

## I14 The Perpetrator-Victim Bond in Matricide: An Unusual Case

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the specific purpose of the criminological investigation regarding the unusual nature of the perpetrator-victim bond in matricide.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating that mental illness is not the only variable related to matricide, and it could not be enough to explain the crime.

In Italy in 2018, one homicide out of two (49.5%) had been committed by relatives. Among the family members involved in homicides (the couple, the sons, the parents, the siblings, and the other relatives), the couple is the most dangerous relationship accounting for almost half of the murders in Italy from 2000 to 2018.<sup>1,2</sup>

Matricide has always been considered one of the most abhorrent crimes, but is a rare event. In Italy, among matricides and patricides, 57.1% of victims are mothers killed by their sons. Matricide seems to be more common among individuals with psychiatric disorders (49.2% of cases), especially schizophrenia or other psychoses. The motives involve disputes and disagreements (23.3%) arising from co-existence often forced and made difficult by marginalized now-adult children unemployed or addicted to drugs, alcohol, or gambling. Economic motives account for 12.7% of matricides. The victim's discomfort or the anguish and fatigue of having to look after a sick parent (physically or mentally) was found as the prevalent motive in 8.2% of cases. According to the literature on matricides perpetrated by a son, most of the perpetrators are single adults with an intense relationship with their mother, a lack of interest in other women, a feeling of social inferiority, and an absent or passive father.<sup>3,4</sup>

This report presents a case of an attempted matricide perpetrated by a homophilic dyad composed of the victim's second daughter and her mistress. The roles of the instigator and the executor were progressively confused until they inverted. The victim was a 55-year-old woman assaulted in her home by her daughter's mistress, a 28-year-old woman, who tried to kill her using first a hammer and then a knife. Only chance and the victim's prompt reaction allowed her to survive. The instigator was the daughter, a 24-year-old university student, who lived with her mother. The two accomplices were arrested the next day. The motive of the criminal project was two-fold: to prevent the mother from discovering her daughter's false degree and to avoid the risk of the victim becoming aware of the homophilic relationship with the executor, always opposed by the mother. It was also found that the daughter had tried to kill her mother many other times, but the attempts were never realistic (e.g., hiring an assassin to run over or shoot the victim, paying a sorcerer to poison her by a "satanic fluid," etc.).

This case of matricide presents with atypical characteristics and interesting particularities found at criminological investigation of the aim and the type of the crime, planned "in concurrence," but carried out "by proxy."<sup>5</sup> The particular dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship and the unique personalities and life experiences of the instigator/executor couple are the real key to this case of matricide.

### Reference(s):

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### Matricide, Personality Disorders, Homicide