



Children Who Kill: Profiles of Pre-Teen and Teenage Killers

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Why would two young boys abduct, torture and kill a toddler? What makes a teenage girl plot with her classmates to kill her own father? Traditionally, society is used to regarding children as harmless -- but for some the age of innocence is short-lived, messy and ultimately murderous. *Children Who Kill* is a comprehensive new study of juvenile homicide. Carol Anne Davis sets out to explore this disturbing subject using in-depth case studies of thirteen killers aged between ten and seventeen. Exclusive interviews with experts offer an invaluable insight into the psychology behind these atrocities and a hard-hitting look at the role of society in an area too shocking to ignore

Children Who Kill: Profiles of Pre-Teen and Teenage Killers Details

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Author : Carol Anne Davis

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From Reader Review Children Who Kill: Profiles of Pre-Teen and Teenage Killers for online ebook

Kevin Walsh says

“Children Who Kill,” by Carol Anne Davis, is a relatively long (396 pages) book which looks at the always emotive subject of juvenile homicide. The author sets out to explore this subject using in-depth case studies of children aged between 10 and 17. The book, as it was published in 2003, is relatively out of date and it does show when it comes to certain cases.

This could have been a very good book, it is relatively easy, if repetitive, to read. But then it is hard to write a boring book about such an emotive topic. Although this book is described as individual profiles, they are more like average essays including the obligatory lack of supporting evidence for what she puts forward as facts. Which unfortunately leads to Carol coming across as a bit of a ‘know it all’. It also leads to some wild claims which don’t sit as true to me, including a claim that all people who have attempted suicide has at one stage wanted to kill someone else. If any Psychologists out there can confirm, or deny, this I would be grateful. She also makes the outrageous, and possibly libelous claim that Pathologists lie to spare the feelings of family members.

My main concern with this book, and thus the author, is that she seems to have a very simplistic view of what causes children to kill. Claiming that the only thing that can cause a child to kill is an abusive childhood, she seems to choose to ignore the influence of genetics as well as possible neurobiological influences.

Overall I was glad when it was over and that I don’t have to read it again.

I gave it 2 out of 5

Lili says

An absolutely amazing read. This book has made me want to read more from this author, as she truly points out the flaws in society that turned these children into gruesome murderers.

William Boyle says

Through this book.

I now know who I am.

I now know how I got here.

I now know why I do what I do.

I now have the knowledge, perhaps, to move on.

-

Because.

I know why I get angry.

I know why I get depressed.

Recognising that it is not completely my fault means I can step back easier and review any situation.

-

I don't think I have read such a valuable informative book.

Jay Miraldi says

This book was so interesting, even if it was a little tough to get through at times. The insight into the lives and minds of these "killer kids" is captivating and I really learned a lot from this book.

Jennifer Brooks says

predictable and simplifies the route of sociopathic behaviour.

Ellie says

A great read for those interested in psychology.

The book provides insight into the psyche of children who kill. Unsurprisingly, one of the main factors that drive a child to commit murder is the presence of violence in the child's environment. Violence manifests itself in various ways - sexual, physical, emotional.

However, sometimes even in a seemingly perfect family, parents could be unintentionally hindering the normal development of their child. Carol gives an example of a boy who is born to a family of overachievers keen on shaping their son into a great athlete and an excellent student. Unfortunately, the kid was not of an athletic build and was with low IQ - as hard as he tried, he could never please his parents. Over time, he built up so much rage and frustration that he snapped and did the unthinkable - murdered his parents.

The think that annoyed me about the book was that the author was often generalising or expressing her personal opinion on a matter as if it is a fact.

For that reason, I would say read the book for the stories but take Carol's "analysis" with a pinch of salt.

Nick Davies says

A very well-researched and sympathetic examination of child killers, including a variety of case studies where the reasons behind such crimes are examined, and chapters discussing the author's conclusions on the

issues raised. I was impressed at the apparent even-handedness of the discussions - a lack of sensationalism and a high level of contextualisation a credit to the writer (and an insight into the grounding for her novels), as is the fact the book remains readable despite the difficult subject.

I was left slightly wanting more, however, with regards the difficult questions of what makes a murderer. Various predisposing factors are discussed, various media-favourite moral crusades are dismissed, but no magic crystal ball can be produced. I guess though it's possible to say that mistreated children of abusive parents are at higher risk of themselves abusing/killing others, it's impossible to know *which* of these children will commit serious crimes and which will 'be normal', so to speak.

Amy says

The book was written in a rather awkward way. I feel like this book only breached the surface on certain cases, and I was confused as to why Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were not included in this book- since Kip Kinkel was, and he was a school shooter whose fame due to his shooting pales in comparison to the incident at Columbine. The author also seems to point fingers at the fact that all these children came from troubled backgrounds (violent families, dysfunctional families, etc)- though many do- but at the same time, there are often other reasons that lead people to kill. I felt there was no true depth to this book. It was a decent read to pass the time, but as someone who enjoys true crime, this was a disappointment.

Braxton says

possibly the best book on this subject that you can find.

Julia says

Nonfiction isn't usually my thing, but a family friend, who is a psychologist, thought I would be interested in *Children Who Kill* by Carol Anne Davis due to my interest in the field (of psychology, not children killing). The book was thin enough (around 250 pages), so I decided to sit down with it. I consider myself a slower reader, but I was finished with this one in less than a week. It was simply so engaging and thrilling, I couldn't put it down.

First, this book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with different young murderers, each given their own chapters, and assesses what they did and the contributing factors as to why they did it. The second section of this book focuses more on mythbusting, such as pointing out and then deconstructing, which things society often blames for making children killers, but are ultimately less responsible for their creation (such as rock music).

In the first portion, I appreciate how Davis did not limit herself. The killers she profiled were both British and American, male and female, with varying ages (some being quite young children and others being in their mid-teens) and modi operandi, such as arson, poisoning, and shooting, some with and some without a sexual element. So the scope of killer she included is broad, which is helpful from a psychological standpoint--it helps to prove that not all killers behave alike, think alike, or are motivated for the same purposes. Some have criticized Davis as making excuses for the killers in this book, but I disagree. I found

her tone honest and neutral, without downplaying either what they did or the wrongs done onto them that helped spur them on to become killers (bad parents are no less responsible for their cruelty than the violent product of their parenting is for being a killer).

In the second section of this book, Davis even makes a point of explaining how the cycle of violence tends to culminate in murder. She provides examples of how the subjects' parents were mistreated when they were children., and then went on to repeat the bad things they learned. This effectively shows that child murderers do not spring from nowhere--it's not a case of simple bad luck--but that the home environment and parenting style have a much stronger effect on a child than, say, too much television.

From the perspective of a layperson not well-trained in psychology, I highly enjoyed this read. The entertainment value is there. It was not written in a sensationalist way, and was not sympathetic, either. It was an honest reporting of facts, neither demonizing nor dismissing the perpetrators for what they've done. I was not familiar with any of the killers mentioned beforehand, but I think that unawareness mixed with her neutral writing worked in my favor, since I did not already have, say, a blinding hatred for anyone written about, and could focus solely on her reporting. I found this book entertaining and informative, and would be interested in her other works (especially her new work on sadistic killers). Please keep in mind that Davis has no formal psychological or forensic training--she is ultimately not that much more informed than anyone else in the public is about these kinds of topics. But she arranges the information in a way that is palatable and easy to read, so anyone interested in brushing up on notable figures of this sort has a bevy of basic information to keep them entertained--and that is, ultimately, what books are for.

I think I loved this book so much because of my preexisting interest in the topic. Those who don't share that interest probably won't be converts from this book. Nonfiction has a way of seeming dry and boring, and I don't have much faith that this book could kindle that in someone who is neutral at best in the subject.

Eva Leger says

I'm going to refer people to Bettina's review. I hope she doesn't mind (if you do please let me know and I'll remove this.) My reason for this is she basically says what I don't have the time for right now.

The oversimplification is so over the top it's nuts. I'm not sure what happened to Davis to make her believe everything is so easy, most especially when dealing with a subject like this, but apparently something has. She's far too opinionated on a subject that should have been covered with facts alone. IMO anyway.

A few cases in point since I do have a minute.

Page 73 - "Name tattoos are often a sign of insecurity, for people in secure relationships don't feel the need to make such obvious public statements about their love." Um, guffaw.

So.... apparently it's come to light I'm probably not "secure" in my relationship with my daughter. According to this idiot. Or, am I over-analyzing? Is this only with "other" relationships? Familial relationships don't count? Get the hell out of here.

How about this? Uh, some people like tattoos. Ever think of that Davis? Or too set in your idiotic ways.

Also apparently Jon Venables was completely stressed because his Mother had an unhappy marriage, a divorce, and a council house. Newsflash!!!!!! Lots of us deal with that same shit and don't kidnap little babies and brutally murder them. He doesn't get a pass for the reasons above, he doesn't get a pass for his age, he gets a pass for NOTHING from me. His pass was taken when he made his decision.

The Wendy Gardner and James Evans chapter is especially interesting. Those two were just totally stressed and out of their minds. I mean, my God, they couldn't date at 11, couldn't stay out all night at 12, who wouldn't do that they did. Duh. It was only natural.

Kip Kinkel - we all know him right? He made sure of that. The poor thing had "just mastered English" when he was "thrown into school in Spain." His not being able to "master English" made life so, so hard. (Yes, I do know what I typed. I typed what was in the book. Your question is my question.) So, what we have folks is a built in excuse. And I'm going to go out of my way, right now, to help each and every one of you parents out there.

Don't want your kid to grow up (or start to grow up) and become a murderer? No problemo.

1. Don't live too far in the city.
2. Don't live too far from the city.
3. Don't allow kids to watch t.v.
4. Only allow kids to listen to YOUR music. (After all, you do know best.)
5. Allow them, girls or boys, to date whenever they want. (9? Okay!)
6. Don't have pets.
7. Do have pets.
8. Don't let them go to school.
9. Make sure they get an education.
10. Listen - and do - everything they say.

And there you have it. Then, if they do become a cold blooded murderer, you can say you tried your best. Me? I'm sticking to my way. I'll come back in 20-some-odd years and let y'all know how it worked out. As for this book? The two stars come from the facts. The actual facts of the crimes and the families seem to be legit. The rest sucks. I mean, listen, if you want to pay for people's opinions I have a bunch for you. And I don't even charge all that much. Hit me up if interested. Personally, you couldn't pay me to pick up another book by this one. I'm so tired of the blanket excuses for criminals it's not even funny. How about accountability? How about making decisions and dealing with the consequences? That's gone in this country. GONE.

Bettina says

Of course this book is engaging and the subject matter is difficult to present in a "boring" manner. It also isn't overly sensationalist, which is positive and rare in this area. The author successfully manages to empathise with the situation without demonising or condoning the crimes.

However, although this book is clearly above tabloid level, the author falls into many common traps.

- 1.) Oversimplification - "look what the world did to those poor children, is it any wonder they turned out like that?" The sentiment is understandable, but offending behaviour is influenced by a number of other factors, which she disregards.
- 2.) Overgeneralisation - "what we tend to find in the pyromaniac...", "like all serial killers, he tortured animals", "children who are abused eventually take revenge". Enough said. She does not back these claims up with either evidence or clinical experience (having none herself). Most of the typologies she uses -where she does use them- are also outdated, especially in the area of arson.
- 2.) Pop psychology - making claims without supporting them by any evidence, simply because they were once fashionable. For example, the triad of enuresis, cruelty to animals and fire-setting has only very limited support by research, and competing models are replacing it. A lot of the theories she uses seem to come out of FBI agents' autobiographies and general FBI models used, rather than from research. These FBI models are contentious in this country and are not well-supported by research, which she should know as a British

writer.

3.) Arbitrary inference - "children who daydream were often abused and cope with this through daydreaming". Again, looking at actual, proper research would have been helpful here, and understanding the principle of having a control group or at least checking base rates in the population would be helpful. How many people daydream who were NOT abused? Has she considered ADHD? etc.

4.) Omission of relevant facts - she tends to leave out certain details which would be helpful to know about both the offences and also about what research has told us, favouring certain models over competing explanations that are better supported by research. She would claim, for example, that the fact that a boy's mother criticised men and his father left made him kill for money. NOTHING in her chapter gives us any reason for this inference or tells us how she arrived at this conclusion. Is there a link? Did the boy even exhibit signs of anger? Did he hold attitudes against men? Her disregard for base rate also lets her ignore the issue of how many boys have mothers who criticise men in the first place, who don't kill for money, and why they do not do so. You can't just look at one side of the coin.

5.) No references used!!!

Hence my two stars for this book. I think it might be okay as a starting point if you are not very familiar with the topic, but don't take what she says at face value. If you know a bit about the field, I don't think this is essential reading, although the summaries of the cases are quite nice.

Snem says

When people ask you what you're reading and you answer "Children Who Kill" it's super fun to watch their reactions. The profile of child killers were well-done, in depth and I appreciated the author providing background and context. I thought the typology information towards the end was extremely informative.

Seems like the author entirely blames bad parenting for children who kill. While it's certainly a contributing factor, to say it's entirely nurture (vs. nature) seems overly simplistic. What about all the children who kill who had healthy childhoods and kind parents? What about all the kids who had incredibly brutal childhoods who don't kill? None of that is addressed. The author needs a better editor, the typos were distracting.

I recommend this if you're dark and creepy like me.

Lindy says

I absolutely LOVED this book. I could not put it down! I finished it faster than most books I try to read. A very clear, concise, interesting true-crime book, laid out in a fantastic way. I love how each story is laid out so you get a good history on each person, as well as a brief psychology on them. Really helped me understand their lives a bit better, as to why they committed crimes. SO CREEPY, too!

Simon Bruce says

I feel like the author has picked a hand full of Wikipedia pages, after typing "Children who kill" into a search

engine, then proceeded to print them, bind them, and with a smattering of average banal thoughts, from her highly unqualified head, proceeded to get it published! Complete shit!
