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# Prostitute Homicides

## A Descriptive Study

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It has been estimated that women involved in street prostitution are 60 to 100 times more likely to be murdered than are nonprostitute females. In addition, homicides of prostitutes are notoriously difficult to investigate and, as such, many cases remain unsolved. Despite this large risk factor, little literature exists on homicides of prostitutes, and there is a lack of basic statistics and knowledge regarding this very specific victim group that could possibly help investigators. The aim of the current study is to conduct an exploratory study to explore the key characteristics of this group and how they differ from other subgroups of homicide. Forty-six cases of U.K. prostitute homicides are analyzed and compared to 59 male offender–female victim nonsexual homicide cases and 17 male offender–female victim sexual homicide cases.

**Keywords:** *prostitutes; homicide; victim characteristics; offender characteristics*

## Prevalence of Prostitute Homicides

There are no publicly available statistics on murders of prostitutes in the United Kingdom, but Kinnell (2001), in her role as the U.K. coordinator for the European Network for HIV/STD Prevention in Prostitution, suggests that since 1990 and up to the time of the article, at least 53 more female

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prostitutes have been murdered across Great Britain and an additional 5 were missing, presumed dead. It has been suggested that prostitutes are 60 to 120 times more likely to be murdered than nonprostitute females (Lowman & Fraser, 1994) and that prostitutes who solicit on the streets are more frequent (Kinnell, 2001) and more at risk than those who work indoors (such as in saunas and massage parlors). It is for these reasons that the present study concentrates on street prostitution only.

The actual act of prostitution is inherent with risk; prostitutes often (but not always) work in the more at-risk areas of town. Their high visibility and ready availability, together with their willingness to perform their business in secluded areas, makes the prostitute highly vulnerable and an easy target to attack and murder (Ressler & Shachtman, 1997). There is a question, however, of whether it is this ease of availability and increased opportunity that makes prostitutes more prone to attack than nonprostitute women, or whether it is because of the type of women they are. In other words, are prostitutes attacked just because "they are there," or are they targeted specifically because they are prostitutes? Peter Sutcliffe, the "Yorkshire Ripper," a serial murderer in the United Kingdom, claimed to have murdered prostitute women because "the women I killed were filth-bastard prostitutes who were littering the streets. I was just clearing up the place a bit . . ." (Sutcliffe, 1984).

Indeed, prostitutes can be seen to be a target group for many serial offenders, such as Arthur Shawcross, who between 1988 and 1990 killed 11 prostitutes in the New York area; in California, the "Riverside Prostitute Killer," William Lester, was convicted of 12 prostitute murders and was suspected of committing 10 others (Mendoza, 2002); and in Iran, Saud Hanaei confessed to strangling 16 of the 19 prostitutes who had been murdered in Mashad in 2001 (BBC News, 2001). Most recently in the U.S., Gary Ridgway the "Green River Killer" pleaded guilty to the murders of 48 women from 1982 to 1998, most of whom were prostitutes (The Seattle Times, 2004).

## **Investigation of Prostitute Homicides**

Aside from their prevalence, most murders of prostitutes are notoriously difficult to investigate, and many remain unsolved. Of the 886 cases of all homicides reported for the period April 2001 to March 2002, 10% remain unsolved (U.K. Home Office, 2002), whereas, for example, the 53 prostitute homicides quoted by Kinnell (2001) remained still without a conviction by the time of her 2001 paper. Reasons for the difficulty in solving these particular cases include lack of public interest because of a low opinion of the victim, lack of credible witnesses, and unwillingness by both prostitutes and clients

to talk to the police (Boynton, 2001). Other limiting factors include the lack of client records and the sometimes numerous amounts of DNA evidence collected from the body. These issues make prostitute homicides difficult to investigate, and it is therefore important to find other factors of these homicides that can be used to help identify them and to solve them, notably in relation to the actions the offender engages in at the crime scene. If it were found that murders of prostitutes have distinct dissimilarities from other types of murder in general, this may assist in (a) the recognition of particular risk factors for violence; and (b) the investigation of a prostitute homicide, particularly in terms of identifying specific offender characteristics that may be linked to these specific types of murders.

To investigate prostitute homicide in more detail, an understanding of the dynamics of prostitution itself is useful. The next section therefore describes and discusses the literature available on certain aspects of prostitution: the prostitute, working habits, the clients, and the violence. Because the present study is looking at prostitution within a homicide context, the theories and existing behavioral classification systems for homicide in general are also discussed, after which there follows a discussion of the way prostitute murders might be conceptualized within a homicide context.

## Prostitution

W. T. McLeod (1986) defines *prostitution* as women engaging in sexual intercourse for money. O'Neill (1997) defines prostitution as "the exchange of money for sex" (p. 10), and similarly, Hoigard and Finstad (1992) define prostitution as "buying and selling sexual services for cash payment" (p. 8). May, Edmunds, Hough, and Harvey (1999) state that prostitution or "sex work" is the "performance of sexual acts solely for material gain" (p. 3) and is differentiated from other forms of sexual relationship by the degree to which the contractual nature of the activity is made explicit. They suggest that there are many sexual partners that have implicit expectations or contracts about obligations and rewards and that these rewards may be of a material kind, but it is only when the contract becomes overt and specific that the activity is regarded by law as prostitution. For the purposes of the current study, the focus is specifically on street workers, who, as discussed earlier, are at a greater risk of harm than other subgroups of sex workers are. The focus is also on female victims, specifically to factor out any gender issues that at this pilot stage would introduce elements pertaining to sexual violence against men.

There are no figures for the number of active prostitutes working across Great Britain, but estimates have been made for major cities such as Glasgow, ranging from 425 (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996) to 1,000 (Mendoza, 2002); London, up to 5,000 (Matthews, 1997); and Birmingham, 800 (E. McLeod, 1982) to 1,200 (Sharpe, 1998). These estimates include all types of sex work, including street prostitution, indoor prostitution, saunas, and escort agencies. Estimates for the number of prostitutes involved only in street work range from more than one eighth of the total figures (Matthews, 1997) to one third (E. McLeod, 1982). However, relatively small numbers of prostitutes are working on the street at any one time. Russell (1979) found that only 10% of all active street prostitutes were working at any given hour in Birmingham, and Matthews (1997) found that this figure was just over 16% in London.

A relatively small amount of research has been undertaken to investigate prostitution, with many studies focused on the prostitutes themselves, their working habits, and the reasons why they initially became involved in prostitution. Some of the findings of these studies are detailed below. These findings are not comprehensive, however, and involve many limitations. One of the main limitations in comparing the results includes the fact that the studies relate to greatly varying sample sizes. The studies also took place in different areas, with different social and economic environments, which may also have affected the findings. Similarly, the participants involved in the studies were recruited by different means (e.g., researchers visited special "drop-in" centers or they went out onto the streets themselves). This may once again affect the results, as prostitutes who regularly frequent specialized drop-in centers (i.e., for "safe-sex" talks, free condoms, or a cup of tea) may be very different from those prostitutes who do not. Although the present study is only involved with street prostitutes, some of the studies mentioned below involve prostitutes who work either outdoors, indoors, or both. The studies that do contain both types of workers, however, have been selected on the basis that the majority of the prostitutes sampled did work on the streets.

### *The Prostitute*

Church, Henderson, Barnard, and Hart (2001), in a study of prostitutes in Edinburgh, Leeds, and Glasgow, found that the average age of the street worker was 26 years old. This is in line with the findings of May et al. (1999), who found that the ages of street workers ranged from 14 to 45, with an average of 27 years. Ferguson (2002) found similar findings in her

Sex Workers' Safety Survey, which showed that in her sample of 107 prostitutes, their ages ranged from 16 to 53, with an average of 28 years. Similar results have been found by Phoenix (1999), McKeganey and Barnard (1996), and Sharpe (1998).

May et al. (1999) found that 40% of the prostitutes that they studied were in a relationship. This compares to 62% of street prostitutes studied in Nottingham (Benson, 1998), 44% of prostitutes surveyed by Ferguson (2002), 50% of street workers studied by E. McLeod (1982), and 38% of street workers studied by Sharpe (1998). Whether or not this is a factor that affects the level of risk a prostitute takes is arguable. In Sharpe's study, 37.5% of prostitutes who were in a relationship claimed that their partner did not know what they did for a living. Of the 62.5% of the prostitutes whose partners did know, some claimed that it restricted the hours they worked (and therefore decreased the risk of violence), whereas others claimed that it increased the hours that they worked, because their partner enjoyed the financial benefits and encouraged them to work longer.

Benson (1998) found that 62% of prostitutes had at least one child, which is similar to the 63% found by Sharpe (1998) and 60% studied by E. McLeod (1982). Phoenix (1999) and May et al. (1999) found slightly higher instances of prostitutes who had children—at 76% and 70%, respectively.

Pagliario, Pagliario, Thauberger, Hewitt, and Reddon (1993) identified prostitution as a readily available means for women to support their drug habits, with the majority of drug users working on the streets or in parks. The incidence of prostitution in North America has risen with the emergence of crack cocaine since the 1980s (Pagliario & Pagliario, 2000), and studies have found that some prostitutes are exchanging their services directly for the substance itself, thereby negating the need for money (Ratner, 1993; Rolfs, Goldberg, & Sharrar, 1990).

There have been a few studies trying to determine the amount of drug use among prostitutes throughout the United Kingdom with differing results. Studies undertaken in Edinburgh in the 1980s reported that approximately 20% of prostitutes were injecting drugs (Morgan-Thomas, Plant, Plant, & Sales, 1989), and in London, 14% (Day, Ward, & Harris, 1988). Faugier, Hayes, and Butterworth (1992), however, found substantially higher levels of drug taking by prostitutes in Manchester. In a study that lasted 2 years, McKeganey and Barnard (1996) found that approximately 73% of prostitutes in Glasgow injected drugs. Ferguson's (2002) survey found results similar to this, with 74% of her sample taking drugs on a regular basis. A further study by Church et al. (2001) found that 63% of the prostitutes they

studied were regular drug users, whereas 93% of the total sample had used illegal drugs in the previous month.

Factors such as drug use and number of dependents, if any, may ultimately affect the prostitute's working habits. If the prostitute has a drug habit or children to support, then she may consequently take more risks in her work, making her more vulnerable to attack. May et al. (1999) found that in their survey of 56 street prostitutes, average earnings were £675 a week, whereas the weekly average spending on drugs was £525.

### *Working Habits*

By the very nature of their work, prostitutes, especially those who work on the street, are susceptible to attack. Regardless of whether or not the prostitute works on her own or with others, the actual service for which the prostitute is being paid will usually be between the prostitute alone and the client. The service will often take place in a dark, deserted location, usually an alleyway, a backstreet, or a vehicle belonging to the client. Negotiating for services will often take place through a car window or in the car itself. Being in an isolated spot with a client who, more often than not, is a stranger (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996) is a potentially dangerous situation for the prostitute, and occasionally, for the client himself. The street prostitute is also seen as an easy target for robbery, as she will carry her evening's wages on her in cash.

Sometimes the prostitute will solicit for clients on the street who will then be taken back to the prostitute's residence for sex. This is often seen to be a safer alternative than doing the "business" on the streets. Sharpe (1998) found that 10% of her sample ( $n = 40$ ) took their clients home, and the majority of those who did not wished that they could. Sharpe found that 67.5% who provided their services in the client's car did so usually because they could not take the client home. This was often because they either had small children at home who they did not want to witness their activities or because they were worried that other family members or neighbors might find out that they were involved in prostitution. May et al. (1999) found that within the sample of 55 street prostitutes that they surveyed, 44% took their clients home.

McKeganey and Barnard (1996) surveyed 66 prostitutes on the streets of Glasgow and found that the women worked an average of 5 nights per week and serviced about seven clients per night (although they also found that these drug-injecting prostitutes were likely to work more frequently and for longer periods of time than the prostitutes without a drug habit). Similar

figures, with averages from three to six clients per night, were found by Sharpe (1998), Ferguson (2002), E. McLeod (1982), and May et al. (1999).

The preferred time of day for soliciting was between 6 o'clock in the evening to 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, with the busiest time being around 10 or 11 o'clock at night (Ferguson, 2002; Sharpe, 1998).

Ferguson (2002) found that 13% of prostitutes surveyed claimed that they would often fully undress for a client. Twenty-two percent claimed that they would never fully undress for any client, and 43% claimed that they would only occasionally or for trusted clients only.

E. McLeod (1982) found that many of the prostitutes she sampled had a pimp or ponce—that is, someone who was living off the earnings of a prostitute. E. McLeod made a distinction between heavy ponces, who used violence and intimidation and took nearly all of the woman's money, and men who were simply living off what a woman earned. Heavy ponces were found to be more prevalent on the streets, with E. McLeod estimating that 75% of her sample had a ponce of one kind or another. However, the dividing line between pimping and living off immoral earnings is a fine one, and many of the women had boyfriends or partners who knew that they were working as a prostitute and who enjoyed the financial rewards of their woman's work. The question of whether having a pimp reduces the risk of violence on the streets is debatable. Indeed, the heavy pimp may be able to reduce the risk from clients or other pimps by keeping an eye on his prostitute, but this does not mean that the prostitute is immune from violence from him. Also, those prostitutes with soft pimps such as boyfriends or partners increase their risk of violence, purely because they tend to work longer hours and thus there are more opportunities for violence to arise.

Identifying the prevalence of the different types of working environment (often doubling as the crime scene) as well as the personal relationship by the prostitute is therefore an important issue to take into consideration, as well as comparing these risk factors to those of nonprostitute homicide victims. Part of this is the important issue of identifying whether certain types of relationships—partners, pimps, clients, and strangers—differ for prostitute victims and nonprostitute victims.

### *The Clients*

Obtaining an accurate answer to the question of what type of individual buys sex from a prostitute is difficult, as frequenting prostitutes is often done in secret and may be associated with feelings of guilt and shame (Sharpe, 1998). According to James (1976), Kapur (1978), and Matthews (1993),

however, the majority of clients are typically middle-aged, middle class, and married. Other studies suggest, somewhat differently, that although most clients may indeed be married (McKeganey & Barnard 1996; E. McLeod 1982) and middle class (Lever & Dolnick, 2000), most are in their mid-30s (Benson & Matthews, 1995; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; Sharpe, 1998). Some prostitutes regard older men as safer to work with, with 47.5% of prostitutes interviewed in Sharpe's (1998) study stating that they will not do business with a client if he looks under 30 years old.

With regards to the occupational profile of the clients, most are in full-time employment. According to McKeganey and Barnard (1996), only 16% of their sample were unemployed. This compares to figures such as 20%, 19% (Matthews, 1986), 25% (Benson & Matthews, 1995), and 7% (Sharpe, 1998).

Brooks-Gordon, Gelsthorpe, and West, as cited in Brooks-Gordon (2006), studied the records of 518 men who had come to the attention of the police for vice-related offenses during the previous 2 years. They found that 12% of the men had some kind of criminal record, 25% of these with at least one preconviction for a violent offense, 24% for nonviolent offenses, and 8% for sexual offenses. It should be noted, however, that these figures relate to those clients who had come to the attention of the police for vice-related offenses, and it may be claimed that other clients who do have criminal records may not have been sampled, because they may have some experience in avoiding detection by the police.

Most prostitutes prefer to do business with clients they know. These "regular clients" are, for obvious reasons, perceived to be safer than doing business with a first-time client. Although most prostitutes would prefer to service clients whom they know, or at least have done business with before, this is not the case in reality. The majority of clients are not known to the prostitute when they approach them for business (Sharpe, 1998). In Ferguson's (2002) survey, 45.8% of prostitutes claimed that most of their clients were complete strangers, whereas 5.6% claimed that all of their clients were strangers.

Considering, therefore, that the average number of clients per day per prostitute ranges from three to seven (Ferguson, 2002; May et al., 1999; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; E. McLeod, 1982; Sharpe, 1998) and that an average "shift" is about 6 hours (Ferguson, 2002; May et al., 1999), the prostitute is probably having at least two to three sexual encounters with a complete stranger every 2 to 3 hours of her working day.

Offender-victim relationship has often been highlighted as a key variable in understanding the nature of a homicide. In addition, by being able to

associate the type of victim and the type of actions used by the offender at the crime with the type of offender (offender profiling), a greater understanding of the types of offenders related to prostitute homicides are possible, which has far-reaching implications for suspect prioritization during police investigations.

### *Violence*

Although comprehensive figures for prostitute murders are difficult to come by, figures for violent assaults on prostitutes are even more difficult to discover. Many assaults, some quote as many as 56% (Church et al., 2001), will go unreported, as most prostitutes have little confidence in the police, believing that their cases will be of lower priority to assaults on "normal" women, as they were somehow "asking for it." It has been noted, however, that more street prostitutes report assaults to the police than do those that work indoors (e.g., Church et al., 2001; Kinnell, 2001).

Most studies undertaken to investigate violence within prostitution are done by conducting surveys and interviews with prostitutes and scanning reports in newspapers and sex worker support publications. Farley, Baral, Kireman, and Sezgin (1998) studied prostitution in five countries (South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, United States, and Zambia) with 475 male and female prostitutes and found that 73% of them had experienced a physical assault and 62% had experienced a rape. In the same year, Farley and Barkan (1998) studied 130 female prostitutes in San Francisco and reported that 83% had been threatened with a weapon, 82% had experienced a physical assault, and 68% had experienced a rape. Of the women who had been attacked, 65% were reported to have been by a client. Hoigard and Finstad (1992) recorded that 19 out of a sample of 26 prostitutes (73%) had been exposed to varying degrees of violence, and in the research of Benson and Matthews (1995), 87% had been victims of client abuse, including 27% reporting rape and 43% suffering physical assault or abuse. Of the 87% who had reported abuse, 73% had been abused more than once. Church et al. (2001) in their survey of prostitutes in Edinburgh, Leeds, and Glasgow and found that 81% of street prostitutes reported violence by clients at some point in their career and 50% reported client violence within the past 6 months.

Of the solved homicide cases studied by Kinnell (2001) where the relationship between the offender and victim was known, 69% were committed by clients. O'Neill and Barberet (2000) claim that attacks on street prostitutes are more frequent when the client is a stranger than when he is known to the prostitute. They found that most violence against the prostitute was

unpredictable, happened suddenly, and was committed by clients and third parties (such as taxi drivers). Violence was also more common when the prostitute was either high or drunk. Prostitutes that have experienced violence claim that the most common reasons for a client to become violent are disagreements over the time and quality of the services given to them, clients' trying to get their money back, or clients' drinking.

However, although we know some of the precipitating circumstances and some details regarding the perpetrator, we do not know much about what the assaults consist of, nor how this compares to other types of aggressions against women. One of the biggest questions remains whether violence against prostitutes is one of opportunity and availability or because they are prostitutes. Of particular question is whether violence against prostitutes is sexual or theft motivated, or whether they represent specific targets to the offender. To understand violence, and especially homicide, against prostitutes, it is therefore important to understand these crimes in the context of violence and sexual violence, and particularly homicide, against women in general. The next section therefore describes and discusses previous research on the subject of homicide in general and sexual homicide in particular.

## Homicide

Homicide grows out of a transaction between individuals (Salfati, 2000). This transaction is characterized by Silverman and Mukherjee (1987) as a social event including at least two actors and a social relationship that plays a dynamic role in the way that the homicide unfolds. They suggest that it is the relationship between the offender and the victim that is the prime factor in any analysis of homicide and that the intensity of this relationship will be associated with other factors within the crime itself.

Homicide is, more often than not, an aggressive act. Feshbach (1964) suggested that expressive aggression is motivated by a desire for a harmful outcome, whereas instrumental aggression is motivated by a desire for some outcome other than injury. An instrumental aggressor therefore acts to obtain a readily apparent goal such as power, money, sexual gratification, or some other object, beyond inflicting injury on the victim. This distinction has also been made between different types of aggression in homicide (Salfati, 2000).

### *The Offender*

Homicide is a crime predominantly carried out by males. In a study of homicides carried out from 1976 to 1999 in the United States, the U.S.

Government (2000) claimed that just under 90% were committed by a male offender, and of these, 63% of them were less than 34 years old. In their British study of 1,066 homicide cases, Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, and Lewis (2001) found that the average age of male offenders was 28 years. Fifty-nine percent were single or living apart from their partner, 61% were unemployed at the time of their offense, and most had been married or had previously cohabited with a partner. The average age of 28 years found by Dobash et al. is lower than the 37 years found by the Violence Policy Center (2001). This difference could once again be due to differences in collecting and sourcing the data, but other factors, such as possible differences in culture and conceptual differences in homicides in the United Kingdom and the United States could account for the dissimilarity.

With regards to previous convictions, Wolfgang (1958) found that two thirds of all homicide offenders had previous convictions. These convictions were likely to involve offenses against the person rather than property and were usually of a violent nature. Dobash et al. (2001) found that the vast majority of male offenders in their study had at least 1 previous conviction, with an average of 19 per offender. Over half had at least 1 conviction for a nonviolent offense, and over one third had a conviction for a serious assault. About 10% had a previous conviction for a sexual offense. Just under half of the male offenders had been in prison at least once before their conviction for murder. How offenders who target prostitutes compare to that rate is unclear.

### *The Offender–Victim Relationship*

Wolfgang (1958), in his landmark study on homicide, suggested that the relationship between the offender and victim is of prime importance in the study of homicide, more so than in any other crime. It is generally accepted that most homicides involve offenders and victims who know each other (Decker, 1993, 1996; Hepburn & Voss, 1970; Wolfgang, 1958). Richards (1999) states that four out of five females who were victims of homicide knew their killer, with half of these killed by their partner or lover. Dobash et al. (2001) found that 22% of the homicides studied occurred among strangers, with 7% of these including a female victim. How offenders who target prostitutes compare to that rate is unclear.

### *Behavioral Subtypes of Homicide*

With regards to homicide investigation, the important focus is crime scene behaviors that are observable at the crime scene. These behaviors, as

well as being the main indices on which the investigation is based, are also the most objective measures of what happened, and using these as the basis for any models of behavior will produce a more readily applicable model for investigators who will then be able to more directly use the results of the research in their investigations (Canter, 1994; Salfati, 2000).

Using the crime scene as a focus, Salfati (2000) produced a typology of homicide offense behavior based on the distinction of expressive and instrumental aggression, which both centered on the possible role of the victim and brought to attention the behavioral components that make up different themes of homicide.

With expressive homicides, there was often an extreme physical attack. Moreover, these behaviors, when looked at together, were suggestive of actions centered on the offenders' needing to separate themselves from the victim and the place of crime, as these elements might have aided the identification of the killer. All of these behaviors, Salfati (2000) suggests, show a prior relationship between the two parties or at least suggest that the offender knew the victim to some extent. Actions in the instrumental theme, on the other hand, centered on behaviors that were not singularly directed at the victim as a person. Rather, the actions were part of a larger theme of the offender's using the victim as a vehicle through whom to further attain an ulterior aim such as sex or money. When taken together, these actions suggested a behavioral theme in which the offender regarded the victim not as a person with whom they were personally interacting but as an object ultimately to be used for personal gain.

Through the analysis of the subset of co-occurrences regarding the actual behaviors used by offenders at homicide crime scenes, Salfati's (2000) study brings attention to the actual behavioral components that make up different themes of homicide such as expressive and instrumental crime scenes. The study also takes into consideration that a number of behaviors occurred in all the cases, and these behaviors were thus not used to discriminate between cases but instead used to define what was consistent in homicide as a whole.

The question that remains for the current study is how the particular subgroup of prostitute homicides would fit into such a model and whether they would be found to be present in one behavioral theme more than in another. In particular, the question is raised as to whether prostitute homicides can be conceptualized as persons against whom the offender vents his anger, victims who are available and vulnerable, or victims who provide an outlet for the offender to obtain sex or theft—all of which can be tested within the expressive and instrumental model, where it could either be an

emotional or an expressive crime, or an instrumental crime, where the victims are seen as mere objects and as means toward the offender's ulterior aims such as sex and money.

### *Sexual Homicide*

As mentioned previously, if it were found that murders of prostitutes have distinct similarities or differences from other types of murder, then this may assist in understanding prostitute homicides and this has implications for the investigation of these cases. A comparison must therefore be made with other types of murder. There may be an assumption that the murder of a prostitute is a sexually motivated offense, but this may not be the case. As in the case of rape, it may not be simply just a matter of sex or an exertion of power. As Groth (1980) suggests, "rape is not an expression of sexual desire as much as it is an expression of other, non-sexual needs" (p. 5).

In many instances, certain homicides have been classified as sexual homicides. Burgess, Hartman, Ressler, Douglas, and McCormack (1986) state the following:

Sexual homicide results from one person killing another in the context of power, control, sexuality, and aggressive brutality . . . the essential feature of this deviant behaviour is the infliction of physical or psychological suffering on another person in order to achieve sexual excitement. (p. 252)

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between sexually and nonsexually motivated homicide. One homicide may have an overtly sexual element to it, such as vaginal penetration or assault to the breasts, whereas another may show no such evidence but still be motivated by sexual drives. In some cases, it may even be that sexual behaviors are observed but that the crime was not sexually motivated (Schlesinger, 2007). In some of these cases, it is the offender's control of the victim, and in turn her pain and humiliation that becomes linked to the offender's sexual arousal. Another difficulty may arise when a sexual assault, a rape for example, culminates in the victim's death, purely because the offender wants to eliminate a potential witness and not because the offender gains any sexual arousal from the killing itself.

Most murders that include an overtly sexual element to them have been shown to be linked with other instrumental types of behaviors (Salfati, 2000). Therefore, if it is hypothesized that prostitute murders will be fundamentally instrumental, then they would appear to have more in common with sexual murders than nonsexual murders.

To test this assumption, the study compares cases of prostitute homicides against cases of both nonsexual and sexual homicides.

### *Prostitute Homicides*

Previously, we asked the question as to whether it is the ease of availability and increased opportunity that makes prostitutes more prone to attack than nonprostitute women, or whether it is because of the type of woman they are. If prostitute homicide is fundamentally instrumental in nature, then this would suggest that the homicide is situational and occurs because of ease of opportunity. If, however, the murders of prostitutes were found to be more expressive in nature, then this would lead to the assumption that they are predatory murders and that the prostitutes were being specifically targeted.

As shown by Kinnell (2001) and Farley and Barkan (1998), the majority of violence inflicted on prostitutes is carried out by a client. Assuming that the majority of prostitute homicides are committed by clients who are most probably previously unknown to the victim raises interesting questions about the interaction between the victim and the offender.

Because the encounter is fundamentally a business one, the client may see the prostitute as an object. This would suggest that the act of prostitute homicide would be fundamentally instrumental in nature. This assumption is reinforced further by the evidence suggesting that most prostitute homicides are committed by strangers, with stranger murders also being associated with instrumental behaviors (Salfati & Canter, 1999). Also, the evidence previously outlined suggests that most incidences of violence against prostitutes are initiated by the client over disputes about money, performance, or services received. This, according to the literature, is fundamentally an instrumental motivation.

However, because of the possibly high-aroused state that some clients are in during the offense (in both sexual and anxiety terms), responses to insults and disagreements may involve lack of rational calculation and reasoning, which is mainly the basis for an expressive act. It is most probably this aroused state that leads to this traditionally expressive behavior, but it could be argued that in this case it is precisely the aroused state that makes this sort of emotional behavior instrumental. The effect of the emotional outburst is not necessarily directed at the prostitute as a person but is directed at the situation; the prostitute is merely part of the situation and not important as a person to the offender as such. It is this lack of personal, emotional intimacy between the client and prostitute that would make this sort of sudden emotional reaction more instrumental than expressive. Indeed, Block, Devitt,

Donoghue, Dames, and Block (2000) suggest that instrumental crimes can have an expressive component to them, such as a situation in which the offender goes in with the aim to obtain money through burglary but ends up in an argument, which leads to homicide. This could also be likened to what the police often term a “burglary gone wrong.”

The difficulties of defining sexual homicide in general, as outlined above, are also very much in evidence in prostitute homicides. More often than not, the victim shows evidence of sexual activity when her body is found, but whether this has (a) been carried out by the offender or (b) been forced on the victim by the offender and is part of the murder itself, is very difficult to distinguish, and as such, the labeling of the crime as a sexual one is tenuous. To understand these cases better, we must look at them in the context of other types of homicides, both sexual and nonsexual.

## Aims of the Study

The main aim of the study relates to how we may conceptualize prostitute homicides as a subgroup of homicide. The main question centers on whether it is the ease of availability and increased opportunity that makes prostitutes more prone to attack or whether it is the type of female victim that they are.

To investigate this question, the current study first aims to fully explore the nature of prostitute homicides by determining if this group shares common demographic characteristics as well as determining how they compare to what we know about prostitutes in general from the literature.

The second aim of the study focuses on the demographic characteristics of offenders of prostitute homicides and aims to compare these to what we know about homicide offenders in general. It was hypothesized that the background characteristics of prostitute homicide offenders—due to the instrumental nature of the crime and instrumental crimes having been linked with more criminally experienced offenders in the literature—will differ from those of the general prostitute client population, where prostitute client offenders will show more signs of criminality than prostitute client nonoffenders.

The third aim looks at the crime itself by focusing on the crime scene. Here, the behaviors that the offender engages in are looked at to determine how prostitute homicides as a violent crime compare to other subtypes of homicides of nonprostitutes. Specifically, the study looks at understanding how prostitute homicides can be compared to other subtypes as either sexual and

instrumental types of crimes or as expressive ones. As part of this aim, an exploratory frequency analysis is done, defining the characteristics of this subgroup, both as a group in itself (prostitute homicides) and as compared to nonprostitute sexual homicides and nonprostitute nonsexual homicides.

## Method

### The Sample

Three data sets, including 122 homicide cases in total, were selected for this study and are outlined below.

#### *Prostitute Homicide Data (N = 46)*

This data set (from Ferguson, 2002) was compiled using information from the U.K. Home Office, Hilary Kinnell press reports, and various police forces and included 54 cases of prostitutes murdered, missing, or feared dead, occurring in the United Kingdom between January 1990 and April 2001. Further details on cases were collected using additional articles found in national and local newspapers and information posted on the Internet. In four instances, conversations were held with the senior investigating officers who dealt with the cases in question to gain more information.

The criteria for inclusion necessitated that the victim was a female who worked from the streets, that her body had been found, and that there was sufficient information available on the crime itself. Of the selected 46 cases, 25 had been solved (i.e., an offender had been convicted for the offense). Of the 25 solved cases, all were male, and in all but one case, the offense had been carried out by a lone offender.

The ages of the victims in this group ranged from 17 to 46 years old, with an average age of 24 years.

#### *Sexual Homicide Data (N = 17)*

Seventeen cases were selected from a database of 247 homicide cases (Salfati, 2000). This database had been compiled from cases across the United Kingdom and included single offender–single victim solved homicide cases from the early 1970s to mid-1990s, which were collected from various British police forces around the country as well as the Crown Prosecution Service. The data set includes mainly objectively measured behavioral crime scene information.

From this data set, 17 cases were selected on the basis that the victim was female and the offender was male and that there was no evidence that the victim was involved in prostitution. These 17 cases were also coded as sexual if from the case notes it could be established that the murder was sexual, as determined from either the case information or the crime scene photographs. This variable thus included cases where there seemed to be an obvious sexual motive or where there were physical signs of a sexual nature such as body fluids, interference with the victim's mouth, breasts, or buttocks, necrophilia, vaginal or anal penetration, or the use of a foreign object. Cases were only selected on the basis that the victims' ages ranged from 16 to 50 years old, so that they matched the data set for the prostitution homicides.

For this sample, the victim age range was 16 to 47 years, with a mean of 26 years.

#### *Nonsexual Homicide Data (N = 59)*

Fifty-nine cases were selected from the Salfati (2000) database. The 59 cases were selected on the basis that the victim was female and the offender was male, that there was no evidence to suggest that the victim was involved in prostitution, and that there was no evidence to suggest that the behaviors observable during the murder were in any way sexual in nature. So that the age distribution was similar across data sets, cases were only selected where the victim's age was within the range of 16 to 50 years.

For this data set, the victims' ages ranged from 16 to 50 years, with a mean age of 32 years.

## **The Coding Framework**

Forty-one variables relating to the crime scene and victim and offender characteristics were used for this study. As the data sets originated from two different sources, variables were selected on the basis of information available across the three data sets. All variables (excluding the offender's and the victim's age) were treated as dichotomous, with values based on the presence or the absence of a variable, as research (e.g., Canter & Heritage, 1990) has shown that using such present or absent dichotomies for content analysis of archival data (such as police records) is likely to be more reliable than more refined coding in which differences between categories may be more open to subjective interpretation. The common order of the variables was such that a variable coded present indicated a stronger level of criminal behavior than the variable's not being present (e.g., "knife was used" rather than "knife was not used").

Twenty-one variables related to the crime scene, in particular, the location of the body, the nonwounding actions of the offender against the victim, and the type and intensity of wounding to the victim. These variables were selected in an attempt to create as detailed a picture as possible of the behaviors the offender carried out during his crime.

Eight variables related to the background characteristics of the victims. Apart from the victims' age, all the other victim variables were coded for the prostitute cases only. The reasons for this were because of limitations in the data and because more detailed analyses of the prostitute victims were required. Four variables specifically related to the prostitutes' personal life, including whether she was in a relationship or lived at a fixed address, whereas three variables related to the prostitutes' working practices, including whether the victim worked for a pimp or whether she took clients back to her own residence.

Twelve variables related to characteristics of the offender. These variables were coded for all three data sets, where (a) an offender had been found, tried, and convicted for the offense; and (b) where there was sufficient information to do so. Two variables related to the offenders' personal backgrounds, two variables related to any offenses that may have been previously committed by the offender and whether the offender had spent time serving a prison service. Finally, four variables focused on the nature of the offenders' relationship with his victim.

## Results

### The Prostitute Victim

It was suggested in the literature that prostitute murder victims will differ in background characteristics from those of the general prostitute population. It is hypothesized that the prostitute victims will have higher incidences of those factors that make them more vulnerable to attack. These factors include, for example, drug or substance abuse, lack of experience, and being homeless or living rough.

To test the hypothesis that prostitute victims of homicide will differ in background characteristics from those of the general prostitute population, this section analyzes the frequencies of certain victim background variables and compares them against the frequencies of similar variables found in previous studies of prostitutes. The sample for this study consisted of 46 prostitute homicide victims.

As stated previously, the prostitute victims' ages ranged from 17 to 46 years, with an average age of 24 years ( $n = 46$ ,  $SD = 7.75$ ). This is slightly younger than the average ages of 26 to 28 found by Church et al. (2001) and May et al. (1999). However, it is difficult to test whether this difference is significant or not, because the limitations of studies on prostitutes have to be considered, such as small unrepresentative samples.

The victim was a mother (i.e., had at least one child) or was pregnant at the time of her death, in 20 cases (66.7% of the 30 cases for which information was available). This is within the range of 60% to 76% found by Benson (1998), Sharpe (1998), E. McLeod (1982), May et al. (1999), and Phoenix (1999). This may suggest that having children to support has no bearing on the risks that the prostitute is willing to take or the hours in which she works. However, no data were available for the current data set on whether or not the child or children were living with, or being supported by, their mother at the time of her death.

In 16 instances (66.7% of the 24 cases for which information was available), the victim was in a relationship (i.e., married or had a partner) at the time of her death. This compares to the 38% to 62% found by May et al. (1999), Benson (1998), E. McLeod (1982), and Sharpe (1998). Although the limitations discussed above still apply on testing for significance, it might be suggested that being in a relationship does increase the level of risk incurred, as the prostitutes are perhaps encouraged to work for longer hours by their partners.

In 26 cases (74.3% of 35 cases for which information was available), the victim had a fixed address that included property owned by the victim; rented by the victim; or property that the victim shared with family, a partner, or friends. Of these, 31% took the clients home to do business. This is within the range of 10% to 44% found by Sharpe (1998) and May et al. (1999). As this is the case, it is difficult to make an assumption on whether, as the prostitutes themselves say, it is safer to take the clients home. In 5 of the 7 cases (71%) where the victim took her clients back home, the attack took place at the victim's property.

Out of a total of 33 cases for which information was available, 31 (93.9%) of the victims were engaged in some kind of substance abuse, including drugs, alcohol, and solvents. This compares with the 93% of prostitutes in the Church et al. (2001) study who had admitted to taking some sort of illegal drugs in the previous month, but this figure is higher than the 20% to 73% found by Morgan-Thomas et al. (1989), Day et al. (1988), Faugier et al. (1992), McKeganey and Barnard (1996), and Ferguson

(2002). Aside from the limitations on these studies discussed earlier, it should also be noted that these studies deal with drug abuse only, and although the majority of the prostitute victim substance abusers did take drugs, the present study also includes alcohol and solvents.

Seven (21.9% of the 32 cases for which information was available) of the victims had worked for fewer than 12 months in the area in which they were killed. Seven (25.9% of the 27 cases for which information was available) of the victims were working for a pimp. This included cases in which there was evidence that the victim was forced to work by her partner, for their partner's financial benefit. Eight (30.8% of the 26 cases for which information was available) of the victims used their own residence to take clients either on a regular or an occasional basis.

It is perhaps interesting to note that 26% of victims were known to be working for a pimp at the time of their deaths, which also included cases where there was evidence that the victim had been forced to work by her partner. This is considerably lower than the 75% suggested by E. McLeod (1982) but higher than the figure put forward by Sharpe (1998). What the prostitute figure of 26% suggests about the risk of having a pimp is therefore difficult to interpret. In some respects, it could mean that because the figure is much lower than that found by E. McLeod (1982), having a pimp reduces the risk of violence, whereas because it is higher than that put forward by Sharpe (1998), having a pimp increases the level of risk. The suggestion in the literature that having a pimp may be able to reduce the risk of violence from clients but not from the pimp himself is partly supported by the evidence from the cases. In the five cases that were solved and in which there was evidence that the victim had a pimp, two (40%) had been killed by him. However, more data and further analysis are needed to investigate this link further.

### *Discussion*

Although the information was limited, the results of this primary analysis comparing prostitutes who were killed against what we know about prostitutes in general allow us to start untangling some of the risk factors that may be an issue. Although further studies would need to be done to support these results, the initial findings allow us to make some tentative suggestions to factors that may contribute to a prostitute's being attacked.

Further research in this area may include investigating the factors within a relationship between a prostitute and her partner, which may affect her chances of being attacked. These factors may include, among others, whether

the prostitute gave any of her earnings to her partner, and if so, what percentage; whether her partner knew about her work and what he thought of it; or simply whether or not they cohabited.

More research into the role of the pimp would be useful to try to answer the question of whether it reduces the risk of violence overall or whether it increases it. Further studies on drugs including other abusive substances and the role they play in the risk of attack would be useful, together with a more detailed study on the ramifications of having to support children while being involved in prostitution, and whether the risks are any different if the children are supported by the prostitute herself or not.

## Offender Characteristics

The second aim of the study aimed to investigate the characteristics of prostitute homicide offenders to understand them as a subgroup of homicide offenders in general. It was hypothesized that the background characteristics of prostitute homicide offenders will differ from those of the general prostitute client population, where prostitute client offenders will show more signs of criminality than prostitute client nonoffenders. This section compared the prostitute offenders' background characteristics to what we know of clients in general, as well as comparing them with those offenders convicted of sexual and nonsexual homicides to see if there are any significant differences between them. For this analysis, the full data set of 122 cases was used, which included the 46 cases of prostitute homicide victims; 17 nonprostitute sexual homicide victims; and 59 nonprostitute, nonsexual homicide victims.

### *Characteristics of the Offenders*

Out of 19 solved cases of prostitute homicides for which there was available information, the age of the offender ranged from 19 to 54 years, with a mean of 37 years ( $n = 19$ ,  $SD = 10.56$ ). For nonsexual homicide cases, the offenders' ages ranged from 17 to 52 years, with a mean of 35 years ( $n = 59$ ,  $SD = 9.19$ ). In the sexual homicide cases, the age of the offender ranged from 16 to 38 years, with a mean of 27 years ( $n = 17$ ,  $SD = 6.66$ ). The only significant difference between the ages of the three different groups was between prostitute homicides and sexual homicides,  $t(31) = 3.440$ ;  $p < .01$  (see Table 1).

Significantly more prostitute homicide offenders had previous convictions for violent offenses compared to both sexual and nonsexual homicide offenders but had significantly fewer preconvictions for nonviolent offenses when

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Offender Background Characteristics for Prostitute, Nonsexual, and Sexual Homicides**

Offender Background Characteristics	Prostitute %	Nonsexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>	Prostitute %	Sexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>
Previous conviction of offender: Violence	73.7	32.2	.360	.01	73.7	17.6	.560	.01
Previous conviction of offender: Nonviolence	50.0	81.4	.303	.01	50.0	41.2	.089	<i>ns</i>
Offender in prison	41.2	8.5	.374	.01	41.2	17.6	.258	<i>ns</i>
Offender unemployed	68.8	27.1	.355	.01	68.8	29.4	.393	.05
Offender married	44.4	42.4	.018	<i>ns</i>	44.4	29.4	.155	<i>ns</i>
Previous conviction of offender: Sexual	25.0	74.6	.423	.01	25.0	58.8	.342	.05

Note: All frequencies were only calculated from the actual number of cases for which the information was available.

compared to nonsexual cases. Of note, although not significant, is that when compared to sexual homicide cases, prostitute homicide offenders had more nonviolent offenses. In the 19 out of the 25 solved cases that had available information, 14 (73.7%) had one or more preconvictions for a violent offense compared to 19 (32.2%) of nonsexual homicide offenders and 3 (17.6%) of sexual homicide offenders. This may suggest that prostitute homicide offenders, as a whole, are generally more aggressive than nonsexual homicide offenders are, consistently displaying more aggressive behaviors over different situations. This may suggest a lower threshold of anger compared to nonsexual homicide offenders, who, it is assumed, commit murder impulsively and explosively.

The main question of the study related to whether prostitute homicides could be understood as being part of a subgroup of victims targeted due to availability and vulnerability, or whether they were targeted due to more emotive issues surrounding who they were as a prostitute. In terms of understanding the offenders, the first indication is that they have a criminal background pattern that is in line with expressive offenders as shown in the general homicide literature (Salfati, 2000). The results also show that compared to nonsexual homicides, offenders came to these crimes with a more instrumental tendency for nonperson crimes, although not as much so as the subgroups of sexual homicide offenders, which the literature has shown to be particularly linked with an extensive property-oriented criminal background. These first sets of analysis show an interesting trend; however, without further information and analysis on what motivated these offenders during the actual prostitute homicides, we cannot make conclusive assertions regarding these questions. Future studies should aim to look further into the backgrounds of offenders and look at how their criminal careers and specialties relate to the types of homicide they commit, in particular how prostitute homicides compare to other types of homicide.

In terms of the question of whether the offenders of prostitute homicides bring with them a previous criminal experience in the realm of sex crimes, it is of note that prostitute homicide offenders in the current study also had significantly more preconvictions for sexual offenses compared to nonsexual offenders and, although not to a significant difference, more than sexual homicide offenders. Of further interest is the fact that with soliciting being classified as a sexual offense (U.K. Home Office, 2002), the data showed that 7 (41.2% of the 17 cases with information available) prostitute homicide offenders held such convictions, compared to 5 (8.5%) of nonsexual homicide offenders and 3 (17.6%) of sexual homicide offenders.

Significantly more prostitute homicide offenders had spent time in prison than both nonsexual and sexual homicide offenders. This may be explained by the higher number of preconvictions for violent offenses. Eleven (68.8% of the 16 cases where information was available) of prostitute homicide offenders had been incarcerated at one time or another, compared to only 16 (27.1%) of nonsexual homicide offenders and 5 (29.4%) of sexual homicide offenders. As can be seen, most (48; 81.4%) of the nonsexual homicide offenders had preconvictions for a nonviolent offense(s), whereas this occurred in 9 (19.6% of the 18 cases where information was available) offenders' backgrounds in the case of prostitute homicides and 7 (41.2%) of sexual homicide cases.

Eight (44.4% of the 18 cases for which information was available) offenders were unemployed at the time of their offense, compared to 25 (42.4%) of nonsexual homicide cases and 5 (29.4%) of sexual homicide cases, but these differences were nonsignificant.

Four (25% of the 16 cases with information available) prostitute homicide offenders were married at the time of their offense, compared to 44 (74.6%) of nonsexual homicide offenders and 10 (58.8%) of sexual homicide offenders. Significantly more nonsexual homicide offenders were married at the time of their offense than were prostitute homicide offenders. This may account for the findings in previous research that the majority of nonsexual homicides are between people in a relationship, often between spouses (Decker, 1996; Wolfgang, 1958). As with the nonsexual homicide comparison, the sexual homicide offender was also significantly more likely to be married than was the prostitute homicide offender at the time of the offense.

As the literature suggests that prostitute homicide offenders as a group are mostly married, starting to distinguish differences between subgroups of homicide can be important, as it highlights that in comparing with other types of homicides, they may be understood as having very different subsets of demographics.

### *Offender–Victim Relationship*

The homicide literature has highlighted the importance of the offender–victim relationship in understanding the type of homicide (e.g., Wolfgang, 1958), in particular differences between more emotionally laden crimes and more object-related crimes (Salfati, 2000; Salfati & Canter, 1999).

The results of the current study showed that the three different subgroups of homicide each had their most likely offender coming from a different

**Table 2**  
**Comparison of Offender–Victim Relationship for Prostitute,  
 Nonsexual, and Sexual Homicides**

Offender–Victim Relationship	Prostitute		Nonsexual		Cramer's V		Cramer's p	
	%	%	V	p	%	%	V	p
Stranger	54.2	6.8	.532	.01	54.2	23.5	.306	.05
Sexual relationship	25.0	76.3	.478	.01	25.0	17.6	0.88	<i>ns</i>
Acquaintance	16.7	13.6	.766	<i>ns</i>	16.7	58.8	.438	.01
Blood relation	0.0	3.4	.100	<i>ns</i>	0.0	0.0	—	—

category of victim–offender relationship. The frequencies of the offender–victim relationship variables for the three data sets are illustrated in Table 2.

The prostitute homicide offender was most likely to be unknown to the victim; the offender was a stranger in 13 instances (54.2% of the 24 cases for which there was information). This compares to 4 (6.8%) of nonsexual homicide offenders and 4 (23.5%) of sexual homicide offenders.

When the homicide is of a nonsexual nature, the offender is likely to be in, or has been in, a relationship with the victim. This occurred in 45 (76.3%) cases compared to 6 (25% of the 24 cases that contained this information) of prostitute homicides and 3 (17.6%) of all sexual homicide cases.

When the homicide is of a sexual nature, the offender is likely to be an acquaintance of the victim. This was the case in 10 (58.8%) of all sexual homicides compared to 4 (16.7% of the 24 cases that contained this information) of prostitute homicides and 8 (13.6%) of nonsexual homicides.

The finding that prostitute homicide offenders are significantly more likely to be strangers than those offenders of nonsexual homicides is to be expected, considering previous research on the nature of nonsexual, expressive homicides. This is further evidenced by the results that suggest that nonsexual homicide offenders are significantly more likely to be involved in some kind of intimate relationship with their victim than are prostitute homicide offenders. There were no instances of any prostitute homicide victims or sexual homicide victims being killed by a blood relation.

### *Discussion*

This analysis has shown that there are differences between the background characteristics of homicide offenders across the three different types of homicide. Relating the results back to the literature on clients of

prostitutes suggests that there are also some differences between the background characteristics of prostitute clients who kill and the prostitute clients who do not kill.

The average age of the prostitute homicide offenders corresponds with the findings of McKeganey and Barnard (1996) and Sharpe (1998), who found that most clients were in their mid-30s. This might suggest that the risk reduction strategy used by some prostitutes of not going with clients under 30 is perhaps futile, as most prostitute homicide offenders are indeed over 30.

This study found that 44% of the prostitute offenders were unemployed at the time of their offense, which is higher than the results of 7% to 25% found by Sharpe (1998), McKeganey and Barnard (1996), Matthews (1986), and Benson and Matthews (1995).

The present study also found that 25% of the prostitute homicide offenders were married at the time of their offense, compared with the studies claiming that most clients are married (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; E. McLeod, 1982).

With regards to previous convictions, this study has found results that are considerably higher than studies investigating the general client population. Seventy-four percent of prostitute homicide offenders had at least one previous conviction for a violent offense, which compares to the 25% reported by Brooks-Gordon et al. (as cited in Brooks-Gordon, 2006); 50% of prostitute homicide offenders had a conviction for nonviolent offenses, compared to the 24% found by Brooks-Gordon et al.; and 41.2% of the prostitute homicide offenders had a conviction for a sexual offense, compared to the 8% found by Brooks-Gordon et al.

As with all these results, however, it is not possible to test whether the differences between the current sample are significant when compared to the general literature, as all the studies contain varying sample sizes and different reporting and collecting methods, of which not all are known. The criteria for the variables studied are also unknown and may differ between studies. For example, this present study rates the offender as being married if he was married or cohabiting with a partner at the time of the offense, whereas other studies may not have included cohabiting in this variable.

Similarly, the sample size of prostitute homicide offenders is very small ( $n = 25$ ), and information was not available on all the background variables in each case, which may mean a misrepresentation of results. Obviously, there are no details of the offenders of the unsolved cases, and it may be that these offenders are in some way different from those already detected and convicted, again resulting in a misrepresentation of the results.

However, the results of this analysis do provide the initial suggestion that the offenders of prostitute homicides do possess different background characteristics from the prostitute client population in general as well as from the offenders of sexual and nonsexual homicides. These findings need to be investigated further, however, and may ultimately lead to a classification system of offenders of these three homicide groups, which may assist investigators in relevant future homicide inquiries by aiding the prioritization of the most likely offenders responsible for the crime.

## **Crime Scene Behaviors**

The third aim of the study was to understand more about prostitute homicides in relation to the actions the offenders engaged in at the time of the crime. To test the hypothesis that prostitute murders are in some way conceptually different from other female victim murders (in both sexual and nonsexual homicides), key crime scene variables were analyzed, pertaining to the key group of variables highlighted in the literature to pertain to risk factors. For this analysis, the full data set of 122 cases was used, which included the 46 cases of prostitute homicide victims; 17 nonprostitute sexual homicide victims; and 59 nonprostitute, nonsexual homicide victims.

### *Location Variables*

Location has been shown to be closely related to the risk factors of prostitute homicides. As can be seen in Table 3, variables that occurred more in the prostitute murders as compared to the other two groups included the location variables of transporting the victim away from the original crime scene after death, leaving the body of the victim outside, and hiding the body of the victim (e.g., leaving it in water). Conversely, those variables that occurred less in the prostitution murders included leaving the victim at the same scene where they were killed or at the victim's premises, or committing the crime in daylight.

Thus, overall, prostitution homicides were more likely to include variables linked to covering up the crime and delay the investigation. These differences were all significantly different when comparing prostitute homicides to nonsexual homicides. However, although the direction of the differences were the same when prostitute homicides were compared to sexual homicides, following the same trend as in the analysis of offender characteristics where the differences between sexual homicides and prostitution homicides were less marked, only some of these were significant.

**Table 3**  
**Comparison of Location Variables for Prostitute, Nonsexual, and Sexual Homicides**

Location Variables	Prostitute %	Nonsexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>	Prostitute %	Sexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>
Victim found outside	82.6	34.5	.481	.01	82.6	52.9	.303	.05
Victim transported	64.4	10.2	.556	.01	64.4	17.6	.403	.01
Victim found at same scene	35.6	74.6	.399	.01	35.6	70.6	.320	.05
Victim hidden	28.3	11.9	.207	.05	28.3	23.5	.047	<i>ns</i>
Victim found in own premises	15.2	61.0	.462	.01	15.2	35.3	.220	<i>ns</i>
Victim found in water	15.2	1.7	.253	.01	15.2	0.0	.215	<i>ns</i>
Victim killed during daylight	12.0	43.1	.311	.01	12.0	21.4	.125	<i>ns</i>

### *Body Variables*

The frequencies relating to variables concerning the body for each data set are shown in Table 4. As can be seen, out of 33 cases where information was available, 14 (42.4%) of the prostitute victims were found completely naked. This compares to 5 (8.5%) of nonsexual homicide victims and 3 (17.6%) of sexual homicide victims. The prostitute victim was found naked in just under half of the cases, which may lead us to assume that this was not done with the consent of the victim (as part of their "service") or may be an additional risk indicator, as this figure is slightly higher than might be expected from Ferguson's (2002) survey of normal working habits. All of the sexual homicide victims were found either naked or partially naked, whereas approximately 20% of the prostitute victims were found fully dressed (i.e., neither naked nor partially undressed). This may be an interesting finding, as it suggests a high correlation between the state of undress of the victim and the level and type of sexual crime involved.

The victim was found partially undressed on 12 (37.5% out of 32 cases where information was available) occasions in prostitute homicide, 9 (15.3%) in nonsexual homicide, and 14 (82.4%) in sexual homicide. Significantly more prostitute victims were found either naked or partially undressed than were the victims of nonsexual homicides. Once again, this fits in with the impulsive scenario often associated with nonsexual homicides, as undressing or partially undressing the victim would not be a very spontaneous act. There are a few nonsexual homicide victims who were found either naked or partially undressed, and although this may indicate that undressing the victim is a rarely occurring behavior in nonsexual homicides, it may also be because the victim was already naked or partially undressed before the homicide occurred.

In 3 (14.3%) prostitute cases (out of 21 cases where information was available) and in 1 (5.9%) sexual case, an object was used to sexually penetrate the victim. This action did not occur in the nonsexual homicides.

Both prostitute and nonsexual homicide victims were either bound or had their body placed in significant positions on very few occasions, and the differences between the two sets of homicides were not significant. This suggests a lack of planning and organization as well as less time spent on behaviors not to do with the actual homicide by both the typical prostitute and the nonsexual murderer. Twenty-two (7.4%) of the prostitute victims (out of 27 cases where information was available) were found bound compared with 2 (3.4%) of nonsexual cases and 2 (11.8%) of sexual ones. The placing of the victim was a significantly more frequent action in the cases

**Table 4**  
**Comparison of Body Variables for Prostitute, Nonsexual, and Sexual Homicides**

Body Variables	Prostitute %	Nonsexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>	Prostitute %	Sexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>
Victim had property stolen	51.9	10.2	.458	.01	51.9	35.3	.162	<i>ns</i>
Victim found naked	42.4	8.5	.402	.01	42.4	17.6	.248	<i>ns</i>
Victim found partially dressed	37.5	15.3	.252	.05	37.5	82.4	.428	.05
Victim assaulted with object	14.3	0.0	.331	.01	14.3	5.9	.136	<i>ns</i>
Victim was bound	7.4	3.4	.089	<i>ns</i>	7.4	11.8	.074	<i>ns</i>
Victim was placed	5.6	8.8	.059	<i>ns</i>	5.6	29.4	.329	.05
Victim set alight	4.3	10.2	.109	<i>ns</i>	4.3	5.9	.032	<i>ns</i>

of sexual homicide than the prostitute cases, although it occurred in less than 30% of sexual cases.

In 2 (4.3%) prostitute cases, the victim's body had been deliberately set alight after other fatal wounds had been inflicted on the body. This occurred in 6 (10.2%) of nonsexual homicides and in 1 (5.9%) case of sexual homicide.

In 14 prostitute cases (51.9% of 27 cases where the information was available), property was stolen from the victim, suggesting a link between robbery and the crime, either as a result of the offender's being opportunistic and the taking of belongings was incidental to the murder itself or that the offender aimed to rob the victim. This was higher than for both nonsexual homicides (6; 10.2%) and sexual homicides (6; 35.3%).

### *Wounding*

As can be seen in Table 5, in all three cases, the two most frequent wounding actions were those of a manual nature and multiple wounding. Suffocation was the least common form of wounding across the three data sets, and wounding with a blunt instrument was the second rarest action.

Both prostitute and nonsexual victims were more likely to have multiple injuries than not and were likely to have wounds inflicted manually. Manually killing suggests an absence of planning, as no weapon was used that had been brought to the scene; the killer used what was available at that time, namely himself. The evidence of multiple wounding may also suggest an act of impulsive aggression, most probably caused by some disagreement or another, which suggests an expressive element to these cases.

Although multiple wounding was the most common type of wounding between both groups, within-group figures suggest that prostitutes were more likely to be injured in this way than were nonsexual victims. Considering that multiple wounding is highly associated with expressiveness and impulsivity and has been linked with both known victims and an emotional element, this finding is important in understanding the nature of the violence in prostitution homicides and adds evidence to prostitute victims' possibly being either vehicles through whom offenders vent their aggression or a target in and of themselves. In either case, results suggest that the level and type of violence is important to understand these cases, but further in-depth analysis would need to be conducted to further test these similarities and differences.

### *Discussion*

Overall, the results suggest that in many respects, the prostitute homicide cases are more similar to sexual homicides rather than nonsexual homicides

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of Wounding Behaviors for Prostitute, Nonsexual, and Sexual Homicides**

Wounding Behaviors	Prostitute %	Nonsexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>	Prostitute %	Sexual %	Cramer's V	<i>p</i>
Victim had multiple wounds	75.6	57.6	.185	<i>ns</i>	75.6	64.7	.111	<i>ns</i>
Victim was killed manually	68.3	61.0	.075	<i>ns</i>	68.3	76.5	.082	<i>ns</i>
Victim was stabbed	29.3	33.9	.049	<i>ns</i>	29.3	35.3	.059	<i>ns</i>
Victim hit with blunt	14.6	27.1	.148	<i>ns</i>	14.6	5.9	.112	<i>ns</i>
Victim was suffocated	7.3	1.7	.141	<i>ns</i>	7.3	5.9	.026	<i>ns</i>

in their crime scene behaviors. This is based on 12 significant differences out of 21 for the nonsexual cases, as opposed to 5 significant differences for the sexual cases.

As discussed earlier, the typical scenario for a nonsexual homicide is usually between people who know each other well and is the result of a disagreement. If, as suggested, most prostitute violence is preceded by a disagreement over money or services, then the differentiating factor between these two different groups is the relationship between the offender and the victim.

Some of the findings are to be expected, given the prostitutes' working habits and conditions, including such high-frequency variables as the victim found outside and the victim killed after daylight hours. Other variables occur frequently, which suggest an unplanned, disorganized attack, such as multiple wounding and manual mode of attack, but there are others that do suggest an element of planning, notably in the actions the offender engages in after the homicide takes place. These variables include behaviors such as the transportation of the victim, the theft of property, and the hiding of the victim. In terms of understanding prostitute homicides, it therefore highlights that elements of expressiveness and instrumentality, as well as impulsivity, control, and planning, play different roles at different stages of the crime. Further in-depth analysis would need to untangle these issues, particularly in terms of how they define this group, compared to other subtypes of homicide.

Most nonsexual homicides are expressive in nature, and most sexual homicides are instrumental (Salfati, 2000). The evidence in this present study at this point in the investigation shows differences between prostitute homicides in comparison to these other two groups, which each represents the extreme end of the expressive-instrumental spectrum.

The results of this analysis may be influenced by the limitations in the data, however. For example, there are very few details of sexual behaviors carried out during the offense in prostitute homicides, because in almost every case, the prostitute's body will show evidence of sexual behavior, but it is not known whether this occurred before, during, or after the offense, or indeed by the offender himself. Overt sexual assault was reported in only five prostitute cases, which suggests that in these cases, the sexual assault was intense (three of these cases involved object penetration), but the lack of information may have biased the results. Although, as previously highlighted in the literature, information from homicides may be unclear in terms of adding information regarding the sexual element of the crime, further understanding of both nonsexual and sexual attacks against prostitutes can

be achieved through interviewing prostitutes themselves about their experiences of assault. An important follow-up to the current study would therefore be a thorough interview survey of the ranges of violent experiences that prostitutes face.

## Discussion

This study aimed to examine prostitute homicides against a backdrop of the prostitution literature as well as homicide in general in the hope that any findings may provide assistance at the first stage in the recognition of specific aspects pertaining to prostitute homicides as a subgroup, including any particular risk factors for violence, all of which may help to identify strategies for risk assessment, homicide investigation, and suspect prioritization.

It was hypothesized that the victims of prostitute homicides would differ in background characteristics to those of the general prostitute population and that the victims would have higher incidences of those factors that would make them vulnerable to attack. The current study highlights some important factors.

The study also hypothesized that offenders convicted of prostitute homicides would differ in background characteristics to those of the general population of prostitute clients. Again, comparisons of results found in this study against previous studies put forward some initial trends. The typical prostitute murderer was likely to be in his 30s, employed, and not married at the time of his offense. More offenders were unemployed than the usual prostitute client population. Perhaps one of the more practical findings is that prostitute homicide offenders had considerably higher numbers of previous convictions than did the general client population. The largest difference was in that of violent offenses, followed by sexual offenses. Of the 14 cases of offenders holding violent preconvictions (out of 19 for which information was available), it is of note that 6 involved a preconviction for at least one murder. With figures as high as these, it is likely that a prostitute will come into contact with clients with violent preconvictions on a relatively regular basis. Indeed, in one prostitute homicide case, the victim had had sex with a client who had previous convictions for attempted murder and serious sexual assaults on women in the same night when she was killed by another client who also had previous convictions for attempted murder. The evidence suggesting that men who assault prostitutes have convictions for assaulting other women as well suggests that violence against prostitutes ought to be considered as part of a continuum of violence against women

more generally and not just against prostitutes specifically. This is evidence for the assumption that offenders are consistent in their behaviors at one level and across situations (Burgess et al., 1986; Huesmann & Eron, 1989; Toch, 1969) and is the first step in being able to make inferences about the possible offenders. This, however, needs to be looked at in more detail, and patterns of offending and consistency in victim targeting need to be tested in more expansive studies.

The results also suggest that the background variables of offenders of prostitute homicides differ from those offenders convicted of sexual and nonsexual homicides. Perhaps the most obvious difference was that of the offender–victim relationship. In prostitute homicides, the offender was most likely to be a stranger; in sexual homicides, the offender was most likely to be an acquaintance; and in nonsexual homicides, the offender was most likely to have had or to be in a sexual relationship with the victim. These differences in the relationship between the offender and the victim could be the primary factor in explaining why these different homicides are conceptually different from each other. Further analysis now needs to be conducted with a larger sample to replicate these results before being able to conclusively highlight this as a differentiating factor and to further link relationship type to the nature of the victim group themselves as targets for this type of crime.

It was also hypothesized that prostitute homicides would be conceptually different from other forms of female victim homicides and that prostitute homicides will differ from both sexual and nonsexual homicides in the crime scene behaviors exhibited at the scene. It was found that prostitute homicides differed from both sexual and nonsexual homicides in the frequencies of the crime scene behaviors. Overall, comparing the results to both the general literature and the empirical comparison to other subgroups of homicide allows for a first step in understanding prostitute victims as both vulnerable and available victims, as well as specific targets. Further studies now need to expand and develop these primary findings in a more comprehensive study of both prostitute homicides as well as assaults and sexual assaults against prostitutes, which would include information obtained from homicide files, live victims themselves, as well as offenders.

### *Limitations of the Study*

There have been relatively few studies on prostitution, especially murders of prostitutes, in recent years. Those studies that have been carried out differ greatly in terms of sample sizes, collecting and reporting methods, and location. These differences make comparisons between samples difficult,

and as such, the comparisons in the current study can only provide initial suggestions as to differences. The same limitations can be applied to the comparison of the offender characteristics, together with a further constraint of the very small sample size of prostitute homicide offenders used in this study.

Most of the data for the prostitute homicide cases were derived from open-source material such as local and national newspaper articles and the Internet. There was therefore no standardized recording of the cases in question, with articles containing differing quantities of information and detail. Articles were written from different perspectives, such as a focus on the victim or a focus on the area in which the homicide occurred, resulting in different types of information being reported on each case. There was also no standardized procedure to check the accuracy of the information, although whenever possible, information was pooled from more than one source and checked against each other. As most of the data came from newspaper reports, the accounts of the crimes did not go into any specific details about more detailed behavioral aspects of the crime scene. Valuable details of the crime scene may therefore have been omitted, and this will have affected the findings. Future studies will need to work from actual police homicide files to obtain the type of information that other behavioral work in the area of homicide is using to fully compare prostitution homicides to other types of homicide crime scenes.

Of the 46 prostitute cases under study, 21 were unsolved. It was assumed that of these 21 cases, the victim was a single male, which was representative of our comparison samples of sexual and nonsexual homicides. This may not have been the case, however, and comparisons may have been made with cases that were essentially different. Future studies using larger data samples will need to do a more detailed investigation comparing solved and cleared cases with unsolved cases.

## Conclusion

The prostitute is a marginalized individual in society and as such, it seems that men may be more easily able to rationalize violence against them than to nonprostitute women. A large percentage of the prostitutes' contacts with clients are nonviolent and are purely an exchange of cash for sexual services. The sheer number of partners that prostitutes service, however, implies that only a small percentage of violent encounters can result in a substantial amount of violent experiences. When this violence turns to

murder, it appears that there are differences between the actions directed toward prostitute victims and nonprostitute victims. Further research is required to clarify these differences in more detail so that we may feed this back into both risk assessments and police investigations.

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