

The Situational Context of Adolescent Homicide Victimization in Johannesburg, South Africa

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Lu-Anne Swart,^{1,2} Mohamed Seedat,^{1,2} and Juan Nel³

Abstract

Although studies have described the incidence and epidemiology of adolescent homicide victimization in South Africa, little is known about the situational contexts in which they occur. This study aimed to describe the victim, offender, and event characteristics of adolescent homicide and to generate a typology based on the particular types of situational contexts associated with adolescent homicide in South Africa. Data on homicides among adolescents (15-19 years) that occurred in Johannesburg (South Africa) during the period 2001-2007 were obtained from the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS) and police case records. Of the 195 cases available for analysis, 81% of the victims were male. Most of the offenders were male (90%), comprising of strangers (42%) and friends/acquaintances (37%). Arguments (33%) were the most common precipitating circumstances, followed by revenge (11%), robbery (11%), and acts of vigilantism/retribution for a crime (8%). Through the use of cluster analysis, the study identified three categories of adolescent homicide: (a) male victims

¹Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa

²Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit (VIPRU), South African Medical Research Council - University of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa

³Department of Psychology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding Author:

Lu-Anne Swart, Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa, P.O. Box 1087, Lenasia, Johannesburg, 1820, South Africa.

Email: swartl@unisa.ac.za

killed by strangers during a crime-related event, (b) male victims killed by a friend/acquaintance during an argument, and (c) female victims killed by male offenders. The results can serve to inform the development of tailored and focused strategies for the prevention of adolescent homicide.

Keywords

homicide, adolescents, situational context, victim characteristics, offender characteristics, South Africa, cluster analysis

Homicides are complex social situations involving the interaction between victim and offender, and the physical location and setting that structures the activities of the victim and offender at the time of the event (Kubrin, 2003). Accordingly, more may be understood about the situational contexts in which homicide occurs through an examination of victim, offender, and event characteristics (Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Pridemore, 2006). A focus on the different ways in which various victim, offender, and event characteristics converge, also allows for certain categories or types of homicide to be identified which can assist in establishing the specific contributory factors for the tailoring and targeting of intervention efforts (Brookman, 2005; Flewelling & Williams, 1999).

This study focused on generating a typology of adolescent homicide in South Africa with the view of supporting discreet and focused prevention actions in contexts of scarce resources. The current response to adolescent homicide assumes a universal undifferentiated approach with insufficient attention given to victim, offender, and event characteristics. Much of what we know about adolescent homicide in South Africa is derived from epidemiological studies that describe the incidence, victim characteristics, and weapon used (Burrows, Swart, & Laflamme, 2009; Swart, Seedat, & Nel, 2016). Therefore, although it is known that homicide is a major cause of mortality for adolescents in South Africa, considerably little is known about the situational contexts in which these homicides occur. Accordingly, this study aimed to describe the victim, offender, and events characteristics, and to identify the dominant types of situational contexts associated with homicides among adolescents (15-19 years) that occurred in Johannesburg during the years 2001 to 2007. Before proceeding with the details of the study, an overview of research on the victim, offender, and event characteristics of adolescent homicide and the homicide classification literature informing the empirical framework of this study is provided.

Victim, Offender, and Event Characteristics

Victim and offender demographics, such as sex and age, are important characteristics to consider as they relate to particular role expectations, opportunities, and

life experiences that influence a person's exposure and response to risky situations that may result in violence and homicide (Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004). In South Africa, like most other countries worldwide (Mercy, Butchart, Farrington, & Cerdá, 2002; Pinheiro, 2006), males comprise the majority of homicide victims including those among adolescents (Burrows et al., 2009; Swart et al., 2016). Although offender information on adolescent homicides in South Africa is limited, studies in the United States suggest that the demographics of offenders are similar to those of victims, typically involving adolescent males (Coyne-Beasley, Schoenbach, & Herman-Giddens, 1999; Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001).

Characteristics of the homicide event include features of the social and physical context that influence the initiation and outcome of violent interactions between victim and offender (Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004). Event characteristics considered to play an important role include the victim-offender relationship, number of offenders, motives or precipitating circumstances, physical location, and the type of weapon used (Brookman, 2005; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Pridemore, 2006). Although there is generally little research on the victim-offender relationship associated with adolescent homicides, studies in the United States revealed that adolescent victims are primarily killed by friends/acquaintances, then by strangers, with relatively few killed by family members or intimate partners (Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999; Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001; Harms & Snyder, 2004). However, the victim-offender relationship may differ for adolescents from other countries with the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* (Krause, Muggah, & Gilgen, 2011) and the *Global Study on Homicide* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2011) indicating the proportion of intimate- and family-related homicides are higher in countries in Europe and Asia.

Studies in the United States (Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999; Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001) and Brazil (Sant'Anna & Lopes, 2002) suggest the motives or precipitants of adolescent homicide are varied including interpersonal disputes or arguments, gang- and drug-related homicide, and homicide in the course of other crimes, such as robberies. The motives may differ for adolescents from other countries with research showing the proportion of homicides associated with gangs or organized crime is significantly higher in Central and South America countries (Krause et al., 2011; UNODC, 2011). Moreover, homicide rates related to robbery or theft also tend to be higher in countries with greater income inequality (Krause et al., 2011). Although not focusing on adolescents, one of the few South African studies reporting on the circumstances of homicide in urban areas, found that for homicides where the circumstances were known, most (55%) were the result of arguments, followed by incidents in the course of another crime such as robbery, burglary, and rape (25%), while very few were related to conflict between different groups such as gangs (1%; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR], 2008).

Public places such as the street and entertainment venues, and residential dwellings are the primary locations for homicides among adolescents in South Africa (Swart et al., 2016), similar to the locations reported for adolescents in the United States (Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999). Regarding the weapon or method used in adolescent homicide, research suggests regional variations, with homicides in South and North American countries more likely to be committed with firearms, and homicides as the result of sharp instruments (knives) being more common in countries in Europe (Falbo, Buzzetti, & Cattaneo, 2001; Harms & Snyder, 2004; Sethi, Hughes, Bellis, Mitis, & Racioppi, 2010; UNODC, 2011). Most homicides among South African adolescents are the result of firearms, though firearm use appears to be decreasing while the use of sharp instruments and blunt force seems to be increasing (Burrows et al., 2009; Swart et al., 2016).

Classification of Homicides

Homicides vary considerably in terms of victim, offender, and event characteristics, and researchers have used different classification strategies (see Flewelling & Williams, 1999) in the attempt to identify the factors that relate to specific homicide types. Brookman (2005), for instance, concentrated on the gendered nature of homicide, the relationship between participants, and the circumstances of the event. Focusing on male-perpetrated homicides in the United Kingdom, Brookman (2005) highlighted the different circumstances surrounding masculine homicide (male-on-male) and femicide (men killing women). Among the different forms of masculine homicide, Brookman (2005) described two distinct scenarios that appear to predominate, namely confrontational and revenge homicides. Confrontational homicides, which resemble Polk's (1999) description of "honour contests" in Australia, arise in response to relatively trivial disagreements between acquaintances or strangers, and tend to occur in public settings where there is an audience, often comprising of other males, and where alcohol is a characteristic feature of the social context (Brookman, 2003, 2005). By comparison, revenge homicides are characterized by planned attacks where the offender seeks to avenge some perceived wrongdoing on the part of the victim, where weapons such as firearms are often secured, and the victim sought out and given little or no chance to engage in an altercation (Brookman, 2003, 2005).

In contrast to homicides between men, femicides are more likely to involve intimate partners, and often occur in response to the breakdown of a relationship (Brookman, 2005). In the same way, studies disaggregating homicides according to the victim's sex, including those among adolescent victims, have also revealed differences in the situational contexts, with male

victims more likely to be killed by strangers or acquaintances, by firearms, in public places, and to have used alcohol and/or drugs prior to their death, whereas female victims were more likely to be killed by someone they knew, such as a family member or intimate partner, in the home (Eckhardt & Pridemore, 2009; Muftic & Moreno, 2010; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Most studies, though, have disaggregated homicides into different types along dimensions of either the victim–offender relationship or the motives for the homicide (e.g., Cao, Hou, & Huang, 2008; Last & Fritzon, 2005; Pizarro, 2008). Studies using a victim–offender relationship typology have shown these types comprise distinct situational characteristics in that the closer the relationship between the victim and offender (e.g., intimate partners, family members, and friends/acquaintances), the more likely the homicide occurred at a residential location, involved expressive motives (anger-induced and goal is to harm the victim), and the use of physical violence or a weapon from the scene, whereas homicides among strangers were more likely to have occurred in public places, to have instrumental motives (e.g., crime-related), and to involve the use of weapons such as firearms (Cao et al., 2008; Last & Fritzon, 2005).

Similarly, studies disaggregating homicide into motive-related typologies also report differences with respect to victim, offender, and event characteristics (e.g., Miethe & Drass, 1999; Miethe & Regoeczi, 2004; Pizarro, 2008). In a study in the United States, Pizarro (2008) found that domestic homicides were more likely to involve younger victims (including child abuse cases), older offenders, occur in residential locations, and were less likely to involve the use of firearms than other homicides. Drug-related homicides were more likely to occur in public housing sites and involve the use of firearms, whereas dispute homicides were more likely to involve individuals who were alcohol or drug impaired, typically intimate partners and family members, whereas robbery homicides were more likely to involve strangers and multiple offenders.

However, while the abovementioned studies have disaggregated homicides into different types along a particular dimension (e.g., victim–offender relationship), and then examined how each type differs from the other in terms of victim, offender, and event characteristics, a number of more recent studies have used a variety of statistical techniques to explore the multivariate associations between victim, offender, and event characteristics to classify homicides into distinct types. For example, Salfati (2000, 2003) used a multidimensional scaling technique to analyze the co-occurrence of 36 crime scene behaviors in a sample of British homicides and found that homicides could be differentiated along an expressive/instrumental dimension. Bijleveld and Smit (2006) used multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) to explore

the multivariate relations between the victim, offender, and event characteristics of homicides in the Netherlands. They found that homicides could be structured along two dimensions, with the first dimension consisting of homicides that ranged from businesslike, organized crime feuds to family-related issues, and the second dimension comprising of homicides that ranged from more planned attacks to anger-related killings that often took place in the course of a fight.

Kubrin (2003) used cluster analysis to specifically categorize homicide into types based on detailed victim, offender, and event information on homicides in the United States. Using 16 variables, Kubrin (2003) identified four categories of homicide and their prevalence, namely, general altercation (67%), felony (18%), domestic: male/female (9%), and domestic: female/male (6%). General altercation homicides typically represented arguments between male friends/acquaintances that turned into lethal violence, often involving the use of alcohol or drugs by the participants, and occurred in both public and residential locations. Felony homicides were distinct from general altercation homicides, in that they primarily occurred as the result of robbery motives; otherwise, they also involved male victims killed by strangers or friends/acquaintances in public or private spaces. Domestic: male/female homicides involved female victims killed by intimate partners or male relatives usually due to anger motives, and tended to take place in private spaces. The final category, domestic: female/male consisted of females killing male partners in response to being assaulted or threatened.

Although the above studies have used different methodologies, they nonetheless suggest different types of homicide can be distinguished that comprise of different situational contexts based on the specific combination of victim, offender, and event elements. Therefore, with the intention of supporting prevention efforts in South Africa, the current study aimed to describe the victim, offender, and event characteristics of homicides among adolescents (15-19 years)¹ in Johannesburg (2001-2007). Furthermore, the study used cluster analysis to classify homicides into categories based on victim, offender, and event characteristics with the aim of developing a typology based on the dominant situational contexts of adolescent homicides.

Method

Data Sources and Cases

Data on all deaths classified as homicide among adolescents (15-19 years) occurring in Johannesburg during 2001-2007 were obtained from the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS) which collates information

on injury deaths based on medico-forensic investigative procedures at state medico-legal laboratories (Donson, 2008). The medical examiner and forensic officers at the laboratories that participate in the NIMSS complete a data form for every death that records information on police station and case number, victim demographics, time and place of injury, and external cause and apparent manner of death (homicide, suicide, accidental, and undetermined; Donson, 2008). The NIMSS classifies the external cause of death based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Diseases (ICD). As the final manner of death is only determined after police investigations and court proceedings, which can take between 2 and 5 years to complete, the NIMSS only records the *apparent manner* of death determined by the medical practitioner. The data are fed into a computerized database that is sent to the Medical Research Council (MRC)/University of South Africa (Unisa) Violence, Injury, and Peace Research Unit (VIPRU) at the end of the year, where all the databases from the participating laboratories are cleaned and merged. The NIMSS system started collecting injury data in 1999 at selected sites across the country, and since 2001, has had full coverage of injury deaths for the city of Johannesburg. For this study, the data obtained from NIMSS included victim demographics (sex and race), weapon or method used, scene, and police case number and station name.

Additional information on the offenders and circumstances of the homicide was obtained from police case records with permission by the office of the Gauteng Provincial Commissioner of the South African Police Services (SAPS). A list of the cases was sent to the station commissioner at each of the relevant police stations, and once the officer, who had been appointed to the task, had retrieved the relevant case records an appointment was made to collect the information. With the assistance of docket clerks or investigating police officers, data were collected directly from the dockets by the first author and a fieldworker who was trained on data collection procedures. A data collection form was developed to capture information on offender demographics, victim-offender relationship, number of offenders, and motives or precipitating circumstances for the homicide. Data collectors also created a narrative account for each incident describing the circumstances that led to the homicide, detailing how it occurred, and providing information on the victim and offender(s).

The narrative account was analyzed by the first author to assign motives to the homicide cases from a list informed by previous research (Brookman, 2005; CSV, 2008; Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999). A list of motives or precipitating circumstances was initially created based on the categories and subcategories outlined in the study of circumstances of homicide in urban areas in South Africa (CSV, 2008). Motives that were not relevant to adolescents,

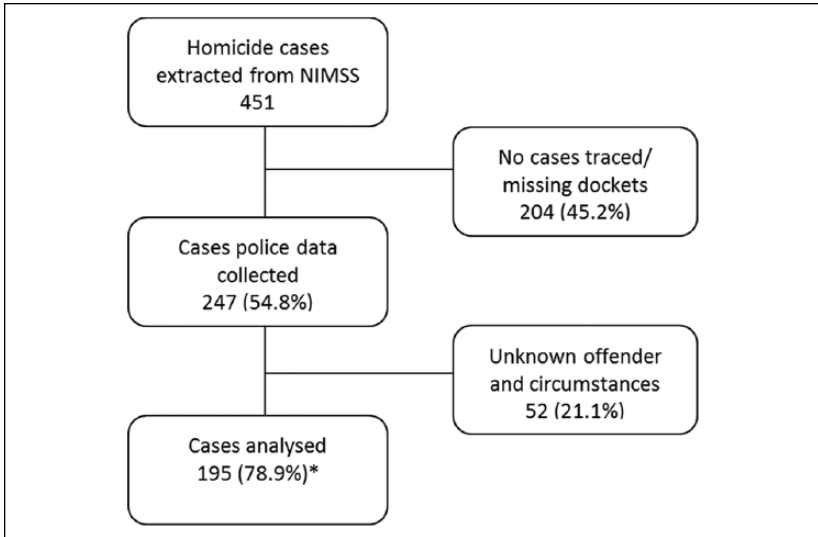


Figure 1. Case-flow diagram.

Note. The 195 cases analyzed represent 43.2% of the 451 cases for the period 2001-2007.

such as the killing of a newborn, were omitted from the list. The initial list comprised of argument, robbery, sexual assault, self-defense, conflict between gangs, conflict between groups other than gangs (e.g., taxi associations), vigilantism or revenge for a crime, pre-meditated killing of current or former intimate partner, pre-meditated murder for financial gain, elimination of witness, mental illness or instability on part of offender, security guard or bouncer killing, killed while intervening to protect someone else, unclear motives, and unknown circumstances. Due to the specific focus on adolescent homicide, the initial list of motives was compared to those used in the study by Coyne-Beasley and colleagues (1999), and accordingly two motives, namely bystander and drug-related, were added to the list of motives. Brookman (2005) was referred to for a comprehensive definition on argument and revenge homicides. During the analysis of the narrative accounts, however, two distinct types of circumstances were encountered for a number of cases, specifically homicides occurring at initiation schools and those with discipline-related motives, and thus were also included to the list of motives in the current study. Descriptions of the motives or precipitant circumstances are presented together with the results in Table 3.

Of the 451 adolescent homicides that were drawn from NIMSS, 247 (55%) were followed up in police case records to obtain information on the offender and homicide circumstances (Figure 1). The remaining 204

homicide cases were not accessed as a result of missing police case numbers or dockets that could not be found and hence were excluded from the study. Of the 247 homicide cases where the police dockets were followed up, 52 (21%) of the cases had no information on the offender or circumstances of the homicide and were also excluded from the study. Therefore, the study is based on 195 (79%) of the 247 homicide cases for which the required information was obtained.

A comparison of the 247 adolescent homicide cases for which police data were available with the 204 cases for which police data were not available, revealed that there were no significant differences between the cases for victim demographics (see Table 1). However, cases with missing police dockets involved more firearms and fewer sharp instruments compared with the cases for which police data were available. The missing cases also comprised of a higher percentage of unknown scenes than the cases where police data were available, which in contrast had a higher proportion of homicides that occurred in street, bars, and other scenes. A similar pattern was observed for the 52 cases that were excluded from the study as they had no information on the offender and circumstances of the homicide when compared with the 195 cases analyzed in the study (Table 1). While no differences were noted for victim sex and race, the excluded cases involved more firearms, less sharp instruments, and more unknown scenes compared with the cases that were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Frequencies and associated percentages were calculated to describe the key variables with respect adolescent homicide victim, offender, and event characteristics. A cluster analysis of the data was undertaken to classify adolescent homicide cases into specific categories based on combinations of offender, victim, and offense attributes. The TwoStep Cluster Analysis procedure is an exploratory tool designed to reveal natural groupings (or clusters). The SPSS TwoStep Cluster Analysis was chosen as the principle statistical analysis in the study because the procedure has the ability to analyze large data sets for both categorical and continuous variables. In the first step, cases are assigned to preclusters. The algorithm assigns each successive case, based on a distance, with a previously formed precluster or forms a new precluster. In the second step, the preclusters are clustered using the hierarchical clustering algorithm forming an optimal number of clusters based on the Schwarz Bayesian Criterion (Norušis, 2012). The following eight categorical variables were entered into the cluster analysis: victim's sex, offender's sex, offender's age, victim-offender relationship, number of offenders, motive or precipitating circumstances, scene, and weapon used. Race was not included in the analysis as a preliminary MCA indicated that this variable had low discriminatory power.

Table 1. Comparison of Adolescent Homicide Cases by Victim Demographic, Weapon Used, and Scene of Homicide.

Characteristics	NIMSS Cases <i>n</i> = 451		Police Data Collected <i>n</i> = 247	
	Police Records Not Available	Police Data Collected	Excluded	Analyzed
	<i>n</i> = 204	<i>n</i> = 247	<i>n</i> = 52	<i>n</i> = 195
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Victim's sex				
Male	167 (81.9)	201 (81.4)	43 (82.7)	158 (81)
Female	37 (18.1)	46 (18.6)	9 (17.3)	37 (19)
Victim's race				
Black	180 (88.2)	219 (88.7)	49 (94.2)	170 (87.2)
Indian	1 (0.5)	4 (1.6)	0	4 (2.1)
Colored	17 (8.3)	19 (7.7)	1 (1.9)	18 (9.2)
White	4 (2)	5 (2)	2 (3.8)	3 (1.5)
Unknown	2 (1)	0	0	0
Weapon used				
Firearm	136 (66.7)	120 (48.6)**	36 (69.2)	84 (43.1)**
Sharp instrument	41 (20.1)	87 (35.2)**	8 (15.4)	79 (40.5)**
Other	24 (11.8)	39 (15.8)	8 (15.4)	31 (15.9)
Unknown	3 (1.5)	1 (0.4)	0	1 (0.5)
Scene				
House	56 (27.5)	66 (26.7)	15 (28.8)	51 (26.2)
Bar/tavern	1 (0.5)	19 (7.7)**	0	19 (9.7)
Street	23 (11.3)	101 (40.9)**	19 (36.5)	82 (42.1)
Open veld (land)	12 (5.9)	23 (9.3)	7 (13.5)	16 (8.2)
Other	9 (4.4)	24 (9.7)*	3 (5.8)	21 (10.8)
Unknown	103 (50.5)	14 (5.7%)**	8 (15.4)	6 (3.1)**

Note. NIMSS = National Injury Mortality Surveillance System.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

Results

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive results for adolescent homicides with respect to victim, offender, and event characteristics. Of the 195 adolescent homicide cases that were analyzed in the study, males comprised of 81% of the victims. Most (90%) victims were killed by male offenders, 3% by female offenders, and in 8% of the cases the offender's sex was unknown. Accordingly, the majority (80%) of adolescent homicides were all male

Table 2. Characteristics of Adolescent Homicides, Johannesburg, 2001-2007.

Characteristics	Total (n = 195) n (%)
Victim's sex	
Male	158 (81.4)
Female	37 (18.6)
Offender's sex	
Male	175 (89.7)
Female	5 (2.6)
Unknown	15 (7.7)
Offender's age	
12-19 years	42 (21.5)
20-29 years	61 (31.3)
30-39 years	13 (6.7)
40+ years	9 (4.6)
Unknown	70 (35.9)
Offender's relationship	
Intimate partner	12 (6.2)
Family member	6 (3.1)
Friend/acquaintance	72 (36.9)
Stranger	81 (41.5)
Unknown/unclear	24 (12.3)
Number of offenders	
Single	119 (61)
Multiple	71 (36.4)
Unknown	5 (2.6)
Motive/precipitating circumstance	
Argument	64 (32.8)
Revenge	22 (11.3)
Robbery	21 (10.8)
Sexual Assault	10 (5.1)
Self-defense	9 (4.6)
Vigilantism/retribution for crime	12 (6.2)
Initiation school-related	3 (1.5)
Discipline	3 (1.5)
Accidental	5 (2.6)
Bystander	7 (3.6)
Unclear	39 (20)
Scene	
House	51 (26.2)
Bar/tavern	19 (9.7)

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Characteristics	Total (<i>n</i> = 195) <i>n</i> (%)
Street	82 (42.1)
Open veld	16 (8.2)
Other	21 (10.8)
Unknown	6 (3.1)
Weapon used	
Firearm	84 (43.1)
Sharp instrument	79 (40.5)
Other	31 (15.9)
Unknown	1 (0.5)

encounters. Almost four out of five homicides, for which records were available, involved a male killed by another male, and just less than one in five (18%) involved a female killed by a male. Around one out of five (22%) of the offenders were aged between 12 and 19 years, 31% were between 20 and 29 years of age, 7% were between 30 and 39 years, 5% were 40 years or older, and in the remaining 36% of the cases the offender's age was unknown.

In 46% of the homicide cases, the offender was known to the victim, most often as a friend/acquaintance (37%), then intimate partner (6%), or family member (3%; sibling, father, or uncle), while in 41.5% of the cases, the victim was killed by a stranger. The offender's relationship to the victim was unknown in 12% of the cases. In the majority (61%) of adolescent homicides the offender acted alone, just more than a third (36%) involved multiple offenders, and in the remaining 3% of the cases the number of offenders was unknown.

Table 3 shows the distribution of adolescent homicides by motive or precipitating circumstances, including a description and case examples. Almost a third (33%) of all the cases were the result of arguments or altercations, this being the leading precipitating circumstance of adolescent homicides. Revenge was the second most common motive accounting for 11% of the homicide cases. This was followed by a range of motives or precipitants that were associated with a crime context, namely, robberies (11%), vigilantism/retribution for a crime (8%), sexual assault (5%), and self-defense (5%). Other motives or precipitating circumstances, which occurred less frequently, involved activities at an initiation school (2%), discipline (2%), reckless behavior/accidental (5%), and bystanders (5%). For the remaining 20% of the cases, the information provided in the police case records was either

Table 3. Motives or Precipitating Circumstances: Description and Case Examples.

Motive	n (%)	Description	Case Examples
Argument	64 (32.8)	The homicide took place during an argument, fight, or incident of spontaneous anger. The circumstances are similar to those described by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV; 2008) but do not include homicides in revenge for an earlier argument. These homicides are comparable with "confrontational" homicides described by Brookman (2005) in that the victim and offender were involved in a spontaneous dispute and engaged together in a violent confrontation that resulted in the death of one of the participants.	<p># 27: The victim and three friends were drinking at a tavern when the suspect walked passed and bumped the table, knocking over their drinks. The victim and his friends demanded that the suspect buy them more drinks, but the suspect said that he did not have the money. The victim and suspect argued and then pushed each other. They then moved outside to the street where they continued to fight when the suspect produced a gun and shot the victim.</p> <p># 123: A group of friends were sitting together when one, the suspect, accused one of them, the victim, of stealing R10 from him. He then picked on the victim. They fought and the suspect took a knife, stabbed the victim, and ran away.</p> <p># 146: The victim and his friend, the suspect, were arguing over a bottle of juice that the suspect refused to share with the victim, when they started fighting and victim took out a knife which the suspect then grabbed and stabbed the victim.</p> <p># 285: The victim and three of his friends were at a party, when the victim met up with a young woman who apparently promised that she would leave with the victim at the end of the party. However, the young woman left to go home with two of her neighbors instead, starting an argument between the victim, his friends and the neighbors. This developed into a fight during which one of the neighbors, the suspect, took a knife and stabbed the victim.</p>

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Motive	n (%)	Description	Case Examples
Revenge	22 (11.3)	The offender killed the victim to avenge some wrongdoing (non-crime related). These homicides typically involve some planning, where "weapons [are] often secured and the victim sought out and given little or no chance to engage in an altercation" (Brookman, 2005, p. 124). A homicide motivated by an earlier argument was coded as revenge if the offender left the scene for a period of time, and returned with a weapon and killed the victim.	<p># 3: The victim was sitting in the street with a group of friends when a car pulled up and three men and a woman got out. One of the men shot the victim while the woman kicked him, and then they climbed back into the car and drove off. The victim had apparently harassed and assaulted the woman when she had been walking alone in the street earlier that day.</p> <p># 114: The victim was with his friend, the suspect, when the victim "mistakenly" hit the suspect in the face with a piece of cardboard. The friend went home, returned with a knife and stabbed the victim.</p> <p># 121: The victim went out with her friends and, when she returned home later that evening, her ex-boyfriend, with whom she had recently ended a relationship, had been hiding in wait outside her house in the dark; he stabbed the victim while she was walking to the front door of her house.</p> <p># 52: The victim and his friend were sitting in a car when they were held up by two men who demanded their cell phones and money. The victim was shot during the incident.</p> <p># 292: The victim was shot when their house was broken into.</p> <p># 216: The victim and her two friends were raped by four unknown men. After the rape the men had beaten the woman with rocks killing the victim.</p>
Robbery	21 (10.8)	The homicide occurred during a robbery or burglary, where the victim was killed by the offender(s) of the crime.	
Sexual assault	10 (5.1)	The homicide involved a victim who had been sexually assaulted.	

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Motive	n (%)	Description	Case Examples
Self-defense	9 (4.6)	The victim was the original offender of a crime and was killed to protect oneself or another person from apparent harm.	<p># 164: The victim attacked a security officer and made off with the security officer's firearm. The security officer called for support and chased after the victim. When the security officer caught up to the victim, the victim stopped, turned around, and pointed the firearm at the officer. At the same time the back-up security officer arrived, and when he saw the victim pointing the gun at his colleague he shot the victim.</p> <p># 376: The victim and his friend attempted to rob the suspect. When the victim stabbed the suspect, the suspect managed to take out a firearm and shoot the victim.</p>
Vigilantism/ retribution for a crime	12 (6.2)	The victim was killed as an act of retribution for a crime that had been committed (CSVR, 2008).	<p># 219: The victim was attempting to steal a car when the owner saw him and called on community members to assist in apprehending the victim. When the community members caught up to the victim, they assaulted the victim who died on the scene.</p> <p>#332: The victim was severely beaten by a group of community members who apparently witnessed the victim rob a young woman walking in the street.</p>
Initiation school- related ^a	3 (1.5)	The homicide occurred during the activities that took place at an initiation school.	<p># 307: While at initiation school, the victim complained about feeling "weak" and the leaders beat him with sticks. When the leaders realized that the victim was not breathing and that they could not revive him after several attempts, they cleared the scene, sent the other boys home, and fled the scene.</p>

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Motive	n (%)	Description	Case Examples
Discipline-related	3 (1.5)	The homicide occurred in the context of an adult offender attempting to discipline or punish the victim for misconduct.	# 329: The victim and his four friends were questioned and severely beaten by the victim's uncle who alleged that they had stolen his gun. Later during the day, when the victim became ill, the uncle took him to the hospital where he subsequently died from his injuries.
Reckless behavior/accidental	5 (2.6)	The homicide occurred as a result of reckless or negligent behavior and was unintentional.	# 360: The victim was with his three friends when one of the friends showed them a firearm which he had just bought for R500, and the firearm discharged killing the victim.
Bystander	7 (3.6)	The victim was killed in a violent confrontation between other individuals or groups, in which the victim had no involvement.	# 117: The victim, a passenger in a motor vehicle, was shot and killed when two motorists, who had climbed out of their vehicles, were arguing in the street and one of them produced a firearm. # 246: There was a shootout at a hostel and several bystanders, including the victim, were shot.
Unclear	39 (20.0)	These were homicides where the case file information was insufficient to determine the motive or precipitating circumstances.	# 40: The victim and his friend were walking in the street when a man approached them and shot the victim and ran away. Whether this was an act of revenge or a possible robbery was unclear. # 133: The victim was shot by her boyfriend but no information explained why he had killed her.

^aInitiation schools are part of the cultural practices in South Africa, and are protected by the Constitution. Male initiation is used as a transitional rite of passage from "boyhood to manhood," and the schools are regarded as cultural educational institutions where male initiates are taught the values inherent in courtship, social responsibility, discipline and acceptable conduct, as well as about their culture. In recent years, initiation schools have been beset by a number of problems, including injuries and deaths among initiates, which has led to a public inquiry in order to seek solutions to the issues surrounding the practice of initiation (Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Communities, 2010).

insufficient or unclear with respect to establishing the motive for the homicide.

Streets were the most common scene for adolescent homicides (42%), then private dwellings (26%), bars/night clubs (10%), and open land (8%; Table 2). Other scenes accounted for 11% of the cases and included places such as parks/sports areas, shops, schools, construction and industrial sites, railway lines/stations, and prisons. In 3% of the cases the scene of the homicide was unknown. Firearms were the weapons most often used in adolescent homicides (43%), followed by sharp objects, such as knives and broken bottles (41%), and blunt objects (e.g., sticks, hammers, stones, fists, and feet; 13%). Other methods used included strangulation (3%), poisoning (1%), and in one case (1%) the weapon used was unknown.

The Situational Contexts of Adolescent Homicide

Table 4 presents the results of the cluster analysis which yielded three categories of adolescent homicide based on distinct combinations of victim, offender, and event characteristics.

Category 1: Male victims killed by male strangers during a crime-related event. Category 1 was the largest, consisting of 42% ($n = 82$) of the 195 homicide cases analyzed in the study. Category 1 homicides have the following characteristics: male victims (96%), male offenders (82%), victim-offender relationship of strangers (81%), multiple offenders (60%), crime-related precipitating circumstances or motives (50%; robbery, vigilantism/vengeance for a crime, and self-defense combined), occurred in the street (57%), and involved the use of firearms (61%). Crime-related circumstances appeared to be a particular distinguishing feature, with all the homicides that occurred as a result of robbery, vigilantism/retribution for a crime, or self-defense comprising part of this category. Furthermore, the majority of cases where the offenders' details were unknown, especially with regard to sex (100%), age (81%), victim-offender relationship (54%), and number of offenders (80%), as well as the majority of those cases where the motives were unclear (64%) were part of this category.

Category 2: Male victims killed by a male friend/acquaintance during an argument. The second category consisted of 40% ($n = 78$) of the 195 homicides cases. Category 2 homicides are characterized as follows: male victims (94%), male offenders (94%) of a young age (89%; 12-19 and 20-29 years combined), victim-offender relationship of friend/acquaintance (78%), single offender (87%), precipitated by argument-related circumstances (69%),

Table 4. Distribution of Homicide Characteristics (Column Percent) in Each Category.

Category Characteristics	1	2	3
	<i>n</i> = 82	<i>n</i> = 78	<i>n</i> = 35
Victim's sex			
Male	96.3	93.6	17.1
Female	3.7	6.4	82.9
Offender's sex			
Male	81.7	93.6	100
Female	0	6.4	0
Unknown	18.3	0	0
Offender's age			
12-19 years	7.3	44.9	2.9
20-29 years	15.9	43.6	40
30-39 years	2.4	5.1	20
40+ years	4.9	1.3	11.4
Unknown	69.5	7.1	25.7
Offender's relationship			
Intimate partner	0	0	34.3
Family member	0	3.8	8.6
Friend/acquaintance	3.7	78.2	22.9
Stranger	80.5	7.7	25.7
Unknown/unclear	15.9	10.3	8.6
Number of offenders			
Single	35.4	87.2	62.9
Multiple	59.8	12.8	34.3
Unknown	80.0	0	2.9
Precipitating circumstance			
Argument	7.3	69.2	11.4
Revenge	6.1	15.4	14.3
Robbery	25.6	0	0
Sexual Assault	0	0	28.6
Self-defense	11	0	0
Vigilantism/retribution for crime	13.4	0	2.9
Initiation school-related	0	1.3	5.7
Discipline	0	0	8.6
Accidental	0	6.4	0
Bystander	6.1	0	5.7
Unclear	30.5	7.7	22.9
Scene			
House	14.6	25.6	54.3
Bar/tavern	9.8	12.8	2.9
Street	57.3	39.7	11.4
Open veld	6.1	2.6	25.7
Other	7.3	16.7	5.7
Unknown	4.9	2.6	0
Weapon used			
Firearm	61.0	26.9	37.1
Sharp instrument	24.4	69.2	14.3
Other	14.6	2.6	48.6
Unknown	0	1.3	0

occurred in the street (40%) and in residential dwellings (26%), and sharp instruments were the weapons most often used (69%). Category 2 homicides differ from those in Category 1 with respect to the victim–offender relationship, number of offenders involved, precipitating circumstances, and weapons used. In addition, fewer of Category 2 homicides occur in the street and more occur in residential dwellings than those in Category 1. Both categories, however, predominantly consisted of homicides that involve male victims and offenders.

Category 3: Female victims killed by a male offender. This category consisted of 18% ($n = 35$) of the 195 cases analyzed. Category 3 homicides have the following characteristics: female victims (83%), male offenders (100%) typically older than the victim (71%), offenders were known to the victim (66%; intimate partners, friends/acquaintances, and family members), single offenders (63%), and occurred in residential dwellings (54%). Category 3 homicides are distinct from Categories 1 and 2 homicides in that they primarily involved female victims. Homicides involving sexual assault and discipline-related motives were over-represented as all were part of this category. Furthermore, it is important to note that none of the sexual assault homicides were committed by intimate partners. Other weapons, such as blunt force and strangulation, accounted for almost half (48%) of these killings, while firearms accounted for just more than a third (36%).

Discussion

This study examined the situational context of adolescent homicide with a specific focus on describing the victim, offender and event characteristics, and generating a situational typology of adolescent homicides in South Africa. With regard to the descriptive results on victim and offender characteristics, the study showed that the majority (79%) of adolescent homicides were male-on-male encounters, mostly committed by young offenders (12–29 years; 53%), which is similar to the patterns observed in the United States (Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999; Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001; Harms & Snyder, 2004) where research on the characteristics of victims and offenders of adolescent homicide is currently available. Also consistent with research from the United States, the study found that a large proportion of adolescents were killed by someone known to them (46%), primarily friends/acquaintances (37%; Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999; Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2001; Harms & Snyder, 2004). However, a substantial proportion of adolescents in the current study were also killed by strangers (42%), which is noticeably higher than the proportion reported for adolescent homicides in the United States (15%–23%; Coyne-Beasley et al., 1999; Harms & Snyder, 2004).

The study also revealed that the motives or precipitating circumstances for adolescent homicides were quite varied, including, for example, arguments, revenge, robbery, acts of vigilantism/retribution for a crime, sexual assault, and self-defense. Gang- and drug-related motives were not identified as a feature of adolescent homicides in this study. As this study only focused on homicides in Johannesburg, it is quite possible that gang-related homicides may be more prevalent in other cities in South Africa, especially in the Western Cape (Kinnes, 2000; van Wyk & Theron, 2005). Nonetheless, the findings regarding the motives and precipitating circumstances of adolescent homicide in this study are similar to the homicide circumstances identified by the CSVR (2008) in South African urban centers.

Regarding the location and weapon used, the study results were similar to other research on adolescent homicide in South Africa (Burrows et al., 2009; Swart et al., 2016) with public places such as the street and residential dwellings among the primary locations where homicides occurred, and firearms (43%) and sharp instruments (41%) the weapons most often used.

The typological analysis of adolescent homicides based on victim, offender, and event characteristics identified three predominant types of situational contexts that were mainly differentiated on the basis of the victim's sex, victim-offender relationship and motive, namely (a) male victims killed by strangers during a crime-related event, (b) male victims killed by a friend/acquaintance during an argument, and (c) female victims killed by male offenders. Although all have in common that the majority were committed by male offenders, the three homicide categories reflect different situational contexts which has important implications for the successful prevention of adolescent homicide in South Africa. In particular, the three homicide categories present different prevention challenges that require specific and focused interventions.

Hence, for the first category implementation of a policing strategy that specifically targets street crimes such as robberies and muggings is needed to better protect adolescents. As some of these homicides involved acts of community vigilantism, which point to the divide and lack of confidence between the public and the police in the country (Burger, 2011), strategies to improve relations between the police and community are also necessary. Although firearm homicides have declined since the implementation of reformed gun-control legislation and firearm amnesties in South Africa (Matzopoulos, Thompson, & Myers, 2014; Swart et al., 2016), further measures to reduce youth's access to firearms should contribute to a decrease in the first category of adolescent homicides.

For the second category of homicides, life-skills based education or social development programs directed at improving adolescents' anger management,

conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills are important interventions, and should form part of the life orientation curriculum implemented in South African primary and secondary schools. These programs should also address social norms regarding masculine behavior, such as the carrying of knives and the use of violence (Seedat, van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009). Although not examined in the current study, several studies have highlighted alcohol use as an important feature of argument-related homicides (Brookman, 2003, 2005; Kubrin, 2003; Pizarro, 2008; Polk, 1999), therefore strategies to reduce the availability of alcohol to adolescents are also likely to contribute to the reduction of homicides in Category 2.

For the third category, female victims killed by male offenders, interventions to intimate partner violence are also required to focus on adolescent women. This should include a focus on the early identification of adolescent victims of intimate partner violence and the provision of accessible spaces for adolescent women to disclose such violence and seek help. School- and community-based life-skills training programs that address gender-based violence, relationship skills, assertiveness training have shown to be effective in reducing men's violence in intimate relationships (Jewkes et al., 2008; Lundgren & Amin, 2015).

A major limitation of this study is the number of homicide cases that had to be excluded because they could not be followed up via police case dockets or because information on the offender and precipitating circumstances were unknown in police case records. Studies on homicide have shown that the "unknown" category with respect to offender characteristics and circumstances follows a pattern that resembles homicides that occur in the course of another crime or those committed by strangers (CSVR, 2008; Petee, Weaver, Corzine, Huff-Corzine, & Wittekind, 2001). Therefore, as a result of the exclusion of homicide cases it is possible that the current study underestimates crime- and stranger-related homicides which also might have influenced the outcome of the typological analysis of adolescent homicides. Other South African studies on homicide have encountered similar problems with missing information and dockets (e.g., Abrahams et al., 2009; CSVR, 2008), pointing to the need for improved management and integration of data that is currently part of the medico-legal process in the country.

Another limitation is that other characteristics should also be analyzed. In particular, future research should focus on the role played by alcohol in adolescent homicides, as alcohol use is an important factor that can precipitate violence. Finally, the study focuses specifically on adolescent homicide in Johannesburg; therefore, the situational contexts found in this study may be different from those homicides among adolescents in other cities in South Africa. For example, the issue of gang violence may be more relevant to the city of Cape Town (Kinnes, 2000; van Wyk & Theron, 2005).

To conclude, this study examined the victim, offender, and event characteristics associated with a particular focus on generating a situational typology of adolescent homicides. The cluster analysis assigned the homicide cases into three distinct categories: (a) male victims killed by strangers during a crime-related event, (b) male victims killed by a friend/acquaintance during an argument, and (c) female victims killed by male offenders. The typology developed in this study reflects three different situational contexts that are distinct with respect to victim, offender, and event characteristics, and accordingly the results can serve to inform the development of tailored and focused interventions that consider the specific dimensions associated with each of the three categories of adolescent homicide.

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Note

1. Studies on adolescent homicide have focused on different age groups (e.g., Burrows, Swart, & Laflamme, 2009; Coyne-Beasley, Schoenbach, & Herman-Giddens, 1999). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2011) and its partners (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], the World Health Organisation [WHO], and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS]) define adolescents as persons between 10 and 19 years. UNICEF (2011) also differentiates between early adolescence (10-14 years) and late adolescence (15-19 years) due to the marked difference in development and experience between younger and older adolescents. As South Africa, like most countries worldwide, demonstrates a marked increase in the rates of homicide victimization from around the age of 15 years (Donson, 2008; Pinheiro, 2006) this study specifically focuses on the age group 15 to 19 years.

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Author Biographies

Lu-Anne Swart is a researcher at the University of South Africa's Institute for Social and Health Sciences. She holds a doctoral degree in psychology. Her research interests include adolescent development, sexuality and violence in dating relationships, and homicide.

Mohamed Seedat is a professor in the College of Graduate Studies at the University of South Africa (Unisa), Head of the Unisa Institute for Social and Health Sciences, and Director of the Medical Research Council/Unisa Violence, Injury, and Peace Research Unit. He has written in the areas of safety and peace promotion and is a psychologist by training.

Juan Nel is a professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa, holds a doctoral degree, is a registered clinical and research psychologist, and president of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA). His areas of expertise include victim empowerment and support, hate crime, sexuality, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) mental health and well-being.