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Sexual Lifestyle and Sexual Homicide: A Continuum of Deviance?

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The research focus on sexual behaviours *during* sex crimes (e.g., signs of torture) has masked the fact that sexual aggression/murder is not the sole sexual behaviour of most sexual offenders, and that their sexual lifestyle could possibly influence the manner in which their sexual crime is committed. This study investigated the sexual lifestyle of French sexual murderers and its association with sexual behaviors committed during their homicide. The aim of this study was twofold: first, we investigated sexual murderers' sexual lifestyle using latent class analysis. Second, we assessed the extent to which sexual homicide was an extension of their sexual lifestyle, and could be understood as an internal constraint to the perpetration of the crime. Participants were 56 French males sentenced for a total of 66 sexual homicides. Homicides had to satisfy at least one of the 6 sexual homicide criteria proposed by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation to qualify as sexual homicides (Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988). Sexual lifestyle behaviors were self-reported and reported by the spouse/ex-spouse. Sexual behaviors which occurred during the homicide were self-reported and assessed by officials (investigators, forensic pathologist). In line with previous research on sexual aggressors against adult women ("rapists"; Langevin, Proulx, & Lacourse, 2017), this study presents evidence that the sexual lifestyle of sexual murderers is heterogeneous: one class (*Antisocial-Sadistic, AS*) is characterized by both internalized and externalized sexual deviance, sexual dissatisfaction, impersonal sex, and hypersexuality, and the other (*Antisocial-Nonsadistic, ANS*) is characterized by internalized sexual deviance and sexual dissatisfaction. Our results further suggest that sexual lifestyle appears to constitute an internal constraint to modus operandi for sexual murderers with an *AS* sexual lifestyle. Our results further suggest that the sexual homicide of individuals with an *ANS* lifestyle was not the result of sexual deviance, but rather mostly of antisocial personality traits catalysed by situational factors (e.g., what the victim said or did). Thus, sexual lifestyle may be clinically relevant – although through different processes, and especially for individuals with an *AS* sexual lifestyle – in the management of sexual murderers. Future research should focus on clarifying the role of non-deviant sexual behaviors as well as internalized psychosexual problems in triggering sexual homicide and determining modus operandi.

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