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No crime is as horrific, as mesmerizingly perplexing, as a child's murder at the hands of a parent. In most cases, the perpetrator is the father. A veteran journalist explores five examples of "family annihilators" in this troubling snapshot of American crime twisted by the dark trajectory of machismo in economically stressful times. Her research includes some fifty in-depth interviews of victims' friends and family, an examination of police files, and detailed profiles of the researchers who track these "killer dads."

She also presents experts' theories on the causes that drive men to commit these heinous acts--ranging from economic pressures, the stress of perceived failure, and distorted egos, to the disturbing statistics on abuse of adopted children by step-fathers and the connection between murder and pregnancy.

Finally, she discusses factors in contemporary society that may foster such crimes, and measures we can and should be taking to prevent them.

Well-researched and often-shocking, *Killer Dads* provides disturbing insights into the dark forces that can turn family dynamics into the worst imaginable nightmare.

Killer Dads: The Twisted Drives that Compel Fathers to Murder Their Own Kids Details

Date : Published June 11th 2013 by Prometheus Books (first published January 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781616147433

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Format : Paperback 275 pages

Genre : Crime, True Crime, Nonfiction



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From Reader Review Killer Dads: The Twisted Drives that Compel Fathers to Murder Their Own Kids for online ebook

Teresa Peacock says

great read! Couldnt put it down

Alicia Stidam says

I won this book from First Reads. I could almost give this 5 stars...that's how good it is written. The author, Mary Papenfuss, is a reporter for the New York Daily News and she covered the Scott Peterson trial. This book details several accounts of true-crime murders committed by fathers and stepfathers, including Peterson. She researched and cited the stories to the fullest extent. I think this book could be used in colleges/universities for Psychology courses; informative and expert non-fiction.

voxcotte says

Doğrusunu söylemek gerekirse bu kitabı sadece ve sadece Scott Peterson davası? hakkında daha fazla detay okumak isteyile bağımsız m. ?çeri?i oldukça dolu ve detaylı? bulduk. Ba?ka türlü olmas?n? beklemiyordum tabii ama oldukça sinir bozucu bir kitap bu. Okuduktan sonra en kötü çocukluk bile, e?er öldürülmeden atlatabildiyseniz, iyi bir çocuklukmu? gibi görünmeye bağımsız.

Linda says

I was familiar with Mary Papenfuss's newspaper coverage of the Scott Peterson trial in California, so I was interested to read the book that triggered her interest in family massacres. I expected "Killer Dads" to be compelling because Papenfuss is a talented writer and a dogged journalist. I was not disappointed. The book is the first page-turner I've read in a long time. I couldn't put it down. I also expected it to be sad, gory and difficult to read in parts, yet it was none of these. Even the tragedy inherent in such a subject is handled with aplomb and in a manner that is neither sensational nor exploitative. Papenfuss is respectful of the victims, even as she unspools their stories gripping detail. She also tells us the story behind the story, examining the evolutionary roots of domestic violence. The opening is particularly riveting, but I won't give any hints.

Megan Murphy says

I received this book from a GoodRead's giveaway.

It's nonfiction but it is in no way dry or a boring read. It was very very interesting and covered a lot of different information and topics. The langur (kind of monkey) chapter I wasn't expecting, but it was relevant and engaging. I had known of some of the cases the book describes but the author really goes into detail

analyzing them.

I learned a lot, but it's not for the fainthearted. These crimes are truly awful.

Netanella says

I was blown away by this book. I'm not quite sure how else to describe it.

Papenfuss is a journalist who was inspired to research and write this book as she was covering the Scott Peterson murder trial of his pregnant wife Laci. I remember reading the details about the case in my local newspaper at the time.

This is a gruesome subject and not one easily stomached. Yet the author does a superb job interweaving her accounts of four separate familial murders by fathers, with interviews, subject matter research, and primary source documents, including journals of both killers and victims. It's a shocking and eye-opening read, given how prevalent these types of murders actually are, the variability of statistical tracking methods, and the lackluster response of American society as a whole.

It's scary when the experts say that children are most vulnerable in their own home, and are statistically more at risk by their own parents, and particularly a father, than anyone else. It's even scarier when I read that the US and Somalia are the only two countries who haven't signed on to the universal rights of children, protecting them from physical harm. In the US it is illegal to slap a total stranger in the grocery store, but within parental rights to slap your child. Now, having read this book, this makes no sense to me.

And what's the scariest yet, when the expert, Gelles, was asked how best to protect children, his response was to hope that the child was born to good parents, and secondly to pray that the birth was in a protective culture.

Damn. I'm going to go hug my kids now.

Mike Pearl says

What do langur monkeys have to do with human fathers who murder their children? They offer interesting evolutionary clues about why parents act the way they do, and when they use violence. It's one of a number of perspectives on the troubling rash of parent-on-child killings in American society examined in the book *Killer Dads: The Twisted Drives that Compel Fathers to Murder Their Own Kids*.

Journalist Mary Papenfuss looks at five key cases of fathers who murdered their children, from Washington state dad Josh Powell, who killed his two young sons and himself in a home he had booby-trapped with gasoline and torched, to the "honor killing" of Jessica Mokdad in Michigan, and New York lawyer William Parente's shocking murder of his entire family in a suburban Baltimore hotel. Each story stands as a gripping, thoroughly researched "true crime" account, but is also paired with theories by several experts about why such crimes occur. The book concludes with ideas about how the continuing problem of family violence can be addressed.

Papenfuss breaks down the notorious murders into "categories" of killings by fathers -- the murder of a stepchild, a family annihilation which the father considers "mercy killings," an "honor" killing of a daughter,

a familicide wreaked in rage, and murder by a psychopath dad-to-be. The psychopath is Modesto fertilizer salesman Scott Peterson. Papenfuss effectively presents the psychopathic personality quoting wiretapped conversations presented in Peterson's murder trial for killing his wife, Laci, who was eight months pregnant at the time with their first child, Conor. Papenfuss, who covered the California trial for the New York Daily News, presents Peterson as a handsome, charismatic predator who set out to find a mistress just months before Laci was to have his son. He concocted a fantasy of a lavish lifestyle for his intended lover, Amber Frey, boasting of a family complex in Kennebunkport, Maine, fishing adventures to Alaska, and business trips to Europe (in one scene he pretends to be watching fireworks from the Eiffel Tower as he talks on the phone to Frey; in fact, he's calling near his home while police search for his wife's body in San Francisco Bay). He was an attentive, romantic, seductive partner with Frey, and used the fact that he "lost" his wife to elicit sympathy from her. A few short months later, he did "lose" his wife.

The book also includes two gripping chapters written by people directly involved in the murders: A man who fatally stabbed his five-year-old stepdaughter, who writes of his rage, and soon-to-be victim Susan Cox Powell, who confides in a series of emails to friends her fears about her increasingly threatening spouse. I highly recommend this book. It's a gripping combination of true crime, criminology and sociology about a problem shattering families in America.

Sara says

Very interesting, but very heavy subject matter. Normally this is not the type the book I would read but I did it for a friend. Her family was profiled in one of the stories and she was of course curious but knew it would be too painful to read. The author is respectful in the cases she reports. She has interesting theories based on research on why and how these tragedies occur and the epidemic of child abuse in the US.

Baran ????? says

Çocuklar?n özellikle d??ar?dan çok sakin, sevecen, aile babas? görünümlü ki?iler taraf?ndan nas?l, neden so?ukkanl? bir ?ekilde suistimal edilip öldürdü?üne dair soluk kesici bir kitap. Türkçesi hem çeviri, hem de edisyon noktas?nda sorunlu ama ona ra?men, içeri?i, kazand?rd??? fark?ndal?k ve sordurttu?u onlarca soru için her ?ekilde okunmaya de?er!

Jamie says

I skipped a lot of her behavior science chapters to read the pulp, best story is the first.

Truereader says

When James cut the throat of his five-year-old stepdaughter during a 2009 family vacation, he wanted "everyone to hurt." He was in the midst of an argument with his wife, his "soul mate," and the little girl was bothering him, and she and her sister were the cause of an ongoing argument between the couple. He

grabbed the girl in a white-hot rage, and before he knew it, she was dead. Now he sits in a state prison, still stunned by his violence.

This gripping account is one of several in Mary Papenfuss' riveting book *Killer Dads: The Twisted Drive that Compel Fathers to Murder Their Own Kids*. Papenfuss examines five major true crime cases (and notes several others) of fathers who have killed their children: a stepchild killing, two different kinds of family annihilations, an honor killing and a murder by a psychopath — the notorious Scott Peterson of Modesto, California, who killed his pregnant wife, Lacy, and now waits on death row. The writer combines with those accounts fascinating histories and theories of academics and other experts who have studied the phenomenon of family violence for years. The most interesting are the evolutionary psychologists who see ancient fundamental drives behind violence between man and spouse, and man and child. It's a convincing perspective that makes sense in several cases.

American life may also be partly to blame for the horrifying statistics. Neil Websdale, a criminology professor at Northern Arizona University, has studied over 200 cases of family annihilations, which is the murder of an entire family followed by suicide of the killer. In almost every case, the murderer is the father. Websdale believes the birth of such familicides was the early American Republic. He believes America demands too much from its men, who must be at once nurturing and tough, understanding and demanding, and are expected to remain calm and supremely financially successful through it all. The demands are even more challenging in a culture that offers little support and help to families in trouble. Websdale focuses on "familicidal hearts," not just "familicidal crimes." He's astounded, Papenfuss writes, that so many men have fantasies about killing their families — which says something "profound" about American culture, Websdale believes.

It's one of several endlessly intriguing theories Papenfuss explores in her hunt for reasons behind the killing of children by their fathers. But true crime fans simply seeking heart-pounding cases and motivation hints won't be disappointed. Papenfuss brings a narrative power to her compelling crimes that combines careful attention to detail, a profound trove of research and insight, and a solid, affecting compassion.

Denise MacDonald says

This book was very well written and interesting. The writer was very respectful to those who were victims and to their families. She did not sensationalize the criminals like many true crime books do. There were some very interesting theories presented in this book and a lot of great recommendations to assist in decreasing instances of family violence. I found some parts were very dry as they went extensively in depth about statistics, which is something I tend to question anyway because they are always so unreliable.
