



A100 Staged and Altered Homicide Scenes: An Analysis of Secondary Sites

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After attending this presentation, attendees will know how to use a mixed methods approach, including investigative methods, archaeological field methods, and forensic interviews, for locating clandestine burials. Attendees will also learn about homicide patterns involving dumped and buried remains.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by offering research into an intelligence-based approach with best practice recommendations to provide law enforcement and forensic anthropologists tools and an understanding of the techniques and protocols utilized in each field to find buried bodies.

It is not uncommon that bodies and crime scenes are altered following a homicide, yet the number of cases resulting in dumped or buried remains in a secondary location are less frequent. Many long-term missing person cases are determined to be homicides with secondary sites. Locating human remains in a forensic context is a collaborative effort among law enforcement and forensic anthropologists who each have unique protocols for search and recovery. This presentation discusses an intelligence-based approach to developing search and interview strategies.

To investigate patterns of homicide and the factors that assist with locating clandestine graves and case solvability for cold cases, analyses of homicide cases from 1985 to 2010, in Hillsborough County, FL, were reviewed ($n=421$ closed criminal homicides). Only cases involving homicidal crimes were included, excluding cases of justifiable, lawful, or vehicular homicides. By analyzing location data and demographic information concerning the victims and offenders, such as whether they are known to each other or are strangers; we can understand modes of body deposition, the spatial patterning of various types of homicide, and the factors that contribute to case solvability through quantified, statistical analyses.

The frequency of bodies moved/tampered with/altered following the homicide represents 38.7% (119/414) of cases. It is expected that domestic killers will go to greater efforts to hide the murder than will strangers in an effort to conceal and distance their involvement with the crime; however, this did not always prove to be the case. Among cases in which bodies were moved/altered/tampered with, 37% were domestic, 27% were robberies, and 12% were associated with rape. It is further expected that bodies will be dumped close to the murder location, in areas of high concealment, more often with use of containers, and generally show highly predictable patterns. The patterns observed in this study generally support these assertions. The victims' bodies were moved to a secondary location or dumped in 40 cases. Among these, slightly more dump sites occurred in rural homicides (county $n=51\%$) compared to city homicides (city $n=37\%$). The victims typically know their killers (77%) and are most commonly friends (30%), followed by boyfriend/girlfriend (25%), and, less frequently, spouses (8%). In 28% of the cases, the homicide was victim-precipitated or robbery-related, whereas, in 25% of the cases, the homicide was sexually motivated. Note that this is a significantly higher concentration given their smaller proportion of cases overall.

Bodies are dumped on the ground surface rather than buried below the surface in a slight majority of cases (53%). Bodies are most often dumped in public spaces, along the road, or in wooded areas (74%). Some type of container was used in only about 10% of the cases; it may have been a blanket, tarp, barrel, trash bin, or other container. Among dumped cases, just over half (58%) were discovered while the remains were fresh or just beginning to decompose, whereas 42% of the victims were found in advanced stages in decomposition or skeletal. Most victims whose bodies were dumped were not killed in the primary residences of their homes or that of the offenders. Interestingly, only about 20% of victims were murdered in their home, then dumped, whereas victims murdered in the offender's home, then dumped, was slightly higher at 33%.

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