



D37 The Rarity of Unusual Dispositions of Victim Bodies: Staging and Posing

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the various positions in which killers leave victim bodies and the reasons why they leave them that way.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by identifying the rarity of the unusual dispositions of victim bodies by killers and assisting forensic scientists recognizing an unusual body disposition when they come across it. This is especially important in staging cases, because when staging is not recognized, it will lead the investigation in the wrong manner.

The act of leaving a victim's body in an unusual position is a conscious criminal action by an offender to thwart an investigation, shock the finder and investigators of the crime scene, or give perverted pleasure to the killer. The unusual position concepts of posing and staging a murder victim has been documented thoroughly and have been accepted by the courts as a definable phenomenon. One staging case and one posing case are outlined to reveal characteristics of those homicides. From the Washington State Attorney General's Homicide Investigation and Tracking System's database on murder covering the years 1981-2000 (a total of 5,224 cases), the relative frequency of unusual body dispositions is revealed as a very rare occurrence. Only 1.3% of victims are left in an unusual position, with .3% being posed and .1% being staged. The characteristics of these types of murders also set them apart. Compared to all other murders, in staged murders the victims and killers are, on average, older. All victims and offenders in the staged murders are white, with victims being disproportionately white in murders with any kind of unusual body disposition. Likewise, females stand out as victims when the body is posed, staged, or left in other unusual positions. Whereas posed bodies are more likely to include sexual assault. Often in serial murders, there is no evidence of either in the staged cases. Last, when a body is left in an unusual position, binding is more likely, as well as the use of more "hands on" means of killing the victim, such as stabbing or cutting weapons, bludgeons, ligatures, or hands and feet.

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