



Psychiatry & Behavioral Science Section - 2015

I37 Parricides and Crime Scene Behaviors — Do They Tell the Story?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be more knowledgeable about psychological motivations for parricide cases and how crime scene analysis can aid in understanding the crime and the possibilities of preventing it.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by expanding knowledge regarding the victims and offenders of parricide cases by looking at the crime scene behaviors for insight into family dynamics and motives for the crime.

Parricides, while being a rare event, are one of the most sensational crimes that attract the attention of the media, clinicians, and researchers worldwide. Much research has been done on the topic of parricide despite the incidence being only about 1.5% to 2.4% of all homicides yearly. Often research focuses on the offender's and the victim's characteristics in order to evaluate the crime and motive; however, there is very limited research into the crime scene behaviors. Basic knowledge of parricide in multiple studies shows that offenders are typically adult White males with mental health issues who often target their mothers. Differences between adults and adolescents who commit parricide show that adults have a higher incidence of schizophrenia or a psychotic process being present at the time of the crime.^{1,2} Some studies have pointed to abuse as the motivation in adolescents who commit parricide. Dr. Kathleen Heide has shown in multiple studies the differences between adult and adolescent offenders, such as most single victim-single offender cases of parricide involve adult males of White, non-Hispanic ethnicity. Studies have shown that the age of the offender is significant as to which parent is targeted as the victim (i.e., offenders less than 30 years old target the father, stepfather, and stepmother, while offenders who are older target their mothers as the victim).³⁻⁵

While research has focused on demographics, motive, social, legal, and psychological factors such as mental health and abuse history, minimal research of crime scene behaviors in parricide cases have been explored. Other types of homicides are often profiled based on crime scene analysis, so why not open this door when looking at parricides as well? Previous analysis of crime scene research in parricides is limited to looking at the weapons the offender used and signs of overkill. Crime scene analysis and profiles have been invaluable tools for investigators and police to help understand the offender of violent crimes, but this concept has not been used to look at parricide cases in order to better understand the events and circumstances that lead to an individual taking their parent's life. To examine the components of crime scene behaviors and its implications within parricide, data from adolescent parricides will be presented. Due to the high incidence of psychosis in adult cases of parricide, this data was excluded from this study. This study will present preliminary data about adolescent parricide offenders and crime scene behaviors such as condition of body when found (covered, face covered, and moved or hidden); type of attack (blitz, surprise, or con/deceived); presence of defensive wounds; signs of overkill; weapon used; confession type/plans to avoid detection; and location of the attack. The hope is that by examining these unique crime scene behaviors, better insight into parricide can be acquired.

References:

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3. Heide, K. M. (1993). Parents who get killed and the children who kill them. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 8, 531-544.
4. Heide, K. M. (1993). Weapons used by juveniles and adults to kill parents. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 11, 397-405.
5. Heide, K. M. & Petee, T. A. (2007). Parricide: An empirical analysis of 24 years of U.S. data. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, 1382-1399.

Parricide, Crime Scene Behaviors, Body Covering