



# Necrophilic Crime Scene Behaviors in the Context of Sexual Homicide: A Multiple Case Study

Ewa Stefanska<sup>1\*</sup>, Adam Carter<sup>2</sup>, Mark Pettigrew<sup>3</sup>, Tamsin Higgs<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Greenwich, Greenwich, UK; <sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, City of Westminster, UK; <sup>3</sup>Department of Health and Social Care, University of Bolton, Bolton, UK; <sup>4</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada

## ABSTRACT

Among the most complex cases faced by forensic practitioners tasked with risk assessment and offending behavior interventions are those who have perpetrated sexual homicide involving paraphilic behaviors, even more so when this includes post mortem sexual acts. There is very little empirical research on necrophilic behavior in sexual homicide to guide forensic-clinical case formulation, and there are conflicting scholarly opinions concerning the significance of necrophilic behavior as an indicator of sexual sadism. To address these issues, offense and offender characteristics of 25 five perpetrators of sexual homicide were examined. All had engaged in unambiguously necrophilic behavior, their sexual acts being exclusively after the victim's death. About one third of the sample was assessed to warrant a working hypothesis of sexual sadism according to their score on the Sexual Sadism Scale (SeSaS). Vignettes of these cases are presented along with examples of non-sexually sadistic cases in order to demonstrate the differing functional significance of necrophilic behavior. Theoretical and clinical implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** Sexual homicide; Necrophilia; Sexual sadism; Forensic case formulation

## INTRODUCTION

Whilst, with some occasional exception, there has been a universal shift away from the organized/disorganized homicide offender typology developed in the 1980s, in recent years there has been a considerable re-energised scholarly interest in crime scene behaviors in cases of homicide, particularly sexual homicide. The burgeoning interest in the assessment of crime scenes and the behavior of homicidal offenders is undoubtedly linked to the importance of linking cases and the swift apprehension of suspects [14].

Just as there has been recent scholarly interest in crime scene behaviors of sexual homicide offenders, so too the attention given to necrophilic behaviors has increased [5] particularly regarding their role in homicide. However, the relationship between necrophilia and sexual homicide was first presented in the nineteenth century by Krafft-Ebing who made a distinction between those who are gratified by killing and mutilation and those who seek sexual contact with corpses. Scholarly attention to necrophilic behaviors and homicide has been sporadic from Krafft-Ebing onwards. Wulfen identified three varieties of necrophilic behavior: necrostuprum, necrophagy, and lust murder [2]. Necrostuprum referred to stealing corpses in order to have sexual intercourse, necrophagy referred to the mutilation

and consumption of body parts, and lust murder referred to killing in order to have intercourse with the corpse. Hirschfield proposed a simple binary categorization of necrophiles: those who kill to satisfy their necrophilic urges and those who use the body of someone who is already dead. Rosman and Resnick went further in their categorization of necrophilic behaviors, based on 122 cases, and proposed the category of pseudonecrophilia to refer to those whose sexual interest in corpses is transient, when the dead are not the main object of a person's sexual fantasies [6]. Referring to genuine necrophilia the authors divided remaining cases into three groups: regular necrophilia; necrophilic fantasy; and necrophilic homicide. The regular necrophile uses already dead bodies for sexual pleasure; the necrophilic fantasizer merely fantasizes about doing so; and the homicidal necrophile will kill to obtain a corpse for sexual activity. Most recently, Aggrawal, attempted to distinguish necrophilic behaviors across ten categories: role players; romantic necrophiles; necrophilic fantasizers; tactile necrophiles; fetishistic necrophiles; necromutilomaniacs; opportunistic necrophiles; regular necrophiles; homicidal necrophiles; and exclusive necrophiles. However, the attempt is not without its critics and despite the typology purportedly having a mathematical underpinning; several categories either overlap one another or are placed in an illogical order of seriousness [7].

**Correspondence to:** Ewa Stefanska, Department of Psychology, University of Greenwich, Greenwich, UK, E-mail: e.stefanska@gre.ac.uk

**Received:** 13-Oct-2022, Manuscript No. JFPY-22-18373; **Editor Assigned:** 17-Oct-2022, PreQC No. JFPY-22-18373 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 31-Oct-2022, QC No. JFPY-22-18373; **Revised:** 07-Nov-2022, Manuscript No. JFPY-22-18373 (R); **Published:** 14-Nov-2022, DOI: 10.35248/2475-319X.22.7.248

**Citation:** Stefanska E, Carter A, Pettigrew M, Higgs T (2022) Necrophilic Crime Scene Behaviors in the Context of Sexual Homicide: A Multiple Case Study. J Foren Psy. 7:248

**Copyright:** © 2022 Stefanska E, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

In 2010, Stein et al. provided the only empirical study to date that focused on the relationship between necrophilic behaviors and sexual homicide. From an original sample of 122 sexual homicide cases, the authors identified 16 with evidence of necrophilic behavior. Interestingly, the study used crime scene behaviors, amongst other information regarding offenders and victims, to support its finding that the homicides were not perpetrated in order to secure a corpse for sexual activity, suggesting that such offenders were not true necrophiles but only engaged in necrophilic behaviors when the opportunity arose.

A distinction between true necrophiles and those who will take advantage of a homicide victim for sexual activity was offered by Carter et al. Post-mortem Sexual Interference Offenders (PMSIOs) are defined as those sexual killers who disclose that a post-mortem sexual assault occurred, or pathologist evidence indicates post-mortem sexual interference but, as the authors specify, are not necessarily necrophiles. As Higgs et al. note, PMSIOs will perpetrate a homicide and then engage in necrophilic behavior in a single psychological event, without a cooling-off period, and although some may have prefacing necrophilic interests, it does not mean that the offender is a true necrophile [8]. Necrophilia, broadly, is characterised by intense, recurrent, and persistent sexual arousal to corpses; it is not a prerequisite to engaging in necrophilic behaviors after the perpetration of a homicide. Moreover, in no way is it suggested that a true necrophile will necessarily go on to, or even contemplate, killing someone in order to act out their sexual fantasies.

Most recently, Chopin and Beauregard have recognized that necrophilic behaviors do not necessarily equate to a diagnosis of necrophilia in their attempt to determine whether a primary motivation to kill was associated with securing corpses or whether post-mortem sexual activity was a deviant behavior secondary to the act of homicide. Using 109 cases of sexual homicide involving post-mortem sexual interference with corpse, their findings suggested four different patterns of necrophilic behaviors in such homicides: opportunistic; experimental; preferential; and sadistic. In so doing, just as in Stein et al.'s study, crime scene characteristics of sexual homicides where necrophilic behaviors were evidenced were analysed alongside victim and offender characteristics [9]. Indeed, the 109 cases were selected on the basis that they had been solved thus affording the researchers access to offender's lifestyle and demographic information which forms part of their categorizations. The opportunistic offender is most likely to be single with a history of prior convictions and to assault an acquaintance victim. The experimental offender is usually in a relationship and is most likely to assault a female victim. The preferential offender is likely to be single, to report sexual dysfunctions and have a loner lifestyle. Finally, the sadistic offender is well socialized, possesses a sexual collection of movies and pictures, and is most able to avoid police detection.

Despite the various classifications of necrophilic behaviors that have been proposed, especially in relation to homicide, two consistent themes emerge: (1) homicide perpetrated in order to gain access to a body, and; (2) necrophilia being an extension of sadistic tendencies. Within the literature, however, there has been a long-standing debate as to whether or not the two themes should be treated separately [7]. Specifically, it has been argued that killing to gain access to an unresisting body is the act of ultimate subjugation and thus, it has its roots in sadomasochism [10,11]. While post-mortem acts should be viewed as an extension of anti-mortem acts amalgamated into a single event, the few existing studies looked at all possible cases where the necrophilic behaviors were present, including cases where sexual behavior occurred both ante and post-mortem. In such an

operationalization, we would expect sadism to be more prevalent, but little is known about sadism in cases where sexual activity took place only after the victim's death. This will be focused on in the present study.

The present objective is not to typologize necrophilia, nor is it suggested that this paraphilic disorder is necessarily indicated when necrophilic behavior occurs. Rather, the study examines necrophilic behavior occurring in the context of sexual homicide and therefore does not include individuals who may meet diagnostic criteria for necrophilia, and may have engaged in necrophilic acts, but have not killed. In addition, in the same way that not all perpetrators of sexual offenses against children may be assumed to have a paedophilic disorder, not all perpetrators of sexual homicide who engage in post mortem sexual acts may be assumed to have necrophilia. Thus, the study aims to contribute to the limited empirical literature permitting to better understand how necrophilia is expressed in homicide crimes, what contextual factors are associated with different expressions of necrophilic behaviors, and what individual characteristics might be associated with the perpetrators of these acts. In addition, we will examine the prevalence of sadism in each homicide case using a structured professional judgment instrument allowing to provide a working hypothesis regarding the diagnosis of sexual sadism. In particular, we aim to untangle the role of sadism and necrophilic behaviors taking a novel approach and excluding homicides where sexual behaviors also took part ante mortem.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

Use of the case study format in the examination of paraphilic behaviors now has a settled tradition in the research literature, particularly when those behaviors under examination are considered to be rare [12,13]. Moreover, the tradition of utilising case studies to advance knowledge and understanding of paraphilic behaviors and conditions extends to homicides in which those behaviors are evident [14-16]. In addition, case study analysis is not only traditional but also valuable from a clinical perspective, given the rarity of some behaviors, such as necrophilia, and the in depth-analysis that this approach affords [17].

The present research takes a multiple case study approach, in which criminal event characteristics for each case were collated and analysed descriptively at the group level, before looking in detail at the individual cases in order to identify the circumstances in which necrophilic behavior occurred.

### Sample

The sample (N=25) comprised of men convicted for the sexual homicide of a pubescent female victim (aged 14 years and over). All perpetrators served a custodial sentence within Her Majesty's Prison Service in England and Wales. Sexual homicides were defined as offenses where a sexual element to the killing was evidenced, admitted, or suspected based on the professional judgement of a psychologist or other qualified assessor within the prison service. Subsequent to the identification of sexual homicides, cases were included in the present study when there was evidence of necrophilic sexual acts, meaning that whether or not the perpetrator could be assessed to meet diagnostic criteria according to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5) or the World Health Organization's International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (11th ed.; ICD-11), the presence of post-mortem sexual activity was confirmed by the coroner's report presented at trial. However, some specific exclusion criteria were

applied in order to minimise ambiguity in the sample composition. These exclusion criteria were: Post mortem acts may not have been sexual in nature (specifically, insertion of objects being the only form of post mortem interference led to the exclusion of the case as crime scene evidence does not permit to conclude that the act was sexual, as opposed to, for example, an expression of anger); sexual abuse was not limited to post mortem sexual activity (i.e., cases where sexual activity took place pre or perimortem as well as post mortem were excluded, because there may be unique perpetrator and offense characteristics of sexual homicides involving sexual acts only post mortem by comparison to sexual homicides during which post mortem sexual activity represents one type of sexual abuse of the victim among others); finally, masturbation was excluded unless there was evidence of this being a post mortem activity occurring at the crime scene (i.e., reports that the perpetrator masturbated after the crime, either when having left the crime scene or later, because he became aroused to the memory of his crime, were not considered for study inclusion, but reports from the criminal investigation that permitted to conclude that such activity took place after the victim was killed but while the perpetrator remained at the crime scene was considered as evidence of post mortem sexual activity).

### Procedure and analytical strategy

Details regarding criminal events were collected from the electronic and/or physical files from the Public Protection Unit Database (PPUD) of the Home Office which are collected for Parole Board purposes. The analyses related to criminal event characteristics and perpetrator's MO was mainly descriptive. Variables were coded as either absent or present (0=no, 1=yes) for each offender in the sample. Case study information was transcribed from the complete offender file. Two raters blind-coded 10% of the same cases in order to establish inter-rater reliability of the framework. The strength of agreement using Fleiss criteria was excellent (Cohen's Kappa=0.91).

### Variables and measures

**Pre-crime circumstances:** Variables related to the early crime phase (circumstances before the killing took place) and situational context were coded here. These included: (1) conflict with victim or someone else before the offense (24 hours before until immediately before the killing); (2) intoxication (excluding if alcohol level was deemed not apparently relevant, i.e., the perpetrator was reported to have consumed a small amount of alcohol, for example, one pint of beer); (3) stalking, harassment or targeted victim (this needed to be clearly noted in the official files); (4) sexual dysfunction (official report of erectile or ejaculatory problems).

**Violent behaviors:** The type of violence used to kill the victim was examined and four types of fatal violence were observed in the sample: (1) killing by strangulation; (2) killing by asphyxiation; (3) killing by beating; (4) killing by stabbing.

**Sexual behaviours:** Sexual behaviors included: (1) vaginal penetration; (2) anal penetration; (3) other sexual activity (according to evidence found at the crime scene or on the victim's body); (4) biting (sexual areas).

**Post-offense behaviours:** Behaviors carried out in the post offense phase included: (1) body left as is; (2) carried on with routine activities; (3) handed himself to police; (4) offender left the area (changed address or travelled somewhere).

**Sexual Sadism Scale (SeSaS):** The SeSaS is a structured professional judgment instrument aiming to provide a working hypothesis regarding diagnosis of sexual sadism. The tool focuses on offense-

related behavioral aspects available from the crime scene and all items are coded dichotomously (1=yes, 0=no). The SeSaS consists of two parts. The first part includes 11 items coded for sexually sadistic crime scene behaviors that take into consideration crime scene actions of the index offense as well as previous offenses. A total of four warrants a working hypothesis for the presence of sadism. The second part is informative and includes three items relating to offense planning and previous sadistic behavior and as such the assessment looks beyond the convicted offenses or current charges, but the items are not counted to the score total.

## RESULTS

Descriptive analysis of criminal event characteristics showed that sexual arousal in the pre-crime phase and stalking, harassment and victim targeting were present in approximately half of the sample (52% and 48% respectively). One-third of the offenders were intoxicated during the commissioning of the crime (32%). Some perpetrators were known to suffer from ejaculatory or erectile dysfunction (16%). Conflict was uncommon in the lead up to the commissioning of the crime (8%). The most frequent type of fatal injury was strangulation (68%) whereas beating was uncommon (4%). During the criminal event, vaginal and anal penetration was noted in 68% and 20% of cases respectively and 44% of offenders engaged in other forms of sexual activity (e.g. masturbation, fondling). Some offenders also engaged in biting (20%). Following the offense, most of the perpetrators left the victim's body as it was (68%). With regards to offender post criminal event behavior, 44% carried on with their routine activities and 28% handed themselves to the police or left the area (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Characteristics of sexual homicides perpetrated by offenders who engaged in necrophilic behavior (N=25).

	Frequency	n
<b>Pre-crime circumstances</b>		
Sexual arousal	52%	13
Stalking, harassment or victim target	48%	12
Intoxication	32%	8
Sexual dysfunction	16%	4
Conflict	8%	2
<b>Violent behaviours</b>		
Killing by strangulation	68%	17
Killing by stabbing	20%	5
Killing by asphyxiation	8%	2
Killing by beating	4%	1
<b>Sexual behaviours</b>		
Vaginal penetration	76%	19
Other sexual activity	44%	11
Anal penetration	20%	5
Biting of sexual areas	20%	5
<b>Post-offense behaviours</b>		
Body left	68%	17
Carried on with routine activities	44%	11
Handed self to police	28%	7
Left area	28%	7

Analysis of SeSaS scores indicated that a working hypothesis of sadism as measured by a score of four or higher could be considered for approximately one-third (36%) of the sample (Table 2). Not surprisingly (given the sexual nature of the offenses) item 1 yielded the highest frequency (92%). In many cases (68%), it was noted that the perpetrator demonstrated his control and superiority during the offense. In 40% of cases it was assessed that the course of the offense was ritualistic and thus, clearly followed some type of script or role-play. On the contrary, none of the offenders confined their victims, 8% used expressive physical violence (i.e., violence that was greater than would have been necessary for committing the sexual offense), and 12% tortured their victim.

**Table 2:** Sexual sadism scale items.

Item	Variable	%	n
<b>Part 1</b>			
1	Sexual arousal during offense(s)	92%	23
2	Power/control/dominance	68%	17
3	Torture	12%	3
4	Degradation/humiliation	16%	4
5	Mutilation of genital areas	16%	4
6	Mutilation of other body parts	16%	4
7	Expressive physical violence	8%	2
8	Object insertion	20%	5
9	Ritualistic behavior	40%	11
10	Confinement	0%	0
11	Taking trophies/keeping records	16%	4
<b>Working hypothesis of sadism (score 4 or more)</b>		36%	9
<b>Part 2</b>			
	Planful conduct	56%	14
	Sadistic acts outside listed offenses	12%	3
	Arousability through sadistic acts/fantasies	48%	12

Given the first study objective, to examine the conceptualisation of necrophilic behaviors in sexual homicide offenses as either an extension of sexual sadism or not, following the group-level descriptive analysis, cases were categorized according to their SeSaS score. Consequently, we present a series of case vignettes, as an examination of situational factors as well as perpetrator and victim characteristics, to work towards a better understanding of the circumstances in which necrophilic behaviors occur. Since we may not provide vignettes for the entire sample, those that most clearly describe what was observed in sadistic and non-sadistic cases were selected.

### Sadistic cases

Nine cases were assessed to have a score of 4 or more on the SeSaS.

**Case 1:** The victim was targeted, and the offense was planned. The perpetrator prepared a script, and the victim was tortured and killed according to the series of planned violent sex acts according to the script. This was a prolonged attack during which the victim was restrained. Following death, further sexual activities took place including ritualistic acts. The body was dressed and re-dressed in various items of clothing. Some of these acts were recorded and the recordings were kept as a trophy.

**Case 2:** The offense was planned, and the victim was conned to arrive at the place where the homicide would take place. The body was then moved to another location and in the course of several days the perpetrator would visit, repeatedly abuse her body violently and sexually. The evidence suggests that during that period he would also watch deviant pornography.

**Case 3:** The victim was targeted, observed for a while, and then attacked. This was a blitz attack, and the killing was immediate. The perpetrator engaged in various post-mortem sexual activities such as petting, attempted sexual intercourse, mutilation of sexual body parts and mutilation of other body parts.

### Non-sadistic cases

**Case 4:** The perpetrator was the victim's ex-partner. The killing appeared to be motivated by jealousy, after the perpetrator noticed love bites on the victim's neck. An argument commenced at home during which the victim was attacked. The perpetrator attempted to strangle the victim but eventually she was killed by drowning. The body was moved, and sexual intercourse took place after the killing and in what could be described as an act of last possession.

**Case 5:** On the day of the killing the perpetrator interpreted the victim's behavior to be deliberately seductive. He tried to force sexual advances on her, but she resisted and was killed during the struggle that ensued. Following the killing, the body was moved to the bed where the perpetrator engaged in sexual intercourse.

**Case 6:** The perpetrator had an interest in strangulation and erotic asphyxia. He was regularly accessing violent pornography of that nature. While the exact lead-up to the offense is not known, the victim died of strangulation. The body was then moved to another secure location where it was kept for more than a week and visited on numerous occasions.

**Case 7:** The perpetrator established a lookout in an outdoor publicly accessible place and used it to observe women sunbathing. He brought a rape kit, suggesting premeditation. The choice of the victim was however random, and she was killed immediately. The body was moved to a more secluded spot and concealed. The perpetrator returned to the body on several occasions for sexual purposes. The evidence indicated that the sex-toys had also been used on the victim.

## DISCUSSION

Necrophilic behaviors in sexual homicide represent the most extreme manifestation of sexual aggression. As such, cases are rare and more than two centuries after Krafft-Ebing it remains that little is known about them. The current study aimed to examine crime scene behaviors of homicide offenders who engaged in such acts regardless of whether or not they met diagnostic criteria for necrophilia. The initial analyses revealed that homicides were typically not a result of a conflict occurring between the perpetrator and the victim. In fact, in approximately half of the sample we found indications that the perpetrator was sexually aroused prior to the



offense occurring. Furthermore, approximately half of the victims in the sample were selected; either targeted immediately before the offense took place or harassed and even stalked some time before the offense. One third of the perpetrators were intoxicated at the time of the attack, a higher number to that noted by Stein et al. Some offenders suffered from erectile or ejaculatory dysfunction. Strangulation was the most common method of killing and this is concordant with Stein et al.'s results as well as findings from the wider literature on sexual homicide.

### The necrophilia/sexual sadism debate

Any discussion of sadism in the context of necrophilic activity appears, at first, to be somewhat oxymoronic. The essence of sadism is enjoyment in the suffering of others, yet the corpse lacks sentience, unable to register the distress that would be the foundation of the sadist's gratification. Yet, the sadistic roots of necrophilia have been debated by those who study the behavior since at least the mid twentieth century. Bloch, for example, notes the helpless state of the corpse, unable to resist any sexual activity that can be perpetrated upon it, and so finds, from that perspective, sadomasochism at the core of necrophilic behavior [18]. Meanwhile, Drzazga in a more explicit assessment asserts that, "[necrophilia] is the crassest form of sadism when the desired object is subject to absolute subjugation without resistance" (p. 199). So too, from the perspective of sexual sadism, necrophilia is found by some to have a sadistic element. Marshall and Hucker, for example, in a review and summation of the studies on sexual sadism they identified, found necrophilia/necrophilic activity as a common criterion for defining sexual sadism [19].

In the context of sexual homicide, sexual sadism has also been identified as the core of necrophilic behaviors. DeRiver, for example, in his seminal work "Crime and the Sexual Psychopath" asserts, of the relationship between the two: "They hang together, as if one psychologically". Indeed, this idea has some empirical support. In a comparison of sexual homicide perpetrators categorized according to whether or not they had engaged in post mortem sexual interference, having a history of sadistic behaviors or interests was associated with the group who had done so [20].

Aside from the exclusion in such accounts of those who do not cause the death of victims upon whom necrophilic behaviors are perpetrated, they consolidate ante-mortem and post-mortem actions and behaviors, as well their psychological drivers. In so doing, necrophilia becomes an addendum to the manner of killing and the necrophile is branded as sexually sadistic by proxy. In the context of criminal investigation, the assumption has been made, somewhat erroneously, that even when the necrophile did not cause the death of the victim, their sexual gratification is dependent upon imagining the victim's suffering; to satisfy their craving for depravity. In short, from such a perspective, "necrophilia represents the total and complete domination of another person's being", and is then, in essence, sexually sadistic.

There are, however, some exceptions in the research literature to the coalescence of sexual sadism and necrophilic behavior. Moll considered that since no pain is inflicted or suffered in the course of perpetrating necrophilic acts then the two are mutually exclusive. With similar logic, Ellis differentiated between necrophilia, defined as sexual activity with a corpse, and such activity accompanied by corpse mutilation; pure necrophilia, according to Ellis, has no sexually sadistic component. In the twenty first century, the behavior of mutilating corpses, which Ellis distinguished from

pure necrophilia, has been labelled as necrosadism. However, that differentiation of necrophilic behaviors has resulted in the contradiction of necrophilia and sadism being conjoined in a single term, necrosadism, thus failing to resolve the logical fallacy of sadism being inflicted upon the dead. To resolve the contradiction, Mellor has attempted to rename such behavior as necromutilophilia [21]. Yet, whilst the rationale for changing the term might be justified, the behavior remains consistently labelled as necrosadism in the majority of the research literature [22-25].

Perhaps not surprisingly, the current sample also included cases where perpetrators sought pleasure not only from sadistic behaviors (such as torture) and the act of killing but also from a final subjugation through necrophilic behaviors, despite engaging only in sexual activity after the victim died (Case 1). Indeed, following the victim's death, the perpetrator took time and engaged in various post-mortem sexual activities as well as other ritualistic behaviors. The sample also included cases that could be regarded as necrosadism (Case 2). Here the victim was first killed and acts that would constitute sadism if the victim was alive, only took place following death. The most endorsed SeSaS items were sexual arousal during the crime scene followed by exertion of power, control and dominance and these results are similar to the results obtained for a whole sample of sexual homicide perpetrators. However, there were some notable differences in some of the items. Contrary to the whole sample of sexual killers (32%), perpetrators who engaged in necrophilia were not likely to use expressive violence (8%). On the other hand, those who engaged in necrophilia were more likely to display ritualistic behavior (40% vs. 17% for the whole sample) and take trophies or keep records (16% vs. 5% for the whole sample). In this way, the sadistic necrophiles more resemble a BDSM forensic variant with ritualistic behaviors and record/trophy taking being more prominent features [26].

### Motivation

One of the main motivations behind necrophilic behaviors commonly noted in the literature is the perpetrator who kills in order to have sex with a corpse: class II HF [27]; necrophilic homicide; homicidal necrophiles. However, this is not a feature of all cases. For example, Rosman and Resnick's pseudonecrophilia subgroup included perpetrators who killed the victim for reasons other than to obtain a corpse. Even though more details on this subgroup were not reported, the authors provided an illustrative case of a male who fatally shot his girlfriend and upon becoming aroused to the sight of the dead body he proceeded to engage in intercourse with the victim's corpse. Indeed, Stein et al. found that among their sample none of the perpetrators acknowledged killing their victim for the sole intention of gaining access to a corpse so that they would be able to engage in post-mortem sexual activity. Chopin and Beauregard also offered some insight into motivations of perpetrators who killed and engaged in necrophilic behaviors. Their opportunistic group appeared to consist of versatile perpetrators some of whom had a prior criminal history. In line with Stein et al.'s study, necrophilic acts were not the primary motivation for the crime but rather, sexual activity took place because an opportunity arose. In what they called the experimental group, the authors hypothesised that post-mortem sexual activity occurred as an experimentation of new sexual practices stemming from already existing deviant fantasies, although it is not clear how such fantasies were assessed in the first place or in what way it could be ascertained that offender was experimenting rather than having a necrophilic preference. Preferential offenders were described as

those who are true necrophiles attacking their victims in order to obtain a corpse for sexual activity. However, another pattern was also described for this group where the perpetrator killed only after failing ante-mortem sexual activity. Finally, for the sadistic group, necrophilic behaviors were associated or formed an integral part of sexual sadism. In the current multiple case study, opportunistic perpetrators as per Beauregard and Chopin could be identified. For example, a domestic situation where the sexual offense could be described as an act of last possession (case 4) or where the victim died during a sexual assault struggle (Case 5). We did not find any cases where offenders were experimenting, perhaps because, from a clinical standpoint, we were unclear as to how this might be assessed. In the cases comprising the preferential group in the present study, evidence indicated that offenders already had necrophilic or asphyxia interests (Case 6). For the sadistic group, as noted earlier, necrophilic behaviors were an extension of sadistic violence or the case suggested necrosadism [28-31].

## CONCLUSION

Atypical features in a sexual homicide cases may present difficulties when carrying out assessment, especially in relation to understanding risk and setting plans for reducing risk of reoffending. Indicators of sexual post-mortem interference may lead to conclusions that the killing was carried out in order to gain access to an unresisting partner. On the other hand, due to the necrophilia/sexual sadism debate discussed in this manuscript, clinicians may also associate necrophilic behaviors with a possible sadism diagnosis. However, the results of the current study indicate that, in line with more recent research on sexual homicide, sexual homicide perpetrators who engage in necrophilic behaviors are likely to be diverse in terms of their motivations. We would therefore encourage a wider consideration of the context in which the offense arose.

## REFERENCES

- Higgs T, Stefanska EB, Carter AJ, Browne KD. The developmental and criminal histories of subgroups of sexual murderers engaging, or not engaging, in post mortem sexual interference, compared to rapists. *J Crim Justice*. 2017;53:92-101.
- Chopin J, Beauregard E. Patterns of necrophilic behaviors in sexual homicide: A criminological perspective. *Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol*. 2021;65(15):1676-1699.
- Greenall PV, Millington J. A sexual murder prevented? A case study of evidence-based practice. *J Forensic Psychiatry Psychol*. 2021;32(5):759-775.
- Stefanska EB, Nitschke J, Carter AJ, Mokros A. Sadism among sexual homicide offenders: Validation of the sexual sadism scale. *Psychological assessment*. 2019;31(1):132.
- Aggrawal A. *Forensic and medico-legal aspects of sexual crimes and unusual sexual practices*. CRC Press; 2008.
- Rosman JP, Resnick PJ. Sexual attraction to corpses: A psychiatric review of necrophilia. *Bull Am Acad Psychiatry Law*. 1989;17(2):153-163.
- Pettigrew M. Aggressive hybristophilia in men and the affect of a female serial killer. *J Forensic Psychiatry Psychol*. 2019;30(3):419-428.
- Higgs T, Carter AJ, Stefanska EB, Glorney E. Toward identification of the sexual killer: A comparison of sexual killers engaging in post-mortem sexual interference and non-homicide sexual aggressors. *Sex Abuse*. 2017;29(5):479-499.
- Stein ML, Schlesinger LB, Pinizzotto AJ. Necrophilia and sexual homicide. *J Forensic Sci*. 2010;55(2):443-446.
- Drzazga, J. Necrophilia. In J Drzazga & C. Charles (Eds.), *Sex Crimes and Their Legal Aspects*. Thomas. 1960
- Geberth VJ. *Sex-related homicide and death investigation: Practical and clinical perspectives*. CRC Press; 2010.
- Arafat SY, Kar SK, Khan ST. Urophilia associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder in a Bangladeshi male: A rare case report. *Neurology, Psychiatry and Brain Research*. 2020;36:96-97.
- Griffiths MD. Saliophilia and other co-occurring paraphilias in a middle-aged male: A case study. *J Concur Disorder*. 2019;2(1):1-8.
- Willmott D, Boduszek D, Robinson R. A psychodynamic-behaviourist investigation of Russian sexual serial killer Andrei Chikatilo. *J Foren Psychia Psychol*. 2018;29(3):498-507.
- Williams DJ. Is serial sexual homicide a compulsion, deviant leisure, or both? Revisiting the case of Ted Bundy. *Leisure Sciences*. 2020;42(2):205-223.
- Greenall PV, Millington J. A sexual murder prevented? A case study of evidence-based practice. *J Forensic Psychiatry Psychol*. 2021;32(5):759-775.
- Gray DE. *Doing research in the real world*.
- Miller ML. Necrophilia: AA Brill. *J of Crim Psychopatho*, II, No. 4, 1941. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. 1943;12:155-156.
- Marshall WL. *Diagnosis and treatment of sexual offenders*.
- Carter AJ, Hollin CR, Stefanska EB, Higgs T, Bloomfield S. The use of crime scene and demographic information in the identification of non-serial sexual homicide. *Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol*. 2017;61(14):1554-1569.
- Mellor L. *Mincing words: Refining the language of mutilation. Understanding Necrophilia: A Global Multidisciplinary Approach*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. 2016.
- Hervey WM, Catalano G, Catalano MC. Vampiristic behaviors in a patient with traumatic brain injury induced disinhibition. *World J Clin Case*. 2016;4(6):138.
- Meloy JR. Sexual desire, violent death, and the true believer. In *Psychoanalysts, psychologists and psychiatrists discuss psychopathy and human evil* 2019;61-81.
- Hickey E. *Criminal Paraphilia*. 26th Annual Conference on the Management of Adult Sex Offenders and Juveniles Who Commit Sexual Offenses, Austin, Texas. 2018.
- Pettigrew M. Piquerism in homicide: A knife wound analysis of a sexually motivated serial killer. *J Forensic Sci*. 2022;67(1):408-415.
- Mokros A. *The neuroscience of sexual offending. The Wiley Blackwell handbook of forensic neuroscience*. 2018;1:333-358.
- Hirschfeld M. *Sexual Anomalies*. Emerson. 1956.
- Stefanska EB, Longpre N, Bloomfield S, Perkins D, Carter AJ. Untangling sexual homicide: A proposal for a new classification of sexually motivated killings. *J Criminal Justice*. 2020;71:101729.
- Burg BR. The sick and the dead: The development of psychological theory on necrophilia from Krafft-Ebing to the present. *J Hist Behav Sci*. 1982;18(3):242-254.
- Chan HC. *A global casebook of sexual homicide*. Springer; 2019.
- Chan HC, Li F. Victim body mutilation in sexual homicides: Exploring Chinese sexual homicide cases. *Behav Sci Law*. 2019;37(5):589-601.