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I5 These Women Who Kill Their Children

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Mothers who are charged with the murder of a child between the ages of 1 through 16 are expected to come from a slightly different population than the mothers of neonaticide. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the basic knowledge about these filicides and determine the characteristics of these mothers.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by individualizing some characteristics concerning the mothers who are charged with the murder of a child aged 1 through 16 years. A variety of psychosocial stresses appear to be a major factor. Prevention begins with the identification of potential perpetrators.

The killing of a neonate on the day of its birth is known as neonaticide. The murder of a child aged 1 through 16, after its entry in the family is different. It is expected that mothers charged with filicide come from a slightly different population than other child-killing mothers.

Method: The study was conducted at the Institute of Forensic Medicine of Angers over a ten-year period. All the victims were autopsied at the institute. Information was collected from forensic medical files, police reports, and judicial files. It was possible to review the interrogations and the forensic psychiatric examinations.

Result: The study involved 17 observations. The mean age was 3.5 years for the victims and 29.5 years for the women. Most women were married or did not live alone. They often had an occupation. Generally the economic status was average. Head trauma, strangulation, suffocation, and drowning were the most frequent means of filicide. However, some mothers used more aggressive methods such as striking, and shooting. Disturbed or disturbing behavior was documented for 15 perpetrators. Six women tried commit suicide. It was often possible to identify the apparent motivation for the offense.

Discussion: In this study, two types of mothers-killers can be identified. Five women killed their children in a general context of abused children and present similarities with the mothers of neonaticide (young, immature). The other group of filicide mother is different. They are generally older, married, and employed. The crime is usually premeditated, committed with the direct use of hands, and sometimes very violent. To understand the motives or the source of the impulse to kill, like Resnick's classification can be used: altruistic filicides (8 cases), accidental filicides (5 cases), spouse revenge filicides (2 cases). The fact that 15 of the 17 perpetrators had disturbed behavior is remarkable. Many women showed signs of suicidal tendencies prior to the event, aggressive and angry behavior. In general, suicidal attempts tend to prevail. These offenders act out of an acute sensitivity to social regulation. A variety of psychosocial stresses appear to have been a major factor. These stresses include lack of social or spouse support, economic difficulties, family stress, and unrealistic expectations of motherhood. The precipitating stress may be disputed.

The prevention begins with the identification of potential perpetrators. Therefore, medical doctors have a significant role in relation to the prevention of child murder.

Homicide, Filicide, Child Abuse