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CONSTRUCTING COERCION

The Organization of Sexual Assault

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There is an abundance of research on how perpetrators organize and orchestrate their activity during the commission of burglary, robbery, and homicide. By contrast, there is very little research on how perpetrators organize sexual assaults. Based on interviews with 33 incarcerated rapists who acted alone and had little or no prior social connection to their victims, we describe rape events in terms of a sequential series of phases that are analogous to those employed to analyze homicides and robbery. The five phases of the kind of rape events we describe include (1) preexisting life tensions, (2) transformation of motivation into action, (3) perpetrator-victim confrontation, (4) situation management, and (5) disengagement. We also argue that within these five phases, perpetrators exhibit differential awareness of their own actions, apply divergent meanings to apparently similar actions, and engage in different degrees and types of organization.

Keywords: *rape; sexual assault; coercion; deviant organization*

For many types of deviance, such as burglary, robbery, and homicide, there are numerous studies of how those activities are organized, and the analytic lens is focused on the organization of the activity by the perpetrator or the interaction of perpetrator and victim. By contrast, there are few comparable studies of rapists and rape situations. Of those studies that do analyze rapists and their activities, a substantial proportion consists of psychological or clinical case studies that seek to identify their personality characteristics and dynamics. Case studies often do contain descriptions of rape events, of course, but they typically foreground the personality configuration of the perpetrator and background situational characteristics. This research draws on a sample of convicted rapists to offer an interpretation of *how* rape events emerge and are organized from the perspective of the perpetrator. In this analysis, we reverse foreground and background, directing attention primarily to the situational characteristics as constructed and enacted by the perpetrator. We are analyzing here a specific type of rape and subset of rapists. These rapists are analogous to most “opportunistic”

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burglars and robbers in that offenders engage in minimal planning, enlist no confederates, and have little or no prior social connection to their victims (Conklin 1972; Lejeune 1977). The organization of the rapes in our sample should be distinguished from serial rapes (Burgess et al. 1988); those carried out in intimate relationships, such as marital rape (Finkelhor and Yllo 1985); and those committed in permissive subcultural contexts, such as fraternities (Sanday 1990) or prisons (Davis 1970). It is also important to emphasize that the sample consists of convicted, incarcerated rapists who have committed offenses that are organized coercively as opposed to the mixture of manipulation and coercion characteristic of some other types of sexual assault, such as date rape (Sanday 1996). We shall argue that rape events, like robberies and homicides, can be analyzed in terms of a sequence of analytically distinguishable phases. The overall development of the event through these phases involves a process that is both contingent and emergent. That is, each phase leads to and structures the following phase, but at the same time, the event sequence of action may be interrupted and redirected by the actions of perpetrator, victim, or third parties.

THEORY AND RESEARCH ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

The classic sociological explanations for sexual assault have proceeded from either structural or social psychological perspectives. Structural theories trace high rates of sexual assault to factors such as the definition of personhood for males in terms of interpersonal violence and toughness (Sanday 1981); possession of limited personal and economic resources by males who regard sex as a commodity, which leads to the adoption of coercion (Clark and Lewis 1977); or Western social, legal, and religious gender roles, which define women as male property and sex as an exchange of goods (Bart 1979; Griffin 1971). The most common social psychological explanations are learning theories, which postulate that aggressive behavior toward women is learned through a number of interrelated processes (Bandura 1978; Kanin 1967; Malamuth 1984; Zillman 1984; Sorenson and White 1992). The processes include imitation of violence toward women that is witnessed in everyday life or depicted in the media; the existence of rape myths that are learned to legitimate sexual coercion; and desensitization to the pain, humiliation, and fear that accompany sexual victimization. These

processes have been referred to as the “modeling effect,” the “sex-violence linkage effect,” the “rape myth effect,” and the “desensitization effect,” respectively (Linz, Donnerstein, and Penrod 1984; Burt 1980; Ellis 1989).

Neither structural nor social psychological theories provide insight into how perpetrators organize rape events, and there is little research on which to construct a theory (Hale 1997). We begin the construction of an event development approach by adopting Best and Luckenbill's (1994) definition of rape as one form of deviant coercion, “a transaction in which one actor exacts compliance from another by means of actual or threatened punishment” (p. 143; see also Felson 2002, 122). The primary characteristics of deviant coercion include rendering the offender eligible for formal sanctions by social control agents; exploitation by serving the offender's needs at the victim's expense, and engendering victim compliance through actual or threatened force (Best and Luckenbill 1994, 144-45). In contrast to predatory crimes, such as extortion (Best 1982), in which criminal and target interactions are extended and complex, transactions during rape events usually are fleeting and unstable as victim compliance is maintained only so long as offender dominance can be maintained. In contrast to other common forms of deviant coercion, such as robbery (Conklin 1972; Einstadter 1969; Jacobs and Wright 1999; Wright and Decker 1997; Walsh 1986), burglary (Shover 1973, 1996), assault (Harries 1990), and homicide (Luckenbill 1977), there is little research on the organization of rape.

Homicide (Felson and Steadman 1983; Luckenbill 1977), robbery (Best and Luckenbill 1994; Katz 1988, 1991), and mugging (Lejeune 1977) events have been described in terms of sequential stages. In the case of robbery, for example, these have been defined as planning the operation, establishing copresence, reorienting interaction toward a common robbery frame, transferring the goods, and leaving the setting (Best and Luckenbill 1994, 149-54). Homicides have been described in terms of a progression consisting of personal offense, assessment, retaliation, working agreement, battle, and termination (Luckenbill, 1977). Lejeune (1977) distinguishes between the prefrontation and confrontation phases of muggings, and gives considerable attention to the prefrontation period. This phase involves the offender's management of his personal fears and his selection of victims as well as the formulation “of a loose plan, subject to modification and improvisation as the action develops” (p. 127). The confrontation phase involves

inducing fear in the victim, communicating toughness, and using physical violence to gain and maintain control.

We argue that rape events can be described in terms of a sequential series of phases that are analogous to those employed to describe homicide, robbery, and mugging. The five phases of the kind of rape events we describe include (1) preexisting life tensions, (2) transformation of motivation into action, (3) perpetrator-victim confrontation, (4) situation management, and (5) disengagement. The first phase, preexisting life tensions, provides context for understanding how the perceived problems in the lives of the offenders give rise to rape events, which the rapists then attempt to control and manage. The subsequent three phases describe the management and control process, and the final phase delineates how offenders attempt to exit the coercive relationship they have created.

Whereas previous conceptualizations of the stages of robberies, muggings, and homicides acknowledge the "unstable" and "fleeting" quality of the transactions involved, we emphasize this variability. We argue that within these five phases, perpetrators exhibit differential awareness of their own actions, apply divergent meanings to apparently similar actions, and engage in different degrees and types of organization. By presenting the rape event in terms of its developmental phases, we highlight the emergent order that the perpetrator seeks to create; by presenting the variability within the developmental phases, we highlight the contingent nature of the perpetrator's actions.

METHODS AND SAMPLE

The data on which this article is based were collected by Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla; findings from that study have been reported in a book and a series of articles (Marolla and Scully 1986; Scully and Marolla 1984, 1985; Scully 1990). The total sample consisted of 114 rapists incarcerated in seven Virginia prisons. Forty-six percent were white and 54 percent black; many were incarcerated for more than one crime, including 11 percent who had been convicted of first- or second-degree murder; their sentences ranged in length from ten years to seven life sentences plus 380 years.

Gaining access to a meaningful sample of rapists is inherently problematic. It is usually not feasible to become a participant observer in a

high-security prison facility for an extended period as a means of identifying and interviewing specific categories of offenders. Identifying active, undetected rapists raises a host of ethical issues about protecting the identities of individuals potentially engaged in ongoing offenses. Former rapists who are identified through official records present problems of recall, given the long sentences they are likely to have served. The strategy of identifying convicted rapists within a prison population and conducting extended structured and semistructured interviews is therefore a reasonable means of obtaining some insight into how sexual assault occurs (Copes and Hochstetler 2003; Ferraro and Moe 2003; Athens 1974). Clearly, this sample of rapists consists of those who resemble the type of rape that is most likely to be prosecuted and result in incarceration: incidents that (1) consisted of a violent attack by one or more strangers, (2) occurred in a public setting or private space through a break-in, (3) involved the use of force and/or weapons, and (4) resulted in physical injury.

The process of gaining access to the men who were interviewed was extended and laborious as it was imperative to protect the rights of respondents and satisfy requirements for institutional security. Letters were initially sent to all men incarcerated in seven Virginia prisons requesting voluntary participation in a study on attitudes toward sexual behavior and women. Rape was not mentioned in the letter since some types of rapists have very low status within the prison population and might have been placed at risk by self-disclosure. In addition, interviews were conducted with other nonrapists (who served as a control group for comparing background and personality characteristics), which helped to conceal the identities of the rapists. Once the volunteers had been identified and meetings arranged, the interviews were conducted on a single occasion to minimize disruptions to prison staff and schedules. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the interviews at any point or decline to answer specific questions. Approval of the interview schedule and participation arrangements was obtained from the university Internal Review Board, the Virginia Department of Corrections, and the National Institute of Mental Health, which provided grant funding.

The prison environment was daunting, but not simply as a product of the walls, guards, bars and locked doors, and extreme regimentation of activity. Prisons create a unique combination of boredom and danger, and the men who inhabit them exhibit both anger and fear. With respect

to this study, one of the most important characteristics of the prison population was mistrust. The men regarded it as extremely risky to disclose personal information or sentiments to others since such disclosures could be regarded as a sign of weakness that would leave them vulnerable to potential exploitation. Personal nondisclosure extended to prison staff and therapists, who also were not trusted since men feared that personal information might be used against them at periodic parole hearings. One indicator of the men's self-protection was that they acted in an impersonal, distant fashion—at the least, in any chance encounters outside the interview situation as a means of preserving their prison personas. The isolation of the prison environment turned out to be an asset in this research as most men regarded their interviews with nonaligned outsiders as a situation in which self-disclosure was not fraught with risk.

Because the interviews were conducted on a single occasion, establishing rapport quickly was critical to obtaining information on a very sensitive subject. Achieving rapport was complicated by the necessity of having guards posted in the vicinity and, in cases where men were in maximum security cells, of placing the interviewer in one cell and the interviewee in an adjacent cell. The most effective means of conducting interviews was to begin with general, background information and gradually work toward the more sensitive issues. In addition, the interviewers adopted a conversational style of interviewing that accorded the respondent considerable freedom in structuring his responses. The men were treated as experts on the subject of rape, with the interviewers assuming the role of nonjudgmental transcribers of their statements. In the end, these procedures appear to have been quite successful as it was not uncommon for men to request additional time for conversation. In addition, in a number of cases, men disclosed details of other crimes they had committed, including crimes for which they had not been apprehended. Interviews averaged between three and six hours, and the interview process was extremely intense. In addition to having to establish rapport and maintain a nonjudgmental stance, the interviewers recorded the men's often-unstructured responses in handwritten notebooks to avoid creating legal liability for respondents (handwritten notes are treated by courts as hearsay evidence). For an extended discussion of these issues, see Scully 1990.

The interviews conducted with inmates were divided into three sections designed to measure various aspects of the subjects' personal

backgrounds (family, childhood, education, religion, marriage, sexual activity, criminal activity, and employment), attitudes about salient topics (rape, violence, females, and masculinity), and the rape event and the rape victim (open-ended questions about the rape event and the victim). The entire research instrument consisted of eighty-nine pages of semistructured interviews with each of the subjects interviewed. Including seven hundred hours of interviews, the complete data set totaled fifteen thousand pages of data.

This analysis draws primarily on the thirty pages of open-ended interview data describing the rape event. It was in this section that the rapists described their particular crimes and their personal recollections regarding what led up to the crime as well as the events that followed. Although the interviews were semistructured, respondents often organized their accounts into a "story" that presented the logic and sequence of events as they perceived them. Respondents offered more or less detail on various aspects of the rape event organization, even when the interviewers expressed interest in those specific, and often nondiscrediting, elements of the rape. As a result, the phases of rape reported here constitute a composite summary derived from the individual offenders' reports rather than an item-by-item analysis of interview data. It was, of course, plausible that the men would provide false or significantly distorted accounts of the rape events. Therefore, a list of thirty questions was included in the interview that addressed background and crime information typically included in pre-sentencing reports. Since the respondents had granted the interviewers access to prison records, it was possible to conduct some comparison of interview responses and court records. This comparison suggests that the men did underreport the amount of coercion and injury that occurred in the rapes, apparently to preserve their self-image and acceptability to the interviewers, but not the sequence of events that occurred before, during, and after the rape event.

The sample that constitutes the basis for this analysis draws on one of the key distinctions Scully and Marolla drew in their analysis between "admitters" and "deniers" (1985, 98). The former group (forty-seven respondents) acknowledged that they had forced sexual acts on their victims and defined the behavior as rape. Since these men admitted that they had committed rape and consented to the interview, they provided sufficient detail to reconstruct the sequence of events. The men in the

latter group either denied all sexual contact or acquaintance with the victim (thirty-four respondents), typically claiming that they were not even at the scene, or admitted that they engaged in sexual acts with the victim but denied that their behavior constituted rape (thirty-three respondents), typically claiming that the sexual encounter had actually been consensual. Some of these men admitted they had engaged in sexual relations but stated that they were drunk or high at the time and could not remember what happened. Those men who denied rape either provided little detail on the sequence of events or offered limited descriptions that were simply designed to buttress their innocence claims. In addition to those who denied committing rape, cases involving admitters who declined to offer details on the rape event, multiple rapists (since the organization and dynamics of those rapes were influenced by the involvement of several perpetrators), and young child victims (who were incapable of resistance or negotiation) were not included in our analysis. Therefore, this article is based on interviews with the thirty-three admitters who acted alone and provided descriptions of the rape event in the course of the interview.

PREEXISTING LIFE TENSIONS

There is ample evidence by a number of measures that the lives of the incarcerated rapists in this sample were filled with problems and tensions. Based on survey data collected on these offenders, Scully (1990) reports that half had been abandoned by their fathers by the time they were eighteen years old, the same percentage stated that their childhoods had been characterized by instability, only 20 percent completed high school, and many had criminal records dating back to their teenage years. As adults, more than half were neither married nor cohabiting with a woman, 40 percent reported being unemployed, and 85 percent had criminal records (typically with multiple property-offense arrests).

The interviews with the thirty-three rapists in our sample support the larger sample demographic profiles. They expressed feelings of a lack of control that most often traced to their work and domestic lives in some combination. Twenty-eight of the respondents made statements that reflected these themes. For example, one rapist who reported that he was constantly "thinking about how fucked up my life was" traced

his sense of futility to an unfulfilling marriage. He felt that he had been forced into marriage and as a result had forfeited an opportunity to attend college. Furthermore, he termed his marital expectations as unrealistic, a response to his own sexual inexperience and the fact that "my parents' marriage was not good, and [I] wanted this one to be perfect." These problems were exacerbated by his feeling that he had "too many responsibilities," that everyone was making decisions for him, and that he had "little control over [him]self." Another offender who raped his victim in her residence after following her there from a store described his mental state as one of extreme depression. He traced his depression to both his work and home life. He recalled, "Work pressures were overwhelming me, [I] wanted to be successful, but tension and pressure were beyond my grasp." He also reported that he "was miserable at home" due to a poor relationship with his wife and children. Prior to the rape, he was "on a three-day leave from work" and in a terribly depressed state in which he "wanted to cry every minute" and "couldn't sleep for days." He stated that he regularly experienced periods during which he wouldn't sleep for days at a time and then would "crash for eighteen hours straight."

Twenty of the rapists reported having experienced these circumstances for an extended period of time, and another eight described equally troubling conditions that were of shorter duration. Whatever the duration, these men seemed to feel caught up in a situation that was hopeless. Their accounts suggest that they were consumed by the emotional threat posed by the onset of these feelings or the need to escape engulfment by them. A major focal concern for many offenders, then, was simply coping with daily life, and judging by the accounts they offered, their efforts had met with very mixed success.

These ongoing life tensions are more directly connected to the ensuing rapes by virtue of the fact that perpetrators were very likely to assert that their personal troubles became particularly acute in the period immediately prior to their commission of a sexual assault. One man who admitted having committed four rapes during the period of a year recalled experiencing tremendous depression for that entire year but also being more depressed and upset than usual on the nights when he committed rapes, often following conflict with a significant other. Another rapist discussed the intense sense of despair he experienced during the several days between the time he came home to find his wife in bed with another man and the point at which he raped his victim:

My parents have been married for many years, and I had high expectations about marriage. I put my wife on a pedestal. When I walked in on her, I felt like my life had been destroyed, it was just such a shock. I was bitter and angry about the fact that I hadn't done anything to my wife for cheating.

A particularly violent rapist traced his sexual violence to a misdiagnosis of venereal disease. His wife was diagnosed as having a venereal disease and accused him of contracting it through infidelities and then transmitting it to her. He reported that he became so enraged by his wife's lack of trust in him that he "wanted to break every bone in her body" and that he was "very angry, so [I] rode around and drank a lot."

The pervasive sense of futility that these offenders reported and the exacerbation of these feelings immediately prior to the rapes does not, of course, provide a direct connection to the sexual assaults that they were to later commit. However, there are several other factors that suggest why these men were good candidates to respond to the tensions they were experiencing by assaulting women—their gender attitudes, the prevalence of force as a means of control in their lives, and their acceptance of the use of force in sexual relationships (Scully 1990). While the rapists did not hold unusually conservative gender attitudes on occupational and domestic matters, they were more likely to subscribe to the "pedestal" idea, that women need male protection and should be more virtuous than men. This idea (note the explicit use of the term above by one of the rapists) oriented both their expectations of women and their conceptions of appropriate male behavior. It is instructive in this regard, for example, that about two-thirds of the rapists agreed that women caused their own rapes by their clothes and conduct. Second, these men were relatively supportive of and accustomed to force being exercised by males in families. In their reports about their child and adult family lives, about half of the offenders reported having grown up in families in which they witnessed violence against their mothers, and the same percentage admitted that as adults they had struck their partners at least once. Third, force was regarded as an appropriate means for men to control sexual relationships. In the attitude survey, more than three quarters of the men stated that a man should not give up when a woman says no to sex; 40 percent agreed that a man was justified in hitting his wife; and 45 percent said that some women like to be hit because it is a sign of caring by the male. Those

men most accepting of violence were also most hostile toward women and accepting of rape stereotypes.

The rapists' accounts provide two other clues to the connection between tension in the rapists' lives and their subsequent sexual assaults. One is that seventeen of them attributed their problems to relationships with women, most frequently wives or girlfriends. As several of the preceding quotes from the rapists indicate, they frequently mentioned unfulfilling marriages, mistrust, and betrayal by their partner. Furthermore, whether the issues were domestic or occupational, the interviews with the rapists strongly suggest that they did not adopt other possible lines of action through which to address their problems directly. For example, there is little evidence that they confronted those against whom they harbored grievances (employers, coworkers, family members, or intimate partners), resolved differences with them, or searched for alternative relational partners. Unwilling or unable to confront the source of their problems, these men defined themselves as victimized and sought out alternative targets onto which to displace their aggression. As one rapist, who cited family problems as a primary source of his personal turmoil and went looking for a victim put it, "I knew I didn't want to be around my family because I knew I would hurt them if anything set me off." From their perspective, then, the assaults in which they subsequently became involved were perceived to be *defensive* in nature. The rapists generally depicted their assaults as a means of attempting to restore control in their lives. A perpetrator who described himself as out of control in every other part of his life stated that rape placed him in control, rape was "having my way." A second offender described himself as having been intimidated by women since boyhood. For him, rape constituted a way that he could feel there was someone of less worth than him. This theme was repeated by a third rapist, who also portrayed himself as bashful, timid, and intimidated by women. Rape was a means of reversing this relationship. As he put it, "In rape, I was totally in command, she [was] totally submissive."

The preexisting life tension phase summarizes what was usually an extended time period during which the individual who ultimately became a rapist experienced a variety of personally troubling events. These men were good candidates to become rapists, given their attitudes toward women and violence and their tendency to connect personal troubles to women. However, the mere presence of these factors did not make sexual assault inevitable. Perpetrators reported specific

incidents that increased their sense of personal futility and anger and heightened their motivation to engage in sexual assault. However, these rapists did not confront what they deemed the source of their troubles but rather sought redress for their grievances by displacing their aggression onto surrogates.

TRANSFORMATION OF MOTIVATION INTO ACTION

The combination of personal tensions, violent proclivities, misogynous attitudes, and perceived victimization among this group of rapists created a predisposition toward a violent solution in which women were the targets. During this phase, the situation moved from one in which the perpetrator was emotionally agitated to one in which he determined what kind of action to undertake, selected a specific victim, and concluded that circumstances were safe enough to proceed. The interview data suggested three paths from motivation to action. Nine of the rapists indicated that they were determined to rape from the outset, nineteen reported that the transition from motivation to action had been mediated by the situation (giving assistance to a woman in four cases, participation in social encounters in three cases, and commission of another crime in seven cases) and was therefore indirect, and five stated that they had consciously suppressed their feelings only to find that those feelings had reemerged. There was similar variation in perpetrators' selection of victims. Most offenders chose victims simply because they were available, some others sought out surrogate attributes, and still others looked for what they deemed desirable physical characteristics. Finally, perpetrators varied in how much attention they paid to their personal security.

Several offenders reported that their turbulent emotions translated immediately into a decision to commit rape. An offender who admitted to raping five females during a period of one year reported that his "intent always was to rape" and that "when I left the house each time I wanted to rape and went out to find the right victim." He further added that "I had a 'Dracula attitude'—going out to get blood, to violate a female." Other perpetrators knew that they wanted to "act out" but were unsure of what they would do. A man whose girlfriend became pregnant stated that he had a fight with her mother immediately prior to the

assault and that “[I was] predetermined to go out and get in trouble—to blow off aggression, but didn’t know what I was going to do.” Uncertainty sometimes persisted until the very moment when confrontation with the rape victim ensued, with rapists deciding to engage in sexual assault when they failed to achieve satisfaction over another grievance. In one incident, the offender reported that he was in the midst of severe financial hardship and went to the eventual victim’s house to collect some money owed to him by the victim’s husband. On being informed that the husband was not present and that the money the offender sought was unlikely to be forthcoming, the perpetrator became enraged, assaulting and then raping the victim. He asserted, “I did it to get even with her husband and her” and that he had decided he was going to “get it one way or another.”

Another group of perpetrators reported that the rape event emerged within a context in which it was unexpected to the offender himself. These perpetrators typically were engaged either in mundane social encounters (such as providing assistance of some kind to the victim or participating in a social occasion) when something occurred in the situation that triggered their hostile feelings or in an illegal activity (such as burglary or robbery) that presented an opportunity for rape. In one case, a rapist offered assistance to a woman whose car had broken down. When he was unable to repair the car, he offered the victim a ride home. He then decided he wanted to have sex with her. When she refused his advances, he raped her. Another incident involved a man helping a sixty-year-old female acquaintance move a table into her house. He reported that he suddenly began hitting her and then sexually assaulted her. He was unable to offer any explanation for his behavior except “I just did it.” Rapes attending robbery and burglary were not uncommon. Several rapists reported burglarizing residences and then committing rape when they discovered a woman present in the house. The impulsive nature of many of these rapes is illustrated by a robber who was going to make payment to a bail bondsman to whom he owed money. He decided instead to rob the bail bondsman; spotting an attractive woman in the office while engaged in the robbery, he decided to rape her as well.

Perpetrators typically described victim suitability in terms of one of three characteristics: simple physical presence (fourteen), surrogate attributes (nine), or manifestation of characteristics the perpetrator deemed desirable (five). In some cases where the perpetrator had

determined to proceed with a sexual assault, the mere presence of the victim in the vicinity was sufficient. One offender, who reported that he had been in a fight with a family member and went out to “blow off aggression,” stated that he chose his victim simply because “she was just there, could have been anybody. I picked her because she was just there.” It was not her personal characteristics; as he put it, “She was plain, healthy, and not too attractive.” Another rapist echoed that same theme, stating, “It was someone I didn’t know and it just happened. . . . She was in the wrong place at the wrong time. She was just the first person available.” Finally, a perpetrator who had gone to a store late at night for cigarettes and who had thought about rape earlier in the evening selected a victim simply because she had driven down the street at the moment he was walking toward the store.

The search for surrogates to represent the actual object of the perpetrators’ grievance sometimes led to the targeting of virtually any woman and at other times involved more specific characteristics. For example, a rapist who felt that his girlfriend had violated his “plans and trust in her” when she began having relations with other men upon moving away to college reported that he saw his victims and all females as representing this girlfriend. He admitted that during the rapes, “I was hating Sally [the girlfriend] and hating them [victims] because they probably messed men over.” He went on to say that at the time he was “hating all females because they were deceitful” and that rape was his way of “getting revenge for what happened to me.” Another rapist selected a victim because she resembled a woman who had previously, and he contended falsely, accused him of rape. It was more common for the perpetrator to seek out some kind of physical resemblance with the woman against whom the perpetrator felt a grievance, such as race, height, weight, or physique.

Finally, some perpetrators sought out females simply because they possessed physical characteristics the offenders found attractive. In such cases, the desired characteristics appear to have been those that the offender looked for in conventional and consensual relationships with females. Several offenders reported that the primary criteria employed when selecting a victim was that she met or exceeded what they described as their subjective standard for sexual attractiveness. One repeat offender indicated that “I choose attractive females, not just anybody.” Another perpetrator described sizing up his victim as she left a store and was walking home. He thought about raping her only after

seeing her and finding her attractive. He characterized her as "cute, 5' 3", a little chunky, blonde, no bra, and sexually appealing." Had she been older or less attractive, he reported, he would not have proceeded with the rape. For those offenders who did seek out surrogate or attractiveness characteristics, the search process involved rejecting potential victims that perpetrators simply seeking any woman would assault. An offender who committed five rapes during a one-year period reported that he would walk around and look into windows at various residences until he came upon a white woman in her forties (because he regarded mature women as more sexually experienced).

The other factor that determined how the rape event proceeded was the perpetrator's degree of concern for his personal security. A number of offenders who were in a rage or inebriated when they committed rape and selected the first available woman obviously took few precautions to protect themselves. For example, a perpetrator who initially intended to commit robbery abducted the victim at noon in front of a supermarket. A particularly candid offender who was discussing precautions stated, "Yes, I knew what I was doing, [I] just said the hell with the consequences." Not surprising, offenders who intended rape from the outset were much more likely to establish and verify the suitability of the circumstances first, and then wait for the necessary victim to emerge within that context. One repeat offender reported very specific techniques for raping, which he referred to as his "pattern." The "pattern was to check out the area, see if any dark spots, people around, dogs around before doing the rape." For him, victim characteristics were a secondary concern. As he noted, when he entered his pattern, he "hadn't seen her yet and couldn't tell what she looked like when I picked her." Another offender chose his victims because they lived in an apartment complex that had minimal security and buildings that allowed him to identify victims easily. He recalled that "all of the victims had their blinds wide open, windows open, and it allowed me to see them." Furthermore, the victims were "always in bed, asleep in a ground-level unit." Indeed, he recalled, "I kept going back because it [the apartment complex] was an easy target" and "a child could do the same thing." One important implication, of course, is that many of these rapists intended to commit rapes on a number of other occasions but did not find the type of victim and/or situation they were seeking or observed a number of women before selecting a victim. There was therefore

considerable indeterminacy in both the occurrence of particular rape events and selection of specific victims.

The phase in which perpetrators transformed their motivation into action was characterized by significant differences in how they were going to act out their intentions. While some perpetrators immediately initiated a rape and assaulted the first woman available, for others the decision to engage in rape was contingent on unfolding events and identifying victims with specific characteristics. Most of the offenders, then, were not fully cognizant of their own intentions at the beginning of the rape process; intervening events shaped the direction that their actions would take. The indeterminacy of the situation for a number of rapists was significant, as they were soon going to confront and then have to manage a victim to complete the rape. There was a similar indeterminacy in who would become a victim as some victims were chosen at random, others on the basis of surrogate characteristics, and still others for their physical attractiveness. The apparently uniform victim selection process actually thus was quite diverse, with perpetrators selecting victims as a product of anger, revenge, or attraction. Whichever choice the perpetrator made, of course, his intention was to use sexual coercion to redress the perceived violation of his identity. Finally, there was variance in the precautions offenders took to insure their security. The combination of concern about the type of victim and the degree of security also produced temporal variability: some perpetrators invested considerable time in identifying a particular kind of victim and setting while others responded more viscerally. These differences were significant in the next phase as perpetrators who had more carefully selected victims and settings more readily gained control of the rape situation.

PERPETRATOR-VICTIM CONFRONTATION

Confrontation occurs once the perpetrator has identified a victim, concluded that an opportunity for action exists, and has directly encountered the victim. The perpetrator now becomes involved in interaction as opposed to purely personal reactions to troubling events in his life. Confronting the victim categorically changes the perpetrator's social situation because he is now committing assault, even if he

terminates the encounter and does not carry out the rape. The situation is also dramatically altered for the victim, who finds her safety and well-being suddenly and unexpectedly threatened. Having crossed a significant normative boundary, the perpetrator's immediate problem becomes gaining control of the victim. As Katz (1988, 176) puts it, the offender seeks to "dramatize with unarguable clarity that the situation has been suddenly and irreversibly transformed." Perpetrators established control through the overt or implied use of force, and victims responded by capitulating, attempting to negotiate, or physically resisting. Victim resistance created a clear challenge to perpetrator control and was met with a rapid and often dramatic escalation of violence by the perpetrator.

The overt use of force involved assaulting the victim to the point where she was immobilized by some combination of injury and fear (Felson 1996). Techniques of overt force included brandishing a weapon in a threatening manner, beating the victim so as to cause injury beyond that involved in the rape itself, and using a weapon to injure the victim. For example, one offender reported, "I grabbed her and hit her a couple of times to get her to cooperate." Another offender abducted his victim at knifepoint and forced her into the car and then onto the floor. He held her down and slapped her across the face, leaving bruises on her forehead. In extreme cases, the perpetrator launched a savage assault on the victim. One rapist approached a woman sunbathing on a roof and told her he was going to have sex with her. When she tried to get him to take money and leave her alone, he grabbed her by the neck. During the rape, she resisted by punching him in the face. He then drew a knife and stabbed her at least fifty times before fleeing and leaving her there to die.

Perpetrators who relied on the implied use of force most often combined verbal persuasion with the display of a weapon or overwhelming physical superiority. These offenders typically contended that they did not physically harm their victims or use or brandish their weapon in a threatening manner. However, they also acknowledged that they made certain that the weapon was plainly visible. One offender who initially hoped to gain consensual sex began by fondling the victim who resisted his advances. He then "ignored her no's" and used his superior size to forcefully let her know he was going to have sex with her. He ordered her to put a blanket on the floor and then raped her. Another offender admitted that he showed his victim the weapon in his possession in a

way that “suggested what would happen.” A third rapist reported that he simply removed the fishing knife he was carrying from his belt and laid it on the ground, making sure that the victim saw it.

Overt and implied force strategies are not mutually exclusive, of course. In some cases, rapists employed combination or sequential strategies. A perpetrator who had given his victim a ride when she experienced automotive problems gained compliance with his demands through verbal threats of physical assault and through the disparity between his physical stature and hers. After gaining the desired capitulation, he reported that “I told her what to do, how to do it, and she did it.” In another case, the offender gained entrance to the victim’s residence by posing as a repairman and claimed that he hoped to obtain sex consensually. However, he stated that “I realized I was getting nowhere, so I grabbed her kitchen knife and put it to her throat. . . . I put the knife to her throat and told her to cooperate and she wouldn’t be hurt.”

From the victims’ standpoint, the sudden, unexpected confrontation left them with little opportunity to formulate a resistance strategy. Some victims capitulated rapidly to the rapist’s initial commands, but in a number of cases, the victim sought to exchange compliance for safety. Several perpetrators reported that their victims offered cooperation to avoid additional injury by saying “please don’t hurt me, I’ll do anything you want.” By the perpetrators’ accounts, at least, verbal or physical resistance by the victim usually occurred early in the confrontation phase, and rapes in which the perpetrator employed an implied force strategy obviously offered victims somewhat greater latitude for resistance. Victims who sought to negotiate with perpetrators usually made moral or self-interest appeals. Another offender who characterized his victim as “very unwilling” stated that she sought to convince him that sex should be consensual by asserting “no, you don’t want it this way.” Again, combination and sequential strategies were not uncommon. For example, one perpetrator reported that his victim kept trying to talk him out of carrying out the rape by referring to the implications of rape for his own family. He reported that “she [repeatedly] asked me to think about my sister and mother.” When that appeal failed, the victim attempted to dissuade the offender by appealing to his self-interest, telling him that she was infected with a venereal disease.

Physical resistance was much more likely than verbal resistance to result in the perpetrator’s escalating the level of violence to reassert control of the situation. A perpetrator who raped his victim in his

apartment following a night of drinking in a bar reports that his victim attempted to prevent the rape by hitting him, sending him into a rage. He stated, “[I] got mad and hit her back with my fist as hard as I would hit a man.” On encountering resistance, another rapist recalled, “[I] called her a bitch and then started to beat her. I hit her over the head with a vase and beat her with a vacuum cleaner.” In some instances, physical resistance produced an outburst of uncontrolled rage. One perpetrator reported, “[I] punched her, choked her, loosened some teeth, bruises, and cuts over her eyes . . . beat her half to death, but someone came in and I left, or I might have killed her.”

If the immediately prior phase in the rape process involved the transformation of motivation into action, this phase moved from action to interaction. Perpetrators for the first time had to engage the victim directly. Their actions were almost exclusively directed at gaining physical control of victims at this juncture. The major source of variability was whether force was overt or implied, but the message to victims was clear in either case. However, the situation now became more complex as perpetrators had to deal with both appeals from victims and their own anger, particularly when victims physically resisted their control. Ironically perhaps, at the very moment that rapists were focused on controlling the victim, offender self-control presented itself as an issue. This problem continued during the next phase, indicating the limited awareness perpetrators had of their own emotions and the extent to which the rape process was emergent for them as well as for their victims.

SITUATION MANAGEMENT

Once the victim's resistance had been overcome and dominance had been established, the rapist's problem became one of managing the coercive situation he had created. Managing the rape situation was considerably more complex than simply subduing the victim and compelling her to engage in sexual acts. The focus of activity for these rapists during the situation management phase was twofold: first, gaining control of their own emotions as well as the emotions and behavior of the victims, and second, developing a management strategy, domination or negotiation, through which to maintain control during the rape.

Achieving physical control of the victim did not end the process of maintaining control of the rape situation. Since these perpetrators typically initiated their assaults while in a state of emotional turmoil and engaged in very little prior planning, many appear to have been unprepared for their own reactions to the actions that they had initiated. Indeed, a recurrent theme in perpetrators' descriptions of the rape situation was the difficulty that they faced not only in controlling the victim but in maintaining self-control. One-third of the perpetrators openly acknowledged that they themselves were unnerved at the outset of the rape. It is not surprising that offenders were anxious because they knew unexpected events could occur. For example, an offender admitted to being extremely fearful upon entering his victims' residence because he "didn't know if a man would be there," while another acknowledged that "there was a time after I got into the house that I was fearful because I didn't know what to expect." One rapist reported just such an unanticipated event. After breaking into an apartment, the man first discovered a baby, which he moved to another room; a second woman then appeared and he raped her as well.

Even after dealing with predictable nervousness, a number of rapists struggled with self-control. As one offender put it, "[I was] not really in control, totally confused and frightened. I didn't take any clothes off, [I was] too scared" and "I kept questioning myself during the act." Another perpetrator reported feeling an intense inner conflict. As he put it, "Part [of me] wanted to stop and part [of me] wanted to go ahead" and then "I didn't really feel in control. . . . It was a fragile control. If anything had gone wrong, I would've run. . . . I felt a sense of control and dominance, although very loose control." This insecurity was echoed by another offender who stated, "If [she] had resisted aggressively, I probably would've taken off." Another said, "If she had screamed, I would have run." In some cases, this internal conflict produced a feeling that they were at war with themselves. As one perpetrator described those sensations, "I didn't feel in total control, it was like something was driving me to do it" and "it just seemed like things were happening and I couldn't control them." Several offenders described these feelings of lack of control in dissociative terms; one likened the rape to a dream-like state and expressed frustration over the fact that he "couldn't get hold of it" while another stated that raping his victim was "like watching myself on TV do it."

Interestingly, a calming influence for these rapists was the capitulation of the victim. The fact that they had at least temporarily subdued the victim gave them confidence, frequently amid self-doubt. As one offender conveyed this feeling of empowerment, "Seeing her laying there helpless gave me confidence I could do it." Another perpetrator gained composure from the fact that the victim was calmer than he was. He commented that "I was nervous too and because she was relaxed, I was relaxed." However, a sense of control was rarely found so quickly but rather proved elusive to acquire and difficult to maintain throughout the duration of the rape event. The primary means through which perpetrators sustained control was by moving in the direction of situation management either by domination or negotiation.

The rapes were relatively evenly divided between those in which domination and negotiation were the primary means of control. Thirteen perpetrators relied primarily on domination, varying from coercive restraint to brutalization. These men simply overrode any doubt they had, recognizing that it could be their undoing. One offender indicated that the time for doubt had passed, making comments such as "Once I got into the rape, I didn't think about precautions, only before the rape"; "Once I entered the house and had female alone, I never hesitated or I would get caught"; and "I had made up my mind that this [rape] was what I was going to do." For those eleven cases that did not simply involve a brutal, physical assault on the victim, both the perpetrator and victim had an interest in "normalizing" the coercive situation so that it took on the appearance of consensual sex (initiating conversation, trying to please the victim sexually, establishing a rudimentary relationship), albeit for different reasons. Many perpetrators were experiencing a mixture of strong emotions—the turbulence that triggered their resort to rape in the first place, the anxiety associated with the initial confrontation, and the feelings of confusion and conflict about proceeding with the rape. Any behavior by the victim that perpetrators could take as evidence of victim desire served to diminish perpetrators' feelings of guilt and ambivalence. Perpetrators could believe at least to some extent that they were not forcing and victims were not resisting. From the victim's perspective, creating the appearance of a normal relationship might reduce the likelihood of injury and increase the probability the rapist would believe the victim would not later report the rape. The result was that both perpetrator and victim attempted to manage the other, and

clearly rapists in some cases allowed themselves in the moment to believe that the relationship was not completely coercive.

In many instances, normalizing the situation merely involved nominal assurances that the victim would not be harmed if she cooperated. One offender stated, "I made an attempt to convey to her that I wouldn't hurt her," while a second tried to "explain to her that I was an everyday person and she needn't be afraid." Some perpetrators clearly allowed themselves to interpret victim compliance as implied consent, a conclusion that might well be attributable to their views on gender and sexuality. Several rapists stated this in remarkably similar ways, such as "[it] felt like she didn't seem to care because she didn't really resist" and "[I] felt like lack of fighting meant that she wanted it."

A number of perpetrators went well beyond simply making perfunctory assurances, however, by constructing a rudimentary personal relationship. In one incident, a perpetrator reported that upon grabbing the victim and dragging her into some bushes for concealment, he proceeded to talk to her before the rape about his family and other personal matters. Another perpetrator recalled that he and his victim were engaging in normal conversation during the rape event: "She didn't seem to care at the time. We carried on a normal conversation" about the victim's child and other issues. Still another rapist contended that conversation with his victim helped to reduce the tension and fear of the event and even served to create what he perceived to be a bond between the two. He stated that there "might have been a bit of feeling for her" and that they talked for awhile "about her divorce, her children." The inauthenticity of the relationship is revealed, however, in the perpetrator's acknowledgment that he lied about most matters pertaining to himself. While conversation was the most common mode of normalizing the encounter, seeking to please the victim sexually was another technique. A perpetrator reported that "I treated her as if it was normal, I tried to get her as high as me. . . . I was trying to please her. . . . We did it like normal sex, with foreplay."

At the same time, of course, victims were trying to manage the situation, and sometimes these efforts apparently were successful to some degree. In one case, the perpetrator said that the victim "made comments like I was the best she ever had, fantastic" and that he believed her at the time, although he later concluded she made such remarks out of fear. A rapist who had committed several rapes admitted that he would

always ask his victims, "Does it feel good? Want more?" enabling himself to believe that the victims were enjoying the sexual acts. And "when they said 'good,' I believed it, even though I know it was crazy to do so."

As perpetrators entered the situation management phase, they had gained physical control of their victims, and now the problem became sustaining that control. Even after dealing with predictable initial nervousness, many of these rapists reported strong, unanticipated emotional reactions, such as inner conflict, lack of control, fright, and confusion. Perpetrators sought to stabilize and manage the volatile situation through either domination, simply suppressing these reactions by plunging ahead, or negotiation, trying to create a working agreement with the victim to normalize the situation. Both solutions created momentary order and control but also produced additional problems. Domination made it more difficult for perpetrators to preserve their initial perception of themselves as victims. Negotiating with the victim created a situation in which a number of these men deluded themselves into thinking the situation was partially voluntary, which of course meant that they were not so clearly perpetrators. Both domination and negotiation had important implications for the disengagement process. Rapists who opted to employ domination typically did not harbor illusions of a relationship with the victim that might deter her from reporting the incident to the police, and negotiation clouded the perpetrator's judgment about the veracity of any victim assurances to him.

DISENGAGEMENT

Once the rape had been completed, perpetrators faced the problem of disengaging from the situation. Given that most of these rapes were precipitated by turbulent emotions and involved negligible planning, it is not surprising that the perpetrators had given little consideration to sealing actions that would protect them against future apprehension. Disengagement therefore most often assumed the appearance of a disorganized retreat; fifteen of the offenders reported lacking any real plan and simply fled the scene. By contrast, three perpetrators seemed unable to cope with the implications of what they had just done and

simply waited with resignation for apprehension by the police. Where perpetrators did develop a disengagement plan to assure themselves the victim would not seek their arrest, their strategies assumed dramatically different forms: murder (three cases) or bargaining (seven cases). Whichever choice they made, these rapists faced the continuing prospect of arrest. The most common responses of the rapists was either to immediately resume their prior lives, both to normalize the situation for themselves and to arouse less suspicion, or to leave the community to avoid arrest.

The most common form of disengagement for these perpetrators was simply leaving the rape scene without doing much more than admonishing the victim not to move until they had departed or eliminating any evidence that would bring attention to themselves. As one rapist put it, his primary objective was simply "to get away and make sure I wasn't caught. . . . I knew I did something wrong." Another said he warned his victim not to scream before pulling the bed covers over her head and leaving. A third offender recalled that he "didn't say much, put [my] pants on and walked out the bedroom door." Finally, a man who committed a particularly brutal rape of a tenant in the apartment complex in which he was employed stated

[I] looked at all the blood and ran down nineteen flights of stairs, went to the employee restroom, washed [the] blood off, put [the] jacket in bag, put [the] keys up and then left the building and took the bus home.

There were also cases in which the perpetrators did not regard their sexual assaults as a major reason for concern. For example, some believed victim assertions that they enjoyed the sex and would not report them to police while others regarded the burglaries they committed concurrently as the really serious crime for which they would be sought by police. These beliefs sometimes contributed to their minimal efforts to protect their identities.

By contrast, some rapists did not even leave the rape scene but simply waited for the police to arrive and apprehend them. In one instance, a man brutally assaulted and raped a woman in his home following an evening of drinking in a local bar. The victim managed to escape when the offender left the room to wash her blood from his hands. When the offender realized that the victim had escaped, he made no effort to conceal evidence or to leave the location. He recalled,

After she left, I just sat there on the couch and felt drained. I was scared because I didn't know what I had done or what would happen. . . . I don't know why I didn't run, I had a car but just sat there until police came.

In another incident, a rapist who committed a particularly brutal and violent rape stated that he was scared and that his immediate concern at the time of exit was to wash the victim's blood off of his clothes and person. However, he took no further evasive action but simply "got plastered that night in my apartment and didn't think about leaving." The offender who raped and murdered multiple females during the period of one year claimed that he would experience a sense of disbelief about what he had done and then "go home, take a shower, try to eat, go to sleep, and escape into subconsciousness."

Those rapists who did try to engage in sealing actions had to somehow prevent the victim from alerting the police and identifying them. Confronted with this situation, a few perpetrators chose to murder their victims. One offender described how he tied his victim with rope and left her while he went back to his vehicle to wipe away fingerprints and remove evidence. Upon returning, he killed her and then disposed of her body in a nearby river. In this sample, murder was rarely chosen as a sealing action because rapists who contemplated homicide found that their own lack of planning or their own sensibilities deterred them from this course of action. Indicative of the relatively unplanned nature of these rapes, one rapist who was carrying a gun but no bullets reported that "if I'd had bullets, I would have shot and killed her." He went on to comment that murder would have been best for him because he would then have been able to hide the body and leave town. Yet other rapists came to the brink of murdering their victims only to encounter their own aversion to murder. One respondent described how he had "debated what he had gotten himself into and what I should do." Regarding killing his victim, he said, "Under the circumstances, it was normal to think about murder"; however, in the end he did not feel like he could "take a life" and he reported that he was proud of himself for not doing it.

Among those who engaged in sealing actions, it was more common for perpetrators to try to extricate from impending arrest by reducing the victim's motivation to report the rape to police. Perpetrators most often tried to apologize and seek forgiveness for their actions. One offender stated that he told his victim he was "sorry about what

happened” and that he “offered her [money] to call the police” because he was upset with himself for inflicting physical injury upon her. Another reported that he dropped his victim off behind a tree and gave her cigarettes and beer and said he was sorry. The rapist who assaulted and raped his victim in response to his wife’s infidelity recalled that “I apologized to her and started to cry.” At least at that moment these offenders hoped that their apologies would suffice. As one offender stated, “I had illusions that I wouldn’t [be arrested], that she wouldn’t tell anyone because I didn’t hurt her and I apologized for five minutes after it was over.”

Most perpetrators who left the scene of the rape tended to return home or to the residence of a family member or significant other. Ten of the respondents reported that they were confident that their sealing actions were sufficient to protect them. These offenders were likely to immediately delve back into their routine by returning to daily work or recreational routines. An offender who committed several rapes said that after exiting the rape event he “would go to work the next day like nothing had happened.” Another offender reported feeling as though “I got what I wanted and had to get on with my business.” He further insisted that the victim was of no concern to him and that he went directly from the rape event to pick up his girlfriend. However, none of the disengagement strategies employed by these rapists offered any real assurance that they would be able to evade identification and apprehension. Therefore, upon reflection, those offenders who were less confident that they took the measures necessary for adequate closure of the rape event chose further evasion. For example, one offender reported that he left the victim’s house and went to work, and then started thinking about the rape and decided to leave town. He reported that he went into hiding for three months before deciding to surrender to authorities. Another perpetrator, who also left town, reported that he knew he was being pursued by the police and several months later was apprehended after he committed a minor traffic offense.

Accounts provided by perpetrators of the disengagement process offer compelling evidence that, as in the prior phases of the rape process, the majority of these men had neither a plan of action nor full control of their own emotions and actions. Despite the gravity of the situation, most of the rapists engaged in little organized effort to conceal their actions and identity; they either left the scene with but minimal effort to cover their escape or emotionally collapsed and fatalistically

awaited apprehension. A number of perpetrators contemplated murder but then found they could not deal with the prospect of becoming murderers. Others emotionally broke down and apologized to their victims, a desperate strategy whether or not their emotions were authentic. Simply resuming normal life constituted another form of denial of their situation. A few perpetrators obviously continued to consider their vulnerability and days or weeks later decided to move to another community, a tactic that only delayed their arrest. By virtue of fully appreciating the implications of their actions only after the fact, this group of rapists virtually insured their ultimate apprehension.

DISCUSSION

In contrast to the extensive research literatures on homicide, robbery, and burglary, there is very little research on how perpetrators organize sexual assault. In this article, we have employed data from interviews with incarcerated rapists to develop an analogous developmental model for rape. At the most basic level, we have argued that rape events are socially patterned and not the idiosyncratic acts of mentally disordered individuals. We have described rape events as consisting of five analytically distinct phases: (1) preexisting life tensions, (2) transformation of motivation into action, (3) perpetrator-victim confrontation, (4) situation management, and (5) disengagement. This sequence of activity is comparable to those reported for both interpersonal and property offenses.

The perpetrators report lives pervaded with a sense of futility and emotional turmoil. They attribute their life problems mainly to domestic and occupational issues in which women are implicated directly or indirectly. In some cases, the perpetrators harbored grievances against particular women or women in general. In other cases, the rapists' personal backgrounds and attitudes (histories of force being exercised in their family lives, regarding force as an acceptable means of controlling sexual relationships, believing that women interpreted use of physical force as caring) rendered them likely candidates for coercively controlling women. In either event, the perpetrators reported that they engaged in sexual assault as a means of restoring a sense of control and self-respect in their own lives. However, in contrast to the homicidal violence described by Luckenbill and Katz, the rapists did not confront the

immediate source of their grievance but rather displaced the violence on to a woman with whom they had little or no relationship. Once they transformed their motivations into action, the rapists focused on gaining control of the victim, managing the situation, and disengagement. One of the most intriguing findings concerning the perpetrators' orchestration of the rape event was that a number of offenders attempted to negotiate a quasi-voluntaristic relationship with the victim. Perpetrators were thus able to deny the full extent of the violence in which they were engaged, and victims apparently took advantage of the opportunity to minimize the violence that would be inflicted upon them. During the course of the rape event, their control of their own actions clearly was compromised by the emotional instability they continued to exhibit, which in part traced back to the perceived grievances that precipitated their actions, as well as the ingestion of drugs/alcohol.

It is important, however, not to allow the analytic template to reify rape event organization. The five developmental phases incorporate considerable variability in the perpetrators' alternative means of handling the issues that presented themselves. This variability manifested itself in issues such as victim selection, security concerns, means of gaining control of the victim and managing the situation, and disengagement strategies. More significant, one of the most striking findings was the emergent and contingent quality of rape events. While the various choices that perpetrators made moved them along through the event phases, this was not an inevitable progression. For example, numerous perpetrators reported looking for specific types of victims or situations that might or might not have presented themselves, simply coming upon the victim or situation by chance, or being in one situation (a social event or a burglary) that the offender suddenly came to perceive as a potential rape opportunity. It is evident from the perpetrator accounts that, whether or not they had decided on rape from the outset, the events had an emergent quality for them. Most engaged in minimal planning and usually had little knowledge of the victim or the situational circumstances. In many cases, they did not know what they were going to do next and did not anticipate their own emotional reactions to the situation they were creating. Perpetrators clearly did not comprehend the full meaning of their actions until they were fully engaged in the situation or sometimes until after they had disengaged from the situation.

The cases reported on here have at least three implications for a more general understanding of rape. First, our data on the preexisting life tensions of offenders strongly reaffirm the connection between patriarchal orientations, in this case interpreted as a male right to sexual access, and sexual assault. Our data leave little doubt that the offenders' lives were in serious disarray on a number of dimensions. However, there were numerous possible alternative lines of action available that perpetrators could have pursued in addressing their personal troubles. These men attributed their problems to women, chose violence instead of other possible resolutions, engaged in sexual as opposed to other forms of violence, displaced their aggression onto women with whom they had no significant relationship, and tended to regard their assaults as appropriate responses to attacks on their identity. Clearly, the element of sexual dominance and control is exhibited in these cases.

Second, there is the issue of power versus sexual motivation in rape. The accounts provided by these rapists suggest both power and sexual motivations, and perhaps complex combinations of the two. Perpetrators most often described their initial motivations in terms of regaining a sense of personal control, asserting appropriate relationships, or simple revenge. These accounts suggest power motivations. However, some rapists specifically sought out women who were sexually attractive to them, some attempted to sexually arouse their victims or negotiate a pseudo-consensual relationship, and some asked victims whether they had been sexually satisfied. These behaviors suggest the presence of a sexual component in rape events. To put the matter another way, some men sought power through sexuality and others sought sexuality through power, but the two themes are linked in complex fashion. Further, we are not proposing a resolution of the power and sexual motivation issue because we are dealing with a very specific type of sexual assault, one that contrasts sharply with the organization of date rape or marital rape. We would be inclined to argue that the mixture of power and sexuality varies by type of rape and there is not a single motivational source.

Third, with respect to resistance/capitulation, and particularly recent discussions about women carrying weapons for self-defense, our data suggest that the implications of resistance to sexual coercion are difficult to predict. On one hand, a number of rapists reported becoming

more violent when victims challenged their control. Since their actions were precipitated by feelings of absence of control in their lives and they were typically emotionally agitated at the time they initiated the assaults, there is a basis for arguing that resistance may increase violence. On the other hand, a number of the perpetrators reported seeking out victims who appeared vulnerable, and one of the most striking findings was the self-doubt and tenuous sense of control that these rapists reported, at least initially. Indeed, rapists commonly reported they were ambivalent about their actions. They were only marginally in control and then only because they perceived the victim to be calm or passive. Many rapists claimed that had they encountered resistance, they would have fled the scene. These observations suggest that at least in some cases, rapists who encountered immediate resistance in the form of screaming, fighting, or brandishing a weapon would have reduced the likelihood of a completed rape. Since the interviews were not constructed to address either of these issues, we cannot offer additional insight with confidence. It is also important to note that our respondents actually carried out sexual assaults. Other men who were deterred by early resistance would not appear in our sample. Data on attempted assaults would be critical to the resolution of the resistance/capitulation issue.

Finally, it is important to affirm that the present research findings represent only an initial statement on the social organization of sexual assault. We have reported on cases in which the perpetrators completed rapes but were apprehended and incarcerated and in which the rapists were the exclusive source of data. The utility of the analytic framework presented here should be tested with cases in which accounts from both perpetrator and victim are available. This analytic framework would also benefit from the incorporation of cases of undetected rapes; perpetrators in those cases might have employed tactics that were not utilized by the incarcerated rapists we studied. Correspondingly, it would be valuable to include cases of unsuccessful rape attempts to gain additional perspective on tactics women used to avoid victimization. And, of course, ultimately it will be necessary to compare the types of cases we have analyzed with date, marital, prison, gang, fraternity, wartime, and other types of rape. A fuller theoretical statement on the social organization of sexual assault therefore awaits the interpretive context that will be created by such research.

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