Body Disposal And Offender Characteristics

John H. White, Ph.D.
Forensic Psychologist
Stockton University
ACFP – March 26, 2015

The Homicide

- Each homicide is like life itself
- It has a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Each crime scene tells a story

Personally Involved in Following Crime Scenes

- Hotel clerk killed a pimp – left him where he fell – argument about payment
- A person shot a male who was lying in bed in a motel – unknown motive
- A female lying on the floor of her apartment – killed by a serial killer – staged

Personally Involved in Following Crime Scenes

- A 5 year-old female chewed to death – left on killer’s property under a bed
- A female bludgeoned to death, chains and cinderblocks weighted her down – placed in lake
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally Involved in Following Crime Scenes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female stabbed over fifteen times in her bed – posed by ex boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 year-old female mutilated and left in a field – serial killer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman stabbed 4 times, run over by car driven by ex husband</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally Involved in Following Crime Scenes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prostitute stabbed in ally, left at scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female strangled in hotel room – serial killer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–11 clerk shot execution style during a robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 year-old female abducted from a bus stop. Raped, strangled, placed in a lake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposal Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The location where the killer leaves the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May or may not be the death scene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Disposal After Homicide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police must determine specifics of the crime scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not, it may be left to Forensic Psychologists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disposal Site Has Meaning
- May be part of the modus operandi (MO)
- May be part of a ritual
- May be part of the signature
- Must look for “one neat and controlled aspect”

Modus Operandi
- M.O. -- Comprised of those actions necessary to commit the crime
- Has three basic purposes:
  1. Insure success
  2. Protect Identity
  3. Facilitate/Expedite escape

Modus Operandi
- M.O. is learned behavior
- In a constant state of change because:
  - Experience
  - Maturity
  - Education
  - Reshaped to meet the demands of the crime

Ritual
- Actions unnecessary to the commission of the crime
- Shaped to meet the demands of the offender’s fantasy
- Purpose – psychological gratification
- Ideals remain constant, although devices may change
Signature

- A unique combination of behaviors never seen before
- Example: Bite marks on chin and breasts
- Example: Tear bra off with blouse on
- Example: Place drugs in Vict’s anal and vaginal areas

One Neat and Controlled Aspect

- Crime scene is chaotic except for one aspect
- Chase – bathtub
- Elveson – ear rings
- Hendricks – silverware drawer
- Indicates mental illness and regression

Comfort Zone

- The geographical area with which an offender is familiar and relaxed.
- Close to where the perpetrator lives, works or where he/she regularly frequents.

Body Disposal After Homicide

- Leave the body at the scene untouched
- Leave the body at the scene
  - Burn the crime scene
  - Stage crime scene
  - Display and pose victim
  - Conceal the body
Body Disposal After Homicide

- Transport victim’s body
  - Burn the victim’s body
  - Conceal the victim
  - Bury the victim
  - Throw in water
  - Display and pose the victim
  - Dump the victim

Disposal Scene

- Usually initial crime scene investigated
- Could be a secondary or tertiary crime scene
- Manner and circumstances may lead to logical conclusions
- Reflects criminal experience
- May indicate a relationship between victim and offender

Concealed

- A method of disposing the body after death in which the killer made a concerted effort to make sure the body would not be found or at least delay the discovery.
- Most commonly used by the organized offender.

Displayed (Posed)

- Usually used by the organized killer
- The killer places the body in a location where it is sure to be found.
- May position the body to:
  - Degrade the victim (Bobby Joe Long, George Russell, Jr.)
  - Protect the dignity of the victim (re-dress the victim)
  - Shock those who find the victim (Danny Rolling)
Dumped

- Killer makes little or no effort to conceal the body.
- Haste is usually the primary objective.
- Most commonly used by the disorganized offender

Equivocal Deaths

- A careful analysis of the crime scene may help answer questions in an equivocal death.
- This is a death scene where the manner of death (natural, accidental, homicide, or suicide) is not readily apparent.

Feminine Touch

- Look for a feminine touch if a female allegedly commits suicide.

Linkage Analysis

- If the crime scene sounds or looks familiar, check for linkage analysis.
- Richard Fortin Case
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Behaviors</th>
<th>Overkill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Body and crime scene may indicate the perpetrator’s core behaviors.</td>
<td>&gt; Look for overkill patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Core behaviors</td>
<td>&gt; Indicates anger and rage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Physical injuries to victim</td>
<td>&gt; If not serial, subject most likely knew her killer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Sexual assault</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Writing or communication (on body or wall)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Like William Heirens – Lipstick Killer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proprietary Interest</th>
<th>Transported – Not Concealed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Material interest in a physical item because of its ownership by the perpetrator who does not want it damaged</td>
<td>&gt; Circumstances may not allow offender to hide the body, so “dumped”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Bodies found in trunks of cars or burned cars</td>
<td>&gt; Killer may want to make a statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Damage to property in house – Jeffrey MacDonald case</td>
<td>&gt; Killer placed body on his brother-in-law’s front porch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Hillside Stranglers left body on hillsides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transported – Not Concealed

- Wayne Williams left some of his bodies on the side of the road
- Johnny Register left victim Crystal Todd in a ravine
- Atlantic City Serial Killer left four bodies in a ravine

Transported and Concealed

- Gary Ridgway (Green River Killer)
  - Had “clusters”
  - So he could remember where they were
  - Go back to the body for sexual purposes

Went Back to Bodies

- Ridgway (sexual reasons) – water and woods
- Arthur Shawcross (sex and cannibalize) – water and woods
- Gerard J. Schaefer (sexual reasons) – woods
- Ted Bundy (sexual reasons) – woods

Concealed Bodies on Property

- Herb Baumeister
- John Wayne Gacy
- Juan Corona
- Robert Yates (one body next to bedroom window)
- Dorothea Puente
- Anthony Sowell
- Kendall Francois
Serial Killers

- 89% in US lived in close proximity to the body disposal sites (DILTS)

Perpetrator Staging

- Deliberately alters the crime scene the way the perpetrator thinks it would have occurred in order to mislead police (only 3%)
- Miss aspects that make the scene believable
- Injuries on body do not match the way it should have happened

Staged Crime Scenes

- Two reasons:
  - 1. Direct the investigation away from the actual perpetrator (i.e. husband kills wife, makes it look like intruder)
  - 2. Protect the victim or victim's family from embarrassment or notoriety – maintain privacy (i.e. autoerotic fatalities, rape murder)

Perpetrator Staging

- Ferguson found out of 115 cases of staging:
  - 48.7% were a spouse or ex significant other
  - 51.3% were females
  - Largest age group of victims were 18 to 29 years of age
Perpetrator Staging

- Ferguson – 115 cases
- Most common stages were:
  - Burglaries
  - Suicides
  - Accidents
  - Car accidents

Autoerotic fatalities

- Autoerotic fatalities: A device is used to cut off oxygen for sexual pleasure
- Person may remove device, reposition the body, remove costume or dress
- May attempt to stage as a homicide

Verbal Staging

- Offender makes self-initiated contact with police to report a homicide victim as a missing person
- Scott Petersen reported his pregnant wife missing

Non Perpetrator Staging

- Rape-murder – Person may reposition the body, redress the body so not to humiliate
Staged Suicides

Almost all staged suicides are by a domestic partner

Posing

Manipulation of the victim's body after death
- 4 reasons
  1. To shock people who find the body
  2. To humiliate and degrade the victim
  3. For perverted pleasure of the perpetrator
  4. To psychologically "undo" the crime

Almost always a part of the signature
Demonstrates power even after death

Beauregard & Field (2008)

Sexual murderers
Organized offenders more likely to move the body
Disorganized offenders tend to leave the body at the death scene
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of Dress</th>
<th>State of dress – Anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual aspects</td>
<td>Articles of clothing stuffed in the victim’s mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nude</td>
<td>Feces or urine in mouth or on body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breasts, buttocks, or genitalia exposed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of Dress – Undoing</th>
<th>Keeping Body or Body Parts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One killer washed the victim’s body,</td>
<td>John Gacy – Buried 23 bodies in his crawl space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bandaged her wounds, dressed her in a</td>
<td>Jeffrey Dahmer – Kept bodies in his apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clean nightgown, placed her in bed</td>
<td>Dennis Neilsen – Kept bodies in his apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anthony Sowell – Kept bodies in house and backyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dorothea Puente – bodies in garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A killer brushed his victim’s hair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beauregard & Field (2008)

› If had conflict with victim within 48 hours of the murder, usually left the body at the death scene

› Sexual murderers of children more likely to move the body than sexual murderers of adults

Results of Study in Progress

› Stay tuned

References


