

A Contextual Exploration of the Contributing Factors of Ritualistic Murders



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ABSTRACT

Ritualistic murder is an undefined and under-researched concept. It is often discussed in connection with serial murder, fantasy-driven behaviour, religion and culture, and mental health disorders. This study discussed and presented the above-mentioned topics and discovered their potential contributions or causal relationships to ritualistic murder. The research further examined the overlap between the characteristics of ritualistic murderers and those of serial killers. In addition, the dissertation identified gaps in knowledge and suggested directions for future research, including the need for a unified definition of ritualistic murder and a deeper understanding of the role of underlying issues. Overall, the findings concluded that ritualistic murder is a wide umbrella term that has important implications for the fields of criminology and psychology. This dissertation elucidated that further research around ritualistic murder could aid in differentiating between and understanding perpetrators of this crime, and thereby potentially reduce crime rates. Furthermore, it was highlighted that by researching this phenomenon, its causal and contributing factors could be addressed and criminal justice agencies could develop more efficient and effective ways of dealing with these perpetrators.

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GLOSSARY

- ***Alter***: A distinct personality or identity within a dissociative identity disorder system, with separate characteristics, feelings, actions and thoughts from other alters or from the host (Kluft, 2010).
- ***Homicide***: A killing of one human being by another/Murder and Manslaughter (CPS, 2022; Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
- ***Human Sacrifice***: Deliberate and ritualised murder of a person to please or placate divinities or other supernatural beings (Leeson, 2014; Watts et al., 2016).
- ***Manslaughter***: A type of homicide, in which the perpetrator suffers from diminished responsibility or lost control due to a qualifying trigger (CPS, 2022; legislation.gov.uk, 1957; Newburn, 2017).
- ***Murder***: A type of homicide, in which a sane perpetrator unlawfully kills someone with the intent to kill or to cause serious bodily harm (CPS, 2022).
- ***Muti Murder/Medicine Murder***: A type of ritualistic murder that involves the use of human body parts and other biological materials for spiritual or magical purposes, or to create 'medicine' (Gocking, 2000; Igbinovia, 1988; Lyncaster, 2015).
- ***Muti***: Medicine/Herbs and plants associated with traditional medicine (Igbinovia, 1988; Labuschagne, 2004).
- ***Ritual***: Defined in multiple ways by scholars, some of these include repetitive acts, religious engagement in a particular environment, or distinct forms of human interactions that fulfil specific purposes (Hazelwood & Warren, 2003; Helland & Kienzl, 2021; Hüsken, 2007; Platvoet, 1998).

- ***Sharia Law:*** Law based on the principles found in the Koran and other Islamic religious texts (Robinson, 2021; Warner, 2010).
- ***Tribalism:*** The tendency to be loyal and favourable toward one's own tribe, and less favourable towards other tribes (Clark et al., 2019).
- ***Tribe:*** Human social group sharing common interests (Clark et al., 2019).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to extract and discuss, via a literature review, the causes of ritualistic murders and potential relationships of the key focus areas as outlined below.

The second chapter of the dissertation will discuss the methodology and the limitations of the research. The third chapter will contain the literature review, which consists of three main topics, highlighted below, and will continue to discuss their potential correlation with ritualistic murder. The key topics are the role of fantasy, mental health disorders, and culture and religion. To round the dissertation off and conclude all the findings, the final chapter will effectively summarise the key points highlighted and establish any further implications. Having provided a structure of the dissertation, it is important to place ritualistic murder in context.

Ritualistic murder and ritualistic crime are insufficiently researched areas with barely any empirical studies conducted on the topic (Perlmutter, 2016; Schlesinger et al., 2010). It is mostly understood that researchers refer to ritualistic murder, as a murder, where a ritual before or after the killing took place (Garrett, 2004; Miletich, 2003; Perlmutter, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2010). This ritual can surface due to cultural/religious reasons, or due to a fantasy-driven behaviour, that satisfies emotional needs of the offender (Miletich, 2003; Schlesinger et al., 2010). Furthermore, it can be suggested that a ritual might be present due to mental health reasons, as if to satisfy symptoms of the disorder of the offender (Reese, 1979). Given these significant relationships, the proceeding chapters will be dedicated to examining these constructs. In addition, other factors such as repetitiveness, cult killings, satanic murders, paraphilia, mafia murders, and homicide committed by deviant pagans, will be explored (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000; Miletich, 2003; Perlmutter, 2009; Schlesinger et al., 2010; Wertheim, 1989). Due to these factors, any murder accompanied by a ritual, not necessarily required to kill the victim, but to satisfy either psychological, psychosexual, cultural or religious needs of the perpetrator, could be deemed to signify a ritualistic murder.

This combined definition, which is adopted within this research, shares similarities with the hallmarks of a serial killer's signature. (Keppel, 1995; Keppel & Birnes, 1998; Schlesinger et al., 2010). A serial killer's signature is an unusual act, left at each of their crime scenes, executed the same way (Keppel, 1995; Keppel & Birnes, 1998). This can include special positioning of the corpse, mutilation, excessive violence, or sexual sadism (Keppel, 1995; Keppel & Birnes, 1998; Schlesinger et al., 2010). While there are undeniable similarities between ritualistic and signature murders, there is disagreement between researchers, whether they are synonymous terms or not (Douglas & Munn, 1992; Keppel, 1995; Keppel & Birnes, 1998; Schlesinger et al., 2010). Douglas and Munn (1992) distinguished between these murders, stating that signatures remain the same across crime scenes, whereas the ritual may evolve over time. Similarly, Hazelwood and Warren (2003) argued that signatures are unique and emerge across two or more offenses, while rituals are repeated acts that do not necessarily happen at every crime scene. Furthermore, they reasoned that rituals are more difficult to establish, as elements of them can function as or be mistaken for the modus operandi [M.O.] (Hazelwood & Warren, 2003). M.O. is the method of the crime, which evolves as the offender gains more experience (Douglas & Munn, 1992). Considering these insights, it is evident that there is a difference between the signature and the ritual at a crime scene. However, while not synonymous terms, murder signatures could be a part of the ritualistic behaviour of the perpetrator, as stated by Schlesinger et al. (2010). Therefore, while it is suggested that certain rituals might not occur during all the crimes committed by the perpetrator, the ritual involving the signature remains. Due to this consideration, signature murders will be explored as a type of ritualistic murder, especially in connection with mental disorders. Furthermore, this suggests that ritualistic murders can be inspected in connection to serial murders.

In parallel with ritual murders being used as an expression of the repeated acts committed in serial murders, they are often referred to as symbolic acts in a religious or cultural

context (Perlmutter, 2011). However, Perlmutter (2011) stated that all ritualistic murders are symbolic acts. While he does this due to the religious and cultural context of his work, this could be deemed accurate in other cases, as rituals are used to symbolise acts unrelated to the crime itself (Hazelwood & Warren, 2003; Perlmutter, 2011). They can showcase the fantasies of a perpetrator, symptoms of a mental disorder, or a connectedness to a culture or to a religious practice (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000; Miletich, 2003; Perlmutter, 2009; Reese, 1979; Schlesinger et al., 2010). While it is possible for the murder signature to be the same for different perpetrators, such as cutting off a body part, the ritual may differ, as it signifies the hidden cause behind the signature and behind the murder (Keppel & Weis, 2004; Lyncaster, 2015; Schlesinger et al., 2010). While most researchers agree on this idea, Labuschagne (2004) states that certain religious or cultural practices, where the victim's death is not the intention (for example muti-murders), should not be referred to as ritualistic murder. Muti-murders are a form of murder committed to remove body parts of victims, while they are still alive, for medicinal or ritualistic purposes (Bhootra & Weiss, 2006). Therefore, Labuschagne (2004) argues that in cases, such as muti-murders, the intention is the acquisition of body parts, whereas in ritualistic and sacrificial murders the intention is to ultimately kill the victim. However, as discussed previously, most scholars disagree with the notion of rituals being present in the murder due to the intention to kill, rather that they are present to satisfy a need of the perpetrator (Schlesinger et al., 2010). In cases of serial murder, this was referred to as an emotional need, whereas arguably, in cases of muti-murders the need would be religious or cultural (Lyncaster, 2015; Schlesinger et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is suggested that sacrificial murders are a type of ritualistic murders, but they are not synonymous terms.

Therefore, muti-murders, based on the evidence that there is a ritual committed before the murder, to satisfy a religious or cultural need, can be considered ritualistic. However, while they are referred to as ritualistic, they are not synonyms, as suggested by Lyncaster (2015).

Ritualistic murder is a much broader term and includes a variety of behaviours (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000; Miletich, 2003; Perlmutter, 2009; Reese, 1979; Schlesinger et al., 2010). Given this landscape, this research will address the question: What are the various factors that contribute to and constitute ritualistic murder and the associated causes? Before embarking on a full review of the literature, it is pertinent to outline this dissertation's methodology. The proceeding chapter will present the methodology that was used in this research in order to arrive at an informed answer to this question.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This methodology section outlines the approach used to conduct research on the topic of ritualistic homicides. Due to the limited availability of research on this topic, a literature review has been chosen as the preferred method. A literature review is a qualitative, secondary research method that is particularly useful in areas where there is a lack of collected knowledge (Arshed & Danson, 2015). The study of ritualistic murders - especially the killer's psychopathology and related themes - has valuable implications for criminology, explaining the often-ignored connections between rituals, fantasy, culture, religion, and mental health (Miletich, 2003; Reese, 1979; Schlesinger et al., 2010). This research aims to establish a foundation of knowledge for future inquiry and the need for a unified definition.

A qualitative research method has been chosen for this study, because it is more effective in understanding the behaviour, beliefs, and values of a group and raising awareness on the topic than quantitative research (Choy, 2014). Due to this, the collected findings were analysed with qualitative data analysis, as this was useful in establishing themes within the research basis (Lacey & Luff, 2009). Furthermore, the data was collected with inductive reasoning, due to the lack of research basis on the topic or ritualistic murder and due to the need to collect valuable information and establish potential connections between topics (Hayes et al., 2010). Although primary research is argued to be more accurate, secondary research has been selected for this dissertation as it offers a more comprehensive understanding of the topic and the gaps within its research base (JMLA, 2006; Taylor, 2022). Furthermore, conducting primary research would be unfeasible, due to the difficulty in accessing the relevant population, and would bring up considerable ethical issues, due to the sensitive nature of the topic (British Society of Criminology, 2015). However, in literature review form, the content of the dissertation can still be considered disturbing for both the reader and writer, which can result in possible subjective bias (British Society of Criminology, 2015). To avoid this bias, a variety

of research was discussed, including qualitative and quantitative sources, journal articles, books, government and police websites, data bases, news websites, and dictionaries. Credible, high-quality sources that are available in reasonable quantities are essential for a good study (Colepicolo, 2015). Therefore, out of all the mentioned sources, this research relied upon peer-reviewed academic journal articles (Sage, n.d.). Alongside of these factors, the research did not have an exclusion criteria for countries, due to the topic's under-researched nature. Languages that were utilized within the research phase are English and German to assist in the research's global perspective.

As for the limitations of the research, it must be stated that ritualistic murder is a wide umbrella term, and while this dissertation attempts to discuss a wide variety of ritualistic murder types, it does not include all of them. Due to the taboo and secretive nature of ritualistic homicides, there may further be a lack of data and information available for analysis, which could limit the scope of the research (Lyncaster, 2014). Additionally, given the complexity and breadth of the topic, a thorough analysis of all available sources may not be feasible within the given timeframe. Lastly, by utilising secondary research, while potential issues were avoided, this dissertation can only contribute to the research base of the chosen topic by collecting scattered available data and cannot create new information.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will introduce the reader to the literature review of this dissertation, consisting of three main areas, based on the possible causes of ritualistic murder. The first section will highlight and discuss the connection between ritualistic murder, murder fantasies, and serial murder. To achieve this, serial murder typologies and personality descriptions are incorporated. The second section will consider the relationship between ritualistic murder and specific mental health disorders. Finally, the third section will examine the correlation between ritualistic murder and religious/cultural murders.

The first section of this literature review is essential in laying a foundation for the understanding into the remainder of this dissertation, as it does not only provide valuable information, but it additionally establishes key elements and definitions of the research.

3.1. Ritualistic Murder and the Role of Fantasy

Ritualistic murder has been described as a fantasy-driven behaviour, suggesting that ritualistic murderers have specific fantasies of the murder before committing the crime (Giannangelo, 2012; Miletich, 2003; Schlesinger et al., 2010). These fantasies can be control-oriented, sadistic, sexual, or based on unique factors, such as delusions or beliefs (Knight, 2006; MacCulloch et al, 2000; Malizia, 2017; Sharma, 2018; Woodworth et al., 2013). They often emerge in early childhood and proposedly due to factors, such as childhood abuse and early isolation (Malizia, 2017). The murder following the fantasy is not an isolated event, but it is the point where mere fantasy is not enough anymore to satisfy the offender and therefore murder becomes the logical solution (Malizia, 2017; Müller, 2004). This step in the fantasy life of the offender makes them feel in control of their reality and consequently, their fantasy and real life become entangled, difficult to differentiate;

leading the offender to commit more crimes (Abrahamson, 1973; Drukteinis, 1992; Malizia, 2017; Ressler, 1988). Furthermore, reinforcement has a significant impact on the murderer's behaviour as each successful murder reinforces the fantasy and often makes the perpetrator unable to stop the killing (Holmes & De Burger, 1988; Morton & Hiltz, 2005; Murray, 2011). Rather they try to refine, re-imagine and perfect their fantasies in real life, which process can contribute to the development of a serial killer (Fox & Levine, 1998). Therefore, these deviant fantasies, particularly the sexual ones, can serve as reliable predictors of the severity of an individual's offense and signal the need for intervention (Proulx et al., 2007). In addition, these fantasies can be reflected in the way the victim is murdered (Hickey & Harris, 2012; Sharma, 2018). Consequently, fantasy is highly associated with serial murder and murder signature (Malizia, 2017; Murray, 2011).

3.1.1. Signature Murders and Serial Murder

As previously discussed, signature murders can be categorized as a type of ritualistic murder, as they require the perpetrator to follow a specific ritual. However, they also fall under the umbrella of serial murders.

Serial murder is mostly defined as the killing of multiple victims by the same offender in separate events, usually with a cooling-off period between murders and across different geographical locations (Ferguson et al., 2003; Murray, 2011). This aligns with the definition provided by the FBI, which states that serial murder is "the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events" (Morton & Hiltz, 2005, Definition of Serial Murder section, para. 15). Although most definitions share similar themes, according to Hickey (2001) serial murder may be defined differently in various cultures. Furthermore, he suggests that cultural differences can also influence the methods and motives of serial murder. Scholars, such as Egger (1990), additionally refer to the

intention of serial murders alongside of basic descriptions, suggesting that the motive of serial murders is not for financial or material gain, but to exact power over the victims. This definition is considered to be restrictive, as Hickey (1991) suggested that the definition should remain broad not to eliminate murderers based on speculations (Giannangelo, 1996). However, the idea that serial murders are committed due to the perpetrator's need for power is commonplace (Myers et al., 2006; Proulx et al., 2007; Skrapec, 1996). While the discussion on a unified definition is controversial, the causes of serial murder and the description of serial killers are significant to find the reasons behind ritualistic murders.

By using the definition of serial murder provided by the FBI, it becomes clear that not all serial murders can be included within ritualistic murder (Morton & Hilts, 2005). For example, a serial killer, who murders for financial gain, will most likely not have a signature or a ritual attached to their crime, except if the murder is committed to satisfy some other need of the perpetrator, such as a psychological or sexual one (Ferguson et al., 2003). Furthermore, it is suggested that not all ritualistic murders belong under the umbrella of serial murders. However, this idea is entirely dependent on the utilized serial murder definition (Ferguson et al., 2003; Jenkins, 1994). Therefore, it is relevant to understand serial murder typologies and further expand on these definitions, to create a better understanding around the connection of serial murder and ritualistic murder.

3.1.1.1. Serial Murder Typologies

Serial murder can be analysed according to the behaviour of the perpetrator and their psychopathology (Sharma, 2018). This behaviour is often discussed as serial murder typologies, as they try to differentiate between the intents and behaviours (Sharma, 2018). One of the most famous typologies was developed by Hazelwood and Douglas (1980),

who distinguished between the organized and disorganised lust murderer, and concordantly adopted by the FBI to characterise serial killers in general (Ressler et al., 1986). The organised murderer premeditates their offenses, leaves no evidence behind, and likes to have control over the situation and the victim (Sharma, 2018). Furthermore, they are often methodical, calculated, highly intelligent, and choose victims according to common characteristics, such as age and hair colour (Sharma, 2018). In contrast the disorganised perpetrator shows little signs of premeditation, leaves evidence behind, and most importantly is opportunistic (Sharma, 2018). Alongside these types, the mixed murderer classification was introduced by Douglas et al. (1992), for the offenders who have both organized and disorganized characteristics. While this classification has been criticized it has been used by other scholars to create new paradigms and can be applied to ritualistic murders to exclude disorganised murderer, as it is suggested that a signature will not likely surface in non-premeditated murders (Canter et al., 2004; Hazelwood & Warren, 2000).

Hazelwood and Warren (2000) created a paradigm for sexual offenders, which classifies them as either impulsive or ritualistic. This idea is quite similar to the organized and disorganized murderer's classification; however, it is used to classify sexual crimes and it discusses the role of fantasy in premediated crimes and murders (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000). They suggest that a ritualistic offender invests a great amount of time to plan their offense, and that they have fantasy lives related to their offending behaviour, which is often identified as relational, demographic, paraphilic, situational and self-perceptual (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000). These behaviours suggest that the offender often suffers from multiple paraphilic disorders; has a specific type, including characteristics and relations to the perpetrator; tries to recreate the situation imagined in their fantasies; and wants to gain control over the victim, to exert power (Hazelwood &

Warren, 2000). While Hazelwood and Warren (2000) discuss sexual crimes, they mention multiple cases, which resulted in murder, most of them ritualistic. This suggests that their description of the ritualistic offender can be used to analyse these murders, especially as most serial murders share a connection to sexual violence (DeLisi, 2014; Malizia, 2017; Marriner, 1992). Therefore, being the most prevalent factors in their ritualistic offender characterisation, paraphilic disorders, the role of fantasy, and the offender's need for control and power can be scrutinised.

While Hazelwood and Warren (2000), Ressler et al. (1986), and Hazelwood and Douglas (1980) describe murderers in accordance with behaviour, Holmes and DeBurger (1988), and Holmes and Holmes (1999) emphasise the intent behind the crime. They created a typology based on types of murderers (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Holmes & Holmes, 1999). These are the visionary, the mission-oriented, the hedonistic, and the power/control-oriented types (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988; Holmes & Holmes, 1999). The visionary refers to murderers with psychotic symptoms that murder due to hallucinations and/or delusions (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). The mission-oriented type seeks to cleanse the world population from certain type of people, such as prostitutes (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). The hedonistic type includes both the lust and thrill murderers, in which lust murderers gains sexual satisfaction from the murder and thrill murderers a feeling of excitement (Holmes & Holmes, 1999). Lastly, the power/control-oriented type attains pleasure from gaining control and power over their victim (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). Canter et al. (2004) suggests that all these types can form a continuum within the organised and disorganised typology, the visionary murderer being on the disorganised and the power/control-oriented murderer on the organised end of the spectrum. This would suggest that all crimes committed by people with psychotic disorders are disorganised and therefore cannot be included within ritualistic murder. However, while individuals with

psychotic disorders typically do not commit premeditated crimes, it is important to note that there are exceptions to this pattern (Canter et al., 2004; Valença & de Moraes, 2006). As a case in point, despite the disorganized nature of the crime scenes of Richard Chase, his killings display characteristics of ritualistic murder, evidenced by the presence of murder signatures (such as necrophilia and blood drinking) at the scene, as well as indications of premeditation (Storey et al., 2005). This suggests that some disorganised crimes can be included within ritualistic murder, as long as there is a sign of premeditation and fantasy. Therefore, visionary types of murderers and psychotic disorders can be examined in relation to ritualistic murder.

Furthermore, Holmes and DeBurger (1988) differentiated between two types of serial murder acts: act focused and process focused. They suggested that the act focused murderers commit the murder quickly, as the gain comes from the killing itself (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). Whereas the process focused type is more typical for the lust, thrill, or power/control serial killers (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). The murder within this type is simply part of the ritual of killing (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). It was also suggested that necrosadism was more common within this type (Holmes & Holmes, 1994). It can be argued that the process focused type provides a useful description of ritualistic type of serial murder.

3.1.1.2. Descriptions of Serial Killers

There is a lack of consensus regarding the understanding of the development of a serial killer (Hickey, 2001; Hodgkiss, 2003). The explanations of serial murder are based on biological, psychological, cultural, and social causes, with some researchers suggesting that the causes may differ across cultures (Hodgkiss, 2003; Murray, 2011). In fact,

Hodgkiss (2003) argues that fantasy being a crucial part in the development of a serial killer is debatable. This is evidenced in South Africa, as many South African serial killers do not report having any fantasies (Hodgkiss, 2003). This could suggest that most South African serial murders are not ritualistic in nature. However, while fantasy-driven behaviour is often associated with ritualistic murders, it is important to note that there are various types of ritualistic murders, such as multi-murders, which are based on different aspects (to be discussed further in 2.3) (Labuschagne, 2004). Researchers have further noted that it is impossible to describe the aetiology of serial murder and that it is likely influenced by a variety of different factors (Hickey, 2001; Holmes & Holmes, 1998). Therefore, it is possible that the factors described could contribute to the development of a serial killer, but they are not concrete causes. Furthermore, most research does not differentiate between types of serial murder when creating a description; instead, the focus is on potential general causes, indicating that not all causes are relevant to ritualistic murder (Malizia, 2017; Murray, 2011; Sharma, 2018). Hence, only factors that are consistent with the aforementioned elements contributing to the development of fantasy will be examined.

Two models that aimed to explain this development are Burgess' motivational model and Hickey's trauma-control model, which developed out of the former (Burgess et al., 1986; Hickey, 1997). Burgess's model, which was adopted by the FBI, identified five critical factors (formation events, ineffective social environment, feedback filtering, patterned responses, and harming self and others) that contribute to the development and escalation of sadistic fantasies and behaviours (Burgess et al., 1986). This model was based on the proposition that serial killers have a history of childhood trauma and that they were raised in dysfunctional environments, resulting in social isolation, antisocial behaviour, and eventually in the emergence of fantasies as maladaptive coping mechanisms (Burgess

et al., 1986; Hickey, 2010; Malizia, 2017; Michaud and Aynesworth, 1989). Despite the evidence behind this idea, Ferguson et al. (2003) disputed that not all murderers are driven by maladaptive coping mechanisms, rather they kill for pleasure and power over others (Hickey, 2010; Malizia, 2017; Michaud & Aynesworth, 1989). However, it is not necessary for these two concepts to be mutually exclusive. Moreover, as proposed by Hickey (2010), these factors may be more complementary than causal, and consequently, they should not be dismissed.

Hickey's trauma-control model, while partially based on the motivational model, offers deeper insight into the same factors (Hickey, 1997). He suggests that it is not trauma alone, but pervasive destabilising formative events that result in the development of serial killers (Hickey, 1997). These events can range from having an unstable family home to childhood sexual abuse, that occur early in the offender's life (Hickey, 1997). They are however not solely responsible for the development of the serial killer, but as Hickey (2010) suggested, are contributing factors. Furthermore, the presence of a mental health disorder might also create a further contributing factor, often emerging from the experienced trauma (Murray, 2011). To compensate for the feelings of 'being out of control', of worthlessness, self-doubt and inadequacy, these individuals could begin exhibiting an arrogant, superior demeanour, or a sense of entitlement (Morton & Hiltz, 2005; Murray, 2011). All of these considered together with Burgess' model potentially demonstrate signs that the offender could suffer from trauma-based disorders, narcissistic personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder. These ideas are supported by the FBI's description of a serial killer, who also found a strong link between the most common traits of the serial killer, narcissism, and psychopathy, identifiable with Hare's psychopathy checklist (Jones & Figueredo, 2013; Morton & Hiltz, 2005). Furthermore, the FBI suggested that alongside all these disorders, a comorbidity of substance abuse

(potentially substance abuse disorders) can play a role in the development of a serial killer, and agreed with other mentioned research that there is no one cause responsible for this development, rather a combination of biological, social, and psychological factors (Morton & Hilts, 2005).

Taking all these factors into account, it has been suggested that the development of a ritualistic murderer can be influenced by a combination of childhood trauma, social isolation, reinforcement of deviant fantasies, and destabilizing formative events in early childhood. However, they are merely contributing factors that do not pre-determine that a ritualistic murder will be committed. Alongside of these factors, mental health disorders and psychopathy were found to be potential contributing factors in cases of ritualistic murders. Therefore, the next section will outline the possible connection between mental health disorders and ritualistic murder.

3.2. Ritualistic Murder and Mental Health Disorders

As highlighted in the previous section, there are multiple mental health disorders that can be mentioned in connection with serial murder, serial sexual murder, murder fantasies, and therefore with ritualistic murder. This section will highlight the key disorders, discuss them and establish whether they could potentially contribute to ritualistic murder.

The disorders in this section were chosen based on serial murder typologies, on the descriptions of serial killers, both discussed in the previous section, and on the suggested connection between compulsions, paraphilia, and ritualistic murder (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000; Helsham, 2001; Sharma, 2018; Wertheim, 1989).

3.2.1. Paraphilic disorders

As paraphilia is a commonly mentioned feature within both ritualistic and serial murder, the connection of paraphilic disorders and ritualistic murder can be examined (Hazelwood & Warren, 2000; Wertheim, 1989). Paraphilia includes any type of sexual interest that is intense and persistent, and directed towards other than genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with consenting, physically mature adults (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). A paraphilic disorder causes distress or impairment to the individual; or causes harm to the self or to others (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Therefore, the criterion for a paraphilic disorder is the presence of both a paraphilia (Criteria A), and the mentioned negative consequences caused by it (Criteria B) (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). However, the presence of paraphilia does not necessarily signify a paraphilic disorder, if other criteria is not satisfied (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Paraphilic disorders are typically first detected in forensic settings, especially during risk assessments, but this may not be the case for ritualistic murder (First, 2014). Since ritualistic murder is inherently violent it can be argued that the presence of paraphilic characteristics at a ritualistic murder crime scene meets both criteria A and B, inferring indication of a paraphilic disorder. While most people with paraphilic disorders do not commit murders, the disorder has been connected with serial sexual homicides, and Hazelwood & Warren (2000) suggest that ritualistic murderers often inhibit paraphilic interests (Stone, 2001).

Hucker (1992) suggests that paraphilias can be a result of early developmental, social and environmental factors, and biological predispositions. If paraphilic fantasies or interests occur early in a child's life with a combination of further risk factors, such as social isolation, low self-esteem, conduct disorder, and dysfunctional attachments, it is suggested that they can escalate further and could develop into violent behaviour to satisfy

their paraphilic fantasies (Perkins, 2007). Arrigo (2007) suggests that this development can be explained by both Burgess and colleagues' (1986) motivational model, and Hickey's (1997) trauma-control model, which information is consistent with the findings discussed in 2.1 regarding the development of a serial killer/serial sexual killer. Arrigo in conjunction with Purcell (2001) created another model based on the previous two, the Integrative Paraphilic Model, which suggests that lust murders are motivated by paraphilia. Furthermore, Briken and colleagues' (2006) found that while individuals with both paraphilia-related disorders and paraphilic disorders had the highest number previous sexual offences and more signs of sadism, individuals with only paraphilia-related disorders have suffered more from childhood sexual abuse, showed higher degree of psychopathy, and had more alcohol problems. Therefore, it can be suggested that both paraphilic disorders and paraphilia-related disorders can serve as a motivation to serial sexual homicide and therefore to ritualistic murder. Additionally, Balyk (1997) suggested that paraphilic disorders are a type of obsessive-compulsive disorders [OCD], therefore this can additionally be inspected in connection with ritualistic murder.

3.2.2. Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders

3.2.2.1. *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders*

Obsessive-compulsive disorder [OCD] is a mental disorder characterized by the presence of obsessions, compulsions, or both (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Obsessions are persistent, intrusive, and unwanted thoughts, images, or impulses that cause significant distress and anxiety (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Compulsions are repetitive behaviours or mental acts that an individual feels compelled to perform in response to an obsession or according to rigid rules (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). The compulsions are aimed at reducing anxiety or preventing a feared outcome, but

are often excessive and interfere with daily life activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Alongside of the presence of either or both obsessions and compulsions, these must be time-consuming (taking more than an hour per day) or cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning, to qualify for a diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Despite the fact that the majority of individuals with OCD do not engage in criminal behaviour and are more likely to be victims than perpetrators, some scholars propose that certain characteristics commonly found in individuals with OCD may bear resemblance to the behaviour of serial killers, particularly the prevalence of ritualistic actions (Boudreaux et al., 1998; Brewerton, 2004; Helsham, 2001; Hickey, 1997). These traits are the desire to always be in control, the fear of losing this control, repeated personal rituals, perfectionism, preoccupation with detail, stifling of emotion and inflexibility (Helsham, 2001; Schwartz, 2002). Helsham (2001) suggests that the presence of excessive fantasies in serial murder might also be related to OCD. Furthermore, Reese (1979) argues that obsessive-compulsive behaviour is the base for many sexually related crimes and that compulsions can drive an individual into committing crimes. He continues to state that murderers often report an obsession with murder, similar to obsessions presented by OCD patients (Reese, 1979). Similar to Reese (1979), Balyk (1997) suggested that there is a connection between OCD and sexual behaviour. He argues that therefore, paraphilic disorders could fall under the umbrella of OCD and related disorders (Bradford, 1999). While this hypothesis could explain the presence of fantasies in paraphilic disorders, and the similarities between OCD characteristics and the behaviour of serial killers, the DSM-5 TR differentiates between the two disorders clearly (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). The manual states that individuals with paraphilic disorders gain pleasure from both their sexual fantasies and from committing sexual acts, whereas individuals with OCD experience sexual thoughts as

intrusive and unpleasant, and mostly fear committing them (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Therefore, while it is unlikely that paraphilic disorders belong under the umbrella of OCD, OCD still shows signs of ritualism and could be connected to ritualistic murder. It is suggested that certain compulsions could be aggressive or sexual in nature and therefore lead to murder to satisfy the anxiety that arises from the obsessions (Castle, 2001; Reid, 2017). Furthermore, most individuals with OCD will not commit homicide, however, if a person with OCD does commit murder as a result of an urge to fulfil a compulsion, it is likely that the killing will be characterized by ritualistic behaviours (Castle, 2001; Helsham, 2001; Reid, 2017). Additionally, if the offender leaves behind any indications of their compulsion, even if these are not directly related to the murder itself, these may also exhibit a ritualistic nature (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Therefore, it is suggested that OCD could play a role in a limited number of ritualistic murder cases and that this connection requires additional research.

3.2.3. Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders

As discussed within murder typologies, the visionary type of murderer refers to an individual who commits a murder due to hallucinations and/or delusions (Holmes & DeBurger, 1988). Therefore, psychotic disorders, that present symptoms of delusions and/or hallucinations, can be inspected in relation with ritualistic murder.

The most referred to psychotic disorder in connection with serial killings is schizophrenia and paranoid schizophrenia, however other type of psychotic disorders could also potentially contribute to ritualistic murder (Hodgkinson et al., 2017; Pistorius, 1996).

3.2.3.1. Schizophrenia and Paranoid Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is characterized by two or more symptoms, that are each present for at least a month (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). These symptoms are delusions, hallucinations, disorganised speech, catatonic or grossly disorganised behaviour, and negative symptoms, such as avolition (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

There are various examples of serial killers with schizophrenia, such as Trenton Chase, Herbert William Mullin, Joseph Kallinger, and Peter Sutcliffe (Hodgkinson et al., 2017; Pistorius, 1996). Trenton Chase committed murders, because he believed that he needed the blood of others to replace his own (Pistorius, 1996). He often murdered animals and had further delusions regarding blood (Pistorius, 1996). Herbert William Mullin believed that he needs to commit murder on the orders of his father, and as a sacrifice to prevent an earthquake happening in California (Pistorius, 1996). Joseph Kallinger believed that he was committing murders in the name of God, and Peter Sutcliffe, the “Yorkshire Ripper”, believed that he had the God given mission to rid the world of prostitutes (Hodgkinson et al., 2017; Pistorius, 1996).

These examples show that the main symptom causing murder amongst schizophrenic patients is delusions. Furthermore, while some of these individuals presented ritualistic behaviour, such as Trenton Chase, others showed no signs of ritualism, due to the disorganised nature of their crimes and their motivation often requiring no specific repeated acts except the murder itself (Pistorius, 1996). However, researchers have found that schizophrenia was more frequent within individuals that were guilty of mutilation, dismemberment, or cannibalism of murder victims (Aquila et al., 2022; Häkkänen-Nyholm, 2009; Kapo et al., 2018). This can be regarded as a ritualistic act if it occurs at more than one crime scene. Therefore, while it can be suggested that most schizophrenic individuals or individuals suffering from a type of psychotic disorder will not commit a ritualistic

murder, hallucinations and delusions can be a risk factor for ritualism, and dismemberment, mutilation, or cannibalism on a crime scene can raise the chances of a ritualistic murderer suffering from schizophrenia (Aquila et al., 2022; Häkkänen-Nyholm, 2009; Kapo et al., 2018).

3.2.4. Trauma Related Disorders

Childhood trauma is highly associated with the development of a serial killer; therefore, trauma related disorders could be inspected in relation to serial murder and ritualistic murder (Helsham, 2001). Most researchers refer to trauma as a root cause of paraphilic disorders and fantasies amongst serial killers, however post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], a type of trauma related disorder, is occasionally mentioned (Berrie, 2013; Helsham, 2001). Furthermore, reactive attachment disorder [RAD] could also be inspected in this regard, due to insecure attachment styles being common within serial killers (LaBrode, 2007).

3.2.4.1. *Post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]*

PTSD can develop, when an individual experiences or witnesses a traumatic event, related to death, serious injury or sexual violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). The symptoms of the disorder include intrusion symptoms, avoidance of stimuli, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, and marked alterations in arousal and reactivity, all of which in association with the traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Furthermore, the duration of these disturbances needs to be longer than a month, and needs to cause significant distress, or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Berrie (2013) argues that PTSD could be responsible for the emotional numbing of serial killers. She argues that if PTSD is left untreated it can become entrenched and can lead to an emotional numbing that remains for years (Berrie, 2013). The author also found a high prevalence of both childhood and adolescent PTSD symptoms amongst serial killers, except symptoms of drug and alcohol abuse (Berrie, 2013). While drug and alcohol abuse can be symptoms of PTSD and are often associated with murderers, these findings suggest that serial killers show a lesser prevalence for this (Berrie, 2013; Wieczorek et al., 1990). Instead, the author remarks on how dissociation, a PTSD symptom which includes daydreaming and fantasising, is more prevalent amongst serial killers, which correlates with the findings discussed previously (Berrie, 2013). Furthermore, other symptoms, such as the recreation and compulsive repetition of the trauma were also displayed, which highly correlates with ritualistic behaviour (Berrie, 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that PTSD could be a potential cause of homicidal and sexual fantasies, alongside paraphilic disorders. Furthermore, symptoms of PTSD also correlate with ritualistic behaviour, therefore it is suggested that PTSD could play a role in ritualistic murders.

3.2.5. Personality Disorders

Personality disorders are the most commonly mentioned mental health disorders in connection with serial murder (Cooke, 2001; Morana et al., 2006; Simons, 2001). These types of disorders cause a deviation in behaviour and in inner experience from the norms and expectations of the individual's culture (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Of all personality disorders, the most referred to disorder in connection with serial murder will be inspected. Therefore, while this research will not include all types of personality disorders, it is suggested that further research in this area could be substantial, due to their prevalence within serial murder. Furthermore, sadistic personality disorder will not be

discussed, although it is often mentioned within serial killer research, as it is no longer included within DSM-5 TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; Cooke, 2001).

3.2.5.1. Antisocial Personality Disorder [ASPD]

ASPD is characterised by a disregard for and violation of the rights of others (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). To qualify for a diagnosis at least 3 symptoms need to be present (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). These are a failure to conform to social norms; deceitfulness, including repeated lying or conning others; impulsivity or a failure to plan ahead; irritability and aggressiveness; disregarding the safety of self or others; consistent irresponsible behaviour; and lack of remorse (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Furthermore, for a diagnosis, individuals need to be at least 18 years old; their antisocial behaviour should not only happen during the course of bipolar disorder or schizophrenia; and there needs to be evidence of them exhibiting signs of conduct disorder before the age 15 years (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Psychopathy is often used interchangeably with ASPD in literature, although referring to a more harmful and severe type of the disorder, however some researchers argue that the two are different, or that the closest diagnoses to psychopathy is a youth diagnoses of conduct disorder with additional callous unemotional traits (a pattern of behaviours including a lack of empathy, remorse or guilt and a lack of concern about other people's feelings and actions) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Deangelis, 2022; Fisher & Hany, 2022). As these traits and conduct disorder is often used as an early diagnosis for ASPD and psychopathy is not included in DSM-5 TR, this research is going to use the first understanding of psychopathy and refer to it as a severe type of ASPD (Fisher & Hany, 2022; Strickland et al., 2013).

ASPD is the most commonly referred to personality disorder in connection with serial murder (Morana et al., 2006; Pasqualetti, 2011). It is suggested that ASPD develops out of abuse and rejection during childhood (American Psychiatric Association, 2022; LaBrode, 2007; Simons, 2001). Due to this experienced abuse, individuals will often start craving control and power over others, which can get attached to sexual satisfaction as well, and therefore eventually to a paraphilic disorder (Simons, 2001). ASPD allows these individuals to achieve satisfaction from their murders, from the control and power they experience, and to repeat these crimes, as they lack guilt or empathy for their victims (Hart & Hare, 1996; Simons, 2001). These findings can help explain the high correlation between ASPD and serial murder. Furthermore, Pistorius (1996) suggests that murderers who are diagnosed with ASPD are more likely to be organised murderers, which could raise the likelihood of a connection between ASPD and ritualistic murder as well.

While these findings support the connection between ASPD, serial murder and ritualistic murder, it must be noted that psychopathy is often used interchangeably with ASPD in literature (Cooke, 2001; Fisher & Hany, 2022; Mehra & Samavatipirouz, 2012; Morana et al., 2006; Simons, 2001). Some researchers argue that the two are different, or that the closest diagnosis to psychopathy is a youth diagnosis of conduct disorder with additional callous unemotional traits (a pattern of behaviours including a lack of empathy, remorse or guilt and a lack of concern about other people's feelings and actions) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Deangelis, 2022; Hare, 1996; Hart & Hare, 1996; Ioana, 2013; LaBrode, 2007; Wall et al., 2015). However, the DSM-5 TR refers to the pattern of antisocial personality disorder as synonymous with psychopathy (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Furthermore, researchers, such as Pement (2013), argue that psychopathy could be a severe case of ASPD, which information is supported by LaBrode (2007), who found that most psychopaths can be diagnosed with ASPD, but most

individuals with ASPD do not have psychopathy. Therefore, this dissertation will rely on these findings, support the reliability of mentioned research, and refer to psychopathy as a severe type of ASPD (Fisher & Hany, 2022; Strickland et al., 2013).

According to this standpoint and to the mentioned findings, it is suggested that both psychopathy and ASPD can potentially contribute to ritualistic murder, due to their strong connection to serial murder and organised murder, and due to the factor, that these types of murderers often commit crimes to satisfy their need for power and control (Simons, 2001). Furthermore, it can be suggested that while ASPD can contribute to ritualistic murder, psychopathy has a higher correlation, and therefore is a more important factor to consider.

3.3. Ritualistic Murder, Religion and Culture

Alongside of inspected causes based on murder fantasies and mental health disorders, it is suggested that there is a correlation between ritualistic murder and religious and cultural murders. While ritualistic murder is often referred to as fantasy driven behaviour in context of serial murder, it can be further described as symbolic acts in a religious or cultural context (Perlmutter, 2011). It is suggested that while both of these types of ritualistic murders are repeated, the main difference lays in the fact that serial murder is repeated by the same person, who has their own personal motivation on committing the crime, whereas religious or cultural murders are mostly repeated by different people, who share the same motivation, rooted in their culture or religion (Ferguson et al., 2003; Igbinovia, 1988; Murray, 2011; Perlmutter, 2011). Therefore, this section will inspect whether religious and cultural practices could contribute to the causes of ritualistic murders, starting with the inspection of religious murders. Furthermore, while this dissertation will talk separately about religious and cultural murders for the sake of coherency, it is suggested that these terms are frequently inseparable.

3.3.1. Religious murders

Ritualistic murders have occurred throughout history, often associated with different cultures, religions, or belief systems (Abrams, 1992; Stidham et al., 2012). In some cases, these murders have been committed by cults or groups with extreme ideologies (Miletich, 2003; Wertheim, 1989). Therefore, this section will explore murders based on belief systems, in such it will talk about multi-murders, and religious murders associated with cults, mentioning Satanism, Judaism, and Christianity.

3.3.1.1. *Cult murders*

Both Wertheim (1989) and Miletich (2003) discuss cults as perpetrators of ritualistic crimes, whereas Perlmutter (2009) attributes these to practitioners of occult ideologies in general. Although all of these researchers specifically mention satanism, some paganism, none of them discusses Christian or other cults (Aragon, 2020; Eldridge, 2021; Newton, 1996). However, Christian cults, such as the “La nueva luz de Dios” (The new light of God), have been shown to commit ritualistic murders as well (Abrams, 1992; Aragon, 2020). The cult organised a ritual in which they killed multiple people, accusing them of witchcraft (Aragon, 2020). Furthermore, they brutalised and subjected victims to rites of exorcism (Aragon, 2020). However, the media representation of ritualistic murders committed by Christian cults fades when compared to satanist cult killings (Abrams, 1992; Aragon, 2020).

This suggests a prevalent bias against satanism or even paganism in general, which can be seen from the mass panic of satanic ritual abuse [SRA] between 1980 and 1990, in which even the police participated (Frankfurter, 2003; Goodwin, 2018; Stidham et al., 2012). Due to a growth in scholarly interest on the topic, SRA was determined to be nothing else, but a modern moral panic (Jenkins & Maier-Katkin, 1992; Stidham et al., 2012). Moral panics

are not uncommon phenomena. Cohen (1972) proposed that they occur when the media creates a folk devil, which is a group whose behaviour became stigmatised by society, and the public demands action against them.

While satanic panic is a perfect example of such a phenomenon, this is not the first instance of using religion to create panic (Frankfurter, 2003; Stidham et al., 2012). The blood libel, another example of a moral panic, was made up of false antisemitic accusations against Jews, who supposedly committed ritualistic murders, mostly against Christian children (Ehrman, 1976; McCulloh, 1997; Po-chia Hsia, 1988; Roth, 1935). Although the earliest accusations date back to 38 - 100 AD, they have only been demonized since medieval Christian Europe (Ehrman, 1976; Po-chia Hsia, 1988). They have been accused of practicing magic, collecting the blood of their victims, cannibalism, sacrificing children and of many more (Ehrman, 1976; McCulloh, 1997; Po-chia Hsia, 1988; Roth, 1935). All these accusations have been however discredited by scholars (Po-chia Hsia, 1988).

While these findings show that ritualistic murders can be committed by religious cults and that this type of murder is often used to create biases and prejudices against outsider groups, it must be stated that ritualistic murder is present within Satanism (Chowaniec et al., 2006; Holmes, 1989). This is however the minority and just as ritualistic murders committed by Christians do not represent the whole religion, so these murders do not represent all believers of Satanism. Alongside of Satanism, Perlmutter (2009) suggested that ritualistic murders are showcased in religions, such as Palo Mayombe or Santeria. Furthermore, ritualistic murders have occurred all around the world, often in connection with specific cultures, such as muti-murders in Africa, discussed in the following section (de Yong, 2015).

3.3.1.2. *Muti-Murders*

Muti-murders, also referred to as medicine murders, are typically associated with traditional African spiritual beliefs and practices, which can be considered religious in nature (Gocking, 2000; Igbinovia, 1988). Muti itself means medicine, or herbs and plants associated with traditional medicine (Igbinovia, 1988; Labuschagne, 2004). They are a type of ritualistic murder that involves the use of human body parts and other biological materials for the use of spiritual, magical purposes, or ‘medicines’ that can bring about certain outcomes or benefits, such as protection, good luck, or healing (Gocking, 2000; Igbinovia, 1988; Lyncaster, 2015). These body parts and materials can include anything from blood, bones, and organs, to hair, skin, and even genitalia (Gocking, 2000; Igbinovia, 1988; Lyncaster, 2015). The dismemberment of the victim usually occurs while they are still alive, as it is believed that their screams provide greater power to the ‘medicine’ (Lyncaster, 2015). Furthermore, the purpose of the ritual is often dependant on the area it is committed in (Lyncaster, 2015). Areas that are often mentioned in connection with muti-murders are South Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Lesotho and sub-Saharan Africa (Igbinovia, 1988; Labuschagne, 2004; Lyncaster, 2015). However, it is suggested that this is not an exclusive list, and prevalence in other regions is highly likely.

The practice of muti-murders is associated with the native pagan populations, and it is suggested that muti-murders could be regarded a type of witchcraft-related murders, alongside of ritualistic murder, and that witchcraft-related murders are prevalent in various countries outside of Africa (Igbinovia, 1988; Petrus, 2008; Pundir, 2023). However, while many witchcraft-related murders are human sacrifices, muti-murders do not fall under the term of human sacrifice, as the murder of the victim is not necessary for the ritual, it is just a consequence of it (Labuschagne, 2004; Pundir, 2023).

The victims in muti-murders, in contrast to serial murders, are usually people known by the perpetrator, and family members are often included within the murder to allow safe passage for the soul of the victim (Igbinovia, 1988; Labuschagne, 2004). However, it is suggested by Igbinovia (1988) that the prevalence of murdering strangers for medicinal or other ritualistic purposes has increased. While muti-murders are often used synonymously with ritualistic murder by researchers, such as Igbinovia (1988) and Lyncaster (2015), or even by various people in Africa; other researchers, such as Labuschagne (2004) and Roelofse (2014), argue of the opposite, that they are separate terms. The lack of connection to serial murder could indicate the latter argument further, as alongside of the victims often being people known by the perpetrator, many muti-murders are not repeated by the same perpetrator. Furthermore, there are instances, where the victim survives the mutilation committed to harvest their body parts, which raises further questions on whether muti-murders could be even labelled murders (Bhootra & Weiss, 2006; Labuschagne, 2004). However, while the definition of murder differs according to the sources used, this dissertation uses the one provided by CPS (2022), which states that murder is, when a sane person unlawfully kills someone with the intent to kill or cause serious bodily harm. Therefore, while the intent in muti-murders might not be to kill the victim, there is an intent to seriously harm them, which therefore indicates that it can still be considered murder. Furthermore, this dissertation aims to include all types of ritualistic murders, and regards any murder, that is committed alongside of a ritual that satisfies the psychological, psychosexual, cultural, or religious needs of the perpetrator, ritualistic. Consequently, it is suggested that muti-murders can be regarded as a type of ritualistic murders, as they are committed to satisfy a religious/cultural need, and that they require further attention, as they are often unreported and/or disregarded by police (Evans, 1991; Igbinovia, 1988).

3.3.2. Cultural murders

Ritualistic murders committed out of a cultural need are most often dominant within subcultures. However, in some instances, such as with honour murders, the murder can be based on the culture of the country (Perlmutter, 2011). It is suggested that cultural murders are related to the perpetrator's need to conform to their group's ideals, or out of the conviction that the morals, ideals, norms, and attitudes of their cultural group are the correct ones, and therefore enacting these ideals is normal or even beneficial to the group (Fineschi et al., 1998; Focardi et al., 2014; Perlmutter, 2011). While cultural murders can appear in various types of murders, this section will discuss mafia and honour murders to present two different examples.

3.3.2.1. *Mafia murders*

As ritualistic homicide can include all type of murders, where an act was committed that is unnecessary to kill the victim and therefore satisfies a psychological, psychosexual, cultural or religious need of the perpetrator, ritualized forms of mafia killings are suggested to be included in ritualistic homicides (Fineschi et al., 1998; Focardi et al., 2014; Pollanen, 2003). Although some crime syndicates, such as the Gambino crime family, would dismember their victims, this was not committed to satisfy any of the suggested needs of the perpetrator, but to dispose of the body, and it neither fits any of the mentioned definitions by scholars; therefore, it cannot be included as a ritualistic murder (Gibbons, 2021; Hazelwood & Warren, 2000; Schlesinger et al., 2010). However, methods, such as “incaprettamento”, “legge del taglione” (law of retaliation) or the method of the Ndrangheta mafia family, who perform a macabre ritual by burying the corpse with burnt lime and putting gloves on their hands after an execution, all associated with the Italian Mafia, could be suggested as ritualistic methods of murder (Fineschi et al., 1998; Focardi et al., 2014;

Pollanen, 2003). “Incaprettamento” is a method of ligature strangulation and binding of the victim’s body in a specific position, which is generally committed to kill traitors (Fineschi et al., 1998; Mondello et al., 2019; Pollanen, 2003). The victim is tied up with a rope, one end in a noose around the neck, while the other one is tied to the ankles and wrists behind the back (Focardi et al., 2014). This method is usually carried out postmortem, after the victim has been strangled with the same rope, but in some cases the death is induced by self-strangulation (Focardi et al., 2014; Pollanen, 2003). This type of homicide is suggested to satisfy a cultural need of the perpetrators, as it is carried out to disrespect the victim and to warn others of the consequences of treachery (Fineschi et al., 1998; Focardi et al., 2014). Meanwhile, “legge del taglione” is a method used to return a received offence, can be applicable for traitors as well, by either mutilating or beating up the victim before murdering them (Mondello et al., 2019). An example of this is removing both hands of the victim before the murder (Mondello et al., 2019). Furthermore, the macabre ritual committed by the Ndrangheta mafia family is intended as an admonition to others, similarly to “Incaprettamento” (D’Errico et al., 2011). Covering the cadaver in burnt lime was presumably used to hide the smell of decomposition and to damage the skin, especially on the face, whereas the gloves were meant to keep the fingers intact, so the bodies could be identified (D’Errico et al., 2011; Maglietta et al., 2017). These type of ritualistic homicides, are committed out of a cultural satisfaction, to conform to the behaviour of their group (Song et al., 2012; Schimmenti et al., 2014). It is suggested that Sutherland's (1939) differential association theory, in which individuals learn the behaviour of others with whom they have regular interactions with, in this case mafia members, and Sykes and Matza's (1957) drift theory, in which individuals begin applying neutralisation techniques to diminish or lessen the guilt of their crimes, plays a huge part in achieving this cultural satisfaction (Klemp-North, 2007; Nicholson & Higgins, 2017).

3.3.2.2. *Honour killings*

Honour killings are murders that are most often executed on women by her family members (Perlmutter, 2011; Sev'er, 2005). The murder is enacted as a way to restore or purify tarnished honour, preserve purity, serve vengeance, save face, and maintain tradition (Ali, 2001; Chesler & Bloom, 2012; Perlmutter, 2011; van Eck, 2002). Honour killings are often culturally accepted as the victim is seen as the guilty party, who allegedly violated cultural norms or traditions, and therefore their punishment is seen as justifiable (Chesler & Bloom, 2012; Perlmutter, 2011). Furthermore, alongside of murder, the victims are often mutilated, or a specific type of murder is used to signify an honour killing, such as stoning to death (Perlmutter, 2011).

It is suggested that honour killings are predominant within Muslim countries, however it happens within other religions and in other countries as well, for example within Hinduism in India (Chesler & Bloom, 2012; Perlmutter, 2011; van Eck, 2002). Perlmutter (2011) argues that honour killings are based on an Islamic symbolic code, that originates from tribalism and evolved into Sharia Law. This could suggest that the main factor for honour killings would be religion and therefore it could be labelled as a religious rather than cultural murder (Perlmutter, 2011). However, while religion within these countries arguably has an impact on both their societal codes and on their norms and culture, honour killings is a predominantly culture-based issue (Ali, 2001; Chesler & Bloom, 2012; Perlmutter, 2011). This can be further seen in the way women are punished for both their own alleged wrongdoings and for the crimes and infidelities of their brothers, fathers and uncles (Perlmutter, 2011). In such cases, rape and gang rapes of the female relative are used to punish the family in question (honour punishment) by taking away their honour

(Perlmutter, 2011). This often results in an honour killing or suicide of the woman, as this is seen as the only way to restore their honour (Perlmutter, 2011).

Therefore, honour killings serve as a purification ritual with the purpose of restoring the family's honour (Perlmutter, 2011). They are executed in various ways, such as beheading, lashing, beating, shooting, stabbing, burying or burning alive, strangling and pouring acid on (Perlmutter, 2011). This indicates that there is no specific way honour killings are executed and there is no ritual alongside of the murder, instead the murder itself is the ritual. However, this is entirely dependent on the inspected country, as it is suggested by Ali (2001) that women in Sindh, Pakistan are dressed in bridal red, henna is applied on their hands, and at dawn they are dragged to the riverbank and hacked to death with an axe as a form of honour killing. Nevertheless, both type of honour killings can be suggested to be a type of human sacrifice, and consequently a type of ritualistic murder (Perlmutter, 2011). Furthermore, they are similar to muti-murders in a sense that they are heavily ignored within the criminal justice system of their countries (Chesler & Bloom, 2012; Evans, 1991; Igbinovia, 1988; Perlmutter, 2011; Sev'er, 2005). Notwithstanding the fact that muti-murder is exclusive to those who adhere to certain religious beliefs, there are indications that honour killings pose a greater challenge as they are rooted in cultural norms and values.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This study aimed to provide an overview and a deeper understanding of ritualistic homicides by investigating multiple subject matters and related themes. However, some of the information and findings within the scope of ritualistic murder, as stated in the methodology, were not incorporated into this study. The exclusion criteria for certain topics, further highlighted below, was based on the decision that other findings were deemed more crucial, that there was a lack of substantial research available for the topic, or due to the recognition that they might not belong under the umbrella of ritualistic murders.

An example for excluded material included mass murders, even though they can be suggested to occasionally show signs of fantasy driven behaviour (Murray, 2017). However, as mass murder is a hate fuelled crime, it is suggested that there will not be any signatures and rituals on the murder scene (Murray, 2017). Therefore, the examination of mass murders provided strong evidence that while fantasy driven behaviour can be an indicator for ritualistic murder, it is not a predetermining factor. Within mental health disorders, there were multiple disorders that were considered for this research, but at the end not included. Both substance abuse disorder and dissociative identity disorder [DID] are examples of this. For substance abuse disorder this was due to the fact that they were regarded less prevalent within serial murder than murder, and therefore other findings were deemed more crucial (Berrie, 2013). The subject of DID was initially considered as a topic for this dissertation. However, upon conducting initial research, it became evident that the research basis was lacking. Furthermore, while it is possible that an alter could carry out a murder or serial murder, it is implied that each alter possesses a separate and distinct personality, which suggests that DID may not be the underlying cause for ritualistic murder (Gillig, 2009; Kluft, 2010). Instead, it is probable that other psychological disorders or motivations play a more significant role. Consequently, due to the potential for alters to experience distinct mental health disorders that may not be shared

by other alters or by the host, it is proposed that these disorders may be more prevalent in the context of ritualistic murder (Gillig, 2009; Klufft, 2010). Furthermore, trauma related disorders were inspected within this dissertation, however a full comprehensive overview of all trauma-related disorders could not be achieved due to a lack of research in this area.

Alongside of excluded materials, there are connections that can be perceived between different sections of this dissertation. When comparing the findings within serial murder typologies and mental health disorders, Holmes and DeBurger's (1988) typology revealed similarities with certain mental health disorders. For example, the visionary type, which is characterised by psychotic symptoms, could potentially apply to murderers with psychotic disorders. The mission-oriented type, on the other hand, may be associated with disorders that involve delusions, such as schizophrenia, as well as some religious cult murders, such as the 'La nueva luz de Dios' cult's killings (Aragon, 2020). Lust killers, within the hedonistic type, display a strong potential correlation with paraphilia and paraphilic disorders. Meanwhile, the power/control-oriented type, as well as the thrill seeker type, may be linked to personality disorders.

Alongside of these findings, it must be pointed out that while this research aims to examine ritualistic murder, the literature review included multiple mentions of serial murder as a connecting point. This could reduce the potential accuracy of this research; however, it was deemed to be necessary, due to the limited research material for ritualistic murder. Furthermore, this lack of research basis could be argued to exist due to the research on ritualistic murder being unnecessary in practice. However, it can be suggested that ritualistic murder, just as other type of murder classifications, is necessary in order to differentiate between and understand perpetrators of this crime, and therefore to apprehend them and reduce crime rates. Therefore, this indicates that research within this topic is necessary, however, the need for a common definition on ritualistic murder is another debatable topic. It could be argued

that a universal definition may restrict the understanding of the phenomenon itself, especially as a research basis is still developing, however, a lack of definition only contributed to an ambiguous, inconsistent, and unclear research field. Therefore, it is the view of the author that establishing a combined definition for ritualistic murder, such as the one presented in this research, might be vital for clarifying and unifying the diverse range of behaviours and practices that fall under this umbrella term. The proposed definition within this research for ritualistic murder is: Any murder accompanied by a ritual, not necessarily required to kill the victim, but to satisfy either psychological, psychosexual, cultural or religious needs of the perpetrator, could be deemed to signify a ritualistic murder.

In conclusion, the comparison of findings between serial murder typologies and mental health disorders has revealed prominent similarities. By understanding these connections, the motivations and risk factors that may contribute to ritualistic murder can be better understood. However, it is important to note that these links are not definitive and that more research is needed to better understand the complex relationship between mental health disorders and ritualistic murder. Furthermore, establishing universal definitions can be crucial for future research within ritualistic murder.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

To capture all the key elements of ritualistic murder, this study highlighted, demonstrated, and critiqued literature in three main areas. In the first section the role of fantasy was discussed and the connection between ritualistic murder and serial murder was established. Afterwards, serial murder typologies and descriptions were brought into the discussion. The second section focused on mental health disorders pertinent to ritualistic murders. This section included a compilation of disorders (paraphilic, obsessive-compulsive, psychotic, trauma related, and personality disorders) that were regarded significant by the author. This shed further light to the connection between mental health disorders and ritualistic murder. To round it off, religion and culture were brought into the discussion in the third section. The primary emphasis of this section involved an examination of cult murders, multi-murders, mafia murders, and honour killings. The inspection of these different topics through a critical lens revealed the underlying motivations that contribute to ritualistic murder. Given this, it can be suggested that fantasy driven behaviour, mental health disorders, and culture and religion can all serve as contributing factors or as potential root causes of ritualistic murder. This dissertation proposes that these topics should be given due importance and not dismissed as insignificant when investigating and attempting to understand cases of ritualistic murder. Therefore, it is essential for law enforcement, mental health professionals, and society as a whole to recognize the potential risks associated with these factors and work towards preventing them. Nevertheless, the response to these issues should remain objective and rational, to prevent any prejudice and potential moral panics. Therefore, it can be suggested that addressing all the underlying issues that can contribute to or lead individuals to commit ritualistic murder is critical.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation highlighted key components that are lacking in sufficient, meaningful data that could facilitate a greater clarity around the criminal scenario of ritualistic murders. In this regard, it is the view of the author that personality disorders, insecure attachment styles, and compulsion may play significant roles in serial and ritualistic murder. Further research in these areas could be beneficial, especially in exploring the connection between mental health disorders and religious and cultural types of ritualistic murder. Lastly, human sacrifice was mentioned briefly within the scope of this dissertation, therefore this area requires further research in relation to its connection to ritualistic murder.

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