

Crime scene behaviors of crime scene stagers

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In an article entitled, "Crime Scene Staging and its Detection," Hazelwood and Napier (2004) defined crime scene staging as "the purposeful alteration of a crime or crime scene in an attempt to mislead investigators and frustrate the criminal justice process" (p. 745). While it is true that crime scene staging can frustrate the criminal justice process specifically, generally speaking, crime scene staging is quite a complex societal problem. Staged crime scenes can potentially threaten public safety, the effective use of public resources, and the adjudication of homicide cases on the very broadest level. Unfortunately, there is very little published empirical research on crime scene behaviors in staged homicide cases that can be applied by scholar-practitioners and law enforcement professionals in the field. Therefore, the identification and analysis of crime scene behaviors of crime scene stagers is necessary in order to build an empirical foundation towards the eventual development of a model of crime scene stagers' behaviors and a methodology for early detection of staged crime scenes. Because valuable financial and human resources are in short supply for many law enforcement agencies in the United States, research on crime scene staging is necessary to help utilize resources more carefully to avoid wastefulness. Further, expert witnesses who are called to testify on evidence recovered from staged crime scenes have virtually no empirical evidence to substantiate their claims or evidence that can be used to help qualify them as expert witnesses in court. Therefore, the purpose of this empirical, qualitative research study was to verify the existence of crime scene behaviors of crime scene stagers and to determine if a common set of behaviors existed among them.

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