procedure
Prior to embarking on the original study, ethical clearance was obtained for the study from the ethical committee of the university where the researchers were based. Official permission was also obtained from the police commissioner of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the head of the Investigative Psychology Unit (IPU) of the SAPS to gain access to the necessary police dockets and other relevant documentation. The documentation was screened by the IPU to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. Identifying information such as victims' and offenders' names, identification numbers, and home addresses were removed before the researchers were given access to the documents.

Victim analysis and victim-risk assessment
In keeping with international trends, victim analysis of the current data set was conducted by assessing the victim's risk, and determining the amount of exposure to possible suffering or harm (Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001; Savino & Turvey, 2005; Turvey, 2003). In keeping with accepted classifications, the researchers categorised victim risk as low, medium or high. Women who were considered to be low-risk victims were women whose personal, professional, and social life did not expose them to potential harm (Savino & Turvey, 2005). Medium-risk victims are women who, as a result of their personal, professional, and social lifestyle may be exposed to dangerous situations (Turvey, 2003). A woman, whose personal, professional, and social life continuously places her in potentially dangerous situations, is considered to be at high risk. Careers such as prostitution (sex work) have, for example, been classified as high-risk. Unsupervised children would also be classified as high risk (Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001; Savino & Turvey, 2005; Turvey, 2003). In the South African context, research has shown that victims who are unemployed, as well as scholars, may be classified as potential high-risk victims (De Wet, 2008).

In addition, Savino and Turvey (2005) and Turvey (2003) propose that victim risk "can and should be categorised even further in terms of victim lifestyle and incidence risk." *Victim lifestyle risk* refers to the circumstances surrounding the victim's lifestyle, habits and activities. For example, in the current research, the lifestyle risk would refer to aspects such as the victim's movement patterns, for example walking along a road alone. *Victim-incident risk* is related to the risk present at the moment the perpetrator comes across the victim, for example, the location of the incident or the time of occurrence.

The authors of this paper concur with Stevens (2000; 2001) who argues that the victim cannot be blamed for the actions of the offender. Offenders are constantly on the look-out for social

settings and different opportunities which contribute to the vulnerability of potential victims (Stevens, 2001). In this article, the focus is not on assessing specific individual risk. The aim is rather to investigate and explore the social and environmental factors that could increase the victim's vulnerability and consequently the risk of becoming the victim of a serial rapist.

An important variable, which was also taken into account during victim analysis, is the relationship, if any, that exists between the perpetrator and the victim. Although not identical to, the relationship categories were adapted from the categories identified by Hazelwood and Burgess (2001) as well as Hazelwood and Warren (1989). The victim-perpetrator relationship was broken down into the following four categories: The perpetrator being *unknown* to the victim, the perpetrator being a *casual acquaintance*, the perpetrator being an *acquaintance*, or the perpetrator *being known to* the victim.

A casual acquaintance was defined as someone the victim had only met briefly or had been introduced to only once (De Wet, 2008). An acquaintance was defined as someone the victim had known, but not in a social sense, such as for example, if the victim had seen the offender briefly on a previous occasion before the actual attack occurred. A known perpetrator would be a family member, like an uncle or a cousin, or a close friend of the victim's family (Burgess, 2001; De Wet, 2008). The victim-perpetrator relationship serves as a tool for providing the investigation with direction as well as with a likely suspect pool.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Socio-demographic information on the victims
Table 2 shows the breakdown of the basic social and demographic information of the victims according to the "racial group"[1] classification represented in the data set. The researchers understand black to be African, coloured and Indian. However, in accordance with the way in which statistics are kept in South Africa, racial group classification has been divided into "black African," "coloured," "white" and "Indian."

Table 2
Victim socio-demographic information (n=75)

"Racial group"		Black African (63)	White (10)	Coloured (2)
	Percentage	84%	13%	3%
Age distribution				
	Average age	21.6	24.1	19.5
Occupational distribution				
	Professional	-	1%	-
	Semi-professional	1%	2%	-
	Clerical	3%	-	1%
	Domestic	7%	-	-
	Unemployed	37%	3%	-
	School-going children	36%	8%	1%
Average age per occupation				
	Professional	-	-	53
	Semi-professional	28	-	49
	Clerical	26	35	-
	Domestic	42	-	-
	Unemployed	23	-	22
	School-going children	14	14	16
Victim-perpetrator relationship				
	Unknown	54	8	1
	Known	9	1	1
	Casual acquaintance	-	1	-

Table 2 reflects the fact that a range of socio-demographic characteristics were identified in the data set. Women from all "racial groups" were targeted. The table also indicates that the majority of the victims (84%) in the data set were either black African females with a mean age of 21 who were unemployed (37%), or were school-going children (36%) at the time of the incidents. The general age distribution of the victims ranged from children under the age of ten to women above the age of 50. Twenty-five percent of the victims were younger than 15 years at the time of rape. The majority of the victims (75%) were aged between 11 years and 25 years. The victims were employed in a variety of occupations at the time of the incidents. In the majority of cases the perpetrator was unknown to the victims.

An examination of the perpetrators' and victims' ages respectively and the "racial" groups of the data set indicate the perpetrators rarely targeted victims in an age range similar to their own. The majority of the perpetrators, irrespective of their race, were on average 11 years older than the victims. An interesting variation was observed in that when the victims were older than 32 years, the perpetrators were on average 12 years younger than the victims.

Figure 1
Average age of victims per perpetrator in the data set
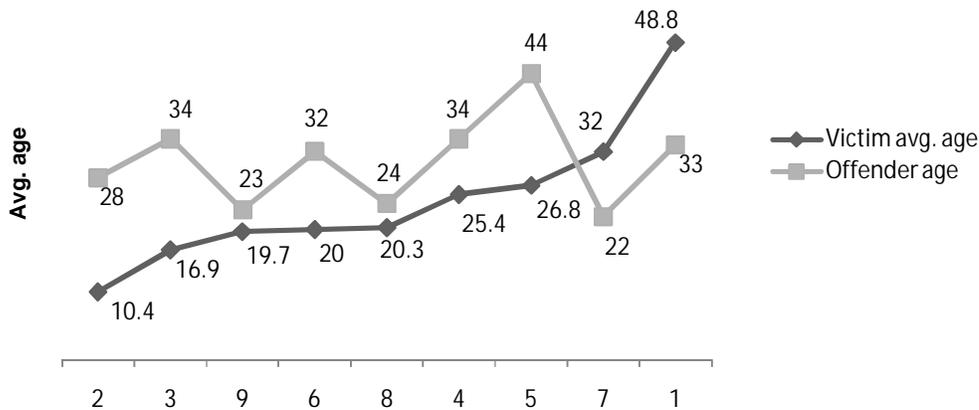
Victim-risk analysis
As indicated earlier, victim risk is the potential or the vulnerability that a woman has due to the presence of various social and environmental factors that increase the possibility of being targeted by a serial rapist. The following factors and/or characteristics emerged from the data in terms of victim selection: Location, time of the attack, socio-economic status, and childhood. In the following section, each of these factors will be discussed.

Location as risk factor
Table 3 shows that the majority of the victims (44%), were approached by the perpetrator while they were walking alone along a road. The majority of the perpetrators also approached the victims at more than one location, for example at bus stops and taxi ranks.

Table 3
Locations where the perpetrator approached the victims (n=75)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Taxi ranks	-	-	-	2	3	1	-	-	-	8%
Bus stops	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3%
Walking alone	2	-	13	8	-	3	-	1	6	44%
Home	-	8	2	-	-	1	2	7	1	28%
Shops	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%
Populated areas	-	-	-	4	2	1	1	-	-	11%
Other	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-		4%

During 85% of the incidents, the perpetrators approached their intended victims at one location, and committed the rape in another location.

Table 4
Incident location of the entire offender data set (n=9)

	Inside	**Outside**	**Car**
1 (4)	2	-	2
2 (8)	6	2	-
3 (16)	-	16	-
4 (17)	-	17	-
5 (6)	-	6	-
6 (6)	-	6	-
7 (3)	-	3	-
8 (8)	7	1	-
9 (7)	-	1	6

Table 4 indicates that the majority of the incidents, namely 52 or 69%, occurred outside in isolated areas which were pre-selected by the offenders. The attacks which took place inside the offender's car (8), also occurred in isolated areas. Judging from the selection of the isolated locations, the perpetrators had some prior knowledge of these areas. Although it should not be viewed as a mutually exclusive risk indicator, the location or environment a woman finds herself at any given moment can influence the potential risk she might be exposed to (De Wet, 2008; Stevens, 2000; 2001). High-risk locations include spaces where the woman is walking on her own towards specific locations, such as bus stops and taxi ranks. Stevens describes serial rapists who identify potential victims in specific situations, circumstances, or social environments as engaging in situational targeting. The offender does not search for a specific victim, but rather for a location or set of circumstances, and therefore considers perceived vulnerability. It consequently boils down to the victim being in the "wrong place" at the "wrong time". The current findings therefore concur with the observation made by Stevens (2001).

Time as risk factor
Table 5 reflects the time of day when the attacks occurred.

Table 5
Time of day during which the attacks occurred throughout the data set (n=75)

	Time of day	
Perpetrator	**Day**	**Night**
1	3	1
2	8	-
3	14	2
4	17	-
5	6	-
6	4	2
7	3	-
8	7	1
9	7	-
Total	69	6

According to Table 5 the majority of the incidents, namely 69 or 92%, occurred during the day while a limited number of the incidents, i.e. 6 (8%) occurred at night. The latter statistics discount the age-old notion that light of day implies safety for women. According to Savino and Turvey (2005), the time of day is influenced by elements such as the number of people present in the various environments as well as the light available for the activities the perpetrator intends to engage in. Although Stevens (2000) makes no direct reference to the impact of the time of day, a female walking alone at night on a deserted road would be viewed as an "easy target" in terms of vulnerability. Thus, in terms of time of day as a potential risk factor, in the South African context the serial rapist is highly likely to attack his intended victims in broad daylight.

Socio-economic status as risk factor
In the current data set, the majority of the victims were unemployed (40%) at the time of the incidents. Research has indicated that the majority of serial rapists in South Africa approached their intended victims by engaging them in conversation regarding employment (De Wet, 2008). The perpetrators would enquire whether the victims were looking for employment and ultimately lured them away under the false pretence of taking them to a place of employment. The perpetrator thus identifies the socio-economic status of the victim as a potential vulnerability and subsequently exploits the situation. According to Stevens (2000; 2001), the socio-economic status of the victim would make the perpetrator view the victim as "easy prey".

Childhood as risk factor
The current research data indicates that a significant number of the victims are children. It is crucial, therefore, that the profile and characteristics are presented of children who are potentially at risk of becoming victims of serial rapists. Figure 2 illustrates the age distribution of the victims across the entire data set (n=75).

Figure 2
Age distribution of the victim data set (n = 75)
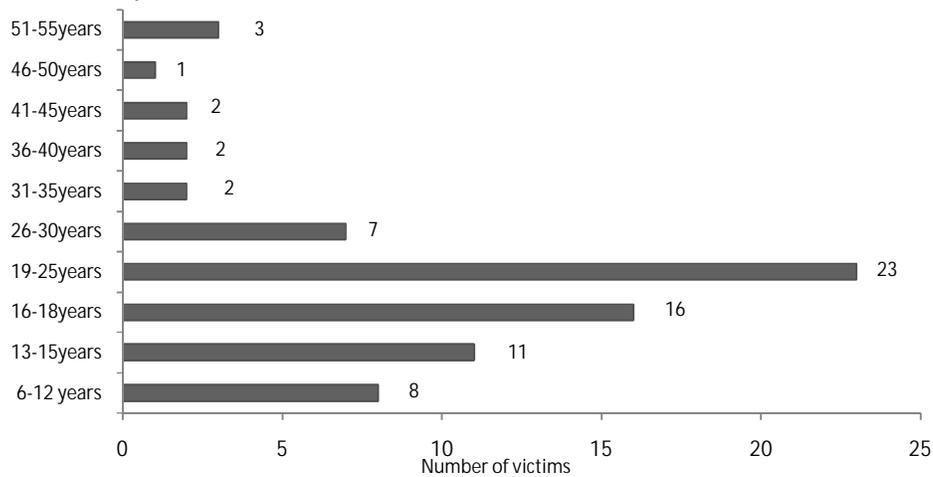
Twenty five percent (19) of the victims in the data set were girl children younger than 16 years of age at the time of the incidents, while 35 (46%) of the victims were girl children between six and 18 years of age. Forty-five percent of the victims of serial rapists were school-going children who were on average 15 years of age. The findings indicate that young girl children as well as young women between the ages of 19 and 25 are at high risk of becoming victims of serial rape. Stevens (2001) recognised adolescent girls as easy prey. Our statistics also indicate that very young girl children who have not reached adolescence are targeted by serial rapists. Stevens viewed middle-class children as vulnerable and easy prey because their parents over-estimate their emotional maturity in terms of coping with strange men. In South Africa, children of all classes and "racial" groups are taught to respect adults and not to question adult authority, especially male authority. This general approach of "not questioning male authority" is an added vulnerability which increases the risk of girls and young women becoming victims of serial rapists.

In the following section, a comparison is drawn between the socio-demographic information gathered in this research and the characteristics of serial rapists' victims in other countries.

COMPARISON WITH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

Several similarities as well as differences were identified between the socio-demographic information observed in this data set and the research conducted by Hazelwood and Warren (1989) as well as Park et al., (2008). Table 6 reflects the variations in and the similarities between the victims' socio-demographic information contained in the current data set and that contained in the research conducted by Hazelwood and Warren (1989), Park et al., (2008).

Table 6
Cross tabulation of victims' socio-demographic information

Variables	SA – Data set	Park, et al *	Hazelwood & Warren**
Race	84% - Black African	95.5% - White	92% - White
Victim-perpetrator relationship:			
Unknown	84%	61.9%	80%
Known	15%	4.8%	-
Casual acquaintance	1%	9.5%	-
Acquaintance	-	19%	5.6%
Other	-	4.8%	2.8%

Sources: *Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto, & Davis (2008); **Hazelwood & Warren (1989)

The variations observed in the "racial" group distribution can be attributed to the general population distribution of the respective countries. Statistics South Africa's mid-year population statistics (2006) indicates that 79.5% of South Africa's population is black African, while the United States Census Bureau (2006) indicates that 73.9% of their population is white. Consequently, a significant difference which was observed between the data sets in terms of the population group distribution was that in the study conducted by Hazelwood and Warren (1989) in the United States, none of the white perpetrators targeted victims from other population groups. Black African perpetrators did, in fact, rape both black and white victims but generally targeted victims from similar "racial" groups. In contrast, Stevens (2000) found that, according to the self-reported data sample utilised in his research, the majority of black and Hispanic perpetrators reported committing interracial rape. Similar findings were identified in the data set utilised in the current article, which had a high incidence of interracial offending. The conclusion drawn is therefore similar to that of Stevens, namely that it is not the race of the woman that makes her an easy target but rather her vulnerability or perceived vulnerability that plays a significant role in victim selection.

Hazelwood and Burgess (2001) found that the reason for selecting the victims was the availability of the victims, as 79% of the victims were alone at the time of the assaults. In the current data set 44% or 33 of the victims were "available" in that they walking alone when the perpetrator approached them.

A significant difference which emerged was that the majority of the victims in the United States and the United Kingdom were adult women. Unlike the findings of the current research, children were not viewed as high-risk victims. In the United States, children were only targeted 18% of the time (Hazelwood & Burgess, 2001; Hazelwood & Warren, 1989). In this data set, 25% (19) of the total number of victims were children below the age of 15, while 46% (35) of the victims were between six and 18 years' of age at the time of the incidents.

The victim-perpetrator relationships observed across the three data sets were relatively similar and revealed that the majority of the victims across all three data sets were unknown to the perpetrators at the time of the incidents.

In the following section, comparisons will be made between the characteristics of single-rape victims and victims of serial rape in South Africa. To date, no attempt has been made to distinguish between single and serial-rape victims, specifically in the South African context. This is therefore regarded as the first attempt in the South African context to construct base - ine data of this nature.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN GENERAL AND SERIAL-RAPE VICTIM STATISTICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Table 7 demonstrates the similarities in and variations between the general socio-demographic features of victims derived from the general rape statistics in South Africa and the current data set.

Table 7
Socio-demographic comparison – SA general statistics and current data set

	Variable description	SA-Rape stats*	Data set
"Racial group"			
	Black African	78.9%	84%
	Coloured	13%	3%
	Indian	2.4%	-
	White	5.7.%	13%
Age distribution			
	Age range	16 - 25	11 - 25
Victim-perpetrator relationship			
	Unknown	24.4%	84%
	Known	34.6%	15%
	Casual acquaintance	17.3%	1%
	Acquaintance	8.9%	-
	Known by sight only	13.4.%	-
	Did not say	1.4%	-

Source: *RSA. Statistics South Africa Quantitative research findings on rape in South Africa. (2000).

Table 7 indicates that the "racial" group distribution of both the data sets is very similar. These figures are also comparable to the general population distribution of South Africa. Statistics South Africa's mid-year population estimates (2006) indicate that 79.5% of South Africa's population is black African, 8.9% Coloured, 2.5% Indian/Asian, and 9.2% white. Similar population group distributions were identified in the research on perpetrator characteristics of South African serial rapists (De Wet et al., 2009).

The general rape statistics in South Africa indicate that rape victims were likely to be young women aged between 16 and 25 years. Although women and girls aged between 11 and 25 years were also targeted by the serial rapists, a major difference is that serial rapists target school-going female children 25% of the time. Another significant difference identified was the variance in the victim-perpetrator relationship. In this data set, in 84% of the incidents the victim was unknown to the perpetrator and known only in 15% of these incidents. In comparison, the perpetrators were known (a relative or someone they were intimate with, an acquaintance, or known by sight) to the victims in 74.2% of the general rape incidents and unknown 24.4% of the time. Another difference observed between the profiles of the serial-rape victim and the single-rape victim was that serial rapes occurred in open spaces and outside (in open fields or small forested areas) in 74% of the incidents. Single-rape cases, in contrast, occurred inside the victim's own residence in 47% of the incidents (Statistics South Africa, 2000).

In a thesis entitled: *Rape as a human security issue with specific reference to South Africa*, Schreiner (2004) indicates that the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) Management

system makes no provision for indicating the number of convicted serial rapists, as the system records only charges of which perpetrators have been found guilty. Neither are separate entries made with regard to sentences for serial rape. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to distinguish between single-rape cases and serial-rape cases. She does, however, urge that the South African Anti-Rape strategy will have to get to grips with serial rape and serial rapists, as the "psychology of the serial rapists is distinct from that of most rapists" (Schreiner, 2004).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As indicated, serial rape has received limited scientific attention, and surprisingly very little research has focused specifically on the victims of serial rapists. In this article, the authors disaggregated data that was collected for a bigger project in an attempt to provide baseline information on the victims targeted by the South African serial rapist. Essentially, basic data was gathered that could be utilised to construct a basic profile of the victims of serial rapists in South Africa.

Similarities as well as variations were observed between the victims of serial rape and general rape in South Africa. Differences also emerged between victim profiles in our sample compared to related research findings in other countries. One of the most conspicuous differences between victims in South Africa and those in other countries is that many of the South African victims are children who would be classified as vulnerable in terms of socio-economic status. Stated bluntly, if you are a girl child, are poor and a black African your vulnerability to becoming a victim of serial rape is disproportionately high. Similar to Stevens (2000; 2001), the researchers can conclude that victims are not necessarily selected because they are, for example, sex workers, but rather because of *their vulnerability as sex workers*. A combination of factors determines the perceived vulnerability of a victim by the perpetrator. The perpetrator assesses vulnerability and then exploits the situational, environmental, and socio-demographic variables to ensure that his ultimate goal is achieved. The social dominance and "power" the perpetrator has over his intended victim also increases vulnerability. Variables that render the potential victim vulnerable in relation to the perpetrator include "being a woman", being within the potential victim's age range, dependence on public transportation, and the need to secure employment.

An alarming finding that has emerged is that 46% or 35 of the victims in the total sample fell in the age range of six and 18 years, and 23% or eight of the 35 victims were pre-adolescent girls under the age of 12 years. An interesting variance observed in the data set was that women in their thirties were raped by men who were on average 12 years younger than the victims. Further research is recommended to explore the latter age variation. A possible interpretation would be that rapists view young girls and older females as easy prey. In South Africa, as in many other societies, children, and especially girl children, are taught to respect and trust adult men. The serial rapist therefore exploits this respect and trust.

Discretion is advised when attempting to generalise the findings to a larger population. As with all research, this study has limitations. There are inherent problems with utilising data obtained from police records which can be incomplete, unstructured, and distorted. The information in police files may not originally have been collected with the aim of scientific analysis (Alison, Snook, & Stein, 2001; Bateman & Salfati, 2007). It is also possible that specific variables and behavioural facets were not included, which could have yielded essential information relating to victim selection.

In order to develop a better understanding of the psychological and other variables which influences the perpetrator's selection of his victims, it is imperative that the researcher should interview the perpetrator. Skrapec (2001) endorses the latter statement in her research on serial murder, when she stressed the need for thorough in-depth interviews with serial murderers. Stevens (2000) also indicated the necessity for individual in-depth interviews with the serial rapist, in order to gain insight into victim selection. De Wet and Potgieter are embarking on a research project that will involve the individual perpetrators, in order to foster a better understanding victim selection. The current victim profile will be used as a point of departure for this new project.

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[1] Racial group is written in inverted commas as it is recognised that these are political constructions and not absolute biological categories.