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A comparison of intimate partner assailants and non-partner assailants among police reported rapes and attempted rapes in the sør-trøndelag police district

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Abstract

A considerable amount of rapes and attempted rapes reported to the police, happen in intimate partner relationships. Knowledge with regards to characteristics of intimate partner rape, and furthermore knowledge related to characteristics of assailants of intimate partner rape in Norway, could be considered limited.

The aim of this study is to explore characteristics of police reported assailants of rape. This is a retrospective, descriptive study, based on N=558 police-reported rapes and attempted rapes in the Sør-Trøndelag Police District (1997 – 2010). Reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes are compared to reported non-partner rapes/attempted rapes on characteristics related to the assailant, the assault, victim characteristics, victim injury, and the legal process.

The present study finds that reported rapes/attempted rapes committed by intimate partner assailants more often involve severe physical violence, compared to reported rapes/attempted rapes committed by non-partner assailants. Reported intimate partner assailants are less frequently recorded to have consumed alcohol in connection with the rapes/attempted rapes, compared to non-partner assailants. The overall rate of charge filing is low. Higher frequencies of cases are dismissed because of lack of evidence when the reported assailant is an intimate partner, compared to a non-partner.

The associations presented here, are in line with some previous empirical findings. The reported intimate partner assailant tend to be violent and is less often reported to have consumed alcohol in connection with the rape/attempted rape, compared to non-partner assailants. Efforts should be put towards preventing intimate partner rape in particular, and intimate partner violence in general.

Keywords: rape, attempted rape, violence, intimate partner, non-partner, police-reports

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Introduction

Sexual violence represents a serious public health concern across the globe (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013; García-Moreno et al., 2013). The World Health Organization estimate that the global prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence in partner or non-partner relationships, altogether reach a figure of 35% of women worldwide (García-Moreno et al., 2013). The worldwide prevalence of non-partner sexual violence alone is estimated to be just over 7% (Abrahams et al., 2014).

Also in Norway, sexual violence is a significant problem (Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014). In 2008, the Norwegian Government made a conservative estimate that as many as 8000–16000 people could be victims of rape each year (NOU 2008:4). A recent cross-sectional prevalence study examining violence and rape in a lifetime perspective, reveal that more than 9% of women and just over 1% of men interviewed, have experienced rape (Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014).

Rape victimization may be associated with significant health problems, with potential short and long lasting consequences, of both physical and mental character (Campbell, 2002; García-Moreno et al., 2013; Kruse, Strandmoen, & Skjørten, 2013). Sexual violence is possibly the most psychologically destructive form of violence an individual can endure (Isdal, 2000, p. 46). A recent prospective study on risk factors for Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) conducted on a Swedish clinical sample, found that 39% of victims of rape had developed PTSD at 6 months follow-up (Möller, Bäckström, Söndergaard, & Helström, 2014). Furthermore, rape may cause suffering for those who are close to the victims, and create insecurity in the community (Kruse et al., 2013). Such a potential impact on both the victims and the community as a whole, warrants research in order to seek a better understanding of the phenomenon of rape (Amnesty International, 2008; Kruse et al., 2013). One important aspect to consider is the assailant of such crimes. Research on assailants of rape is, however, not a large field of study in Norway (Kruse et al., 2013), highlighting the necessity for contribution in this area.

Sexual Violence and the Assailant-Victim Relationship

For the present thesis, the terms sexual aggression, sexual violence, sexual assault and rape are used interchangeably when referring to research, as there are variations in the labels and definitions across studies. However, what may be considered common across different labels and definitions is the fact that these terms cover severe, harmful, and unwanted acts directed against individuals' sexuality (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013). Sexual violence furthermore takes many forms, and varies according to several factors (Dartnall & Jewkes,

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2013). Categorizing sexual assaults can be done in different ways, for instance according to the assailant-victim relationship (Kruse et al., 2013).

The majority of sexual assaults are found to be committed by someone known to the victim, that being an acquaintance, friend, relative, intimate partner or other known assailant-victim relationship (Feldhaus, Houry, & Kaminsky, 2000; Haugen, Slungard, & Schei, 2005; Jones, Wynn, Kroeze, Dunnuck, & Rossman, 2004; Logan, Cole, & Capillo, 2007; Stermac, Du Mont, & Kalemba, 1995; Ullman & Siegel, 1993). According to the Norwegian Criminal Bureau of Justice (Kripos), 58% and 61% of police reported rapes in 2012 and 2013, respectively, included rape in relationships where the alleged assailant and victim to some extent knew each other prior to the assault. Among these, approximately 18% and 21% of assailant-victim relationships were intimate partners/ex partners, in the respective years (Kripos, 2013, 2014). These findings contradict what may be a more or less established cultural belief that rape is something that happens between strangers (Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013), and also demonstrate that rape in intimate partner relationships compel a notable portion of the annual figure of rape reports in Norway. In 2012, the Norwegian government received remarks of concern by the UN's Committee on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with regards to the high prevalence of violence against women, especially related to violence in close relationships, including rape and rape in marriage in some communities (Barne- likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2012).

Intimate Partner Violence

The World Health Organization conceptualize intimate partner as “a husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or lover, or ex-husband, ex-partner, ex-boyfriend or ex-lover” (WHO, 2013, p. VII). Intimate partner violence covers physical, emotional and sexual violence (Devries et al., 2013). There has been a long-standing gender debate related to who perpetrates crimes of intimate partner violence. Feminist research on data gathered from public agencies, find intimate partner violence to be crimes mostly committed by men against women, as cited by Johnson (1995). On the contrary, the family violence perspective argue gender symmetry based on national survey data (Johnson, 1995). Michael P. Johnson (1995) proposes an explanation for this discrepancy, and point out that intimate partner violence is a heterogeneous phenomenon, and that different research populations reflect findings of different types of perpetrators. Johnson (1995) has developed a typology of intimate partner violence based on information with regards to couple dynamics, and information related to the hypothesised underlying motivation for violence. After later refinement of the typology it has been expanded to include four types of intimate partner violence, namely intimate

terrorism, violent resistance, situational couple violence and mutual violent resistance (Johnson, 2008). Intimate terrorism will mostly, but not exclusively involve male perpetrators, and is argued to be similar to people's perception of an abusive partner (Johnson, 2008). Situational couple violence is proposed to be the phenomenon often found in national survey data. It includes violence, in many instances executed by both parties, although the violence is argued not to involve an attempt of extended control and power, which is the proposed motivation underlying intimate terrorism (Johnson, 2008).

Another perspective on intimate partner violence is how individual characteristics may contribute to the trajectory towards violence. In their 1994 review of research within the field of intimate partner violence, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) discovered three descriptive dimensions useful in the characterizations of different types of batterers, namely the severity and generality of violence, and psychopathology. Based on these descriptive dimensions, the researchers hypothesise that three different types of batterers will emerge, family-only batterers, dysphoric/borderline batterers and generally violent/antisocial batterers (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). According to their model they theorize that distal factors such as genetic influences, early childhood family experiences and experiences with peers, could be risk factors for intimate partner violence. These factors may furthermore affect the development of proximal risk factors such as adult attachment style, impulsivity, social skills, attitudes toward women, and attitudes toward violence. Risk factors are hypothesised to influence the trajectory towards different types of batterers (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). The typology has received empirical support (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2000).

Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

Empirical studies have found an overlap between intimate partner violence and sexual violence within intimate partner relationships. An American study exploring sexual violence among men enrolled in an intervention program for men who abuse their partner, found that 53% of the men admitted to acts of sexual violence (Bergen & Bukovec, 2006). Most of these acts met the legal definition of rape according to their respective states of origin. Some of the men were both physically and sexually violent simultaneously, while others were sexually violent after acts of physical abuse (Bergen & Bukovec, 2006). Another American study of women seeking a protection order, found that 68% of these women had experienced sexual assault(s) within a physically violent relationship (McFarlane et al., 2005).

It has recently been argued that there should be an increased focus on intimate partner sexual violence, differentiated from the broader concept of intimate partner violence (Logan,

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Walker, & Cole, 2013). It has furthermore been argued problematic that research on intimate partner violence do not take into account the co-existence of sexual and non-sexual violence within the same intimate partner relationships (White, McMullin, Swartout, Sechrist, & Gollehon, 2008).

Estimates from the USA indicate that 10–14% of the female population will be exposed to rape by an intimate partner (Martin, Taft, & Resick, 2007). In a Norwegian context, a study of a randomly selected population aged 24 – 55 in Oslo, found that six per cent of their respondents had experienced sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner (Pape & Stefansen, 2004). Among these, two thirds reported that they had also experienced other forms of violence, although not necessarily committed by the same partner, as the study did not allow for such an analysis (Pape & Stefansen, 2004). A prevalence study from Norway including randomly selected, ever-partnered women, found that more than nine per cent of the respondents had experienced intimate partner sexual assaults (Nerøien & Schei, 2008). Thoresen and Hjemdal (2014) found that just over 40% of the women respondents who had experienced rape, had been victimized by an intimate partner (Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014).

Repeated rapes, also defined as rape chronicity, have been found to be common among victims of intimate partner rape. In a study from the USA, based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 65% of women sexually assaulted by an intimate partner (in this study, husbands and ex-husbands), reported that they had experienced multiple rapes, a significant finding compared to victims of acquaintance and stranger rapes (Mahoney, 1999). A Norwegian study exploring characteristics of men convicted with rape in a three-year period, found that the majority of cases including re-victimization by same assailant, were connected to rape by intimate partners (Mjøs, 2011).

Theories on sexual Aggression

Historically, Susan Brownmiller put rape on the agenda through her major work, “Against our will” in 1975 (Brownmiller, 1977). She argued that rape is the result of patriarchal social structures, where rape is used by men as a weapon in order to keep women in a state of fear (Brownmiller, 1977, p. 15). Since then, several single and multifactor theories on rape have been developed, in addition to micro-theories and taxonomies (Gannon, Collie, Ward, & Thakker, 2008).

Single factor theories constitute theories where rape is explained by single factors hypothesized to cause rape perpetration (Gannon et al., 2008). An example of a single factor theory is how cognitive factors may influence the susceptibility to sexual violence. As

summarized by Kruse et al. (2013), it has been proposed that particular attitudes and beliefs can potentiate the committing of rape in some individuals (Kruse et al., 2013). Some of these attitudes and beliefs could be reflected in rape myths, which can be exemplified by beliefs such as “women enjoy being raped [...] they could easily resist rapists if they really wanted to” (Drieschner & Lange, 1999, p. 60), and furthermore beliefs related to the acceptance of violence (Drieschner & Lange, 1999). Rape myths have been defined as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). A meta-analysis of 37 American and Canadian studies from 1997 – 2007, propose that the concept of rape myths may be important in the understanding of sexual violence perpetration. Analysis indicate that there is a strong association between the acceptance of rape myths and sexual aggression, and furthermore associations with regards to hostility towards women and aggressive behaviour (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Rape myths may influence rape perpetration both on an individual level and at the level of a social, or cultural context (Ryan, 2004).

It has been argued that a single factor explanation of rape perpetration may not be sufficient (Gannon et al., 2008). An example of a multifactor theory on sexual aggression is the confluence model, which has gained support through empirical studies by different research teams, as cited by Abbey & Jacques-Tiura (2011). The confluence model is based on what is suspected to be underlying motives for sexual aggression, namely power and control, sex, or a combination of the two (Malamuth, Heavey, & Linz, 1996). According to this model, sexual aggression is either driven by the construct of hostile masculinity or an impersonal orientation to sex, also referred to as sexual promiscuity. Hostile masculinity revolves around a man’s angry feelings and hostile attitudes toward women, as well as the belief in rape myths and need for power and control over women. The construct of an impersonal orientation to sex, characterize men who seek out numerous casual sexual relationships, as opposed to the development of an emotional bond to a sexual partner (Malamuth et al., 1996). These drives originate in an evolutionary explanation of hostile masculinity and sexual promiscuity as strategies developed to maximise reproductive success (Gannon et al., 2008; Malamuth et al., 1996). The authors hypothesise that childhood abuse and experiences of parental violence can lead to delinquency, and furthermore lead on to one of two trajectories to coerciveness towards women (Malamuth et al., 1996). Through studies, researchers have found that high levels of both sexual promiscuity and hostile masculinity predict sexual aggression (Malamuth et al., 1996). Thus, sexual violence and aggression is explained by both evolutionary theory and consequent environmental and sociocultural

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factors (Gannon et al., 2008). The confluence model has been expanded to explain intimate non-sexual aggression, and longitudinal research has suggested that sexual aggression in early adulthood may be predictive of later difficulties in relationships with women, both sexual and non-sexual (Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995).

In addition to the above-mentioned types of theories, micro-theories have been developed, which are descriptive theories based on offence data and offender's accounts for their actions, and also several taxonomies seeking to break up the heterogeneous population of assailants of rape into more meaningful categories (Gannon et al., 2008).

Assailant Characteristics and Risk Factors

Studies reveal that the majority of assailants of rape are men (Black, 2011; Kruse et al., 2013; Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014). Based on a summary of theory and research on rape, Gannon et al. (2008) find that assailants of rape tend to have a diverse criminal history. As an example, Simon (2000) finds that convicted assailants of sexual crimes are as versatile in offending behaviour as otherwise violent offenders. Compared to assailants of sexual crimes against children, sexual and violent offenders are characterized by a significantly more versatile criminal history (Simon, 2000). Similar tendencies have also been found in a more recent study comparing rapists and child sexual offenders, although in this study, child sexual offenders also tended to have a rather diverse criminal history (Harris, Smallbone, Dennison, & Knight, 2009). Gannon et al. (2008) further summarize that assailants convicted of rape tend to be characterized by high levels of antisocial traits, hostility, and aggressiveness.

Some possible risk factors associated with rape perpetration in general have been examined (see Jewkes, 2012, for a review). Key findings from Jewkes' (2012) review on rape perpetration reveal five groups of risk factors based on studies from North America and South Africa examining populations of incarcerated sex offenders, naval recruits, and college men, in addition to some community-based studies. Groups of risk factors considered important, as summarized by Jewkes (2012), include adverse childhood exposures (such as being sexually abused, and witnessing intimate partner violence), attachment and personality disorders, social learning and delinquency (e.g. associating with delinquent peers), gender inequitable masculinities (e.g. the impact of social norms related to gender, and the perception of sexual entitlement over women), and substance abuse (Jewkes, 2012). Related to risk factors for intimate partner rape, studies indicate that non-sexual aggression and marital dissatisfaction are among factors found to be strongly correlated with rape in marriage (Martin et al., 2007). Furthermore, individual characteristics such as unemployment,

hyper masculinity, alcohol and drug abuse, and also sexually coercive fantasies, are some indicated risk factors, as summarized by Martin et al. (2007).

Physical violence and injury according to the assailant-victim relationship.

Associations between the assailant-victim relationship and physical violence have been detected both in population studies and studies based on data from sexual assault centres (SAC). An American interview survey of a representative community sample of women who had experienced rape as adults, found that offender aggression, and intimacy between assailant and victim formed a curvilinear relationship. Strangers and intimate partners were found to use higher levels of violence, compared to acquaintances (Ullman & Siegel, 1993). The same curvilinear relationship was also found in a Canadian study of female patients presenting to a SAC (Stermac, Du Mont, & Dunn, 1998). Sexual violence committed by husbands or boyfriends frequently involved physical violence and physical trauma similar to that committed by strangers (Stermac et al., 1998). A Norwegian study based on SAC data in Trondheim, also revealed a similar pattern (Haugen et al., 2005).

Contradicting this finding is an American mail survey examining recovery after sexual assault experiences. The researchers found stranger assailants to use more physical violence in connection with rape compared to acquaintances, partners and relatives. (Ullman, Filipas, Townsend, & Starzynski, 2006). Strangers being the most prone to use physical violence was also true for victims attending a SAC in Canada (Stermac et al., 1995). However, this study did not discriminate the known-partner category, masking possible differences with regards to degree of familiarity between the assailant and victim (Stermac et al., 1995). Lack of discrimination with regards to known assailant-victim relationships was also true for another American study revealing that stranger assailants used more physical means of coercion and more often used a weapon, compared to known assailants (Jones et al., 2004).

Some studies have found intimate partners to be the most violent assailants. A Canadian study found boyfriends and spouses to be more violent and cause their victims more severe injuries compared to strangers and other known assailants (Stermac, Del Bove, Brazeau, & Bainbridge, 2006). Compared to strangers, boyfriends and spouses were nearly three times as likely to execute physical violence (Stermac et al., 2006). A similar trend was also detected in a Swedish study of patients attending an emergency clinic for raped women (Möller, Bäckström, Söndergaard, & Helström, 2012). A higher incidence of physical violence was found when the assailant was an intimate partner compared to a stranger. Furthermore, multiple forms of violence, and reports of kicks and attempts of strangulation

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more often characterized the violence committed by intimate partners compared to strangers (Möller et al., 2012) . A Canadian study of victims attending a SAC, compared sexual assaults committed by spouses, boyfriends and acquaintances. Results revealed that boyfriend assailants executed the most severe forms of coercion, although the use of physical violence was similar between boyfriends and spouses (Stermac, Del Bove, & Addison, 2001).

According to these empirical findings, both population data and data from SAC's have yielded mixed results when it comes to the association between physical violence and assailant-victim relationship. Still, a great amount of studies find partner assailants to be just as violent, or more so, than strangers and other assailants.

With regards to victim injury, some studies have found more severe injury and physical trauma among victims of intimate partner assailants, compared to other assailant-victim relationships. Möller et al. (2012) found a greater frequency of bodily injury when the assailant was an intimate partner compared to other assailant-victim relationships, although the results were reported to not be significant after adjusted analyses (Möller et al., 2012) . Stermac et al. (1998) found that sexual assaults by intimate partners and strangers were similar in that they caused significant physical trauma. An American study of female victims attending an emergency room for sexual assault, found that victims sustained greater body injury when the assailant was an intimate partner compared to a stranger (Logan et al., 2007). In addition, bodily injury was more common when the assailant was an intimate partner, compared to acquaintance (Logan et al., 2007). On the contrary, an American study of clients who attended an urban hospital emergency department, found stranger rapes to be associated with more bodily injury, compared to friends/acquaintances and intimate partners/spouses. Serious injuries were reported to be rare (Sugar, Fine, & Eckert, 2004). Jones et al. (2004) found stranger rape to result in a higher frequency of bodily injuries compared to rape by known assailants (Jones et al., 2004).

Concerning anogenital injury, injuries to the anal or genital areas, Möller et al. (2012) found no significant associations with assailant-victim relationship, although victims of intimate partners and acquaintances more often presented with anal injuries. An examination of SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examination) data from the USA, on the other hand, found that genital injuries was more common when the victim was sexually assaulted by an intimate partner (Murphy, Potter, Pierce-Weeks, Stapleton, & Wiesen-Martin, 2011). However, intimate partners and non-strangers (work colleagues, neighbours and classmates) were recorded with a similar percentage of genital trauma, 29% and 25% respectively. The

percentages for strangers and unknown relationships were 15% and 19%, respectively (Murphy et al., 2011).

Alcohol use among assailants of rape. Alcohol consumption among assailants of rape is an often-discussed issue related to sexual violence (Abbey, 2011). Studies have found that assailant alcohol consumption is, on average, reported in connection with half of all rapes (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan, 2004). An American prevalence study on the lifetime experiences of sexual violence in the state of Texas, found that 46% of assailants were reported to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or both during the sexual assault (Busch, Bell, Dinitto, & Neff, 2003). Alcohol consumption may potentiate the perpetration of sexual assaults, even though alcohol by itself does not explain the committing of rape (Abbey, 2011; Jewkes, 2012). Several studies have found that alcohol may enhance the risk of sexual violence, but this only seem to be true for individuals who are already predisposed to act aggressively (Abbey, 2011; Abbey, Wegner, Woerner, Pegram, & Pierce, 2014). Abbey et al. (2011) propose that alcohol may be an indicator of when a person will act aggressively, as opposed to alcohol being a determinant of who will become sexually aggressive (Abbey, 2011). Abbey et al. (2014) furthermore hypothesize, on the basis of their review on alcohol's role in the perpetration of sexual aggression, that alcohol may enhance the effect of the majority of risk factors related to sexual aggression (Abbey et al., 2014).

With regards to alcohol consumption according to the assailant-victim relationship, a study of a community sample of single men from a large metropolitan area in the USA, found assailants of rape who were in a casual relationship to drink more heavily and more frequently, compared to assailants in committed relationships (Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Similarly, Stermac et al. (2001) found alcohol use to be more common among acquaintance assailants, compared to intimate partner assailants.

Police Reported Rapes in Norway

Statistics provided by the National Bureau of Crime Investigation (Kripos) show an increase of nearly 12% in the total number of rapes reported to the police, in the time frame of 2008 – 2012 (Kripos, 2013). This does not necessarily signify an increase in rape perpetration but could indicate an increased tendency of police reporting (Kripos, 2013).

Despite an increase in police reported rapes, the attrition of rape cases in the legal system is striking. Only a fraction of the suspected assailants of rape are charged in Norwegian courts, hence, the risk of being convicted of rape in Norway is small (Kruse et al., 2013). A Norwegian study exploring charge filing in the years 1997–2003, found that the majority of rapes reported to the police did not lead to charge filing (Hagemann, Stene,

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Myhre, Ormstad, & Schei, 2011). Similar findings are true for the whole of Norway, see figure 1 below.

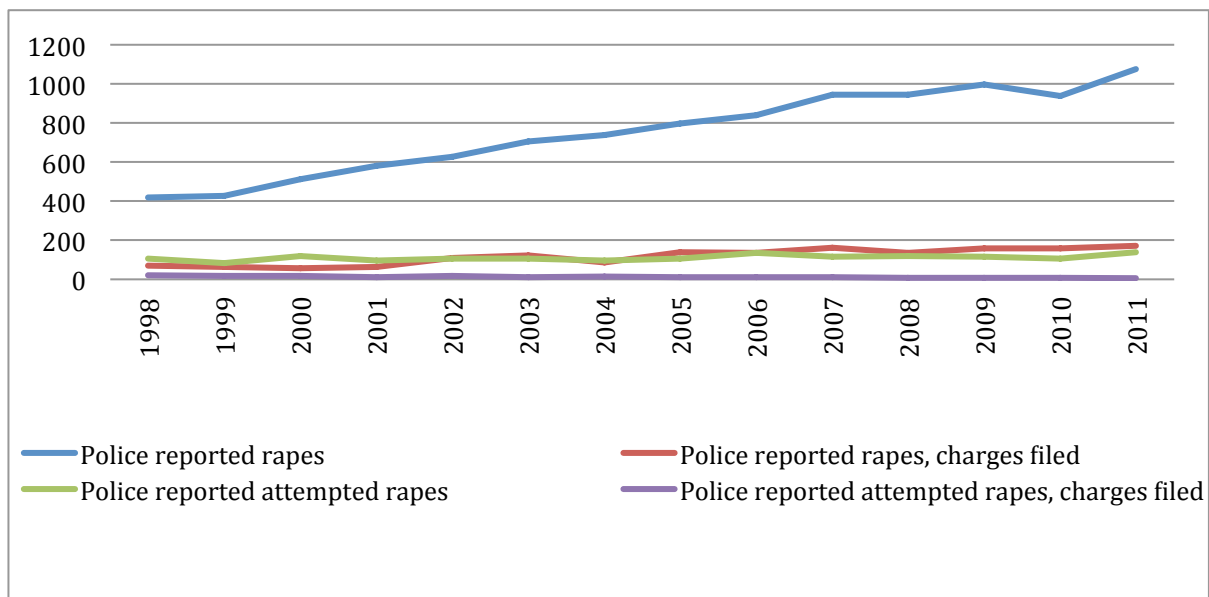


Figure 1: Annual proportion of reported rapes/attempted rapes where charges are filed, Norway 1998 – 2011. Source: Statistics Norway, retrieved from Hagemann (2014, p. 7).

As illustrated in Figure 1, while the number of police reported rapes increase, so does the gap between police reported rapes, and number of cases that end with charge filing (Hagemann, 2014).

Rape according to the norwegian general civil penal code. According to the Norwegian General Civil Penal Code (Straffeloven, 1902, §192), a person committing rape is

any person who engages in sexual activity by means of violence or threats, or engages in sexual activity with any person who is unconscious or incapable for any other reason of resisting the act, or by means of violence or threats compels any person to engage in sexual activity with another person, or to carry out similar acts with himself or herself (The norwegian general civil penal code, 2006, Chapter 19, Section 192).

Until relatively recently, rape in marriage was not regarded a crime according to the Norwegian legal system. The first conviction of marital rape in Norway, happened in 1974 (NOU 2003:31). Although marital rape has since been recognised as a criminal act, CEDAW raise concern on the finding that some Norwegian women do not seem to be aware that rape in marriage is in fact punishable by law (Barne- likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2012).

Police reported rapes and the assailant-victim relationship. Some studies have found associations between the assailant-victim relationship and charge filing. An American case control study reviewed the records of female patients attending a hospital SAC (Wiley, Sugar, Fine, & Eckert, 2003). Only 15% of police reported cases led to charge filing. Victims of partner or spouse assailants were significantly more likely to have a legal resolution of the case than victims of other assailant-victim relationships. Similar results were found in a Canadian study (Du Mont & Myhr, 2000). Among women attending an urban SAC, 66% police reported the case. Nearly half of the cases resulted in charge filing, whereby 17% of the total number of reported cases resulted in conviction. In cases where the assailant was a partner or an acquaintance, a higher proportion of the cases resulted in charge filing (Du Mont & Myhr, 2000). In contrast, being an intimate partner assailant was associated with dismissal in a Norwegian study (Hagemann et al., 2011). However, here the reported rape cases classified as unfounded and those with unidentified suspects had been excluded from the comparisons (Hagemann et al., 2011).

Study Aim

Sexual violence is a serious health concern, impacting fundamental human rights, such as the right for physical and mental well-being, gender-equality and judicial safety (Amnesty International, 2008). It is furthermore a phenomenon expected to vary according to different cultures (Fulu, Jewkes, Roselli, & Garcia-Moreno, 2013). Knowledge on characteristics of assailants of rape in a Norwegian context could be considered limited (Kruse et al., 2013). To broaden the understanding of assailants of rape, there is a need for evidence-based knowledge. Only then, preventative measures and policy makers can be guided (Halvorsen, 2011).

The aim of this study is to explore assailant characteristics among cases of police reported rapes and attempted rapes in the Sør-Trøndelag Police District throughout the period 1997–2010. This study will specifically compare different characteristics of the assailant, the assault, the victim, medical findings and legal outcome between reported rapes/attempted rapes in intimate partner and non-partner relationships. The main research question is:

Do reported assailants of rape/attempted rape in intimate partner relationships differ from assailants of rape/attempted rape in non-partner relationships?

Material and Methods

With regards to material and methods, the following are based on previous descriptions of the original study of which the present data material is a part of (Hagemann, 2014).

Design and Sample

This is a retrospective descriptive study, based on reported rapes and attempted rapes in the Sør-Trøndelag Police District (STDP) throughout the period 1997– 2010. According to a previous study, a total of N=697 cases of rape and attempted rape were reported during this time period (Hagemann, 2014). Cases were excluded according to the flowchart below, leaving a total of N=558 cases included in the study.

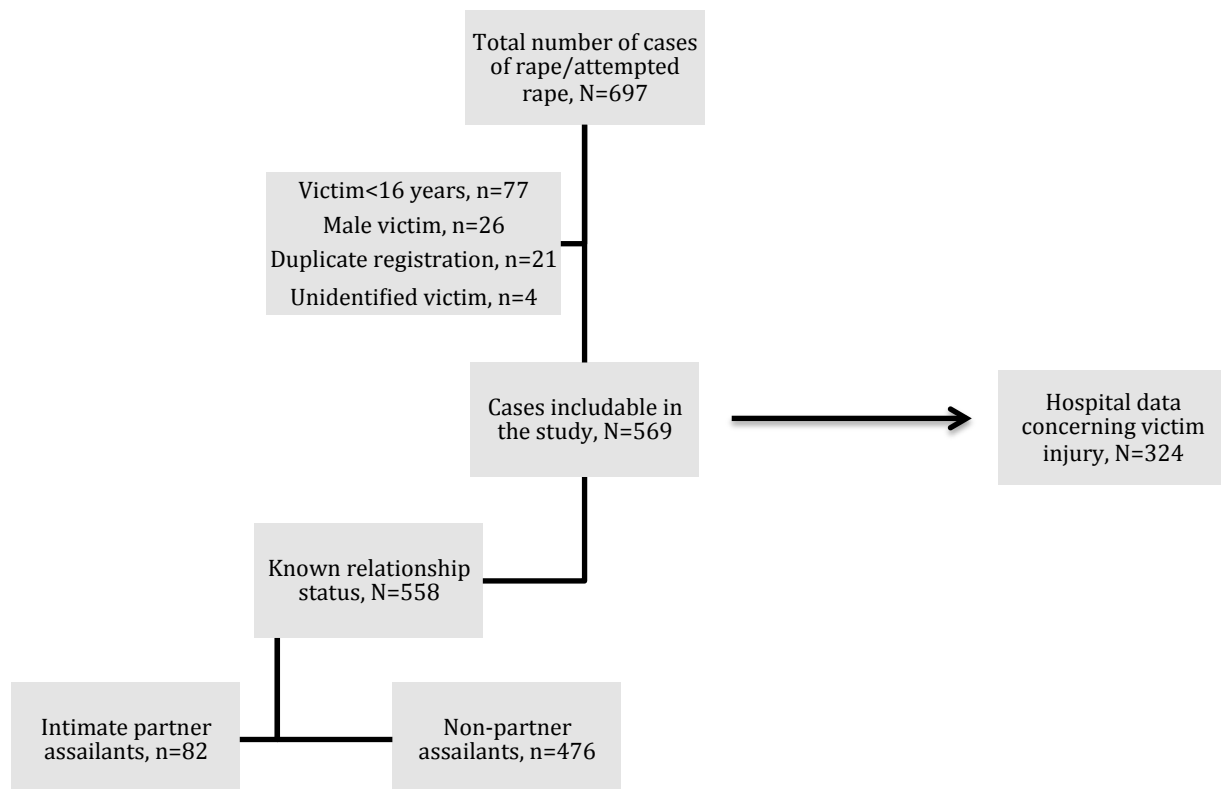


Figure 2 Flow chart of included and excluded cases of rape and attempted rape for the period 1997 – 2010, Sør-Trøndelag Police District. See text for details.

Victims under the age of 16 years (n=77), and male victims (n=26) were excluded. Furthermore, there were n=21 duplicate registrations and n=4 unidentified victims, leaving N=569 eligible for the study.

This study calls for a categorization based on assailant-victim relationship. Of the total population of N=569 cases, relationship status was known for n=558 cases. Among these, n=82 were categorized as intimate partner relationships and n=476 as non-partner relationships. Partner relationships were defined as partners, ex-partners or current and previous boyfriends. The non-partner relationship category comprised friends/acquaintances/family known for >24 hours (n=224), casual acquaintances known for <24 hours (n=148), and strangers (n=104).

Data regarding police reported rapes and attempted rapes were merged with hospital data from the St. Olav's Sexual Assault Centre (SAC). This also allowed for analysis of victim injury, with a total of N=324 cases eligible for study (see Hagemann, 2014). For some variables, data from the hospital records were used if information was missing in the police files. The police files, however, were regarded gold standard in case of discrepancy.

Variables

Assailant characteristics. In cases of multiple assailants, information regarding the presumably most active assailant was used. Variables examining assailant sociodemographic characteristics include gender, age and country of origin. Age was either estimated from birth date, or if birth date is not known, reported by victim. In cases of both estimated assailant age and victim-reported assailant age, age estimated from birth date was regarded gold standard in the frequency analysis. Country of origin was categorized as Norwegian/Western or Non-Western. Victim report of the suspect's intake of alcohol or other drugs prior to the assault was dichotomized. Whether or not the reported assailant had a prior registration in the STPD police files as a previous suspect in cases of violence/sexual crime, or whether the suspect had previously been convicted for such crimes, were dichotomized. Whether the suspect admitted sexual contact with the victim, or rape/attempted rape was also dichotomized.

Assault characteristics. The location of the assault was categorized as either public or private. A private venue included the woman's, assailant's or other person's residence. A public venue included any public, indoor or outdoor location, or a vehicle.

The type of sexual assault was defined as either penetrative or not. Penetration included penetration by penis (vaginal, anal, oral) or a foreign object (vaginal, anal). The use of a finger to penetrate, as well as forced masturbation, attempted penetration or touching

up/fondling, were defined as non-penetrative, although do still constitute rape according to the General Civil Penal Code (NOU 2008:4).

Physical violence was categorized as "none/verbal threats", "light/moderate" or "severe". Light or moderate physical violence included holding, tearing of clothes, slapping, kicking, tying up, biting, sucking and stinging with needle. Severe physical violence included the presence of weapon and/or attempted strangulation, and punching/kicking towards head, fracture, and internal injuries.

Victim characteristics. All subjects in the present study are females by inclusion criteria. The variable of vulnerability factors was defined to include physical or mental disability, prior or current mental health symptoms, prior or current drug abuse, and prior self-reported sexual/physical assaults. This variable was organized dichotomously. Self-reported intake of alcohol was dichotomized.

Victim injury. With regards to victim injury, a sub-analysis of records from the St. Olav's University Hospital SAC was performed, leaving N=324 eligible for analysis. The victim's bodily injury was categorized as either "none", "minor" (erythema, swelling, bruises, abrasions, lacerations, suction marks) or "moderate/serious". "Moderate/serious" injuries included moderate injuries (bruising of head/neck expected to result in significant headache, lacerations requiring suture/dressing and bite/injection marks) and serious injuries (evidence of attempted strangulation, head injury with concussion and stab/incision wounds). Anogenital injuries were categorized as either present or not. If such injuries were present, these included tears, abrasions and bruises. Redness and/or swelling were not regarded as injury, due to its lack of specificity (Astrup, Ravn, Lauritsen, & Thomsen, 2012).

Legal data. The reported incident was categorized dichotomously as either "attempted rape" or "rape". In addition, the latter category comprised the following crime denominations; "indecent assault on an unconscious subject", "indecent assault by means of threats/devious behaviour" and "indecent conduct/exploitation facilitated by superior position". For the period 2003–2010, "negligent rape" was also included, due to revisions in the Norwegian Penal Code. Whether the suspect had been arrested was dichotomized, and only comprised data from the time period, 2003–2010. Whether the suspect or witnesses had been interrogated was dichotomized.

Legal outcome was categorized as the following; "charges filed", "charges not filed", "no suspect identified" and "other". "Charges filed" included cases that proceeded into a court of law. "Charges not filed" comprised cases dismissed because of insufficient evidence, cases dismissed because they were time-barred and cases dismissed because the assailant was

not legally responsible for the crime. The “other” category included withdrawn cases, cases where the police concluded that no crime had been committed, cases treated outside criminal proceedings, cases dropped because the suspect was diseased, cases let at rest and cases sent for investigation abroad. The three latter categories only applied for the 2003–2010 material.

Data Collection and Storage

Information had already been collected from the police files. For the period 1997 – 2003, information was manually collected from the police files, by a paper-based registration form. However, for the period 2003 – 2010, a web-based data collection system (case report form, CRF) developed and administered by the Unit of Applied Clinical Research at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology was used. Through this system, all information was encrypted and de-identified. The original files are stored in a separate research file area provided by the Data Protection Official¹ at the St. Olavs Hospital.

Statistical Methods

For all analyses, descriptive characteristics are described by frequencies and proportions for the categorical variables, and by mean, median and ranges for the continuous variables. For all the comparisons of the categorical variables, Pearson’s χ^2 test, Fisher’s Exact test and Pearson’s χ^2 test of heterogeneity was used as appropriate. Missing data was not included when statistical tests were performed. Statistical significance was assumed when $p < 0.05$. Data analyses were performed with SPSS for Mac, version 21.0. Cases with missing information are not reported in the tables.

Study Approval

The Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REK-Midt)² approved this study. As this study called for approval of a new student researcher gaining access to police data, an application was also sent to the Director General of Public Prosecutions³. The application was approved through the Advisory Board on Secrecy and Research⁴.

Results

Unless otherwise specified all categorical variables were analysed by Person’s Chi Square Test, using 2x2 tables. In cases where the expected count in more than 20% of the cells was less than five, the p -value of Fischer’s Exact Test is reported.

¹ Personvernombud

² Regionale komiteer for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskning

³ Riksadvokaten

⁴ Rådet for taushetsplikt og forskning

Assailant Characteristics

Number of assailants was known in N=553 cases. In approximately 90% of the cases (n=496) there was one reported assailant. In just over eight per cent of the cases (n=46) there were two assailants, and in just over one per cent of the cases (n=8) there were three assailants. Less than one per cent of the cases (n=3) involved four assailants. All but two reported rapes/attempted rapes involving multiple perpetrators were connected to the non-partner assailant category. With regards to gender (N=552), two assailants were women. The age of intimate partner assailants (n=80) ranged from 17 to 57 years. The mean age was 32,8 years (SD=10.1) and median age was 33 years. The age of non-partner assailants (n=432) ranged from 16 to 84 years. The mean age was 30.2 years (SD=10.6) and median age was 27 years. See Table 1 for further details on the following.

The majority of reported assailants were Norwegian or Western in origin, with no significant association to the assailant-victim relationship. There was a significant association between alcohol consumption and the assailant-victim relationship. Reported intimate partner assailants were less often recorded to be alcohol intoxicated in connection with the assault, compared to non-partner assailants, approximately 48% vs. 80%. Analysis revealed no significant association between the use of drugs other than alcohol, and the assailant-victim relationship. There was furthermore no significant association between the assailant-victim relationship, and whether the assailant had previously been a suspect of, or convicted of, violence or sexual crimes. With regards to these two variables, the distribution of missing cases was not similar according to the assailant-victim relationship. Missing data related to the reported intimate partner assailants was nearly 27% and 26%, compared to nearly 47% and 43% among non-partner assailants, respective to the two, above-mentioned variables.

Irrespective of the assailant-victim relationship, there was a discrepancy between the number of reported assailants who admitted sexual contact with the victim, and the number of assailants who admitted rape, approximately 66% vs. 2%, respectively. There was no significant association between these two variables and the assailant-victim relationship.

Table 1

Assailant Characteristics - Analysis of Categorical Variables, Comparisons Between Partner and Non-Partner Assailants

Variable	Total N=558(%)	Partner n=82(%)	Non- Partner n=476(%)	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Country of Origin (n=509)					
Norwegian/Western	373(73.3)	59(75.6)	314(72.9)	0.26	.609 ^a
Non-Western	136(26.7)	19(24.4)	117(27.1)		
Alcohol consumption (n=364)					
Yes	271(74.5)	28(47.5)	243(79.7)	26.97	<.001 ^a
No	93(25.5)	31(52.5)	62(20.3)		
Drugs (n=233)					
Yes	31(13.3)	6(14.0)	25(13.2)	0.02	.890 ^a
No	202(86.7)	37(86.0)	165(86.8)		
Previous suspect (n=314)					
Yes, violence/sexual crime	101(32.2)	22(36.7)	79(31.1)	0.69	.407 ^a
No	213(67.8)	38(63.3)	175(68.9)		
Prior conviction (n=333)					
Yes, violence/sexual crime	37(11.1)	8(13.1)	29(10.7)	0.30	.582 ^a
No	296(88.9)	53(86.9)	243(89.3)		
Admit sexual contact (n=373)					
Yes	246(66.0)	43(72.9)	203(64.6)	1.5	.221 ^a
No	127(34.0)	16(27.1)	111(35.4)		
Admit rape (n=377)					
Yes	9(2.4)	2(3.2)	7(2.2)	0.20	.649 ^b
No	368(97.6)	61(96.8)	307(97.8)		

Note ^aChi-Square, *df*=1, ^bFischer's Exact Test, *df*=1

Assault Characteristics

For further details with regards to assault characteristics, follow Table 2. The majority of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes were found to have taken place in a private venue, a significantly higher frequency compared to non-partner rapes/attempted rapes.

Penetration was significantly more common when the reported assailant was an intimate partner, compared to a non-partner. There was furthermore a significant association between physical violence and the assailant-victim relationship. This variable was analysed by Pearson's χ^2 test of heterogeneity in a 3x2 table. Severe physical violence was executed by nearly a quarter of reported intimate partner assailants, compared to one tenth of non-partner assailants.

Table 2

Assault Characteristics - Analysis of Categorical Variables, Comparisons Between Partner and Non-Partner Assailants

Variable	Total N=558(%)	Partner n=82(%)	Non- Partner n=476(%)	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Location (n=548)					
Private venue	367(67.0)	75(94.9)	292(62.3)	32.64	<.001 ^a
Public venue	181(33.0)	4(5.1)	177(37.7)		
Type (n=492)					
Penetration	373(75.8)	71(92.2)	302(72.8)	13.38	<.001 ^a
No penetration	119(24.2)	6(7.8)	113(27.2)		
Physical violence (n=489)					
None/verbal threats	87(17.8)	9(11.3)	78(19.1)	11.14	.004 ^b
Light/moderate	343(70.1)	53(66.3)	290(70.9)		
Severe	59(12.1)	18(22.5)	41(10.0)		

Note ^aChi-Square, *df*=1, ^bChi-Square, *df*=2

Victim Characteristics

All victims in the present study were female by inclusion criteria. The age of victims of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes (n=82) ranged from 16 to 62 years. Mean age was 29,3 years (SD=10,2), and median age was 27,7 years. The age of victims of reported non-partner rapes/attempted rapes (n=476) ranged from 16 to 72 years. Mean age was 24,5 years (SD=9,5) and median age was 20,9 years.

See table 3 for further details on the following variables. Victims of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes were more often recorded to be vulnerable compared to victims of non-partner rapes/attempted rapes, although not a significant association. More victims of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes reported no alcohol consumption compared to victims of non-partner rapes/attempted rapes.

The distribution of missing cases according to the victim variables was not similar with regards to the assailant-victim relationship. There was a considerable amount of missing information among victims of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes compared to victims of non-partner rapes/attempted rapes, approximately 54% compared to 24%. Concerning alcohol consumption, there were nearly 70% missing cases among victims of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes, compared to approximately 34% among victims of non-partner rapes/attempted rapes.

Table 3

Victim Characteristics - Analysis of Categorical Variables, Comparisons Between Partner and Non-Partner Assailants

Variable	Total N=558(%)	Partner n=82(%)	Non- Partner n=476(%)	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Vulnerability (n=402)					
Yes	222(55.2)	24(63.2)	198(54.4)	1.07	.301 ^a
No	180(44.8)	14(36.8)	166(45.6)		
Alcohol Consumption (n=338)					
Yes	283(83.7)	18(72.0)	265(84.7)	2.73	.153 ^b
No	55(16.3)	7(28.0)	48(15.3)		

Note ^aChi-Square, *df*=1, ^bFischer's Exact, *df*=1

Victim Injury

See table 4 for further details on the following variables. A sub-study of victims with records from the St. Olav's Hospital SAC was performed examining victim injury. Among the total group of N=324 cases eligible for analysis concerning victim injury, assailant-victim relationship was known in n=318 cases. Approximately one third of women victimized by an intimate partner, had records of moderate or severe bodily injury. Anogenital injury was reported in approximately one fifth of the total population. Victims of reported rape/attempted rape by an intimate partner presented with anogenital injuries less often than victims of rape/attempted rape by a non-partner, although this was not a significant finding.

With regards to victim injury, information was available for approximately 28% of the total group of reported cases of intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes (N=82), and approximately 62% of the total group of reported non-partner rapes/attempted rapes (N=476).

Table 4

Victim Injury - Analysis of Categorical Variables, Comparisons Between Partner and Non-Partner Assailants

Variable	Total N=318(%)	Partner n=23(%)	Non- Partner n=295(%)	χ^2	p
Bodily injuries (n=293) ^a					
None	114(38.9)	5(22.7)	109(40.2)		
Light	153(52.2)	10(45.5)	143(52.8)		
Moderate/serious	26(8.9)	7(31.8)	19(7.0)		
Anogenital Injuries (n=291)					
Yes	67(23.0)	2(9.1)	65(24.2)	2.61	.106 ^b
No	224(77.0)	20(90.9)	204(75.8)		

Note^a Only frequencies and percentages are depicted due to non-valid chi-square test,

^b Chi-Square, df=1

Legal Data

Additional details related to the following variables are presented in Table 5. Rape was the incident most often reported to the police. There was a lower frequency of reported

attempted rapes among intimate partner assailants compared to non-partner assailants. With regards to the arrest of a suspect, information had only been documented for the period 2003–2010. Nearly one fifth of the reported assailants of intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes were arrested, while approximately one third of the reported assailants of non-partner rapes/attempted rapes were arrested.

Interrogation of the suspect was performed in just over 75% of the cases. More than 84% of the reported partner assailants were brought in for interrogation, while nearly 74% of the reported non-partner assailants were interrogated. Interrogation of witnesses other than victim and/or forensic experts was performed in just over 70% of the cases. Interrogation of witnesses was significantly less often performed when the reported assailant was an intimate partner compared to a non-partner.

Charge filing was analysed using Pearson's χ^2 test of heterogeneity, in a 4x2 table. There was a significant association between charge filing and the assailant-victim relationship. The overall rate of charge filing was low. There were fewer charges filed among reported intimate partner assailants compared to non-partner assailants. A higher frequency of the cases where the reported assailant was an intimate partner ended in "charges not filed", compared to cases where the reported assailant was a non-partner. Among cases included in "charges not filed", n=306 cases were dismissed because of insufficient evidence, n=7 cases were dismissed because they were time-barred, and n=1 case was dismissed because the assailant was not legally responsible. The "other" category included n=58 cases where the police concluded that no crime had been committed, n=5 cases that was withdrawn, n=4 cases treated outside criminal proceedings, n=4 cases where the suspect was diseased, n=1 case that had been let at rest, and finally, n=1 case that was sent for investigation abroad.

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Table 5

Legal Data - Analysis of Categorical Variables, Comparisons Between Partner and Non-Partner Assaultants

Variable	Total N=558(%)	Partner n=82(%)	Non- Partner n=476(%)	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Incident reported (n=558)					
Attempted rape	67(12.0)	3(3.7)	64(13.4)	6.34	.012 ^a
Rape	491(88.0)	79(96.3)	412(86.6)		
Arrest of suspect, 03-10 (n=275)					
Yes	78(28.4)	10(17.9)	68(31.1)	3.82	.051 ^a
No	197(71.6)	46(82.1)	151(68.9)		
Interrogation suspect (n=511)					
Yes	384(75.1)	65(84.4)	319(73.5)	4.17	.041 ^a
No	127(24.9)	12(15.6)	115(26.5)		
Interrogation witnesses (n=551)					
Yes	386(70.1)	40(50.0)	346(73.5)	17.94	<.001 ^a
No	165(29.9)	40(50.0)	125(26.5)		
Charge filing (n=557)					
Charges filed	61(11.0)	7(8.6)	54(11.3)	25.65	<.001 ^b
Charges not filed	314(56.4)	65(80.2)	249(52.3)		
No suspect identified	109(19.6)	2(2.5)	107(22.5)		
Other reason	73(13.1)	7(8.6)	66(13.9)		

Note ^aChi-Square, *df*=1, ^bChi-Square, *df*=3

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore characteristics of reported assailants of rapes/attempted rapes, and furthermore explore whether there were any differences between assailants of reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes and assailants of reported non-partner rapes/attempted rapes. Some differences were discovered, and key points are presented in the following.

Firstly, results indicate that the assailant-victim relationship is associated with physical violence. Severe physical violence is more common when the reported assailant is an intimate partner, compared to a non-partner. Secondly, there are associations between the assailant-victim relationship and reported assailant alcohol consumption. Assailant alcohol consumption is significantly less frequent when the reported assailant is an intimate partner, compared to a non-partner. Still, almost half of intimate partner assailants are reported to have consumed alcohol. Finally, few of the reported cases in this study proceeded to a court of law. Higher frequencies of cases are dismissed because of insufficient evidence when the reported assailant is an intimate partner, compared to non-partner.

Physical Violence and Injury

A finding from the present study is that severe forms of violence, such as the use of a weapon, and/or attempted strangulation, are more common among reported assailants of intimate partner rape/attempted rape, compared to reported assailants of non-partner rape/attempted rape. The finding that rapes by intimate partner assailants are associated with severe coercion and physical violence has been detected in several studies, both in population data (Ullman & Siegel, 1993) and in data gathered from SACs (Haugen et al., 2005; Möller et al., 2012; Stermac et al., 2001; Stermac et al., 2006; Stermac et al., 1998). For instance Möller et al. (2012) found that intimate partners more often exposed their victims to multiple forms of physical violence during the rape, compared to strangers and acquaintances, 49% compared to 29% and 14%, respectively. Some studies have on the contrary, not found intimate partner assailants to be more violent compared to other assailant-victim relationships. For instance, Ullman et al. (2006) found strangers to use more physical violence compared to acquaintances and intimate partners. Certain factors may, however, complicate the process of comparing results across studies.

Different means of operationalizing physical violence are evident across empirical studies. As an example, Ullman et al. (1993) code the existence of force as physical coercion, either in isolation or in combination with verbal pressure, in addition to the use of a weapon, and physical harm. Stermac et al. (2001, 2006) on the other hand, rank coercion on the basis

of agreement on the severity of different means of coercion, between clinical specialists. Physical violence is ranked the most severe form of coercion executed by the assailant. Möller et al. (2012) define physical violence by different acts ranging from the holding of the victim, to hits, kicks, attempts of strangulation, or other means of physically violent coercion.

Furthermore the definition and grouping of assailant-victim relationships among studies also differ. For instance, some studies have not examined intimate partner sexual violence in isolation, e.g. Stermac et al. (1995) and Jones et al. (2004). Others have made further distinctions in the intimate partner assailant group. Stermac et al. (2001), for instance, examine potential differences between boyfriends, spouses, and acquaintances. Furthermore, as sexual violence is expected to vary between different cultures (Fulu et al., 2013), research from the USA and Canada, may not be representative related to what might be found in Scandinavia. In that respect, the results derived from Möller et al. (2012) may be more representative for comparisons. Also physical violence as described and defined by Möller et al. (2012) seem to fit the present study description of the various acts of physical violence comprised in the different categories, fairly well. Despite difficulties with regards to comparing results, the use of severe physical violence by reported intimate partner assailants is evident in the present study sample. The study results do mirror previous research, which find intimate partner assailants to be physically violent, often more so than other assailants.

Results from the current study furthermore show that reported intimate partner assailants cause moderate or serious bodily injury in connection with approximately one-third of the reported intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes eligible for exploration. The finding of moderate and serious bodily injury among victims of reported intimate partner rape is in line with some previous research (Logan et al., 2007; Stermac et al., 1998). Möller et al. (2012) also found bodily injury to be more frequently present when an intimate partner had sexually assaulted the victim, although results were not significant after adjusted analyses. With regards to anogenital injuries, the present study does not reveal any association to the assailant-victim relationship. Also, anogenital injuries are reported with a lower frequency in general compared to percentages of reported bodily injury. This is similar to the findings of Möller et al. (2012), but not to the findings by Murphy et al. (2011), where anogenital injury was associated to the assailant being an intimate partner. As mentioned in the results section, only a small amount of the total sample of victims of reported intimate partner rapes and attempted rapes, had records on injury (see table 4). This may bias the results.

The association between the assailant-victim relationship and physical violence could be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, however, the motivation behind the alleged assailants

acts cannot be explored by the present study findings. Still, as mentioned previously, there seem to be a considerable overlap between intimate partner violence and the occurrence of sexual violence within intimate partner relationships. High rates of women are both physically and sexually assaulted by the same partner (Bergen & Bukovec, 2006; McFarlane et al., 2005). It could be plausible to hypothesise that assailants of rape reported to the police also exhibit other forms of violence in the relationship. Non-sexual violence is shown to be strongly correlated to sexual violence in marriage (Martin et al., 2007). One interpretation could be that the use of severe physical violence reflect more antisocial tendencies among assailants who use these tactics, when taken into consideration how the society usually condemn such extreme behaviour (Abbey & Jacques-Tiura, 2011). It might be that some of the reported assailants of intimate partner rape are in fact using more violence than what is necessary to commit their alleged acts of rape (Kripos, 2014). From a psychological perspective this may raise questions related to the possible underlying motivations for these acts. Central themes in this respect could be whether rape is motivated by a sexual desire or whether rape is motivated by power and control, or possibly both (Malamuth et al., 1996). The use of severe physical violence, could indicate that rape is one of several tactics used by an intimate terrorist to execute power and control over his partner (Johnson, 2008). Still, other forms of coercion, such as verbal tactics, are much more commonly executed in association to rape (Abbey, 2011). This also applies for marital rape (Martin et al., 2007). The Norwegian specialist in clinical psychology, Per Isdal define sexual violence as “any act directed towards another person’s sexuality, whereby the perpetrator through pain, injury, terror or humiliation, make that person do something, or stop doing something against that person’s will“ (Isdal, 2000, p.45, my translation). Also Miller (2014) argue that rape should be understood as a violent act that is selected with the intention to hurt another individual (Miller, 2014). If assailants of intimate partner rape are in fact using more violence than what is necessary if sex were to be the primary motivation, it could be hypothesised that these acts also reflect a significant desire for power and control, e.g. central themes proposed by the confluence model (Malamuth et al., 1996). Still, this only remains speculations with regards to the present study findings.

Importantly, the severity of physical violence does not necessarily define the severity of rape. There is limited knowledge with regards to how severity of rape should be conceptualized, and how different experiences with sexual violence relate to potential consequences for the victims (Logan et al., 2013). However, a recent Swedish longitudinal study on risk factors related to the development of PTSD did find that a combination of

victim vulnerability (such as co-morbid depression and a history of several traumas), and factors related to the assault (such as being assaulted by multiple perpetrators, being injured, and being exposed to several sexually violent acts) constituted risk factors for the development of PTSD (Möller et al., 2014). Still, rape should nonetheless be regarded a severe violation of human integrity with serious potential consequences for the victims (Amnesty International, 2008), regardless of assault characteristics.

Assailant Alcohol Consumption

According to the results of this study, reported alcohol consumption was documented in a lower frequency among assailants of reported intimate partner rape/attempted rape, compared to assailants of reported non-partner rape/attempted rape. This is in line with some previous research (Stermac et al., 2001; Wegner et al., 2014). There are no national representative population studies concerning alcohol consumption related to assailants of rape in a Norwegian context (Kripos, 2013). According to police records from the Oslo Police District anno 2011, approximately 30% of reported rapes included assailants under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol consumption furthermore was reported to vary according to rape type. In this report, rape type was categorized on the basis of a combination of the assailant-victim relationship and the assault context. Related to rapes committed in a party context, nearly 54% of assailants were reported to be under the influence of alcohol. For rapes by partners, almost 19% of assailants were reported to be under the influence of alcohol. In “stranger”, “vulnerability” and “other” rape types, alcohol was reported in approximately 20%, 21% and 13% of the cases, respectively (Sætre & Grytdal, 2012). Abbey et al. (2011) call for more research on the role of alcohol consumption in steady and casual relationships (Abbey, 2011). Also in a Norwegian context, it could be argued necessary to conduct further research in this area.

Assailant Criminal History

In the present study, approximately one third of the total group of reported assailants of rape/attempted rape have previously been suspected of violent or sexual crimes. Just over one tenth of the total group of assailants have previously been convicted of such crimes (see Table 1). There was no significant association between these variables and the assailant-victim relationship. This somewhat contradicts Mjøs’ (2011) findings, although Mjøs studied convicted assailants of rape, not reported assailants. Mjøs (2011) found that convicted intimate partner assailants of rape had more varied records of criminal behaviour, both violent and non-violent, compared to other assailants. Intimate partner assailants also more often had records of repeated perpetration of sexual violence, compared to other assailants.

The majority of intimate partner assailants were convicted of other crimes in the same legal proceeding, mainly crimes of violence, but also crimes of threat (Mjøs, 2011).

In general, convicted rapists have been found to have a diverse criminal history, including both violent and non-violent crimes (Gannon et al., 2008; Harris et al., 2009; Simon, 2000). In addition, when assailants of rape reoffend, their offence is just as often a violent offence as it is a sexual offence, as cited by Miller (2014). Lisak and Miller (2002) conducted a study on 1882 university students, examining self-reported assailants of rape, not detected by the legal system. Among the respondents, 120 students had committed acts that met the legal definition of rape. Researchers found that the majority of these men had repeated their offence, nearly two thirds. The majority had also been otherwise violent in interpersonal relationships, including battering and child abuse, both sexual and physical (Lisak & Miller, 2002).

One explanation for the present study findings could be that the reported assailants of rape actually do not differ with regards to criminal behaviour, and that the results reflect characteristics of the group of reported assailants of rape and attempted rape as a whole. Still, the present variable only includes previous acts of violent or sexual crimes, and it could be that assailants differ with regards to non-violent crimes. In addition, there is a notable amount of missing information in the group of reported non-partner assailants, which may bias the results. Furthermore, if intimate partner assailants of rape were in fact more generally violent and more criminally diverse compared to other assailants, this would not necessarily apply to all reported assailants of intimate partner rape, as this may also constitute a heterogeneous group of assailants. As theorized by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) with regards to violent intimate partners, the rate and type of violence, for instance, will vary between types of intimate partner-assailants (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994).

In the present study sample there is a big discrepancy between the number of assailants who admit sexual contact with the victim, and assailants who admit rape (see Table 1). This finding is similar in both assailant-victim relationship types. Although only speculations, one possible explanation could be that assailant attitudes toward women, rape and violence in general, may influence the assailant's perception of the crime. With regards to cognitive factors related to rape, rape myths are hypothesised to be one of more factors that may be associated to the susceptibility to commit rape (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). It is not, however, possible to explore this based on the present study findings.

Legal Data

In the time frame studied, few cases preceded to a court of law, and a considerable amount of cases were dismissed because of insufficient evidence, especially so when the reported assailant was an intimate partner. Results derived from this study are in line with previous national findings in that the attrition in the Norwegian legal system is striking (Kruse et al., 2013). A question to be raised is how the tendency of remarkable attrition in the legal system, which is found for the whole of Norway (see Figure 1), may influence the society's understanding of rape. It has been argued that the low rate of prosecution of sexual offences, and also domestic violence, may reflect the level of social tolerance for such crimes, compared to other severe criminal acts (White et al., 2008).

With regards to the assailant-victim relationship, results from the present study contradict findings by Wiley et al. (2003), where more cases with an intimate partner assailant led to charge filing. The researchers wonder if the fact that intimate partner assailants are easier to locate than strangers, may be a contributing factor, along side the possibility that victims of intimate partner rape present with more injury, and report more violent assaults (Wiley et al., 2003). A Canadian study with similar findings as Wiley et al. (2003), argue that the higher rate of charge filing related to cases where the assailant is an intimate partner might be due to the fact that increased focus on the prevalence of rape in known assailant-victim relationships may have paid off, with the result of a reduction in typical rape myths related to the "real rape" and "real victim". Such rape myths would for instance include the belief that real rapes happen between strangers, in deserted, public places (Du Mont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003; Du Mont & Myhr, 2000).

Rape myths could be thought to influence both a woman's decision to report the rape to the police (Bitsch & Kruse, 2012, p. 236), and possibly the consequent attrition rates after the case has been police reported. The question of the possible existence of rape myths in the legal system has been raised in a Norwegian context (Hennum, 2004), but cannot be explored by the present study results. Findings from the Nordic countries indicate that women's rights for legal justice may be influenced by the "real rape" and the "real victim" stereotypes, gender stereotypes with regards to sexuality, and also biased expectations related to victim behaviour (Amnesty International, 2008). A Norwegian study examining rape myths among lay judges and professional judges in Norway, found a low acceptance of rape myths (Bendixen, Helle, Langbach, & Rasmussen, 2014). Furthermore, male professional judges had a lower acceptance of rape myths compared to a representative sample of reference. Still,

there were more gender related chauvinistic attitudes among male compared to female judges, which was in turn related to the acceptance of rape myths (Bendixen et al., 2014).

It might be that other factors, such as the difficulty of proving that a crime has been committed, present one of the bigger challenges related to crimes of rape (Kripos, 2013). Intimate partner rape probably often stand the risk of being one person's word against another's, and are therefore harder to prove (Kripos, 2013). With regards to interrogation of suspects, there is no significant difference according to the assailant-victim relationship in the present study, although a higher percentage of suspects of intimate partner rapes are in fact interrogated (see Table 5). Not surprisingly, there are fewer witnesses interrogated when the assailant is an intimate partner. This might complicate the process of building a case for prosecution (Du Mont & Myhr, 2000), and also complicate the process of proving that a crime has been committed (Kripos, 2013).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, this is a retrospective descriptive study, which implies that it is not possible to make any causal conclusions from the results. Furthermore, it is not possible to draw conclusions with regards to underlying motives among reported assailants of rape or attempted rape. Also, this data material was not collected for the intended use in research.

Secondly, this is a study of police reported, not convicted, assailants of rape/attempted rape, and it is not known if a crime has taken place for the vast majority of cases. This is an important point to keep in mind when considering the results. Furthermore, the results of this study can, at best, indicate tendencies associated to a certain population, in a particular geographical area, at a certain point in time.

Thirdly, the results of this study are not generalizable to the total population of assailants of rape. As is pointed out by Kruse et al. (2013), information collected and analysed from the legal system is not by far covering the complete picture of this phenomenon (Amnesty International, 2008; Kruse et al., 2013). A great number of rapes are never disclosed to either the police or the health care system (Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014). According to Thoresen and Hjemdal (2014) only 10% of rape-victimized women, and no men, sought medical care shortly after the assault. Approximately 10% of women and nearly 17% of men, themselves reported the rape to the police (Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014). Furthermore over 60% of women and 70% of men never disclosed information related to the event to health care personnel, and 29% of the women raped had never disclosed the rape to anyone (Thoresen & Hjemdal, 2014). It is furthermore likely that women who report rape in

intimate partner relationships, represents “the tip of the iceberg” as referenced by Logan, Walker and Cole (2013). As the experience of repeated rape is expected to be high among victims of intimate partner rape (Mahoney, 1999), it could be that the cases of intimate partner rapes that are reported to the police reflect situations where there has been repeated abuse, whereby the woman has reached a final point where she reports (Stermac et al., 2001). In addition, this study only focuses on female victims of reported rape/attempted rape. Future research should also focus on rape among male victims (Hagemann, 2014).

Fourthly, the information in this data set is mostly based on the victim and the assailant’s descriptions of the incident. Considering the fact that the reporting of a sexual assault could be characterized as a stressful situation, it might be that this could influence the victim’s description of both the situation and the assailant. In addition, in cases where the victim does not know the assailant, one would expect less elaborate descriptions of the various variables.

Finally, for some analyses, some of the outcome groups are rather small, which may result in type II statistical error. For further methodological limitations see Hagemann (2014).

Implications

Although data from the police and health care system are not generalizable to the general population of assailants of rape, it could be argued that the current study sample give valid data for this type of population. Furthermore, the study sample is rather large, and includes both police data, and supplemented information from St. Olav’s Hospital SAC. Some implications may be drawn from the results.

In this study physical violence (light, moderate or severe) was reported in connection with more than 80% of rapes in total. Nearly a quarter of reported partner assailants executed severe violence against their victims. This is only one of several means of coercion used by assailants of rape, but nonetheless highlight one of more aspects reflecting the severity of these crimes. It has been found that victims of intimate partner rape also stand a significant risk of re-victimization by their partner (Mahoney, 1999), and that victims of rape furthermore stand a significant risk of developing mental and physical health problems (Campbell, 2002; Möller et al., 2014). This underscore the necessity for an increased focus on how to prevent these crimes, and furthermore means for understanding what characterizes assailants of intimate partner rape in order to develop more tailored prevention programs (Wegner et al., 2014). Several studies show a notable overlap between sexual and physical violence in intimate partner relationships (Bergen & Bukovec, 2006; McFarlane et al., 2005). With regards to this it could be argued important also to focus attention to the presence of

sexual violence, when targeting prevention efforts on intimate partner violence in general (Wegner et al., 2014; White et al., 2008).

On the basis of the present study findings, reported partner assailants are less often found to be alcohol intoxicated in connection with the rape/attempted rape, compared non-partner assailants. This might call for a differentiation when targeting rapists in prevention programs. If assailants of intimate partner rape are in fact less often alcohol intoxicated in connection with rape, campaigns directed towards prevention of intimate partner rape should not emphasize alcohol as a risk factor to the same degree as rapes committed within other relationship types, such as more casual relationships, as mentioned by Wegner et al. (2014).

With regards to the status of attrition in the Norwegian Legal System, a striking amount of cases are dismissed because of insufficient evidence. The legal protection of victims of police reported intimate partner rape could be argued to be especially weak, as nearly 80% of cases are dismissed, mostly because of insufficient evidence. These cases are hard to prove, and dismissal does not necessarily signify that the Police doubt the victim (Sætre & Grytdal, 2012). It could still be argued important to initiate steps related to the investigation and handling of these crimes, maybe particularly so when taken into consideration the risk of re-victimization, and risk of exposure to additional physical abuse and violence, as cited above.

Future Directions

In order to expand the understanding of the phenomenon of rape in a Norwegian context, it has been argued necessary to rely on a multidisciplinary approach (Kruse et al., 2013). As sexual violence is a serious social problem, greatly impacting both the victims, the victim's relatives and the community as a whole (Amnesty International, 2008; Kruse et al., 2013), it should be of a collective concern, warranting contributions from a range of fields of expertise (Kruse et al., 2013). In order to develop a useful base of knowledge to guide the prevention of rape in a Norwegian context, it could be argued advantageous to design prospective studies exploring risk factors related to rape perpetration (Jewkes, 2012). Such studies could make it possible to map characteristics of perpetrators in a way that the present study cannot.

In examining previous findings with regards to e.g. violence and injury associated to the assailant-victim relationship, there seem to be a lack of theoretically driven empirical research. This also applies for the present study. A theoretical basis could help guide future research, and also prevention strategies. As with research on treatment of sexual offenders of various kinds, a crucial factor in prevention is that of having a good theoretical foundation

that can help create hypothesis as to what will reduce the phenomenon of rape, on the basis of what is theorized to contribute to the risk of rape perpetration (Ward, 2014). With regards to theoretical development, Wegner et al. (2014) highlight the fact that there seem to be limited communication between the work that is carried out in the field of intimate partner research and the field of research on sexual violence within intimate partner relationships. White et al. (2008) furthermore argue that there is a need for integrated research on what they characterize as dual perpetrators, and examine how these perpetrators differ from perpetrators of physical or sexual violence only, and non-violent intimate partners. Theoretical development and further research could possibly aid the development of prevention programs for sexual violence within intimate partner relationships in particular, and intimate partner violence in general.

Conclusions

Through comparisons, this study has revealed tendencies that could be of importance with regards to the understanding of intimate partner rape in a Norwegian context. It has been found that the reported intimate partner assailant of rape more often is recorded to use severe forms of violence compared to non-partner assailants. Furthermore, it has been found that alcohol use is less frequent when the assailant is a reported intimate partner compared to a non-partner. Finally, the low rate of charge filing is striking, and a considerable amount of cases related to intimate partner rapes/attempted rapes are dismissed because of insufficient evidence. The study findings may contribute in raising awareness on the important issue of intimate partner sexual violence, and rape. As mentioned earlier, rape perpetration in general is an issue of basic human rights for physical and mental well being, gender-equality and judicial safety (Amnesty International, 2008). Sexual violence should be the target for further research also in a Norwegian context, and efforts should be put towards preventing these crimes.

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