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How Sexual Murderers Checkmate the Investigation

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Abstract:

When a sexual homicide occurs, the top priority is to deploy all means available in order to identify quickly the perpetrator, and stop him from committing another sexual homicide. However, some investigations take longer than others to be solve. It has been suggested that beyond the murderer's individual characteristics, the delay between the homicide and the apprehension of the offender can increase the probability that he commits another homicide ([DeLisi, 2014](#)).

The objectives of our study were twofold: 1) identify factors (modus operandi, criminal investigation) associated with the length of the criminal investigation, and 2) determine if these factors had an influence on sexual murderers' seriality. Information on the modus operandi of 47 sexual murderers (serial sexual murderers = 10, nonserial sexual murderers = 37) having committed a total of 62 homicides in France between 1979 and 2013 were analyzed (sequential negative binomial regressions, sequential logistic regressions, Chi²). Precrime, crime, and postcrime factors, and criminal investigation characteristics were analyzed in order to consider dimensions which could influence seriality ([James & Proulx, 2014, 2016](#)).

Results suggest that choices made by both sexual murderers (precrime: premeditation; crime: victim mutilation; postcrime: evidence of forensic knowledge) and criminal investigators (absence of neighborhood survey, forensic traces left at crime scene were not analyzed, error in the forensic pathologist's

conclusions) can: 1) influence the length of criminal investigation, and 2) influence the seriality of sexual murderers (i.e., whether they become serial sexual murderers).

The findings are consistent with the idea that a sophisticated modus operandi can not only extend the length of a criminal investigation, but also influence the seriality of sexual murderers. These findings also underline that criminal investigation characteristics may allow a murderer to commit yet another sexual homicide. The forensic and theoretical implications of these results will be discussed.