

Clinical and Psychological Perspectives on Foul Play

Stephen J. Morewitz

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Stephen J. Morewitz
Department of Nursing and Health Sciences
California State University, East Bay
San Francisco, CA, USA

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Preface

Thousands of people die under suspicious circumstance each year. These individuals die on the street and in other settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, jails, prisons, military facilities, and educational institutions. Foul play is involved in fires, drug overdoses, missing person events, cemetery damage, and other incidents every year.

Clinical and Psychological Perspectives on Foul Play is the first title to examine conditions that may influence the ways in which law enforcement and other forensic professionals suspect foul play in cases involving deaths, missing persons, bomb threats, cemetery vandalism, and other situations.

This book will address such questions as: To what extent do socioeconomic status factors influence suspicions about the foul play? To what degree do race, ethnic, gender, age, and other demographic factors trigger the police consideration of possible foul play? To what extent do the characteristics of different social, community, and organizational settings influence the ways in which law enforcement and other forensic professionals suspect foul play? How do technological factors such as DNA and information technology affect the effectiveness of police investigations involving possible foul play?

This book also analyzes the effects of family pressure on the police and forensic specialists. For example, family members of missing persons may become concerned that police are not doing enough to search for their missing family members, and these left-behind family members may organize search parties and media campaigns to help locate their missing loved ones.

In addition, cases involving foul play may lead to changes at the local, state, and national levels such as the development of new laws, policies, and training procedures in institutions and community settings to assist in identifying possible foul play in incidents.

Research findings from the Foul Play Project (FPP), the Missing Persons Project (MPP), Domestic Violence Project (DVP), and Stalking and Violence Project (SVP) are used to help evaluate these issues. Chapter 1 evaluates the extent to which family pressures and other factors influence the probability that autopsies are performed. Chapter 2 analyzes which conditions may affect the likelihood that other law enforcement agencies participate in criminal investigations. Chapter 3 assesses

the uncertainties that police face in investigating child victims. In Chap. 4, the uncertainties surrounding children who are abducted by their parents or go missing during child custody are examined.

Other chapters assess the effects of social, psychological, technological, organizational, cultural, community, family, media, and financial factors on the degree to which the police and forensic scientists suspect foul play. The chapters evaluate crime staging, false police reports, and crime hoaxes, which increase uncertainty in deciding whether crimes have occurred. In addition, the psychosocial effects of crimes and related media coverage are analyzed.

San Francisco, USA

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About the Author

Dr. Stephen J. Morewitz is President of the consulting firm, Stephen J. Morewitz, Ph.D., and Associates, San Francisco and Tarzana, CA, which was founded in 1988. He is Founder and President of the Forensic Social Sciences Association. He is Lecturer in the Department of Justice Studies and Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, San Jose State University, and is Lecturer in the Department of Health Sciences, California State University, East Bay. He has been on the faculty or staffs of Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center, University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Medicine and School of Public Health, and the California School of Podiatric Medicine. He, a triple-certified forensic social scientist, is the award-winning author of 13 books and many other publications. His books include the award-winning *Handbook of Forensic Sociology and Psychology* (co-edited with Dr. Mark L. Goldstein) (New York: Springer, 2014), the award-winning *Death Threats. New Research and Clinical Perspectives* (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 2010), the award-winning *Domestic Violence and Maternal and Child Health* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers/Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 2004), the award-winning *Stalking and Violence. New Patterns of Trauma and Obsession* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers/Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 2003), and *Sexual Harassment and Social Change in American Society* (Bethesda, MD: Austin & Winfield, Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 1996). In 2010, he was named San Jose State University Scholar Presenter for his book, *Death Threats. New Research and Clinical Perspectives* (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 2010).