The American Serial Rapist: 1940-2010

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Lauren E. Wright

May 2014

© 2014 Lauren E. Wright. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
The American Serial Rapist: 1940-2010

by
LAUREN E. WRIGHT

has been approved for
the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
and the College of Arts and Sciences by

Thomas M. Vander Ven
Professor of Sociology

Robert Frank
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
ABSTRACT

WRIGHT, LAUREN, E., M.A., May 2014, Sociology

The American Serial Rapist: 1940-2010

Director of Thesis: Thomas M. Vander Ven

Serial rape, while being one of the most serious crimes in nature, is also one of the least researched. Previous studies suggest that a majority of sexual offenders have multiple victims, but have used mixed definitions of serial rape and small sample sizes. This study aims to create a sociological definition of serial rape and uses newspaper articles spanning seven decades to find reported cases of the crime across the United States. Using a sample of 1,037 offenders, an offender profile was created, as well as a visual representation of the crime across time.
DEDICATION

To everyone who has helped me along the way, this would not have been possible without you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mom & Dad: I think it’s safe to say that I wouldn’t be where I am right now without you. You have supported me through all of my decisions and perhaps unconventional ways of figuring out what I wanted to do with my life. You’ve always embraced the different sides of me and let me be the person that I am and allowed me to follow whatever dreams I wanted to pursue. I cannot say thank you enough for constantly being there when I called to vent or chat, or for calling me when you hadn’t heard from me in a few days because I was too stressed out to do anything else. Your love and support mean everything. I love you.

Bryan, Lisa, & Dan: What can I say? Some people might think we’re weird because we’re very close, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. Though we may not see each other as often as we want, I know that you’re always just a phone call or text away. Thank you for providing me with endless amounts of laughter, love and support. From Christmas sleepovers, to Mario Kart, to concerts, and squash behind the ears; these were the things that kept me going. I love you all.

Kristen & Susan: I couldn’t ask for two better friends to have helped me through this whole process. I know at times I was probably hard to deal with and stressed out and constantly working on something, but you were always there whenever I needed anything. You kept me fed when I was too busy or stressed to want to go buy groceries. You reminded me to take breaks and have fun once in a while. You brought me medicine and soup when I was sick. You made me laugh and supported me through this whole process, whether it was listening to my defense the night before or calming me down the
day of, or just allowing me to take a breather now and then. Your love and support have helped me not only during the last two years, but the last six. We have gone through a lot together, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. Thank you for everything. I love you both.

*Ken, Bri, & Holly:* What would this year have been without the three of you? I love that we stayed so close and were able to go through all of this together. Teaching our first classes, writing our theses, and defending them. This whole year has been a whirlwind. Thank you for laughing with me, having late nights, venting with me, keeping me occupied during office hours, and just generally being there overall. We’ve come so far from last year that it’s hard to believe we’re finally here.

*SVU:* I think it’s safe to say that without you, my research team, that I would be in a very different place than I am now. The enormity of this project was something that would have been nearly impossible alone. I cannot thank you enough for the work you have put in and for putting up with my crazy ideas and discussions about life and bizarre sense of humor. You are all rock stars.

*Committee:* To my committee for always being so supportive and helpful with everything, even before I started writing my thesis. I couldn’t have picked three better members. Whether you were making me laugh or telling me that it was all going to be okay when I was nervously freaking out, or just showing a genuine interest in my life and how I was doing. It means more to me than I could ever properly say.

*Deb:* Thank you, Deb, for being so great to me as I went through this whole teaching process. For helping guide me along with the questions and concerns I had about
teaching. You helped remind me that there’s always something to laugh about or how to look at a situation differently. Thank you for always being aware when I was stressed out and asking me what was wrong. Your enthusiasm is contagious.

Dave: You have been so unconditionally loving and supporting of me through everything I have done. You have believed in me when I doubted myself, you have dealt with my endless discussions about all things criminological and sociological. Your belief that I can do anything and that I will change the world and be amazing is something that I contest on a regular basis, but that means more to me than I know I could ever say. I know that the days I don’t believe in myself, I have you rooting for me and on my side and that has helped get me through on so many occasions. Thank you for believing in me. I love you.

Dr. Vander Ven: I sat down to write this and realized it was going to be a lot more difficult than I had thought and it still isn’t everything I want to say. I didn’t realize just how much I wanted to say or how to properly put it into words. I guess the one thing I want to say above all others is ‘thank you.’ I wouldn’t be who I am or where I am today without you. When you first became my advisor all those years ago, I had no idea the extent to which you would impact my life. For some reason…and I’m still not entirely sure why, you saw something in me and that has always been evident. You have always been unwaveringly supportive and confident in me, even when I wasn’t confident in myself. I don’t think I’ll ever fully understand where that comes from, but I always know it’s there. You have provided me with endless opportunities for which I am unbelievably grateful. You know me so well and my interests and quirks that you were able to
perfectly match me with this specific project…and it has been amazing. I have never been more proud of myself than I am when I think about the work put into this and that’s thanks to you. You took a huge chance on me and it’s paying off. Through everything, you’ve laughed with me about things that probably only you and I would find funny, you have let me vent about countless different life crises and helped me better understand life in general. We’ve laughed so hard we’ve cried, lost many hours of sleep, consumed a lot of coffee, made a lot of commentary about zombies…I could really go on and on. I just want you to know, because I don’t think I could ever really tell you enough, that you have made me into a better person. You’ve brought out a confidence in me that I didn’t know existed. I can only hope that someday I can repay you for everything that you’ve done.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What We Know About Serial Rape</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theorizing Serial Rape</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data, Methods, and Sample</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Future Directions</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Current Study Offender Profile vs. Prior Research Offender Profile ...............36
LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 1: Active Serial Rapists, United States 1940-2010 .............................................37

Figure 2: Uniform Crime Report, Violent Crime Trends in United States 1960-2012 ..38
INTRODUCTION

While single-victim sexual assault is widely researched, serial rape is one of the least studied and least understood predatory crimes. Rape, while being one of the most serious crimes in nature, is also one of the most underreported, with anywhere between 64% and 96% not reported to the proper authorities. (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Perkins & Klaus, 1996). Prior research suggests that a small number of offenders commit the majority of violent sexual acts. Studies have shown that sexual offenders will have sexually offended against, on average, between seven and eleven victims (Lisak, 2011; Lisak & Miller, 2002; Warren, Reboussin, Hazelwood, Gibbs, Trumbetta, & Cummings, 1999; Hazelwood & Warren, 1990). Lisak and Miller (2002) state that while repeat rapists make up a small amount of the offender population, they account for about 28% of the violence. In this sample, a total of 76 rapists committed 488 acts of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. Furthermore, the 41 serial rapists interviewed by Hazelwood & Warren (1990) were responsible for raping a total of 837 victims. Similarly, the 108 serial rape cases studied by Warren et. al (1999) produced a total of 565 rapes and a study by Beauregard, Proulx, Rossmo, Leclerc, & Allaire (2007) identified 72 rapists responsible for 361 sexual assaults. These findings suggest that while serial rape may or may not be a common crime, there is a significant victim count associated with the crime and lends itself to the idea that serial rapists need to be researched and understood in a more extensive manner. Serial rape is so vastly under researched, that we know almost nothing about its prevalence, incidence, or distribution over time and space. Furthermore, little is known about the social correlates of serial rape.
offending or victimization. Most prior research conducted on not only serial rape, but serial violence in general, takes a more psychological, individualistic approach. This study aims to look at serial rape from a sociological perspective, focusing on the social patterns and correlates associated with the crime, taking a more macro-level approach to the understanding serial violence in order to better understand and create a broader generalization of the crime.

This omission of serial rape from the extant literature suggests a need for more empirical research in this area. Within the minimal research that currently exist on serial rape, scholars have used a variety of differing, conflicting definitions on what constitutes “serial rape.” Contributing to this problem is that various different government agencies in the United States do not use the same definitions for what constitutes rape in general. The New York Times (2012) reports that the FBI reported 85,000 forcible rapes in 2010, which included only vaginal penetration of a woman by a man; however the CDC reported 1.3 million rapes because it included other forms of penetration, as well as attempted penetration. This discrepancy contributes to the inconsistency between definitions in rape scholarship. The Crime Classification Manual (1992) defines a serial rapist as one who has committed attacks in “three or more separate events, with an emotional cooling off period [between offenses]…” (p.12). Graney & Arrigo (2002) state that a serial rapist is a person who has committed two or more acts of sexual assault on at least two victims on separate occasions. Finally, Hazelwood & Warren (1989) defined a serial rapist as a predator who had offended against at least 10 victims. These different definitions could produce vastly different results. In 2011, the FBI created a more
inclusive definition of rape: “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 consent of the victim” (2013, p.1). This definition is far more inclusive than any previous definitions, as it now can include male victims. Most prior research on serial rape came before this new definition, therefore potentially limiting the results.

While research on serial rape is scarce, cues may be taken from the vast literature on serial murder. Serial murder scholars have studied historical trends, developed offender profiles, and brought an understanding to the social correlates of offending and victimization. Furthermore, these scholars often use media accounts in order to produce their sample and provide qualitative analyses. (Holmes & Holmes, 2010; Jenkins, 1994; Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, 1990) One connection between serial murder and serial rape may be that they have the potential to draw from similar victim pools. For example, Jenkins (1998) reports that the largest group of victims of many serial murderers were female prostitutes. Certain marginalized groups such as prostitutes, runaways, and the homeless are likely to be potential victims of serial rape as well, due to their vulnerability. Thus, research on serial rape may reveal that this crime disproportionately affects socially disadvantaged populations.

In order to better understand serial rape, an offender profile needs to be developed. A profile will give a better depiction of the crime and who might be the average offender. Previous studies are unable to generalize about serial rapists because of small sample sizes. Hazelwood & Warren’s sample size, for example, consisted of only 41 individuals (1990). Similarly, a sample size of 22 serial rapists was used in separate
studies by Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto, and Davis (2008) and by Woodhams and Labuschagne (2012). These smaller sample sizes do not allow for high generalizability. To date, serial rape scholars have not created a large enough sample size to accurately portray the crime as a whole.

Currently, scholars do not know how prevalent serial rape is or how rates may have changed over time and space. And while there is not a wide variety of literature on serial rape, there have been a few studies conducted that have provided us with some knowledge about this under-researched group.
WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SERIAL RAPE

Single-victim rape research has been widely studied. Rape and sexual assault are severely underreported crimes, making it difficult to truly know the numbers associated with these crimes. Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, (2006) found that factors such as shame and guilt, concerns about confidentiality, and thinking they will not be believed are potential reasons why someone might not report a sexual assault. Many sexual assault studies have focused on college-aged women and women who know their assailants. Fisher et. al. (2000) found that on college campuses there was a victimization rate of 27.7 per 1,000 female students. They also state that 9 out of 10 victims knew their offender and less than five percent of victims filed a report of the assault to the police. These numbers are incredibly low compared to other types of violent crime. Park et. al. (2008) found that the mean age for single-victim rapists was 33.4 years, with a range of 18-46 years. 65% of the offender population were white, 30% black, and 5% Hispanic.

While extensive research has been conducted on single-victim sexual assault, not much research exists on serial rape. Lisak (2011) argues that because such a small number of sexual assaults are reported, as well as low numbers of prosecuted rapists, multiple offenders are difficult to study. However, a few studies have been conducted on incarcerated rapists and produced some basic information about the topic. While this information is valuable, generalizability is limited because data was drawn from incarcerated perpetrators and does not provide information on those offenders that have never been caught.
**Offender Profile.** While we know little about the profile of the typical serial rapist, studies suggest demographic patterns. Woodhams & Labuschagne (2012)’s study of 22 South African serial rapists estimated average age at first offense to be 28.99 with a range of 9-85 years. The race of 21 of the men sampled was black. This team also discovered that a majority of the rapes were interracial. Finnish researchers Santtila, Junkkila, & Sandnabba (2005) had a sample size of 16 serial stranger rapists with a mean age of 31 years and a range of 16-49, but did not list race of the offenders. Of the 22 men studied by Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto, & Davis (2008), the age range was 14-57 with a mean age of 29.1 years. Forty-one percent of the offenders were White, 31.8% were Black, 18.2% Hispanic, and 9.1% Asian. This study is also the only one to mention offender occupational status. Over 26% of the offenders were unemployed, 42.1% were blue-collar workers, 5.3% were white-collar workers, and 10.5% were students. McCormack, Rokous, Hazelwood, & Burgess (1992) had a slightly higher sample size of 41 men, with an age range of 23 to 55 years and a mean age of 35.2 years. Eighty-six percent were white, 12% black, and 2% Hispanic. Of these 41 rapists, 31 of them reported some sort of childhood sexual abuse, with about 15 being victims of incest. Beauregard et. al. (2007) studied 72 serial offenders with a mean age of 30.7 at the beginning of the crime series with 91.3% of the offenders being white.

**Style.** In addition to the few studies related to the social correlates of serial rape, some scholars have studied offender style. Hazelwood & Warren (1990) cite three methods of approach in terms of type of assault: The con, the blitz, and the surprise. The con approach is based around gaining the victim’s trust in some way, sometimes by
pretending to be someone they are not (e.g., a maintenance man, or by asking for help, etc.) This approach shows the assailant interacting with their victims under fall pretenses. The blitz approach involves the use of a sudden, direct attack that quickly subdues the victim and is more opportunistic, as it does not typically involve planning the attack ahead of time. According to Hazelwood and Warren (1990), this approach was used the least frequently of all three types. According to their analysis, the surprise approach is the most common method used by serial rapists. This approach is more premeditated than the other methods and usually involves a preselection of victims. In a related study, Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto, & Davis (2008) found that 79.5% of their sample employed the surprise attack, while 18.6% of serial rapists used the blitz method and 11.6% favored the con approach.

*Crime Scene.* A small amount of research has also been conducted on crime scene behaviors of offenders. Park, Schlesinger, Pinizzotto, & Davis (2008) found that serial rapists tend to show more sophistication than single-victim rapists in their crimes, which could possibly make the offender more difficult to detect. Hazelwood & Warren (1990) found that the majority of offenders tended to attack their victims in their homes as a means of evading detection.
THEORIZING SERIAL RAPE

The limited research on serial rape leaves a lot to be explored. We do not know how serial rape is positioned in time and space and how its distribution can be compared to other forms of violent crime. There also has not been a study with a large enough sample size to provide an accurate depiction of the offenders and their methods of attack. In this context, we aim to use an Environmental Criminology approach to better theorize these issues.

Environmental Criminology allows a better understanding of the criminal world and how it relates to positions in society. Brantingham & Brantingham (1984) suggest that in general, most offending and victimization occurs while someone is positioned in their daily routine, such as going to and from work or school. This hypothesis is supported by Warren, Reboussin, Hazelwood, Cummings, Gibbs, & Trumbetta (1998) whose findings suggest that rapists tend to only travel on average about 3.14 miles. The reasoning for this, they believe, is because rapists carry more knowledge about the area in which they live. Research conducted by Pizarro, Corsaro, & Yu (2007) found that incidents of homicide often took place in or around places associated with the daily routines of offenders and victims. They also point out that certain demographics, such as age and gender could potentially affect the activities of certain individuals.

As a variant of environmental criminology, Routine Activity Theory takes a similar route to understanding criminal behavior. Cohen & Felson (1980) state that in order for a crime to occur, three things must be present: 1) A motivated offender 2) A lack of capable guardianship 3) A suitable target. Capable guardians can be any sort of
measure that would deter a criminal because of its presence, such as: locked doors and windows, alarms systems, dogs, and the presence of other people. When these three components converge in time and space, there is an increased likelihood for criminal behavior. Routine Activity Theory helps give a better understanding into how and why offenders choose their victims. This theory can also help explain the changing trends of serial rape across time by considering social trends, demographic shifts, and changes in the supply and positioning of capable guardians, to help understand why the act of serial rape might be more or less common over time.

The main concepts of routine activities approach are evident in the theoretical explanations formulated by serial murder scholars. For example, Jenkins (1988) reports that the largest group of victims of many serial murderers were female prostitutes. Certain groups such as prostitutes, runaways, and the homeless are likely to be potential victims of serial murder, and likely serial rape due to the vulnerability of these populations, as a lack of capable guardianship is a prominent feature of their lifestyle. Jenkins (1992) again discusses vulnerable populations during certain decades in the United States, with certain cultural practices and changing ideals creating larger victim and offender populations.

In this context we seek to conduct a socio-historical analysis of American serial rape from 1940 to 2010, with an additional focus on developing an offender profile and examining patterns in offender style.
DATA, METHODS, AND SAMPLE

To locate and track cases of serial rape over time, we first had to locate an effective tool for identifying potential cases. Newspapers are one of the most commonly used resources when attempting to trace crime over time. The time parameter for the current study spans from 1940 until 2010. Jenkins (1988) used secondary sources and media reports to research serial murder, citing that sensationalized crimes (e.g., serial violence) often receives heavy coverage in media outlets. Duwe (2000) backs up this hypothesis, by discussing how many news outlets profit from reporting on topics that might attract a wide variety of readers. While rape is a massively underreported crime, cases of serial rape may be likely to be reported more often by both newspapers and victims because it affects a larger number of people and because its extreme nature appeals to the general public as newsworthy. Clay-Warner and McMahon-Howard (2009) found that victims that were attacked in their home or a public place by a stranger, were more than twice as likely to report the rape to authorities. Hazelwood & Warren (1990) along with the FBI have made prior generalizations based upon a small number of cases and with a larger number of cases, broader generalizations can be made.

There are several benefits to using newspaper articles to research serial rape. Huff-Corzine, McCutcheon, Corzine, Jarvis, Tetzlaff-Bemiller, Weller, & Landon (2014) discuss how newspapers are the only sources available for many of the earlier decades prior to the development of systematic crime reporting efforts. They also discuss how often times, newspapers provide more details on cases than perhaps government-based information (i.e. name of offender, ages of victims, locations of crime), which allows for
a more thorough understanding of these crimes, the offenders, and the victims. As stated above, newspapers do have a tendency to report some cases more than others, so sensationalistic cases might have more media coverage than more routine, mundane crimes. On the other hand, Huff-Corzine et. al (2014) argue that one possible limitation of drawing data from newspapers is that there could potentially be conflicting information from different sources. It is also logical to assume that as technology expanded, such as cable television and access to the internet, so too would coverage of crimes like serial rape. Thus, an increase in serial rape coverage in newspapers may appear to reflect an actual increase in the crime but some of that increase may owe to increasing expansion of information and news sharing among agencies.

Being aware of both the benefits of limitations of newspaper coverage, we constructed our data set entirely from newspaper accounts since there is no other source for comprehensive data on this phenomenon, official or otherwise. Our newspaper sample includes: The Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, and the Washington Post. All newspapers were searched starting with the year 1940 and ending in the year 2010. Research conducted by Jenkins (1992) had similar parameters to better understand waves of serial crime across several decades. The selection of these newspapers was based upon them being readily available within our database, and being major national newspapers that cover most major geographical areas in the United States. These newspapers also have been around for the time period being researched, while other newspapers may have gone in and out of business or not been created until later. The data were collected using Proquest and their collection of both
historical and current newspaper articles. Proquest is a research database used by many libraries around the world with coverage of numerous different topics, scholarly articles, newspaper databases, and books. Described by the company (2014) as having access to over three centuries worth of newspaper articles, Proquest has been used as a resource for several other empirical studies (Huang, Kvasny, Joshi, Trauth, & Mahar, 2009; Woloshin and Schwartz, 2006; Jones, 2005; Savelsberg, King & Cleveland, 2002).

Previous studies regarding serial rapists, focused mainly on incarcerated offenders, thus limiting the potential offender pool. The use of newspapers in this study allows for studying not only convicted offenders, but offenders that may be at-large, detained, or deceased.

**Serial Rape Definition**

The serial murder concept first started to become popular in the mid-1980s. In 1983, The New York Times ran the original definition of serial murder created by the Justice Department that year: “they defined ‘serial murderers’ as those who kill for reasons other than greed, a fight, jealousy, or family disputes” (1983). The article also discusses the department doing preliminary research on the problem of serial murderers. This early definition was the start of the sensationalized and often reported crime of serial murder and led the pathway for other discussions of serial violence, such as rape.

In order to properly search for cases of serial rape, a definition had to be created. The definition of serial rape used in this study was created based upon prior research and taken from cues around the definition of serial murder. The FBI defines serial killings as:
The term ‘serial killings’ means a series of three or more killings, not less than
one of which was committed within the United States, having common
characteristics such as to suggest the reasonable possibility that the crimes were
committed by the same actor or actors. (2008).

Thus, our definition of serial rape is: “Three or more separate events of sexual coercion
(with or without penetration) that occur over a period greater than 72 hours. The
offenders are actively seeking, hunting, or luring victims as their principal goal. Attacks
are linked together (by police, media, or both) by some set of offense characteristics that
may include the offender’s physical characteristics, a common style of attack, or
characteristics of the victim. Rapists that kill their victims are not included (to distinguish
from serial killers).” Other groups not included in this definition are people that may be
in a position of authority over a potential victim (e.g., priests or teachers) who use
manipulation and rhetorical persuasion, as opposed to coercion, to manufacture consent
from their victims. Serial rapists are active hunting, luring, and/or attacking their victims,
while groups such as child molesters and pedophiles tend to focus more on mentoring,
grooming, and persuading their victims. Serial rapists will only have brief contact with
their victims, while these other groups tend to have extended, personal contact. For this
reason, these cases were not included in the data. In this context, we used the search
terms “rape” and “rapist” to find potential cases. These terms produced a total of 255,238
articles. Out of these, we used our definition to determine legitimate cases of serial rape.
To distinguish cases from spree or mass rapists, as in murder, we used victim count and
time parameters. We also did not include rapists who killed their victims as a primary act. Using our definition of serial rape, we identified 1,037 offenders from 1940 to 2010.

For the current study, we focused on active serial rapists, the time period during which they were active, and a variety of variables related to offender characteristics, details of the crime, and victim characteristics. For the purposes of our study, five variables were used to form a basic profile.

Age: This variable is defined as the age at which the offender committed their first act of rape in a series. For example, Gerald Chatman, was a serial rapist in the 1950s, accused of eleven different rapes, who was arrested and convicted in 1957 when he was 18. The articles written stated that he began his series of rape in 1955, making him 16 years old when the crimes first occurred. In some cases where the assailant was still at-large, we estimated his age based on victim estimates of his age range. When a range of ages was given (e.g. 25 to 30), the median age was used. The justification behind the use of the variable in this way, is in the idea that it’s important to know at what age someone first commits a crime. Farrington (1986) demonstrates using the age-crime curve that the peak age for violent offenders falls at 18 with sd=11.6. This variable will help detect whether the age-crime curve holds up for serial rapists as well. Age of offender was present in about ninety-one percent of the cases (n=947). Of the cases where age was listed, the mean age of offenders is 27.15 with sd=8.39 and a range of 10-71. Compared to single victim rapists, our sample mean age was younger, and our range of ages was broader. However, compared to other studies (e.g., Park et.al, 2008; Woodhams &
Laubschagne, 2012) our mean age was very similar; 29.1 and 28.99 respectively, but younger than others (e.g., McCormack et al., 1992) with a mean age of 35.2.

**Race:** This variable is defined as race or ethnicity of the offender as stated in the article. If race was not stated in the article, but a police sketch was present, perceived race or ethnicity was used. Of the total number of cases of serial rape, only twenty-nine percent had an identified race or ethnicity. Out of the 297 cases where race was known 46.1% of the offenders (n=137) are black; 29.3% (n=87) are white; 18.9% (n=56) are Hispanic/Latino; 4.7% are Asian (n=14); and one percent other (n=3). Often times, race was assigned based on victim descriptions when a perpetrator was considered at large and had not been caught. In the case of the Horn-Rimmed Glasses rapist from 1969 in Eddison and Orioles Park Illinois, the Chicago Tribune stated: “at least four recent victims have described the assailant to police as a white male, age 25 to 30…” (Chicago Tribune 1969). In our sample, compared to both single and serial rape offenders, blacks are overrepresented.

**Gender:** This variable is defined by stated gender of the offender in the newspaper article. Gender was also assumed by use of pronouns by either police or victims. Gender was identified in one hundred percent of the cases. All but two of the cases (n=1,035) were men. While rape is often assumed to be a man against woman crime, there have been cases where women were involved. For example, a husband and wife team, Terri and James Charboneau, were convicted in 1978 for a series of rapes. And while the majority of rape cases involve rape of a woman by a man, there have also been cases of male offenders attacking male victims. Keith Hill was arrested and
convicted for a series of crimes in 2006 in Baytown, Texas for raping five male victims: “All five victims have been white men who were alone and attacked in or near their homes in upscale neighborhoods…” (Los Angeles Times, 2006). These examples help demonstrate just how diverse this population of these offenders may be.

**Offense Date Range:** This variable is defined as the years in which a serial rapist was active. The offense date range was determined by specific years given by police or victim accounts. If specific years were given for the attacks, then those years were when the offender was deemed active. If a newspaper report stated that an offender began in a certain year and was caught during a later year, it is assumed that the rapist was active during all years in between. For example, Ben Galloway was convicted in 1976 for a series of rapes in Porterville, California. The Los Angeles Times stated: “…pleaded guilty to raping nine women between July, 1974 and July, 1976” (Los Angeles Times 1976). This would indicate that the offender was also active during 1975. Occasionally, a rapist would be deemed a serial rapist, get caught, convicted and upon release, would commit a series of rapes again. In this instance, the offender could not have been active while incarcerated, as his attacks were temporarily suspended. For example, Edward David Apodaca was arrested and convicted in 1966 for a series of rapes in Hermosa Beach, California and was released in the 1970s. While he was out of prison, Apodaca committed another series of rapes in 1972 and 1973, making his offense date range: 1966; 1972; and 1973.

**Style:** This variable is defined as the type of attack an offender would use to subdue their victims. Hazelwood & Warren (1990) identified three basic types of
offender approach: the con, the blitz, and the surprise. The con approach is based around the offender being able to trick their victim somehow and relies on face-to-face interaction. Brad Lieberman was convicted in 1980 for attacks on fourteen women. Lieberman would gain access to the victims’ homes by saying he was a plumber sent over to check on their house and, or pretend he needed help with his car and once inside, would attack. “…he gained entry to the home by telling her his parked auto had been damaged by a hit-and-run driver and he wanted to leave his name and address in case anyone had witnessed the accident” (Leeds, 1980). The surprise approach involves premeditation and often a preselection of victims, however, unlike the con approach, this method does not rely on personal interaction with the victim beforehand. For example, Reginald Muldrew, arrested and convicted in Los Angeles, California in 1978, was nicknamed by police “The Pillowcase Rapist” because he would sneak in through windows and place a pillowcase over the victim so they could not identify him. “[victim] was awakened at about 4:15, a.m. when the suspect entered her bedroom through an open window and attempted to tie her up” (Decker, 1978). The blitz approach is opportunistic and typically involves an unexpected blow to the victim. The Halls Hill Rapist in Arlington, Virginia would grab women from behind after they exited buses and drag them at knifepoint behind buildings. “The most recent attack took place on Dec. 1 when a single woman […] got off a Metro bus […] in the early evening. The woman was dragged at knifepoint behind two construction trailers where the assailant attacked her…” (Dougherty, 1981). In addition to these three methods of attack, our analysis identified a previously neglected method of assault—drugged. Drugged was considered a new
method because it employs different tactics that didn’t fit into the previous three categories. Drugged involves the use of some sort of medicine or drug to subdue the victim (e.g. laughing gas). Dr. William Dishuk admitted to raping five patients of his while they were sedated. He would inform them he needed to put them under sedation to perform small surgeries. “[The offender] admitted that he had anesthetized five women patients between 1982 and 1984 and then sexually assaulted or took nude pictures of them” (Myers, 1987).

The current study aims to use all of these variables to update existing literature and create a more general offender profile of serial rape. Along with this information, the study aims to create a depiction of the distribution of serial rapists across time and space, as well as make observations about offender style.
FINDINGS

As displayed in Table 1, basic characteristics of our sample were estimated and compared with previous research. The current study aims to explore whether the serial rapist is a unique offender by using these basic demographics, or whether this information in similar to existing rape research.

Offender Profile and Style

Profile: Table 1 demonstrates the comparison of the current study with previous research.

The mean age for the current study is similar to that of both Woodhams & Laubschagne (2012) as well as Park. et. al. (2008). The difference between McCormack et. al. (1992) may lie in the fact that the offenders were already imprisoned and age at the time of the interview, rather than age of first offense, was used. Lisak (2011) supports this hypothesis and suggests that many repeat offenders, when arrested, have been active for decades.

Race of offender is a major discrepancy between the current study and previous research. Our data suggest that the majority of serial rapists are black males, which is an overrepresentation of this group. Previous research shows that the majority of sexual offenders are white. This discrepancy may be due to the increased sample size. It is also possible that the reason for this is that race may have been more likely to be reported when the offender was black, however existing research has little evidence to support this hypothesis (Collins, 2014; Kumar, 1999).

Offender Style. Of the 1,037 cases found, about 74 percent of cases had an identified method of attack (n=768). Of these cases, 27.9 percent (n=229) were the con
approach; 22.2 percent (n=182) were the blitz approach; 47.4 percent (n=389) were the surprise approach; and 2.6 percent (n=21) were the drugged approach.

The surprise approach was the most frequently used style of attack. Data from both Hazelwood & Warren (1990) and Park et. al. (2008) also found this style to be the most frequently used. The second highest method of attack falls under the con approach, followed by blitz, and then drugged. With the exception of drugged, these findings support those found by Hazelwood & Warren (1990). Routine Activity Theory could help explain why these patterns might exist. The surprise approach is often premeditated, with the offender seeking a suitable target that has no capable guardianship, such as open windows or unlocked doors. Capable guardianship doesn’t always mean a physical person. Often times, the offender would find an unlocked door or window and sneak in while the victim slept. The offender might also be aware from watching and observing, whether or not the victim lived alone. The blitz approach, being the most opportunistic may have also been the hardest commit, as it is not as carefully calculated as the other styles. In this style of attack, the offender isn’t actively seeking out victims beforehand, so their suitable target pool is diminished.

Offense Date Range was the variable used for the main analysis of this study. This variable covers all of the potential years between 1940 and 2010 when a serial rapist was active. SPSS, a statistical software program created by IBM (2014), was used to develop variable frequencies, sample descriptives, and to graph results.

Figure 1 displays the distribution of active serial rapists over seven decades. There are several points within this graph that need to be discussed.
1940-1975: This time period shows relatively small amounts of active serial rapists, always less than twenty at any given time and often even less than that. So what caused the spike in active serial rapists in the early part of the 1970s? Routine activity theory would lend itself to the idea that certain aspects of society at the time increased offender and victim populations. Jenkins (1992) discusses how this time period consisted of increasing sexual freedom, as well as a highly mobile population of young individuals.

…the vital changes in the 1960s might have been the greater independence of the younger generation and changes in their sexual behavior and attitudes. This greatly enhanced the opportunities for a potential offender to find himself or herself in intimate circumstances with a victim, and the increased physical mobility of these years made it less likely that a young person’s disappearance would be immediately noticed. (Jenkins, 1992, p. 14-15).

In this context, number of active serial rapists would have increased due to the increase of suitable targets. Jenkins also theorized that police involvement was not at its peak during this time period, minimizing capable guardianship. With less police on the streets or targeting criminals, there is the potential for an increased likelihood of offending. Serial offenders rely on low guardianship, as it helps facilitate more opportunities to commit the crime. Serial rapists especially would benefit from any social trend that might reduce guardianship.

An alternative explanation for these trends may be that violence is a result of social disorder and a breakdown in attachments and belief in social institutions. Crime may be a result of informal social control. Roth (2009) argues that when the general
public has lost confidence and trust in the government, violence tends to occur more frequently. According to Roth, the late 1960s and 1970s were fraught with tension due to dishonesty from the government about the Vietnam War, and also experienced a reduction in trust of the government due to the Watergate scandal.

Divisions over race relations and the Vietnam War polarized the nation and left many Americans angry, bitter, and hostile toward each other. Trust in government and faith in public officials nearly evaporated between 1963 and 1974, and the homicide rate doubled… (Roth, 2009, p. 455).

Roth’s argument can also explain the relatively low rates of serial rape present up until 1970. He suggests that there was a lot of patriotism that existed and many citizens stood behind their government in the fight against communism. With a country that has more trust in its government, crime may be likely to decrease.

1976-1991: This steady increase in active serial rapists over this fifteen year time period is dramatic compared to the previous decades explored. Fischer (2010) argued that the crime increase during this time period could simply have been because of the baby boom generation and the increase of the population as a whole—more people means more crime. There would not only be more potential motivated offenders, but also more potential targets. Jenkins (1992) also discusses this potential hypothesis associated with the baby boom generation, citing that this generation was more aggressive in their sexual motivations. Hitchhiking in the 1980s was a popular social phenomenon that would have resulted in low guardianship and more suitable targets, making the crime easier to accomplish. Consider the case of Daniel Gordon Watson who was convicted in 1985 for
a series of rapes he committed in 1982 in Santa Monica, California. Watson would often pick up women that were hitchhiking or at bus stops looking for rides. “The prosecution said Watson drove his victims to a remote area in the Santa Monica Mountains and raped them after picking them up at bus stops or while they were hitchhiking…” (Feldman, 1985).

1992-2002: As depicted in Figure 1, 1992 saw a significant decrease in active serial rapists. In the late 1980s, DNA evidence had entered into the court system. The Committee on Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Science Community (2009) suggest that over the past twenty years, science and DNA evidence have allowed for more prosecutions and convictions, as well as solving previously unsolved cases. The FBI (2008) also brings up this point, arguing that forensic evidence based upon a person’s DNA and a national database, has allowed for prosecution in previously unsolved cases, and allowed for linkage between cases that were not known before. These advancements have allowed for an increasing potential for identifying offenders and, thus, had made serial offending more difficult to accomplish.

It is also possible during this time period, that many of the motivated offenders to commit these crimes were incarcerated due to higher arrest rates. Conklin (2003) posits that the decline of crime in general in the early 1990s may have been due to high incarceration rates: “…13 to 54 percent of the decline in crime rates in the 1990s was due to growth of the prison population…” (Conklin, 2003, p. 95). If more criminals in general were imprisoned, it can be assumed that this includes active serial rapists as well.
**2003-2010:** As depicted in Figure 1, 2003 demonstrates an increase in active serial rapists compared to the overall trends occurring throughout the rest of the decade. Roth (2009) lends itself to the idea that this time period was a time of distrust in the government. The Second Iraq War had just started, and the country was divided on the issue. Because of this political upheaval and distrust, more crime may have been likely to occur. The continuing decrease throughout the rest of the decade may owe to a variety of factors. For example, increasing incarceration rates and advances in police technology may have played a factor.

*Violent Crime:* Figure 2 demonstrates violent crime trends in the United States from 1950-2010. The trends represented in this graph match the trends represented by the current study’s graph of active serial rapists. This finding demonstrates that serial rape fluctuates like other violent crimes in the United States, suggesting that there are larger social forces at work that would affect both offender and victim populations.

One main difference between the violent crime trends and the active serial rapists, is that active serial rapists all but diminish towards the latter half of the 2000s. Potential reasons for this may be the capture of previous at-large serial rapists through forensic evidence. It’s also possible, that with the increase in reporting of other issues. With other news stories such as the Olympics, the election of President Barack Obama, WikiLeaks, and devastating earthquakes, these stories may have fallen under the radar.
CONCLUSION

This study aimed to give a better understanding of the under researched crime of serial rape and the offenders who commit this crime, as well as construct a sociologically informed definition of serial rape. While prior research had been conducted on the topic, the samples sizes did not allow for generalizability, as well as failed to include at-large rapists. Another aspect of previous research that was not addressed, was that of how serial rape was distributed across time and space.

Serial rape definitions from prior research varied widely in regards to various different aspects, including number of victims and whether or not there was a cooling off period in between victims. The definition created for this study covers number of victims, a cooling off period, and the inclusion of hunting for victims and linkage between cases based on style of attack.

The data suggest that 46.1% of the offenders are black, 29.3% white, 18.9% Hispanic/Latino, 4.7% Asian, and 1% other. All but two of the offenders are men with a mean age of 27.15 and an age range of 10-71. These numbers are similar compared to prior research on serial rape, however there is an overrepresentation of black men in this population compared to previous studies. It also appears that the majority of these offenders utilize the surprise style of attack, by seeking out their victims and looking for opportunities to enter homes. The least used style of attack, that other studies also incorporated was the blitz method, an opportunity based method, which does not have the offender actively seeking out victims beforehand. A new category of style was added based on findings within this data set. The drugged style has the offender relying on some
sort of medication or sedative to subdue the victim and while the victim is unconscious, the perpetrator attacks.

This study also created a visual distribution of active serial rapists from 1940 until 2010. This graph helps to better visualize the crime and see how it fluctuates throughout different time periods in the United States. This graph displayed several spikes, which might be explained by different social movements, increased population in the United States in general, as well as distrust of the government. The graph also displayed several drops in active serial rapists. These drops may represent things such as high levels of trust in the government, increased conviction rates due to DNA evidence and forensic advancements, and increased incarcerations rates nationwide.
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While this study was extensive, some limitations did exist. Gathering data from newspapers, while a valuable resource, may not have captured all cases of serial rape, especially in places that might have smaller populations. Another limitation of using newspapers, is that we rely on journalist reporting. Journalists aren’t required to put a specific amount of information into an article and there is no uniform way of reporting crime and often times certain variables, such as race or details about style are not reported and would result in missing variables. There is also the potential for linkage blindness, with neither the cops or newspapers realizing cases might be connected.

Further research is needed on this topic in several different areas. An important finding of this study was that of race. Future research could aim to explain why this racial difference and overrepresentation exists. Another avenue to explore would be seek out regional differences regarding serial rape. Did certain geographical territories experience more or less serial rape during given time periods?

Another important aspect of this research that needs to be explored is that of victim characteristics. Victims are an important aspect of this crime and studying their characteristics could not only give more insight into who is at risk, but also potentially shed even more light on the offenders themselves.
REFERENCES


Graney, Dawn J. and Bruce A. Arrigo. 2001. The power serial rapist. Springfield, IL. Charles C Thomas Publisher Ltd.


Huff-Corzine, Lin, James C. McCutcheon, Jay Corzine, John P. Jarvis,


## APPENDIX

Table 1. Current Study Offender Profile vs. Prior Research Offender Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Age (Years)</strong></td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>28.99</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Range (Years)</strong></td>
<td>10-71</td>
<td>18-46</td>
<td>9-85</td>
<td>14-57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16-49</td>
<td>23-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Active Serial Rapists, United States 1940-2010
Figure 2. Uniform Crime Report, Violent Crime Trends in the United States 1960-2012

Note: 2012 data are preliminary
Source: FBI Uniform Crime Report and Preliminary Annual Uniform Crime Report