Sexual Homicide of Children: Pre-Crime, Crime, and Post-Crime Factors

Most of the research conducted on sexual homicide and sexual murderers have focused on those individuals who killed an adult woman. Because of the difficulties related to collecting information on these offenders, very few empirical studies have looked specifically at sexual homicide of children. Three studies comparing sexual murderers of children to other groups (nonhomicidal child molesters, nonoffenders, incest offenders) have been conducted (Firestone, Bradford, Greenberg, Larose, & Curry, 1998; Firestone, Bradford, Greenberg, & Larose, 1997; Firestone, Bradford, Greenberg, & Nunes, 2000). Although these studies found interesting differences between homicidal child molesters and the other groups on psychological variables (e.g., PCL-R, deviant arousal, paraphilias, personality disorders), no comparisons were made on factors related to the crime. Moreover, Firestone and colleagues (1998b) reported that “there is a limited amount of psychological research available on men who commit sexual murders, and no distinction has been made between those who have victimized adults and those who victimized children” (p. 306). Therefore, in order to better understand specifically sexual murderers of children (N = 11), comparisons with a group of sexual murderers of adult women (N = 66) on pre-crime, crime, and post-crime factors, were performed using bivariate statistics. Although the two groups present much more similarities than differences as to their crime, some of the significant differences and implications of the results will be discussed.