

A Heuristic Study of the Similarities and Differences in Offender Characteristics Across Potential and Successful Serial Sexual Homicide Offenders

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ABSTRACT

This heuristic study examined potential serial sexual homicide offenders (SSHOs), an unacknowledged offender group comprised of aspiring and probable SSHOs, and compared them to successful SSHOs. Data were collected on six aspiring SSHOs that each failed a single homicide attempt, 16 probable SSHOs that committed 17 homicides in separate events, and 13 successful SSHOs that killed 90 victims in separate events. The study results indicate that while potential SSHOs share more in common with successful SSHOs than they do with single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders, and that there is overlap between potential SSHOs and successful SSHOs, there is currently insufficient evidence to suggest that there are discreet transitions among categories. While few potential SSHOs strive to become successful SSHOs, this may be due to weak or non-existent emotional triggers. Being a potential SSHO does not appear to be a predictable first step on a pathway towards becoming a successful SSHO as potential SSHOs cannot reliably be thought of as prospective SSHOs if all things were equal. The present study could not foresee all potential SSHOs becoming successful ones. An as yet unidentified number of factors still appear to separate potential SSHOs from successful SSHOs.

KEYWORDS: criminal victimization, homicide, serial homicide, violent behavior

1 | INTRODUCTION

The dearth of research on determinants that lead serial sexual homicide offenders (SSHOs) in the early stages of their career to continue or desist from offending inhibits our understanding of them. Mention of these potential SSHOs is sporadic in the literature and such research subjects were classified under varied terminology. Johnson and Becker's (1997) adolescents obsessively thought about murder and maintained goals to become SSHOs. Reisner, McGee, and Noffsinger's (2003) self-professed 'budding' SSHO had a list of would-be victims. Brantley & Ochberg's (2003) 'lethal predators' killed once and were likely to keep killing if not for failures (Homant & Kennedy, 2014). Williams and Vincent's (2018) teenage offenders aspired to become SSHOs by emulating successful SSHOs. Preliminary evidence suggests that identification of burgeoning SSHOs may have prevented new homicides (Bjorkly & Waage, 2005) as better prepared law enforcement organizations (LEOs) and technology that aids potential victims to stay vigilant (Quinet, 2011; Yaksic, 2015) pose obstacles and force shifts in SSHO's behaviors (Yaksic, 2019).¹ While potential SSHOs may strive to 'self-actualize' and become successful SSHOs, the frequency of attempts and number of successes in realizing such a goal is currently unknown.

Conversely, much is known about successful SSHOs as they have been studied for decades. Many were impulsive (Healey & Beauregard, 2017), have substance use histories, worked at unskilled jobs, were exposed to the criminal justice system, lacked support networks, experienced relationship inadequacies, failed to manage depressed mental states, and had authority problems, persecutory ideas, and emotional disorders which led to a desire for

¹ "Being able to find someone alone and hurting them without anybody seeing or any witnesses, it's kind of really hard." Daniel Spain, 25, aspiring SSHO. (Keneally, 2015).

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affection, rumination, and obsessive thinking (Harbort & Mokros, 2001; Morton, Tillman, & Gaines, 2015; Porcerelli, Abramsky, Hibbard & Kamoo, 2001). Successful SSHOs frequently accumulate negative experiences (e.g., parental abandonment, child abuse, harsh discipline, depersonalization, isolation from peers, rejection, family instability) over their life course. This suggests that successful SSHOs may be motivated to continue killing to reckon with feelings of strife, but it is also likely that there may be a genetic underpinning that influences SSHOs. Because successful SSHOs often meet the criteria of psychopathy (Sturup, 2018), it is not surprising that their lifestyle is dominated by the deviant sexual behavior of sexual sadism (James & Proulx, 2016) which is often reflected in their modus operandi.

Identifying those whose trajectory includes sexual proclivities, criminal history, and unusual modus operandi (Beauregard, 2018) will help us understand SSHOs as these are possible multi-factorial trends in their behavior (Gurian, 2013). While it can be rare for an offender to commit a second homicide (Liem, 2013), prior offending is often associated with future offending (DeLisi, Ruelas & Kruse, 2019).² A likely contributor to the development of SSHOs is abuse³ during childhood (DeFronzo, Ditta, Hannon & Prochnow, 2007; Harrison, Murphy, Ho, Bowers, & Flaherty, 2015; Ostrosky-Solis, Vélez-García, Santana-Vargas, Pérez & Ardila, 2008) but other factors and experiences that shape personality, promote predatory inclinations, enable fantasies, and predispose individuals toward offending (Liem, 2013) may explain serial murder.

² Other research suggests that the main indicators of recidivism seem to be young age and prior criminal record (Liem, 2013), the commission of burglary in concert with homicide (DeLisi & Scherer, 2006), and arrests for both sexual and assault offenses (Trojan & Salfati, 2011), characteristics of almost one third of probable SSHOs in the present study. Martin, Schwarting, and Chase (2020) note that some SSHOs exhibit a three-part progression from burglary to sexual assault to homicide and that looking for these combinations is the key to catching serial offenders early.

³ SSHOs are likely to have been physically abused six times more, and sexually abused nine times more than the general population (Mitchell & Aamodt, 2005)

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SSHOs appear to begin exhibiting behavioral patterns in early adolescence that serve as precursors, such as emotional instability, lack of responsibility, egotistic tendencies, low frustration tolerance, reduced impulse control, low self-confidence, low affect, deficiency in maintaining attachments, deficits in conflict competency, and a lack of empathy (Harbort & Mokros, 2001).⁴

It is not currently known if potential and successful SSHOs constitute distinct types of offenders, one more prone to personality disorders with greater signs of alienation and social maladjustment than the other. While potential SSHOs may be psychologically similar to successful SSHOs (Culhane, Hilstad, Freng & Gray, 2011), they have been understudied, possibly because of their apparent ordinariness (Trojan & Salfati, 2011; Yaksic, 2018a). The aim of this exploratory research was to compare potential SSHOs with successful SSHOs who had killed three or more victims in separate events using a heuristic approach. The potential SSHOs were categorized into two groups: 1) aspiring SSHOs who wanted to kill serially and had tried unsuccessfully to kill their first victim, and 2) probable SSHOs who planned to commit additional homicides beyond their first. These two potential SSHO groups were then compared with successful SSHOs to explore what, if any, group differences might emerge and if meaningful distinctions could be discerned.

2 | THE PRESENT STUDY

Distinguishing between the characteristics of potential and successful SSHOs should help us to understand whether or not these three groups are distinct from one another. We hypothesized that

⁴ Myers' (2004) study of adolescent SSHOs found they were largely driven by the pursuit of sadistic pleasure and displayed obsessive fantasies but their cognitive and emotional immaturity, impulsivity, feelings of invulnerability associated with their young age, and lack of criminal sophistication prevented their success.

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aspiring SSHOs would seek attention for their crimes and have an immature grasp of what it means to be a SSHO, while probable SSHOs would be grounded in their understanding of the realities of being an SSHO. We hypothesized that aspiring SSHOs will be younger and act on their urges after excessive homicidal ideation. These offenders may struggle to kill their first victim, express their will to kill through threats or admissions to others, seem ready to embrace their interpretation of the killer lifestyle, and intend to harness powers they believe SSHOs wield. Probable SSHOs are speculated to be older in age, have a more complete understanding of what they are, and act more logically, spend less time ideating, and are well-grounded. These offenders may fail to kill sequentially after the commission of their first homicide due to incompetence or situational factors, such as the presence of an eyewitness or being caught retaining victims' belongings. We hypothesized that most potential SSHOs would strive to self-actualize and attempt to become a successful SSHO.

2.1 | METHOD

A purposive, non-random sampling strategy was used to gather information on aspiring and probable [potential] SSHOs. The present study operationally defined a successful SSHO as an offender that has been convicted of killing three or more victims across separate events (Adjorlolo & Chan, 2014; Yaksic, 2018b). An aspiring SSHO is defined as an offender who intends to kill three or more people in separate events and has attempted an initial homicide. A probable SSHO is defined as an offender who intends to kill three or more people in separate events, has committed at least one homicide, and attempted a second homicide. Offenders were sorted into one of the three groups by three authors (EY, DK, CS) after a thorough review of the offender's known victim count and the transcription of statements made to those in a position of authority, their peers, found in their personal writings, or other sources.

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To be included in the present study, potential SSHOs must have displayed a discernible intent, through written or oral statements, to kill three or more people in separate events.

Potential SSHOs must have also worked towards that goal in the five-year period between 2013 and 2018 by attempting an initial or subsequent homicide. Before being considered as a research subject, three authors verified that all potential SSHOs engaged in at least two of the following behaviors: 1) the devising of a plan to kill three or more people in separate events; 2) an admission designed to convince others of their capacity to kill three or more people in separate events; 3) a preoccupation with “becoming a serial killer”; 4) the joining of a fandom dedicated to admiring and celebrating SSHOs; 5) the possession of a SSHO mindset with failures to amass victims; 7) a desire to emulate other SSHOs. Although not a necessary component of the operational definition, some potential SSHOs were described by police or prosecutors as “budding” SSHOs with serial killer hallmarks, tendencies or traits⁵.

Both potential and successful SSHOs must have been male and had a sexual motivation as the primary reason for their crimes. Sexual motivation was apparent from both external (evidence of sexual assault) and internal (rationale for crime) variables. SSHOs that maintained other motivations as the primary reason for their crimes (e.g., profit, mental illness, anger) or whose crimes were the result of gang violence, organized crime, or cult activity were excluded from consideration.

2.2 | *Data collection*

In an effort to locate the names of potential SSHOs and build the database, we conducted searches of Lexus Nexis, Google News, Pittcat+ and Murderpedia for variations of the following

⁵ In 12 instances, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges labeled potential SSHOs using words or phrases such as ‘budding,’ ‘earmarks,’ ‘profile,’ ‘fledgling,’ ‘tendencies,’ ‘progression,’ ‘mindset,’ or ‘in the making.’

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terms that must have appeared in concert with the words ‘serial killer’, ‘serial murderer’, and/or ‘serial homicide offender’: ‘admiration’, ‘aspiring’, ‘attempt’, ‘avert’, ‘budding’, ‘desire’, ‘earmarks’, ‘fan’, ‘fantasy’, ‘ideation’, ‘idolize’, ‘in-the-making’, ‘influence’, ‘inspire’, ‘mindset’, ‘obsession’, ‘potential’, ‘probable’, ‘profile’, ‘progression’, ‘prospective’, ‘student’, ‘tendencies’, ‘thwart’, ‘wannabe’, ‘would-be’. This search resulted in 368 articles with information on 103 separate offenders. We then gathered data on these 103 potential SSHOs across 30 variables (presented in the following Dimensions Coding section) from a variety of primary (e.g., court documents, public records, offender’s journal entries) and secondary sources (e.g., newspapers, internet searches and websites, academic articles). Data coding was conducted by three authors (EY, DK, CA) and verified by the senior author (CS). Thirty-three offenders were excluded as they occurred outside of the timeframe of the study, chosen to prioritize recent incidents to ensure the availability of information. Four offenders were excluded after further review given that their actions only amounted to threats. Four offenders were excluded because they were female. Forty offenders were excluded because their actions were not sexually motivated. The results of our data gathering effort are illustrated in Figure 1. The successful SSHOs were culled directly from nine scholarly journal articles containing details of the offender’s lives. No timeframe criteria were identified for the successful SSHOs given that the data would be limited to the period within which the literature was published.

Analyses were conducted in an Excel workbook and IBM SPSS Statistics. The cases in the sample were analyzed using Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test and Cramér's V. All data were cross-validated using two independent sources. Inter-rater reliability testing was conducted by four authors (EY, DK, CA, CS) until agreement met the threshold of 70 percent. The final sample consisted of six aspiring (all males, mean age 32) SSHOs, 16 probable (all males, mean

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age 28) SSHOs, and 13 successful (all males, mean age 29) SSHOs. The potential SSHOs were responsible for 17 homicides as a group and the successful SSHOs were responsible for 90 homicides as a group. The SSHOs operated internationally - across the United States (n= 25), the United Kingdom (n= 8), Australia (n= 1), and Canada (n= 1).

[Enter Figure 1 about here.]

2.3 | *Dimensions coding*

Information for 30 variables, 19 of which are presented in Table 1⁶, were cataloged in an Excel workbook. The gender and age of the victims and offenders and whether or not the victim was known or unknown to the offender was recorded. The ‘type of weapon’ used to injure or kill a victim was logged as ‘knife’, ‘firearm’, ‘blunt instrument’, or ‘strangulation’, ‘other’ (which encompasses poison and hanging), and ‘multiple’ (which accounts for offenders that utilized more than one method during the crime). The ‘type of body disposal’ cataloged the method used by the offender to dispose of the victim’s body. The offender could have left the victim’s body at the crime scene, dumped it at another location, concealed it in some way, or used any combination of these methods. The ‘number of factors of capture’ is a count of the number of factors that led to an offender’s apprehension, categorized as: eye-witness statements, forensic linkages, law enforcement action, or an offender’s mistake, confession or surrender. ‘Law enforcement action’ is defined as any proactive actions taken by LEOs independent of other factors. An ‘offender’s mistake’ resulted from their error in judgment and includes such actions as retaining a victim’s body, personal possessions, or the weapon used to kill them, remaining at

⁶ The variables not presented in Table 1 are ‘offender name’, ‘year’, ‘victim name’, ‘number of kills’, ‘modus operandi’, ‘transcription of offender statements’, ‘narrative of how captured’, ‘city/state’, ‘country’, ‘information source’, and ‘additional information’. We thought it inappropriate to list the names of offenders given that some kill for notoriety.

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or leaving personal items at the crime scene, letting a victim escape, or being caught on surveillance footage.

The 'secondary offender motivation' considers the offender's motivation to engage in crime beyond their primary one of sexual assault. 'Anger' refers to offenders that wanted to lessen the stress caused by their emotions. 'Become a SSHO' refers to offenders that acted on an urge or compulsion to self-actualize and become a successful SSHO. 'Obsession' refers to offenders with a preoccupation with serial murder that became apparent to those around them. 'Power' refers to offenders that pursued serial murder as a means to attain psychological gratification that resulted in a feeling of superiority. 'Revenge' refers to offenders that sought retribution after being wronged by the victim. 'Thrill' refers to offenders that desired pure excitement and pleasure. 'Random' refers to unplanned attacks that occurred on the street between two unacquainted individuals.

'Offender contact with victim' catalogs how the victim came into contact with the offender. 'Abducted' victims were forcibly taken from a location without being lured away. 'Lured' victims were conned away from a location by the offender's promise of physical items (such as money or drugs), experiences (such as sex), or services (such as a ride or photoshoot). 'Break in' refers to offenders who forced their way into the victim's residence. 'Acquainted' refers to offenders who were familiar with their victim in a friendly capacity. 'Romantic' refers to offenders who selected their significant other as a victim. 'Sex worker' refers to offenders that victimized individuals with sexual services for sale. 'Random' refers to encounters that occurred between two unacquainted individuals. 'Multiple' refers to offenders who utilized more than one method to make contact with their victims. 'Unknown' refers to records that could not be located.

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There were several binary ‘yes/no’ variables in the present study. ‘Inspiration’ refers to offenders who consumed media dedicated to serial murder, and/or studied real-life SSHOs, and used that information to further their own goals. SSHOs were inspired if they displayed an abnormal attraction to objects or topics that they believed actual SSHOs are enamored with (i.e., dissection, dismemberment and other indicators of violence) or surround themselves with (i.e., knives, binding material, violent pornographic media). ‘Fantasy or ideation’ refers to SSHOs who devoted time to thinking about the concept of serial murder and used this time to plan to become a SSHO. ‘Self-identification’ refers to SSHOs with insight into what is transpiring inside their minds and refer to themselves as a serial killer. ‘Abuse’ refers to any reported instance of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse that took place over the offender’s life. ‘Forensic Countermeasures’ refers to steps taken by SSHOs to delay or render impossible the location of evidence of a forensic nature that could be used to link their crimes.⁷ ‘Logged pre/post crime actions’ refers to any effort made by the offender to document in written, visual, or auditory format how they anticipated the event would live up to their plans and desires and whether or not it did. ‘Criminal history’ refers to the arrest history of the offender. ‘Mental illness’ refers to the presence of any form of mental illness during the commission of the crime. ‘Drug or alcohol use’ refers the use of substances during the commission of the crime.

2.4 | RESULTS

⁷ The forensic countermeasures instituted by offenders in this study were varied. Two offenders utilized a “murder room” on their property to maintain better control of post-crime sanitation activities. Other forensic countermeasures utilized by the remaining offenders included: the use of cleaning agents to remove or destroy biological evidence, the destruction of victim’s property (e.g., cell phone), and the dismemberment and/or burning of the victim’s remains to obscure identification.

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The present study reports on potential SSHOs who intended to kill three or more individuals in separate events whose plans were not always fully realized and successful SSHOs who succeeded in doing so. Among the potential SSHOs in the present study, the mean age when the offenders began killing was 32 years old for aspiring and 28 years old for probable SSHOs. This found them victimizing younger individuals more often than not as the mean age of victims for aspiring SSHOs is 23 years old and for probable is 20 years old. The mean age of successful SSHOs was 29 years old which found them victimizing older individuals as the mean age of victims was 39 years old. Out of six attempts to kill a victim among the aspiring SSHOs, none were successful compared to all but one being successful among the probable SSHOs (that offender was killed during his attempt). One probable SSHO killed two victims in separate events.

Table 1 contains a breakdown of the comparison of variables across aspiring, probable, and successful SSHOs. The differences between aspiring and successful SSHOs are apparent in Table 1. If one factor was high among aspiring SSHOs it would generally be low among successful SSHOs, and vice versa. Probable SSHOs were also unlike both aspiring and successful SSHOs on most metrics.

There were relatively strong associations between the type of offender and the victim's age (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .043$, Cramer's $V = .421$; "teens" were overrepresented in aspiring SSHOs, "young" were overrepresented in probable SSHOs, and "teens" were underrepresented in successful SSHOs), the post-crime treatment of the body (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .507$; "multiple" was most likely for successful SSHOs, and "dump" or "conceal" was likely for probable SSHOs), the offender's use of forensic countermeasures (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .032$, Cramer's $V = .430$; aspiring SSHOs did

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not use these methods), fantasy/ideation (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .019$, Cramer's $V = .475$; all aspiring SSHOs engaged in "fantasy/ideation"), the use of drugs/alcohol (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .588$; probable SSHOs were more likely to not use drugs/alcohol, successful SSHOs were more likely to use drugs/alcohol), and criminal history (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .040$, Cramer's $V = .426$; aspiring SSHOs did not encounter law enforcement).

There were strong associations between the type of offender and their familiarity with the victim (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .614$; "unknown" was overrepresented in aspiring SSHOs, "known" was overrepresented in probable SSHOs, and "both" was overrepresented in successful SSHOs), self-identification (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .634$; most aspiring SSHOs self-identified, and no successful SSHOs self-identified), and inspiration (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .740$; all aspiring SSHOs were inspired, probable SSHOs more commonly were inspired, and successful SSHOs almost never were inspired).

There were very strong associations between the type of offender and the type of weapon used (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .852$; "blunt instrument" was underrepresented among successful SSHOs, "multiple" is overrepresented among successful SSHOs, and "multiple" is underrepresented among probable SSHOs), secondary motivation (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .004$, Cramer's $V = .844$; "anger" was underrepresented among probable SSHOs, "anger" was overrepresented among successful SSHOs, and "obsession" was overrepresented among probable SSHOs), and abuse (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .832$; "physical, emotional, or sexual abuse" was overrepresented among successful SSHOs, and not present among aspiring or probable SSHOs).

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There were no statistical associations between the type of offender and offender age (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .546$, two-tailed), the offender's contact with the victim (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .664$, two-tailed), the number of factors of capture (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .223$, two-tailed), the logging of pre/post crime actions (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .613$, two-tailed), and mental illness (Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .632$, two-tailed).

[Enter Table 1 about here.]

[Enter Table 2 about here.]

2.4.1 | *Interactions between variables*

The following review of the interaction between variables provides depth beyond the statistics in Table 1.

2.4.1.1 | Disposal of the body in the context of offender's relationship to victim

Half of probable SSHOs disposed of their victim's body by leaving it at the murder site ($n=8$, 50%) and a smaller proportion dumped the body in another location ($n=5$, 31.2%). Of those offenders who left the victim's body at the murder site, two (25%) were acquainted with their victim. Two (40%) offenders who dumped the victim's body were acquainted with their victim. Victims of successful SSHOs were generally left at the murder site ($n=9$, 69%). Of those SSHOs, one (11.1%) was acquainted with their victim while eight (88.8%) were strangers to their victims. In regard to the victim-offender relationship, nine (69.2%) successful SSHOs killed at least one person who were strangers to them, and four (30.7%) killed at least one victim with whom they were acquainted. Of the six aspiring SSHOs, all left the victim's body at the murder site and all were strangers to their victim.

2.4.1.2 | Use of forensic countermeasures in the context of victim disposal

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Of the eight (50%) probable SSHOs who took forensic countermeasures, three (37.5%) left the victim's body at the murder site, four (50%) dumped the victim's body at an off-site location, and one (12.5%) concealed the victim's body. Of the eight (61.5%) successful SSHOs who took forensic countermeasures, five (62.5%) left the victim's body at the murder site and three (37.5%) used multiple methods to dispose of their victim's body. Of the eight aspiring SSHOs, none of them used forensic countermeasures.

2.4.1.3 | Inspired by other SSHOs, ideation, self-identification, recording, criminal histories, and illicit substances

All aspiring SSHOs (n=6, 100%), but far fewer probable SSHOs (n=2, 12.5%), were inspired by other SSHOs, used them to fuel their fantasies and ideation, and self-identified as SSHOs. Both aspiring SSHOs who logged their feelings and plans pre/post-crime were also inspired by other SSHOs, ideated about being an SSHO, and self-identified as a SSHO. There were no probable SSHOs who took part in all four of these processes in concert. All other offenders took part in at least one of the three processes. Of the seven probable SSHOs with a criminal history (43.7%), four (57.1%) took forensic countermeasures. No aspiring SSHOs had a criminal history. Only one (7.6%) successful SSHO was inspired by other SSHOs and it did not fuel his fantasies. Of the 10 (76.9%) successful SSHOs who reported incidents of psychological, emotional, or sexual abuse in their past, eight (80%) consumed alcohol and/or drugs, and four (40%) were diagnosed as mentally ill. Four (30.7%) successful SSHOs consumed both alcohol and/or drugs and were diagnosed as mentally ill. Of the eight (61.5%) successful SSHOs with a criminal history, four (50%) took forensic countermeasures.

2.4.1.4 | Apprehension

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When only one method of apprehension resulted in the capture of an aspiring SSHO (n=2, 33.3%), it was due to LEO action (n=1, 50%), or the offender's surrender (n=1, 50%). The combinations for two methods of apprehension (n=4, 66.6%) were the offender's confession and a forensic link (n=2, 50%), the offender's mistake and the offender's confession (n=1, 25%), and the offender's confession and eyewitness contributions (n=1, 25%).

When only one method of apprehension resulted in the capture of a probable SSHO (n=8, 50%), it was the offender's confession (n=1, 12.5%), mistake (n=2, 25%), and surrender (n=1, 12.5%), a forensic link (n=2, 25%), and eyewitness reports (n= 1, 12.5%) that led to their arrest. A victim killed the offender once (12.5%). The combinations for two methods of apprehension (n=6, 37.5%) were the offender's mistake and LEO action (n=1, 16.6%), the offender's mistake and confession (n=1, 16.6%), the offender's confession and a forensic link (n=2, 33.3%), and the offender's mistake and a forensic link (n=2, 33.3%). The combinations for three methods of apprehension (n=2, 12.5%) were the offender's confession, mistake, and a forensic link (n=1, 50%), and the offender's mistake, eyewitness reports, and a forensic link (n=1, 50%).

When only one method resulted in the capture of a successful SSHO (n=10, 76.9%), it was the offender's mistake (n=6, 60%), or confession (n= 4, 40%) that led to their arrest. The combinations for two methods of apprehension (n=3, 23%) were an offender's mistake and confession (n=2, 66.6%), and an offender's confession and eyewitness identification (n=1, 33.3%). Successful SSHOs who did not use forensic countermeasures remained free for an average of one additional year more than successful SSHOs who implemented such measures.

2.4.1.5 | *Motivations*

All offenders in the present study were driven first to sexually assault their victims, but many had secondary motivations. A third of aspiring SSHOs committed sexual violence as their only

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goal (n=2, 33.3%), while others were motivated to also act on urges to self-actualize and become a successful SSHO (n=1, 16.6%), pursue their obsession with serial murder (n=1, 16.6%), satisfy their needs for power (n=1, 16.6%) or experience a thrill (n=1, 16.6%). More than half of probable SSHOs committed sexual violence as their only goal (n=9, 56.2%), while others were motivated to also pursue their obsession with serial murder (n=4, 25%), act on urges to self-actualize and become a successful SSHO (n=2, 12.5%), or kill randomly (n=1, 6.2%). More than half of successful SSHOs committed sexual violence as their only goal (n= 8, 61.5%), while others were also motivated to quell their anger (n=4, 30.7%), and obtain revenge (n=1, 7.6%). No offender explicitly sought fame.

3 | DISCUSSION

The aim of the current study was to classify two groups of offenders who had been previously identified using the lay terms of “wannabe” and “would-be” SSHOs, separate them out from the more established successful SSHOs, and compare the three groups to discern whether or not they are distinct from one another. A number of hypotheses were made in terms of offender age, motivation, ideation, the circumstances contributing to career longevity, and grasp of the skills needed to be a SSHO. Results of the present study indicate that there are differences between these three groups, enough to consider them to be distinct from one another.

Potential and successful SSHOs can be better compared if we understand how they arrived on the pathway to violence. While there is no single approach to understanding their psychology (Culhane et al., 2014), researchers have tried to comprehend successful SSHOs through direct interviews (Beasley, 2004; Pino, 2005), one-to-one comparisons (Morton et al., 2010; Wolf & Lavezzi, 2007), archival examinations (Harrison, Hughes, & Gott, 2019) and clinical instruments (Culhane et al., 2011; Culhane, Hildebrand, Walker & Gray, 2014; Leach &

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Meloy, 1999; Ostrosky-Solis et al., 2008; Porcerelli et al., 2001; Reavis, 2011) for 40 years. Results show that serial killing can be a variable phenomenon, with apparent diversity in the offender's actions and psychopathologies. Their thinking is seemingly overtaken by antisocial cognition (Culhane, Walker & Hildebrand, 2017) and the formation of neutralizations (i.e., denial of the victim, responsibility, and injury; condemnation of the condemners; and appeal to higher loyalties) used to explain away their behavior (James & Gossett, 2017).

If researchers are to consider potential SSHOs as an offender group, we must determine where they fit within current definitional structures. It is difficult to know how potential SSHOs compare to successful SSHOs because most studies appear to echo support for stereotypical characteristics such as their penchant for using torture, a singular kill method, and a habit for collecting totems (Fridel & Fox, 2018; Yaksic, 2018a). This suggests that semantic issues have slowed criminological understanding of serial murder (DeLisi & Scherer, 2006). A key distinction between potential and successful SSHOs appears to be the successful SSHO's seemingly characteristic use of extreme violence (Fridel & Fox, 2018). But researchers must acknowledge that intentionality may provide a better account of serial murder than the measurement of body count or temporal sequences between murders (Adjorlolo & Chan, 2014; Harbort & Mokros, 2001; Yaksic, 2018a; Yaksic, Simkin & Roychowdhury, 2020) and that luck and coincidence may influence the outcome of whether or not an attempt is fatal (Bjorkly & Waage, 2005).⁸ These are important considerations specifically when studying potential SSHOs.

We sought attributes common to single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders to further highlight the similarities and differences between potential and successful SSHOs. Previous

⁸ For example, Reavis (2011) reports on a SSHO who relied on luck since he executed his plans haphazardly due to an inability to learn from his first homicide attempt and apply such knowledge to a template for subsequent killings.

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research characterized single-victim nonsexual homicides as interpersonal events in which offenders impulsively react in anger to provocation from acquaintances (Harbort & Mokros, 2001; James & Proulx, 2016; Kraemer, Lord & Heilbrun, 2004; Pakkanen, Zappalà, Bosco, Berti, & Santtila, 2015; Sturup, 2018). Potential SSHOs did not act in this manner except for the small proportion of probable SSHOs who were acquainted with their victims. So far as is known, over three-quarters of SSHOs have fantasies that drove their assaultive behavior,⁹ compared to less than one-quarter of single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders (Prentky et al., 1989). Single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders are thought to kill their family and friends and display more reactive anger and impulsive behavior (Harbort & Mokros, 2001). SSHOs are thought to plan their crimes, whereas single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders appear to react to interpersonal conflicts (Sturup, 2018). SSHOs may be different due to their premeditated, predatory nature, and unprovoked attacks (Kraemer, Lord, & Heilbrun, 2004). Male SSHOs appear to target more women than men for sexual motivations and appear to choose female victims more than non-sexually motivated serial homicide offenders (Arndt, Hietpas, & Him, 2004). SSHOs appear to target more sex workers and display a higher level of forensic awareness (Pakkanen, Zappalà, Bosco, Berti, & Santtila, 2015) than single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders who more often kill victims known to them.

SSHOs often select victims with distinctive physical and/or psychological characteristics (Chan, Beauregard & Myers, 2015) and are seemingly more likely to make their murders congruent with their fantasies, torture victims, attack individuals when they are alone, and record

⁹ Offenders with evidence of homicidal ideation, which evidence suggests peaks at age 15 and begins to decline thereafter (Vaughn, Carbone, DeLisi, & Holzer, 2020), appear to have the highest scores for antisocial personality (DeLisi, Tahja, Drury, Caropreso, Elbert, & Heinrichs, 2017), suggesting that those older than 16 years of age with ideation, or 63 percent of the potential SSHOs in this study, may be similar to successful SSHOs.

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the murder (James & Proulx, 2016). The use of a remote location to dispose of a victim's body can be an indicator of SSHOs who were more "hands-on" (i.e. strangulation or beating), while single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders seem to more frequently use firearms and have anger-based motives. As is partly evident from Table 1, potential SSHOs used hands-on methods, planned their crimes, lured and abducted their victims, and preyed on sex workers, much like successful SSHOs. Successful SSHOs have been classified in the literature as planners motivated to appease their predatory nature and deviant fantasies by targeting female strangers with distinctive physical and/or psychological characteristics, killing them with hands-on methods, and disposing of the body in a remote location after utilizing forensic countermeasures. The successful SSHOs in the present study mostly conformed to these characteristics but deviated in their lack of consistent engagement in fantasy and infrequent disposal of bodies in remote locations.

In regard to how much successful SSHOs were influenced by their active fantasy life, some identified a vague but overwhelming feeling that compelled them to act, but only if the opportunity presented itself. This haphazard and nonchalant attitude towards killing appears to be different from the potential SSHOs who embraced their obsession with killing and fixated on the idea that anyone could be a victim at any time. The successful SSHO's ability to compartmentalize their lives and 'switch on and off' may come from a conscious decision to fantasize less and could possibly contribute to their ability to blend in with society. Potential SSHOs seem to prioritize the process of killing and appear to allow it to consume their identity to the point of obsession. This may make it more difficult to "drift between conventional society and criminality" (James & Gossett, 2017) or at least as seamlessly as successful SSHOs appear to. This counterintuitive process, where thinking less about killing translates to real life success

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and deep pondering does not effectively contribute to the SSHO's goals, appears to be similar to Hurt and Grant's (2018) finding that threateners who eventually attacked or killed their victims were less preoccupied with violent ideation than their violence obsessed counterparts that never did. The potential SSHO's apparent obsession with serial murder may be the mediating factor that prevents them from fully realizing their goals. Given the wealth of risk assessment literature that points to the opposite conclusion, however, this idea, as well as other theories related to the present study should be further explored.

There may be hallmarks attributed to successful SSHOs within potential SSHOs who have not yet achieved the same benchmarks. Potential SSHOs appear to be more introspective, self-analytical, and open to being inspired by other SSHOs than successful SSHOs who compartmentalize aspects of their lives. Refusal to question their own identity may be a mechanism of defense for successful SSHOs as these exercises have been known to lead to existential questions and self-doubt. Probable SSHOs appear to spend less time than aspiring SSHOs introspecting to discover themselves, as evidenced by the lower percentage of probable SSHOs that are influenced by other SSHOs, fantasize, and self-identify as SSHOs.¹⁰ Successful SSHOs appear to begin their series without much ideation or intensive planning, seemingly wasting little time engaging in these behaviors while aspiring SSHOs may have prematurely exhausted their energy by using fantasy to convince themselves that it is time to act. Potential SSHOs appear to keep a journal to merge pre-offense fantasies into the execution of the crime,

¹⁰ Shanafelt and Pino (2014) roll introspection, being influenced by other SSHOs, fantasizing, and self-identifying as a SSHO into a process they call 'self-talk', a key factor in what transforms the life experiences of would-be killers into the actions of experienced ones. The process of 'self-talk' did not seem to translate into success for aspiring SSHOs.

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whereas successful SSHOs appear to journal to preserve the experience (Warren, Dietz & Hazelwood, 2013).

The lack of firearm use among potential SSHOs could be due to their adherence to portrayals in popular culture and academic literature stating that SSHOs do not kill by firearm (Madan, 2017). This theory does not explain why aspiring SSHOs preferred blunt force injuries and stabbing weapons over strangulation. Perhaps potential SSHOs would utilize multiple methods and expand their weapon selection if they were given more time to realize their goals (Yaksic, 2015). When considering body disposal and forensic countermeasures, aspiring SSHOs appear to be inexperienced since all victims were left at the murder site with no effort taken to transport or conceal them or to alter the murder site. In contrast, Morton et al. (2015) found that half of all successful SSHO victims were left at the murder site and just over one third engaged in forensic countermeasures.

One hypothesis in the present study, that potential SSHOs would be undone by mistakes caused by their own incompetence, is incorrect given that mistakes were more common among successful SSHOs. If it were not for the almost equal rate of drug and alcohol usage among aspiring and successful SSHOs, these substances could have been seen as an accelerant for the mistakes. It is not surprising that LEOs did not take proactive action against successful SSHOs as many of their murders took place between 1969 and 1998 when police were still developing best practices to intercept SSHOs. LEO's proactivity in addressing potential SSHOs lends credence to the theory that they are quicker to make the conceptual leap about a SSHO theory now than they have been in the past (LePard, Demers, Langan, & Rossmo, 2015) and they may be better equipped to handle cases of potential SSHOs in the modern era. That probable SSHOs were

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twice as likely to be forensically linked to their crimes than aspiring SSHOs is likely due to the probable SSHOs who completed their homicide attempt and left behind evidence.

The hypothesis that aspiring SSHOs would be younger than their probable and successful SSHO counterparts, and that they would have an immature grasp of what it means to be a SSHO (given their excessive ideation and penchant for being influenced by other SSHOs) was only half supported given that probable SSHOs represent the youngest of the three groups. We were incorrect in hypothesizing that probable SSHOs would fully understand who they are while functioning logically (as only a third self-identified as a SSHO and an even smaller portion were motivated to appease their obsession with serial murder). Our hypothesis that aspiring SSHOs seek attention for their crimes was incorrect, as no offender sought fame. Our hypothesis that most potential SSHOs would strive to self-actualize and attempt to become a successful SSHO was incorrect as only one aspiring and two probable SSHOs desired to fulfill this goal.

The history of child abuse for potential SSHOs is far lower than reported by successful SSHOs (Mitchell & Aamodt, 2005). Given that many SSHOs act upon histories of child abuse, perhaps potential SSHOs can attribute their lack of success to weak or non-existent emotional triggers, given that no potential SSHOs reported abuse. The potential SSHOs appear to draw their inspiration from other, less definitive or tangible sources, such as proclaimed preoccupations and desires to kill another person that are sometimes picked up as a contagion from popular media sources.

3.1 | *Limitations*

There are a number of limitations with the present study. Research on serial homicide is complicated by a number of factors, namely variations in definitions and a lack of systematically collected data (Yaksic, 2015). Reliance on secondary sources to build the database of potential

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SSHOs introduced the potential for missing and misreported information as there is little consistency in the level of available detail. While we defined parameters for inclusion and exclusion criteria, it is possible that we miscategorized some information. For example, a 'forensic link' can be both a mistake on the part of the offender as well as the result of law enforcement action. The information about successful SSHOs may be more accurate than other gathered data since it was derived from peer reviewed, scholarly journal articles. Due to the limits of the information, we were able to compile, the impact of the potential SSHO's limited life experience cannot be discerned from the current research. A person who has killed once but has neglected to state or document their desire to kill again is beyond the scope of this research. Drawing any meaningful conclusions of risk from the present sample is not currently possible and is ill-advised given that the number of individuals with violent fantasies (a nonpathological aspect of human consciousness) who do not act on them is quite large.

The present study is a data mining effort on a small number of subjects who we did not directly interview or study. The sources used to build the database of potential SSHOs cannot be expected to know or report all killings, or each of the offender's behaviors, thoughts, attitudes, or beliefs. This impacts many of the inferences made about them and limits the generalizability of our findings. In looking for correlations within reams of facts, we relied on second and third-hand perpetrator statements and anecdotal writings and media articles that may not be accurate or consistent. For those reasons, the terms put forward in the present study cannot reliably be used in LEO investigations or criminal profiling. The results of this study should not be used to classify anyone as a potential SSHO, even if they fit one or more of the characteristics identified herein. Our findings cannot support other studies that suggest there is a single continuum or set

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of unifying characteristics between groups of offenders without additional longitudinal and statistical evidence.

Given that no central registry cataloging potential SSHOs exists, the present study relied on non-random sampling. For that reason, the subjects in this study represent only a small fraction of SSHOs, and the characteristics presented here may not be representative of the larger group. Our efforts also resulted in a few selection effects. Certain countries may be more or less forthcoming with information about prospective murderers that would cast their populations in a negative view. The criteria used to assemble the dataset may have selected offenders with narcissistic traits since potential SSHOs are able to share their intentions openly on social media platforms, something that several of the successful SSHOs in the present study (active beginning in 1969) could not do. Focusing on offenders who proclaim a need to become a SSHO may have resulted in an overemphasis on the differences between them and successful SSHOs since some successful SSHOs began killing for banal reasons such as being slighted or lied to (Quinet, 2011). For these reasons, it may be more difficult to identify potential SSHOs from previous years and, as a result, we are careful not to name the appearance of potential SSHOs as an emerging trend. It is likely that potential SSHOs had always been active but had not received attention.

Furthermore, grouping offenders into separate groups may inhibit correctly classifying them, which can impact progress into understanding them. One case written about by James and Proulx (2016) illustrates the limits of a dichotomous, serial/non-serial, approach: this offender exhibited the profile of a SSHO but was arrested after his second murder, which led the authors to classify him as a non-serial murderer. Other authors would disagree with this classification given that some define serial murder as the killing of two or more victims in separate events.

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Because there are inherent dangers in comparing offenders with great variations in backgrounds, motivations, and in the nature of their crimes (Wolf & Lavezzi, 2007), Giannangelo (2012) reminds researchers that SSHOs are more individualized than how they are presented in the media. While we were aware of these limitations when building the database of potential SSHOs, it was difficult to avoid issues that have also affected other authors as these problems may be inherent to this type of research.

The current research may have co-mingled single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders with potential SSHOs due to false positives, individuals that display most or all of the hallmarks associated with serial murder but go no further in developing into a SSHO. For instance, John Balyo had many of the traditional hallmarks of serial homicide, yet only committed sexual assault (Agar, 2014). In another instance, the sexual assault of one victim was followed by the singular death of another victim several years later (Rabin, 2018). Michael Brown (Edwards, 2017) behaved like a SSHO by inflicting genital mutilation, binding, raping, and strangling his victim but did not progress beyond one homicide. Elton Walters' extensive travel, paired with the rape and stabbing death of his victim, made it appear as if further victims were possible (Trischitta, 2013). Offenders like Jeffrey Willis (Moore, 2018) who amassed lists of SSHOs, thousands of murder porn videos, and items to construct a rape kit probably had the intention to recidivate but just because some SSHOs amass a collection of fantasy materials does not mean that they will eventually reoffend (Warren, Dietz & Hazelwood, 2013). Many normal people experience deviant fantasies, but few take them to the extent of multiple homicide (Johnson & Becker, 1997). While no factor by itself was shown to be a reliable predictor of who will become a SSHO, the present study did not rule out the possibility that abuse, also experienced by millions of non-offenders, could be associated with becoming a SSHO.

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3.2 | *Future Research Directions*

The present research opens several avenues for future research. Future research should compare our results to two-victim SSHOs and seek to understand what sets these groups apart. The practical, analytical, and emotional intelligence of potential and successful SSHOs should be compared once psychometric data becomes available. The specific type of role model influence that motivates certain potential SSHOs towards initial or subsequent attacks should be explored as well as what draws these groups to prior perpetrators (Langman, 2018). The effect that forensic countermeasures have on the longevity of a SSHO's series should be studied, as the current research counterintuitively found that the successful SSHOs who did not engage in this activity remained free for an average of one additional year more than killers who implemented such measures. These findings raise the question of just how much of a successful SSHO's longevity is due to their own actions and what proportion benefits from lucky breaks (Yaksic, et al., 2019; Yaksic, Allred, Drakulic, Mooney, De Silva, Geyer, Wills, Comerford, & Ranger, 2021). Future research should review if the young age of some potential SSHOs have impeded them from participating in the full scope of life, from the elation of positive events to the crushing lows of setbacks, as they may not be as aware of normative expectations (James & Gossett, 2017) as successful SSHOs that have been exposed to society and culture. Without such experiences to provide perspective, potential SSHOs might be destined to function far below the capacity of the successful SSHO's capabilities, aptitude, and stamina, all necessary components of a criminal career.

Future studies should take into account previous criminal convictions to look for patterns in criminal behavior and if evidence of escalation type behaviors is more prevalent in one group over another. The pathways that lead potential SSHOs to ideate and attempt to realize their goals

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should be mapped in the hopes that some useful distinctions can be found. Although the present study defies Calhoun and Weston's (2015) six steps by showing how potential SSHOs do not fully walk the 'path' (but are more likely to do so than single-victim nonsexual homicide offenders), the application of the "path to intended violence" model to cases of potential SSHOs could still be useful (Allely & Faccini, 2017). The overlapping characteristics that potential SSHOs share with those yearning to commit a massacre, identified by Mullen & Pathé (2018) as involuntarily celibate men, should be explored. This study should be replicated with a focus on offenders without sexual motivations and should also include female offenders. Future researchers on this topic should interview the research subjects to ensure that statements captured by news media sources accurately represent the offender's thoughts, attitudes, motivations and beliefs. A longitudinal analysis that follows the offenders in the present study as they age would be beneficial as some potential SSHOs will be paroled and are likely to recidivate.

4 | CONCLUSION

The present research represents the first effort to investigate similarities and differences between potential and successful SSHOs. Our findings suggest that these groups are distinct; being a potential SSHO does not seem to enhance one's odds of progressing into a successful SSHO. For instance, only two probable SSHOs in the present study behaved like successful SSHOs (who usually have a criminal history, target female strangers, kill with hands-on methods, and take forensic countermeasures) and may have been on the pathway to becoming a successful SSHO. This low frequency is due to better equipped LEOs and, since well over half of all SSHOs were captured due to direct observations (White, Lester, Gentile & Rosenbleeth, 2011), a more aware public.

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While there is some overlap among potential and successful SSHOs, there are enough differences between these types to consider them to be distinct groups. There is insufficient evidence to suggest discreet transitions between these groups; there is no guarantee that being a potential SSHO is the first step on a pathway towards becoming a successful SSHO. In other words, potential SSHOs cannot reliably be thought of as prospective SSHOs, especially since those with a desire to self-actualize failed to do so after an average of two years of attempting to attain their goals.¹¹ Future research should investigate if potential SSHOs lack engagement in the processes that seemingly aid successful SSHOs in avoiding apprehension (e.g., resiliency, adaptation) and whether or not they are ill equipped to undertake such a journey. Even so, scholars, policymakers, and LEOs should address how biological, social, and psychological features operate, interact, and flourish to shape the developmental trajectories of SSHOs given that environmental contexts in which SSHOs operate contain guidelines for understanding future trends (Jenkins, 1992). The present research demonstrates that there may be a danger in ignoring so called “budding” SSHOs on the cusp of realizing their own dangerousness. Even when aspiring SSHOs failed to kill those on the other end of their homicide attempt, the trauma inflicted on their victims is long lasting. This is an area worthy of additional larger scale empirical studies and we encourage other researchers to scrutinize our findings and build upon these early foundational efforts.

¹¹ Data from the Consolidated Serial Homicide Offender Database (Aamodt, Fox, Hickey, Hinch, Labuschagne, Levin, McClellan, Nelson, Newton, Quinet, Steiger, White, & Yaksic, 2020) found that the majority of successful SSHOs with a victim count of three or greater were apprehended on average within a year of the formation of their plans to kill several individuals.

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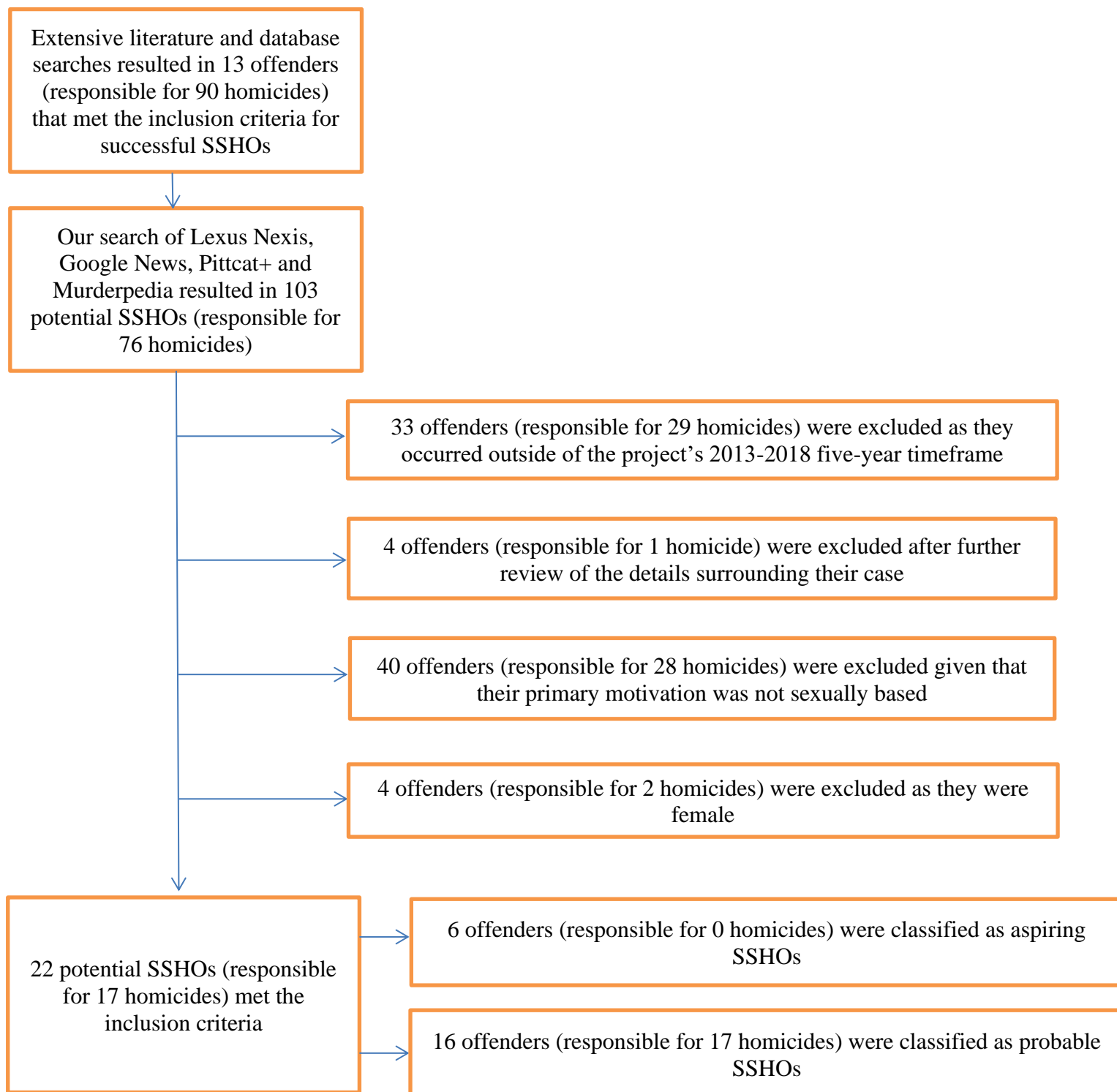
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Figure 1. Derivation of the study sample



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Table 1. Statistical comparison between aspiring, probable, and successful SSHOs

Factor	Level	Aspiring (N=6)		Probable (N=16)		Successful (N=13)		Statistical Relation to Type
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Offender Gender	M	6	100	16	100	13	100	Constant; all male
	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Victim Gender	M	0	0	0	0	1	8	No relation, Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .174$, two-tailed
	F	6	100	16	100	10	77	
	Both	0	0	0	0	2	15	
Offender Age	13 - 20	1	17	5	31	1	8	No relation, Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .546$, two-tailed
	21 - 30	3	50	4	25	8	61	
	31 - 40	1	17	5	31	3	23	
	41 - 50	0	0	1	6	0	0	
	51 - 60	1	16	1	6	1	8	
Victim Age	Young	0	0	3	19	0	0	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .043$, Cramer's $V = .421$
	Teen	3	50	3	19	0	0	
	Adult	2	33	9	56	10	77	
	Elderly	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Varied	1	17	1	6	3	23	
Type of Weapon	Knife	2	33	6	37	1	8	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .852$
	Firearm	0	0	0	0	1	8	
	Blunt Instrument	3	50	5	31	0	0	
	Strangulation	0	0	3	19	4	30	
	Other	1	17	2	13	0	0	
	Multiple	0	0	0	0	7	54	
Victim Known or Unknown to Offender	Known	0	0	4	25	0	0	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .614$
	Unknown	6	100	12	75	9	69	
	Both	0	0	0	0	4	31	
Secondary Offender Motivation*	Anger	0	0	0	0	4	31	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .004$, Cramer's $V = .844$
	Become a SSHO	1	17	2	13	0	0	
	Obsession	1	17	4	25	0	0	
	Power	1	17	0	0	0	0	
	Random	0	0	1	6	0	0	
	Revenge	0	0	0	0	1	8	
	Thrill	1	17	0	0	0	0	
Offender Contact with Victim	Abducted	0	0	3	19	1	8	No relation, Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .664$, two-tailed
	Acquainted	0	0	1	6	0	0	
	Break In	0	0	1	6	1	8	
	Lured	3	50	5	31	4	31	
	Multiple	0	0	1	6	4	31	
	Random	1	17	1	6	0	0	
	Romantic	0	0	2	13	0	0	
	Sex Worker	2	33	2	13	2	15	
	Unknown	0	0	0	0	1	7	

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Continuation of Table 1

Type of Body Disposal	Left Dump Conceal Multiple	6 0 0 0	100 0 0 0	8 5 3 0	50 31 19 0	9 0 0 4	69 0 0 31	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .507$
Number of Factors of Capture^a	1 2 3	2 4 0	33 67 0	8 7 1	50 44 6	10 3 0	77 23 0	No relation, Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .223$, two-tailed
Forensic Countermeasures^b	Y N	0 6	0 100	8 8	50 50	8 5	62 38	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .032$, Cramer's $V = .430$
Fantasy or Ideation^c	Y N	6 0	100 0	8 8	50 50	4 9	31 69	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .019$, Cramer's $V = .475$
Self-Identification^d	Y N	5 1	83 17	5 11	31 69	0 13	0 100	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .634$
Inspiration^e	Y N	6 0	100 0	12 4	75 25	1 12	8 92	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .740$
Logged Pre/Post Crime Actions^f	Y N	1 5	17 83	4 12	25 75	1 12	8 92	No relation, Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .613$, two-tailed
Physical, Emotional, or Sexual Abuse	Y N	0 6	0 100	0 16	0 100	10 3	77 23	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .832$
Drug or Alcohol Use	Y N	4 2	67 33	1 15	6 94	8 5	62 38	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .588$
Mental Illness	Y N	1 5	17 83	5 11	31 69	6 7	46 54	No relation, Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .632$, two-tailed
Criminal History	Y N	0 6	0 100	7 9	44 56	8 5	62 38	Sig., Fisher-Freeman-Halton Test, $p = .040$, Cramer's $V = .426$

Note:

* will not sum to 100% given that not all SSHOs maintained a secondary motivation

a. 'Number of factors of capture' is a count of the number of factors that led to an offender's apprehension, categorized as: eye-witness statements, forensic linkages, law enforcement action, or an offender's mistake, confession or surrender.

b. 'Forensic Countermeasures' refers to steps taken by SSHOs to delay or render impossible the location of evidence of a forensic nature that could be used to link their crimes.

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- c. 'Fantasy or ideation' refers to SSHOs who devoted time to thinking about the concept of serial murder and used this time to plan to become a SSHO.
- d. 'Self-identification' refers to SSHOs with insight into what is transpiring inside their minds and refer to themselves as a serial killer.
- e. 'Inspiration' refers to offenders who consumed media dedicated to serial murder, and/or studied real-life SSHOs, and used that information to further their own goals. SSHOs were inspired if they displayed an abnormal attraction to objects or topics that they believed actual SSHOs are enamored with (i.e., dissection, dismemberment and other indicators of violence) or surround themselves with (i.e., knives, binding material, violent pornographic media).
- f. 'Logged pre/post crime actions' refers to any effort made by the offender to document in written, visual, or auditory format how they anticipate the event will live up to their plans and desires and whether or not it did.

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Table 2. Summary of distinctive SSHO characteristics

Aspiring	<p>Inexperienced with an immature grasp of what it means to be a SSHO</p> <p>Journal to work out the merger of pre-offense fantasies into the execution of crime</p> <p>Preference for blunt force injuries and stabbing weapons over strangulation</p> <p>Use serial murder to seek controlled means of satisfying a need for power</p> <p>Introspective, self-analytical, and open to being inspired and influenced</p> <p>Engagement in excessive ideation that prematurely exhausts energy</p> <p>Failure to formulate the necessary components of a successful homicide</p>
Probable	<p>Obsession with serial murder influences crimes</p> <p>Cognizant of pursuit of a “serial killer” identity</p> <p>Motivated to act on urges to ‘self-actualize’ and become a successful SSHO</p> <p>Proclaimed preoccupation to kill as a contagion from popular media</p> <p>Fixated on the idea that anyone could be a victim at any time</p> <p>Less interested in the process of homicidal ideation and fantasy</p> <p>Prioritize the process of killing and allow it to consume identity</p>
Successful	<p>Heightened aptitude, stamina, and ability to compartmentalize aspects of their lives</p> <p>Controlled and deliberate planners motivated to appease predatory nature</p> <p>Selectively target strangers with desirable physical characteristics</p> <p>Heavily reliant on forensic countermeasures</p> <p>More apt to utilize multiple killing methods and multiple types of body disposal</p> <p>Rely on luck given history of mistakes</p> <p>Journal to archive crimes and preserve the experience</p> <p>Easily drift between conventional society and criminality</p>