What do we know about multiple perpetrator rape?

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Aim

- Consider what multiple perpetrator rape is, and think about how we can start to explain its causes

Overview

- Prevalence and description of MPSO
- Contexts MPSO occurs in
- How do we make sense of MPSO?
  - What factors are important?
  - Multifactorial Model of MPSO
  - Where do we go from here?

Multiple perpetrator sex offenses - Prevalence

- Rates of MPSO vary widely depending on country, jurisdiction, definition used, etc.
- 11% of service users at a sexual assault referral centre in the UK (Kelly, Lovett & Regan, 2005)
- 13% of officially recorded incidents of attempted or actual rapes in 6 UK counties (Wright & West, 1981)
- 42% of allegations made to a UK Metropolitan police station in the UK were committed by multiple juvenile perpetrators (Woodhams, 2004)
- Between approximately 2 and 26% of rapes in the US (Cavanaugh, 1991)
- 1/3 to 1/2 of all rapes in South Africa (Artz & Kunisaki, 2003; Smart et al., 2000)

Characteristics of MPSOs

- Most are male (Woodhams & Cooke, 2011)
- Most groups consist of two offenders (Horvath & Kelly, 2005; Woodhams & Cooke, 2011)
- Offenders' ethnicity: some studies have found the majority to be White (Woodhams & Cooke, 2011) whereas others have found ethnic minorities to be overrepresented (Bijleveld, et al., 2007; Horvath & Kelly, 2009)
- Most groups share the same ethnicity (Bijleveld, et al., 2007; Horvath & Kelly, 2009)
- MPRs are more violent (Ullman, 2007; Woodhams, 2004)
- Most victims are female (Bijleveld, et al., 2007; Horvath & Kelly, 2009; Woodhams & Cooke, 2011)

Importance of context for understanding the big picture...
### Contexts
- Street gangs
- War
- Fraternities
- Prison
- Day care centres
- Residential schools
- Ritualistic abuse
- Pedophile organisations
- Pedophile rings
- Sport, either by coaches or players
- Rape in countries under political upheaval or social inequalities (e.g., South Africa)
- Human sex trading
- Military

### Street gangs
**Males say:**
- Coerced group sex with female gang members as a form of US gang initiation (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001)
- Account of a man who set up his girlfriend for a gang rape in order for him to join a US gang (Knox, 2004)
- Some females become members of gangs by having sex with multiple male gang members (i.e., "being sexed in")
  - Miller (1998) notes that many girls who are "sexed in" are not treated as true gang members but are treated as weak and promiscuous and are at increased risk for further victimization
- However, although Decker and Van Winkle (1996)'s male gang members reported the occurrence of such gang initiations to researchers, female members denied such acts

**Females say:**
- Some 'choose' involvement in gangs (and sexual violence against other women), others more clearly exploited/coerced (Batchelor, 2009)
- Rape used as a weapon in retaliation against female members of rival gangs, or partner, sisters, or mothers of rival gang members (Firmin, 2010)
- Partners/links offered to fellow gang members (Firmin, 2010)
- Gang-involved females raped by own gang members (Firmin, 2010)
- 'Rape myth' acceptance amongst boys and girls (Firmin, 2010)
  - E.g., that men should be the controllers in a relationship or that sexually liberated women are promiscuous

### Prison
- 20% of males and females in a US prison (n=516), had been pressured or forced into at least one incident of sexual contact against their will whilst in prison (Struckman-Johnson et al., 1996)
  - Incident rate of 22% for men and 7% for women
  - At least 50% of victims had been forced to participate in some form of intercourse, with 25% carried out by multiple perpetrators
- In a study of British ex-prisoners (n=208), 1.9% had experienced some form of sexual coercion from more than one perpetrator and 2.9% from multiple perpetrators (Banbury, 2004)
  - Most acts took place in prisoners cells, by prisoners
- Others have also reported MPR of prison guards, and in some cases rape that was facilitated by guards (Money & Bohmer, 1980)

### Military settings
- 28% (n=540) female veterans in a US national survey reported being the victim of a rape during military service, 5% reported gang rape (Sadler, Bruch, & Doebbeling, 2005)
- 50,000 US male veterans reported experiencing "military sexual trauma" (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2010)
  - Military sexual trauma refers to both sexual harassment and sexual assault that occurs in military settings

### War
- Sexual violence can take many different forms such as:
  - (1) sexual slavery in which the women are forced to serve the combatants for extended periods of time
  - (2) one of many types of torture while being held in detention
  - (3) indiscriminate rape of victims who are encountered during military operations
  - (4) public rape in front of an assembled population after the takeover of a village (Wood, 2006)
**War**

- Berlin, World War II: thousands of women were raped, often by several men in sequence, by Soviet forces (Wood, 2006)
- Nanjing, China: Estimated that 20,000 to 80,000 women were raped and executed by Japanese soldiers (Chang, 1997)
- Congo: 24% of men and 39% of women have been estimated to have been raped
- Croatia: Yugoslav National Army soldier claimed "I only remember that I was the 20th, that her hair was a mess, that she was disgusting and full of sperm, and that I killed her at the end" (Korac, 1996, p.137)
- Israel/ Palestine: In contrast, despite the long-time violent conflicts accounts of sexual violence are virtually unheard of (Wood, 2006) therefore this phenomenon is by no means a natural corollary of conflict

**Can't see the wood for the trees?**

"How do we understand group offending?"

"Conceptualising ..violence as a particular type of problem explicitly answers questions about the problem’s cause and this in turn implicitly answers questions about what should be done to eliminate violence" (Loseke, Gelles & Cavanagh, 2005; p1).

**The importance of multifactor models**

**Proximal Confluence Model**

*White & Kowalski (1998)*

- Genetics
- Biology
- Personality
- Attitudes
- Past History
- Relationship Type
- Dynamics
- Influence of responsibility on victimization
- Dehumanization
- Situational Context
- Violence
- P x V
- S x V
- S x S

**Multifactorial Model of Wartime Rape**

*Henry, Ward & Hirshberg (2003)*

- Individual Context
- Sociocultural Context
- Structural Context
- Myths, values, norms, beliefs
- Male dominance, aggressive attitudes to women
- War environment, aggression, violence, death
- Diffusion of responsibility, dehumanization
- Genetics
- Biology
- Personality
- Attitudes
- Past History
- Relationship Type
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*Can't see the wood for the trees?*
Multifactor Model of Group Sex Offending

Harkins & Dixon, in press

**Sociocultural context (SC)**
- Cultural, social, and community factors are widely perceived as playing a role in sexual and nonsexual behaviour
- This will play a great or lesser role depending on the individual
- Examples: Rape culture, societal norms about patriarchy, interpersonal violence, gender roles, negative attitudes to victim group, rape myths

**Situational context (S)**
- Specific external stimuli that influence the likelihood of an individual behaving in a sexually aggressive manner
- Includes "triggering" factors or those that would be expected to act as proximal disinhibitors in a given situation
- Strong situational factors may overpower normally inhibiting factors to increase the chance of sexual aggression occurring
- Examples: Power imbalance between groups, legitimised use of aggression, anonymity

**Individual Context (I)**
- Individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits, developmental factor, sexual deviance) will inevitably play a role in whether someone engages in sexual violence
- Irrespective of any other factors, each individual has to make the ultimate decision about whether they will engage in MPSO
- In spite of cultures and situational contexts that are highly conducive to sexual violence against women, some individuals will refuse to engage in this behaviour
- Examples: Deviant sexual interests, Leadership traits

**Internalisation of sociocultural factors (I*SC)**
- The extent to which an individual will internalise sociocultural norms, values, beliefs and myths to shape their individual attitudes, beliefs and cognitions
- When individuals are immersed in a sociocultural context that is conducive to rape (e.g., those accepting male dominance and hypermasculinity) inevitably some people will internalize some of these sociocultural factors
- Examples: Cognitive distortions, Implicit theories

**Subcultural Context (S*SC)**
- Interaction between wider sociocultural factors and specific situational contexts
- Group norms are established in subgroups
- Behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions of what is approved and expected of group members, which have powerful effects on the thoughts and actions of group members
- Examples: situations encouraging male bonding, fraternities, gangs
Group processes (I*S)

"You are not the same person working alone as you are in a group" (Zimbardo, 2009, p.8)

- By definition, MPSO involves more than one person and thus would constitute a social process

Obedience to Authority

- Complying with the orders of perceived superiors
- Stanley Milgram obedience experiments (first published 1963):
  - Aim: How far will the participant comply with the experimenters instructions before refusing to carry out the actions required of him?
  - Community sample; conducted in a laboratory in Yale university
  - "We want to find out just what effect different people have on each other as teachers and learners, and also what effect punishment will have on learning in this situation"
  - Learner strapped in to electric chair
  - Asked to participate in pair-associate learning task
  - Introduced to shock generator; teacher given sample shock
  - Told to administer a shock each time the learner got a question wrong

Cont’d….

- Sequence of 4 prods used by experimenter to encourage compliance:
  - Please continue, or please go on
  - The experimenter requires you to continue
  - It is absolutely essential that you continue
  - You have no other choice, you must go on

- 63% of participants carried onto the end

Cont’d….

- Why do they obey the experimenter?
  - It is psychologically easy to ignore responsibility when one is only an intermediary link in a chain of events and is far from the consequences of the action "I wouldn't have done it by myself, I was just doing what I was told"
  - Diffusion of responsibility
  - Systematic devaluation of the victim

  - "If it's a whole group you have to have it with all of them. She shouldn't have put herself in that position. That's the deal" Firmin, 2010

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  - "It's the girl's fault. She knows the risks and she rolls with the crowd" Firmin, 2010

Conformity

- Individuals change their attitudes, verbal statements or behaviours to adhere more closely with the salient norm

  - There are two types of social influence which people conform to:
    - Normative: One conforms to be liked or accepted by the members of the group
      - Usually results in public compliance, doing or saying something without believing in it. Compliance is only likely to persist as long as such normative social influence is present
    - Informational: occurs when one turns to the members of one's group to obtain accurate information, usually in an ambiguous situation or crisis
      - Often results in internalised change where they believe the information is correct

Future directions

- Test this model!
- Offenders
  - Do they pose different risk levels?
  - What to do with MPSOs in treatment?
- Victims
  - Understand victim experience and how to address their problems
  - How to minimise victimisation
- Society
  - Change patriarchal societies, challenge rape myths, address social inequality
Questions?

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