



D48 Child Abduction Murders: A Description of the Victims, Offenders, and Factors Affecting Investigations

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Attendees will learn the results of a study that will provide police investigators with descriptive information which will lead to the capture of child abduction killers and enhance the solution of child abduction murder cases. This presentation will impact the forensic community by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the investigation processes of child murders. Very little information exists in social science literature about the victims, offenders, victim-offender relationships and other factors affecting murder investigations of abducted children.

Child abduction murders are incredibly difficult to solve and deeply impact society and law enforcement officials involved in the investigation. A considerable amount of scholarly material on murder exists; far less is available on the murder of abducted children. This study provides an overview of descriptive information about the victims, offenders and other factors affecting the investigations of child abduction murders. The characteristics of the victims as well as the characteristics, motives and actions of offenders were examined. A description of the victim-offender relationship, the offender's motivation, and victim selection process is also included. Variables relating to the victim's cause of death and offender's post-offense behavior will be presented. Finally, a descriptive analysis of the variables affecting case investigations, physical evidence, and a comparison of single-victim and series cases in this sample are also included. Because the murder of an abducted child impacts society in such an overwhelming manner, the absence of literature in this area is disturbing.

The child abduction murder dataset (CAM) included 833 child abduction murders. Only cases in which the victim was 17-years-old or younger were used for this analysis ($N = 735$). Offenders in this sample ($n = 589$) were not identified in all child abduction murder investigations included in the CAM dataset.

The typical child abduction murder victim in this sample was a white (74.5%) female (74.0%), approximately 11-years-old ($M = 11.52$). Victims in this sample were predominantly from a middle-class (35.2%) or "blue-collar" (35.8%) family, living in an urban (29.3%) or suburban (35.2%) neighborhood, in a single-family residence (71.1%). The victim's relationship with their family was good (49.8%) and the family situation was not generally considered high risk (83.5%).

The typical offender from this sample of child abduction murder cases was a white male, approximately 27-years-old. The data indicated some interesting and meaningful characteristics of child abduction murderers which may enable law enforcement professionals to quickly identify and guard against potential offenders.

It is critical to understand the victim-offender relationship in order to properly protect children. The data indicated interesting differences in the victim-offender relationship by age and gender. The data also indicated that children are at a higher risk of victimization from those that they know than strangers.

In addition to information on victims and offenders and their relationship, variables relating to the actual investigation process were explored which may prove valuable to detectives. A descriptive analysis of the variables affecting abducted child murder investigations including those related to witnesses, canvasses, and searches, investigative steps in the first 48 hours and physical evidence is provided.

Child Abduction Murder, Victim-Offender Relationships, Factors Affecting Investigation