

## **BETTER TOGETHER**

2018 ATSA Conference | Thursday October 18 | POSTER

### **Sexual Sadism and Psychopathy in Sexual Murderers**

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In the field of sexual homicide, murderers have long been perceived as dangerous sadistic psychopaths. However, not all sadistic sexual murderers are psychopaths and not all psychopathic murderers are going to commit sexually sadistic acts when perpetrating their homicide. To explain heterogeneity among sexual murderers, studies have analyzed the characteristics of their crimes and suggested that psychopathy and sexual sadism are risk factors for violent behaviors when committing a homicide (angry murderers: vindictive excessive violence vs. sadistic murderers: sexualized excessive violence, Beauregard & Proulx, 2002; James & Proulx, 2016). These studies tend to dichotomize sexual murderers and overlook the possibility of a continuum of severity for violent behavior among sexual murderers. Thus, the aim of this study is to compare different groups of sexual murderers according to their psychopathological profile. Therefore, the developmental antecedents, criminal career, and pre-crime, crime, and post-crime factors of four groups of 53 murderers were analysed: non-sadistic non-psychopath (**NoSP**,  $n = 25$ ), psychopath (**P**,  $n = 7$ ), sadistic (**S**,  $n = 12$ ), sadistic psychopath (**SP**,  $n = 9$ ). Psychopathy was measured using the Hare Psychopathy Checklist: Screening Version (PCL: SV; Hart, Cox, & Hare, 1995) and sexual sadism using the Severe Sexual Sadism Scale (SeSaS; Nitschke, Osterheider, & Mokros, 2009). The results show that the groups of sexual murderers characterized by sexual sadism, with or without psychopathy (**S** & **SP**), committed their homicide at a younger age than the other groups (**NoSP** & **P**). Furthermore, their homicide was planned and organized. In addition, the **SP** group particularly appears to be the most problematic: indeed, this group has the highest proportion of serial sexual murderers among them (44.4%). On the other hand, the **NoSP** & **P** groups also committed violent crimes but they have greater chances of being apprehended post crime due to the presence of disorganization while carrying out their crime. (i.e., lack of premeditation). Despite the fact that **NoSP** & **P** have a similar modus operandi, their developmental background seems to be different. Indeed, the childhood of **NoSPs** is characterized by the experience of psychological victimization, while for **P**, there is a combination of experiences of physical and sexual victimization, however, in lower proportions than in the **S** & **SP** groups. Thus, although sexual sadism and psychopathy seem to favor emergence of violent sexual behaviors, when psychopathy and sadism coexist within an offender, this increases the risk of leading to serial sexual homicides. Finally, theoretical and clinical implications of our results will be discussed.

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