



### H147 A Staged Crime Scene Determination: Correlation of Forensic Evidence

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of recognizing crime scene changes or alterations, including manipulation of the body, which is in fact “staging.”

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by emphasizing the importance of a careful crime scene examination, especially in cases in which the victim’s body or other elements of the scene have been deliberately manipulated.

Geberth in 2006 stated that, “Staging is a conscious criminal action on the part of an offender to thwart an investigation”.<sup>1</sup> Chancellor in 2014 classified staged crimes in three types: (1) Primary — a deliberate manipulation of the physical tests or other aspects of the crime scene with the criminal intent of misleading or to diverting a police investigation by adding, removing, or changing the position of evidence; (2) Secondary — the basic intent is to change the placement of the victim in a way to shock or offend society, humiliate or degrade the victim, or enhance any ritual or symbolic meaning that the assailant wants to convey; (3) Tertiary — incidental or innocent changes not performed by the attacker but usually by relatives who alter the crime scene to preserve the dignity of a spouse or to reduce embarrassment and humiliation of the family.<sup>2</sup> Two staged crime scene cases are reported.

**Case 1:** A young man killed a woman by gunshot for economic reasons in the German countryside, but was not apprehended because the case was declared a suicide. After three years, an “unusual death” of a young woman occurred in southern Italy. The victim was the daughter of the woman killed in Germany three years before. At first, it seemed to be a suicidal event, but the evidence retrieved at the scene, the background of the victim, and meticulous investigation processes eventually connected the two cases. The man was also the culprit of the second murder and he staged the suicide scene of the young daughter. Farewell letters, concealment of clothes, tampering of phone records, and false statements were important evidentiary factors.

**Case 2:** The culprit was a 33-year-old man with a histrionic personality who liked to woo many women using multiple Facebook® profiles. This case involves a 50-year-old female victim with a submissive personality who had been living with the offender for approximately three years. When the woman decided to end the relationship, she communicated it to friends via Facebook®. The woman was not aware that one of the profiles was a fake created by the man as a means to spy on her. One evening, he went to her apartment but found no one at home. Nevertheless, because he had possession of the apartment keys, he entered and waited for the woman to return. When she came home, the man attacked her verbally, then hit her with little statues found in the house. Subsequently, he strangled her and drowned her in the bathtub. Using her Personal Computer (PC), he attempted to alter the “crime scene” by using the woman’s Facebook® profile, sending the message, “Just back home ... I met three guys! They’ll come here tonight!” to a friend of hers. After sending this message, he left three condoms on the victim’s bed. The man was finally identified as the killer. These cases demonstrate that the investigation of a crime must necessarily



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involve various experts representing several disciplines of the forensic sciences. The results of the autopsy must be correlated with all evidence associated with crime scene, the personal history of the victim, and the ancillary laboratory tests.

### Reference(s):

1. Geberth V.J. *Practical Homicide Investigation, IV edition*. CRC Press, Taylor and Frances, Boca Raton, FL, 2006.
  2. Chancellor A. Graham G.D. Staged Crime Scenes: Crime Scene Clues to Suspect Misdirection of the Investigation. *ISJ*. Vol.6, No.1, January 2014.
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### Crime Scene, Forensic Evidence, Staging