



D44 Child Abduction Murder: Time to Death by Victim Age-Group Category and Distance Between the Body Recovery Site and the Homes of the Victim and Offender

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain an understanding of how quickly abducted children are murdered by age category and the proximity of an offender's home to the body recovery site and other murder-incident components (victim last seen site, initial contact site, and murder site).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by adding information to an area with little prior research. Specifically, this presentation will identify locations where distance intervals may be more likely to produce relevant forensic evidence linking the offender to the victim, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the investigations. This presentation will also give investigators a better idea of how long differing age categories of children are kept alive after they are abducted.

There are few empirical studies on child abduction murder.¹⁻⁴ Little research has addressed the influence of time and distance on case solvability in murder investigations of abducted children.^{1,2} Only one study has addressed the impact of forensic evidence on child abduction murder investigation solvability.⁵

The relationship of time and distance between child abduction victims and offenders was explored by examining child abduction murders occurring from 1968 to 2002 ($N=735$). Information from each case relating to time spans and intervals of distance between the offender's home and the victim's homes and other murder incident components were analyzed. In addition, the time between when the child was abducted and when they were killed was examined by victim age-group category.

Preliminary results indicate that as the victim's age increases, the time span between when the victim is abducted and when the murder occurs does not always increase. Abducted children who were murdered were killed within three hours (76.2%; 1-4). Young children between the ages of 0 to 5 years old were killed within three hours at a higher percentage than the other age groups (81.8%, $p > .05$). Young children (0 to 5 years old) were killed more quickly than middle childhood victims (6 to 11 years old), young teenagers (12 to 14 years old), and older teenagers (15 to 17 years old).

Previous solvability research has shown that the more investigators know about the distances between the murder incident components (victim last seen site, initial contact site, murder site, and body recovery site), the more case solvability increased.¹⁻⁴ However, these studies did not examine the distance between the victim's home, offender's home, and the body recovery site. Approximately 37.3% of the victims' bodies were recovered within one-and-one-half miles from the victim's home and 38.7% of the bodies were recovered within one-and-one-half miles from the offender's home. In addition, the study explored the distance between the victim's home and offender's home and other murder incident components. The findings provide valuable information to investigators in the absence of other leads or evidence.

Most child abduction murder victims are victims of opportunity; therefore, knowledge about the distance probability between the offender's home and the body recovery site, as well as the distance from the body recovery site and victim's home, may provide valuable investigative direction if no other leads are available. Findings suggest that area searches of at least one-and-one-half miles should be conducted during an abduction investigation. Results also indicated that further research should be conducted to explore how forensic evidence recovered from these additional murder incident locations (offender's home and victim's home) may impact solvability. This examination adds to the literature on how time and distance operate within murder investigations. Because time and distance are critical solvability factors in child abduction murder investigations, this study is a valuable investigative tool for homicide detectives.

References:

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