

PROCEEDINGS

American Academy of Forensic Sciences

75th Anniversary Conference



Science Works

February 13-18, 2023
Orlando, Florida
Rosen Shingle Creek Resort



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of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences 75th Anniversary Scientific Conference

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February 2023

Volume XXIX

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J27 Crime as an Outcome of Conflicts Between Subcultural and Symbolic Dimensions

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Learning Objective: After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the complexity of the issues underlying affective and cultural codes, relational patterns, processes of change and evolution in family contexts, in relation to their traditions and historical, tradition-based, and rural characteristics.

Impact Statement: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how processes of change in these contexts can trigger aggressiveness that culminates in conflicts with outcomes of criminological, medicolegal, psychological, and forensic psychiatry concern.^{1,2}

The case involves two brothers from a rural family living in northern Italy, the owners of a farm. The older brother was true to the family traditions and lived in Italy with his two children. The younger brother, in disagreement with his older brother about questions of the succession and not wishing to work on the family farm, emigrated to France, where he became a successful entrepreneur. Their subsequent relationship and contacts were sporadic.

The elder brother’s daughter, growing up in the rural context, refused to become an agricultural worker. Her father was angry with her and associated her with her “traitor” uncle. At the age of 19, the girl went to France to meet her uncle, aged 48 years, and was struck by the great cultural differences. Her uncle introduced her to “his world,” allowing her to have experiences she had never had in Italy. After about one month, they became lovers. The affair ended after about six months by mutual agreement, when the girl had started a relationship with a north-African Muslim waiter working for her uncle. The uncle accepted the relationship.

The girl went back to Italy to present her new companion to the family. The father was very angry about the relationship, due to racist issues. In revenge, the daughter revealed her previous relationship with her uncle.

The man invited his brother to come to Italy, to talk about questions related to their inheritance. During lunch, the older brother strongly criticized his brother for having a relationship with his niece. In response, the younger brother criticized him for his narrow-mindedness and backward culture. At the height of the quarrel, the elder brother struck the younger in the neck with a knife, severing the right recurrent laryngeal nerve.

The prosecutor initially accused the man of attempted homicide dictated by questions related to the inheritance. During the trial, however, all the underlying family motives emerged, demonstrating that the true motive for the attempted homicide was the ancient rivalry and competition between the two brothers, together with the daughter’s attempted emancipation. She had colluded with her uncle and become an accomplice, while her mother was relegated to a dependent, peripheral role. We will discuss the difficulties and active psychological disorders, attributable to a rigid, archaic, and traditional system that cannot accept change and transformation of any family members.

A complete understanding of the criminal act during the brothers’ quarrel thus derives not only from the medicolegal assessments and forensic psychology-psychiatry evaluations, but also from an overall examination of the family history and cultural and anthropologic relations of the enlarged family nucleus, and of all the actors in the background of the crime scene.

References:

1. Francia A, Verde A, Birkoff J. Raccontare delitti. Il ruolo della narrativa nella formazione del pensiero criminologico. Franco Angeli Ed. 1999, Milano.
2. Verde A, Barbieri C. Narrative del male. Franco Angeli Ed., 2010, Milano.

Homicide; Psychiatric Assessment; Incest