

# Behavioural characteristics of rapists

Marita P. McCabe\* & Michelle Wauchope

*School of Psychology, Deakin University, Australia*

---

**Abstract** *A substantial proportion of past research on rapists has focused on their motives. This paper reports on two studies that investigated the behavioural characteristics of rapists. The first study gathered behavioural data from police rape files to determine the types of behaviours exhibited by 130 men charged with rape. The second study was designed to validate the behavioural clusters found in study 1, using the transcripts of court cases from a sample of 50 accused rapists. The results demonstrated a high level of consistency in the behaviours of the accused rapists in the two studies. Rapists were most frequently a stranger, the rape occurred frequently in the victim's home, and the rapist used a range of different ways to communicate verbally with his victim. Five behavioural themes were identified in both studies: vaginal, kissing/fondling, oral, anal and brutal/physical themes. This analysis of the behavioural aspects of rape provides an understanding of the types of behaviours exhibited by men who reach the stage of court proceedings for the crime of rape. The difference between the current behavioural profile and that reported by members of the general community who have experienced rape is discussed.*

**Keywords** *Rapists; behavioural characteristics; male rapists; qualitative data; rape themes; communication patterns; victim/offender relationship; type of assault*

## Introduction

Rape is defined as the penetration of the anus or vagina by a penis, finger or object or the penetration of the mouth by a penis. If a person is forced to penetrate someone in the anus, mouth or vagina with their penis, this is also regarded as rape (Polaschek, Ward & Hudson, 1997). The most commonly cited motives for rape are those of power, anger and sex (Barbaree & Marshall, 1991; Barbaree, Seto, Serin, Amos & Preston, 1994; Berlin, 1987; Groth, 1979; Groth, Burgess & Holmstrom, 1977; Hazelwood & Burgess, 1987; Holmstrom & Burgess, 1980; Holt, Meloy & Strack, 1999; Kanin, 1985; Palmer, 1988; Sanday, 1981). Most modern conceptualizations of rape recognize that it involves both aggressive and sexual motives, but theorists generally emphasize one motive and minimize others.

Holmstrom and Burgess (1980), for example, emphasized power and anger as opposed to the sexual motive. They reported that although rape always included power, anger and sexuality, they proposed that sexuality was never the dominant theme, as in each case they studied either power or anger dominated. They concluded that rape was the use of sexuality to

---

\*Corresponding author: Professor Marita McCabe, School of Psychology, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Victoria 3125, Australia. Tel: 61 3 9244 6856. Fax: 61 3 9244 6858. E-mail: maritam@deakin.edu.au

express issues of power and anger. Similarly, Prentky and Knight (1991) suggested that acute feelings of social and sexual inadequacy may motivate a rapist to overcome these feelings by asserting control and dominance in the most potentially threatening area to a woman—sexual behaviour. Lisak and Roth (1990) reported that non-incarcerated rapists, compared to a matched group of controls, showed more hostility toward women, felt more betrayed and deceived by women and had stronger dominance and power motives for engaging in sexual activity. Darke (1990) also proposed that all sexual assaults are perpetrated to satisfy the offender's desire for, and to enhance feelings of, power.

From a different perspective, Prentky and Knight (1991) suggested that power and sexual factors are not separate from each other, and that anger and sadistic sexual factors also overlap. This is also suggested by Barbaree and Marshall (1991). In reality, sexual factors are inherent in all crimes of rape, which may be the reason why researchers tend to focus on other factors, such as power and anger, for discriminating one type of rape from another. Most of the research and the typologies that stem from this research focus on the cognitions and motivations of rapists (Hudson & Ward, 1997; Knight & Prentky, 1990; Langdon & Marshall, 2001). In fact, in a recent review of his typology system, Knight (1999) identified the four primary motivations of rapists as being opportunity, pervasive anger, sexual gratification and vindictiveness.

An extensive search of the literature in this area has revealed that there are few studies that have examined behavioural characteristics alone in an attempt to understand the behaviour of rapists. Of those studies that do focus on the behaviour of offenders, a number of them have examined behavioural characteristics in an attempt to link them to a motive. For example, Darke (1990) linked offender behaviour during assaults to an intent to humiliate the victim. Darke examined the police files of 68 incarcerated sex offenders and found that the concepts of power, hostility and control were closely tied to the notion of humiliation. She found that the non-verbal humiliating behaviour tended to fall into two broad categories, namely sexual behaviours that are traditionally considered unacceptable, such as anal penetration, and blatant acts of abuse that were not necessarily physically injurious, such as ejaculation on the victim's face. Verbal humiliation appeared to include abusive statements, comments or questions of a sexual nature. Of the 68 cases studied, 43 cases (63%) included one or more of these humiliating behaviours. The validity of both the humiliation hypothesis and the high percentage of humiliating behaviour is, of course, dependent upon the way that behaviour in an assault is labelled and the accuracy of this labelling.

Support for humiliating behaviour being an aspect of rape was also found by Amir (1971), who reported that more than 25% of the cases that he studied contained instances of what he termed 'sexual humiliation', which referred specifically to acts of forced oral and anal penetration, cunnilingus and repeated penile/vaginal intercourse. Other researchers have also linked behaviours of rapists with the intention to humiliate (Clarke & Lewis, 1977; Holmstrom & Burgess, 1980).

Rather than trying to infer a motive from the behavioural characteristics of an offender, it may be more informative in understanding the characteristics of rapists to examine behavioural characteristics in isolation, without attempting to link them to a motive. By conducting a study that focuses specifically on behaviour, it is possible to explore a broad range of behaviours associated with rape, and not simply focus on the sexual act. For example, there are a number of other behavioural characteristics that may provide an understanding of an offender, such as an offender's demeanour before, during and after the assault; the amount of force used by the offender; the type of approach he uses; his choice of location for the assault; his reaction to resistance; the amount of anger he displays; the amount of negotiation he uses; his choice of weapon; and the type of restraints he uses. Past studies

have not provided a comprehensive understanding of these behavioural characteristics. This paper therefore reports on two studies that were designed to examine these broader behavioural characteristics of rapists.

## **Study 1**

### *Aim*

The aim of study 1 was to gather and classify behavioural data from Victorian Police Rape files to determine the behavioural characteristics of rapists.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Data were collected on 130 men who had been charged with sexual assault of adult women, using information in the form of a violent crime analysis report, gathered by the Victoria Police in the course of their investigations of these sexual assaults.

### *Materials*

All homicides and sexual offences in Victoria, Australia are recorded by the detective in charge of a case using a Violent Crime Analysis Report. This report is then sent to the Violent Crime Analysis Unit to be entered into the Victorian Police's Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (VICLAS), which is a database that is used to track violent crimes within Australia. The VICLAS questionnaire contains 263 questions that focus on areas such as the classification of the crime; the possible motive(s) for the crime; the victim and his/her demographic and identifiable information; the offender and his demographic and identifiable information, as well as information regarding his sexual practices and/or collections; and information about the crime itself, including the type of approach, the type of offence, and how the assault was perpetrated. All data that were collected related to male offenders. The data that related to the behavioural aspects of the rape (28 questions) are the focus of the current study. These data were completed by police officers based on their investigations and interviews with victims and witnesses.

### *Procedure*

The files of 130 men who had been charged with sexual assault of adult women over the past 12 months were selected by the Supervising Analyst of Victorian Police's Violent Crime Analysis Unit. These files comprised all men who had been charged over the previous 12 months. Only those offenders who had allegedly committed offences that were deemed as sexual assault or aggravated sexual assault of adult women under the Crimes Act (1956) were included. This meant that all other sexual crimes, such as incest, were excluded from the sample. Only crimes that included actual penetration or attempted penetration of an adult woman were included in this study.

It is not known how many of the 130 participants were actually convicted of their crimes. However, to be recorded by the VICLAS system, there is a strong likelihood that an assault did, in fact, occur because of the comprehensive screening process involved to reach this stage. There are an extensive range of hurdles that need to be satisfied before an investigation

is undertaken. The alleged offender is questioned by police, and charges are laid only if there is sufficient evidence for the police to believe that he/she committed the crime. It is only at the end of this process that a VICLAS form is completed by the lead police officer.

## Results

### *Type of assault*

The 28 questions that related to the behavioural aspects of the rape that were outlined in the VICLAS report were found to centre around five distinct themes, namely a vaginal theme, a kissing/fondling theme, an oral theme, an anal theme and a brutal/physical theme. Table I shows the frequency of each theme within the current sample. Frequencies were obtained by counting each time a particular theme was present in an incident. Most incidents (68%) contained more than one of these themes.

*Theme 1: vaginal theme.* This theme included all categories of sexual assault that involved vaginal penetration, such as vaginal intercourse, digital penetration, foreign object insertion into the vagina, hand/fist insertion into the vagina, etc. The data indicated that this was the most prevalent form of assault, with 119/130 or 91.5% of assaults containing this theme.

*Theme 2: kissing/fondling.* This theme included the less sexually intrusive categories of sexual assault, such as kissing, fondling and touching. The data indicated that a large number of assaults (41/130 or 31.5%) contained kissing and/or fondling as part of the assault. This finding suggests that rapists may be trying to convince themselves that the assault is mutually enjoyable and possibly consensual, given that this behaviour is frequently present in consensual sexual relationships.

**Table I.** *Categories and patterns of assault themes—study 1.*

Theme	Description	Frequency (n)
1.	Vaginal theme (including digital penetration)	119
2.	Kissing/fondling theme	41
3.	Oral theme	33
4.	Anal theme	29
5.	Brutal/physical	11
Theme combinations		
	Themes 1 & 2	37
	Themes 1 & 3	29
	Themes 1 & 4	21
	Themes 1 & 5	10
	Themes 2 & 3	11
	Themes 2 & 4	9
	Themes 2 & 5	3
	Themes 3 & 4	10
	Themes 3 & 5	3
	Themes 4 & 5	3
	Assaults with 3 or more themes	24

*Theme 3: oral theme.* This theme included all categories of sexual assault that involved any type of oral activity, such as cunnilingus, fellatio, anilingus, etc. The data indicated that the oral theme was present in a substantial number of assaults (33/130 or 25%).

*Theme 4: anal theme.* This theme included all categories of sexual assault that were associated with anal penetration, such as anal intercourse, anilingus, foreign object insertion into the anus, and hand/fist insertion into the anus. The data indicated that anal penetration was a reasonably prevalent assault, with 29/130 or 22% of assaults containing this theme.

*Theme 5: brutal/physical theme.* This theme included all categories of sexual assault that involved brutality, as well as physical aggression, such as biting, beating, kicking, slapping, choking, hair-pulling and strangulation. The data indicated that this was the least prevalent theme, with only 11/130 or 8.5% of assaults containing this theme.

#### *Patterns of themes*

Table I details the frequencies of the theme combinations found in the sexual assaults. The most common grouping or combination of assault categories was a mixture of the kissing/fondling and vaginal themes, with a frequency of 37/130 or 28.5%. This was followed closely by the combination of oral and vaginal themes, with a frequency of 29/130 or 22%, and finally the combination of anal and vaginal themes with a frequency of 21/130 or 16%. It is also interesting to note that 24/130 or 18.5% of the assaults involved three or more themes, indicating that a substantial minority of offenders engaged in unusual or prolonged sexual assaults.

#### *Victim/offender relationship*

Table II shows the frequency of the most prevalent types of relationship between the rapist and victim. The most common type of relationship was that of strangers, with 55/130 or 42% of rapists selecting a stranger as their victim. This seems to suggest a predatory and/or impersonal element to the assaults. An acquaintance/work colleague type of relationship was the next most prevalent type of relationship between a rapist and his victim, with 31/130 or 24% of rapists selecting an acquaintance or work colleague as their victim. It is possible that some rapists may be simulating consensual adult relationships by choosing someone with whom they are acquainted. The victim may simply be an easy target because of the rapist's knowledge of her habits and working patterns.

#### *Victim activity*

Table II shows the frequency of each of the most prevalent types of activities the victims were engaged in at the time of the offences. The large majority of offences took place in the victim's home in 55/130 or 42% of assaults. Some of these rapes may have been date rape, whereas other may have been rapes conducted by strangers who followed the victim home.

#### *Qualitative data*

The violent crime analysis report contained a question regarding the types of words each offender used with his victim.

**Table II.** *Types of victim/offender relationships, victim activity, and communication with the victim—study 1.*

	Frequency (n)
Types of relationships	
Stranger	55
Acquaintance/work colleague	31
Friend	13
<i>De facto</i> /partner	9
Client/customer	7
Ex-partner	5
Employer/employee	5
Family/relative	5
Victim activity	
At home	55
Public recreational activity	45
Client/work-related	18
Mutually arranged contact	12
Communication with victim	
Caring, persuasion, reassurance	31
Sexually abusive or explicit language	25
Angry, demeaning or threatening	23
Revenge, payback	3
2 or more themes	15

These data provided a better understanding of the types of words offenders use in their assaults. Four distinct themes emerged from the data, namely a caring, persuasion or reassurance theme; a sexually abusive or explicit language theme; an angry, demeaning or threatening theme; and a revenge or payback theme. Table II shows the frequency of each theme.

*Theme 1: caring, persuasion, reassurance.* This theme included words that suggested that the offender was worried about the victim, words that indicated that the offender was trying to persuade the victim to do something, or words that were meant to be reassuring in nature. Some examples of the kinds of words included in this theme were:

“I won’t hurt you, I just want sex.”

“I want you to enjoy this, I’m sorry, I want anal sex, grab the lubricant because I don’t want to hurt you too much.”

“I’m sorry I don’t know why but I had to do this, tell me if I hurt you but do as I say because if you don’t it might hurt.”

“If you cooperate I will be your boyfriend, you are beautiful.”

The data indicated that this was the most common theme used by offenders, with 31/130 or 24% of offenders using these kinds of words with their victims.

*Theme 2: Sexually abusive or explicit language theme.* This theme included words used by the offender that were sexually abusive and demeaning in nature, and/or words that were sexually explicit. Some examples of the words included in this theme were:

“I want you on top, play with yourself.”

“I can give you the wildest sex of your life.”

“You have sex written all over your face.”

The data indicated that this theme was the second most common theme used by offenders, with 25/130 or 19% of offenders using these kinds of words with their victims.

*Theme 3: angry, demeaning or threatening theme.* This theme included words that were angry, aggressive, demeaning or threatening to the victim in nature. Some examples of the kinds of words included in this theme were:

“Keep your voice down or I will kill you.”

“You’re going to earn it you bitch, stop your whinging, if you don’t shut up I’ve got a knife.”

“Shut up bitch, don’t move and it will not hurt.”

“Do you like that bitch?”

The data indicated that these kinds of words were also used frequently by offenders, with 23/130 or 18% of incidents containing this kind of theme.

*Theme 4: revenge, payback theme.* This theme included words that were revengeful in nature. Some examples of the kinds of words included in this theme were:

“This is what is going to happen if you ever think about leaving me.”

“I will kill your new boyfriend.”

“Where is your boyfriend now?”

The data indicated that this was the least common theme, with only 3/130 or 2% of offenders using words such as this with their victims.

## **Study 2**

### *Aim*

The aim of study 2 was to validate the results found in study 1 using a sample of men accused of raping adult women. It was not possible to obtain further files from the Victorian Police, and so transcripts of court cases from the Sex Offences Department of the Office of Public Prosecutions were analysed. These men were further down the path of the Justice System in terms of their crime, and so were not an equivalent sample to the men in study 1. However, this study was concerned with determining the extent to which the themes that emerged in study 1 were also evident in a group of accused male rapists at a different stage of the Justice System.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Data were collected using 50 court transcripts through the Office of Public Prosecutions of cases that had been tried through the court system over the past 5 years.

### *Materials*

The checklist used in study 1 was also used in study 2.

### *Procedure*

The transcripts of these 50 men were selected by the manager of the Sexual Offences section of the Office of Public Prosecutions in Victoria, Australia. The first 50 files of men accused of raping adult women located by the manager comprised the sample for the current study. Only those offences that were deemed as sexual assault or aggravated sexual assault of adult women under the Crimes Act (1956) were included. This meant that all other sexual crimes such as incest were excluded from the sample. Only crimes that included actual penetration or attempted penetration of adult women were included in this study. Data were collected from the victim's statement in each of the transcripts using the checklist from study 1. Court transcripts and victim statements are not structured reports such as the Victorian Police's violent crime analysis report, and therefore the information was selected from what the victim said happened to her. Given this difference in structure, it was inevitable that information about the presence or absence of some of the variables was not available.

It is important to note that not all these alleged offenders were convicted of their crimes. Some of the people who were required to defend themselves against rape charges in court may not have committed the crimes they were charged with. At times there may not have been enough evidence or information for the courts to convict some offenders. Furthermore, the court system itself is not about truth as such, but rather about the notion of being innocent until proven guilty, and thus the onus is on the prosecutor to actually prove beyond reasonable doubt that the alleged offender actually committed the offence. The notion of "beyond reasonable doubt" is an arbitrary one, which leaves a great deal of room for strategy and skill to influence the process, rather than truth.

## **Results**

### *Type of assault*

As with study 1, the data that emerged revealed five distinct themes, namely a vaginal theme, a kissing/fondling theme, an oral theme, an anal theme, and a brutal/physical theme. Table III shows the frequency of each theme. Frequencies were obtained by counting each time a particular theme was present in an incident. Most incidents (70%) contained more than one of these themes.

The most common theme combination of assault categories was a mixture of the vaginal and kissing/fondling themes, with a frequency of 22/50 or 44%. The combination of vaginal and oral themes was the next most common, with a frequency of 4/50 or 8% (see Table III).

It is interesting to note that 13/50 or 26% of the assaults involved three or more themes, indicating a moderately strong preference by the offenders for unusual or prolonged sexual assaults that involved a range of different activities.

### *Victim/offender relationship*

The most common type of relationship between a rapist and his victim was that of stranger, with 18/50 or 36% of rapists selecting a stranger as their victim (see Table IV). An ex-partner was the next most prevalent type of relationship between a rapist and his victim, with 12/50 or 24% of rapists selecting an ex-partner as their victim.

**Table III.** Categories and patterns of assault themes—study 2.

Theme	Description	Frequency (n)
1.	Vaginal theme (including digital penetration)	48
2.	Kissing/fondling theme	25
3.	Oral theme	19
4.	Anal theme	10
5.	Brutal/physical	1
Theme combinations		
	Themes 1 & 2	22
	Themes 1 & 3	4
	Themes 1 & 4	1
	Themes 1 & 5	1
	Themes 2 & 3	0
	Themes 2 & 4	1
	Themes 2 & 5	0
	Themes 3 & 4	0
	Themes 3 & 5	0
	Themes 4 & 5	0
	Assaults with 3 or more themes	13

### *Victim activity*

Data were collected from the court transcripts about the type of activity the victim was engaged in at the time of the offence. Table IV shows the frequency for each of the most prevalent types of activities the victims were engaged in at the time of the offences. Frequencies were obtained by counting each time this particular type of activity was indicated in the report.

**Table IV.** Types of victim/offender relationships, victim activity, and communication with the victim—study 2.

	Frequency (n)
Types of relationships	
Stranger	18
Acquaintance/work colleague	9
Friend	5
<i>De facto</i> /partner	1
Client/customer	2
Ex-partner	12
Employer/employee	3
Family/relative	1
Victim activity	
At home	26
Public recreational activity	15
Mutually arranged contact	7
Client/work-related	3
Communication with victim	
Caring, persuasion, reassurance	12
Sexually abusive or explicit language	14
Angry, demeaning or threatening	15
Revenge, payback	3
2 or more themes	10

Consistent with the results of study 1, the large majority of offences took place in the victim's home; in 26/50 or 52% of assaults. As for study 1, the data also indicated that the victim was frequently engaged in a public recreational activity.

### *Qualitative data*

Within the victim's statements there was information about the types of words that each offender used with his victim, and this information provided a useful insight into the act of rape. As for study 1, these data detailed the sexually explicit language used by offenders. The data were assigned to one or more of the four themes that emerged from study 1, namely a caring, persuasion or reassurance theme; a sexually abusive or explicit language theme; an angry, demeaning or threatening theme; and a revenge or payback theme. Table IV shows the frequency of each theme.

The data indicated that two or more of the themes mentioned above were present in the same incident only 20% (10/50) of the time, which seems to suggest that the majority of offenders had only one focus to their communication in their assaults.

## **Discussion**

These two studies were designed to examine the behavioural characteristics of rapists and the circumstances surrounding rape. The studies were conducted among alleged rapists to determine the behavioural nature of the sexual assault, the types of victims and place of the rape, as well as the nature of the communication the rapist used during the rape. Although there were some differences in the findings between the two studies, the overall findings demonstrated marked similarities in terms of the behaviours of the accused rapists. The differences in the findings may have been due to the different sample sizes in the two studies ( $n = 130$  in study 1,  $n = 50$  in study 2), and also the different characteristics of the men due to them being at different stages of the Justice System.

The results of the studies demonstrated that the most common category of assault amongst rapists was vaginal penetration. Similarly, the most common grouping or combination of assault categories was a mixture of the vaginal and kissing/fondling themes. This seems to suggest that rapists may be trying to convince themselves that their assaults are mutually enjoyable and possibly consensual, given that this behaviour is frequently present in consensual sexual relationships.

Very few studies have focused on categorizing the actual behaviours that occur in sexual assault. However, of the two studies located that provided a detailed examination of the behavioural aspects of rape (Clarke & Lewis, 1977; Holmstrom & Burgess, 1980), their findings did not fully support those of the current studies. Holmstrom and Burgess (1980) focused on excretory, sadistic sexual acts, and found that fellatio (oral theme) was the most frequent sexual act, followed by penile/vaginal penetration (vaginal theme). Similarly, Clarke and Lewis (1977) found that 23.3% of the assaults they studied involved one or more of the following acts: oral or anal penetration, cunnilingus, victim stimulation of the offender or offender masturbation. Overall, they found that fellatio (oral theme) was the most common act accompanying vaginal penetration (vaginal theme). This seems to suggest that vaginal penetration was assumed to occur, and the focus was on what accompanied it. Both the results from the current studies and those from Clarke and Lewis' study indicate that vaginal penetration (vaginal theme) was the main goal of a sexual assault. Although Holmstrom and

Burgess found the oral theme to be more common than the vaginal theme, this may be explained by the type of assaults they were studying.

In the current studies, the most common type of relationship between a rapist and his victim was that of strangers. This finding is at variance with the findings of other research, such as that by Koss (1988), who reported that approximately 80% of rapes occurred between acquaintances. Similarly, a national Women's Safety Survey, conducted in Australia between February and April 1996 to assess the nature and prevalence of violence experienced by women in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996), found that more women experienced physical violence from a current or previous partner than from a stranger or another man known to them (such as a relative, friend, work colleague or professional).

The differences in the findings between the current study and previous studies may be explained by the manner in which the data were gathered. The data for the current studies were collected from police files or court transcripts, which means that only sexual assaults that were reported to police and were likely to go to court (or had gone to court) were included in this sample of rapists. In contrast, surveys and other self-report questionnaires may capture a wider cross-section of sexual assaults; namely, those that are often not reported to police, such as sexual abuse by family members, relatives, friends or dating partners. This proposal is supported by the findings of Russell (1984), who found that assaults committed by offenders who were strangers, acquaintances or work/client-related, were more likely to be reported to police.

Furthermore, the current studies focused only on those crimes that were labelled as rape. This means that there were a number of assaults that could be considered sexual in nature, that were excluded from these studies; namely, those where actual penetration did not occur and/or those that were paedophilic in nature. It is therefore possible that there are a large number of sexual assaults and attempted sexual assaults committed by offenders who were friends, family, and/or relatives of the victims that were not included in the data included in this paper.

Results of the current studies revealed that a large number of offences took place in the victim's home. This seems to suggest that the offender was either invited into the home, had been into the victim's home before or knew where the victim lived. This proposal is consistent with findings by researchers (e.g. Koss, 1988) and a survey on Women's Safety (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996), that found that the majority of rapes occur between acquaintances or previous partners. However, this finding is not consistent with the results that the most common type of relationship between a rapist and his victim was that of strangers. A possible explanation for the apparently contradictory findings is that the rapist engaged in a substantial amount of planning, where he either followed the victim home or somehow obtained her address. A high level of planning was also found to be a characteristic element of Knight's (1999) classification of sexually (both sadistic and non-sadistic) motivated rapists. This proposal needs to be further explored in future studies.

The most common offender communication themes found in the current studies were that of a caring/persuasion/reassurance theme in study 1 and an angry/demeaning/threatening theme in study 2. The caring/persuasion/reassurance theme included words that suggested that the offender was worried about the victim, that the offender was trying to persuade the victim to do something or words that were meant to be reassuring in nature. The angry/demeaning/threatening theme included words that were angry, aggressive, demeaning or threatening to the victim in nature.

Previous research has not focused on rapists' communication patterns, except for a study conducted by Darke (1986) that focused only on verbal communication related to humiliation. However, the caring/persuasion/reassurance theme appears to be consistent with

the power reassurance rapist [proposed by Douglas & Olshaker (1998) to be the most common type of rapist], because previous researchers have suggested that this type of rapist generally feels inadequate and compensates for these feelings of inadequacy by sexually assaulting women (Douglas & Olshaker, 1998; Hazelwood & Burgess, 1987). Furthermore, it seems that this type of rapist is constantly looking for reassurance of his own power and potency, and may apologize and express concern for his victim (Douglas & Olshaker, 1998; Hazelwood & Burgess, 1987). However, this type of behaviour serves his need for reassurance rather than expressing any genuine concern for his victim (Douglas & Olshaker, 1998).

The angry/demeaning/threatening theme was the most common type of offender communication found in study 2. This theme does not seem to fit neatly with the rapist typologies proposed by previous researchers, for example the anger rapist, the power exploitative rapist, the power reassurance rapist and the sadistic rapist (Knight & Prentky, 1990; Prentky & Knight, 1991). However, some of the communication patterns seem to be consistent with the power exploitative rapist, as researchers suggest that this type of rapist is generally concerned with dominating and controlling his victim and using force, threats and humiliation to gain this submission (Douglas & Olshaker, 1998). This theme is also consistent with the crime scene variables of aggression, antisocial behaviour, anger and vindictiveness identified by Knight et al. (1998).

Although these descriptive and qualitative data do not appear to fit neatly into any of the typologies proposed by previous researchers, they are more consistent with some typologies than others. Furthermore, the category of assault, the victim/offender relationship, the victim's activity at the time of the offence or the offender's communication patterns may be alternative ways of categorizing rapists in future research. It is not clear at this stage if it is more useful to classify rapists according to various dimensions or to place them into different types within a particular typology system. It is important to note that the sample in the current study were men who had been subject to a police report or had been brought before the courts, whereas typologies developed in previous studies have often been based on samples drawn from student samples and men from the general population. An exception to this is, of course, the typology developed by Knight and Prentky (1990). It is also important to note that the data in the current studies were drawn from police reports and court transcripts and so the information recorded may, to some extent, reflect the bias of the person making the report. In order to obtain a better understanding of rape it is important to conduct further studies with different populations of rapists to determine the types of behaviours that accompany rape. This will, in turn, provide information on the type of person who engages in rape. This understanding of the behavioural patterns that accompany rape can then be used to better inform treatment and rehabilitation programmes for rapists.

## References

- Amir, M. (1971). *Patterns in Forcible Rape*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996). *Women's Safety Study*. Canberra: Government Printer of Australia.
- Barbaree, H. E., Seto, M. C., Serin, R. C., Amos, N. L. & Preston, D. L. (1994). Comparisons between sexual and nonsexual rapist subtypes. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 21, 95–114.
- Barbaree, H. E. & Marshall, W. L. (1991). The role of male sexual arousal in rape: six models. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 59, 621–630.
- Berlin, F. (1987). Interview with 5 rapists. *American Journal of Forensic Psychology*, 2, 3–33.
- Clarke, L. & Lewis, D. (1977). *Rape: the Price of Coercive Sexuality*. Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press.
- Crimes Act (1956). *Act No 6231 of 1956*. Melbourne Victoria: Government Printer of Victoria.

- Darke, J. L. (1990). Sexual aggression: achieving power through humiliation. In W. Marshall, D. R. Laws & H. E. Barbaree (Eds.), *Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories, and Treatment of the Offender* (pp. 55–72). New York: Plenum Press.
- Douglas, J. & Olshaker, M. (1998). *Obsession*. Sydney: Pocket Books.
- Groth, A. N. (1979). *Men who Rape: the Psychology of the Offender*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Groth, A. N., Burgess, A. W. & Holmstrom, L. (1977). Rape: power, anger, and sexuality. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *134*, 1239–1243.
- Hazelwood, R. & Burgess, A. (1987). *Practical Aspects of Rape Investigation: a Multidisciplinary Approach*. New York: Elsevier.
- Holmstrom, L. & Burgess, A. (1980). Sexual behaviour of assailants during reported rapes. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, *9*, 427–439.
- Holt, S., Meloy, J. & Strack, S. (1999). Sadism and psychopathy in violent and sexually violent offenders. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law*, *27*, 23–32.
- Hudson, S. M. & Ward, T. (1997). Rape: psychopathology and theory. In D. R. Laws & W. O'Donohue (Eds.), *Sexual Deviance: Theory, Assessment and Treatment* (pp. 332–355). New York: Guilford Press.
- Kanin, E. (1985). Date rapists: differential sexual socialization and relative deprivation. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, *14*, 219–231.
- Knight, R. A. (1999). Validation of a typology for rapists. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *14*, 303–330.
- Knight, R. A. & Prentky, R. A. (1990). Classifying sexual offenders: the development and corroboration of taxonomic models. In W. Marshall, D. Laws & H. Barbaree (Eds.), *The Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories, and Treatment of the Offender* (pp. 23–52). New York: Plenum Press.
- Knight, R. A., Warren, J. I., Reboussin, R. & Soley, B. J. (1998). Predicting rapist type from crime-scene variables. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, *25*, 46–80.
- Koss, M. P. (1988). Hidden rape: incidence, prevalence, and descriptive characteristics of sexual aggression and victimisation in a national sample of college students. In A. Burgess (Ed.), *Sexual Assault II* (pp. 3–25). New York: Garland.
- Langdon, C. M. & Marshall, W. L. (2001). Cognitions in rapists: theoretical patterns by typological breakdown. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, *6*, 499–518.
- Lisak, D. & Roth, S. (1990). Motives and psychodynamics of self-reported, unincarcerated rapists. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatrists*, *60*, 268–280.
- Palmer, C. (1988). Twelve reasons why rape is not sexually motivated: a skeptical examination. *Journal of Sex Research*, *25*, 512–530.
- Polaschek, D., Ward, T. & Hudson, S. M. (1997). Rape and rapists: theory and treatment. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *17*, 117–144.
- Prentky, R. A. & Knight, R. A. (1991). Identifying critical dimensions for discriminating among rapists. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *59*, 643–661.
- Russell, D. (1984). *Sexual Exploitation. Rape, Child Sexual Abuse, and Workplace Harassment*. California: Sage.
- Sanday, P. (1981). The socio-cultural context of rape: a cross-cultural study. *Journal of Social Issues*, *37*, 5–27.