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**LIVESTOCK THEFT: EXPANDING ON CRIMINOLOGICAL PROFILING  
AND OFFENDER ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICA****Cecili Doorewaard,<sup>1</sup> Anni Hesselink<sup>2</sup> and Willie Clack<sup>3</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Criminological profiling and assessments of offenders have proved to be a valuable tool in the prediction and rehabilitation of criminal behaviour. However, such assessments have mostly been applied to violent types of crimes. Although economic crimes such as theft and fraud have not been neglected, the value and application of criminological profiling and the assessment of offenders who perpetrated the crime of livestock theft has not been fully explored. This article focuses on three case studies drawn from court case records and other-related literature of individuals who have been found guilty of livestock theft. The aim is to explore, describe and examine these case studies from a criminological perspective following an in-depth qualitative case study analysis. This analysis shows that livestock theft in particular is not a typical crime committed out of a need for immediate gratification of hunger (or so-called 'potslagting' [slaughtering for the pot]), but a crime that is committed by individuals who come from different socio-economic backgrounds, who have diverse social standings in society and who commit this type of crime for various reasons. The data includes a discussion on the motives, causes and contributory factors linked to the crime of livestock theft. Furthermore, the need to implement an Africanised approach to explain crime from a criminological point of view is briefly debated with particular reference to the explanation of livestock theft. Livestock are seen, not only as a commodity, but also as something that has cultural significance. Therefore, the contributory value of the application of criminological profiling and offender assessments towards the prevention and policing of livestock theft should not be overlooked.*

**Keywords:** *livestock theft; criminological assessment; criminological profiling; economic offending; African approach*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Various publications and studies have shown the value of criminological profiling and the assessment of perpetrators whether it may be for custodial, judicial or preventative means (Herbig & Hesselink, 2009: 441; Hesselink-Louw, 2005: 54; Hesselink, 2012a: 199-200; Labuschagne, 2009: 31; Latessa & Lovins, 2010: 204). Notwithstanding that some of these assessments focus mainly on violent crimes such as rape and/or murder, economic offending is not excluded (Hesselink, 2012b: 171-181). Research on economic offences include theft, fraud, burglary and white-collar crimes (Siegel, 2013: 414). Another type of economic offence that remains under-researched but nonetheless important, is livestock theft (Clack, 2013: 78).

Historically, livestock theft is not a new phenomenon and dates back thousands of years. The perception is, however, that rural crime, especially livestock theft – which is often associated with 'potslagting' (i.e. stealing for survival/slaughtering for the pot) – is of no significance or of little concern (Bunei, Rono & Chessa, 2013: 77; Clack, 2013: 82). Slowly but surely these perceptions are beginning to change. Numerous authors have alluded to the fact that the theft of livestock has adapted into a highly organised criminal operation with

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approximately thousands worth of livestock being stolen (Clack, 2013: 82; Jones, 2010: 38; KwaZulu-Natal Department of Community Safety & Liaison (KZNDCSL), 2008: 14; Naidoo 2014: 1-2).

It is believed that livestock theft perpetrators include those who slaughter for own consumption ('potslagting'); some who take the opportunity to enrich themselves financially; individuals who steal and kill livestock out of revenge; and those who are part of organised crime syndicates (Oosthuizen, 2014). Even though the view is that livestock thieves vary in sophistication and socio-economic circumstances, little is known about these perpetrators, so much so that no offender profile of livestock thieves as yet exists (Clack, 2014: 57; KZNDCSL, 2008: 14).

As part of the first author's Masters in Criminology, which involves undertaking the development of a criminological assessment and sample-specific profile of livestock theft perpetrators, this article will examine from a criminological perspective three types of livestock theft perpetrators (two white males and one African male), two of which best represent livestock theft committed as an act of financial greed associated with skill and precision and the third type, committed out of need. The article will also take into account the nature and extent of the crime, the motives, causes and contributory factors that are linked to this age-old crime. Lastly, the need to contextualise livestock theft within an African context will be discussed.

### **CONTEXTUALISING THE CRIME OF THEFT**

Siegel (2013: 414) simply defines an economic crime as an act "in violation of the criminal law" where the aim is to "bring financial reward" to the perpetrator. Consequently, the question to ask is, when is a crime (particularly a financial crime such as theft) an act committed out of greed or simply an act committed out of need?

In simple terms, the concept 'greed' is viewed as an excessive desire or hunger. Seuntjens, Zeelenberg, Breugelmanns and Van de Ven (2014: 1), warn that this concept can be perceived as something that has positive and negative connotations. In other words, greed is viewed as positive (i.e. having the ability to drive individuals' ambitions for more and better things and developing the economy), while the negative side of greed is seen as an immoral practice of self-interest driven by an unsatisfied desire for wealth, power and wanting to attain material goals (Seuntjens et al, 2014: 506-507). Thus, an act of theft out of greed can be viewed as an excessive desire for wealth, power and self-interest, featuring behavioural factors such as manipulation, selfishness and lack of remorse for other people's interests (Seuntjens et al, 2014: 506-507).

In contrast, the term 'need' refers to something that is required to alleviate pressing factors (such as financial constraints and even recognition and acceptance that are often lacking due to limited opportunities (e.g. employment, support structure and social interaction) (Holtzhausen, 2012: 210). In other words, theft is committed as an act of need for financial alleviation, acceptance and acknowledgement. For the purpose of this article, theft is viewed from a dual perspective. Firstly, theft is perceived as an act of greed associated with an avid desire for wealth that is driven by self-interest. Secondly, as a theft committed out of need. This need is derived from a means of desperation, acknowledgement and to alleviate financial strain, thus, not for reasons of self-interest (i.e. for the accumulation wealth).

### **LIVESTOCK THEFT AS A VIABLE ECONOMIC CRIME**

In order to explain and bring into context the motives, causes and contributory factors associated with the offenders under discussion, it is worthwhile to note why livestock theft (as old a crime as it may be) is increasingly being pursued by some criminals as a financial means rather than stealing for direct consumption (i.e. stealing for the pot). Livestock, whether kept in local rural or commercial areas, developing or developed countries,

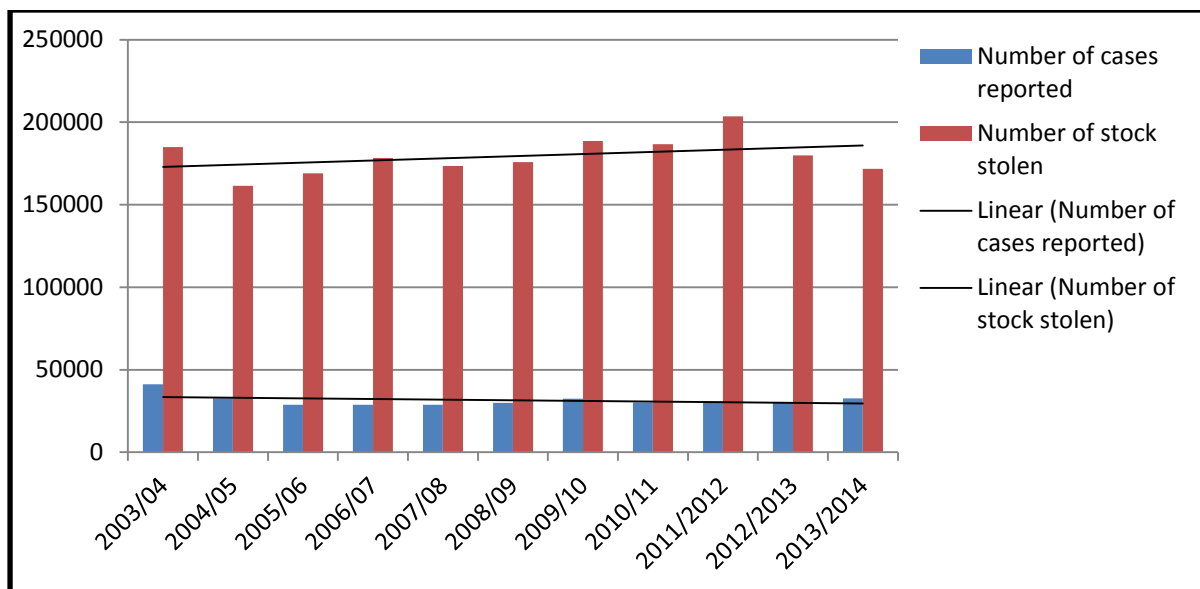
contributes significantly to the food security of a country. It also provides multiple uses for the individual farmer (Clack, 2013: 77; Shackleton, Shackleton, Netshiluvhi, & Mathabela, 2005: 127).

The annual Crime Statistics for 2013/2014 reveal that theft of livestock decreased by 6.2 percent for the financial year. A total of 28 026 cases were reported for the year compared to the previous financial year (29 894 cases reported) (South African Police Service, 2014: 59). Although, this figure may be much higher than presented, these figures should not misrepresent the fact that victims of crime do not always report crime to the authorities (Doorewaard, 2014: 5).

The Victims of Crime Survey (2013/2014) indicates some reasons as to why victims of livestock theft did not report these thefts to law enforcement. The most critical reasons raised by the respondents was that: “police could not do anything” (30,9%); or that the “police won’t do anything about it” (Statistics South Africa, 2014: 49). The percentage of non-reported stock theft cases increased from 60.1 percent in 2011 to 64.4 percent in 2013/2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2011: 39; Statistics South Africa, 2014: 43).

Figure 1 below also illustrates the number of livestock cases compared to the actual number of livestock stolen. In 2011/2012 the number of estimated livestock stolen was 20 3539 compared to the number of actual cases reported (30 949) to law enforcement for the same period. In the period 2013/2014 the actual reporting of cases fared better with a total of 32 675 cases recorded. Clack (2013: 81) also addressed the issue of the severe under-reporting of livestock theft cases. Consequently, without sufficient statistics and trends on the true extent of this crime, effective policing of these offenders are difficult, which further serves as an incentive to potential criminals to commit this type of crime (Doorewaard, 2014: 1-13).

**Figure 1: Number of livestock cases reported versus number of livestock stolen**



(The information used in Figure 1 is a combination of the following multiple sources: South African Police Service (2000); South African Police Service (2009); South African Police Service (2011a); South African Police Service (2011b); South African Police Statistics (2012); & South African Police statistics (2014)).

In order to illustrate the monetary impact of livestock theft it is necessary to note that the National Stock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) annually determines the average monetary value of livestock. These values are then used to estimate the economic impact of livestock theft for the subsequent year (Clack, 2013: 87). Goats, sheep and cattle were calculated to the respective values of R500, R1 600 and R1 800 each for the 2013/2014 reporting year.

The value of livestock reported stolen for the same period amounted to a loss of over R500 million as shown below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Value of all livestock stolen, recovered and lost**

	<b>STOLEN</b>	<b>RECOVERED</b>	<b>LOSS</b>
<b>2007/2008</b>	R507 956 400	R192 641 600	R315 314 800
<b>2008/2009</b>	R547 955 600	R210 710 500	R337 245 100
<b>2009/2010</b>	R619 510 800	R224 890 800	R394 620 000
<b>2010/2011</b>	R655 814 600	R250 884 300	R404 930 300
<b>2011/2012</b>	R830 906 600	R344 271 900	R486 634 700
<b>2012/2013</b>	R757 155 750	R282 034 950	R475 120 800
<b>2013/2014</b>	R788 536 200	R277 475 800	R511 060 400

The above figures thus illustrate (to a small extent) why livestock theft is an attractive viable crime (for financial benefit) to those who choose to pursue it.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Hesselink (2013: 144) contends that assessing the needs and risks of offenders in order to determine the motives and causes of crime and identifying factors which may lead to the onset of criminal behaviour, are some of the core functions of the Criminologist. In order to utilise and showcase these assets with respect to assessing and profiling livestock theft this article aims to explore, describe and examine three case studies of livestock offenders, from a criminological perspective. For the purposes of this article, an in-depth qualitative case study analysis approach was followed (Cresswell, 2014: 4). The information was obtained through the (desktop) analysis of relevant court case records and available personal documentation (Liamputtong, 2013: 202). According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont, (2011: 321), a qualitative case study analysis provides for an in-depth description of a case and further affords the researcher the opportunity to utilise a wide variety of data collection methods such as the examination of existing documentation, to gain deeper insight and meaning into phenomenon (De Vos et al, 2011: 377).

The aims and objectives of the article are, therefore, to describe, analyse and interpret the causes, motives and contributory factors specifically associated to the individual case studies under discussion (Cresswell, 2014: 14). In consideration of the fact that livestock hold significant meaning, not only to the African people but also livestock agriculturalists across all cultures (Clack, 2013: 77; Shackleton et al, 2005: 133), the second objective is to further enhance the interest of forming a criminological African approach in explaining this type of crime not only as a commodity but as something that has cultural significance (Ovens & Prinsloo, 2010:4).

To attain the aims and objectives, as set out above, a short background of each case study will be given below. This is followed by a brief discussion on the motives, causes and contributory factors, including a theoretical criminological explanation, in order to illustrate the importance of expanding criminological assessment and profiling practices applied to economic crimes such as livestock theft.

### **Case Study A**

The offender (Mr A), a 36-year old, white male and livestock agriculturalist from the Free State Province (in South Africa), was found guilty by the court *a quo* of livestock theft and other related charges. He effectively received a sentence of 17 years imprisonment for the theft of approximately 1 318 livestock valued at then current prices of R3,1 million. The charges against him amounted to a total of R4 million (approximately US\$275 000) (Van der Vyver v S [2012]).

The court records indicated that the offender had been working as a marketing manager for a company specialising in the auctioning and marketing of livestock, after which he started his own farming business. Records also reveal that the offender, after his marriage broke down had relinquished his farm to his ex-wife as part of the divorce settlement. Subsequently, he worked as a manager at a butchery and also pursued a career as a building contractor before relocating in 2001 to another farm situated in the Wepener district (Free State Province, South Africa), where he continued farming until his arrest in 2005 (Van der Vyver v S [2012]).

Mr A was accused of stealing a total of 1 318 head of cattle on separate occasions – and committed acts of theft and fraud against nine different complainants. It was reported that he had a trusting relationship with his victims. Here, a case in point being that Mr A invited two (not so wealthy) Lesotho citizens to allow their cattle to graze on his fields with the intention to sell the cattle and keep the money for himself. One victim experienced financial difficulties, and the offender was aware of this. This victim wanted and needed to sell his cattle as soon as possible. Mr A proceeded to appropriate the victim's cattle without reimbursing the victim. After having 'bought' the livestock from his victims Mr A would unlawfully brand the livestock with his or someone else's brand-mark, while some livestock were branded on both sides. The offender then sold the livestock before 'purchasing' it (defrauding the victims of the full amount of the 'sold' livestock) (Van der Vyver v S [2012]).

### **Motives, causes and contributory factors**

Factors such as the reasons, causes, motives and behavioural triggers specific to the nature of the offender are important for the identification of the risks (i.e. future offending) and needs (i.e. employment) of the offender. The purpose of the aforementioned assessment factors is to guide the criminologist to identify criteria for suitable treatment, rehabilitation, growth and management of the offender (Hesselink, 2012a: 199). In this case, related reasons, causes, motives and behavioural triggers are drawn from research on economic offenders and various elements are found to be associated with the offender's criminality (Hesselink, 2012b: 174).

These include the offender's opportunistic and callous behaviour and sense of entitlement. In this regard, the offender displayed no empathy for his victims. In contrast Mr A revealed a pro-criminal attitude (i.e. depriving destitute victims of their means to financial survival). Furthermore, the offender engaged in risk-taking behaviour, showed no insight and understanding into his own behaviour and also lacked self-control (Hesselink, 2012b: 175; Siegel, 2013: 312).

The criminology theorists, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), assert that persons with a lack of self-control are inclined to be impulsive and insensitive to the feelings of others and that they are self-centred and short-sighted. Such individuals also tend to have unstable marriages, friendships and frequently change jobs (Siegel, 2013: 310-311). In this regard, Mr A lacked victim empathy and focused only on his own needs (i.e. insensitive to the needs of his victims), while ignoring the victims of his crime's dire financial situations. In addition, Mr A could not display any self-control and could therefore not abstain from perpetrating the thefts. Instead, he felt compelled to steal and sell his victims' cattle, knowing that his actions were wrong, and aware of the consequences of these acts (possible arrest and incarceration).

However, Wilkström and Triber (2007: 237-238) suggest that self-control should not be viewed solely as an individual trait but as a situational concept, “a factor in the process of choice”. These authors would then postulate that Mr A’s cognitive functions guided, firstly, his decision to mislead the victims (their naïve belief in Mr A’s intention to allow their cattle to graze on his fields). Secondly, to steal their livestock (exploiting the victims’ need for financial means). Accordingly, Mr A’s situation in which he found himself influenced his ability to exercise self-control (Wilkström & Triber, 2007: 238, 252). Studies (İçli, Seydiogullari, Tatlidil, Çoban, Sever & Süeroglu, 2010: 642), have also shown that motives for property crime is not entirely about the monetary incentive, but that they are also linked to factors such as adventure, excitement, entertainment and satisfaction.

### **Case Study B**

The second case involves a registered police informant (a 33-year old African male, also referred to as Mr B) who attempted to steal nine head of cattle from a farmer claiming to have responded to a stock theft assignment. On the night of the crime, Mr B’s accomplice phoned the victim informing him that cattle theft was taking place on his farm. The victim phoned the police and found that two of his nine cattle were tied to a pole at the scene. About 200 metres away the victim found the accused and a vehicle with a trailer stuck in the mud. After being questioned by the victim, Mr B justified his presence at the scene by claiming to be on a stock theft assignment. Upon further inspection of the scene it appeared to the victim that someone had attempted to push the vehicle out of the mud (S v Nkosi [2012]).

Mr B then explained that he received a request from his accomplice to assist in loading some cattle. About 200 metres from the cattle his vehicle got stuck in the mud. They tried to get it out of the mud but were unsuccessful. Mr B went to get some help and when the accomplice did not return the offender phoned one of the police officers. The offender stated that he knew the accomplice from a previous auction where he met him and said that the accomplice had also once delivered liquor to his house. Mr B nonetheless led the court to believe that since then he had had no further communication with the accomplice, but an analysis of his phone records showed otherwise (S v Nkosi [2012]).

The court found Mr B’s version of events not to be reasonably possibly true and stated furthermore that he did not follow the correct police procedure, linking Mr B’s version as reason to steal the cattle. It was only when Mr B and his accomplice failed to execute their plan that they phoned the police to justify the vehicle at the scene (S v Nkosi [2012]).

### **Motives, causes and contributory factors**

Assessing the above information, the following pro-criminal tendencies of the accused showed a misuse of power, lack of self-control, opportunism, a lack of integrity and a lack of guilt or remorse (i.e. lack of responsibility) (Hesselink, 2012b: 174-175; Siegel, 2013: 242). Numerous researchers of economic offending and white-collar crimes (Bucy, Formby, Raspanti & Rooney, 2008: 404; Hesselink, 2012b: 174; Willott, Griffin & Torrance, 2001: 441) agree that it is not unusual for some of these offenders to misuse their position of trust, social status and responsibility within society and their working environment.

In consonance with Siegel’s (2013: 416) typology of property (theft) criminals, the ‘professional’ thief, namely: Mr B, displayed a high degree of skill and had exploited the interests of his victim in order to maximise his financial means and to evade suspicion. Similarly, Mr B’s actions included a high degree of skill, knowledge and ‘professionalism’, evidently abusing his social standing in society (as a police informant) by using this position to his advantage to avoid being captured. Furthermore, Mr B attempted to deny any involvement in the crime claiming that he only knew his accomplice from a previous encounter and that he had not spoken to him since, thus shifting blame and not taking any responsibility for his involvement (Conklin, 2013: 154).

### **Case Study C**

The third and final case comprises of a 46-year old white male (also referred to as Mr C), who stole 48 head of cattle (valued between R105 000 and R120 000) from his employer where he worked as a foreman (manager) on the farm. The thefts occurred on three occasions between April and May 2005. Mr C sold the cattle for a total of R83 000 but paid R20 000 back to the complainant as a means of restitution (Truyens v S [2012]).

Mr C explained that during the week the complainant (hereafter the employer) was not present on the farm, since he worked somewhere else and only returned to the farm on weekends (Saturdays). Mr C and his employer agreed that he (Mr C) could return to his family on Fridays for the weekend. It started to occur frequently that the employer arrived later on weekends and expected from the offender to stay longer (on Saturdays) as previously agreed, in order to show what work had been done for the week. Mr C was also promised that he would be reimbursed for the extra work he had to take on from a former employee. However, payment for Mr C's additional workload never materialised. Mr C stated that when he tried to phone his employer during the week to inform him of any problems on the farm, the employer would cut his calls short stating that the phone calls were too expensive (Truyens v S [2012]).

Adding to Mr C's frustration was the fact that his oldest son and twin daughters suffered from a rare condition known as cystic fibrosis and they therefore needed constant medical care and could not function independently (without assistance) on their own. The court found that Mr C's motive for the theft was not to spend the money on luxuries, but rather to cover the medical costs to alleviate his children's suffering (Truyens v S [2012]).

### **Motives, causes and contributory factors**

In this case, the known motives, causes and contributory factors related to Mr C's criminal behaviour involve traits such as desperation, a need for survival, opportunity, lack of integrity, lack of moral values, pro-criminal attitudes (i.e. knowing what he did was wrong, yet persisted), misuse of a position of trust, low self-control, frustration and dissatisfaction (Agnew, 2006: 5-7; Hesselink, 2012b: 175-176; Froggio, Zamaro & Lori, 2009: 75). These factors and 'stressful events' in combination with an already existing form of criminal thinking propelled Mr C to commit crime (Froggio et al, 2009: 75). Moreover, Siegel's typology of a thief not only involves the 'professional thief' but a thief whom he typifies as an 'occasional thief' (Siegel, 2013: 417). Siegel (2013: 416) holds that this type of thief, namely: Mr C, and his decision to steal was born from his unique situational circumstances (i.e. the need provide, his frustration – in working longer hours than agreed and not being paid for this – and desperation to care for his children, together with Mr C's readiness and choice to steal, are often spontaneous actions that are inter-linked).

Research conducted by Willott et al, (2001: 450) suggest family responsibility (as was the case with Mr C) is a motivating factor for criminality among professional-class men. Willott et al, (2001) found that during interviews with four offenders, one of the respondents iterated: "if it had just been me, I don't think... there would probably have been no need, to have to dig into these funds..." (Willott et al, 2001: 450).

Mr C confirmed that his employer had expressed his gratitude towards him to other people, and to his wife by stating that he (the employer) wished he had more people like him (Mr C) who could work so hard, but none of this was said to the offender himself. Mr C further expressed that he knew that what he did was wrong but that he trusted that his employer would give him a second chance. Mr C stated: "Maybe it is wrong of me, but it is only human to want acknowledgement, especially if you have done more than your share". Froggio et al, (2009: 74), substantiate the view that there is a strong link between strain (e.g. where Mr C was not treated fairly by his employer as expected) and crime. Similar research (Rebellion, Piquero & Piquero, 2009: 50), revealed that crime was more likely to occur among

individuals who perceived discrimination from others such as employers (as was the case with Mr C) on the basis of their ascribed (demographic) characteristics. Thus, it is not uncommon for individuals to act out on feelings of unfairness, frustration and hopelessness (Agnew, 2006: 13).

For purposes of the expansion of the criminological explanation below, all the causes, triggers and contributory factors linked to Mr A, Mr B and Mr C's offending behaviour are summarised in Table 2. As depicted in this table some factors associated with each case are similar in some respect and may overlap.

**Table 2: Motives, causes and contributory factors**

Case study A	Case study B	Case study C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunistic and callous behaviour</li> <li>- A sense of entitlement</li> <li>- A lack of victim empathy</li> <li>- Criminally inclined behaviour (i.e. depriving destitute victims of their means to financial survival)</li> <li>- Risk taking behaviour</li> <li>- No insight and understanding in own behaviour</li> <li>- A lack of self-control</li> <li>- A lack of prosocial norms and values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Misuse of power</li> <li>- A lack of integrity</li> <li>- A lack of self-control</li> <li>- A sense of entitlement</li> <li>- Opportunistic behaviour</li> <li>- Denial of responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frustration</li> <li>- Dissatisfaction</li> <li>- Desperation</li> <li>- Need for survival</li> <li>- Opportunity</li> <li>- A lack of integrity and moral values</li> <li>- Pro-criminal attitudes (knowing what he did is wrong, yet he persisted)</li> <li>- Misuse position of trust</li> <li>- Low self-control</li> </ul>

As indicated in Table 2, all three of the offenders misused their position of trust by depriving their victims of their means of survival. As stated before, economic offenders tend to abuse the trust of others to facilitate their acts of crime (Hesselink, 2012b: 174). Secondly, the offenders showed a lack of self-control and displayed a sense of risk-taking behaviour (i.e. knowing that livestock theft is against the law and yet they persisted with their crimes) (Conklin, 2013: 108). Lastly, the offenders were in favourable positions (i.e. the form of employment), thus providing them with a continuous (exploitable) opportunity to commit the thefts (Hesselink, 2012b: 175).

### CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

It is generally difficult to explain the exact nature of theft. Hesselink (2012b: 173), correctly captures the enigma of such an act by stating that people often wonder why certain individuals, especially well-educated and respected members of a community commit acts that are against the law. Criminology theory is an important feature in explaining why some individuals commit crime. Although no single theory exists, the theories below explain criminal behaviour of some trends within a broad spectrum without focusing on one aspect or on a specific individual (Williams, 2012: 8). Nevertheless, according to Hesselink (2012b: 174), the most noted criminological theories in explaining sophisticated economic offending, consist of the Neutralisation Theory (Matza & Sykes, 1964), the Corporate Cultural Perspective (Piquero, Tibbetts & Blankenship, 2005) and the Self-Control Perspective (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) (see also Siegel, 2013: 214, 470, 313). Amongst these theories, the most prominently featured are the neutralisation and self-control theories (including the General Strain Theory). Although some of these theories have been discussed in this article (to some extent), it is further proposed to expand on these explanations in order



to illustrate their application to the explanation of the individual livestock offenders from the three case studies.

The Neutralisation Theory holds that people tend to rationalise or justify their criminal acts to others, and to themselves by what is known as “techniques of neutralisation” (Conklin, 2013: 152). Techniques of neutralisation include: denial of responsibility, denial of the victim, denial of any injury, and condemnation of the condemners (Froggio et al, 2009: 77). These techniques enable individuals to commit crime and rationalise their acts without damaging their self-image (Conklin, 2013: 154). In Case Study B, the offender denied any criminal intent when he tried to implicate and shift all the blame for the crime onto his accomplice, and furthermore, when he tried to mislead the court as to his involvement in the crime, demonstrating the fact that he tried to meet his needs by neutralising the social controls (i.e. the courts) without harming his image (i.e. status) (Hesselink, 2012b: 174).

On the other hand, the self-control perspective contends that an individual commits an act of crime in the pursuit of his or her self-interest. This perspective ascribes the individual’s propensity to commit acts of crime to a low self-control (Conklin, 2013: 3). In other words, a person such as Mr A, who displayed a sense of low self-control (e.g. impulsiveness, insensitive to the feelings of the victims, short-sightedness, and self-centredness), lacked the necessary characteristics that inhibited him from enjoying gratification over a longer period of time (Rebellion, Straus & Medeiros, 2008: 332). Thus, his criminal actions provided him with immediate gratification to meet his intended desires. In addition, some self-control theorists advise that the concept ‘self-control’ is not a sole factor in determining criminal behaviour. Rather other factors such as the opportunity to commit crime (e.g. holding a position of trust with the victims), and the presence of social bonds and/or the lack thereof (e.g. divorced from wife, lack of pro-social activities) at the time also influence a person’s tendency to commit crime (Pratt, 2015: 664-665).

Lastly, the General Strain Theory asserts that the stronger the intensity and the frequency of the strain (e.g. unemployment, financial strain), the more likely such a person will turn to crime. Being frequently exposed to the strain (and accompanying stress) can give rise to anger and negative emotions (i.e. feelings of helplessness, revenge, anger) can in turn increase the likelihood of criminal actions (Siegel, 2013: 208-209). Froggio et al (2009: 75), further note that the General Strain Theory encompasses three major categories of strain. The first strain occurs when others prevent the individual from achieving their goals (e.g. money or status), while the second strain emerges when a positive stimuli (e.g. family support) is removed. The third strain happens if the individual is subjected to aversive stimuli such as verbal or physical abuse (Froggio et al, 2009: 75).

The sources of strain that may have been conducive towards Mr C’s decision to commit the crime include (but may not be limited to): the responsibility of having to care for children who are in constant need of medical attention; experiencing financial restrictions due to the medical costs involved; a restricted means to an income (not being reimbursed for the extra work done); being deprived from positive stimuli (i.e. visiting his family); and feeling dissatisfied with the way his employer started to treat him (e.g. cutting phone calls short, not giving personal acknowledgement of his hard work ethic). These factors may produce negative emotions such as feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, anger, frustration, disappointment and even revenge, thus increasing the decision to act criminally (i.e. committing theft) (Siegel, 2013: 208-209).

A study conducted by Botchkovar and Broidy (2010: 846), from a random sample of 340 adults in Russia found that both anger and other negative emotions increased the likelihood of property theft. In addition, these researchers advocate that crime may be a likely coping strategy for an individual who is affected by initial strain (i.e. child in need of medical care), that leads to subsequent or concurrent straining events (i.e. financial restrictions) (Botchkovar & Broidy, 2010: 851).

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF A CRIMINOLOGICAL PROFILE AND THE NEED FOR AN AFRICANISED APPROACH**

Hesselink (2013:142), notes the invaluable contribution and potential that criminology research and practice can bring to the South African context. These research “interests and outputs” provide assistance to the South African Police Service (SAPS) in the identification of criminological profiles of known and unknown offenders.

The limited availability of research conducted on livestock theft in general and specifically on the livestock perpetrator, warrants the need to identify and contextualise the perpetrators of livestock theft (Clack, 2013: 78). Dzimba and Matooane (2005:59-60), as well as Bunei et al, (2014: 211), noted that livestock perpetrators vary in terms of the socio-economic backgrounds and social standings in society from which they emanate. The case studies discussed above were also not limited to one specific racial group (two white and one African). This factor re-kindles, from a criminological point of view, the debate regarding explanations of diverse cultural backgrounds (Ovens & Prinsloo, 2010: 4).

Nevertheless some criminological theories, (e.g. the General Theory of Crime), have been tested across cultures, but Rebellon et al, (2008: 355), posit that existing research does not provide ample insight into the applicability of these theories to non-Western cultures. However, they claim that their findings (which are based across 32 national settings) found support for some of Gottfredson and Hirschi’s predictions and suggest that the theory can potentially be applied to both Western and non-Western cultures. Even though such criminological theories can explain criminal conduct within an African context, it has been prominently emphasised by South African scholars (Ovens & Prinsloo, 2010: 4; Hesselink, 2013: 139; Hesselink & Dastile, 2015: 342) that there is a need to contextualise and apply criminological theory sufficiently to explain crime from an African perspective. This applies specifically to the cultural differences, beliefs and traditions intrinsic within an African context that should be uniquely explored (Hesselink, 2013: 139). Hesselink and Dastile (2015: 342), support this view by highlighting that an Africanised approach is required to explain the African, and particular South African experiences “according to their own meanings” and understanding of what is significant to their culture and life history.

Although the case studies did not explicitly reveal or state that any of the thefts were committed for, or out of cultural reasons, it is necessary to emphasise that livestock is more than a just commodity – it has cultural significance (i.e. payment of *Lobolo* [customary marriage dowry from male side of the marriage], slaughtering for celebrations and rituals among the African community) (Shackleton et al, 2005: 133), and therefore the need also arises to explain livestock in an African context. For example, in the book *The abundant herds: A celebration of the Sanga-Nguni cattle* (Poland, 2003: 10), it is noted that “the well-being of the herds and the well-being of men have been so closely connected that cattle have become a part of the spiritual and aesthetic lives of [African] people”. In essence, if applicable, when assessing the livestock theft perpetrator, attention should be given to each offender’s cultural and traditional beliefs. This view is substantiated by Hesselink and Dastile (2015: 343) when they state that any correctional [sic] assessment should take into account the cultural beliefs and practices (i.e. cultural rituals and celebrations) that are unique to African society.

Ovens and Prinsloo (2010: 4) propose that a theory should be constructed and developed that is unique to the African domain. They proclaim that criminological theorists and academics should avoid making generalisations or to explain and examine the situation from a purely Western perspective and they further suggest that an African theory should consider ethnicity and ethics when formulating an African criminological theory.

## CONCLUSION

Livestock theft, even though an age-old crime, is rarely explored among researchers, academics and practitioners but it is revealed to be more than just a petty crime. Criminological profiling and offender assessment practices not only focuses on violent types of crimes but also explores economic offences. Although, such practices are yet to be applied to economic crimes such as livestock theft and further explored, especially when taking into account the crime's diverse nature (from slaughtering for the pot to organised crime) and the perpetrators associated with the crime. Therefore, this article set out to expand further on the usefulness of criminological assessment and profiling practices in South Africa by analysing three case studies of individuals who have been found guilty of stock theft offences. The aim was to explore, describe and explain this phenomenon from a criminological perspective. The causes, motives and contributory factors discussed further unpacked the complexities and diverse nature of the crime and of the individuals involved.

The authors have illustrated that livestock theft is an economically viable crime that can be committed out of greed to promote self-interest, or committed as an act of need to alleviate financial difficulties. It was also accentuated that livestock is not only seen as a commodity but provides for cultural practices such as rituals and celebrations. Although none of such cultural practices could be linked to any of the selected case studies with the information provided, the intention was rather to stimulate potential research in this field, considering that the perpetrators do not emanate only from one ethnic/race group. Not only should such a theory apply to the perpetrators themselves but also include the victims of the crime as well, especially when comparing the different views of commercial farmers and rural subsistence farmers and how they perceive the phenomenon of livestock theft. Therefore, the importance of expanding and utilising criminological profiling and assessment practices to livestock theft offences should not go amiss towards the prevention and policing of this particular crime.

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