



## Psychiatry & Behavioral Science Section – 2010

### I3 The Psychopathic Mother: Identification, Characteristics, Prognosis, and...Treatment?

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By attending this presentation, attendees will understand that psychopathy is not a condition limited to men and will learn about special characteristics of psychopathic women (with an emphasis on mothers), who are in the position to do the most harm to their most vulnerable victims. The topics of family reunification versus termination of parental rights will be addressed, as will the controversial topic of treatment of psychopathy.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by:

(1) acknowledging that psychopathic women exist outside of fiction; and, 2) describing characteristics that the forensic evaluator can identify in order to help determine which abusive mothers can be conventionally treated, and which mothers are psychopaths (whose victims include their own children).

Abusive mothers fall into one of four groups. These groups are: the substance abusers, the mentally ill and personality-disordered, the mentally retarded, and the psychopathic. Psychopathy in women has been overlooked by researchers for many years, although the new Hare PCL-R II now has been normed for use in women. However, social biases tend to work against identifying women as psychopaths. Sadly, it is these rare psychopathic women who tend to be misunderstood and excused by the criminal justice system.

Current research will be covered, which focuses on the psychopathic mother – how to identify her, what interventions are commonly utilized (if any), and what interventions should be utilized in dealing with families in which abuse is the result of psychopathy.

To date, there has been little research on this question. Existing relevant literature will be reviewed. Data will be presented on a cohort of 100 women who have been documented to be abusive to their children, whose children have been removed by the court, and who have been referred for psychiatric/evaluations and disposition recommendations.

The results of the data will be discussed. If time permits, specific cases will be discussed and the audience will be asked to categorize the mothers using the four-pronged system. In addition, some individuals who have received extensive media coverage will be discussed; the audience will be asked to help categorize these individuals using the aforementioned four-pronged system.

The data will show that although psychopathic mothers are rare, they are some of the most dangerous parents in our society and that properly identifying them is critical.

**Psychopathic Mothers, Abusive Mothers, Psychopathy**