CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As explained in Chapter one, the current research is a descriptive-exploratory study on serial rape and on how it presents itself within the South African context. The research is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodological aspects, and aims to build a general 'picture' of the South African serial rapist.

Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) generated the most relevant information on serial rape as a whole. The FBI research was aimed at providing insight into the development of the serial rapist, and of his behaviour prior to, during, and after the crime. In terms of the development of the offender, the research gathered information about the offender's family, education, sexual development, military experience, employment, and sexual activity during marriage (Hazelwood & Burgess, 1987). The research also focused on the behaviour exhibited by the serial rapist such as the methods of approach, use of violence, and verbal activity (Hazelwood & Warren, 1990). The mostly interview-based research consisted of interviews with 41 incarcerated serial rapists responsible for 837 rapes and more than 400 attempted rapes. Relevant documentation was also utilized in order to corroborate any information gathered.

Due to lack of research on the phenomenon in the South African context, a similar descriptive type of research would yield valuable information, which could assist law- enforcement agencies in the investigation of other similar types of crimes and future research.

In this chapter, the methodological approach adopted for the study, the data collection process, and the data analysis process, is explained.

4.1   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were deemed most appropriate for the present study. By moving between the qualitative and quantitative designs, the researcher was able to achieve a more

coherent and structured description and explanation of the phenomenon (Bailey, 1994; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005; Thomas, 2003; Yin, 1989). No empirically tested statements or specific research questions had been formulated for the research. Instead, each case study was explored, and a descriptive-explanation of each individual case was constructed.

With respect to the nature and type of data utilised in the course of the study, a document case-study methodology was deemed the most appropriate. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:314) a document study involves an analysis of any written material, which contains information on the phenomenon being studied. A variety of classifications exist of the types of data sources that can be utilised during a document study. According to Bailey (1994:294), primary sources are seen as original written material, and include the author's personal experiences and observations. Secondary sources are derived from someone else who was not physically present at the event (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:315). The research data was obtained from primary documentation consisting of official police dockets, court reports and other relevant information regarding each individual case of serial rape.

In the data analysis, content analysis was used as the primary technique. Content analysis is guided by a question or a set of questions that the researcher wishes to answer. The type of question can be limited to either qualitative features or quantitative aspects (Thomas, 2003:57). According to Carney (1972:24-25), quantitative and qualitative methods can supplement each other. The aim and objectives of the current research lend themselves to both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2004:324), content analysis is "...a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of verbal data." Thomas (2003:57) states that content analysis entails the analysis of a document's contents by answering questions or a set of questions about the phenomenon being researched. Neuendorf (2002:10) states that content analysis "...is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on a specific scientific method and is not limited to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented". Clark-Carter (2004:10) defines content analysis as a technique to quantify aspects of writers or spoken text or some form of visual representation. The role of the researcher is to decide upon a unit of measurement, and then apply that measurement to the text or other form of representation.

Content analysis involves coding the content into categories or relevant variables, which summarize and systematize the data. The categories which the researcher utilises during content analysis can be determined inductively or deductively by means of some combination of both. These categories can be derived either by 'immersing' oneself in the data and identifying relevant themes, for example utilising the grounded theory approach (inductively) or from utilising prior categorical schemes suggested by theoretical frameworks (deductively) (Berg, 2004:272-273; Carney, 1972:168-169; Neuendorf, 2002:102; Smith, 2006:196). In terms of the current research the categories which were utilised during the data collection and data analysis portions of the research was constructed by a combination of inductive and deductive measures. In order to facilitate the category construction each case was analysed individually by utilising the case study method. Through the application of a theoretical framework the empirical as well as abstract properties of the data could be analysed. This allowed the researcher to construct mutually exclusive categories which are theoretically sound, completely grounded within the data and unique to the phenomenon being studied (Charmaz, 2003:81-82).

4.1.1 The Case study method

The case study method involves systematically gathering information about a group, social setting, or phenomenon, in order to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions (Berg, 2004:251). The case study method is the preferred research method when questions such as "how" and "why" are being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has no control. This method is also preferred when a current phenomenon within a real life context, is researched (Yin, 1989:8-13).

According to Thomas (2003:33), a case study typically consists of a description of the event or situation being studied, and the actions exhibited by the individual during the event or in the situation. The case study also offers an explanation as to why specific behaviours occur during the event or situation. The unit of analysis in a study utilising the case study method can vary from individuals or groups to organizations (Thomas, 2003:33-34). The description and exploration of the case take place through a detailed in-depth data-collection method involving multiple sources such as interviews, documents, and archival records. Where multiple cases are involved, it is referred to as a collective case study method. The product is an in- depth description of the case or cases (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:272).

When the study contains more than a single case, such a study is said to utilise a multiple-case study design. Evidence gathered from the multiple-case study is considered more credible, and the overall results are regarded as more compelling (Tellis, 1997). In a study in which the multiple-case study method is used, each case must serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of the research. Each case utilised in the multiple-case study design should relate specifically to the research. Multiple-case studies should be viewed in the same light as multiple experiments, and subsequently must follow replication logic. Replication logic specifies that, if the researcher has access to a certain number of cases, and if similar results are obtained for all the cases during the research, replication has taken place. The same logic underlies the use of multiple case studies. Each case must be selected so that it either (a) predicts or will produce similar results (literal replication) or (b) produce contrasting results, but for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) within the research (Yin, 1989:45-46).

4.1.2 Theoretical framework

An important aspect in the replication logic procedure is the development of an extensive theoretical framework. The framework is of importance due as it would state conditions under which the phenomenon might occur. The framework later becomes the "blueprint" for examining and interpreting the findings of the research (Yin, 1989:46-47). A theory can be defined as a set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of a phenomenon by specifying relationships between variables with the aim of explaining and predicting a phenomenon (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:442).

The level of theory, which formed the theoretical framework applied during the research, was the theoretical system. A theoretical system allows for the focus of the research to be not just on empirical elements and properties, but also on abstract elements (Frankfurt-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004:39-40). According to Berg (2004:257) a descriptive case exploration requires a descriptive theoretical framework. The behavioural profiling framework (see Chapter 3), which formed the basis of the theoretical framework, focuses on the identification of observable behavioural patterns (measurable elements) such as the use of a weapon or restraints, and also focuses on theoretical constructs (abstract elements) such as the fantasy and signature elements.

4.2   DATA COLLECTION

In this section the data collection process utilised during the research will be explained. A basic description of the cases that formed the data set will also be given.

4.2.1 Case description

Due to the limited amount of information and research on the phenomenon of serial rape within the South African context and the exploratory-descriptive nature of the research, the research focused on an exploration and description of the South African male serial rapists. The research does not exclude the possibility that female serial rapists exist, however, in order to make the research as comprehensive as possible the female serial rapist was not included.

In terms of the current research, the parameters for the sample were reported and convicted male serial rape cases. Due to the combined qualitative-quantitative nature of the research, only nine individual serial rape cases were selected. Although the offender data set only consisted on nine cases the victim data which was generated from the nine cases consisted out of 75 victims. The nine individual serial rape cases allowed for a more manageable data set but also ensured that the behavioural evidence gathered from the data set would be comprehensive. No parameters were defined for the ethnic distribution of the data set due to the exploratory nature of the research. The limited amount of offenders will have an influence on the conclusion that can be made with regards to demographic information. However, because of the exploratory descriptive nature of the research the nine cases will be sufficient for drawing initial conclusions and making recommendations for future research.

The data set was based on 9 reported and convicted rape series, and consisted of a total of 75 victims. Sixty-four of the victims were raped, four victims were involved in attempted rape incidents, three victims were involved in sexual assaults, and four victims were involved in unsuccessful attempts.

The ages of the nine offenders ranged from 22 years to 44 years. Only three population groups were represented in the data set: black, coloured and white. The occupational categories of the offender data set varied from unemployed to professional individuals, with education levels

ranging from lower education levels (grade 1 – grade 6) to higher education levels (university degrees). The criminal histories of the offender data set ranged from attempted murder to burglary.

The age distribution of the victim data set varied; the youngest victim was six years old and the oldest 53 years old. The majority of the victims were black females who were either students or unemployed at the time of the incidents. In most of the incidents, the offender was unknown to the victims.

The research data was obtained from primary documentation consisting of official police dockets, court reports, and other relevant information about each individual case of serial rape. Official documents, in contrast to personal documents, are documents compiled and maintained by organisations such as government institutions; such documents are more formal and structured than personal documents (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:317). Official documentation is generally produced for a limited audience, and may include court transcripts, police reports, financial records, crime statistics, and similar documents (Berg, 2004:214-215).

Formal permission was obtained from the head of the Investigative Psychology Unit of the SAPS to gain access to the necessary police dockets and other relevant documentation. The documentation was screened by the unit to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. Identifying information such as victims' and offenders' names, identification numbers, and home addresses were removed before the researcher was given access to the documents.

4.2.2 Generating data

Through the application of the case study method a *behavioural checklist* (Appendix A) was constructed. This was utilised during the content analysis process in order to generate the required data. The behavioural checklist was developed from the behavioural profiling framework described in chapter 3, in order to ensure that the relevant information for all facets of the research is gathered. Utilising the behavioural checklist ensured that the exploration and description of the phenomenon were grounded in significant theoretical propositions.

The checklist consisted of five primary categories: offender demographics, victim demographics, modus operandi, components of the sexual act, and crime-scene behaviour.

The offender demographics section was divided into several sub-categories:
- the age of the offender at the time of the first incident;
- population group, for example black, white, coloured, Asian or Indian;
- occupation of the offender at the time of the first incident (for example if the offender was a painter he would classified as a labourer an if the offender was a computer programmer he would be categorised as a professional);
- the educational level of the offender (primary – (grade 1- 6), secondary – (grade 7-12), and higher – (diplomas and university degrees));
- the criminal history of the offender is the final sub-category of the section and consists of all the previous convictions of the offender.

The victim demographics section also consisted of aspects such as the age of the victim at the time of the incident as well as the population groups of the victims. The section also included the offender relationship:
- how the offender knew the victim;
- whether the victim met the offender at least once before the actual incident;
- whether casual acquaintance;
- whether the victim knew the offender, for example if he was her cousin the offender probably was known to the victim;

The occupational categories of the victims were also included in this section for example, professional – realtor; semi-professional – teacher; clerical – bank teller; student – school or university; domestic worker – cleaner; or sex worker.

The information obtained from these fields allowed for the compilation of a general victim profile as well as a general description of the demographic characteristics of the offenders per population group distribution.

The checklist also focussed on the modus operandi of the offender, and included aspects such as:
- how the offender approached the victim;

- the location where the offender approached the victim;
- the location where the actual rape occurred;
- the methods of transport utilised;
- the methods of controlling the victim and the verbal interactions between the offender the victim.

In order to determine the levels of violence utilised during the incidents by each individual required a general criterion which would include any form of violence or method of control:
- *Verbal threats*: This interaction includes any verbalised threat which implied physical harm. This also includes threats of physical harm caused by a weapon or physical harm to the victim's family and friends.
- *Presence of a weapon*: This method of control involves the implied threat of weapon which the offender shows to the victim but never refers to.
- *Verbal threats and the presence of a weapon*: this interaction involves the offender threatening the victim with physical harm and using the weapon as added motivation without actually referring to the weapon.
- *Physical violence*: This entails any form of physical violence directed towards the victim, for example forcibly pulling the victim into a room or repeatedly hitting and kicking the victim.

In order to assist in the data generation section several basic concepts were created which would allow the researcher to gather data from the data set in a uniform manner. This included aspects such as the types of verbal interaction between the offender and victims. The interaction was divided into five standardised aspects:
- *Conversational*: Any interaction where the offender and victim engaged in general non-specific conversation, for example asking the victim about her family.
- *Complementary*: Any interaction involving the offender giving the victim a compliment or attempting to sound complimentary, for example telling the victim how successful she was.
- *Aggressive*: Any interaction where the overall tone of the offender is perceived as aggressive. This usually entails the offender yelling at the victim or the offender giving the victim specific orders.
- *Threatening*: Any interaction where the offender threatens the victim with any form physical harm if she does not comply with his demands.

- *Demeaning*: This interaction entails the offender speaking to victim in an undignified and humiliating manner. This usually involves the offender insulting the victim or speaking to her in a debasing manner.

The checklist also examined the components of the sexual acts that occurred during the incident and focussed on the elements of the sexual behaviour as well as the verbal interaction between the offender and victim during the sexual contact.

The checklist also looked at the crime scene behaviour of the offender, for example whether the offender engaged in any activities in an attempt to hide his identity from the victim as well as from the authorities.

In terms of compiling a general behavioural profile of the serial offender, as well as a general description of the phenomenon, the above-mentioned themes were of great importance.

The categories that comprised each individual field in the behavioural checklist were constructed by utilising deductive category construction. Deductive category construction comprises an examination of relevant and associated theories to construct a general idea of what types of data the researcher must search for. The actual categories must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Deductive category construction allows the researcher to construct the categories before the measuring instrument is applied to the data (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2004:336-337).

The general fields of the behavioural checklist are grounded in existing theoretical concepts. The aim was to expand on the categories and to provide a more detailed explanation of what happened, creating sub-categories, which were grounded within the data.

The behavioural checklist was utilised as a coding scheme and was applied to each individual case, and the data was broken down, conceptualised, put together, and classified into meaningful categories.

4.2.3 Consistency of measurement instrument

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2004:170), reliability refers to the extent to which the measuring instrument limits variable errors. This means that, if a variable is measured by the same measuring instrument under the same conditions at different occasions, the measurement procedure will produce identical (or nearly identical) results. In other words, it refers to the measuring instrument's ability to produce consistent results each time it is applied (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:162-163). In order to address the reliability and consistency of the behavioural checklist utilised during the research, the test-retest method was determined as the most viable method to determine the consistency of the proposed checklist (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2004:172). The test-retest method is derived directly from the conceptual definition of reliability. The method stipulates that the researcher administer the measuring instrument on the same group, respondent or data set, at different intervals, to determine whether the measuring instrument provides similar results.

In terms of the current research, an independent criminologist not associated with the original research project, and one of the members of the Investigative Psychology Unit was approached to test the reliability and consistency of the behavioural checklist. Four case studies were selected from the original data set and were given to both of the re-testers. They were asked to analyse the four cases by applying the behavioural checklist to each of the cases. The results obtained from the retest method were compared to the findings of the original analysis of the same four cases. The results achieved by the re-testers and researcher were almost identical. The differences that occurred in the data sets were expected and could be attributed to subjective interpretation of the information from the individual cases.

4.3   DATA ANALYSIS

The goal of the data analysis was to achieve a richly-articulated description, which furnishes a comprehensive understanding, and achieves an organised and coherent presentation of the phenomenon (Van Vuuren, 1991:57-58).

Due to the fact that the research project did not have specific quantifiable research questions and the exploratory-descriptive case study method utilised, the data analysis process presented with several challenges.

One of the mayor challenges during the data analysis process was integrating the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the research. Both the qualitative and quantitative data was categorised and organised in terms of the behavioural-profiling framework. The profiling framework organised the data under three core categories: offender demographics; victim demographics, and modus operandi, which consists of three distinct categories; approach phase; attack phase, and sexual behaviour. The data obtained was utilised to construct a detailed description of the phenomenon instead of forcing the data into preconceived categories. The goal was to utilise the two types of data and to combine them into an intelligible and interpretable data set, which could produce a logically assembled presentation of the facts.

In order to facilitate a descriptive-explanation regarding serial rape and how it presents itself in the South African context a comprehensive behavioural profile of each individual case had to be compiled. Multiple data sources were utilised in order to acquire the information needed to compile the behavioural profile of each individual case. The data sources consisted of victim accounts of the incidents, notes from the investigating officer, court transcripts, psychological reports, and offender accounts of the incidents. The challenging aspect of utilising multiple data sources was the multifaceted integration of the various sources. Due to the multiple data sources, determining the accuracy and reliability of the information ultimately utilised during the research was a concern. Victim statements could be incomplete or the statement could just include selective information deemed important by the investigating officer. The notes of the investigating officer could also be deficient, and the offender's description of the events could be scripted in such a manner that would favour him. In an attempt to counteract any deficiency in any one of the data sources, corroborating information was attained from the other sources to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The data collected from the individual case studies utilising the behavioural checklist was converted into frequency patterns of the variables listed in the checklist observed throughout the individual cases. The individual cases produced a variety of data depending on the size of the individual case study. The cases that had a large number of victims produced large *n-values*, which could be transformed into meaningful percentages, and could be compiled in table and graph format. The cases that consisted of fewer victims also produced information that could be transformed into percentages, but the small *n* value would not justify constructing tables and graphs for the information. The *n*-values for the smaller cases were calculated, as these would

be essential later in determining the overall implication for the entire data set. Each individual case presentation also consisted of a written protocol, which produced a narrative of the entire case and also an abstract analysis of the individual case integrating the findings into a cohesive descriptive-exploratory synopsis of the individual case.

The data-integration for the individual cases as well as all the overall data sets was done according to the behavioural-profiling framework. During the integration of the overall data set, the aim was to identify patterns observable for the entire data set. The data was also changed into frequencies and percentages and presented in table and graph format. During the overall integration, the percentages of the cases that had a small *n*-value were also incorporated, in order to achieve an accurate representation of the entire data set.

As mentioned earlier, the data was presented in table and graph format, as well as a written protocol to ground the abstract analysis and to verify the claims and conclusions about the data.

4.4   CONCLUSION

The research method utilised during the research process consisted of a qualitative content analysis, which was supplemented with aspects of the case study theory research method. Although quantitative and qualitative methods are viewed as exclusive, supplementing the quantitative content analysis method with selected aspects of qualitative research methods allowed the researcher to combine the advantages of both designs. The ultimate goal of the research design was to let the data be the focus of the research, and to ascertain what the data yielded. The aim was not to force the data into preconceived categories or theoretical applications, but rather to let the data guide the analysis. Theoretical constructs did play an important part in the data collection and data analysis procedures, but only as a point of departure and a basic framework.

The research design was structured in such a way that an analytic description and explanation could be given of the phenomenon of serial rape and how it presents itself within the South African context. The information was presented in two phases; the first phase was to construct a behavioural profile of each individual case by utilising the behavioural profiling framework. The second phase was in terms of statistical findings, which relate to the overall distribution of the specific categories, as well as the significance of its distribution in terms of the sample. The

statistical findings could ultimately be projected onto the larger population of the phenomenon. The statistical data, along with the information contained in the protocol, was used to construct a basic profile of serial rape within the South African context.

In the following chapter (Chapter 5) the individual case studies will be examined and analysed, and a behavioural profile of each individual case will be constructed.