

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Review of: *Juvenile Sexual Homicide*

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**REFERENCE:** Myers WC. *Juvenile sexual homicide*. Academic Press, London, 2002, 185 pp.

Wade Myers presents a comprehensive and fascinating examination about juveniles who commit sexual homicide. *Juvenile Sexual Homicide* is a unique contribution, in that it is the first empirical, systematic study ever conducted on this population. Sexual homicide is understood as a murder that has an identifiable sexual component connected to the act, often demonstrated by either an overt behavior or having symbolic significance. Although the act of sexual homicide is a rare event, Dr. Myers painstakingly identified and studied 16 male juveniles who committed at least one sexual homicide. The text is intended, in part, to identify and understand the psychopathology, personality, and behavioral characteristics within a group of 16 male juveniles. The book is divided into three sections, beginning with a general discussion regarding the scope of the research and presents the methodology used to gather, analyze, and interpret the findings. Section two examines the juvenile's behaviors, taking into account the various criminal aspects identified, and applies the known case data to psychiatric and psychological diagnoses, particularly focusing on the juvenile's personality structure and psychopathic characteristics observed. The text concludes by providing the reader with a typology of these offenders, and devotes a chapter to elderly female victims, an increasing concern for law enforcement.

Myers opens with an informative chapter discussing and defining the components of sexual homicide, and provides several brief examples of sexually homicidal behaviors committed by the juvenile sample. Various factors are identified and discussed which lay the foundation for future chapters devoted to presenting the research findings.

Of particular interest is the interdisciplinary approach to understanding the etiological influences that were relevant to the cases studied. Section one concludes with an in-depth case study of a young adult sadistic murderer. The reader is provided with a com-

prehensive analysis ranging from crime scene characteristics to developmental influences, which is complete with illustrations that underscore the complexity and level of disturbance.

Subsequent chapters are devoted to applying case data to various criminal aspects. For instance, the juvenile's modus operandi were examined and discussed, providing the reader with a better understanding of the wide range of observed offender characteristics. Moreover, Myers takes the case data one step further, and discusses the significance of their emotional and behavioral characteristics using a psychiatric framework (DSM-IV). Numerous charts and graphs are presented, adding clarity to the psychological underpinnings that may have influenced the juveniles' development. It is these numerous idiosyncratic psychosocial variables that bring these cases to life and provide meaning and guidance to those professionals who may be asked to consult on similar criminal cases.

There is the chapter devoted to the typology characteristics of the juveniles studied. For example, the type of crime (i.e., explosive, predatory, revenge, and displaced matricide), attack style, and location of the crime are discussed and applied to the juvenile sample. Case studies provide further examples for each typology, and are complete with hand-drawn pictures and crime scene photographs. The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit presented results from a five-year study on elderly female victims. Case studies provide the reader with an increased understanding of the growing concern for this often vulnerable population. Finally, there is an appendix that provides a list of practical questions addressing such areas as sexuality, child abuse, crime variables, and socioeconomic status.

Overall, this text is a must read for mental health professionals, law enforcement investigators, and criminal justice professionals who may be asked to address these types of homicides. Both novice and seasoned professionals alike will find this research extremely interesting, as well as pragmatic in nature. Dr. Myers has significantly contributed to the existing literature on what is known about juveniles who commit sexual homicide.

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