

CHAPTER 6

THE RAPIST SAMPLE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter briefly outlines the research sample participating in this research project in order to understand the rapists better as well as the results that were obtained in the context of this sample. The said sample consisted of eight black persons and one white person. Table 6.1 gives a breakdown according to every rapist that participated in this project.

6.2 EVALUATION OF THE RAPIST SAMPLE ACCORDING TO BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

6.2.1 Rapist's age

McGrath (1991), Verwey and Louw (1989b) and others indicate that rape is primarily committed by persons under 30 years of age or by young adult males as men in the 20 to 29 year-old bracket accounted for a larger proportioning of arrests for rape. In this sample of first-offender rapists, most of them were in the age group of 21 to 30 with one prisoner being 47 years old. The median age of these prisoners was 27,4 years, thereby confirming other research findings.

6.2.2 Marital status

Eight of the nine prisoners (88%) in this study were single and only the older prisoner was married at the time of the offence. These results confirm Verwey and Louw's (1989b) finding that in more than 60% cases, rapists were usually unmarried at the time of the offence. It could therefore be assumed that sexual offenders in general might be unable to form steady or long-term relationships to interpersonal difficulties. They would

therefore prefer to be single possibly due to uncertainties within themselves or due to low self-esteem.

6.2.3 Level of education

Low educational and poor socio-economic levels are not uncommon in most rapists (Verwey & Louw, 1989b), as many rapists do not complete their school education. All nine prisoners in this research project indicated a limited education level (between Grade 7 and Grade 9), which is not uncommon in the prison environment in the Department of Correctional Services, according to the researcher's own knowledge and experience. Only one offender in the group had a very limited education level, namely Grade 4.

6.2.4 Number of children in family of origin

The data indicated that one prisoner was an only child, two prisoners were from a family of two children, three prisoners from a family of three children. Only three prisoners came from families of more than four children and of the three, one prisoner came from a family of nine children.

6.2.5 Socio-economic status of family

Sixty percent of the prisoners came from families with a very low income and socio-economic status. These prisoners indicated their family income was less than R2 000.00 per month. Therefore, it was possible that most of their basic needs (food, housing, education, etc.) were not met. One prisoner's parents received a pension, two prisoners came from an income group where the family received an income of between R2 000.00 and R10 000.00 per month. Verwey and Louw (1989a) found that low socio-economic levels contributed to criminal behaviour.

6.2.6 Abusive patterns in the family

More than half of the group (55%) indicated abusive patterns, specifically alcohol misuse or abuse, in their family homes. Four of the prisoners indicated abusive patterns in their childhood by a family member (not necessarily the parents) while five prisoners indicated no traumatic experiences during their childhood. The abuse the five rapists encountered might have set a pattern for abusing others, as they themselves were abused. Verwey and Louw (1989a) found that rapists who were abused or exposed to violence in intra-family relationships as children, later experienced problems expressing themselves, had low self-esteem and were sexually frustrated.

6.2.7 Any traumatic experience during childhood

Four prisoners (44%) indicated the absence of a father or a mother. The loss or absence of an important role model might have played an important role in these prisoners' socialization process and have affected their interpersonal relationships and led to low self-esteem. Verwey and Louw (1989a) indicate that with rapists there is often a history of a dominating mother and an absent father in critical stages in their development. The result is a loss of an identification figure perhaps leading them to prove their manliness. This, then, might also be why 45% of the rapists in this study felt in the attitude toward women questionnaire that they needed to prove their manliness by sleeping with a woman. It also correlates with the lack of self-esteem found in many rapists and with the findings on the TAT's of this group of rapists.

6.2.8 Use of alcohol or drugs during the crime

Hazan and Grobbelaar (1994), McGrath (1991) and Verwey and Louw (1989b) indicate that sexual aggression and alcohol are closely associated as alcohol reduces inhibitions and social controls. McGrath (1991) found that most studies suggest almost half of all sex offences are committed by offenders who consumed alcohol at the time of their

offence. This finding was confirmed in this study as six of the prisoners (66%) indicated that they were under the influence of alcohol when the rape was committed. Verwey and Louw (1989b) state that alcohol appears to act as a releaser only when an individual has already reached a frame of mind in which he is prone to rape. Although three rapists denied the use of drugs or alcohol during the crime, it can be assumed that alcohol abuse might have caused a disinhibiting factor in the case of the six rapists who used alcohol during the crime. This does not necessarily provide a motivation for the rape, which would correlate with Morrison et al's (1994) findings.

6.2.9 Were others involved in the rape?

Four rapists committed the rape while they were alone. Five of the rapists (55%) were in a group of more than two persons when the rape was committed. This might indicate that their behaviour was in some way triggered or aggravated by being with others.

6.2.10 Use of force during the rape

Two of the rapists reported threatening their victims and using extra force (by means of an object such as a bottle, knife or gun). This implies that excessive force was used and that violence played a major role in their offence. In most rape cases, the findings on the use of weapons are contradictory. Therefore, the findings in this study need to be interpreted cautiously as threats and force are common in most rape cases (Verwey & Louw, 1989 b). The use of excessive force might influence the possibility of recidivism. There is ample evidence that rapists who use force in committing their offences recidivate at a higher rate than those who do not (McGrath, 1991). McGrath (1991) found that where sexual arousal was fused with aggression or sadism, there was a higher incidence of recidivism.

6.2.11 Acceptance of responsibility for committing the crime

Two rapists indicated that they did not commit the rape. Denial and minimization have been found to occur in the majority of sexual offenders and are not uncommon in sex offenders (Marshall et al., 1999; Maletzky, 1991; Morrison et al., 1994). According to Morrison et al (1994), 87% of sexual offenders deny all or part of their crimes. In this study only 22% denied their part in their crime.

6.2.12 Relationship to victim

In this study only three of the rapists knew the victim(s). Six of the rapists indicated that they had had no previous contact with their victims. In this study, then, 66% of the cases were committed by a stranger to the victim which confirms Verwey and Louw's (1989b) finding that in 80% to 91% a person unknown to the victim commits the rape.

6.2.13 Age of victim

Verwey and Louw (1989a) found the victim's age does not necessarily play a role. This study found that in six of the nine prisoners' cases, the victim was between 21 and 30 years of age; in two cases, the victim was between 10 and 15 years old, and in two other cases, the victim was under 10 years old. This finding confirms the popular profile of the victim as a young (teenager or young adult), black, lower class, unmarried female residing in an urban area (Hazan & Grobbelaar, 1996). Given the size of the group, the fact that approximately 36% of these rapists committed a sexual offence with a victim younger than 15 years old is alarming.

6.3 CONCLUSION

From the biographical questionnaire it was determined that the median age of the rapist sample was 27. Most of the rapists in the group were single and had an educational level

between Gr 9 and Gr 11. Their families came from a low-income category, sometimes earning less than R2 000.00 per month. More than half (55%) the offenders had experienced some type of alcohol abuse in their homes as well as traumatic experiences, such as the absence of an authority figure (i.e., mother or father). In most instances, the offenders were under the influence of alcohol at the time of committing the offence, were alone at the time and had had no previous contact with their victim. The victims were mostly of a similar age group to the offender except in two instances where they were minors.

The results from the biographical data in this sample confirmed the findings of other studies in South Africa and elsewhere. The main similarities were age, marital status, low educational level, abusive patterns in the family, absence of authority figures and use of alcohol or drugs during the crime.

An interesting difference noted was that only 22% of this sample, in comparison to 87% in other studies, denied that they had committed the rape. This indicated that 88% of the sample accepted responsibility for having committed an act of rape. It might be interpreted that these rapists accepted responsibility and/or acknowledged the fact that they were in prison for rape. This acceptance of responsibility might have played a role in the treatment process because when a person accepts responsibility, it makes it easier to work with him and does not pose additional problems, such as overcoming denial and minimization first, which can hamper or negatively impact on the treatment process.

Table 6.1 Results of the biographical information of the rapists participating in the treatment programme

Biographical data	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Age	21	24	25	27	24	47	26	30	23
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single	Single
Level of education	Gr 11	Between Gr 7 and Gr 9	Between Gr 10 and Gr 12	Busy with Gr 11	Gr 9	Gr 4	Between Gr 10 and Gr 12	Between Gr 7 and Gr 9	Gr 9
Number of children in family of origin	2 (one sister)	3	3 children (has 2 brothers)	3 children (one brother and one sister)	One of 9 children	One of 6 children	Only child	One of 4 children	One of 2 children (one sister)
Socio-economic status of family	Family income between R2 000.00 and R10 000.00 per month	Family income less than R2 000.00 per month	Family receiving a pension	Family income less than R2 000.00 per month)	Family income less than R2 000.00 per month	Family income less than R2 000.00 per month	Family income less than R2 000.00 per month	Family income less than R2 000.00 per month	Family income between R2 000.00 and R10 000.00 per month)
Abusive patterns in the family	None	Alcohol misuse/abuse by parents	None	Father used alcohol	None	None	Alcohol misuse/abuse by parents	Alcohol misuse/abuse by father	Alcohol misuse by father

Table 6.1 (continued)

Any traumatic experience during childhood	None	Death of father at age 18	None	Absence of mother (did not know her at all)	None	None	Absence of father	None	Physical abuse by uncle as parents were divorced and father went to prison when he was 10 years old)
Use of alcohol and/or drugs during the crime	Alcohol	None	None	Alcohol	Drugs (dagga and mandrax)	Alcohol	Alcohol	Alcohol	None
Were others involved in the rape	5 of them were involved and he was accused no 1	More than 2 persons were involved	Alone	There were 5	There were 4	Alone	Alone	Alone	There were 3
Use of force (e.g. bottle, etc.)	No other object	No other object	No other object	Used another object i.e. bottle	Knife	No other object	No other object	No other object	No other object
Relationship to victim	No previous contact	No previous contact	House-friend	No previous contact	No previous contact	His girlfriend's daughter	Acquaintance	No previous contact	No previous contact

Table 6.1 (continued)

Age and race of victim	Between 21 and 30 years: black	Between 21 and 30 years: black	Between 10 and 15 years: white	29 years of age: black	27 years old: black	Between 10 and 15 years: black	Younger than 10 years: black	Younger than 10 years: black	Between 21 and 30 years: black
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From the biographical data obtained, the researcher expected to have a group of rapists with different intellectual, physical and emotional needs as their age groups ranged between 21 and 47 years. Because more than half of the group were in their early to late 20s, the researcher expected the group to be eager and motivated to change as well as able to make the necessary changes in their behaviour provided they received adequate guidance and/or support.

Many of the rapists in the group did not have an emotionally supportive, positive or consistent role model in their family of origin or current relationships, and some had had previous abusive relationships with authority figures. The researcher thus knew that she would play an important role in modelling positive, trusting and accepting behaviour to them. Building trust was deemed a necessary and critical aspect as it was assumed that their relationship with the researcher would influence their attitudes, thoughts and behaviour towards authority figures in general in the future. This challenge placed a great responsibility on the researcher because it meant that her actions would be watched, copied and might or might not influence them.

Most of the rapists in the group came from a previously disadvantaged background with a limited means of income and their educational levels were relatively low. This might have led to increased feelings of worthlessness and/or low self-esteem. The researcher therefore assumed that they would need intellectual and emotional stimulation to improve their existing knowledge base and encourage them to use their full potential in order to positively enhance their self-esteem.

Since all of them were in prison for rape and some had used excessive force on their victim, the researcher also had to acknowledge the fact that some of the rapists might pose a threat or a danger. Taking into account that the restrictive prison environment leads to sexual frustration and that some of the rapists could be prone to act out their sexuality or have a need to prove their manliness, the researcher had to constantly be aware of dangerous situations and to take the necessary precautions to ensure her and her assistant's own safety.

As two of the rapists still denied having committed the rape after being in prison for some time, the researcher also had to take cognizance of the fact that issues such as denial and minimization would be present. Taking responsibility for their actions would be an important issue for all the rapists in the research project. The researcher thus expected that some of the rapists might not be able or willing to change. In addition, there was a possibility that some of the rapists might re-offend in future, despite their participation in the treatment programme.

The researcher had to take all the above aspects into consideration in the development, implementation and evaluation of the treatment programme and the results therefore need to be interpreted cautiously and cannot necessarily be generalized.

CHAPTER 7

IMPACT OF THE PRISON SETTING ON THE PROCESS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes a psychodynamic evaluation of the prison setting and its impact on the study and change processes of the rapists in order to understand how the facility and the interaction between correctional officials and the rapists influenced each other.

7.2 IMPACT OF THE PRISON FACILITY ON THE RESEARCHER AND THE RAPISTS

Most prison settings in the Department of Correctional Services do not facilitate treatment programmes. The Leeuwkop Prison, where this treatment programme was implemented, is one such prison as it was also originally built for incarceration and not for treatment purposes.

Photographs 7.1 and 7.2 are included to give an overview of the view of the facility and the room in which the treatment programme was done. It should be mentioned that all the photographs in this study were taken with the permission of the area manager and facilitator (verbal) and the rapists (Appendix).

As can be seen from photographs 7.1, it is a seldom used facility with broken windows, poor lighting and no equipment. Equipment (e.g., flipcharts, overhead projector, paper, etc.) had to be carried to the offices daily by the researcher with the help of the prisoners. A video recorder and electricity were supplied from a nearby facility for use in the study on certain prearranged days.

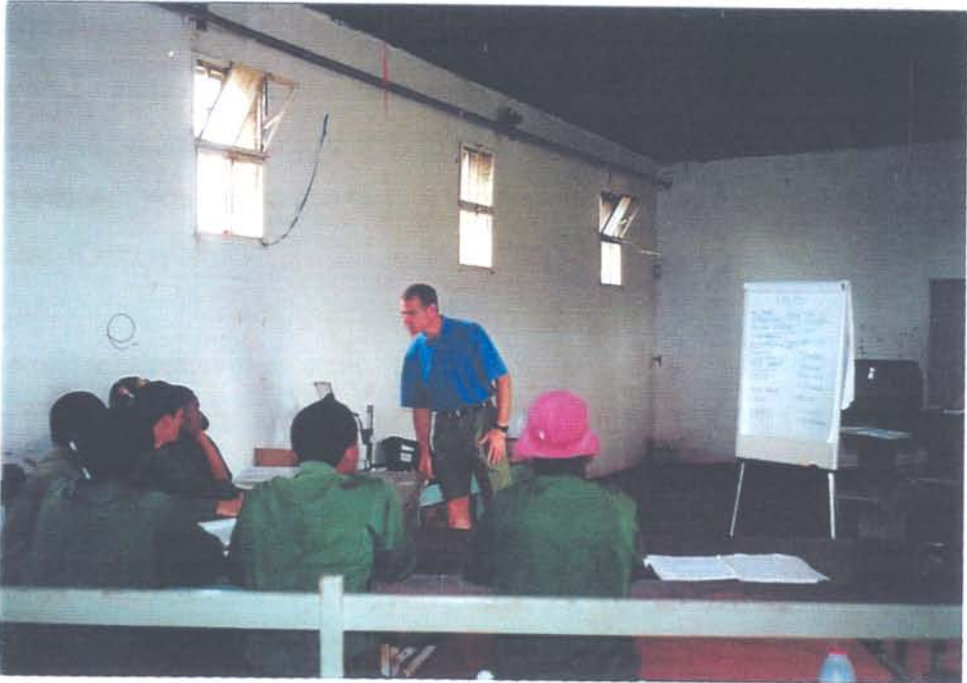
Although the facility was empty and had only the bare necessities (photograph 7.2), the researcher is of the opinion that the facility in itself did not deter the rapists from becoming involved in the treatment programme.

The facility is an example of the current environment that psychologists and prisoners are confronted with while doing their daily tasks. The rapists had also not yet been exposed to the more modern prison facilities that were built to encourage and promote a positive therapeutic environment. The researcher is, therefore, of the opinion that the facility in itself did not have a negative effect on the group or the outcome of the research because it is the usual type of facility to which the rapists and the researcher are accustomed. None of the prisoners commented on the facility. They were eager to participate and made the environment as comfortable for themselves and the researchers as they could. One of the prisoners took it upon himself to arrange for a broom and sweep the room daily, while the others arranged the available furniture to make it as comfortable as they could. After this was done they focused on the material and content of the programme and it can be assumed that the content of the programme, the commitment of the rapists and the researcher played a more important role than the sparse environment. It can therefore be assumed that a sparse prison context need not necessarily be seen as a negative factor in rendering treatment programmes although a more positive and therapeutic environment could have facilitated feelings of caring and respect.

Photograph 7.1 **Outside view of facility at the Leeuwkop Prison**



Photograph 7.2 Inside view with some members of the group and Mr Coetzee from the Pacific Institute South Africa



7.4 IMPACT VARIOUS CORRECTIONAL OFFICIALS HAD ON THE RAPISTS AND THE PROCESS

The researcher had the support of and commitment from the National Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services. Consequently, the other role players, senior management, were generally supportive and assisted in a friendly manner, which made the researcher's task easier and led to the successful completion of the programme. Gaining support from the whole organization is therefore seen as a major aspect when research is done in a setting with strict policies, rules and procedures as well as restrictions on access and entry to the organization as it plays a major role in the success of any project.

The role of the researcher as senior manager in the prison context was never more important than during the initial stages when trust had not yet been established with the rapists. For example, a particular incident when the rapists could not be met due to a roll-call within the first week of the programme illustrates this clearly. On arrival at the prison the researchers were informed that they would not be able to see any of the prisoners for the whole of the day. The researcher and the psychologist then went to each of the prisons in person, informing the prisoners by means of a correctional official or another prisoner/rapist who could take the message to them that the researchers were there, but were not able to see them. This first roll-call initially led to great disturbance and loss of trust amongst the group as they thought the researchers were not there – as had happened to some of them before. The fact that the researchers went to the prison and spoke to some of the rapists in person, led them to believe that the researchers were physically there but could not see them due to circumstances beyond their control. By establishing interaction, their trust was gained and they were motivated to continue as they did not see or experience it as a breach of trust as was so often the case with other authority figures in the past.

Most correctional officials (i.e., the area manager and some heads of prisons) involved with the study at Leeuwkop Prison were supportive in the process and motivated the rapists to attend the treatment programme and this positively affected the interrelationships on an individual and a group level, as it assisted with the group

process. The researcher discussed the problem of the roll-call incident with the area manager of the prison and explained to him how it had negatively impacted on the process and treatment programme. With his intervention, the same process was not repeated again during the course of the programme.

On another occasion the group as well as individual members noticed and mentioned that the treatment programme was affecting all the processes in the prison and it became increasingly difficult to get some of the rapists on time, especially during the second week. The area manager resolved this issue by allocating one correctional official to the group for the whole period. The correctional official was then responsible for ensuring the availability of the rapists as well as guarding the researchers, which worked well.

Between the second and third week, however, it became apparent that some correctional officials deliberately wanted to sabotage the programme. In one instance, two rapists' supervisors told them that they would no longer receive gratification because they were not at work and their work would be allocated to other prisoners. This distressed the two. The problem was resolved by giving each of them a letter to submit to their supervisor, informing the supervisors that the rapists' attendance was necessary, formed part of a focused treatment programme for them in which they were daily participating and they would be back at work in four weeks. It was also stipulated in Departmental policy that prisoners' gratification could not be tampered with, as attendance of treatment programmes formed part of the objectives of the Department of Correctional Services. By doing this, the rapists were again made aware of the fact that change for themselves, the group and the organization was important and that the Department does support positive change.

7.4 THE RESEARCHERS' IMPACT ON THE RAPISTS DURING THE PROCESS

Therapy by female therapists in a prison setting with mostly single male prisoners is difficult in itself. Coming from an advantaged position (especially on a social and educational level) and dealing with prisoners from a mainly disadvantaged position posed unique challenges, as most of the rapists were not well educated and/or

illiterate. When prisoners are in prison for rape, which is a sexual and violent crime against women, it is an even more challenging/demanding situation because of the rapists' distrust of women in general. For the researchers, as women working with rapists, it could also be difficult to work with men who had transgressed against other women. The possibility of violent or aggressive behaviour against women in the prison environment had to be acknowledged and not denied, as it did pose a threat to their own safety. However, both therapists had had extensive experience working in a prison environment with different types of violent and sexual offenders (including rapists), which facilitated the process of building trust with these rapists. The fact that the correctional official who brought the rapists to the researchers daily was also on guard outside the room in case of emergency, as the facility was outside the normal parameters of the prison where guards were more easily accessible, was a consolation to the researchers, without interfering with the process.

In the initial stages of the treatment programme the researchers had to gain trust on two levels, namely first as therapists and secondly as women. Some of the rapists preferred to speak in their own language, especially at the beginning of the programme, as they clearly did not trust the researchers. This problem was resolved by utilizing a prisoner as language interpreter and facilitator. He was placed in the group specifically for this reason, as it was anticipated that language difficulties might influence the evaluation and therapeutic process.

As the programme progressed and the process developed, trust was established and only became an issue again when sexuality was addressed directly. The reason for this is that in many indigenous cultures, it is taboo to discuss sexual issues with women and all the rapists spontaneously started talking in their mother tongue. The interpreter informed the researchers that the rapists found it highly embarrassing and strange to talk freely and openly to women about this very intimate subject. It therefore took far longer than anticipated to cover the module on sexuality, because they first preferred to talk about sexual matters among themselves in their own language. This meant that lengthy discussions were taking place without the researchers' understanding and being able to only take note of their facial expressions and non-verbal gestures. As the researcher continued answering their questions (which were first translated into English by the facilitator, and the answers then

translated into their own language), they gradually relaxed. As they became more eager to gain knowledge and understanding, they started asking their questions directly to the researcher in English, thereby indicating that they had known what was going on all the time and had probably been double-checking. This development is a significant aspect of the process that had to be dealt with in a way that facilitated trust, because the moment trust is established the relapse into a comfort zone (in this case the mother tongue) becomes less important and growth and learning can follow naturally.

7.5 THE IMPACT OF THE PARTICIPATING RAPISTS ON THE PROCESS

Some individuals in the group constantly needed to be motivated and to refocus, especially towards the middle of the programme, when it was clearly visible that there was a change in attitude and motivation.

For example, about the third week one rapist continually got up and lay down at the back of the room. When he was awake, the others tried hard to get him to refocus and gain his commitment to change and get him to keep up. Later, however, they decided to let it go, did not try to involve him, and accepted his being left out. They realized that he was holding them back and were not prepared to be restricted any longer. He stayed until the end of the programme, however, and it was a grim reminder to them of what could happen if they were not prepared to change and/or move forward with their life.

In another instance, when a member left the group in anger or wanted a chat with other non-participants outside, the group would not interfere directly but they talked to him afterwards during a break individually or in small groups – depending on the circumstances. This proved to be an effective way to solve some individual problem behaviour, as it seemed to calm the individual, and provided emotional support and acceptance from the group. When the group then resumed again after the break, it was noted that the offender(s) came back to the group in a more positive frame of mind. According to Mink et al. (1993), people all need to feel that they belong and being part of a group or team and having their acceptance, helps them to meet this

need. If this level of trust, feeling unique or special in some way and awareness of it and of their individual differences are met, people will feel free to devote their energy to the tasks at hand, learn effective problem-solving techniques and utilize opportunities for learning instead of focusing on protecting themselves.

7.6 THE IMPACT OF SPECIAL/UNIQUE REQUESTS AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE PROCESS

In certain situations the researcher had to adapt to special/unique requests as that showed respect for the individual and/or the group. This had to be managed very carefully as it impacted on how they perceived their world as well on the process. In one instance, the rapists were asked to cut out pictures from magazines for collages on what was important to them in their lives and later to cut out pictures depicting female and male sexuality. They would not cut the magazines at all and were upset that magazines like the ones they were given had to be damaged, because magazines or literature are very scarce in prison. They preferred to rather talk about those subjects and/or to show the therapist relevant pictures in the magazines. They all asked to take the magazines back to their cells for themselves and others to read later. The researcher granted this request of theirs because she noted that it was very important for them. This agreement worked very well as they brought back specific issues or information to the group at other stages of the programme which could then be discussed by the group.

7.7 CONCLUSION

A barren and unique context or environment, such as the Leeuwkop Prison, presented various obstacles and/or restraints that had to be tackled immediately. If issues such as access to the facility and the rapists, safeguarding of the researchers, cooperation from relevant correctional officials and certain subject matter had not been dealt with immediately, they might have impacted negatively on the whole process. Although certain issues were difficult to overcome initially, it did not necessarily negatively impact on the outcome of the study. The researcher's patience, adaptability and creativity were tested to the limits in the prison environment. At the same time, it created a unique opportunity for growth and learning for all participants involved. It

also facilitated a better understanding and awareness of the daily difficulties with which prisoners and therapists or researchers are faced. [University of Pretoria etd – Bergh, L B \(2006\)](#)

The fact that the researchers respected the rapists as individuals, treated them with respect and dignity and acknowledged their individual needs (i.e., to clean the room themselves, arrange the room as they saw fit, provision of magazines for them and others, arranging for them to be there and on time, arranging that their gratification not be taken away, etc.) created a humane, respectful and caring environment. It facilitated and improved the building of trust with authority figures, led to improved interpersonal relationships in general and motivated them to participate. It also increased the researcher's knowledge of the importance of small and sometimes insignificant factors which can be overlooked by researchers but which are crucial to prisoners in a prison environment.