Leadership and interpersonal influence in Multiple Perpetrator Rape

Dr Louise Porter
ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security, Griffith University, Australia
l.porter@griffith.edu.au
www.ceps.edu.au
Outline

• Research Context
• Research Aims
• Integrating Theory
• Data
• Identifying Leaders in Rape Groups
• The Leadership Process in Rape Groups
• Implications
Research Context: Group Crime

- Driving force behind group crime is poorly understood
- Present argument: MPR (a group crime) is an interpersonal event
- Groups should be systematically explored using leadership and interpersonal theories
- Organisational, Social & Criminal Psychology can be drawn together
- 4 stage model of evolution of group crime events
  - Instigation
  - Leader/follower (group member) interaction
  - Group action
  - Offender/victim interaction
Research Aims

STAGE 1: Leadership as the Driving Force
1.1 Produce a model for identifying leaders in criminal groups
1.2 Test whether leaders can indeed be identified through the model

STAGE 2: The Interpersonal Process
2.1 Identify the common strategy employed by leaders to influence their group
2.2 Identify the reactions of group members to the leader strategies
Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour: The Interpersonal Circle

• Leary (1957)
• Theory of behaviour in a social interaction
• *Desc*ribes behaviour in terms of 2 dimensions
• Provides *predictions* for likely reactions to behaviour
• Thus can be used to explore both action and interaction
• Interpersonal theory: 4 strategies designed to elicit particular reactions

1. Co-operative → Co-operative
2. Hostile → Hostile
3. Dominant → Submissive
4. Submissive → Dominant
Behavioural Theories of Leadership

• Distinction between strategies that are democratic (participative) vs autocratic (order-giving)

Democratic
1. Co-operative  →  Co-operative

Autocratic
3. Dominant  →  Submissive

• Difference between power *with* the group and power *over* the group
Power with the group: Participative Leaders & Modelling

• Copying actions of others (Modelling), increased by
  - Perceived similarity between learner and model
    - Similarity of co-offenders
  - Perceived high status of model that learner wishes to attain (or associated rewards)
    - Copy in the hope of gaining same rewards (status, popularity)

• Charismatic leadership
  - Chemers (2000) Charismatic leaders
    - effective role models
    - aware of the collective interests of the group
    - self confident
    - need to influence others
Modelling in Criminal Groups

• Juvenile Gangs
  ✷ Thrasher (1960) in his work on gangs, noted that leaders often emerge due to their willingness to try things before other group members
    ➢ being the first to act elevates one’s status
    ➢ demonstrates the qualities that juvenile gang members would want to emulate such as courage and boldness

• Thus, leaders benefit from risk taking and acting as role-models
Process of Contagion

• Participative leaders are *inviting* rather than prescribing followership.
• Willingness to follow, in the absence of direct pressure may indicate:
  - Shared goals
  - Mutually co-operative relationship
• Likely to indicate goals of friendship and acceptance.
• Power *with* the group
Power over the group: autocracy

- Obedience
  - Milgram argued that when individuals become part of a hierarchically organised group, they enter an **AGENTIC state** (i.e. they become agents of a higher authority)
- Control through dominance or authority is achieved, at least in part, through the power of the superiors to punish (and reward) subordinates.
- Compliance/obedience
  - Follow instructions out of fear or threat of repercussions
  - Follow due to legitimacy of authority
### Integrating theories

- Predicted Leadership strategies & expected reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader Strategy</th>
<th>Leader - Follower Interpersonal Style</th>
<th>Follower Reaction</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participative Action</td>
<td>Co-operative</td>
<td>Co-operative Imitation/Contagion</td>
<td>Power with the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic Orders</td>
<td>Dominant – Submissive</td>
<td>Submissive Obedience</td>
<td>Power over the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 216 Multiple Perpetrator Rape cases (58% from US; 29% from UK)
• Archival sources (law reports, media accounts, victim statements)
• 60% of offenders under 21yrs old; 39% under 18yrs old
• Group size range 2-13 offenders (mean 3, mode 2)

• Caveats:
  ✓ Missing information
  ✓ No access to offenders’ internal thought processes, unless reported as part of the case narrative
In order to influence others into behaving in a desired way:

1. decide what the particular behaviour is (Decision making)

2. Communicate that decision to others either
   • explicitly verbally (Order giving)
   • implicitly through action - imitation or modelling (Action)
Method

- Offence broken into stages: initial idea, selection of victim, approach, first sexual act, post-offence decision, post-offence act

- All group members individually coded at each stage of the offence for whether or not they made a decision, acted first (but not in response to an order), or gave an order.

- Analysed using Partially Ordered Scalogram Analysis (POSA), a Multidimensional Scaling technique
Coding framework

An offender’s attempted influence over other group members in MPR can be characterised by involvement in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Idea</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decides to commit the crime of rape</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target selection</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selects the target</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach of victim</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approaches the target*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orders other to approach the target</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Sexual Act</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commits the first sexual act*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orders other to commit the first sexual act</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposal decision</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decides on the method of disposal of the victim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposal</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carries out the disposal*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both disposes and orders other to dispose of the victim</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A&amp;O Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orders other to dispose of the victim</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results in a range of total influence 6 - 16
Advantages of the model

• Assesses influence throughout all stages of the crime
• Incorporates decision making – identified leaders are not implementing the decisions of others
• Quantitative and qualitative dimensions
  
  Quantitative:
  ✤ Scores are additive
  ✤ A higher score represents more influence
  ✤ Order giving has a higher score than action as it is a higher form of influence (more explicit and more direct pressure)
  
  Qualitative:
  ✤ Individuals can obtain the same score (amount of influence) through behaving in different ways or at different stages
1.1 Do the variables combine to form a scale of influence/leadership?

• not a simple linear relationship between the behaviours but a partially ordered scale (i.e. There is a qualitative aspect to the scale, the behaviours are not just additive quantitatively)

• significant aspects are the approach and disposal of the victim – where some offenders are active in one or the other, but the most influential are active in both.

• The initial decision to commit the offence and the selection of the target are contributory factors (and are cumulative)

• Thus, decision making and the initiation of ideas appear to play a central role in the influence process.
1.2 Does the model identify leaders?

- POSA showed 97% of rape groups had a leader i.e., one member more active (in terms of numbers of decisions, actions and orders) than the other co-offenders.
- Nearly 50% of these leaders scored over 1SD above the mean influence score (all but 1 scored above the mean).
- Over ¾ of ‘followers’ scored below the mean.

- Approx. 70% of rape groups showed a dichotomous leader-follower distinction (where one member scored high and the remaining members scored equally low).
- The remaining 30% of groups showed some dispersion of different influence degrees across members, showing more complex hierarchies.
STAGE 2: PROCESS

2.1 Leader Strategies

- Ignoring the distinct stages and analysing the numbers of decisions, actions and orders each identified leader exhibited
- 98% of leaders engaged in at least one action stage of the offence.
- Just over half the leaders made at least one decision
- less than 10% gave at least one order.
Leader Strategies

- POSA showed Action & Order as qualitatively distinct (leaders tend to do one or the other, but some do both)
- Action far more frequent
  - 91% Participative Action
  - 3% Order giving
  - 6% used both Action & Order (at different stages)
  - Decision Making common to both
### 2.2 Follower Reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follower Reaction</th>
<th>Participative Leader N = 188 groups</th>
<th>Order Giving Leader N = 19 groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwillingness</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Results

1. We can identify leaders in Rape groups that exhibit (more) influential behaviour to the other group members

2. Majority of Leaders use active participation to encourage group members

3. Majority of group members willing to follow through contagious imitation
Participative Leadership

- Majority of these juvenile groups were not formal gangs with recognised leaders with power to give orders.

- Interpersonal theory suggests participative leaders are inviting co-operation. Likely to indicate goals of friendship and acceptance.
Possible Explanations

• Mutual process of participative leadership and contagious influence:

• LEADER
  ❖ Demonstrates qualities group admires
  ❖ Attracts acceptance by group
  ❖ Provides social support to group to follow

• FOLLOWERS
  ❖ Security of acting within established norms
  ❖ Displacement of responsibility
  ❖ Provides social support to leader’s actions by following
Why do followers accept this participative leader?

- Process is based upon the follower’s needs and perceptions of the leader.
  - behavioural contagion involves no overt intention by the actor to exert influence
  - the behaviour is subject to interpretation by the observers whose perception of the behaviour can reflect their own needs.
  - Thus, the decision to interpret the observed behaviour as an influence attempt, and the decision to be influenced by it, lies with the observers.

- Contagion may imply willingness and shared goals but some may follow due to conformity pressures
  - Need more in-depth questioning of offenders’ own experiences rather than behavioural observation
Legal implications?

• Existence of leaders has legal implications for blame and sentencing

• Indeed, this may be one function of leaders – scapegoat for followers
Legal implications?

• Criminal responsibility – blame the leader?
  ❖ Followers are willing just by observing – implies shared goals
  ❖ Leadership is a two-way process: leadership is bestowed upon an individual by the fact that others actually follow him/her
    ➢ Maybe the leader is spurred on by followers
    ➢ Following legitimises behaviour for leader
    ➢ Followers have choice

• Indicates blame cannot lie with the leader alone.
  ❖ Could be argued leader would not act if not for support of followers
General Implications

• Target leader to change group
  ❖ But are leaders consistent in their role across situations?

• Removal of leader to remove criminal initiative
  ❖ But if goals are shared, will another leader just step up?

• Replace with legitimate leader: Mentoring programmes
  ❖ What qualities will make an attractive role model?
Thanks!

l.porter@griffith.edu.au

www.ceps.edu.au