

2020

## **Capturing the Investigators' Perspective of Stranger Rapists and the Investigation**

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Capturing the Investigators' Perspective of Stranger Rapists and the Investigation

by

Diane M. Crowley

MA, Monroe College, 2016

BS, Iona College, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

February 2020

## Abstract

Stranger rape investigations are complex and present the challenge of identifying the unknown suspect. Criminal profiling is an investigative tool used in these difficult-to-solve cases, but there is a lack of knowledge on how detectives use profiling during their investigations and whether they are able to apply criminal profiling research in practice. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of the stranger rape investigative process from the perspective of experienced sex crime detectives. The conceptual framework for this study was the assumption of homology, modified from Owens, and behavior consistency originating from trait theorists. Research questions focused on the similarities identified from numerous interactions with stranger rapists, intuition, and the role intuition plays in the investigative process. Twelve retired law enforcement officials with extensive experience investigating sex crimes were recruited to participate using purposeful and respondent-driven sampling techniques. Their experiences were shared by completing an anonymous online questionnaire. The data were then coded with themes emerging that indicated that participants used patterns identified amongst stranger rapists and the use of those patterns in other investigations to assist with identifying a stranger rapist. Law enforcement personnel may be able to use the study findings, specifically about how detectives view profiling as a tool, to refine their investigations. The implications for positive social change are improvements to the investigative process to identify stranger rapists more efficiently. These improvements ultimately may provide justice for victims and remove violent offenders from the general population.

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## Dedication

To my parents, for conveying from a very young age that the sky was the limit, and I could be whatever I wanted to be if I was willing to work hard for it. For telling me girls could do anything boys could do, and better. Thank you for teaching me the value of family, importance of integrity, strength of ambition, and power of determination. You led by example teaching me to embrace challenges, as they would lead to resiliency. I am beyond grateful for these lessons, but most grateful to be the very best of each of you. Cancer took my father long before he could see me reach the potential he so often spoke about, but his death has fueled a drive and aspirations within me that I never knew existed. The ability to maintain the drive through the storms has been due to my mother's unconditional love and perpetual support. To my father in heaven, who could not be here through this dissertation journey, and to my mother, who was there every step of the way with pom-poms: Thank you for believing in me and more importantly teaching me how to believe in myself. I love you both beyond measure, infinity times infinity; this one is for you and all my future endeavors.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Media coverage of criminal profiling, including fictional television portrayals, has made forensic psychology a popular field in recent years (Kocsis, 2015). The reality is that there is no universal way to profile (Kocsis, 2015), despite its unique potential to solve serious crimes. Perspectives of the most experienced sex crime detectives are often not shared with others. Thus, the research community cannot empirically reveal the anecdotal evidence from those practicing in the field. Experience from practice is not something that researchers can comprehend. The detectives' intuition should not be underestimated (Wright, 2013), and is the rationale for this research. By gaining a deeper understanding of the perspective of the detective the potential implications for positive social change are improvements to the investigative process. Ultimately, this could mean identifying violent offenders more efficiently, which results in justice for victims and overall safety for communities. This chapter will provide the foundation for this research. In the chapter, I will address the background, the problem, and the purpose of the study. The chapter also includes the research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, and definitions of key terms. The assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study will also be explained.

### **Background**

The New York City "Mad Bomber" case was the first successful use of criminal profiling (Fallon & Snook, 2019). Investigators in the 1950's analyzed the behaviors and actions of a serial offender developing inferences regarding the type of person he was

(Fallon & Snook, 2019). These inferences created the criminal profile of the “Mad Bomber” (Fallon & Snook, 2019). Despite the lack of success in many other cases, the field of profiling continues to flourish, mainly because there is no other investigative tool like it (Kocsis, 2015). The process can be subdivided into clinical and statistical categories (Fallon & Snook, 2019). Clinical tends to be unstructured and guided by intuition, whereas statistical seeks models to inform practice by both inductive and deductive methods (Fallon & Snook, 2019). Both processes have the same goal to identify the offender. In the simplest definition, criminal profiling is the relationship between the offender and the offense (Gerard, Whitfield, Porter, & Browne, 2016).

The original typologies used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) were categorized as organized or disorganized (Fallon & Snook, 2019). Based on the offenders’ behavior during the commission of the crime, the offender was classified as organized or disorganized, which allowed for certain inferences to then be made (Fallon & Snook, 2019). Over time, the term *criminal profiling* has been replaced by *criminal investigative analysis*, though the terms mean the same thing and are often used interchangeably (Petherick, 2013).

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 revealed existing research focuses on the statistical aspect of criminal profiling. There is a lack of strong empirical evidence supporting criminal profiling despite consumer reports revealing anecdotal support (Fox & Farrington, 2015). The gap in the literature is the clinical aspect of criminal profiling. A deeper understanding of the clinical aspect of criminal profiling is necessary to inform statistical approaches and guide future research.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem with identifying unknown subjects in serious crimes, specifically stranger rape. That problem, precisely, is the detectives' ability to apply criminal profiling research into practice during an investigation (Trojan & Salfati, 2016). Currently, when forensic science and technology fail, criminal profiling methods are the last resort to possibly identify the suspect (Sea, Kim, & Youngs, 2016). However, there is a lack of coherency when applying the research to practice (Kocsis, 2015). This problem impacts the detective, the victim, and the general population because investigative resources are not being utilized to their maximum potential to identify the rapists and bring them to justice (Almond, Mcmanus, Bal, O'Brien, Rainbow, & Webb, 2018). One possible factor contributing to this problem is that researchers have not fully considered the perspective of detectives. The statistical research relies solely on facts from reports, not how detectives process the facts in practice.

Researchers (Almond et al., 2018; Goodwill, Lehmann, Beauregard, & Andrei, 2016; Sea et al., 2016) have examined the prior convictions of known stranger rapists, finding the rapist to be unique and active in their criminal justice history (Friestad & Skardhamar, 2016). Researchers suggest that patterns identified can assist detectives in future investigations; however, none of the literature reviewed considers the perspectives of detectives, what they have experienced through investigations, and what they feel would be relevant to assist them in terms of profiling. By capturing the lived experience of sex crime detectives who have investigated stranger rape cases, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge by bridging the gap between research and practice.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the stranger rape investigation from the perspective of sex crime detectives using a phenomenological approach. I sought to capture the perspectives and lived experiences of sex crime detectives regarding stranger rape investigations while obtaining a deeper understanding of intuition and the role intuition plays during the investigative process. By focusing on these goals, this study added to the current body of knowledge by presenting a different perspective that can guide future research.

### **Research Questions**

I sought to answer the following three research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What suspect similarities have sex crime detectives identified from their interaction with numerous stranger rapists?

RQ2: How do experienced sex crime detectives describe intuition?

RQ3: How does intuition play a role in the investigative steps taken by sex crime detectives to identify the suspect in stranger rape cases?

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used two theories for the conceptual framework. The literature reviewed for this study identified behavior consistency and the assumption of homology as the foundation for research on criminal profiling (Almond et al., 2018; Goodwill et al., 2016; Sea et al., 2016; Trojan & Salfati, 2016). Behavior consistency originated from work by personality trait theorists (Petherick, 2013). The theory states that certain traits result in human



behavior and do not deviate over time and that actions will reflect that same behavior in all aspects of life (Petherick, 2013).

The second conceptual theory I used was the assumption of homology originating from biologist Richard Owen. Experts have applied homology to the phenomenon of criminal profiling, suggesting that offenders who similarly commit crimes also share similar backgrounds (Alison, Bennell, Mokros, & Ormerod, 2002; Petherick, 2013). This modification is demonstrated in David Canter's (Canter, 2011; Canter, Bennell, Alison, & Reddy, 2003) profiling A to C equation. Canter suggests there is a link between the actions of an offender at a crime scene and the characteristics of that offender (Canter, 2011; Canter et al., 2003).

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a qualitative phenomenological design. Qualitative research is exploratory in nature (Patton, 2015); researchers seek a deeper understanding of the attitudes, the perspectives, and the opinions of its participants (Macdonald, 2012; Nassaji, 2015). My intent in using this method was to gain a deeper understanding of the investigative process from the perspective and thick descriptions of experienced sex crime detectives. Nassaji (2015) explained that qualitative researchers explore the data collected to determine common themes.

According to Patton (2015), researchers conducting phenomenological studies aim to find meaning by exploring the lived experiences of people who share similar encounters. The phenomenology method is used when the researcher wants to describe a specific phenomenon through the perspectives of those who have experienced it firsthand

(Rudestam & Newton, 2015). I created interview questions that I included on a questionnaire that I administered via Survey Monkey, an online survey platform. Traditionally, interview instrumentation has been associated with quantitative studies; however, Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that researchers conducting qualitative studies can interview participants using questions in short answer, journal style, or essay formats. I designed open-ended questions to solicit rich, detailed responses.

### **Definitions**

I use the following terms and definitions throughout the study:

*Arrest*: “The act of keeping a person in lawful custody. A warrant, crime, or statute can authorize this” (“Arrest,” n.d., para. 1).

*Conviction*: “In a general sense, the result of a criminal trial, which ends in a judgment or sentence that the prisoner is guilty as charged” (“Conviction,” n.d, para. 2).

*Crime linkage*: An analytical technique in which a potential crime series is identified through analysis of an offender’s crime scene behavior (Woodhams, 2012).

*Criminal profiling* (also referred to as offender profiling, psychological profiling, offender analysis, behavioral profiling, and profiling): An investigative practice that was initially developed to provide behavioral advice to police investigations and has become synonymous with the crimes of the serial killer (Petherick, 2013).

*Detective* (also referred to as investigator): “The name given to a police officer who will detect and apprehend those people who have committed a crime” (“Detective,” n.d., para. 1).

*Intuition:* The ability to automatically go beyond the information available to develop a hypothesis and make inferences (Wright, 2013).

*Investigation:* “A term that means to examine and look at carefully; discover the factor make a legal inquiry” (“Investigation,” n.d., para. 1).

*Investigative experience:* Engagement that provides detectives with a knowledge base from which intuition can develop (Wright, 2013).

*Rape:* “The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim,” according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report Summary Reporting System (as cited in United States Department of Justice, 2012, para. 1).

*Special Victims Division:* A highly specialized police unit that investigates sex crimes and child abuse allegations (New York City Police Department, 2019).

*Stranger rape:* An act of rape in which the victim does not know the perpetrator at all (Rainn, 2019).

### **Assumptions**

The assumptions for this study were that participants would be sincere and provide detailed descriptions of their experiences with stranger rape investigations. Qualitative research relies on the assumption that participants will be honest (O’Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008). Although self-reporting comes with the understanding that the data collected may range in detail from minimal information to rich descriptions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I made numerous efforts to elicit detailed and honest responses from

participants (see Chapter 3 for more discussion of my interviewing protocol).

Furthermore, I assumed that participants would have vast experience in investigating stranger rape cases. To achieve this goal, sampling was designed to recruit participants who had at least three years of experience investigating sex crimes.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was exploratory in nature and concerned the experiences of retired sex crime detectives. The 12 participants all stated that they retired from New York City. The study was therefore delimited to retired New York City detectives and did not include the perspectives of active detectives and those from other regions of the United States. To obtain a rich set of data to utilize and replicate in future studies, Fusch and Ness (2015) recommend achieving saturation. Fusch and Ness explained that saturation occurs when new information is no longer being obtained and coded (2015). Regarding transferability, Miles and Huberman (2011) explained that the same phenomenon would have to be studied in similar organizations.

### **Limitations**

I could not interview every person who has experience investigating stranger rapes. Using purposeful sampling, I sought participants who represented the population as a whole. This study was limited to the experiences described by 12 retired sex crime investigators from New York City and may not be generalizable to the broader population of investigators. I was cognizant of using a retired population, as Gertler, Czogiel, Stark, and Wilking (2017) explained that a time-lapse between the personal experience and interview could present challenges regarding accuracy. Ravitch and Carl

(2016) also explained that participants may withhold information or embellish the truth due to embarrassment, lack of memory, or simple misunderstanding of the question or context.

The use of a Survey Monkey questionnaire as the instrument also came with some limitations. Similar to telephone interviews, Novick (2008) stated that the researcher cannot observe the participant's body language and nonverbal cues. Many of the other limitations (honesty, accuracy, and credibility) would be true for any data collection method. Ravitch and Carl (2016) pointed out that the participant's interpretation of the questions may alter their responses. The instrumentation was chosen to manage any potential biases due to my role as the researcher. I will explain my choice in further detail in Chapter 3. Participants were informed on the purpose of the study and directed to answer questions openly, honestly, and in great detail. I weighed the pros and cons of this design and determined that the pros outweighed the cons.

### **Significance**

This research filled the gap in the literature by providing insight on the experiences of sex crime detectives. The major problem within the field of profiling is the disconnection between research and practice. Studies by Chifflet (2015), Fox and Farrington (2015), and Yokota and colleagues (2017) revealed anecdotal evidence about investigators' application of criminal profiling methods, but they lack an explanation of specific details that result in such success. Other researchers have identified links between specific crime scene actions/behaviors and prior convictions through the A to C

equation (Almond et al., 2018; Goodwill et al., 2016; Sea et al., 2016). However, it is unknown if these findings are useful for actual investigations.

Although research on criminal profiling methods claims to be useful to detectives in identifying unknown suspects (Almond et al., 2018; Goodwill et al., 2016; Sea et al., 2016; Trojan & Salfati, 2016), it lacks consideration of the perspective of the investigator. This study was unique in that it involved exploring the perspectives of sex crime detectives to gain a deeper understanding of the investigative process, the value of intuition, and patterns within the stranger rapist's background as identified by those who have conducted stranger rape investigations. The knowledge gained from these participants helps bridge the gap in literature and has the potential to guide future research.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided background information on criminal profiling, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, and conceptual frameworks associated with criminal profiling. Furthermore, the nature of the study, key definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study have been explained. In the next chapter, I will provide the foundation for this problem through a literature review.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Researchers have extensively studied the topic of criminal profiling with good reason. Offender profiling is often the only or last resort to identify a suspect who has committed a crime (Sea et al., 2016). Existing research concentrates on an array of serious crime types including homicide, rape/sexual offenses, burglary, school shootings, and arson. Researchers (Chifflet, 2015) who have studied criminal profiling express frustration in the lack of empirical evidence despite the abundance of anecdotal support. Although supporters in the field view the slightest evidence as confirmation of the value of the technique (Almond et al., 2018; Goodwill et al., 2016; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek, Van Den Eshof & Mali, 2010; Trojan & Salfati, 2016), critics question the framework and the application of findings to practice (Chifflet, 2015; Kocsis & Palermo, 2015).

There is limited and dated research on criminal profiling for rape, as much of the literature focuses on psychological aspects of rape, motivations of the offender, comparisons to other crime types, or characteristics of the victim or has been conducted for preventative, rehabilitative, or recidivism purposes. In reviewing the literature, I found limited literature on the nonserial rapist and the one-off rape to assist investigators. The literature aligned with this topic is minimal and was conducted outside of the United States (Almond et al., 2018; Davies et al., 1997; Goodwill et al., 2016; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010).

Rape has historically been considered a severely underreported crime. The literature regarding rapists and profiling is also scant, despite the recent trend of increased

reporting likely due to social movements empowering sexual assault survivors to come forward and seek justice (Sheley, 2018). Current literature focuses on rape culture and consent (Sheley, 2018), which is not aligned with identifying suspects in stranger rape investigations.

In this chapter, I will explain the literature search strategies used to conduct the literature review. I will describe the foundations associated with criminal profiling and criminal profiling as it stands today. An explanation of what is known to be true about rape, the investigation, the victim, and the rapist will be provided to grasp the purpose and significance of this research. In the literature review, I will describe prior studies whose authors used the frameworks of behavioral consistency, assumption of homology, and the A to C equation. The chapter begins with overviews of the literature search strategy and conceptual framework for the study.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I worked with librarians from Walden University, Mercy College, and Monroe College to determine search criteria. Then, using access through Walden University Library and Monroe College Library as well as open internet searches through Google Scholar and Sage Publications, I conducted searches using the key words *offender profiling, criminal profiling, A to C equation, homology assumption, behavior consistency, rapist characteristics, crime scene actions, sexual offenders, and investigation*. Initially, I reviewed articles about sexual crimes/rapes, frameworks, and general offender profiling. Once that literature was exhausted, the search broadened to



include offender profiling within other serious and violent crime types. I also found literature by retrieving and reviewing research mentioned in the articles I located.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theories associated with criminal profiling are behavior consistency and the assumption of homology (Petherick, 2013).

#### **Behavioral Consistency**

Behavior consistency originates from personality trait theorists who suggested that human behavior does not deviate over time and that actions will reflect that same behavior in all aspects of life (Petherick, 2013). Salfati (2008) described behavior consistency as vital to profiling, in that it is necessary to comprehend the progression of an offender over time and the regularity repeated across a series of crimes. Although psychology theorists now assert that behavior is based on situations, they still use personality tests to determine career and education success (Kluemper, McLarty, & Bing, 2014). Many researchers argue that with behavior consistency, behavior differentiation is also necessary (Canter, 2004). This means that not only do offenders display consistency over time but that the consistency must be easily distinguished from others under differentiation (Canter, 2004). Goodwill and Alison (2007) agreed with Canter regarding differentiation, stating that profiling is only possible if the behavior is consistent and different from that of other offenders and if the manner in which the offenders commit crime relates to their characteristics. Research supporting behavior consistency has come in forms of crime linkage, comparative case analysis, and linkage analysis (Vettor, Woodhams, & Beech, 2014).

### **Assumption of Homology**

The assumption of homology originated from biologist Richard Owen (1843) who stated that there is the “same organ in different animals under every variety and form” (p. 379). In essence that all vertebrate in different species (humans, cats, seals, bats) though physically different (hand, paws, flippers, wings) and serving different purposes, share the common structure plan (Owen, 1843). These frameworks are modified to the phenomenon of criminal profiling, suggesting that offenders who similarly commit crimes, also share similar backgrounds (Alison et al., 2002; Petherick, 2013).

### **A to C Equation**

Considering both behavior consistency and the assumption of homology, a profiling equation was created. Canter suggested there is a link between the actions of an offender at a crime scene and the characteristics of that offender (Canter, 2011; Canter et al., 2003). Canter (2004) summarizes his previous work stating that “A” is everything that is initially known from the criminal incident and what is needed/ wanted to know that can lead to identification of a suspect is represented by C. More recently, Canter (2011) has stated that while development has been slow, it has also been steady revealing that in specific instances there is a relationship between A and C and the inferences made in between are useful to investigations. The majority of the literature on profiling rests on homology or behavior consistency, utilizing the A to C equation.

Profiling skeptics question the validity of these frameworks and note that human behavior is not consistent but situational (Chifflet, 2015; Kocsis & Palermo, 2015). On the contrary, in their study of stranger sexual assailants, Goodwill et al. (2016) considered

situational contexts and still found support for homology. Yokota et al. (2016) also studied sexual offenders' behavior considering the victims' reaction finding support for both behavior consistency and behavior differentiation. However, Goodwill and Alison (2007) stated that homology holds in some situations but is not absolute. Chifflet (2015) further commented on the lack of empirical research and pointed blame at homology. Specifically, he claimed that all of the frameworks associated with criminal profiling are flawed, and require revision (Chifflet, 2015).

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

#### **Criminal Profiling and Practice**

Criminal profiling can be categorized as predictive or explanative (Vettor et al., 2014). The approaches can then be broken down into classifications of the criminal investigative approach, the clinical approach, and the statistical approach (Alison, Goodwill, Almond, Van den Heuel, & Winter, 2010). Regardless of classification, profiling aims to provide inferences concerning an unknown suspect.

Salfati (2008) reminded us that motivations are not the same as behaviors in terms of observations and measurement therefore actions must be behavior-based to be most useful to law enforcement. Meaning, one cannot observe and articulate motivation. Motivations can be assumed, but assumptions cannot be documented or used in future investigations. Actions, however, are observable and can be measured. If documented accurately the behaviors could be queried by investigators and potentially generate probable suspect pools.

Profiling is said to have the ability to assist police to identify the suspect in unsolved cases (Fox & Farrington, 2015). Sea et al. (2016) suggested that criminal profiling is often the last resort when other methods fail to identify the unknown suspect. Bouhana, Johnson, and Porter (2016) took it a step further and described criminal profiling as a potential method to identify a suspect pool when there is a lack of physical trace evidence. Considering this, profiling is used on difficult to solve cases (Chifflet, 2015), and can be useful in cold case investigations. Profiling is an investigative tool in a class all its own, as Kocsis (2015) argued there lacks comparison to other investigative tools. Wright (2013) argued that the research on profiling should be refocused as detectives regularly use their intuition to draw conclusions regarding offenses and offenders.

Many have argued that all crime is committed by a small portion of people living within society (Bouhana et al., 2016). Simply stated, Woodhams (2012) suggested that the majority of crimes are committed by a group of minority offenders. The criminal histories of violent offenders supported this claim, as the majority of stranger rapists have a criminal history and were active in police databases (Almond et al., 2018). Trojan and Salfati (2016) stated it is for this reason that criminal history has been deemed to have great potential for criminal profiling. In other words, by looking at those who have been arrested in stranger rape investigations, what patterns exist in their histories that can be used to assist in future cases?

**Popularity of profiling despite lack of empirical findings.** Forensic psychology and the topic of criminal profiling have continued to grow (Chifflet, 2015) making it a

popular area for students to study (Kocsis, 2015), partly because of how it is portrayed by the media (Beauregard, 2010; Kocsis, 2015). Beauregard (2010) noted that despite the increased popularity the development has been slow, while Chifflet (2015) stated that the scientific evidence of profiling is lacking, despite anecdotal claims. However, anecdotal claims by those who practice the investigative tool cannot be ignored and are revealed by Yokota et al. (2017) who stated that when looking at the profiling accuracy in Japan, 46% of the cases it was utilized in led to identifying the offender.

Fox and Farrington (2015) also noted the positive feedback from law enforcement and explained the issues of accuracy in consumer opinion reports. In their experimental study of the utilization of burglar profiles in control and treatment groups, the post-test revealed the use of the burglar profiles for treatment groups had significantly higher clearance and arrest rates (Fox & Farrington, 2015). Kocsis (2015) added that validity is greatly misunderstood. He further explained that the evidence only reveals the general potential of criminal profiling, lacking specific efficiency of approach to profiling, like when or how to utilize it (Kocsis, 2015). Wright (2013) drew attention to the fact that detectives routinely rely on their intuition on hard to solve investigations. This concept seems to be dismissed by many who study the phenomenon as Kocsis (2015) further identified that most of the profiling research has been conducted by those who have zero involvement with the field.

## **Rape**

Historically rape was accepted as the method men used to claim ownership of women during early civilization and were not considered outlawed until the late 15<sup>th</sup>

century (Siegel, 2018). Rapes can be categorized further as gang rape, serial rape, acquaintance rape, date rape, statutory rape, marital rape, aggravated rape and rape on campus (Siegel, 2018). Stranger rape is when the victim and the perpetrator have no prior interaction (Rainn, 2019). Stranger rape adds an elevated level of fear because the suspect is unknown to the victim and initially undetected to law enforcement.

Although rape has historically been said to be one of the most underreported crimes, recent statistics show an increase in reporting (Almond et al., 2018). Sheley (2018) blamed the underreporting of rape to lack of enforcement, further suggesting taking the broken windows approach to sex crimes, by focusing on street level sexual harassment it could reduce more serious sex crimes like rape. As the definition of rape has changed it has become challenging for the criminal justice field. Traditionally rape was classified as forcible when in reality modern day it also the lack of consent (Sheley, 2018). Siegel (2018) noted that while there is a decrease in other violent crimes, rape under both the traditional and new definitions have been on the rise. The increase of rape reports have many believing that it is due to the rape culture, however, others make it clear rape comes from a motivated offender, not cultural factors (Rainn, 2019; Sheley, 2018).

The motivation for rape had been extensively studied and often has taken away from the study of crime scene actions during a rape (Hakkanen et al., 2004). Those motivations are classified as both aggression and sexually based (McCabe & Wauchope, 2005). The varieties of forcible rape have been classified as anger rape, power rape, and

sadistic rape (Siegel, 2018). While the motivations of rape are certainly useful for prevention and intervention, it serves little use for profiling purposes.

No literature reviewed specifically identified success cases for practice for use of profiling in rape investigations, Sea et al. (2016) suggested that sex crimes and their offenders may be the best candidate for profiling, as they show the greatest promise.

**The detective and the investigation.** Scott et al. (2006) stressed the importance of law enforcement response to rape, as rape instills fear on not only the victim, the entire community. An inappropriate or slow response has the potential to re-victimize the victim. It is because of this that agencies are always seeking additional and innovative ways to identify stranger rapists, like criminal profiling (Scott et al., 2006). Ter Beek et al. (2010) acknowledged this by saying detectives must think and act quickly even though they may not have all the information and are limited with time and resources. Furthermore, stranger rape investigations usually lack witnesses presenting additional challenges to the investigator (Ter Beek et al., 2010).

Due to the lack of literature on detectives and the investigative process of stranger rape, literature for other violent/serious crimes that discussed these factors was reviewed. Wright (2013) described initial stages of homicide investigation as fast-tracked gathering as much information as possible while preserving physical evidence. The “golden hour” or first 48 is considered the initial stages of an investigation that is crucial for the success of the case (Wright, 2013). The investigative steps taken within the first 48 hours are critical, something experienced detectives are familiar with (Ter Beek et al., 2010).

While many cases solve themselves, detectives rely on their intuition for other investigations. A detectives' intuition is created by both experience and a high level of knowledge (Kahneman, 2011). In a study to measure the accuracy of detectives' intuitions for homicide investigations, 40 experienced detectives (at least 12 years of experience, the average of 24 years) from the United Kingdom participated in the study with the following results: 67% of the inferences made based on their intuition was accurate (Wright, 2013). These findings suggested that when information is scarce, intuition provides direction (Wright, 2013). However, no studies involving stranger rape studied the detectives' intuition and the role that it played during the first 48 hours and remainder of the investigative process.

Sheley (2018) argued that many investigative steps are not being performed promptly like collecting DNA evidence or interviewing witnesses. This could be due to manpower issues, but Sheley (2018) suggested that it is due to the stereotypes of victims, stating agencies routinely discourage victims from participating in a criminal investigation. Siegel (2018) acknowledged the challenge faced by prosecutors trying rape cases. Sheley (2018) added that prosecutors often only will take on "winnable" cases, but Siegel (2018) explained that often blame is removed from the perpetrator and placed on the victim making it difficult to get a conviction.

**The victim.** Siegel (2018) stated that the majority of rape victims are females, however, there are male victims as well. Victims of rape experience violations that advance from personal to physical to ultimately sexual (Canter et al., 2003). Traditional rape culture includes a stereotype of the victim as helpless and fragile with the attack



being unavoidable (Sheley, 2018). Stranger rapes typically fall under this stereotype as LeBeau (1987) cited Williams (1984) stating that stranger sex assaults provide both the victim and law enforcement with the concept of “legitimate.” While recent social movements of #metoo have encouraged victims to be empowered and report their sexual assault, the hashtag #whywomendontreport is also commonly observed on social media.

During the investigation and prosecution of sex crimes, victims are often portrayed in a manner that suggests they held some responsibility in the crime (Sheley, 2018). The stereotype of rape victims has always come with some victim-blaming. It was not until the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century when married and poor women who were raped were considered victims (Siegel, 2018). History and stereotypes add challenging levels to the investigative process. Traumatized victims may be hesitant on reporting certain details, which can hinder the investigation.

**The rapist.** Researchers have studied the different classifications of rapists, which are beneficial for rehabilitation purposes, but not useful to guide an investigation (Ter Beek et al., 2010). Meaning classifying rapists into subgroups can provide investigators with the type of criminal they are looking for. However, this type of knowledge does not lead investigators to the actual identity of the perpetrator.

Almond et al. (2018) claimed that stranger rapists were already documented in police databases. Ter Beek et al. (2010) found 76% of their sample had prior convictions, Davies et al. (1997) stated that 85% of stranger rapists had recorded versatile criminal history, Scott et al. (2006) stated 84% of their sample of stranger rapists had prior criminal records, Friestad and Skardhamar revealed 80% of their rapist sample had prior

criminal records, and Goodwill et al. (2016) found that 90% of their sample of stranger rapists had prior criminal records. Due to the seriousness of the crime and risk of reoffending, research on high-risk sexual offenders are said to be necessary (Kaseweter, Woodworth, Logan, & Freimuth, 2016). Goodwill and Alison (2007) acknowledged that simply studying the general background of offenders is productive. While knowledge is beneficial, no researcher has considered how this knowledge can be applied in an actual investigation to lead to the identification of the suspect in a real stranger rape investigation, nonetheless apprehension, arrest, and conviction.

The contents of the rapists' criminal record were further explored by Friestad and Skardhamar (2016) who conducted a study to explore the singularity of rapists and then assessed the prior convictions to determine if their backgrounds revealed versatility or specialization. They used secondary data to test the theory that convicted rapists differed from all other offender types (violent non-sexual, other sex crimes, and other general crimes). The sample consisted of 36,951 men convicted of crimes in 2002 and 2003 in Norway, assessing social indicators, prior convictions dating back to 1992, and recidivism rates for crimes committed post-conviction through 2008. The convicted rapist who represented 142 of the total sample had significantly higher prior conviction rates (78.9%) for diversified crimes, lower education levels, higher percentages receiving social benefits, and lower recidivism rates when compared to their counterparts. All of these conclusions, in essence, is supporting the basis of homology. Friestad and Skardhamar (2016) failed to acknowledge the possibility that those convicted of rape could be incarcerated, hence the low recidivism. The relevance of this study presents the

uniqueness of rapists compared to other criminal types. The result of a highly active and diverse criminal history opens the door for additional research to study.

Ter Beek and colleagues (2010) further noted that 51% of their sample had prior convictions for a violent crime. Aside from criminal history, there is other accessible documentation on offenders, referred to as the offenders' resume. These studies do not consider summonses, domestic violence reports, complaint reports as victims, aided reports, social media presence, or parole/ probation/ sex offender status.

Both Goodwill et al. (2016) and Ter Beek et al. (2010) found that the distance a perpetrator lived from the crime scene should be further explored. Ter Beek et al. (2010) found that their sample was consistent with previous research stating stranger rapists offend in the area close to their home as 50% resided within 3km and 74% resided within 10km of initial contact with their victim. Goodwill et al. (2016) identified 53.9% of rapists as the hunter type, targeting victims near their homes. Despite these findings, literature is focused either on geographical profiling or criminal profiling, not the combination of the two together.

**Behavior consistency and crime linkage.** Literature reviewed for behavior consistency resulted in crime linkage for sexual assaults (Corovic, Christianson, & Bergman, 2012; Deslauriers-Varin & Beauregard, 2014; Harbers, Deslauriers-Varin, Beauregard, & Van Der Kemp 2012; Hewitt & Beauregard, 2014; Slater, Woodhams, & Hamilton-Giachritsis 2014; Tonkin et al., 2017; Yokota et al., 2016). Meaning based on consistencies in behavior, crimes can be linked to one offender, commonly referred to as

established patterns committed by a serial offender. Yokota et al. (2016) stated crime linkage is only possible if both consistency and distinctiveness are present.

Obviously, the more information that is known about a suspect, the easier it would be to identify. When linking numerous crimes together, committed by the same individual, more information is known. While this differs from traditional profiling, some consider it to be a form of criminal profiling as it rests on the assumption of behavior consistency (Vettor et al., 2014). This type of profiling is not useful for one-off crimes, while it is another tool that could be useful to investigators in terms of working collaboratively and efficiently using resources and manpower. Physical description, crime location, and motive are all taken into consideration when linking crimes together. Crime linkage also occurs with the assistance of modern technology and forensic science and has been successful in stranger rape (Vettor et al., 2014).

Tonkin and Woodhams (2015) acknowledged homogeneity makes it difficult to differentiate one offender from another, claiming perpetrators are versatile. They studied 166 binary behavior variables of 3018 stranger rapists responsible for 3364 crimes collectively from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Finland, Dutch, and Belgian to determine the accuracy for linking crimes by use of three different analysis techniques. Each method for analysis achieved statistically significant levels of discrimination accuracy, ultimately supporting behavior consistency and behavior distinctiveness as the basis for linking crimes. This also retaliates against those perspectives who state that behavior is situational.

Yokota et al. (2016) studied six behavior variables that were not based on the victim's reaction of 360 serial offenders responsible for 720 serious sex crimes in Japan. Removing the victim's reaction from the equation also removes the notion that behavior is situation-based. Yokota et al. (2016) relied on multiple correspondence analysis after previously having success with logistic regression analysis (Yokota et al., 2015), both analysis types are said to support behavior consistency and distinction of crime linkage by discriminating accuracy.

### **A to C Studies of the Rapist**

The literature reviewed that studies the A to C equation of the rapist have been quantitative using different variables and different analytical techniques. Like any topic, some researchers support the framework due to their findings, and others who question the accuracy due to their non-existent or minimal results. Goodwill and Alison (2007) argued that the action variables need diversity to be distinguishable. Meaning, simply looking at the action of rape is not enough. That is debatable, as the action of raping a stranger is not the social norm and may be distinguishable in itself.

One of the first studies to determine if actions during a stranger rape could be linked to the prior criminal history found validity through logistic regression (Davies et al., 1997). Davies and colleagues (1997) studied a United Kingdom sample of 210 individuals arrested for serious sexual assault against a female stranger victim obtained through 33 British police forces. Twelve behaviors were distinguished from the commission of the crime and 9 offender characteristics were identified, which revealed the probability of specific characteristics of the offender when specific behaviors were

displayed during the crime (Davies et al., 1997). The 12 behaviors were classified as fingerprint precautions, semen destruction, sighting precautions, lies to mislead, departure precaution, a reference to police, theft from the victim, forced entry, weapon seen, extreme violence, confidence approach, and alcohol. The 9 characteristics were categorized as given a custodial sentence, a criminal record, at least one conviction for burglary, at least one conviction for drug-related offenses, at least one conviction for robbery, at least one conviction for a sexual offense, at least one conviction for theft, at least one conviction for violence, and apparently only ever committed one sexual offense. Using logistic regression probabilities were then calculated. The results are as follows. Rapists who took precautions regarding fingerprints were twice as likely to have had a custodial sentence, rapists who took fingerprint precautions were four times more likely to have a prior burglary conviction, and rapists who took precautions regarding semen destruction were four times more likely to have a prior sexual offense conviction. Rapists who referred to the police were four times more likely to have had a custodial sentence, five and a half times more likely to have had a prior conviction, and two and half times more likely to have been convicted of a violence-based crime. Rapists who stole from their victims and/ or used forced entry five times more likely to have a burglary conviction in their past. On the contrary, rapists who did not take any precautions were three times more likely to be a one-off rapist.

Based on these probabilities, Davies et al. (1997) found promise in the existence of burglary convictions, violent crime convictions, and whether the offender was likely to be a serial rapist or a one-off offender. The goal was to begin the creation of a predictive

model for stranger rapists but like Scott et al. (2006) pointed out the study had limited findings, as the researchers did not provide clear details on associations between different types of convictions. Mokros and Alison (2002) later criticized the correlations found between crime scene actions and offender characteristics stating it just predicted base rates. The sample of rapists was taken from 33 different police agencies throughout 28 years, potentially being problematic. It is not stated if each agency had the same reporting protocol and if those procedures have changed over those 28 years.

Mokros and Alison (2002) conducted a study in the United Kingdom of 100 British male stranger rapists, testing the validity of homology. They found no linear relationship through multi-dimensional scalogram analysis between characteristics of prior convictions, age, or social demographics and crime scene actions, deeming the framework superficial (Mokros & Alison, 2002). They further suggested that the relationship between actions and characteristics is flawed because it fails to consider the situation. However, Ter Beek et al. (2010) pointed out that although Mokros and Alison (2002) did not find validity for homology when analyzing crime scene actions and offender characteristics at the same time, homology may be valid with a different action/characteristic combination. This argument stresses the success of homology needs to be further studied, as the combinations of what is being analyzed reflect the accuracy of the tool.

Hakkanen et al. (2004) also studied the relationship between actions during the rape of a stranger victim and demographic characteristics in a sample of 100 Finnish rapes committed by 93 rapists. The researchers analyzed the case files for rape and the

documented criminal history for the rapist noting that the data that was collected was by different sources/ officers and lacked consistency. The researchers classified 41 variables reflecting the crime scene actions and eighteen variables reflecting the offender characteristics. The statistical analysis used was bivariate analysis and two-dimensional scaling utilizing SPSS. Nonetheless, they concluded that the only significant association was in offenders who stole from the victim and a criminal history that included property crimes. Hakkanen et al. (2004) acknowledged that this finding lacked usefulness in the practice of profiling.

In New Zealand, Scott et al. (2006) tested the hypotheses derived from prior studies, resulting in findings similar to Mokros and Alison, 2002. Although, the descriptive statistics of the sample of 114 stranger rapists showed optimism for behavior consistency and homology: 84% had a criminal history, 78% had a prior imprisonment, 64% had a prior conviction for serious assault, 70% had a prior conviction for theft, and 76% had a prior conviction for burglary (Scott et al., 2006). On the contrary, offenders did not reveal a prior conviction of sex crimes. Scott et al. (2006) stated that although the findings suggest that criminal history patterns exist amongst stranger rapists, linking the patterns to actions or behaviors making it statistically significant, reliable, and indistinguishable has not yet been accomplished.

Ter Beek et al. (2010) used a Canadian sample of 271 stranger rapes and the police database ViCLAS to consider crime characteristics, offender characteristics, spatial behavior (how far offender traveled to commit crime), living situation, and prior criminal convictions, information that is all available to police once a crime is solved.



The analysis revealed crime scene actions could predict characteristics of the offender as five statistical predictive models were created. Ter Beek et al. (2010) stated that all the models were better than the “best guess method,” and noted that 4 of the models achieved a correct prediction rate of over 70%. This research claimed that prior convictions and distance (residence to the crime scene) has the potential to be most valuable (Ter Beek et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is advised that investigators should not solely rely on a model rather the models should be used to assist them by guiding the investigation (Ter Beek et al., 2010).

Goodwill et al. (2016) studied the A to C equation with a Canadian sample of 69 men deemed serial offenders responsible for 347 stranger sexual assaults considering the situational factors that critics have focused on. The data was collected by both semi-structured interviews and case file reviews. The actions were classified as events of search (hunter- close to home, poacher- traveled further than 10km, troller- encountered during routine activities, trapper- put themselves in position to access victim), selection (actively targeted specific physical characteristics in vulnerable women, targeted children/ youth with specific physical characteristic, nonspecific), approach (opportunistic con/ trickster, home intruder, persuasion/ familiarity), and assault behaviors (violence and control, attempt, persuasion and sexual). All of these clusters are unique to each situation. The variables considered for the characteristics of the offender were occupation/ employment status, relationship status, previous convictions, deviant sexual behavior, and psychology. A two-step cluster and multiple correspondence analyses were utilized and revealed significant associations between offense phase

clusters and characteristics, ultimately supporting homology and the A to C equation (Goodwill et al., 2016). In terms of assisting detectives, this research claimed to be a small step in the direction of creating an operational predictive model, however, it is noted that the usefulness in practice is unknown (Goodwill et al., 2016).

Sea et al. (2016) conducted a two-part mixed methods design to study the validity of actions to characteristics in a sample of 111 sexual assailants in South Korea, not specifically stranger relationships. The first part of the study looked at actions from crime, identifying 16 behaviors (serial type, crime time, acquaintance, adult victim, location of the crime, outdoor, fraudulence/ allurement, housebreaking, usage of a weapon, aggressive control, covering scheme, peculiar sexual habits, sexual dialogue, aggressive violence, steals property, planned finishing scheme) and four categories of sexual offense type (serial sexual offense, offense against children, offense against adolescents, offense against adults) creating six separate clusters (Sea et al., 2016). While the clusters did show associations, they are not useful for investigative purposes as none of the correlations would lead to the identification of a suspect.

Part 2 of the study included a Personality Assessment Inventory and questionnaires to obtain self-reported information regarding social demographics, psychological information, criminal history, and sexual behavior to investigate cluster characteristics (Sea et al., 2016). Each cluster had limited findings but suggested that personality traits may have the potential for predictability from actions at a crime scene (Sea et al., 2016). One on one interviews with the offenders were conducted to obtain the data and limitations about accuracy were not considered. If the self-reported information

is not documented in police databases, it is useless for investigative purposes. Sea et al. (2016) claimed that personality traits can be useful to predict offense behaviors, from an investigator's perspective- and yet nowhere in their study do they consider the perspective of the investigator.

Most recently, Almond et al. (2018) replicated the study conducted by Davies and colleagues (1997) to determine if evolution affected findings. The study was conducted also using a sample from the United Kingdom, but on a much larger scale, including 474 convicted male stranger rapists (Almond et al., 2018). Almond et al. (2018) added 12 additional crime scene actions, to 10 of the behaviors analyzed in the 1997 study, and also analyzed 9 conviction variables, 8 being the same from 1997 study. The additions to offense behaviors were darkness, offender disrobes victim, public, outside, blitz or surprise, inside, private, victim disrobes self, daylight, blindfolding, gagging, and phone disabled. The added conviction variable was criminal damages. The probability of associations between behaviors displayed during the commission of the crime and prior conviction types was analyzed through chi-square and logistic regression models, which found that specific behaviors were predictive to prior convictions. However, Almond et al. (2018) stated that 2018 findings were significantly different from 1997 findings, and claimed evolution is likely the culprit.

An important take away from Almond et al. (2018) is that studies may not be generalizable, and factors need to be current. As social trends develop, research should reflect them. Outdated studies are likely to not consider modern social and technological factors necessary for accuracy.

### **A to C for Other Crime Types**

Trojan and Salfati (2016) studied criminal history and co-occurrence of that history in 122 homicide offenders to explore Canter's A to C theory. They insisted that rather than squeeze offenders into specific categories, observations should be made in groups of behaviors that co-occur in multiple offenders. They further suggested identifying meaningful patterns could be valuable to detectives by narrowing down the suspect pool using prior offenses. The descriptive statistics reveal that the majority had an extensive criminal history in the form of both arrests and convictions. Researchers distinguished specific documented history that occurred in 50% or more of the offender's backgrounds. Those variables consisted of arrests of disorder, narcotics, and traffic law. The second part of the study was to determine if offenders could be broadly characterized as either a violent or instrumental specialist. They found that 84% of the offender's backgrounds could be generalized into one of the two frameworks. Analysis of this study revealed that due to the sample, the generalizability of findings could be impacted. The relevance of this study is that researchers acknowledge that existing research on criminal profiling cannot assist investigators. Trojan and Salfati (2016) have left the door open by stating this is a broad starting point for additional research that can be applied towards investigations.

Also, on the homicide front, Gerard, Whitfield, Porter, and Browne (2017) studied 67 subjects under the age of 22 that were charged with murder and attempted murder in the French-speaking section of Belgium. A to C was tested and found no associations. They acknowledged that the lack of support for homology could be based on their

sample, which was the young perpetrator. However, their study found value in using the actions to create three themes classifying homicides as instrumental: theft, instrumental sex/ forensic awareness, or expressive: multiple offenders, and stated that 84% of their sample was classified as a specific theme. This article suggested that A to C may be found more accurate when looking at adults who have established their ways.

School shootings, while not as common as rape, create the same level of community fear and are fatal when they occur. Also similar to rape, Gerard et al. (2016) pointed out that historically the motivations of school shooters were being studied. Gerard et al. (2016) studied the crime and offender across multiple countries for 28 school shootings, placing focus on offenders under the age of 18 and over the age of 18. While the purpose focused more on preventative and intervention efforts once risks were established, some findings were notable. For offenders 18 years old and under, the following characteristics were reported 93% suffered from depression, 64% had a history of violence, psychiatric issues, being victimized, and being rejected. 100% of the sample was linked to the school where the crime was committed. In regards to the actions from the crime 71% planned the attack, 64% made threats, 57% made more than 3 threats, wore combat gear, and stole weapons used (Gerard et al., 2016). Although these researchers believed this information would be critical for intervention and prevention, these findings can also be applied to narrow down a suspect pool- if the suspect is unknown after an incident.

## **Types of Analysis**

The research reviewed included studies that utilized bivariate associations or thematic approaches, Almond et al. (2018) argued that bivariate associations are the more appropriate analysis. Despite this claim, Goodwill et al. (2016) found support for homology through clusters. Others have attempted to link offender personality to clusters of behaviors exhibited during the commission of a crime but came up short in the findings, concluding sex crimes show little promise on profiling (Sea et al., 2016). Trojan and Salfati (2016) suggested rather than forcing offenders into specific categories, research should aim to look at what groups of behaviors co-occur in multiple offenders. They argued that by doing this meaningful patterns could be identified and serve value to investigations (Trojan & Salfati, 2016).

## **Limitations of Prior Research**

Almond et al. (2018) acknowledged the limitations of inaccurate reporting, (though no faults of the research) is not ideal for empirical research. Vettor et al. (2014) pointed out that the need for empirical studies and scientific approaches to profiling has evolved from the traditional take on profiling, which was based on intuition and experience. Wright (2013) urged researchers to refocus profiling studies to consider these original factors (detectives' intuition and experience) in future research.

Kocsis (2015) classified the shortcomings of criminal profiling on a lack of coherency in both research and practice. He further claimed that for investigations, there is not a universal standard, rather cases unfold based on unique factors (Kocsis, 2015). Almond et al. (2018) argued the need for research to be current, as their replication of the

previous study by Davies et al. (1997) despite additions of modern variables found different results. It is said that the model created by Davies et al. (1997) has been used to assist BIA's in investigations if the findings are outdated it is no wonder the results are criticized. Fox and Farrington (2015) described the lack of consistency in the definition of success with offender profiling. They further stated that profiling studies do not test the usefulness, rather concentrate on the mechanisms underlining profiling (Fox & Farrington, 2015).

Using population samples and variables including convictions (those convicted and previous convictions of them) is a huge limitation. This limitation was acknowledged briefly by Almond et al. (2018) that to be better suit the studies, arrest history may be a different measure. The samples as well are considered limited, which leads to corrupt data (Kocsis, 2015) and is perhaps the reason support for homology was not found in Gerard et al. (2017).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Stranger rape investigations are complex. The literature reviewed for this study focused on behavior consistency, assumption of homology, and the A to C equation. The literature reviewed for this study highlighted the potential of offender profiling, particularly in the field of rape due to their active criminal history, measured by prior convictions. The literature reviewed also suggested that the stranger rapists resided within a close proximity to the crime location. In many instances, associations have been made between actions/ behaviors at a crime scene and offender characteristics, yet it is still unclear if these studies are useful to those who practice criminal profiling. All of the

studies for stranger rapists and profiling have been conducted internationally. Despite strong anecdotal claims for criminal profiling, empirical evidence is lacking suggesting a lack of communication between those who utilize profiling and those who study it. No two studies were identical, and no researcher inquired what variables would be deemed relevant or useful by law enforcement. The gap in the literature has been identified as the disconnection between research and practice. This study explored the perspective of those in practice, the investigators, to assist with bridging this gap.

The next chapter will explain in detail the research design and rationale as well as the methodology. The role of the researcher will be disclosed. The next chapter will also address issues of trustworthiness and ethical concerns.



## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight into the experiences of sex crime detectives who have investigated stranger rape cases. This study has contributed to the existing body of research by providing a deeper understanding of the stranger rape investigative process from the perspective of the detective. I identified the gap in the literature as the disconnection between research and practice. The experiences of sex crime detectives could assist scholars undertaking future criminal profiling research.

In this chapter, I will describe the research design and rationale as well as the role of the researcher. The methodology including population, instrumentation, and data analysis plan will be explained in detail. Additionally, issues of trustworthiness and ethical concerns will be addressed in this chapter.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

RQ1: What suspect similarities have sex crime detectives identified from their interaction with numerous stranger rapists?

RQ2: How do experienced sex crime detectives describe intuition?

RQ3: How does intuition play a role in the investigative steps taken by sex crime detectives to identify the suspect in stranger rape cases?

The phenomenon of interest was stranger rape investigations and the ability to identify suspects through the use of criminal profiling. I used the qualitative method and a phenomenological design. Qualitative research includes an in-depth exploration of the

study phenomenon (Seidman, 2012) to elicit a deeper understanding (Macdonald, 2012) that can later be tested quantitatively (Patton, 2015). Qualitative researchers tell a story (O'Sullivan et al., 2008) by obtaining data on issues experienced by a specific population (Miles & Huberman, 2011). Janesick (2011) stated that the phenomenology approach is often used when research is lacking. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological researchers seek to “obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Consistent with this definition, Miles and Huberman (2011) explained that participants describe their experience and how it was perceived, not how outsiders perceive an experience they have not lived through.

The literature reviewed for this study was quantitative and identified prior convictions as a valuable characteristic for criminal profiling (Almond et al., 2018; Davies et al., 1997; Goodwill et al., 2016; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010). However, limitations in existing research were that researchers were not aware of how useful their findings would be in practice. A qualitative exploration of sex crime detectives' perspectives of stranger rape investigations was necessary to fill the gap in the literature regarding the disconnection between research and practice.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I am a detective in a large metropolitan city in the northeast United States. I have approximately seven and a half years of experience investigating stranger sexual assault cases, and I estimate that I have participated in hundreds of stranger rape investigations.

Considering my occupation, I was aware that I could have biases based on my personal experience. Qualitative researchers often conduct studies in areas they have some experience in (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). In every aspect of developing this study, I considered personal bias and ethical concerns. The sample population of retired investigators and recruitment method ensured no conflict of interest in the workplace. Furthermore, the instrumentation and collection method were designed to avoid my potential biases influencing data collection and data analysis. I maintained a journal throughout the process to control any potential biases by being aware of my presumptions and allowing the data to speak for itself. During the data analysis stage, I used peer debriefing to manage biases.

I did not have any face-to-face interaction with human participants. There was a possibility that some of the participants may have had a professional relationship with me at one time. It is important to note that I have never held a supervisory position. In addition, I also had no knowledge of the identity of the participants. I managed the potential for personal bias through the use of anonymous qualitative surveys with open-ended questions designed to promote thick descriptive responses. Participants had the ability to review their responses before submitting them. Furthermore, the responses from the participants were directly exported for coding, eliminating the possibility for any transcription errors.

In addition, I strictly adhered to Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. I ensured the confidentiality of all participants, obtained implied consent from all participants, and ensured there was no harm to any participants.

Participation in this study was voluntary and could have been discontinued at any point in time prior to submitting responses.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The population for this study was sex crime detectives and detective supervisors who had a minimum of three years investigating sex crimes and who have since retired. The law enforcement population is known for being reluctant to provide information to researchers due to the culture of keeping their feelings to themselves (Lambert & Steinke, 2015). To overcome this reluctance to share information, I restricted the population for this study to retired members of the service and used a data collection design that ensured anonymity. Excluded from the sample were active members of the service or those who did not have at least three years of experience working in units designated to sex crime investigations (also known as Special Victims Division).

For the recruitment process, I used both purposeful and respondent-driven sampling, by publishing a public invitation including the purpose of the study on my personal Facebook page which can be found in Appendix A. If individuals met the criteria (retired and at least 3 years of experience in sex crime investigations) and were willing to take part in study, a link redirected them to Survey Monkey. The first page on Survey Monkey was “Informed Consent.” After reading the information, prospective participants implied consent by clicking “begin.” Demographic questions confirmed that individuals met criteria by asking their retirement date and number of years assigned to

Special Victims. Due to the anonymity of design, participants were not further identified or contacted by me.

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), the most common type of sampling is purposeful. Miles and Huberman (2011) explained that participants are recruited based on established criteria that are selected with the research questions in mind. For this study, the preselected criteria were retired law enforcement officials with at least three years of experience investigating sex crimes. I believed that use of the criteria would yield a sample with the necessary perspectives to answer the three research questions.

To assist with recruitment, the social media post encouraged individuals to share information about the study with others, which is consistent with respondent-driven sampling. Respondent-driven sampling is similar to snowball sampling, but, instead of the researcher contacting referrals received from the participant, the participant recruits others through their own personal network (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) stated that respondent-driven sampling is often used for hard-to-reach populations. Considering the specific population and experience level desired this technique was utilized for recruitment.

In regard to sample size, Rudestam and Newton (2015) stated a small sample size of up to 50 participants is ideal for phenomenological approaches. Mason (2010), stated a minimum of six participants and a maximum of twenty-five is best. However, the ideal participant number is achieved when there is a lack of new themes emerging (Mason, 2010). This study met data saturation after 12 individuals participated in it.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

I developed interview questions formatted as a questionnaire and utilized Survey Monkey for collection. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions. The questions covered demographic information, questions based on their experiences investigating stranger rapes, and further presented them with a mock stranger rape scenario to capture their thought process and rationale behind investigative steps. This instrumentation allowed anonymity, which minimized my bias, avoided a conflict of interest, addressed the limitation of law enforcement cautiously responding, and enforced the privacy and comfort of the participants. The questions were designed in an open-ended manner to promote rich detailed responses. The questions were designed to obtain a better understanding of the investigative process, ultimately answering the three research questions pertaining to this study.

Detailed instructions as well as the purpose and goals for the study were disclosed and explained thoroughly. Furthermore, this form of data collection is similar to member checking, as the participants could review their responses before submitting them. This aspect also limited errors of transcribing as the responses were exported directly into Microsoft Excel and NVivo for open coding. Due to the anonymity of the data collection, no follow up procedures were utilized. In accordance with Walden University IRB, once published this dissertation will be publically shared on my Facebook page in the same manner in which participants were recruited. Interview questions can be found in Appendix B. All questions were reviewed and approved by Walden University IRB before being administered.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Data was collected through the use of Survey Monkey, organized through Microsoft Excel and coded to establish themes and patterns. NVivo was then used to assist with organizing, coding, and presenting the data. Open coding promotes the data to be reviewed and then categorized (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Multiple levels of open coding were conducted to first establish themes and then ensure the codes answer research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested to first focus on coding what was specifically asked and then code what the participants actually said.

**Issues of Trustworthiness**

To minimize issues of trustworthiness for this study the following measures will be taken.

**Credibility**

To establish credibility, the interview questions were designed to promote responses that capture the detective's experience investigating stranger rape cases. I further ensured that the participants identified themselves as retired law enforcement officials with at least three years of experience investigating sex crimes by reviewing individual responses to demographic questions. The participants were reminded to review their responses before submitting them. A detailed explanation of how the data was processed from collection through analysis was shared consistent with the suggestion of Lincoln & Guba (1986). Furthermore, this research was approved by Walden University's IRB upholding ethical standards.

**Transferability**

To establish transferability, the same phenomenon was studied in like organizations (Miles & Huberman, 2011). All participants have retired as a law enforcement official with a minimum of three years investigating sex crimes. Moreover, I disclosed thick descriptions for aspects of data collection and data analysis. The interview questions are included in Appendix B. These steps will assist in promoting transferability.

**Dependability**

In regard to dependability, I revealed detailed descriptions of the research design, methods used, data collection, and data analysis. I further divulged all limitations and obstacles encountered during the study. Furthermore, data collection was aligned with research questions to ensure consistency for replication purposed as recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016).

**Confirmability**

To establish confirmability, I disclosed my role as a researcher. The data collection allowed the participants to be in control of their responses prior to the data analysis phase. Due to the fact that I was mindful of my perspective including all presumptions and biases, journaling and peer debriefing were utilized. Lincoln and Guba (1986) urged researchers to provide a concise description of how data is collected and to use the information collected rather than the interpretation of such data by the researcher to establish confirmability.



**Ethical Procedures**

I maintained a journal and participated in peer debriefing throughout the study. Confidentiality was upheld throughout this entire study. Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous and stated as such. I provided the consent form as the first page of Survey Monkey, ensuring that each participant reviewed and implied their consent prior to participating in the study. Participants were informed that they could discontinue their participation at any point in time simply by exiting the Survey Monkey window prior to submitting responses. I further adhered to the rules and recommendations of the University's Institutional Review Board. All documentation pertaining to this study will be kept for a minimum of seven years, on a password-protected flash drive that will be stored in a water and fireproof safe in my home.

All appropriate documentation pertaining to this study was sent to Walden University's IRB. Walden University IRB approval was granted under 11-14-19-0759943 on November 14, 2019, with an expiration of November 13, 2020. This information was provided on the consent form reviewed by all participants prior to taking part in this study.

**Summary**

This chapter discussed a detailed description of the research design and rationale. The role of the researcher and all potential biases were disclosed. The methodology including population, sampling method, criteria to participate, instrumentation, and data analysis plan was presented. A detailed examination of issues of trustworthiness as well as ethical concerns was explained.

Chapter 4 will cover the study conducted in detail. The setting and demographics of participants will be offered. A detailed description of data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness will be presented. Lastly, Chapter 4 will explore the results that answer the research questions.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of stranger rape investigations and steps detectives take to identify the suspect. The RQs focus on similarities observed from numerous interactions with stranger rapists, intuition, and the role that intuition plays throughout the investigative process in an effort to bridge the gap between research and practice. The RQs were as follows:

RQ1: What suspect similarities have sex crime detectives identified from their interaction with numerous stranger rapists?

RQ2: How do experienced sex crime detectives describe intuition?

RQ3: How does intuition play a role in the investigative steps taken by sex crime detectives to identify the suspect in stranger rape cases?

In this chapter, I will provide information regarding the setting, recruitment of the participants, and demographics of the participants. The data collection method and data analysis plan are presented in detail. Furthermore, evidence of trustworthiness in the areas of transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability is provided. Finally, I present the results for each research question by the themes that emerged from data analysis. Excerpts from individual participants' interviews are provided that support the themes created. It is important to note that these excerpts have not been edited in any way as they were copied directly from what the participants submitted. This chapter will conclude with a summary of key points.

### **Setting**

I designed the study to uphold the anonymity and the comfort of participants. In addition, I chose the setting to avoid conflict of interest, personal bias, and ethical concerns. I recruited participants using a public Facebook post including the preselected criteria and a direct link to the study via Survey Monkey. The social media post can be found in Appendix A. Originally, I planned on having a 2-week time frame for data collection; however, at the conclusion of 2 weeks, new themes were still emerging from the nine submitted responses. I did repost the original invitation, and an additional three individuals took part in the study leading to saturation being achieved. The link was active for 30 days, and the participants were able to take part in the study at their convenience in a private setting of their choice.

### **Demographics**

The population for this study was retired law enforcement officials with at least three years investigating sex crimes. Twelve individuals participated in the study, all of whom reported that they had worked law enforcement in the confines of New York City. The gender breakdown for participants was nine men (75%) and three women (25%). The age range of participants was 42 to 59, with the average age being 51. Four (33.33%) participants held a bachelor's degree, and eight (66.67%) reported having some college or an associate's degree. Participants' experience investigating sex crimes ranged from 4 years to 16 years, with the average being 10.25 years. Total years of experience for all participants was 123 years. Eight participants reported being involved with 100 or more

stranger rape investigations. Table 1 provides the precise demographic information for each participant.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Rank	Retirement year	Years of sex crime experience	# of stranger rape investigations
1	Male	44	Some college	Detective	2019	9	100
2	Female	48	Some college	Detective	2018	5	75
3	Female	58	Bachelors	Detective	2015	13	100
4	Female	50	Some college	Detective	2019	14	100s
5	Male	59	Some college	Lieutenant	2006	6	60
6	Male	49	Some college	Sergeant	2017	10	400
7	Male	56	Bachelors	Detective	2018	14	100s
8	Male	42	Bachelors	Sergeant	2019	6	50
9	Male	55	Some college	Sergeant	2019	16	100s
10	Male	51	Bachelors	Detective	2018	13	100s
11	Male	49	Some college	Detective	2016	4	10
12	Male	53	Some college	Detective	2019	13	100

**Data Collection**

I collected data from 12 individuals who participated in the questionnaire from the public Facebook invitation with Survey Monkey link. I set up the questionnaire using a Survey Monkey account and obtained a link for use on social media. The link was shared twice in 30 days from my personal Facebook page, and the Survey Monkey link remained active for 30 days. Each of the 12 participants answered all 25 questions after reading the consent form on the first page of the Survey Monkey link. Survey Monkey

calculated the average time spent on the questionnaire to be 1 hour 17 minutes and 7 seconds.

I logged on to Survey Monkey daily to review new responses as they were completed. The individual responses were viewed as they were submitted, with the goal of meeting saturation. After 12 individuals participated, I was confident that saturation was met, as no new themes were emerging. After 30 days, I exported the data into a PDF and Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and uploaded into NVivo for data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

I performed multiple levels of data analysis. Survey Monkey provided the ability to export all the data collected to both a spreadsheet for organization and a PDF. A basic word cloud feature was utilized for responses to each question in Survey Monkey to provide a starting point for coding. The data were then uploaded into NVivo for an in-depth analysis. Features in NVivo that were utilized were word frequency tools including word clouds and word trees that determined words and phrases that were repeatedly used. I used these features for coding and ultimately creating themes. Data were coded, then sorted out into categories, and the themes emerged. I conducted a second and third round of data analysis for accuracy and refinement.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Due to the criteria set forth for this study, participants shared their experiences with stranger rape investigations. This aspect is consistent with the phenomenology approach, understanding a phenomenon from those who have personally experienced it. Participants were recruited by the use of purposeful and respondent-driven sampling.

Qualitative research seeks saturation, which Mason (2010) explains as reoccurring themes with no new information being collected. Janesick (2011) states that there has to be enough data collected to answer the research questions. The reliability of qualitative research rests upon credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Miles & Huberman, 2011).

### **Credibility**

I established credibility by designing interview questions that yielded responses that captured the participants' experiences investigating stranger rape cases. Participants were asked to use their experience from sex crime investigations to answer each question honestly to the best of their ability. The criteria for participants were preselected and disclosed to prospective participants, which enabled recruitment of participants who identified themselves as retired members of the service with at least three years of experience investigating sex crimes. I asked demographic questions to ensure that all participants met these two elements. Due to the nature of data collection, the participants were in control of their responses, as they were encouraged to review their responses before submitting them. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that saturation is utilized to establish credibility. After receiving 12 responses, no new themes came to light, and saturation was met.

### **Transferability**

I established transferability by studying the same phenomenon in like organizations (see Miles & Huberman, 2011). All 12 participants identified themselves as being retired law enforcement officials from New York City with at least three years of

experience investigating sex crimes. All 12 participants had vast experience investigating stranger rape cases. Numerous responses had similar themes leading to saturation.

Detailed explanations of how this research was conducted including the interview questions used for data collection was shared which provides the ability for another researcher to replicate this study and achieve similar results. According to Lincoln and Guba (1986), this aspect promotes transferability.

### **Dependability**

I established dependability by designing interview questions that were aligned with the research being conducted and the questions were approved by Walden University's IRB. Ravitch and Carl (2016) state the importance of aligning data collection with research questions as it allows consistency for replication purposes. The data exported for analysis came directly from each participant. Responses from the 12 participants were consistent with the phenomenology approach and met saturation.

### **Confirmability**

I established confirmability when I disclosed my role as a researcher. I also followed the advice of Lincoln and Guba (1986) who urged researchers to provide a concise description of how data is collected and to use the information collected rather than the interpretation of such data by the researcher to establish confirmability. By conducting three rounds of coding data analysis and peer debriefing during this process I was able to follow this suggestion. Further steps to establish confirmability were setting specific criteria for participants, allowing participants to be in control of their responses,



exporting their responses directly into Microsoft Excel for a side by side analysis, and the use of NVivo to assist with coding and data presentation.

## **Results**

### **Research Question 1**

*What suspect similarities have sex crime detectives identified from their interaction with numerous stranger rapists?*

Participants expressed numerous commonalities that they have identified through their experience investigating stranger rape. The similarities were captured through questions pertaining to their experiences with solved cases, the investigative process, and the behavior of stranger rapists during interrogations. Data analysis revealed three reoccurring themes that captured what the participants said to answer this research question.

**Theme 1.1: Documented history with police.** Prior criminal history for stranger rapists that is documented in police databases was discussed by 11 of the participants. The content of the criminal history ranged in type, as the codes ranged from specific crimes and the different report types on file. These codes were sorted into categories of violent crimes, low-level crimes, and named in other types of non-criminal police reports. The theme of documented history with police incorporated all of the individual codes and subsequent categories. Depending on the particulars of the stranger rape being investigated, the likelihood of specific documented history is suspected. Participant 1 simply stated, “They all seem to have some sort of criminal background.”

Participant 5 expands on this notion and stated:

Rapists are predators. They don't start out as rapist. They are abusers.

They have been abused. They have a criminal past. Stranger rapes during a home invasion, perpetrators may have prior burglary arrests. Street assaults may have prior robbery arrests.

Five participants mentioned having a history with lower level sexual crimes, such as misdemeanors of forcible touching. This aspect suggests that the stranger rapist escalates their level of crime through the course of their life. Participant 2 stated simply, "Criminal trespass, burglary, forcible touching."

Participant 6 stated, "Stranger rapists are likely not arrested for a prior rape. May have committed other offenses such as domestic violence, burglaries, and robberies. May have low-level misdemeanor sexual crime."

Participant 10 agreed with the aspect of lower level crimes and brought up criminal history dating back to youth years, "Sexually motivated crimes that often begin as small misdemeanor crimes before becoming violent and forceful rapes. In and out of juvenile detention as well for truancy and petty crimes."

Participant 8 stated, "Multiple arrests. Multiple locations of police contact. Some have lower sex crime history (forcible touching, harassment) which are usually sealed."

Four participants referred to more serious and violent crimes. Participant 9 mentions prior rape, which contradicts the perspective of participant 6. "All have had prior violent arrest for example rape, robbery, burglary, arson and assaults." Participant 4 stated similarly, "Sex offense history, burglary history, robbery history."

Interestingly enough, participant 7 brings up the fact that prior behavior may not always be observed in their documented histories. “The other thing is that they are repeat offenders. This may have been the first time caught, but they have definitely offended before. It is not their first incident.” This perspective tells a different story and sheds light on the fact that not all victims report and not all crimes are solved. Just because the criminal resume of a stranger rapist doesn’t include prior sex crimes, does not mean that they didn’t commit them- it just means they were never linked to it.

Four participants mentioned the presence of previously documented domestic violence incidences. Participant 11 stated, “Usually some sort of domestic issue in the past.” Participant 9 also stated, “Further they had domestic incidents with their parents, girlfriends, wives, and siblings.”

Participant 3 added to this category by discussing both domestic violence and aided reports, “There is definitely a correlation between a violent rapist and crimes against women. Be it domestic violence or harassment. Aided reports can tell a story as well because violence is often disguised as an accident.”

**Theme 1.2: Offends in an area of familiarity.** Ten participants expressed a connection between the crime location and the perpetrator. The correlation between the crime location and the perpetrator had numerous codes of current/ previous home, work, hangout spots, knowledge of the location, and past neighborhood. The codes were then sorted into categories of places of residence, places of leisure, and places of necessity. The emerging theme from this analysis was that they offend in an area of familiarity.

Participant 1 stated, “Usually they have some sort of connection to where the crime occurs. Even if its not near their residence. But they are usually aware of the location in some way.”

Participant 4 stated, “I absolutely believe a suspect will rape near his home. He knows the area well and knows the ways to escape.”

Participant 6 bring ups an actual geographical radius they found to be valid through their own experience, “Most stranger rapists reside within a 3 miles of the crime location. I conducted a 3 year study that confirmed that.”

Participant 8 expressed types of areas of familiarity other than a residential location, “Perpetrators will frequent at times locations in which they feel comfortable with. Whether it is a previous residence location, shelters, or acquaintance hangouts.”

Participant 9 confidently stated there was a correlation between crime location and perpetrator:

Absolutely it plays a major role. There is definitely a relation between the crime location and the perpetrators residence, in almost all the cases I have seen the perpetrator is within a mile of the crime. They are very familiar with the area and escape routes.

Participant 10 agreed with this trend and stated:

In my experience it was a surprise when I started to constantly see the perps residence being typically close to the location of the crime. Stupidity or feeling too uncomfortable to venture too far. The area that was common

to the perp was typically where they would assault and that would be where they lived, worked, or frequented.

On the contrary, participant 12 stated that in their experience there was not a connection between the crime location and perpetrator, “Rarely in my experience most perpetrators do not commit crimes where they live.”

**Theme 1.3: Justification of behavior (rape).** When discussing interactions with stranger rapists during interrogations, the common theme discussed was justification. Data was coded and sorted into categories of victim-blaming, minimizing events, and playing the victim themselves/ “whoa is me.” Five participants mentioned blaming the victim as justification. Participant 3 stated, “A lot have warped sense of reality. They place blame on their victim. Many have said they cannot help it. They were intimidated by strong women like myself. Anger towards women definitely.”

Participant 5 stated, “They are in denial that their actions are what they are. They tell themselves or believe it was consensual, almost date like. They try to place blame elsewhere.”

Participant 7 stated, “There always seems to be a justification in their mind of why they did the crime. They won’t always tell you, or you may not always find out. However, the ones who do tell usually give some type of justification for their actions.”

Participant 8 described his experience with behavior patterns observed in the stranger rapist as, “Immediate denial of accusation when confronted followed by minimizing of events or with the end result of confession when confronted with DNA, video, lineups. Followed by sleeping.”

Participant 10 stated:

Always willing to speak. A “real” would always think they can except use their options to lie, invoke or see what WE have so they can plea bargain later. As they go into the interrogation with that mind set, they would typically give something away that would be a benefit to the investigator. My rule as is across an experienced investigator, is to get them to TALK! Also, stranger rapist would justify their behavior. They would turn things on the victim and make it seem as if the interaction was a normal one. Stranger rapists are great at justifying their actions too. The victim wanted things to get to that “level.” “I’m not the monster they think I am” I heard more than once during interrogations.

Participant 12 simply stated, “If they talk, they generally blame the victim and minimize their actions. This is common with perpetrators of sex crimes.”

The final category that established this theme was the “whoa is me” category, where the perpetrator uses negative aspects of their life to justify their actions. The codes in this category included family issues, drug/ alcohol impairment, temptation, and being the victim of sexual assault.

Participant 1 stated, “They all seem to have some sort of issues in their childhood or upbringing.”

Participant 2 stated similarly, “They have been victims themselves at some point of sexual assault.”

The codes of impairment and that they could not help themselves as a justification for their actions were expressed by participant 12 who further stated, “Usually is a spontaneous ‘urge’ by the perpetrator. Sees ‘opportunity.’ Many cases where the subject is high on drugs.”

## **Research Question 2**

*How do experienced sex crime detectives describe intuition?*

To answer this research question participants were asked what intuition means to them, how they believe their intuition developed and how their intuition changed throughout their career. Data was coded and categorized to establish three reoccurring themes.

**Theme 2.1: Sixth sense.** The reoccurring theme when describing what intuition meant to them was a sixth sense. Nine participants described intuition as a feeling, instinct, hunch, or “gut feeling.” Participant 7 stated, “Intuition to me is a gift like a sixth sense. It is something you just know and it cannot be taught.”

Participant 11 described intuition as, “A feeling that leads you to see something that others may not.”

Participant 12 explained intuition as, “A strong feeling about someone or something not based on evidentiary factors.”

**Theme 2.2: Develops and evolves with experience.** Eleven participants described experience as being a major factor in how their intuition developed and changed throughout their career. Participant 7 stated:

When you have been doing something for a long time there are certain patterns that develop. You begin to pick up on those patterns after seeing it so many times. For example when people lie, the stories begin to sound the same. Only the names and locations change, but the basic story is repeated over and over again.

This perspective is shared through experiences of participant 3 when she stated, “After interviewing thousands of children I could tell if they were telling the truth just by their body language. I knew exactly what questions to ask.”

Participant 8 explained how their intuition developed:

Through continuous exposure to similar events over an extended period of time i.e.- interrogation of suspects and their responses has led to an understanding of truth v. lie. Investigation intuition has evolved over the years. From a simple he is lying, she is lying “hunch,” it has evolved to why would he/she be lying and for what purpose / gain.

**Theme 2.3: Ability to learn.** Four participants expressed the ability to be open to learning as a major factor for developing intuition. Participant 2 simply stated that their intuition developed by “Learning from peers.. structure.”

Participant 5 stated their intuition developed by “Dealing with all types of people of people and situations. Watching the reaction of victims and perpetrators under certain circumstances. More than 35 years of law enforcement, patrol, internal investigations, and criminal investigations. Learning human nature.”



In discussing how intuition has changed over the course of their career, participant 6 stated they “Learned to be more open minded to all possibilities.”

Participant 11 explained the process of developing intuition, “It takes time. Keeping an open mind and knowing you can always learn from others. You have nothing to loose.”

### **Research Question 3**

*How does intuition play a role in the investigative steps taken by sex crime detectives to identify the suspect in stranger rape cases?*

The themes that answered the first two research questions were a major component for answering the final research question. The themes that emerged for similarities identified in stranger rapists and the themes that emerged on the meaning of intuition built the foundation for research question three. Intuition is a sixth sense that grows with experience and openness to learn. That experience has enabled these participants to identify specific similarities across numerous stranger rapists that are used as their rationale behind performing specific investigative steps in future cases. Their intuition provides direction and guidance during a stranger rape investigation. By providing a mock stranger rape investigation scenario it became apparent multiple paths that have the ability to lead an investigator to the perpetrator.

**Theme 3.1: Multi-tasking investigative steps.** When provided with a mock case scenario each participant described numerous steps that they conduct almost simultaneously, in an effort that one road will result in the identification of the perpetrator. The codes that fell under this theme were conducting interviews,

communication, canvasses, crime scene, forensic evidence, physical description of the perpetrator, mug shot viewing, data mining, grid searches, computer checks, surveillance, sketch artist, wanted flyer, and conferrals. The codes were sorted into categories of analyzing evidence, soliciting additional information in the field, following through with potential leads, and reviewing prior police documentation from the office. The theme that emerged from these categories was multitasking investigative steps. When asked about the initial steps of a stranger rape investigation participant 1 stated:

I would attempt to establish a relationship with the victim in order to gain her trust so that we could work together in an attempt to solve the case.

Based off the physical description that she gave, I would immediately start looking for sex offenders in the area that fit the description that she had given. Also based on that description I would speak to business owners in that area and give whatever description I had from the victim. Also do an extended video canvass in the surrounding area. Also go back to the scene to possibly recover anything of an evidentiary nature. Hopefully some type of DNA.

Participant 3 reported the steps they would take if assigned a stranger rape investigation:

Respond to the hospital, interview outcry witness, interview doctor, police officers, ems, interview victim. I will compare what the victim told me to what she first told responders. Included in interview with victim is time line of what they did leading up to the incident. Canvass of area with the

victim walk thru. Canvass with victim will coincide with crime scene looking for physical evidence. Victimology. Take victim to sketch artist. Make and distribute wanted posters with sketch. Canvass with victim 24 hours and one week later. Door to door canvass/ video canvass. Interview family/ friends. Surveillance the crime scene and area around. All these things have to be done. If perp is not found every month work should be submitted- canvass & checking for similar motive arrests.

Participant 4 stated:

The first step is to speak to the victim first. Second step should be to go to the crime scene. The victim is the only person that could describe the suspect at this time. Do computer checks to see if you find anyone in local database that matches the victims description. Put up wanted flyers in the vicinity of incident and follow up with DNA.

Participant 7 explained the steps they would take in a stranger rape investigation in great detail:

The first thing I like to do is speak with the victim. He or she can tell you a lot even if they don't realize it. That is one of the gifts of a successful investigator is the ability to get information from someone through your interpersonal skills. Speaking with the victim sometimes paints a picture for you which would not otherwise be there. Just as important, is responding to the crime scene. You can learn a lot from a crime scene especially when you don't have any witnesses or cameras. By the way,

there are always witnesses. I find that it may seem as though you have not identified any witnesses, but when you canvass the area and just simply talk to people, you will find witnesses. Another important investigative step is computer and data analysis. As an investigator, you should have someone doing this for you while you are conducting the above listed steps. This can tell you a lot when you don't have the initial witnesses and cameras to look at. It would be a good idea to conduct canvasses in the vicinity of crime scene in order to identify the potential witnesses, cameras and possibly the perpetrator. As time is of the essence, the sooner you get that information out there is the better chance you will have of identifying the perpetrator. Also having the crime scene secured and processed is a big deal because after is said and done, forensic evidence today is a huge factor in solving these type of crimes. When the victim is able to do so, you should conduct a cognitive reenactment with her which is also crucial at time to gather evidence that might have been missed and to narrow the area of concern. You should also conduct a mug shot viewing because sometimes the victim does not have confidence in what he or she can remember from the incident. Sometimes seeing that photo triggers the memory. Once again, analytical data is going to be important as well as to identify patterns/ similar crimes in the area and possible subjects in the area. It is also important to confer with the local precinct personnel to see if they have any information.

**Theme 3.2 Maintaining investigative discipline.** At one point or another throughout the questionnaire, each participant responded with the code “open-mind.” This code was observed as a quality for a successful investigator, as well as a characteristic needed throughout the investigative process. The reoccurring theme was that these investigators reported going through the motions not knowing which motion will result in the break in the case. Other codes observed were determination, patience, follow-through, and exhausting all leads. The categories that this theme emerged from were investigator characteristics and no stone left unturned.

Participant 1 explained that while there are many characteristics of a good investigator to find success, one must have “Experience, street smarts, the ability to speak to people and be able to think outside the box.”

Participant 5 provided some additional clarity on this theme stating:

After years of watching human nature and how people react, when you stop and watch, slow everything down and truly pay attention to everything around you, oddities stand out. When conducting surveillance, observe who is observing you. Why is this individual not moving on? Why is he hanging around? What is his purpose? People will show their intentions without stating them. You never know which lead will be the lead that closes the case. You dot I's and cross t's. You need to obtain as much information as possible. You need to utilize information gained from all sources; other detectives, individuals arrested. As a chief once told me when a search revealed 3500 results- “it's a place to start”.

Participant 3 provided an example of exhausting a lead that brought her to the identity of the stranger rapist:

I had a case where perp brutally raped woman in apartment complex laundry room bathroom. The victim was very upset and emotional. I interviewed her, took her for a walk through with crime scene and took her home. I interviewed her numerous times. I took her to a sketch artist. But what solved the case was the jacket the perp wore. The victim described it and I went on the internet to have the vic identify the exact jacket. I put the photo of the jacket on the wanted poster. I distributed the posters at the precinct of occurrences roll call. I spoke to the officers that were going to be out there looking. I believe that is what solved the case. An officer picked up the perp who that jacket on. I responded in the middle of the night spoke to him and went home to get some rest. The next day I spoke to the perp in great length. It took a long time and a lot of patience because the perp had tourette's syndrome and he also was babbling about an ex girlfriend. In the end he confessed.

Participant 10 also shared an experience of a solved stranger rape that fell under this theme:

I had a case that was simply solved based on a canvass with the victim. She was in the backseat and suddenly she saw her assailant standing near the location incident. An investigator has to make sure they consider all the basics in a case and never become compliant and skip a step. The case

I'm referring to was first given to a number squad investigator before I received it days later. So I felt taking the victim on a canvass after an interview was appropriate, especially since her recollection of him had been distorted after a few days went by. When she saw him on that street corner, she was able to relive his persona, manner of standing, stature, etc. it was just basic police work that was overlooked by the first assigned investigator.

**Theme 3.3: Patterns guide investigations.** The similarities identified as a response to research question one were also identified as the rationale for steps taken in subsequent investigative processes. This theme emerged from a constant comparison of responses to numerous questions. Participant 12 explained that the patterns they have observed influenced data mining in other cases, "By using the same parameters that have produced identification in the past."

Similarly, participant 6 explained to "Conduct a thorough investigative process by checking all the things you have done on prior cases in an effort to develop leads."

All 12 participants noted that their investigative steps include specific tasks based on location and criminal history- two themes that were developed in response to research question one, participant 9 stated:

Search of area of any parole, probation, sex offenders. Examine the shelters in area and speak with security staff. Look at all reports involving stalking and suspicious persons. Review all police radio runs not just the immediate area, but also surrounding precincts. Speak with officers on

patrol and inform them of the crime and get feedback from them. I immediately search for all registered sex offenders in area, recently released prisoners checking their back round address and seeing if they fit the description. I look at complaint reports taken looking for any similarities. I immediately go out to the crime scene and speak with the people in the area, looking for cameras, witnesses, other evidence. I look at radio runs that police have responded to beginning with the last 24 hours. I know to keep focus on the area of the crime because most likely they live and shop in that area.

Participant 8 also discussed geographic factors when discussing routine queries:

Sex offenders living in area are known deviants. EDP's/ unstable persons taken to local hospitals may match description. Parolees recently released offenders in area. 911 calls- obtain info on suspicious persons in area. Complaint reports/ arrest reports- minor sex offenses and harassment may show potential victims or escalation. Witness interviews provide information no matter how minute that assist in stranger rape cases. The geographical location in relation to proximity of homeless shelters, known drug locations, rehab locations, psych hospitals provide leads of individuals who may have prior police contact.

Participant 7 explained their rationale behind the steps they take to obtain a suspect pool:



A lot has to do with the geographical area of the crime. So I am looking to identify similar crimes in the area, parolees, sex offenders, persons arrested, 911 calls, among other queries. The rationale behind this is that people are creatures of habit, it is worth looking into as an investigative tool.

The patterns observed during interrogations are also used to assist obtain confessions or implications in other cases. Participant 4 stated that the similarities observed “have assisted in other cases because the offender offended in the same way.” Participant 8 provided additional insight on this matter stating patterns “has allowed us as investigators to be more patient with the perpetrators during the interview phase and allowing for the development of a solid confession.”

Participant 12 went into the most detail stating that patterns have assisted him in other cases:

Very much. You have to show empathy and understanding to the perpetrator during an interrogation. Even if you obviously don't mean it. In order to get a statement from a perpetrator you must never be judgmental and allow the subject to tell you his version of events. Once he puts himself at the crime scene he has implicated himself. Any absurd excuse he may say just helps the case.

### **Summary**

This research study was designed to gain a deeper understanding of the stranger rape investigative process, the role of intuition and similarities observed among numerous

stranger rapists. A qualitative research approach was utilized to comprehend the perspectives of those who investigated vast amounts of stranger rape cases. Based on the responses from 12 experienced sex crime investigators it was determined that criminal profiling through the use of data mining is a portion of numerous investigative steps, often performed simultaneously during an investigation. Detectives often rely on their intuition, which is described as a sixth sense that developed from experience and lessons and is used to guide other stranger rape investigations. Furthermore, patterns observed from stranger rape offenses and the stranger rape offender are used to assist in other stranger rape cases- supporting the frameworks of homology and behavior consistency.

The next chapter will discuss the interpretation of the findings and explore how this study relates to existing research. Limitations of the study will be presented. Furthermore, recommendations for future research will be explained. Finally, implications for positive social change will be explored.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of 12 retired sex crime detectives who have investigated stranger rape cases through a qualitative phenomenology research approach in an effort to bridge the gap between research and practice. The research questions focused on similarities observed from interactions with numerous stranger rapists, intuition, and the role intuition plays in the investigative process. The foundation for this research was the theories of assumption of homology and behavior consistency, which are the common frameworks for studies pertaining to criminal profiling (Petherick, 2013). I created a structured questionnaire and administered it online utilizing Survey Monkey to uphold anonymity, which I deemed vital for the study population of retired law enforcement officials.

Twelve retired law enforcement officials who had a minimum of three years investigating sex crimes participated in this study. Their responses provided their perspective of a stranger rape investigation, including patterns they encountered, how their personal experience enhanced their intuition, and how they have used those patterns to guide other investigations. In this chapter, I will provide an interpretation of the findings discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter also includes the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, and a conclusion to the study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The themes that emerged from this study pertaining to similarities observed through numerous interactions with stranger rapists were with documented police history, offenses in areas of familiarity, and justifications of behavior. The first two themes are consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 but concern a different context. These themes are not new concepts to this body of research; however, this research yielded a deeper understanding of how these themes are applied to assist in real stranger rape investigations. This in-depth understanding is not possible in quantitative research; researchers deemed the lack of such an understanding problematic in prior studies (see Kocsis, 2015). Participants described intuition as a sixth sense that detectives have, a sense that develops and evolves with experience and lessons. According to participants, intuition is used to guide investigations through multitasking investigative steps, maintaining investigative discipline, and applying identified patterns to subsequent investigations.

A common theme in existing literature was that stranger rapists have active criminal histories and are already in police databases (see Almond et al., 2018). This study supports this theme; documented police history emerged in several participants' responses. The content of previous criminal history varied in participant responses, suggesting some versatility, although many participants discussed stranger rapists having a history with lower-level sexual crimes. Scott et al. (2006) found that their sample did not have prior convictions of sex crimes. The discrepancy could be due to convictions versus arrests. In all previous studies I reviewed, researchers used convictions as their

variable for measurement (see Almond et al., 2018; Davies et al., 1997; Goodwill et al., 2016; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010). Findings in this study revealed other types of documented history that are commonly relied on during a stranger rape investigation: arrest reports, complaint reports, 911 jobs, parole reports, sex offender reports, aided reports, and domestic violence reports. This insight suggests that prior researchers have limited variables by focusing solely on prior convictions.

Interestingly enough, the theme of offends in an area of familiarity added to the previous notion that stranger rapists rape in areas close to their home (see Goodwill et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010). The results of this study indicate that the location has some sort of personal tie to the perpetrator; however, the location is not limited solely to just the perpetrator's current residence. It could be a previous address, a place of employment, or even a place frequented often for social reasons. This finding broadens the scope of geographical significance and should be explored further in future studies.

The theme of justification for their behavior is not something that was previously mentioned in the literature reviewed for this study. The theme of justification may have been mentioned in studies concerning motivations for rape, but that was outside of the scope of this research. As Salfati (2008) points out, inferences for profiling should be behavior-based, as motivation cannot be measured. While this statement seems valid, an investigation does include the initial complaint through prosecution. An investigation is not over just because the perpetrator is identified. The theme of justification can be extremely useful for interrogations to solicit a statement implicating themselves as

revealed in this study. Also, interestingly enough, blaming the victim, a category that fell under the theme of justification, is a trend that Sheley (2018) addresses as a challenge for justice. Victims are often portrayed in a manner that suggests they held some responsibility in the assault (see, Sheley, 2018).

The themes established to answer RQ 2 were that intuition is a sixth sense, which develops and evolves with experience and lessons, a finding that is consistent with the limited research that touches upon this topic (see Kahneman, 2011; Wright, 2013). The findings of this study did support others' findings. Wright (2013) suggests that detectives routinely rely on their intuition to justify steps performed during an investigation. The themes that emerged from the role intuition plays during the stranger rape investigation were multitasking investigative steps, maintaining investigative discipline, and using patterns to guide investigations. Encompassed within the multitasking of investigative steps and maintaining investigative discipline are numerous actions taken by the investigator followed through until exhaustion to eliminate every possible lead. Participants identified patterns that they rely on to assist them in other cases. Their intuition guides them and is the rationale behind every investigative action they perform during an investigation.

Existing research (see Almond et al., 2018; Davies et al., 1997; Goodwill et al., 2016; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010) relies on Canter's A to C equation, built upon the frameworks of homology and behavior consistency, that actions at a crime scene have a correlation to the characteristics of an offender (see Canter, 2011; Canter et al., 2003). The researchers

reviewed in Chapter 2 (see Almond et al., 2018; Davies et al., 1997; Goodwill et al., 2016; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010) took this equation literally, by analyzing known components of the actual crime to connect to specific characteristics of the offender. If the combination of action and characteristic did not result in significance, the frameworks were then questioned and deemed as flawed, not to mention useless to those in practice. Due to the versatility in stranger rapists' documented history as revealed from these participants, one combination of an action and characteristic is too specific. This study provided context to this equation; it is not as simple as prior research implies.

When returning to Canter's explanation of *A* to *C*, it becomes clear that the researchers took this concept of an equation and put their own interpretation into it. Canter (2004) explained that *A* is what is initially known, and *C* is what is needed to know. The "action" incorporates all the information gathered throughout the investigation, not just what is documented and checked off on the initial rape complaint report. This includes but is not limited to motive, injuries on the victim, statements made by victim and witnesses, an image of the subject (from video surveillance or sketch artist), items left at the crime scene, and other forensic evidence. Based on those actions, detectives process the information and rely on their intuition to link it to a characteristic of the offender with the end goal ultimately being the identification of the offender.

Participant 8 expressed this factor by saying:

Intuition is a great guide however all intuition should be corroborated by fact.

Believing someone did something and proving are very different. Intuition is

useful however outside information is necessary. Example the perp 'smelled' and was dirty- gut says likely homeless/ EDP (emotionally disturbed person). Focus on hospitals, parks, shelters, soup kitchens. Description provided to staff and public create leads.

The information given has to be explored through interpretation, something an equation is not capable of doing.

Meaning, the simple equation of A to C described in existing research is a straight road. The reality is there are moving factors, additional variables that are unique to each investigation. The prior A to C studies on rapists (see Almond et al., 2018; Davies et al., 1997; Goodwill et al., 2016; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Sea et al., 2016; Ter Beek et al., 2010) does not consider these moving parts. While some investigative steps are standard, others are situational and in response to uncovered information from the investigative journey (see Kocsis, 2015). Experienced detectives follow all possible leads wherever the investigative journey takes them. No two stranger rape investigations are identical despite some similarities. Considering this aspect, how can one specific equation be determined that will always lead to the identification of the suspect? The findings of this study reveal that there is no universal code to crack that will work in every case. Numerous queries are conducted based on what proved to be successful in previous stranger rape investigations.

This is also relevant when discussing the topic of criminal profiling in general. Through the literature review, the limitations of prior studies shared the common concern that it was unclear how useful findings would be in an actual investigation. These studies



analyzed criminal profiling as a stand-alone investigative tool. In practice, data mining information to produce probable suspect pools is incorporated into the investigative process, which includes multiple different tools and tasks that influence each other. By definition, criminal profiling is the foundation of every stranger rape investigation- connecting the offender to the offense (see Gerard et al., 2016). In practice, this foundation is observed through multitasking numerous investigative steps.

Others suggest that criminal profiling is often used as a last resort (see Sea et al., 2016) or when evidence is scarce (see Bouhana et al., 2016) however, going back to the definition and the goal of every investigation, it is used all the time. Prior studies believed an equation based on actions during a rape could be connected to a specific characteristic resulting in the identification of the perpetrator. And yet even if it could, additional steps would still need to be taken to identify the actual rapist as a person that can be arrested for the crime. By capturing the perspectives of experienced sex crime investigators the multiple layers of an investigation were revealed. One specific equation is not practical to identify the suspect. In practice, investigators use the theories of criminal profiling and their intuition to get to the end result, identifying the rapist. Multiple roads have taken these experienced detectives to the end result. It is through trial and error, maintaining investigative discipline, and history repeating itself that the stranger rapist is identified.

All 12 participants were able to describe behavior and content of criminal history that through their experience they have deemed as consistent across the majority of stranger rapists they have encountered. They have recognized specific patterns from their experience with stranger rapists. The theories for criminal profiling have constantly been

questioned and yet these findings support the foundations of both assumption of homology and behavior consistency. The findings of this study do support that stranger rapists have similar backgrounds and behavior remains consistent throughout the course of their life (see Petherick, 2013), which is why experienced detectives have been able to identify such patterns. The similar background supporting homology is having a documented history with police. The content of that history can be diverse without reducing the validity of homology.

Perhaps stranger rape investigations are far too complex for what quantitative studies are capable of. Previous research has minimized the role of the investigator by not exploring their perspectives and further acknowledging that any findings are of unknown value to those in practice. For a stranger rape criminal profiling study to be deemed valuable to those in practice, the researcher needs to comprehend the dynamics of a stranger rape investigation. The dynamics are best explained by those who have experienced it firsthand, over and over again. The investigative discipline and resiliency of experienced detectives cannot be underestimated.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study did experience limitations worth noting. This study was limited to the experiences captured by 12 retired law enforcement officials with at least three years of experience investigating sex crimes. The 12 participants in this study were recruited through purposeful and respondent-driven sampling through social media. The goal was that if saturation was achieved- this sample would represent the population of sex crime detectives as a whole. All 12 participants stated they retired from New York City. It is

unknown if active law enforcement officials from a different region would have the same findings. This may not be the case, as it is unknown if the results found in this study are generalizable.

As discussed in Chapter 1, when there is a time-lapse between the personal experience and participation in the study there could be an inaccuracy in responses (see Gertler et al., 2017). Using retired law enforcement officials came with the limitation that investigative tools and modern technology used during current investigations may have changed since they were active investigators. Participants were encouraged to review their responses before submitting them and answer honestly to the best of their ability. Due to the design participants were able to take as much time as they needed, start the questionnaire and return at a later time to complete, and to do so in the privacy and comfort in a setting of their choice.

The instrumentation of structured predetermined questions administered through Survey Monkey came with limitations. Besides from missing out on body language, non-verbal cues, and facial emotions (see Novick, 2008)- follow up questions were not feasible. After reviewing the responses, there were many answers that additional questions could have provided clarity and richer responses. Some participants provided a lot more detail than others, which could be due to the participants' interpretation of the question (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Another limitation was my biases due to my personal experiences investigating stranger rapes. This limitation was reduced by not having interaction with participants,

the anonymity of data collection, and structured questions predetermined. Removing the process of transcribing and enlisting in peer debriefing also mitigated this limitation.

### **Recommendations**

This research study was developed based on the gap in existing literature about stranger rape investigations and the use of criminal profiling. There was an apparent disconnect between research and practice of criminal profiling- also known as clinical and statistical. The gap observed after reviewing literature was the perspective of sex crime detectives investigating stranger rape cases, something quantitative research could not grasp.

To truly study the stranger rapist and criminal profiling researchers should consider shadowing an investigation in a true phenomenological fashion. The role of the researcher was crucial in understanding what the missing pieces of previous literature were. There is a uniqueness to each stranger rape investigation. An outsider is unable to comprehend all the steps that are taken and fully understand what will work in an actual investigation. During the preliminary phases of an investigation, one is unable to know what information will be probative.

To grasp this phenomenon the big picture has to be painted which encompasses all the investigative steps, all the followed leads to the point of exhaustion, and the rationale behind it- a stranger rape investigation truly is a chaotic maze. It is due to this aspect that it is suggested that future research focus on qualitative studies, rather than quantitative. It would be recommended that future studies focus more on the perspective of the investigator to comprehend what findings would be useful in practice. In order to

fully understand the phenomenon, this cannot be minimized. Criminal profiling in the form of data mining should be studied as a piece of the pie, not the entire pie. Future research teams should consist of individuals from both backgrounds- research and practice working collaboratively and exploring the big picture- not just what one side deems as valuable.

To consider all the ways that a stranger rapist can be identified some methods are much easier for an outsider to comprehend. When discussing sexual assaults everyone understands the role of DNA. Whether it is from fingerprints at a crime scene or evidence from a rape kit, the gist of the process is comprehended. An image of the suspect obtained from a surveillance camera and ran through facial recognition software or released to the media resulting in a tip regarding the subjects identify, is also easily comprehended. Explaining how one's intuition guided them and how previous success with a specific task is the rationale for completing the action is not easily understood. This study is a small step in the right direction of capturing the experiences of detectives to gain a deeper understanding of the investigative process. Future studies should attempt to explore this aspect further.

Furthermore, due to the theme of offenders offending in areas of familiarity, it is recommended that geographical profiling be incorporated with criminal profiling research. During the literature review for this study the two topics were typically studied independently, and yet provide so much value to each other. Making it standard protocol to combine the two topics in future research has great potential. Combining the two may

be more beneficial to practice because it narrows in on a specific geographical radius, likely to generate a more manageable suspect pool.

### **Implications**

The crime of stranger rape is in a class all its own. The trauma and violation that a stranger rape offense brings to the victim is like no other (see Canter et al., 2003).

Stranger rape brings fear to the entire community and stress upon even the most experienced detective who works diligently to identify these violent offenders.

Knowledge is power. It is a statement that widely used but provides great meaning for the investigative process of stranger rape. Understanding the investigative process and tactics used by experienced sex crime detectives that lead to the identity of the suspect provides the ability to make improvements that could result in more efficient investigations. Ultimately, improving tools utilized to identify stranger rapists positively impact the victim, the community, the police agency, and the assigned case detective. The sooner these violent criminals are identified, the sooner they are removed from society providing justice for the victim and safety to any potential future victims. Time-efficient investigations are beneficial to police departments as there are limitations pertaining to manpower and resources. In a society where there has been an influx of rape reports (see Almond et al., 2018; Siegel, 2018) and an entire social movement dedicated to empowering sex crime victims (see Sheley, 2018), improving the investigative process will follow the trends.

This study brought forth the theme of learning as a component of evolving intuition. A recommendation for those in practice would be to increase communication

with other investigators during a stranger rape investigation. They should share case particulars frequently as a fresh set of eyes and ears may be able to assist in thinking outside the box. Agencies should consider holding seminars where experienced sex crime detectives present stranger rape investigations that they solved and share the steps and tools that led to identifying the suspect. Unsolved cases should also be presented to gain insight from other experienced minds. Learning should not be minimized as it adds to ones' experience and will provide additional tools for the tool belt of a sex crime detective.

### **Conclusion**

This study was developed based on previous literature of criminal profiling the stranger rapist, which lacked strong empirical evidence and support for criminal profiling frameworks. While conducting the literature review it became apparent that the gap in the literature was the disconnection between those studying the phenomenon and those living the phenomenon. Stranger rape is a brutal crime that leaves those affected by it traumatized and in fear. As investigators the goal is to identify these violent offenders as quickly and efficiently as possible to reduce the chances that they will strike again and provide justice for their victim- regardless of the presence of physical evidence, strong witnesses, or deemed "solveable" case.

Sure, it is great when forensic evidence or a clear image of the suspect from video surveillance leads to the identity of the rapist fairly quickly. However, for the cases that do not have this luxury, investigators rely on their personal investigative toolbox of intuition built upon experience to direct their investigations. This is accomplished

through multitasking investigative steps, maintaining investigative discipline, and exploring patterns they have identified and found them success in previous stranger rape investigations.

This study revealed the perspectives of 12 participants that were not completely aligned with each other, suggesting that there is a lot to be learned from those within the field. The power of sharing knowledge provides each detectives investigative tool belt to expand, providing additional concepts to incorporate into investigations in an effort to identify stranger rapists. There is a need to continue to improve methods of criminal profiling stranger rapists, not just because rape reports continue to rise- or because we cannot ignore the hashtags of #metoo and #whywomendontreport- but because stranger rapists are predators and they do not deserve to walk our streets unidentified.



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### Appendix A: Social Media Post

Hello! If you are a retired LEO with at least 3 years experience investigating sex crimes, please consider helping me to complete my research for my PhD dissertation by taking part in an anonymous online questionnaire. This study aims to explore intuition and the role intuition plays while investigating stranger rape cases. My goal is gain insight that can assist the investigative process and guide future research pertaining to criminal profiling. If you are interested in participating (and meet criteria of being retired and have 3 years experience in sex crime investigations), please click link below. Please feel free to share this post or tag others who meet criteria and may be interested in participating. Thank you in advance!

## Appendix B: Survey Monkey Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. What was your rank when you retired?
5. When did you retire?
6. In what geographic region were you employed?
7. How would you describe the department you worked for (city/ state/ local/ county/ or federal)?
8. How many years were you assigned to Special Victims Division?
9. Approximately how many stranger rape investigations have you been involved in?
10. Please describe the qualities and skills you believe are necessary to be a successful investigator.
11. What does intuition mean to you?
12. How do you believe your intuition developed? Provide specific examples.
13. How has your intuition changed over the years of your career? Provide specific examples.
14. Imagine you are working and receive a stranger rape case. The incident took place in a city park- with no witnesses and no cameras. The victim is at a local hospital with visible physical injuries. A sexual offense evidence collection kit is being collected. Describe the initial investigative steps you would take and the rationale behind them.

15. You get to the hospital and are met with a credible victim who discloses that at about 8pm she was walking her small dog in the park when an unknown male approached her, engaging in conversation about how cute her dog was. He stated he has a similar one, and pointed to an area in the park. The victim reported that she willingly walked a couple feet with the male, and then he sucker punched her in the face causing a black eye. She further stated that he choked her causing her to fall to the ground. She reported he covered her mouth and threatened to kill her if she screamed. He then forcefully inserted his penis into her vagina, fleeing in an unknown direction as it was dark and she was trying to get her dog and the leash together. She is able to provide a decent physical description of the perpetrator but states it all happened so fast and she is unaware if she could recognize him from mug shots. Her injuries are consistent with what she is reporting. Describe the investigative steps and rationale behind them that you are doing now.
16. I would like you to think back to your career and think of a stranger rape case that resembled the scenario above. Please describe how you have solved a stranger rape case without the assistance of DNA, facial recognition, or a crime stoppers tip.
17. In a case where you are without DNA or video footage, explain the role your intuition has taken to assist you with identifying the subject?
18. Approximately what is the percentage of stranger rape cases you have been involved in led to an arrest based on intuition or data mining? (Without a DNA hit or other forms of modern technology?)

19. Describe the routine queries you conduct on stranger rape cases to generate probable suspect pools. What is the rationale behind these searches?
20. In your experience with stranger rapists, what patterns have you seen across multiple rapists documented in their histories? In terms of previous reports as victim or perpetrator, warrants, arrests/ specific charges, domestic violence, summonses, aided reports, etc
21. How have these patterns influenced the data mining you conducted in other cases?
22. In your experience, how does location and distance play a role in stranger rapes? Do you believe that there is a connection to the crime location and perpetrators residence?
23. In your experience interrogating/ interacting with stranger rapists, describe any behavioral patterns you have observed in numerous stranger rapists.
24. How have these identified behavior patterns assisted you in other cases?
25. How do you think criminal profiling methods can be improved and utilized in stranger rape investigations?