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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this article, participants should be better able to do the following:

1. Apply the knowledge that those who kill their parents may not have been abused or mentally ill, but may display anti-social behavior coupled with psychopathic traits increasing the probability of murder.
2. Know that parricide offenders can be red-collar criminals in that they kill in order to silence their parents who have detected their fraudulent behavior.
3. Understand that if a child exhibits psychopathic and anti-social traits coupled with perpetrating fraud against his or her parents, mental health professionals may consider a violence risk factor when evaluating whether the son or daughter is capable of violence and potentially murder.
4. Know legal obligations to warn law enforcement and potential victims of violence under the Tarasoff Act may have increased if the child discloses that he or she is committing fraud against the parents.

KEYWORDS: red-collar criminal, psychopath, parricide, Tarasoff Act

TARGET AUDIENCE: mental health professionals, investigators

PROGRAM LEVEL: update

DISCLOSURE: The authors have nothing to disclose.

PREREQUISITES: none

ABSTRACT

This article is the fourth and final in a series on fraud detection homicide. In this article, we examine the application of fraud detection homicide to an adult child who is perpetrating fraud schemes against his parents and kills his parents (known as parricide) once they have detected his fraud. Although parricide accounts for less than 2 percent of all homicides in the United States, cases have emerged that appear to counter the popular perception that children who kill their parents only do so because of parental abuse or mental illness. Red-collar criminals who may be perpetrating fraud schemes against their parents display psychopathic traits that propel them to use murder as a solution to their parent's detection of their fraud scheme. In this article, the authors examine two parricide cases that resulted in the conviction of an adult child, Christopher Porco, killing the father and attempting to kill the mother. Another case is a quadruple homicide where Eric Hanson, the defendant, killed his mother, father, sister, and brother-in-law once his sister and mother detected his fraud schemes perpetrated against the family. The authors advance suggestions for families to protect themselves and also what the obligations of mental health professionals (clinicians) consists of under the Tarasoff Act in warning family members, for example, that they be targets of violence if they confront their child, be it an adult or a minor, of the fraud that is perpetrated against them.

POST CE TEST QUESTIONS (Answer the following questions after reading the article)

1 The act of a child killing his or her parents is referred to as:

- a. Parricide
- b. Fratricide
- c. Suicide
- d. Homicide

2 What is the name of the personality trait that the adult children displayed?

- a. Schizophrenia
- b. Narcissism
- c. Psychopathy
- d. Retardation

3 What is the name of the law that mental health professionals must know?

- a. IRS Act
- b. Sarbanes-Oxley Act
- c. Smoot-Hawley Act
- d. Tarasoff Act

4 What is the name of the defendant that was found guilty of a quadruple homicide?

- a. Christopher Porco
- b. Eric Hanson
- c. Albert Walker
- d. Robert Petrick

5 What did Christopher Porco use to kill his father?

- a. gun
- b. knife
- c. ax
- d. chainsaw

EVALUATION: Circle one (1=Poor 2=Below Average 3=Average 4=Above Average 5=Excellent)

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By Frank S. Perri, Terrance G. Lichtenwald, and Paula MacKenzie

The Lull Before the Storm:

*Adult Children Who
Kill Their Parents*



This study is the fourth article in a series of articles devoted to understanding red-collar criminals. The first study, "Fraud Detection Homicide: A Proposed FBI Criminal Classification" (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007), advanced the proposition that there is a sub-group of white-collar criminals who are capable of vicious and brutal violence against individuals, namely murder, whom they believe have detected their fraudulent crimes. The sub-group is referred to as red-collar criminals. The second study is "The Arrogant Chameleons: Exposing Fraud Detection Homicide" (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2008), and the third study is "A Tale of Two Countries: International Fraud Detection Homicide" (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2008).

This article examines the application of fraud detection homicide to an adult child who is perpetrating fraud schemes against his parents and kills them (known as parricide) once they have detected his fraud. Although parricide accounts for less than 2 percent of all homicides in the United States, cases have emerged that appear to counter the popular perception that children who kill their parents only do so because of parental abuse or mental illness.

Red-collar criminals who may be perpetrating fraud schemes against their parents display psychopathic traits that propel them to use murder as a solution to their parents' detection of their fraud scheme. In this article, the authors examine two parricide cases, one that resulted in the conviction of an adult child, Christopher Porco, killing the father and attempting to kill the mother. The other case involved a quadruple homicide where Eric Hanson, the defendant, killed his mother, father, sister, and brother-in-law once his sister and mother detected his fraud schemes perpetrated against the family.



▲ Christopher Porco

The authors advance suggestions for families to protect themselves and also what the obligations of mental health professionals (clinicians) consist of under the Tarasoff Act. For example, clinicians may be required to warn family members that they may become targets of violence if they confront their adult or minor child over fraud that is perpetrated against them.

Discussion

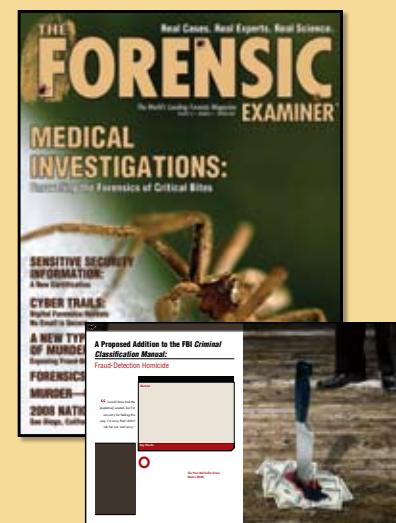
Many parents often attribute their children's psychopathic behavior to maturity issues or a lack of attention and concentration. It is also common for the wide variety of professionals interfacing with such individuals to attribute one's psychopathic behavior to the existence of some inherent parental deficit or to assume that parental abuse or neglect has undoubtedly taken place. Despite the lack of a single definitive cause to explain the occurrence of this type of behavior, most would agree that encountering individuals displaying such behavior can be both frustrating and at times even dangerous.

Most would also agree that managing individuals choosing to engage in psychopathic behavior often becomes particularly problematic for family members and other personal associates. A large part of the difficulty lies in acquiring a heightened sense or awareness that one's child is not likely to experience empathy, frequently lies, steals from the family, and can readily provide ample verbal justifications for one's psychopathic behavior.

One of the problems that arises for parents is how to cope with psychopathic children as they develop into adolescence and adulthood. Unfortunately, when psychopathic behavioral patterns or psychopathic personality traits surface during childhood, the likelihood increases that these same behavioral patterns and personality traits may remain and become more solidified as they age. Given this generalization, how parents, law enforcement, and mental health professionals elect to interact with psychopathic adult children is important because there have been instances where related parental and professional misconceptions or minimizations have resulted in serious physical violence, such as the murder of one or both parents together with siblings.

The occurrence of parricide involves different types of parricide offenders. Some incidences involve individuals who have suffered parental abuse or neglect, while others involve individuals who suffer from a serious mental illness. In contrast, many incidences of parricide involve offenders who are affected by some psychopathic, non-psychotic type of process that can guide one's homicidal behavior. Yet, there are offenders who reveal no signs of mental illness nor disclose abuse as a motive to kill, but may reveal serious anti-social personality traits. The authors concentrate on the anti-social reason why children kill, and they believe that these adult children exhibit psychopathic traits enhancing the probability that they perceive violence as a solution to a problem. Noting that this single type of homicide can be committed by different types of parricide offenders is important, especially when considering options for prevention and protection.

Past Issues in the Red-collar Criminals Series



▲ Volume 16, number 4, Winter 2007



▲ Volume 17, number 1, Spring 2008



▲ Volume 17, number 2, Summer 2008



Portrait of a Psychopath

Dr. Robert Hare (1991) notes that psychopathy can be distinguished from officially recognized personality disorders, "... on the basis of its characteristic pattern of interpersonal, affective, and behavioral symptoms." Some of the most significant personality and behavioral traits identified by Hare are noted below (Herve & Yuille, 2007):

Interpersonal

- Superficial charm
- Grandiosity
- Lying
- Conning & Manipulation

Affective

- Remorselessness
- Shallow affect
- Callousness
- Failure to accept responsibility

Lifestyle

- Impulsivity
- Seeking of stimulation
- Irresponsibility
- Parasite lifestyle
- Lack of realistic goals

Anti-Social

- Poor behavior controls
- Delinquency
- Criminal versatility
- Early behavioral problems

The article examines the general concept of psychopathy, the phenomena of parricide, and how the interplay of these two concepts influence our understanding of two specific parricide cases—the cases of Christopher Porco and Eric Hanson. The article is also a continuation of the examination of red-collar criminals (white-collar criminals who have turned violent). The research discusses how these concepts are significant in structuring prevention and protection strategies as well as understanding one's obligation under the Tarasoff Act to warn law enforcement and targeted victims of violence.

The Concept of Psychopathy

According to Dr. Robert Hare, international psychopathy expert from the University of British Columbia, the term or concept of "psychopathy" has had a long and sometimes confusing history. Dr. Hare (1991) states that part of the conceptual confusion stems from the use of multiple terms to describe similar personality traits and behavioral patterns (e.g., moral insanity, psychopathic personality, sociopathy, antisocial personality). These writers contend that the concept of psychopathy is best understood in terms of a range or degree of personality and behavioral traits that are typically associated with negative implications. The concept of psychopathy is no longer in and of itself an actual clinical diagnosis; rather, it refers to a specific cluster of traits and behaviors used to describe an individual in terms of pervasive dominating personality traits and behaviors (Gunn & Wells, 1999). One should understand that psychopathy is not a mental illness, but a personality disorder.

The theoretical model delineated by Dr. Hare identifies a number of personality and behavioral characteristics that have become a generally accepted definition of psychopathy. "Psychopathy" is not officially identified in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR), but Hare (1993) defines it as "... a personality disorder defined by a distinctive cluster of behaviors and inferred personality traits, most of which society views as pejorative."

Psychopaths are not disoriented or out of touch with reality, nor do they experience the delusions, hallucinations, or intense subjective distress that characterizes most other mental disorders. They are rational and aware of what they are doing and why. Their behavior is the result of choice, freely exercised but coupled with a distorted sense of reality (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007). Psychopaths also have difficulty projecting into the future; that is, they have difficulty understanding how their actions play themselves out in life. In addition, they have deficits in reflecting on their past: "[t]hey are prisoners of the present" (Meloy, 2000). As Edelgard Wulfert, forensic psychologist and professor at the

University of New York at Albany, stated, "A psychopath invents reality to conform to his needs" (as cited in Grondahl, 2006). Other signature traits of psychopaths are their chronic cases of self-centeredness, parasitic lifestyle, egocentrism, and narcissism that places their own interests and the pursuit of their desires above all others in a way that disregards the rights or feelings of others.

Although all of the traits are important, there are certain traits that stand out more than others in terms of identifying psychopaths, all of which we shall see in the cases presented in this article. Lack of remorse or guilt is the benchmark of psychopathy—in other words, a lack of conscience. This trait most closely relates to a psychopath's lack of remorse for his or her actions, because the psychopath is not capable of internalizing how his or her behavior had an impact on another person. Usually, when people feel bad about what they do to hurt someone, there is an unsettling physical behavior that accompanies the feeling of being remorseful. This quality does not apply to psychopaths, and they are capable of fooling people with outward signs of emotions because they learned by watching others how they should behave emotionally given a set of circumstances (Meloy, 2000).

*"For God said, Honor thy father
and thy mother."*

—Exodus 20:12

Parricide

In contrast to serial murder, parricide often represents a crime that affects people personally because it transgresses sacred values of family that are embraced within one's society (Heide & Boots, 2007). Yet, according to experts, parricide is one of the few crimes that remains an anomaly to many observers and can make people quite uncomfortable because it is a family relationship with which they may identify. Merriam-Webster (2004) defines parricide as "One that murders his or her father, mother, or other close relative." Less than 2% of all homicides in the United States are parricides (Boots & Heide, 2006).

International parricide expert Dr. Kathleen Heide includes attempted homicides in the operational definition of parricide because whether a homicidal incident results in death to the intended victim is often the result of factors such as physical stamina of the victim, the immediate availability of medical care, or the marksmanship of the offender (Heide & Boots, 2007). Multiple-victim offenses in which other family or non-family members are killed in addition to at least one parent are also included in the operating definition of parricide (Heide & Boots).

Children who have murdered one or both of their parents have been studied, along with their families,

by a variety of investigators. Different theories have been developed to examine dominant motivating factors of those who commit parricide.

According to Dr. Heide (1995), the severely abused child typically does not have a history of serious mental illness. These children kill because they could no longer tolerate the physical and/or psychological abuse occurring in the home. For this group of offenders, "killing represents an act of desperation and the only way out of one's familial situation" (Heide). Studies examining juvenile and adolescent parricide offenders in the United States have found that the majority of these cases appear to be abuse related (Boots & Heide, 2006).

The second offender group, the severely mentally ill child, typically kills because the intent to do so is related to some psychotic and/or delusion process (Heide, 1995). Clinical reports and studies in the United States have found serious mental illness to be a common reason why adult children kill their parents (Boots & Heide, 2006). Some of these offenders are not even tried as killers because the courts have found them unfit (Heide, 1992). These cases involve mentally ill adult children who are not capable of living independently and live with or near the parent(s), are emotionally and financially dependent on their parent(s), and have limited social relationships outside the family (Cooke, 2001). In some cases where mental illness is the issue, parricide occurs when the perpetrator perceives that real or imagined rejection or abandonment is imminent, thus creating a sense of hopelessness (Cooke).

The third offender group, the dangerously anti-social child, is comprised of parricide offenders who are typically free from hallucinations, delusions, or other symptoms of a serious mental illness. Dr. Heide states that offenders in this group murder for self-serving and instrumental reasons, none of which have anything to do with abuse or the presence of a severe mental illness. For example, consider the Menendez brothers, who murdered their mother and father and lied about being abused as the motive for the killings so that they could gain financially (Pergament, 2007). The authors posit that the dangerous anti-social child that Dr. Heide refers to harbors psychopathic personality traits that facilitate the child's ability to consider homicide as a solution to satiate his or her needs. However, it is the psychopathic child's appearance of normalcy that can be so disarming in considering how to interact with them both as family and as a clinician.

Although the overwhelming majority of offenders involved in incidents in which fathers and mothers were killed were adults, juvenile involvement is noteworthy. Approximately one in four offenders involved in the killings of the father (25.4%) and one in six offenders involved in the killings of the



mother (17.0%) were under 18 years of age (Heide & Petee, 2007). Parents killed tended to be white; white mothers comprised 75% of the victims and white fathers comprised 68% of the victims (Heide & Petee, 2007). Males were more likely than females to commit parricide. Males comprised 87% of the offenders and came from middle and upper-class social strata (Heide & Petee).

Literature on the international cases of parricide has focused on the role of mental illness in the killings. For example, in one Canadian parricide study, paranoid schizophrenia and drug and/or alcohol abuse disorders were reported as the most common diagnoses. When looking only at the killing of the mother, the child was male, overly violent, and suffered from schizophrenia (Boots & Heide, 2006). In a French parricide study, 60% of the offenders were reported to have psychosis (Boots & Heide).

The Christopher Porco Case

During the early morning hours of November 15, 2004, Christopher Porco, then 21 years old, entered his family home in New York and brutally murdered his father, Peter, and attempted to murder his mother, Joan, with an ax while they were sleeping (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007). When the authorities found Joan, her brain had been exposed, her jaw had been dislodged, and she eventually lost one of her eyes. The father was found practically decapitated. Interestingly, the mother told the authorities that Christopher was responsible for the murder, but she later recanted her statement to the police (McNiff & Cuomo, 2006).

The behavioral data from the Christopher Porco case did not reveal a murder in which the adult child alleged that the murder was justified because his parents had abused him as a youth or an adult.

Three Classifications of Parricide

Dr. Kathleen Heide (1995) proposes that most parricide offenders fall into one of three classifications:

1. The severely abused child
2. The severely mentally ill child
3. The dangerously antisocial child who may kill out of greed for insurance or inheritance reasons



▲ Joan Porco is shown in this undated family photograph, taken before the ax attack that left her husband dead and her face disfigured.



▲ Video taken by a security camera at the University of Rochester showed Chris Porco inside his yellow Jeep Wrangler supposedly heading toward the highway at about 10:30 p.m. on November 14, 2004. Prosecutors alleged he was on his way to his parent's home on the day of the attack and murder. He allegedly arrived at 2 a.m. on November 15, 2004.

He offered no history of mental illness as a defense at his trial, and he did not suffer from psychosocial and psychological deprivations, nor did he fear for his life. He was convicted of the murder of his father and the attempted murder of his mother. This is a case of two parricides under Heide's operational definition of parricide.

What is instructive about the Christopher Porco case is that as Christopher exhibited the qualities of a psychopath, his parents attempted a variety of parenting techniques to both discipline their son as well as force him to adhere to their value system. The data from this retrospective study suggests that Peter and Joan Porco did not understand that Christopher was capable of murdering them to prevent them from obstructing his wants.

Additional research from the Porco case indicates that psychopaths who are raised in anti-social environments tend to develop into violent psychopaths, whereas those who are not raised in such environments and have access to positive social and educational resources are more likely to develop into non-violent white-collar criminals (Hare, 1993). The behavioral data in the Porco case yielded no indication that Christopher Porco was raised in an anti-social environment; in fact, the data reflects the opposite: He was highly intelligent and came from a solid middle-class family. Together, the Porco and Hanson cases serve as a warning to parents who do not develop protective measures when they and those working with these troubled families fail to recognize the child's psychopathic traits. We observe these traits during adolescence, continuing into adulthood, with wants being forced against family values with no sense of remorse.

These authors believe that parents, by either ignoring or not interpreting their child's behaviors correctly, expose themselves and the rest of their

families to psychopathic destruction, either emotionally, financially, or possibly even physically (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007). As we shall later address, there is a shift in the behavior of psychopaths that mental health professionals must be aware of that may require them to warn family members that they may be a target of violence, especially if the family detects and confronts the child about his or her fraud activities. In addition, there is often a pattern of escalating conflict between the offender and the victim(s) that includes threats and/or assaults: The data reveals that at least half of the parricides stem from arguments (Heide & Petee, 2007).

The study of the behavioral data yielded warning signs of Christopher Porco's psychopathic qualities. In general, Porco left a trail of deceitful behavior. One specific example of this deceitful behavior is that Porco was known to have manipulated college transcripts from Hudson Valley Community College, located in upstate New York, reflecting false grades so he could be readmitted to the University of Rochester after he was forced to withdraw for poor grades (Karlín, 2006). In addition, during the course of the murder investigation, authorities determined that Porco had a history of anti-social behavior that included burglarizing his parents' home and selling their computer equipment on eBay (Lyons, 2006c).

Interestingly, one month before the murder, the parents froze their eBay accounts after Christopher Porco never sent the items sold on eBay. During the investigation, it was revealed that Porco posed as his brother and sent e-mails to customers explaining that his brother had died and was unable to send the purchased items (Lyons, 2006c). He was also known to have broken into his former employer's place of work to steal cell phones, cameras, and computers (Lyons). He fraudulently obtained loans using his parents as co-signers without parental knowledge after obtaining his father's relevant personal and tax information. Christopher Porco had told his parents that he only needed a co-signed \$2,000 loan for school, yet he fraudulently took out a loan for more than \$30,000 to pay for college expenses (McNiff & Cuomo, 2006). Moreover, to keep up with the appearance that he was from a wealthy family, he accumulated more than \$40,000 in debt from lavish spending and Internet gambling (McNiff & Cuomo).

There were several e-mail correspondences between Porco and his parents that exemplify the tensions between the parties and accurately support research stating that conflicts and arguments are a catalyst for parricide. The parents eventually confronted Porco on his fraudulent behavior and threatened to go to the authorities to take action against him. In one e-mail, the father wrote, "Did you forge my signature as a co-signer? What the

hell are you doing? You should have called me to discuss it. ... I'm calling Citibank this morning to find out what you have done and am going to tell them I'm not to be on it as co-signer" (as cited in Perri & Lichtenwald, 2008).

Amazingly, the next day, Citibank notified Peter Porco that Christopher Porco had also obtained a line of credit of more than \$16,000 to purchase his new Jeep Wrangler (McNiff & Cuomo, 2006). Again, Porco used his father's name as co-signatory to secure the auto loan. The parents tried to contact Porco via the phone, but he would not talk to them. In another e-mail, the father stated, "I want you to know that if you abuse my credit again, I will be forced to file forgery affidavits in order to disclaim liability, and that applies to the Citibank college loan if you attempt to reactivate it or use my credit to obtain any other loan" (as cited in McNiff & Cuomo).

In the same e-mail, the father went on to say, "We may be disappointed with you, but your mother and I still love you and care about your future." Interestingly, Christopher indicated that he had committed fraud to "absolve my parents the financial burden of college" (as cited in Lyons, 2006a). What is ironic is that he took the money to also buy himself a new Jeep. There was no evidence that at a minimum he took the money to pay off some of his earlier debts. One can see how Christopher Porco supports Dr. Meloy's position on psychopathy, where the individual is remorseless, lives in the present, and is not capable of understanding how his or her actions play themselves out in terms of harming others and, eventually, themselves. Furthermore, one can observe how the escalation in tensions in the Porco case fits the research where many of the parricides stem from arguments between the parents and the child (Heide & Petee, 2007).

Despite the chaos Christopher Porco brought into his parents' lives, they told him how much they loved him. Unfortunately for them, though, their love was irrelevant for what he planned to do next. Less than 2 weeks from the time the father warned Christopher Porco that he would not hesitate going to the authorities for his son's fraudulent behavior, Christopher executed his plan to negate



the threat. It has been the experience of the authors that the victim's threat of exposing the fraud will force a shift in the psychopath's strategy from employing charm, cunning behavior, and manipulation on the victim to employing violence in an effort to silence the victim.

The Concept of Psychopathy and Christopher Porco

Several Albany, New York, area psychologists and mental health professionals familiar with the case stated that "Christopher Porco fits the profile of a psychopath" (Grondahl, 2006). They focused on his continued pattern of lying and deceitful behavior. Furthermore, these professionals also pointed to his pattern of grandiose perceptions centering on himself as a member of a wealthy and influential family. Christopher Porco was known to have lied to friends and acquaintances about a fictitious inheritance from his grandmother of millions of dollars. Even Peter Porco was reported to have said to a co-worker that his youngest son was a sociopath (Lyons, 2006b).

Many people found Christopher Porco's behavior strange given that he was out of custody because he made bail on murder charges. For example, while

▲ Peter Porco smiles in this undated photograph. He was murdered with an ax on November 15, 2004. His son, Christopher Porco, was convicted of the murder, which prosecutors say occurred after his Christopher Porco's parents confronted him over his fraud activities.



◀ The ax used to murder Peter Porco and gravely wound his wife, Joan, is shown in this evidence photograph.

awaiting trial, many found him to be strangely arrogant, drinking in bars, attending concerts, going out to entertainment establishments, and driving around the yellow Jeep that witnesses state was the same Jeep he used to drive to his parents' home on the night of the murder. This behavior fits the traits of an individual in need of grandiosity and embellishment of his life (Grondahl, 2006). As forensic psychologist Wulfert stated, "There's an overlap between psychopathic and narcissistic tendencies. . . . He (Christopher) believes that the rules do not apply to him and he has a need to show off in front of people" (as cited in Grondahl).

Hopefully, most parents of psychopathic children will never experience this horrific scenario; however, not undertaking the proper precautions can result in tragic consequences. As demonstrated in the Porco case, the parents incorrectly believed that discipline and "tough love" was the answer. They failed to understand that psychopaths follow one set of rules—their own. It is not uncommon for psychopaths to lash out violently when they believe they are losing control over a situation, especially one in which they believe their freedoms may be taken away. In this case, the father indicated that he was willing to go to the authorities for Christopher Porco's fraud.

When psychopaths such as Christopher Porco lash out violently, society, in general, incorrectly assumes that he was angry at his parents and that his emotions got the better of him. Somehow, under normal circumstances, it would not be his character to become violent. Again, societal perception incorrectly injects a non-psychopathic explanation to the murder by attempting to inure an emotion to the killing—it was the defendant's emotional state that was the impetus for the killing (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2008).

For Porco, the data suggests that the issue was not about anger nor other unresolved emotions, but about his perception of murder as being a viable or acceptable means of conflict resolution. Many parents are unaware of this mindset and are probably not equipped to suggest that a child would be capable of formulating such solutions. Consequently, they do not perceive their parental behavior as the obstacle to their child's self-gratifying desires. The truth is, the Christopher Porcos of the world do not engage in a moral debate within their minds as to whether murder is an option. They perceive parental control as a form of provocation sufficient to over-

come them, so they commit heinous acts. Their strong need to "win at all costs" means eliminating others to maintain control, and murder is certainly a viable option because it is the ultimate form of control over an individual.

The thought that one's child may exhibit reptilian qualities can drive parents into denial and consequently lead them to underestimate their child's proclivity toward violence. One observes how Christopher Porco's mother simply recanted her statement and tried to protect her son even when the evidence overwhelmingly pointed to him as the murderer. She wrote a letter to the local newspaper, *The Times Union*, stating, "I implore the Bethlehem police and the District Attorney's Office to leave my son alone, and to search for Peter's killer or killers, so that he can rest in peace and my sons and I can live in safety" (Lyons, 2005b). She stated, "With every ounce of my being, I cannot accept that Christopher could have, or would have chosen to butcher us in any conceivable way, or any conceivable reason" (Lyons, 2006a).

Moreover, even after her son was found guilty of murder, the mother at the sentencing stated, "Please allow Christopher the opportunity to attain freedom in my lifetime. I believe him to be innocent with all my heart. Please give him a chance to use his talents to make a significant contribution to society" (Lyons, 2006a). Unfortunately the mother did not understand that her attempt to bond with her son did not mean that he would reciprocate the bonding, a common misconception parents of psychopathic children harbor.

What makes the Porco case difficult to accept, whether a parent or not, is the fact that Christopher Porco's parents tried to do the right thing by being disciplinarians, coupled with not letting their child believe he was unloved. Despite all of the goodwill bestowed upon Christopher Porco, none of it mattered to how he treated his parents. Christopher Porco's parents probably thought that he would one day see the error of his ways and thank them for using the "tough love" approach. Yet, Porco's destructive behavior did not decrease even though he was quoted referencing his bogus college transcripts, "I've learned my lesson, I really need this tough love" (Karlin, 2006). In fact, the parents' behavior exacerbated the problem—it was as if the parents were pouring gasoline on an already out-of-control fire, and the result was an escalation of family turmoil.

Ironically, Christopher Porco perceived his parents' position of being caring and loving as a weakness to be exploited (Hare, 1993). One can observe how Christopher's destructive behavior accelerated over his life and well into adulthood with escalating family turmoil. Each move that the parents took to discipline Christopher was met with a counter-move by their son. Christopher did not view his parents' disciplinary actions as gestures of parental love, but as attempts to curtail his self-gratifying, egocentric personality.

It is interesting to note that during an interview with CBS, while visiting his mother at the hospital, Christopher Porco stated, "I saw her—she was swollen and covered in tubes and my reaction was I burst into tears. I fell on the floor right there" (Bell, 2007). Yet a former youth leader minister named Joseph Catalano who went to the hospital to be with Christopher Porco claimed to be "struck by Porco's odd behavior because he did not seem to exhibit any grief" (Bell). The psychopaths' use of the "chameleon strategy" is not surprising in that they attempt to read a situation and determine what the appropriate emotional response others want to hear to make them appear sympathetic to outsiders (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007). Fortunately, someone was present to observe his true behavioral response.

Therapy and Psychopathy

Therapy is often a panacea that appears to be a solution for many people. However, therapy has not proven to be a viable solution for psychopaths. There are several problems with viewing therapy as a viable solution. First, these individuals do not believe there is anything wrong with them. They do not look at their behavior with regret, they experience little, if any, anxiety over their actions, and they are capable of rationalizing their behavior given they obtain perceived rewards from their behavior.

The second problem is that attempting to use therapy as a method to inculcate empathetic qualities is futile. Trying to teach a psychopath to be remorseful is like trying to teach an alligator to apologize for eating its young. In fact, psychopaths may view therapy as a method of gaining new insights into human weakness that they can use to manipulate others. Often, therapy is pushed on them by desperate parents, and they simply go through the motions. Psychopaths don't feel they have psychological or emotional problems, and they see no reason to change

their behavior to conform to societal standards with which they do not agree.

The stark reality is that therapy may actually make matters worse. According to one study, psychopaths were four times as likely to behave violently post-therapy than other patients (Hare, 1993). The psychopaths who were not part of the therapy sessions were less likely to be violent upon release from the treatment program. As one psychopath stated, “These programs are like finishing school. They teach you how to put the squeeze on people” (Hare).

Quadruple Homicide: The Eric Hanson Case

Eric Hanson was found guilty of a quadruple homicide in February of 2008. He murdered his mother, father, sister, and brother-in-law and has been sentenced to death. According to the prosecution, the defendant is responsible for the theft of more than \$150,000 from his parents through forgery, mail fraud, credit card fraud, and identity theft schemes (Golz, 2008a). In fact, just hours before the killings on the night of September 28–29, 2005, because Hanson lived with his parents, he was able to intercept a \$13,800 check delivered to the family’s home and deposit it into his personal bank account (Golz, 2008d). He continued to use the parents’ credits even after their murder. As State’s Attorney Joseph Birkett stated, “Eric Hanson in a cold, calculated and premeditated manner, committed the execution-style murders out of greed and fear of having his fraudulent scheme discovered” (Rozek, 2005).

The motive that the prosecutor advanced accurately reflects fraud detection homicide where a bonafide red-collar criminal silences those who discover, and are in a position to reveal, their fraud schemes that pre-date the murder (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007). Family members told the police that Mary Hanson discovered Eric’s fraud scheme when she had trouble using one of her credit cards (Burghart, n.d). Apparently, Eric opened multiple credit cards in 2004 using his mother’s name and her mailing address, but later Eric Hanson added himself as an authorized user and changed the mailing address from his parents’ home address to a post office box (Golz, 2008e). Kate Hanson confronted Eric about the fraud and threatened to tell their father if he did not confess, and Eric threatened to kill Kate if she disclosed what she knew about his fraud schemes to their father (Gregory, 2008b).

Eric denied the threat; however, a letter he wrote to his cousin from jail confirmed the threat where he stated, “I called Kate and told her to stay out of my life. ... If she didn’t, she would regret it. When she asked me if I was threatening her, I said, ‘No, it’s a promise’” (Golz, 2008c). According to



Jennifer Williams, the sister who lives in Minnesota, her deceased sister Kate told her that Eric threatened to kill her if she disclosed the fraud detection (Gutowski, 2008d).

Although the father was shot in the back of the head and the mother was shot in the face while they were sleeping, the prosecution claims that he carried the bodies to his sister’s home, where he had already killed both his sister and brother-in-law with blunt trauma force (Gutowski, 2008c). Jimmy’s face was not recognizable and Kate’s arms were broken as she tried to protect herself from the blows to her head (Gutowski, 2005). On the morning of September 29, after the murders, he went to Los Angeles to visit his ex-girlfriend, Allison Beck, but it appeared that his visit had to do with more than just attending a concert with her.

Prior to Beck and Hanson meeting in Los Angeles, Hanson called her and told her of the murders of his parents, sister, and brother-in-law (Barnum, 2008b). At this point, Beck did not meet with him because of a conversation she remembered having with Hanson. Several weeks before the murders, Hanson became livid with Beck when he suspected that she and Kate Hanson spoke about him. Beck denied the conversations when Eric Hanson pressed her, and he stated, “If I ever find out, you’re going to get it” (Barnum, 2008b).

▲ Eric Hanson stares blankly ahead in this law enforcement mug shot.²



▲ This family portrait of the Hanson family was made during the 1970s. Pictured are Terrance and Mary Hanson, with their children, from top, Jenny, Kate, and Eric.

Beck responded, "What does that mean?" Hanson stated, "Wait and see." "Is that a threat?" Beck asked. "No, it's a fact," stated Hanson.

When police wanted to talk to Eric Hanson about the murders, he initially declined but then agreed. He had told the police that he was willing to talk to them about the killings, but that he was still in Los Angeles (Gutowski, 2008d). However, law enforcement was able to discover through cell phone usage the call was being made from Wisconsin (Gutowski, 2008d). After he was stopped, he told the police that he was on his way to Minnesota to tell his sister Jennifer of his grisly finding. Practically, Eric Hanson was on his way to Minnesota to silence the last piece of the puzzle that he believed tied him to the murders because of his belief that she knew of his fraud.

Furthermore, Jennifer Hanson received a call from Eric on September 28, 2005, where he asked if he could stay with her and her family because he wanted to see a ball game (Gregory, 2008b). However, all the other times that he came to Minnesota, he would never spend time with Jennifer or her family (Gregory, 2008b). After the police stopped Eric Hanson in Wisconsin, they found his father's blood stains on a glove in the car together with Jimmy's Rolex watch and Kate's diamond ring (Gutowski, 2008d).

In applying Dr. Heide's operational use of parricide, this is a case of four parricides where all the victims were related to Eric Hanson. The problems Eric had with his parents as well as his chronic lying and deceitful ways with others revealed a high probability that he exhibited psychopathic traits. As he aged he spent time in a youth home, went to prison for home invasion in Michigan, and past

girlfriends testified how he lied to them, stole from them, and became violent with them (Gutowski, 2008c). He was known to watch videos of animals being tortured and killed, and a family friend told authorities that Eric had forcibly held his daughter's head under water (Burghart, n.d.).

Most disturbing of all was a 911 call from Kate Hanson back in 1993, when she told the police that he held a knife at her throat. Kate Hanson stated, "(He) got very mad at me and grabbed the top of my hair and threw me down on the wooden floor. His face turned color because he was so angry and he said, 'I might as well kill you because as soon as my probation officer finds out, I'll be sent away anyway. ... I can cover it up. No one will know'" (Gutowski, 2008c).

Eric's aunt, Donna Hanson, stated she observed "strange behavior over the years but was told he was getting help, and so we wondered but did not get involved, figuring Terry and Mary (Eric's parents) were trying the best to help him; this has been hell on the dynamics of the entire family" (Hanson, 2006). In fact, Eric Hanson's lifestyle, chronic lying, flagrant spending, and constant freeloading caused family fights (Gutowski, 2008d). Yet, Hanson indicated that he had "zero money problems" (Burghart, n.d.). Hanson's statement that he had "zero money problems" would seem reasonable given that he stated, "It just seemed like free money" to describe his fraud (Gutowski, 2008e). He spent more than \$14,000 on a new motorcycle several months before the murders (Barnum, 2008c). One former co-worker who chose to remain anonymous, stated the following:

He told all of us at work that he had a day job selling insurance and that he played golf in college and was a pro but hurt his back. Then I found out he never graduated high school and never even went to college in Michigan or somewhere and he was in prison for home invasion. He also had a friend come into work and tell him his sister died in a car accident so he could get the weekend off. We all chipped in some money, because he was going to miss work. He took the money and thanked everyone for understanding. Thing is, his sister never died in that car accident. Just an evil soul. (Former co-worker, 2006).

The evidence reveals that if Hanson did kill, he did not kill because he had a mental illness. Nor is there any evidence that he was abused. Psychologist Dr. Marva Dawkins evaluated Hanson and concluded that he exhibited narcissistic personality disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), and learning disabilities, coupled with anti-social features with no evidence of psychotic disorders (Gutowski, 2008b). Dr. Dawkins described the narcissistic personality disorder Hanson

exhibited as “an element of self-love” and “believing they are superior or unique and deserve recognition by others” (as cited in Barnum, 2008a). As to Hanson’s ADHD, Dr. Dawkins indicated that ADHD “doesn’t tell us if a person will do good things or bad things” (as cited in Barnum). Interestingly, a psychologist who evaluated Hanson a decade earlier indicated that he “wasn’t a threat to commit more violence” (Gregory & Barnum, 2008).

Dr. Dawkins further testified that Hanson lacked the ability to form deep bonds with others or to feel much empathy for others (Gutowski, 2008c). However, we can observe the manipulative games Hanson played when he attempted to inure an emotional quality to his relationship with his family when he told a reporter, “I think the older I got, the closer I got with my parents. ... I always looked at my family as kind of a rock, someone you could rely on no matter what” (Gutowski, 2008f). Other psychopathic traits Hanson exhibited that were disclosed by the prosecutor included “deceitfulness, lack of remorse, impulsivity, reckless disregard for the safety of others, irritability, and aggressiveness” (Golz, 2008b). In fact, just like the Porco case, Dr. Dawkins stated that Hanson came from a loving, supportive home that one could characterize as affluent, upper-middle class. There was no evidence of childhood emotional or physical abuse or neglect, but as Dr. Dawkins stated, “He has the persona of presenting himself as a macho guy, someone who has it together ... but from what we have learned, he’s actually a very vulnerable, weak individual in terms of his own self-esteem” (Gutowski, 2008b).

What is very interesting about Dr. Dawkins’s statement is that it dovetails with Dr. Hare’s observation of psychopaths’ personality structures being as thin as a balloon. Factors that may puncture their ego, such as threats, can result in a narcissistic rage, even though they perceive their personality structures to be sound. The Hanson case supports current research that reveals most parricides occur by males who are white and who come from middle- to upper-middle income class families (Cooke, 2001). However, the data does not support Dr. Heide’s findings that many adult parricide offenders are compelled to murder because of a mental illness. Hanson exhibited no signs of a mental illness.

Though Hanson’s parents never turned their back on him, Jennifer Williams said that their mother was especially concerned with protecting the family image (Burghart, n.d.). In fact, the mother’s behavior could be characterized as enabling when she was attempting to find a way to pay off Eric Hanson’s fraudulently obtained money. She took out loans in the tens of thousands of dollars to pay off the credit card debt he had accumulated (Gutowski,



2008a). The mother wanted to cover for her son because she believed that he would try to hurt himself, even though Kate Hanson was livid and threatened to tell their father (Gutowski, 2008d). Parents have been known to exacerbate an already difficult family situation when dealing with psychopathic children (Hare, 1993).

Hanson was not capable of reciprocating family obligations of respect and support despite his parents’ effort to show him through example what family support is, as exemplified through Jennifer’s victim impact statement to the court:

My parents did so much for Eric. ... When he was in trouble at school, my parents would meet with the school officials. When Eric was in trouble at home, they would go to counseling with him to try and help him out. When he was in trouble with the police, my parents would get him a lawyer and attend court with him. They supported him when he wanted to go to golf school, when he wanted to be a CNA, or when he was trying to work as a mortgage officer. They let him live under their roof, helping him get on his feet. ... Eric murdered the only people in his life that loved him unconditionally (Williams, 2008).

Like the Porco case, the Hanson case tends to deviate from Dr. Hare’s general observation of how psychopaths emerge in life. The quality of the family unit has no effect on the emergence of criminality in psychopaths. Depending on whether there are positive resources available in one’s environment, it is the type of criminality, violent versus non-violent, that a psychopath may gravitate toward that is an issue. It is this deviation from Dr. Hare’s observation that makes the red-collar crim-

▲ In this September 2001 photo, Jimmy Tsao and his new bride, Kate Hanson, center, pose with her parents, Mary and Terrance Hanson, on the couple’s wedding day. The four were found slain Sept. 29, 2005, in Aurora, Illinois.

inals who, in this case, commit parricide so brutally and so misunderstood by the public. These individuals did not have aggravating environmental factors that one would logically assume accentuated the probability that they would resort to violence.

Often, mental illness or abuse, common explanations used to rationalize these horrific situations, are helpful in protecting sacred values and reducing our own anxiety when explaining parricide. Yet, as the Porco and Hanson cases demonstrate, these common explanations may not apply because it is the sheer conscienceless behavior of these individuals rejecting those sacred family and societal values that makes murder an option. We do not see Christopher Porco or Eric Hansen somehow sparing their mothers because they appear to have championed their son's cause or attempted to bail them out. Their mother's values were never important to them to begin with.

Prevention & Protection: Options for Parents & Other Family Members

Parents who have concerns about behaviors that are similar to Christopher Porco's or Eric Hanson's can employ some preventative or protective measures, but as the ancient proverb states, a house divided against itself cannot stand. Family disagreement over how to deal with such a child can end in tragedy. Just as a business implements internal controls to safeguard its assets from being misappropriated, so too should parents implement their own internal controls to protect their own tangible and intangible assets.

Perhaps the first key for parents is their acknowledgement that their adult child has psychopathic personality traits and behavioral patterns. Understandably, many parents struggle with this realization, which is often accompanied by the presence of pure and simple denial. If parents resort to persistent denial as a main coping mechanism, such as Joan Porco and Mary Hanson did, then parents may be placing themselves at a greater risk of being targets of familial destruction and violence. In many cases, adult psychopathic children send their loving parents to the poor house, both figuratively and literally speaking, as the confrontation between child and parents spirals downward. Many parents, through no fault of their own, do not possess the ability to navigate through the emotionally and perhaps financially difficult time that their adult child psychopath may create for their families.

For those parents who have admitted there is a problem, there are a couple of measures they can implement to protect themselves. First of all, important documents or items, such as any financially related documents, wallets, and purses, must not under any circumstances be accessible to the child. For example, blank checks left around the home are a recipe for check fraud. Set up a lock box at a bank to store valuable items like jewelry, wills, and other items that could be stolen, manipulated, or forged. Parents should occasionally check credit history for unusual transactions that they are not aware of. It is imperative to check the origins of such transactions, as there is a real possibility that one's child may be the cause of the transaction. For additional financial safety, fraud protection should be purchased. Contacting any lending institutions can prevent the child from applying for possible loans.

Second, computer access codes must remain within the province of the parents. Christopher Porco had the parents' eBay account and abused having this privilege as well as having access to his parents' personal and tax information. Parents must take into account other sensitive information that their other children may possess that is accessible to the psychopathic child. Protective measures must take into account all parties that are capable of being exploited.

Third, parents should make sure that the child does not have a key to their home and, if possible, should install an electronic device to notify the authorities of any intruders. It is imperative not to give the electronic access code of your home to your adult child. Christopher Porco was able to gain entry because his parents gave him the code to enter their home. Had Porco been forced to break in, perhaps the noise caused by the break in would have been enough of a warning for his parents.

And finally, communication between the family and adult child should be handled with care, especially if such communications could be interpreted by the adult child as somehow threatening. The authors are not implying that the adult psychopathic child should not be confronted about his or her wrongdoings, but if these adult children still live with parents or they have access to their home, parents could be placed at risk for future physical violence and retaliation. So before confronting an adult child, confronting parties should carefully weigh out the desired results and develop a strategic plan of action should things not go as intended. A

parent has to be prepared to remove such a child from the household and go to the police when necessary.

Although such steps may appear overly cautious or unnecessary, the amount of effort required to put these protective measures in place is minimal compared to the amount of effort required to reverse the damage of a poor credit record or the destructive impact of identity fraud. It is imperative that items such as utility bills, bank statements, social security cards, and records that have personal information be made inaccessible to the child. In the Hanson case, the police found credit card information traceable to the parents and his sister in his bedroom (Gutowski, 2005).

The Porco case revealed the threats his father levied onto his son via e-mail and then how Christopher Porco's parents then went on to express their love for their son. The Porco parents were straddling two approaches that do not work with these adult children. Self-preservation places these parents in a position where they may have to disassociate themselves from these children or they must accept family turmoil as the norm and the fact that their very lives may be in danger. Enabling the child simply emboldens a narcissistic sense of entitlement and parasitic behavior and reinforces the belief that he or she is immune from being held accountable for their actions. However, if the enabling ends, engaging the adult psychopathic child in power struggles can place parents and other loved ones at a greater risk for violent outcomes. Psychopaths have a strong need for psychological and/or physical control to reinforce their authority: For the psychopath, it's about winning.

What Mental Health Professionals Can Do

Mental health professionals are in a unique position to evaluate and assess the dynamics of the psychopathic adult child. By nature of the work with the mental health professional, he or she can document the anti-social behavior that is exhibited toward the family members. In particular, the mental health professional can document the assessment of the adult child's drive for a particular want. The astute reader will note that much of the fraudulent activity Porco and Hanson directed against their family was intended to maintain a lifestyle. However, clinicians must be aware of their own anxiety level and value system in terms of whether they are willing to accept the fact that these individuals are

capable of killing without evidence of abuse or mental illness. Clinicians who have an issue with this position are encouraged to outsource evaluations to another professional who understands that violence can be perpetrated against a family member as a solution to a perceived problem absent mental illness and abuse.

With respect to formal evaluations of the adult child psychopath, the counselor is in a unique position by the nature of the work involved. More recent studies have shown that even if only in the short term, clinicians are getting better at predicting the risk of violence (Shaw, 2000). Most of the diagnostic tools used for evaluating psychopathic personalities require a detailed knowledge of the individual's developmental history. For example, with the individual's history of relationships with others, especially in light of empathy, learning from experience is typically gathered. In recent years the research in the mental health field has advanced to the point that the assessment of psychopathy in adolescents is possible. The advancement in the field is based in part on the reliability, validity, and utility of the psychopath construct in samples of adults.

Fraud Against Parents as a Violence Risk Factor to Consider

Some have questioned the possibility of predicting a patient's violence in clinical practice. In fact, actuarial and clinical research studies have identified risk factors associated with violence, including but not limited to demographic factors (gender), a history of violence, substance misuse, the presence of acute psychotic symptoms, and certain types of delusions (Shaw, 2000). Risk assessments estimating the probability of violence take these risk factors into consideration. There are some key factors that have been shown to be useful in predicting the imminent risk of violence. These factors include threats to identifiable victims, access to potential victims, and premeditation (such as the purchase

of a weapon). An essential first step in assessing risk of imminent violence is an inquiry into violent thoughts. In the Eric Hanson case, Hanson threatened to kill his sister if she disclosed the fraud to their parents.

The authors believe, however, that if the child perpetrates fraud against the parents, that should also be considered a possible risk factor in predicting violence in conjunction with the other factors previously mentioned. In the Porco and Hanson cases, the fraud predated the murder along with other signs of anti-social behavior. The fact that violence against family members may not be evident does not mean that the child may not kill. In contrast to the Hanson case, the Porco case showed no evidence of family violence that predated the murder. The authors have observed from these cases and other fraud detection homicide cases that once the fraud detection becomes a reality for the defendant, a new set of factors converged together with their psychopathic traits that increased the likelihood of murder as an option for these children (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007).

Although psychopaths appear to be able to "blend in" with others by giving the appearance of human normalcy, their true colors may not be revealed until certain stressors show traits that one normally would not see (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2008). Thus, if the clinician knows that the client's fraud detection has been detected and potentially exposed to law enforcement, the clinician should not be surprised if the clients exhibit behavioral changes. Even though the child may not have alluded to violence as a solution, it would be necessary for the clinician to further explore their thoughts for violence as a solution to their perceived problem. Moreover, even though the two cases represent adult children, this risk factor would still be present for those who are adolescents.

The number of people who act on violent thoughts is unknown, but it is as important to inquire routinely into violent thoughts as it is into suicidal thoughts. Inquiry about

violent thoughts is, however, only the start. Focused risk assessment must follow, including inquiry into the circumstances of any previous violence, intention to act on violent thoughts, availability of weapons, and potential victims. This further assessment is analogous to the questioning following the expression of suicidal thoughts.

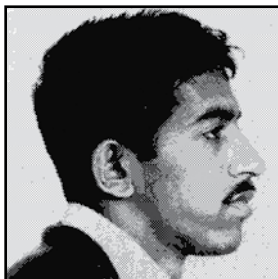
The Tarasoff Act—Duty of Disclosure

In 1968 in California, Prosenjit Poddar met a fellow student, Tatiana Tarasoff, at a school dance. However, Tatiana was not interested in his advances. Poddar went to the university's health service for an evaluation pertaining to depression and disclosed to his therapist that he had thoughts of harming, perhaps even killing, a girl identified as Tarasoff. The therapist and his supervisor decided to commit Poddar to a hospital and called the police to help. The police visited Poddar, found him rational, and warned him to stay away from Tarasoff. The psychiatrist did not proceed with the commitment. Two months later he shot and stabbed Tarasoff to death. He was charged with first degree murder, and Tarasoff's parents filed a negligence suit against the campus police and university health service.

Following these events, the California Supreme Court mandated that when a patient threatens violence, the clinician has a special responsibility to evaluate the patient's risk and take appropriate action to protect others from danger. Therapists are faced with the conflict between maintaining patient confidentiality and also protecting the public. Guidelines have been developed to help clinicians when a patient describes thoughts of violence. The first stage is a thorough clinical assessment of the threat, including obtaining collateral information from various sources. If a third party is thought to be at risk, the second stage involves the duty to protect that third party by informing the third party and the police. The third stage involves careful



▲ Tatiana Tarasoff



▲ Prosenjit Poddar

The Tarasoff Ruling:

When a therapist determines, or pursuant to the standards of his profession should determine, that his patient presents a serious danger of violence to another, he incurs an obligation to use reasonable care to protect the intended victim against such danger. The discharge of this duty may require the therapist to take one or more of various steps. Thus, it may call for him to warn the intended victim, to notify the police, or to take whatever steps are reasonably necessary under the circumstances.

Mental Health Assessment Checklist

Be Proactive

Increase your understanding of professional obligations under the Tarasoff Act and duty to warn. Think through standard operating procedures and accounting for any occurrences. Know the policies and procedures of your specific context of practice. Make your standard operating procedures on this issue explicit both verbally and in writing upon any new client interview.

Level of Expertise.

Be knowledgeable and open about your own level of professional competence and boundaries of practice. Know when a client should be referred for more extensive psychological testing or assessment. When referring a client out for more testing or assessment, know before an event surfaces where you will be referring clients out to and all of the community resources you have at your disposal.

Local Services

Understand that all states have very specific statutes regarding involuntary commitment criteria, protective custody, and other arresting powers. When accessing local emergency services, be it medical-, psychological-, or law-enforcement based, EMS/ERS workers and other law enforcement personnel have to abide by these specific statutes and their limitations. This means when calling for assistance, one needs to understand that specific information and specific behavioral details are necessary. If you call to say "I think J.Q. Citizen may hurt..." be ready to say why.

Trust Yourself

Pay attention to your intuition in terms of deciding whether or not to gather additional information or to refer a client out for further examination. Keep in mind that the psychopath may not want to have you as their clinician once they know that you are not as capable of being manipulated as they once thought. Remember, they are reading your behavior just as you are reading theirs. Consider everything and dismiss nothing.

Client History

To the greatest extent possible, gather and review information about your client's history, especially those factors that would increase one's risk for future violence. Understand a good predictor of future violence is past violence (Weiner & Hess, 1999).

monitoring of the process of implementation of these measures and documentation of the clinician's reasoning about the risk-benefit analysis.

One case that exemplifies the application of the Tarasoff Act is the murders by Erik and Lyle Menendez. The two brothers went into their parents' home and killed them with a shotgun. The authors believe that the Menendez brothers might never have been caught were it not for their act of threatening their therapist (Thorton, 1995). When Erik Menendez originally confessed the killing to his therapist, that confession was privileged. However, once he and his brother Lyle threatened the therapist because he was aware of

the murder, a different set of dynamics followed, especially if the therapist believed he was in danger. Some of the taped therapy sessions of the Menendez brothers were admitted because at the trial the brothers were the ones who made their mental state at the time of the crime an issue as to why they killed their parents.

Does Fraud as a Potential Violence Risk Factor Activate Tarasoff?

The authors believe that psychopathic and anti-social traits coupled with fraud perpetrated against parents may be a risk factor for predicting violence. However, is the clinician obligated under Tarasoff to warn the parents

that confronting a child of fraud detection increases their chances of being targets of violence? This is a difficult question, but if a clinician were to observe the escalation of family turmoil as we have seen in the Porco and Hanson cases, the activation of Tarasoff may be warranted, especially because the clinician knows the specific names of the fraud victims. As is currently recognized under Tarasoff, specificity as to known potential victims increases the clinician's obligation to warn. If the clinician is working with a psychopath, that in and of itself may be reason enough to warn parents, particularly if there have been episodes of family violence, fraud directed at family, or other non-violent but anti-social behavior.

Two cases have been presented in this article that resulted in tragic consequences to the parents and other family members because the family did not assess the likelihood of being targets. One of the interesting facts that is observed in these parricide cases is that there appears to be a change in the person's behavior when confronted and their fraud has been discovered.

In the Porco case, after the parents confronted Christopher, they did not hear from him after repeated attempts to get in contact with him. It is almost as if there was a lull before the storm, as the title of this article states, where the child is retracting into himself and planning his next move, which is to silence the parents. For example, several days after the father confronted Christopher Porco about the bank loan, the mother e-mailed Christopher and stated, "Dad and I are very upset about your not communicating with us. We don't know if you are well or mentally stable ... Dad is about to have a nervous breakdown. Do you understand that you are not behaving responsibly? If you don't call I will be there to see you tomorrow. For God's sake, call" (Lyons, 2005a). This same quality is observed with the Hanson case. There is a time lag between the alleged fraud detection, the confrontation with the sister, and the eventual murder. It has the markings of a premeditated murder—and not one that is driven by passion.

It may be proper for clinicians to legally protect themselves from negligence lawsuits if they discretely address family members about the fraud, because the risks of potential violence escalate when there is an indication of other anti-social behavior. Referring to the Porco case as an example, it is documented that Porco stole from his employer, stole from his parents, was heavily in debt, forged

documents for school and banks, and committed identity fraud. Interestingly, there were reports from classmates at the University of Rochester that Porco had become an increasingly heavy drinker, had threatened to kill a female classmate, and had to be pulled off another person during a fight at a party when it seemed that Porco would not stop choking him (McNiff & Cuomo, 2006). In the authors' opinions, if Porco were in treatment, these fixed factors are telling of an individual who has no regard for others and is willing to do what he has to in order to maintain the status quo.

An individual such as Christopher Porco or Eric Hanson is willing to use violence as a solution to a problem (Perri & Lichtenwald, 2007). It may be useful when assessing potential harm to the family for the clinician to think through a threat assessment by considering histories of criminality, anti-social behavior, and fraud directed at family members. The authors recommend that the clinician meet with family members to discuss strategies if there is a confrontation with their child about the fraud detection, especially if there is an escalation in fraudulent and anti-social behavior.

Dr. Heide believes that efforts should be placed on prevention and intervention before parent(s) are killed. According to Dr. Heide, half of the parricide incidents stem from arguments, and it can be seen that there were acrimonious feelings between Porco and his parents when they detected his fraud schemes and of Hanson and his sister when she confronted him about his fraud. It would be worthwhile for clinicians to examine the probability of a violent response in patients who may be confronted by their family concerning their fraud.

The authors recommend that clinicians take into consideration the mental health assessment checklist and grid outlined below.

Conclusion

Although the number of parricides committed by children killing their parents is small compared to the overall homicide rate, there are indications that reasons other than mental illness or abuse account for the motivations behind these murders. The authors advance the proposition that these children exhibit psychopathic and anti-social traits facilitating the use of murder as a solution. Given that families must deal with these children, families must safeguard themselves and their personal belongings. It is crucial that they understand that the child they are dealing with may have deficits that severely impact the ability of the family to parent as they would a normal child.

Moreover, if the child is being treated by a clinician, the clinician should consider fraud perpetrated against a parent as a potential violence risk factor. Based on fraud and the other risk factors, the clinician can then determine whether they are

obligated under Tarasoff to warn the parents and the police of potential violence by the patient.

Methods and References

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Mental Health Assessment Grid

Discuss and Develop Safety Procedures With Family

Investigate emergency procedures available in one's area

Know when to notify police, relatives, and family of your concerns

Safety Procedures for Professionals

Duty to warn

Understand Tarasoff obligations

Self-protection from client manipulation and physical harm

Interventions

Parenting techniques that support environmental consistency

Family education about psychopathic traits and patterns of manipulation

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