

Women's mobility and the situational conditions of rape

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A third of all rapes in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, take place in public outdoors places. Yet, little is known about the events that precede this type of sexual offence and less about the situational context of rape.

This study aims at improving the understanding of the nature of rape's situational conditions over time. The analysis assesses whether women's whereabouts, the activities they perform and/or with whom they socialized before the sexual assault affect their risk to be raped based on medical records of 144 outpatients in 2012 and 2013 and a selected number of interviews. The analysis is guided by Situational Action Theory (SAT) using visualization tools (VISUAL-TimePACTS), Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and conditional logistic regression.

Results show that being outdoors is not necessarily riskier for women when compared with indoor public setting; some environments are actually protective, such as streets. Being in a risky social context (e.g. alone) and engaging in a risky activity (e.g. drinking) before the event increases women's risk of rape and such a risk escalate over the day to a maximum at the time the rape occurred. Among those women who never drank alcohol, the results were similar to what was observed in the overall sample, which suggests that risky socialization and risky activities made independent contributions to the risk of rape.

Keywords: sexual violence, visualization techniques, GIS, case-cross over design.