

## Criminal and Behavioral Aspects of Juvenile Sexual Homicide

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**ABSTRACT:** This preliminary research provides a descriptive, systematic study of juvenile sexual homicide. Fourteen incarcerated juveniles, identified through a department of corrections computer search, were assessed using a structured diagnostic interview, an author-designed clinical interview, and a review of correctional files and other available records. Five of the offenders' victims survived the homicidal attack, but their cases were nevertheless included in this study as the offenders' intent was clearly to kill their victim, and the victim's survival was merely by chance. All victims were female and all offenders were male. Their crimes typically occurred in the afternoon, and involved a low-risk victim of the same race who lived in the offender's neighborhood. The sexual component of the crime consisted of vaginal rape in over one-half of the cases. Weapons, typically a knife or bludgeon, were used in all but one case. Thirteen of these youths had a prior history of violence, and twelve had previous arrests. Chaotic, abusive backgrounds and poor adjustment in school were typical for these boys. A conduct disorder diagnosis was present in twelve of the youths, and violent sexual fantasies were experienced by one-half of the sample. The findings in this study suggest that juvenile sexual murderers comprise less than 1% of juvenile murderers, and are likely to be an emotionally and behaviorally disturbed population with serious familial, academic, and environmental vulnerabilities.

**KEYWORDS:** forensic science, sexual homicide, violence, adolescence

Sexual homicide, the fusion of sexual assault with murder, contains a sexual element or activity as the basis for the sequence of acts leading to the death of the victim (1). In addition to the murderous behavior, the crime will involve either an overt sexual assault such as rape or sodomy, or sexually symbolic behavior. The latter may include lack of clothing on the victim, sexualized positioning of the body, evidence of seminal fluid on or near the body, or mutilation of the sexual organs (2). Overkill, the infliction of excessive trauma beyond that necessary to cause death (1), is also highly suggestive of sexual motivation (3).

A number of factors contribute to the occurrence of sexual homicide. In many of these crimes, the murder is committed in response to the offender's fantasies to dominate and hurt his victim, thus

adding to his sadistic gratification beyond the sexual assault alone. Permanently silencing the sexually assaulted victim and potential witness is a contributing motivation in other cases. The phenomenon of catathymia is also believed to lead to sex murder. Catathymia occurs when the offender's psychological equilibrium is overwhelmed by powerful emotions, often stemming from a conflicted relationship, and catastrophic, unprovoked violence results as the tension is released (4,5).

Fantasy is believed to be a root cause in most if not all sex crimes and sex murders (6,7). Sadistic fantasy, developed from the offender's need to dominate, humiliate, and inflict suffering on his victim, is often refined over time and acted out in a progressive fashion, sometimes manifested by behavioral "tryouts" (8). Such fantasy is believed to lead to the development of a mental template or script, which then serves as a guiding force in the commission of the crime. Data from studies of adult sex criminals suggest that sadistic fantasy formation not uncommonly begins during the early to middle teenage years, and sometimes even in childhood (6,8).

Sexual homicides may be categorized through the organized/disorganized dichotomy based primarily on crime scene analysis (9). Organized crimes are planned, conscious, methodical acts in which the victim is typically not known. The offender displays control at the crime scene, and the various components of the crime reflect an organized, methodical approach. Disorganized crimes are spontaneous, unplanned acts, often against a known victim. This disorganization may be a result of the youthfulness of the offender, lack of criminal sophistication, use of drugs and alcohol, and/or mental instability or deficiency.

Few studies of juveniles who have committed sexual homicide exist, except for scattered case reports (10-12), a case series of three subjects (13), and a recent report by Myers and Blashfield (14) on the psychopathology and personality findings in the present group of fourteen juveniles. In earlier case reports, the sexual element of the crimes were described, but the acts were not conceptualized as sexual homicides.

The current preliminary study aimed to provide the first descriptive, systematic study on the criminal and behavioral characteristics of juveniles (defined as youth less than 18 years of age) who have committed such offenses. This research project was embarked upon with the knowledge that the crime of juvenile sexual homicide is rare, and that a large sample would not be obtainable. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (15), there were approximately 25,000 murders committed in the United States in 1994. Only about 0.5% of these crimes involved rape or other sex offenses as a component of the murder circumstances. However, this figure may be spuriously low, as sexual homicides are sometimes misidentified as nonsexual homicides because of a lack of suspicion or recognition by investigators (2,12).

Fourteen incarcerated juveniles who had committed their crimes over a six-year period were identified. A number of questions were formulated to investigate what type of youth commits sexual

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homicide. Who did these offenders kill? How and why did they commit their crimes? What would crime scene analysis show? Were these crimes of the organized or disorganized type? How had these boys been functioning in society before the crimes, such as in their families, at school, and in the community? Had they acted violently before? Would they have preexisting criminal records?

## Methods

A State Department of Corrections (DOC) computer search identified fourteen offenders who had entered the prison system during a 72 month period, January 1990 through December 1996, and had simultaneously committed sexual assault and homicide/attempted homicide while under 18 years of age. These fourteen youths were culled from a pool of approximately 1500 juvenile murderers who had entered the state correctional system during this same period. No juvenile sexual offenders were identified in the juvenile justice system; apparently all had been transferred to adult court for trial and sentencing. Thus, juvenile sexual homicide offenders in this study account for just under 1% of all juvenile murderers in the state sampled.

Five cases in which the victim survived were included because the intent of the offenders was clearly to kill their victims, and the victim's survival was merely by chance. For example, in one case the victim survived an intracranial gunshot wound at point-blank range during an execution style shooting; two other victims at the crime scene were killed by gunshot wounds to the head. In another case, the victim was bludgeoned, beaten, stabbed, and strangled, and an attempt was made to break her neck as well. She was then left for dead in a wooded area.

The mean age of the sample at the time of the crimes was 15.2 years (range 13–17); the mean age at follow-up assessment was 18.8 years (range 16–23). Seven subjects were white (50%) and seven were black (50%). All were male. Average IQ was 101.4,  $\pm$  13.3 (range 78–119). Hollingshead and Redlick Two Factor Index of Social Position (16) averaged 3.93,  $\pm$  0.62 (range III–V).

The Diagnostic Interview for Children and Adolescents (DICA-R) (17) was administered to assess for Axis I psychiatric disorders. This structured interview covers the diagnostic criteria for the major psychiatric disorders in childhood and adolescence, and takes about 90 minutes to administer. The DICA-R has been used previously with success in samples of juvenile murderers (18,19).

A five page author-designed clinical interview form was used to assess the areas of victimology, family background, medical history, educational history, sexuality, child abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual), crime variables and modus operandi (i.e., motivation and planning, use of weapons, victim procurement and control), and violent sexual fantasies. Correctional files which contained various information sources including pre-sentencing evaluations, psychological evaluations, prior arrest sheets, current crime descriptions, and other offense-related data were also reviewed. In addition, all of the youths had received intelligence and educational testing upon entering the correctional system. The correctional files were compared with the youths' reports to supplement and corroborate crime details and other historical information. Author W.C.M. administered the DICA-R and clinical interviews to the youths.

One offender (# 14) declined to participate in the clinical interview portion of this research project, but completed the psychological testing portion of the study and consented to a review of his correctional files. Therefore, certain percentages in the results will

reflect a denominator of 13 instead of 14 when the information on #14 was lacking.

This study was approved by the University of Florida Institutional Review Board and the State Department of Corrections Office of Research. Written informed consent was obtained from all subjects after the nature and purpose of the study was explained to them. They were informed that these research results would not be available for parole or appeal purposes.

## Results

### Victimology

*Victim Demographics*—Subjects #1 and #2 committed their crime together, as did subjects #13 and #14, leading to a total of 12 crimes and 12 victims in this study. The mean age of the twelve victims at the time of the crimes was 24.2 years (range 10–37). Seven were white (58%) and five were black (42%). All were female.

Eight (67%) of these girls and women were known by the offenders before the crimes, and four (33%) of the victims were strangers. Acquaintance was the most common relationship category, which described six (43%) of the offender-victim relationships. Table 1 lists the victim's relationship to the offender, and provides crime characteristics for the sample. In Table 1, "Child" refers to victims 12 years of age and younger, "Teenager" refers to those 13–17 years of age, and "Adult" refers to those 18 years of age and older.

All of the victims lived in the same city or town as the offenders. In seven of the cases (58%), the victim and offender(s) lived in the same neighborhood. Three (25%) of the victims were next-door neighbors of the offender. One offender lived in the same home as the victim, his stepsister.

*High-risk Versus Low-risk Status of the Victims*—Victims were classified according to whether they were high-risk or low-risk victims. High-risk victims encompassed those victims whose life circumstances and behaviors would increase their risk for becoming victims of violent crimes. The three (25%) high-risk victims included a prostitute, a crack cocaine addict, and a woman who left an entertainment club at night with one of the offenders shortly after she had met him.

Low-risk victims in this study included those who were attacked: (1) in their homes; (2) by a family member, friend or significant other whom they would have had no basis to fear; (3) while at work in a relatively safe neighborhood (e.g., babysitting); or (4) in a grocery store parking lot. Nine (75%) of the twelve victims were judged to be low-risk victims.

### Offender DSM-IV Diagnoses and Related Findings

*DSM-IV Axis I Diagnoses at the Time of the Crimes*—Twelve of the fourteen youths (86%) met criteria for at least one DSM-IV diagnosis at the time of the crime. Conduct disorder was the most common diagnosis, present in all twelve of the subjects with diagnoses. Other common diagnoses included substance abuse disorders in six subjects (43%), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in three (21%), anxiety disorders in three (21%), and dysthymia in two (14%). None of the youth were judged to have a psychotic disorder, such as schizophrenia or a delusional disorder, by the DICA-R, clinical interview, or file review.

*Criminal and Violence History*—Often associated with the diagnosis of conduct disorder is a history of violent behaviors and

TABLE 1—Crime characteristics.

Subject	Victim Age	Victim Relationship	Apparent Motivation	Degree of Planning	Crime Scene Aspects	Method(s) of Attack	Feelings Just Before
1	Child	Girlfriend	Anger over victim's pregnancy	Talked about for 2 months	Two perpetrators (#'s 1 & 2). Rode bike. Wooded location planned. Knife taken, hidden afterwards. Victim raped, then murdered.	Attempted neck-cutting with dull knife, stabbed several times, cord strangulation, bludgeons at scene used.	"Normal"
2	Child	Acquaintance	Partner of #1	As above	As above. Victim resisted his attempt at rape.	As above	"Hyper"/ "Excited"
3	Adult	Neighbor/ Acquaintance	Sexually violent fantasies	Knew it would be "bloody" for weeks ("violent" feeling)	Apparent rehearsal of crime day before. Crime at victim's home, same block. Armed with knife. Victim raped and simultaneously strangled. Door fingerprints wiped.	Manual strangulation during sex.	On "pins and needles"
4	Adult	Stranger	Rape fantasy/ Argument with mother	Recent joke of raping someone	Crime at home where victim baby-sitting. Rode bike. Knife taken, hidden at home later. Threatened rape but only touched victim's leg.	Stabbing with knife (17 stab wounds to body inflicted)	"Numb rage"
5	Adult	Neighbor/ Acquaintance	Fantasy stimulation from "slasher" movie	Appeared impulsive	Crime at neighbor's home, same block. Knife taken, left at scene. Projected sexual and aggressive impulses onto victim. No sex assault.	Stabbing with knife (18 stab wounds to body inflicted)	"Don't know"
6	Child	Stepsister	Resentment/jealousy toward victim	Appeared impulsive	Victim and subject lived at same home. Victim bound, stripped, raped (at knife-point?), then shot.	Rifle. Shot in head.	"Frustrated"
7	Adult	Stranger	Victim kidnapped for rape-murder	Discussed earlier that day	Two perpetrators (other was 18 y.o.). Victim selected from store parking lot, abducted at gunpoint, driven to planned secluded area, raped, shot.	Pistol. Shot four times in leg, neck, and head.	Could not describe
8	Teenager	Friend	Victim kidnapped for rape-murder	Discussed with friend for years	Two perpetrators (other one 18 y.o.). Victim driven to planned wooded area for a "party." Rope, knife, pistol taken. Victim physically attacked, left for dead. Boys too nervous to carry out planned sexual assault.	Bludgeoned, beaten, stabbed, attempted neck-breaking, strangled with hands and rope.	"Excited"
9	Adult	Neighbor/ Acquaintance	Rape/murder fantasies	Several days of intense fantasy	Crime at neighbor's apartment in same building. Knife and pistol taken, not left at scene. Youth broke in, hid, and awaited victim's return. Fondled her breasts; unable to get an erection. Stabbed and shot her.	Victim stabbed in head. Shot in head.	"Wired"/ "Anxious"
10	Teenager	Fellow student	Rape/murder fantasies	"Rape kit" taken to scene	Drove to victim's home. Rope, knife taken. Cut phone lines, locked doors. Victim choked to submission, raped, and then bludgeoned.	Bludgeoned with shovel obtained from garage; also took sledgehammer from garage but didn't end up using it.	"Resigned to do it"
11	Adult	Stranger	Earlier violent fantasies toward women	Vulnerable victim selected	Met physically handicapped victim at nightclub. Left club to walk her home. Took victim to secluded area behind gas station, then raped (orally and vaginally) and impaled her.	Repeatedly impaled, presumably with wooden stick.	"Frustrated"/ "Angry"
12	Adult	Stranger/ Prostitute	Escalation of group sexual aggression	Group sought out prostitute	In van with father, cousin, and adult male. Got prostitute in van. Victim held at knife-point, blindfolded with dress. Sexually assaulted by all. Subject unable to reach orgasm. Victim later physically assaulted.	Attempted to cut victim's neck with knife (too dull) and to break her neck by twisting. Also banged her head on vehicle.	"Weird"
13	Adult	Acquaintance	Revenge for drug debt	Went to victim's home with #14	Two perpetrators (#'s 13 & 14) walked to victim's house, raped her (orally and vaginally), and then killed her.	Three bludgeons already of crime scene used. Neck cut with mirror shard.	"Impatient"
14	Adult	Acquaintance	Revenge for drug debt	Went to victim's home with #13	As above	As above	Not available

illegal acts. Table 2 provides a background of criminal and violent behaviors for the study sample. Thirteen (93%) had acted violently toward others in the past, and all of the sample had engaged in some form of illegal activity before their current crimes. These actions ranged from carrying a knife to school to having an extensive felony arrest history. Fighting (86%) and prior arrests (86%), each present in 12 of the youths, were the two most prevalent antisocial behaviors. Using a weapon in fights ( $N = 7$ ; 50%) was common, as were a history of fire setting ( $N = 5$ ; 36%) and cruelty to animals ( $N = 4$ ; 29%).

*Substance Abuse Before the Crimes*—As stated earlier, nearly half of the group manifested substance abuse problems. Six of the fourteen subjects (43%) were under the influence of a mind-altering drug at the time of the crimes. Three had used both marijuana and alcohol before their offenses, two solely used marijuana, and one solely used alcohol.

#### *Offender Academic, Family, and Sexual Adjustment*

*Educational History*—The mean school grade for the sample at the time of arrest was 9.0. All of these youth had experienced significant school difficulties, including a history of truancy ( $N = 12$ ; 93%), suspensions ( $N = 10$ ; 77%), learning disabilities ( $N = 8$ ; 57%), and failure of least one school grade ( $N = 7$ ; 54%).

Six (46%) had been in emotionally handicapped classes, learning disability classes, home schooling because of an inability to control their behavior at school, and/or alternative schools for students with severe conduct problems. Two students had experienced a precipitous drop in their grades the year before their crime; both had previously been good students. Another boy who had failed the same grade twice and was faced with a third failure dropped out of high school just before he committed his crime.

*Family Dysfunction and Child Abuse*—Family histories were assessed to determine if a chaotic family environment was present. A chaotic background was defined by parental abandonment or neglect, child abuse, unstable living arrangements with frequent geographical moves, parental incarceration, parental substance abuse, and/or serious parental arguing/fighting. Thirteen (93%) of the youths had experienced a chaotic upbringing, and some type of family violence was present in 86% ( $N = 12$ ) of the youths' homes. Family violence was defined as physical abuse of the child, physical abuse of one spouse by another, or physical fighting between parents or adult family members witnessed by the child. As an example of the latter, one youth watched his mother stab herself with a knife in the chest during a suicide attempt.

Twelve (86%) of these boys had been abandoned or neglected by their fathers. These fathers were absent or largely so because

TABLE 2—*Criminal and violence history.*

Subject	Examples
1	Frequent fights (about "15"), sometimes with weapons; school suspensions for fighting School expulsion and alternative school placement for disruptive behavior Regularly carried a gun; owner of four handguns Prior arrests for battery and trespassing
2	Numerous fights (about "100"), sometimes with weapons; school suspensions for fighting School suspensions for having and soliciting sex in female students' bathroom School expulsion and alternative school placement for disruptive behavior Prior arrests for assault and battery; history of cruelty to animals
3	Several fights ("3"), once using a weapon Always carried a knife Prior arrests for petit theft and trespassing; history of firesetting
4	Carried a knife to school for one and a half years prior to his crime
5	Numerous fights; school suspensions for fighting Once taken from school to emergency room for physically fighting with teachers and principal Prior arrest for strong-armed robbery
6	Frequent fights ("15" or more); school suspensions for cutting a student and firesetting Prior arrests for burglary and retail theft; history of firesetting
7	Frequent fights ("10" or more); school suspensions and an expulsion for fighting Prior arrests for auto theft and shoplifting; history of cruelty to animals
8	Occasional fights, once using a weapon Prior arrests for burglary
9	No history of fighting Prior arrests for burglary, auto theft, retail theft, arson, criminal mischief, trespassing History of cruelty to animals and firesetting
10	Several fights ("3"); opponents received serious injuries Prior arrests for sexual battery—grabbed an adult female's breast and teenage female's buttocks (both were strangers)
11	Occasional fights, sometimes with weapons; school suspension for fighting Prior arrests for assault and battery and criminal mischief; history of firesetting
12	Frequent fights (more than "10"), once with a weapon; school suspensions for fighting Opponents received significant injuries on "10" occasions Prior arrests for burglaries
13	Numerous fights (more than "20"), once with a weapon; school suspensions for fighting History of fire setting: set a van on fire; attempted to burn down his mother's home on three occasions; set aunt's bed on fire as child, stating that he "wanted to see someone burn" Extensive history of cruelty to animals: shot, burned, and drowned many cats ("15–20")
14	Occasional fights Prior arrests for strong-arm robbery, battery, grand theft, and trespassing Member of gang for three years until arrest



on the extent of premeditation, and reveals a spectrum varying from impulsive acts to extensive planning.

*Crime Scene Location and Transportation*—All 12 of these crimes occurred within the offenders' home towns or cities. The most common location was at the victims' home, occurring in six of these crimes (50%). The second most common location was in wooded areas, occurring in three instances (25%). Other locations, each accounting for one crime (8%), included a home where a victim was baby-sitting, the back of a van, a secluded area behind a neighborhood service station, a deserted roadside, and an offender's home. In the latter case, the victim was a stepsister who also lived at the home. Overall, seven of the twelve crimes (58%) occurred within the offenders' neighborhoods.

Cars were used as transportation to the crime scene by only four (28%) of the boys, perhaps partly due to the young age of the sample and therefore their lack of driver's licenses and resources to buy a vehicle. Six others walked to the crime scenes, while three rode their bikes. No transportation was used for the crime that occurred at the offender's home as his stepsister was the victim.

*Time of Offense*—To classify the time periods during which these crimes occurred, the hours of the day were divided into four six-hour blocks: morning (6:00 am–12:00 pm), afternoon (12:00 pm–6:00 pm), evening (6:00 pm–12:00 am), and night (12:00 am–6:00 am). Eight offenders (57%) committed their crimes in the afternoon. Four others (29%) assaulted their victims during the evening hours. Of the remaining two offenders, one committed his crime during the morning period and the other one committed his crime at night.

*The Role of Violent Sexual Fantasies*—Thirteen of the fourteen youths were able to be queried about the presence of violent sexual fantasies. One of the thirteen refused to answer questions related to fantasies. Thus, six of the twelve youth (50%) questioned reported having violent sexual fantasies. Their experience of such fantasies is described below.

One subject had acted out rape murders through the fantasy game "Dungeons and Dragons." He had violent dreams in which he would stab females while he had sex with them. In other dreams he would hurt people with knives without any accompanying sexual activity. For weeks before he committed his crime, he "knew it would be bloody." After his arrest, he began having frequent daydreams of killing people with swords.

A second subject, several months before his crime, had "joked" with a friend that they should find someone to rape.

A third subject had projected his own sexual fantasies onto the victim, stating that she was the initiator of the sexual contact and that he had repeatedly stabbed her to protect himself from her aggressive sexual advances. Immediately before this crime, the offender had been watching a movie that depicted helpless females falling prey to a homicidal maniac armed with a knife. His crime was remarkably similar to the content of the movie.

A fourth subject had "thought a lot about it" for years before finally acting on his fantasies. He had fantasies of slitting the throat of his female victims, as well as disemboweling them. His fantasies included cutting out the victim's internal organs, and he named the heart, liver, kidneys, and stomach as particular organs he planned to target.

A fifth subject had nonstop fantasies of raping his mother and then killing her with a knife that he "couldn't get off of his mind" for three or four days before his crime. His crime was directed

against another victim instead of his mother, and he explained that he chose this victim over his mother because he did not want to hear his mother scream. During his crime, he stabbed his victim in the head, but was unable to get the knife to penetrate the skull. He likened this action to the movie hero "Rambo," who successfully stabbed his victims in the head.

A sixth subject reported aggressive thoughts towards prostitutes. He felt angry whenever he saw prostitutes, and described them as being "inappropriate," but he would not elaborate further.

*Could the Victim Have Prevented This Crime in Any Way?*—Each of the youths was asked the above question in hopes of acquiring some useful information that might lead to the avoidance or circumvention of future crimes by similar aged offenders. Five boys said "No," and two said they did not know. Four others blamed the victim, stating "If she had not attacked me"; "If she had not gone out there with us"; if she had "Not gotten into the van"; and "She shouldn't have been in the house." In two cases the offenders thought the victim should have taken control of the situation; in one case the offender believed that the victim should have "Pulled out a gun," and another posited that "She could have taken the gun out of my hand."

*Crime Categorization*—The Crime Classification Manual (CCM) (1) provides a classification scheme for three major crime categories: homicide, sexual assault, and arson. The murders and attempted murders in this juvenile sample were classified in accordance with the CCM classification for sexual homicide by two independent raters. The results with description of the classification follows.

Six cases were classified as organized sexual homicides. As described earlier, the organized offender plans his murders, targets his victims, and displays control at the crime scene. In contrast, five cases were classified as disorganized homicides. The disorganized offender commits an unplanned, spontaneous act, often against a known victim. This disorganization may be a result of the young age of the offender, lack of criminal sophistication, intoxication, and/or psychopathology. The naivete about how to kill someone was apparent in the two cases in which the juveniles tried to twist their victim's heads off. In three cases, a knife was too dull to cut the victim's throat, and in another case the knife could not be forced through the victim's skull.

Three subjects were classified as having committed mixed sexual homicide based on components of both organized and disorganized characteristics at the crime scene (1). For example, mixed sexual homicides may occur due to the influence of two or more offenders, a well-ordered assault that deteriorates due to unanticipated events, or victim reactions altering the course of the crime plan. In the case involving subjects #13 and #14, the motive was believed to be revenge for a drug debt. In a second case involving a juvenile acting in concert with his father, cousin and adult male, a prostitute was targeted, abducted, raped and then murderously assaulted through attempts to cut her neck with a knife and break it through twisting.

## Discussion

Juvenile sexual homicide is an egregious but rare crime, accounting for slightly less than one percent of all juvenile murders over a six-year period in the state studied. This is comparable to the national figure for adult sexual homicides, as about 0.5% of all United States murders in 1994 were sex-related (15).

The youths in this study can be compared and contrasted in a number of ways with other juvenile murderers, although limitations exist to doing so due to the small sample size. As with most children who kill, the youths in this study were male. The commission of sex murderers by females is considered extremely rare (20), and, not unexpectedly, no female juvenile sexual homicide offenders were identified in the study at hand. The national race distribution for juvenile murderers is about one-half white and one-half black (21), identical to the race distribution found in this study. In examining the murder rates of strangers versus acquaintances, there were no differences noted in this study group and juvenile murderers as a whole, with the proportion of strangers as victims being 33% and 34% respectively (21). Other commonalities these study subjects have with homicidal youth include high rates of psychopathology, chaotic family backgrounds, school problems, and previous violent acts (22–24).

Juvenile sexual murderers appear to be motivated by different forces than are the great majority of youths who kill, as the latter usually kill others during a nonsexual crime or interpersonal conflict (21). Unlike youthful murderers who typically use guns in their murders, the youths in the present study most often used knives and bludgeons in their attacks. The use of a more personal weapon such as a knife, rather than an impersonal weapon like a firearm, is believed to lead to increased psychosexual gratification for the sexual murderer (7).

Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, Hartman, & D'Agnostino (9) have proposed a motivational model for adult serial killers that elaborates on the role of fantasy along with related cognitive processes, internal dialogue, imagery, emotional arousal, and bodily tension in these types of crimes. There is evidence that a violent fantasy life can develop early in the life of the eventual sex murderer. A study examining adults convicted of sexual homicide (6) found that the average age of onset for rape fantasies began in the preadolescent years for those who had been sexually abused, and in the middle teen years for those who had not been sexually abused (mean age of 11.6 years for the former versus 15.3 years for the latter).

Violent sexual fantasies may also play a significant role in the crimes of juvenile sexual murderers. One-half of the youth in the current study were aware of or were able to admit the role of violent fantasies in moving them toward their murderous acts, similar to an adult sample of sexual murderers (6) in which approximately one-half admitted to a preoccupation with sexually violent fantasies. Since many individuals are reluctant to reveal their sexual fantasies, particularly if they consider their thoughts to be aberrant, the present finding of violent sexual fantasies in one-half of the sample may be falsely low.

The victim profile of this sample indicates that the victims were often older, of the same race, acquainted with and living in the same city as their attackers. Victim attractiveness, as reported by the offenders, ranged widely between the three categories of above average, average, and below average in attractiveness. None of the victims appear to have expected the assault, and most were at a low risk for violent crime. Minimal useful information was obtained by asking offenders if the victims could have prevented the crime in any way, as the offenders either felt that there was nothing the victims could have done, or they projected the blame for the crime onto the victims. Such answers provide a greater understanding of the offenders' mental states and their perceptions of the crimes, but offer little assistance to potential victims.

A profile of these juveniles based on fourteen characteristics identified in 75% or more of the sample is provided in Table 3.

TABLE 3—*Profile characteristics.*

At-risk Factor	N	%
1. Serious school problems	14	100
2. History of truancy	12	92
3. Previous violent acts	13	93
4. Chaotic family environment	13	92
5. Child abuse by a family member	12	92
6. Family violence	12	86
7. Paternal abandonment/neglect	12	86
8. Conduct disorder diagnosis	12	86
9. History of fighting	12	86
10. Prior arrests	12	86
11. Weapon of choice	10	83
12. School suspensions	10	77
13. Prior sexual intercourse	10	77
14. Knife taken to crime scene	9	75

In addition to being of average intelligence, the juveniles prior to their current crimes had demonstrated a history of aggressive behavior, an inability to respond to authority, impaired attachments to others, impulsivity, and substantial sexual activity for their age.

Some tentative management and treatment implications may be gleaned from this study by comparing these findings in juveniles to the research on adult serial killers. Prentky et al. (25), in examining crime scene organization, found that serial sexual killers were significantly more likely to have organized their crimes than single sexual murderers (68% vs 24%). Similarly, most of the juvenile crimes in the present study began in an organized fashion, although many degenerated into disorganized crimes, probably because of these youths' developmental immaturity and inexperience in sexually assaulting and murdering others. The high degree of crime organization by many of the juvenile subjects in the current study raises the issue of recidivism as a very serious concern. Moreover, these fourteen boys received prison sentences ranging from four to 50 years, with an average sentence of just under 20 years. Only two received multiple life sentences. Thus, nearly all of them will be released from prison by middle adulthood.

Some experts believe that the only effective treatment for sexual murderers is preventive detention (20); however, the juvenile judicial system does not prescribe to this tenet for juvenile offenders. Because most of these youth will reenter society at a relatively young age, providing treatment while they are incarcerated is crucial. Such treatment should combine strategies devised for both the violent offender and the sex offender. A program to provide close monitoring of these offenders after release to the community would serve as an external control against further, violent sex crimes. The benefits of treatment, despite the costs, seem to clearly outweigh the risks of no treatment. Such an intensive approach is clearly warranted in light of the high rate of recidivism in adult offenders who have committed crimes similar to the crimes of these youths (6,20).

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