RECALCITRANT VICTIMS AND REFRACTORY SYSTEMS:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ATTRITION

DURING THE INVESTIGATION OF RAPE COMPLAINTS

IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A DISSERTATION

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DEIRDRE SMYTHE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents the results of an empirical examination into the reasons for rape case attrition at the police investigation stage of the criminal justice process. The research focused on four policing jurisdictions in post-apartheid South Africa, a country with one of the highest reported rates of rape in the world. Employing a mixed methods approach, it seeks to describe in fine detail the personal, structural, and systemic factors that arise in specific rape cases, and their relationship to case attrition. Content analysis of 132 police rape dockets closed at the investigation stage is supplemented through interviews with detectives and other criminal justice personnel. The perspective of victims on the police reporting process is reflected in an analysis of reports captured by Rape Crisis counselors. Findings are presented in five chapters. The first of these chapters presents a quantitative description of the cases in the sample. The following chapters deal with police perceptions of victim recalcitrance, the social context of "false" reporting, complainant withdrawals, and the response of the police to rape complaints. The findings provide a useful and important insight into the social and systemic context that promotes attrition within a transitional context, showing how a lack of investigative skill and effort, poor internal oversight, and high expectations of complainant cooperation result in a *process* of disengagement by both detectives and complainants.