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CRIMES OF DESPERATION: POVERTY-RELATED FILICIDES 1810–1860

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ABSTRACT

Using Finnish upper court records as a source, this article is concerned with parental child homicides, newborn infanticides excluded, committed in Finland in the period 1810 to 1860. It focuses on the development in the rate and geographical distribution of these crimes, as well as the social and gendered distribution of the perpetrators. This information forms the basis for analyzing the connection between the motivation for the crime and the pauperization that culminated in these decades as a result of a rapid population growth, which manifested itself in an increase in the landless agrarian proletariat. Dire economic distress over subsistence was a motive for over a half of all filicides. Such crimes of desperation took place especially in periods of crisis: in the years following the Finnish War (1808–09) and after crop failures in the 1830s and the late 1850s. Filicides where the victim was older than a newborn child were, however, as an object of the authorities' concern, overshadowed in the public debate by neonaticides and other major contemporary social problems.

INTRODUCTION

Concerning the history of Finland, the nineteenth century, especially its later decades, is usually perceived as a period of industrialization and of national revival. Even so, the era has also been characterized by more sinister traits: the social historian Antti Häkkinen has described the 1800s as the century of poverty, and the legal historian Kaijus Ervasti as the century of neonate infanticide (hereafter neonaticide). The main factor underlying both phenomena was the marked population growth, which, until the 1870s, in Finland almost exclusively increased the

numbers and shares of the rural landless population (Häkkinen 2004; Ervasti 1995). The so-called period of knife-fighters, continuing from the late eighteenth century until the 1880s, was a temporally and spatially limited phenomenon associated with rapid economic and social change, whereas neonaticides constituted a more universal and long-term social problem which, in the nineteenth century in particular, has been regarded as one consequence of proletarianization (see, for example, Dickinson and Sharpe 2002; Ervasti 1995; Ylikangas 1998).

Both the Ostrobothnian knife-fighters and unmarried young women as perpetrators of neonaticides were already subjects of drama, fiction, and poetry in nineteenth-century Finland (Juteini 1827 [2012]; Canth 1895; Alkio 1894 [1981]; Järviluoma 1914). These crimes, however, do not present the whole picture of nineteenth-century homicide in Finland. For example, parental child murders where the victim was older than a newborn infant have not been a subject of historical research in Finland, nor is there much international research available. This is likely the result of both their much lower incidence and their more heterogeneous nature as compared to neonaticides. Parental child homicides were, and still are, extreme, albeit rare acts. In Western societies, the sanctions against such crimes have been based on Christian ideas concerning the value of human life, and their reprehensibility has been emphasized with arguments appealing to the innocence of the victim and the natural obligation of parents to take care of their offspring. It has thus been regarded as an unnatural crime, and such an extreme act is often seen as a consequence of particularly powerful motives. Frequently such cases have been viewed as a result of perpetrators finding themselves at an economic or social impasse and seeing no way out (Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011, 4–5, 16–18; Pitt and Bale 1995, 375; Resnick 1969, 325–34; Stroud 2008; West 2007, 49–51; Bergenlöv 2005). Actually, this was also how the Finnish writer Sara Wacklin portrayed the motives of an Ostrobothnian mother who killed her three sons in 1826 to save them from their drunken and violent father, the story being so far the only known contemporary description of parental child murder in early Finnish literature (Wacklin 1899; Joki 1996).

One of the most important of the numerous generalizations that have been made worldwide about child homicides committed by parents is their classification into three groups according to the age of the victim, based on historical and contemporary observations made by the child psychiatrist Phillip Resnick, for whom the motivational basis of child homicides varies with the victim's age. The first category of child homicide is the killing of a newborn (neonaticide), an act

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that is virtually without exception committed by a mother who has concealed her pregnancy. The second group consists of crimes involving victims older than twenty-four hours but less than one year. Resnick's third category is filicide, in which the victim is between one and fifteen years of age. Here, the older the victim is, the more often the crime is committed by the father (Resnick 1969; Koenen and Thompson 2008; West 2007, 49–53). The need to focus on the differences between *neonate* and *non-neonate child homicides* makes it most expedient to refer here to both infanticides and filicides (in Resnick's terms) as filicides.

The social historian Randolph Roth, who has collected by far the largest corpus of data on child murders from the seventeenth to the late-nineteenth centuries, has compared the incidence of all kinds of child murders to fluctuations in fertility, abortion, illegitimacy, and also to other types of homicide in New England. This material indicates that both murders of neonates and of older children increased markedly from the 1820s onwards as a result of a social development that caused mothers or fathers of the lowest strata of society to regard their children as economic or emotional burdens (Roth 2001).

The causes and prevention of neonaticide were among the most prominent themes of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social debate in Europe (Bergelöv 2002, 237, 264–65). In the northern Protestant societies, where individual responsibility for one's actions was strongly emphasized, the reprehensibility of the crime was underlined by its nature as a double crime: the motive for the murder of an innocent child was considered to be the mother's desire to hide a previous act of fornication (Rautelin 2009; Ransel 1988; Bergelöv 2005). In addition to the shame and fear of the reactions of parents and household masters to the illegitimate pregnancy of a lower-class servant woman, the growing incidence of neonaticide in the nineteenth century has commonly been explained by pauperization. For example, Richter (1998, for part of Germany), Ervasti (1995, for Finland) and Johansson (2006, for Sweden) see poverty as the strongest motive for nineteenth-century neonaticide, pointing to the fact that increasing rates of neonaticide trials in the first half of the century coincided with the most marked phase of population growth, which was concentrated largely among the most disadvantaged social groups. The Danish scholar Grothe Nielsen (1999) also connects the motives for neonaticide in the nineteenth century primarily to the difficult life situations of lower-class women, as well as the severe punishments incurred for the crime of fornication (see also Kilday 2007).

As was the case in many other parts of Europe, the number of neonaticide trials in Finland peaked around the mid-nineteenth century. The background factors were mostly societal. Until the 1870s, Finland had been a predominantly agrarian country. Between 1810 and 1860, the population of Finland doubled, as happened in many other Western European countries, but unlike in more developed European areas, owing to the limited extent of industrialization in Finland, this was manifested in an increase only among the landless agrarian proletariat. Thus, the landless population had even fewer economic opportunities to marry, and the subsequent increase in the rate of illegitimate births (the annual level of which was 6 to 7 percent between 1810 and 1860) in turn created an environment in which neonaticide was also liable to increase (Ervasti 1995, 75–76; Miettinen 2012, 163, 172; Turpeinen 1981, 13–16). Alongside this development lay the problem of pauperization, which was itself aggravated not only by population growth, but also by technical changes in agriculture. The most significant of the latter was the transition from slash-and-burn cultivation to field cultivation in the province of Savo from the 1830s onward, which reduced the demand for agricultural labor. One consequence of the development was local hunger crises in the early 1830s and late 1850s, finally culminating in the last peacetime famine in Europe, which occurred in Finland in 1862 and between 1866 and 1868 (Ervasti 1995, 72–75; Häkkinen 2004, 149–52; Markkola 2008; Pulma 1994, 51–55).

THE FOCUS AND DATA

As the increase in neonaticide rates was largely connected with child support problems, it could be assumed that the impoverishment of the masses was reflected in the rates of murders of older children, too. This fact motivates the focus of this article on economic distress as a reason for parental child homicide in Finland between 1810 and 1860, especially in the cases of filicides of non-neonates where the perpetrators were unmarried mothers. At the time of committing the filicide, the mothers of older children lacked the main motivation for neonaticide: *concealment of an illegitimate pregnancy and avoidance of the ensuing shame*. What then *were* their motives for killing their children?

If neonaticide in nineteenth-century Finland was a crime typical of single, lower-class women, how common then were other parental child homicides? And, if subsistence difficulties were one main cause of neonaticides, it is also necessary to ask whether they were a significant motive for filicide committed by other (married or widowed) parents, too. Was the growing mass poverty also reflected somehow in

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paternal filicides? To sum up: what was the general distribution of the class, gender, and marital status of the perpetrators, and that of the geographical and chronological incidence of filicide (of non-neonates)?

The period of this study is 1810 to 1860, at the beginning of which Finland was recovering from the Finnish War (1808–09), as a result of which the areas of the Kingdom of Sweden east of the Gulf of Bothnia were detached from the mother country and annexed to the Russian Empire to become the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland in 1809 (Kirby 2006, 68–104). The examination ends before the exceptional period of the famine years in the 1860s because the machinery of social control, which in fact produced the judicial sources, was disrupted by the crisis at that time (Häkkinen 2006). With the exception of killing an illegitimate new-born infant, Swedish criminal law (known as the Code of 1734), which was in force in Finland throughout the period of interest, did not differentiate between filicide and other killings of close relatives, regardless of whether the victims were born in wedlock or not. According to the law, it was punishable by a qualified death penalty (Sveriges Rikes lag, gillad och antagen på riksdagen 1734, Missgärnings Balk 14:1, cf. cap. 16). However, after 1826, when the Tsar in practice abolished capital punishment in Finland for all non-political crimes, the amnesty procedure commuted all death penalties to corporal punishment combined with hard labor. In the harshest sentences, the culprit was deported to perform hard labor in Siberia (Ylikangas 1998).

In addition to that, Chapter 30 of the Penal Code also distinguished between three types of unintended child homicide: involuntary manslaughter (§ 1), suffocation (§ 2), and lethal chastisement (§ 3). Of these crimes, many historical studies (e.g., Bergenlöv 2004; Frykman 1977) regard suffocation as a relatively mildly sanctioned means for mothers, whether single or married, to terminate the life of an unwanted child.

The trial material from 1830–60 shows thirty-six cases of unintentional suffocations which are excluded here; only intentional suffocations that were treated as homicides of a close relative are included in the research data. Most of the cases of (non-neonate) filicides were prosecuted as homicides of a close relative. As a whole, the source material comprises records of 130 filicides committed by 119 main perpetrators in the Grand Duchy of Finland from 1810 to 1819 and 1830 to 1860. The material consists of trial records of the state courts: the Courts of Appeal in Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg (est. 1839) and the Justice Department of the Governing Council, renamed the Senate in 1816. In the later period, the trial material of all

Courts of Appeal is preserved and the material thus covers the whole area of the Grand Duchy of Finland while in the earlier period only the trial material of Vaasa Court of Appeal, the contemporary upper court for Northern and Eastern Finland, has been preserved.

It is obvious that a large number of filicides may not have come to the attention of the authorities since the deaths of older children were easy to conceal in the nineteenth century. The death of an identifiable child could always be explained as the result of disease or accident (see also Roth 2001, 101–3; cf. Sharpe 1981, 33).

The crucial links in the chain for exposing a filicide were the local pastor and the district police chief, who decided whether or not a forensic post-mortem examination should be performed (Koskivirta 2003, 85–87). The high infant and child mortality rates of nineteenth-century societies—in Finland, for example, about 10,000 out of nearly 60,000 babies born annually in the 1850s did not survive their first year—created opportunities for the concealment of filicide since the sparse network of district doctors had neither the means nor the resources to undertake comprehensive investigations of infant and child deaths. Drowning, suffocation, and strangulation, which in this material were the most common methods employed in reported filicides, did not necessarily leave the victim with any visible injuries (see also Roth 2001, 101–2). It was even more difficult to detect a homicide if a child died as the result of an induced illness, for example, by leaving it outside in bitter cold weather to die of hypothermia. Probably there were also several intentional manslaughters among the deaths caused by drowning, smoke, or fire, for example, that in the courts were deemed to be accidents. Because of the underreporting, the figures presented here can be regarded as minimum estimates. However, on the basis of the court material used here, the motivations and the nature of the crimes can be evaluated more reliably—with the exception of the cases where the accused denied all charges.

THE CHANGING FORMS OF FILICIDE

Key Features and Comparisons: Gender Distribution, Social Status, and the Victim's Age

In mid-nineteenth-century Finland, there were in most years more neonaticide trials than all other kinds of homicide trials put together. For example, 740 neonaticide trials were held compared to 665 trials for murder and intentional manslaughter in the rural courts of Finland in the period 1850–59 (Prokuraattorin toimituskunnan arkisto: Prokuraattorin kertomukset, tilastotaulukot 1850–1859). Thus, neonaticides were far more common than any other kind of intra-familial homicides, too.

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How much less frequent, then, were other parental child homicide trials compared to neonaticide trials? In the 1850s, for example, on average, seventy-four unmarried women were convicted of neonaticide in Finland every year, while typically only five to seven were prosecuted and one to three parents were annually sentenced for other types of child homicide (except for 1857, when the number of child victims rose to eleven). It can be estimated that in the Finnish trial material from the period between the 1810s and the 1860s, neonaticide trials were about fifteen to twenty times more common than trials for other types of filicide; the difference between the rates was broadly comparable with those in late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century New England (Roth 2001, 108). Moreover, trials involving unmarried women accused of other filicides made up not even 2 percent of the equivalent figure for neonaticides (during 1850–59, twelve cases of filicide committed by single mothers, and 740 neonaticide trials).

The proportion of female perpetrators of filicide in pre-modern times was, and still is, much larger than that in other types of homicide (Kauppi 2012; Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011; D’Cruze and Jackson 2009, 47–48). However, filicide in the nineteenth century was not a particularly gender-oriented crime. Excluding five cases where both of the victim’s parents were accused of filicide, 60 percent of the accused in this research material were females, but of all legitimate child victims, over two-thirds (45 children out of a total of 65) were killed by their fathers, stepfathers, or foster fathers. Married mothers, instead, had only a fairly marginal role as perpetrators (21 of the total of 119 accused). The gender distribution of the victims is even more even: of the cases where the gender of the victim is reported, 62 of the victims were female and 65 male children.

The regularity in the gender distribution of the perpetrators of parental child homicides according to the age of the victim detected by Resnick (1969) also holds for nineteenth-century Finland, with fathers rarely being prosecuted for killing a child under one year old (5 of the total of 38 paternal child homicide victims in years 1830–59). Conversely, they still constituted the majority of those accused of the filicide of older children (18 of the total of 27 parental homicide victims over the age of three in 1830–59) (see also Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011, 14–18).

A distinctive feature for both genders, however, was that the perpetrators of filicide mainly came from the lower orders of society: half of the male and over 60 percent of the female perpetrators were servants, cottagers, former soldiers or their wives, dependent lodgers, or vagrants. The only exception to this was married

mothers (18 mothers and 3 stepmothers) as perpetrators of filicide, most of whom were freeholder peasants' and crofters' wives.

One-third of the paternal perpetrators of filicide had to support themselves and their children solely by casual work. This mobile stratum of the population was not only in apparent economic difficulties, but also became a subject of particularly strict social control. Moreover, not only vagrants and dependent lodgers, among whom former soldiers were decidedly overrepresented, but also married farmhands killed their offspring relatively disproportionately to their share of the population; this was a group to whom their growing broods were a significant financial burden. Their status was reflected in something the witnesses at one filicide trial in North Karelia reported the accused farmhand to have said to his pregnant wife: "If you are going to give birth to twins, one of them needs to be killed at birth" (VHO. Alist. as. päätöstalot and alistusakti 83/1831).

All in all, comparing the social composition of the nineteenth-century perpetrators of filicides to modern ones, one difference is crucial: a typical perpetrator of nineteenth-century filicide was of lower social strata than those of other kinds of homicides, whereas in relatively prosperous modern Finland their social composition is more middle-class than that of other homicides (Lehti, Kääriäinen, and Kivivuori 2011). Actually, in the nineteenth century, the lowest social groups were thus under some pressure to commit the crime, but these pressures were subsequently resolved. I shall next turn to these issues.

A Rising Phenomenon: The Infanticide of Illegitimate Non-Neonates

The most striking feature of nineteenth-century filicide is the significantly large proportion of unmarried women among the perpetrators. In over one-third (42 out of 119 perpetrators) of all cases reported, the perpetrators were the unmarried mothers of the victims, and they committed two-thirds (42 out of 63 cases) of all reported maternal filicides. It should be mentioned here that single mothers were also accused in two-thirds of all suffocation trials in Finland between 1830 and 1860.

In the material that I used for my earlier study (Koskivirta 2003), which dealt with homicidal crime in Eastern Finland during the years 1748 to 1808, there were only two cases of unwed mothers killing their (non-neonate) children and ten other types of filicide. In the 1810s alone, there were six filicides of the former type in the same area (Koskivirta 2003; see also Rautelin 2009, 278). This was probably the result of the exceptional situation after the Finnish War, since by the 1830s at

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the latest the violence had abated there, and the filicide statistics were headed by the region of Päijät-Häme in Central Southern Finland (bordering areas of the counties of Mikkeli and Häme).

Compared with these restricted data available for parental child homicide in Finland in the eighteenth century, the proportion of single mothers as perpetrators of filicides seems to have increased noticeably in the nineteenth century, partly reflecting the growth of this population group. Moreover, the context of maternal filicide changed: the main motive in the eighteenth-century court material was marital conflict, but in the following century, the most common background factor was difficulties in providing for the child, which were somehow present in over half of the filicide cases in this research material (for those cases where the motives for the crimes can be evaluated), and especially in cases of filicide committed by unmarried mothers.

The typical form of (non-neonate) filicide committed by single mothers was, in Resnick's terms, infanticide: in the period 1830–59, nearly two-thirds of the victims of unmarried women (21 out of 35) were below the age of one, and only three victims were over the age of three. On the other hand, the court records indicate that for cases involving filicides of children under three years old, unmarried mothers were tried seven times more often than were their married counterparts even though their share of maternal population was only 6 percent. The victimization of the youngest children in Finland seems to have been mainly the result of the single mothers' employment and subsistence difficulties during the children's first years of life. For those children whose murders were motivated by difficulties in providing for the child, the oldest children were aged four. A majority of the unmarried mothers were in dire economic distress at the time of their offenses (on economically distressed women in nineteenth-century Finland, see Miikka Voutilainen's article in this volume).

Livelihood problems in her first year as a mother sealed the fate of the child of a 22-year-old soldier's daughter, called Anna G., in Tyrnävä, Northern Ostrobothnia, after the Finnish War. In June 1810, she drowned her four-month-old illegitimate son in a ditch. Anna's child was conceived when she was serving as a maid to a widow, whose manservant had promised to marry Anna and had entered into a sexual relationship with her. However, after Anna became pregnant, the manservant disappeared from her life in the autumn of 1809. Anna, for her part, gave up her job at the end of her pregnancy with the permission of her mistress and moved to her mother's cottage. Unfortunately, her mother could not help her adult daughter

because she was a poor soldier's widow, who herself had two small children as dependents.

In mid-February, Anna gave birth to a son, and within four weeks, she had used up the money she had saved from her wages. In late March, she had to go out on the road with her child and start begging for subsistence in neighboring villages and parishes. The journeys were long and the people of the region far from generous. At the end of June, Anna met a woman who was a dependent lodger (a person with no land or home of her own) and complained to her that she could not afford to support herself and her son. The woman replied to Anna that she, too, had an illegitimate child, but if she, like Anna, did not have the means to feed it, she would rather drown the child than drag him from one place to another. Anna said that back on the road, she remembered the woman's words and decided to kill her son, believing that they would both otherwise starve to death. Without thinking about the consequences, Anna threw her son into a deep ditch and went on her way. That very same evening Anna came to a farm where she was asked to stay and work for the summer. She told her masters that her child had died in a neighboring parish, and nobody suspected the story because the child had been very ill as a result of his living conditions.

Recent Nordic studies have stressed that the fate of unwed mothers was not as grim as it is presented in folklore or fiction. Although the expenses of the child's maintenance inevitably weakened the mother's economic situation, in the nineteenth century, the safety nets provided by their own parents and other relatives ensured that the vast majority of unmarried mothers still survived moderately well. In many cases, the mother and the child received a minimum standard of security as poor-relief beneficiaries of the parish or, working as housemaids in towns, could afford to pay for childcare somewhere in the countryside. Some of the mothers also eventually married—either their child's father or someone else (Lindstedt Cronberg 1997; Markkola 1986, 80–82; Miettinen 2012, 252, 254; Saarimäki 2010, 108–12; see also Johanna Annola's article in this volume). However, it did not turn out so well for all mothers. The economic situation of single mothers changed decisively at the end of the eighteenth century. In eighteenth-century Finland, it had still not been difficult for mothers with illegitimate children to find employment on farms because of the lack of manpower, but in the early nineteenth century the rapid population growth began to create a surplus of labor. Therefore, a farm no longer needed to engage a maid who had an illegitimate child to look after. For some single mothers, begging remained the only way of supporting themselves and

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their children, and around garrison towns they risked drifting into prostitution. However, there were no mothers living by prostitution among those accused of filicide, a fact which may suggest that prostitutes could afford to support their children or that they had more expert ways of concealing filicide. Even if illegitimate fertility was also at a high level among industrial workers (which itself was a rather small group in Finland in the research period), none of them was accused of filicide in the trial material studied here.

Two illegitimate children aged two became victims of filicide after their mothers had had to withdraw them from childcare because of lack of money. Both mothers said they were going to give their child to the poorhouse in Helsinki, but instead ended up drowning them on their way. Actually, paid babyfarms were far from safe places for children, and occasionally the nurses were accused in court of manslaughter. Actual murder prosecutions of children in care were, however, rare (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot, 25/1845, 89/1847; 17/1842; March 19, 1818, May 8, 1839).

In court, Anna G. was not asked why she had not sought help from the poor-relief system of her home parish. On the other hand, begging in one's home parish was also an integral part of the official poor-relief system in Finland, especially at a time when the other sources of aid were overloaded, as was the case at the time of Anna G.'s crime owing to the Finnish War, which had recently ended. For example, the disbanding of the Swedish army conscripts in Finland in 1809 deprived more than 10,000 soldiers and their families of their source of livelihood, and the resulting social problems that impinged widely on society were also reflected in the incidence of filicide (Danielson-Kalmari 1896; Niemelä 1990, 161–74). In all six filicide trials in the years 1810–12 that were referred to the Governing Council, the accused was a former soldier or a member of a former soldier's family, as in the case of Anna, who was a soldier's daughter. One of the basic messages of Christianity was the idea of charity: "For ye have the poor always with you" (cf. Matt. 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8).

The attitudes towards beggars had previously been merciful, but they harshened as the poverty of the masses started to escalate in the early nineteenth century (Pulma 1987, 32–53; 1994). This change impinged first on people whose own way of life could be blamed for their needy fate, and many included single mothers among them.

Anna confessed to her crime immediately after the child's body was found in the water. She said in the criminal investigation that she had killed her child when she realized that there was no way she could cope together with him since it was his

existence that prevented her from supporting them. Anna said that after her deed she had suffered from constant remorse and contrition—like many of her contemporaries who shared her fate elsewhere in the Western world (Roth 2001).



Figure 1. A farm mistress, a boy, and a beggar. A sketch by Severin Falkman 1882. Source: *I Östra Finland* (Falkman 1882, 24).

The detailed investigation continued from one district court session to the next because the court wanted to ascertain whether the child's father and the dependent lodger woman whom Anna had met were implicated in the crime. Although Anna herself had asked in court that the trial should not be protracted because she had confessed to her crime and was ready to face the consequences, the proceedings dragged on because the judge and lay jurors were obliged to identify and investigate

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any circumstances that might mitigate Anna's guilt.

Even so, since Anna's crime fulfilled the specific criteria of homicide of a close relative, and the prison physician regarded her as *compos mentis*, the district court and the court of appeal had no choice but to sentence her to death. The verdict was sent via the Governing Council to the Tsar for ratification. Although the Criminal Code, the Bible, and the popular sense of justice of the time required a life for a life, the Tsar had the power to commute a capital sentence if the crime was committed in strongly extenuating circumstances (Koskivirta 2003, 36–37). The wording of Anna's plea to the Tsar for clemency indicates that the pastor who had composed her letter felt compassion for her fate. She asked for pardon because she had committed her crime in an unfortunate situation in which she was obliged to choose between two inescapable alternatives: either starving to death together with her child or saving him from suffering a long and painful demise. By killing the child, she could at least save one life: her own.

Justice was tempered with mercy, as the Governing Council and the Tsar commuted Anna's capital sentence on the grounds of particularly extenuating circumstances. Anna was sentenced to atone for her crime by suffering corporal punishment and by serving a sentence of six years' hard labor (Senaatin [hallituskonseljini] oikeusosasto. Anomus- ja valitusakti SOO Ea 10/1811. Pääöstaltio Da2: 288/1811). However, in the following comparable case, clemency yielded to deterrent control policy. In Southern Ostrobothnia, Lovisa B., exhausted from supporting herself and her three-year-old illegitimate son by casual work and begging from house to house and having ended up killing him, atoned for her crime with the death penalty in 1812 (Senaatin [hallituskonseljini] oikeusosasto. Anomus- ja valitusakti SOO Ea 66/1813. Pääöstaltio Da5: 435/1814).

In the period of this research, the mental distress caused by the social conditions in which unmarried mothers lived was not medicalized to the same extent as in parts of the English-speaking world, where the plight and suffering of poor unmarried mothers were increasingly viewed as factors affecting their mental state that could diminish their criminal responsibility (cf. Roth 2001; Rabin 2002). This seems to be one reason why sentences for filicide in the English-speaking world were often much more lenient than in the Nordic countries. In Britain and New England, mothers in distress were typically released after no more than a few weeks or months in prison, while in Finland the minimum sentence in specifically extenuating circumstances was six years' hard labor combined with a half of the maximum prison sentence (which was twenty-eight days) on bread and water. Although in the

broader context of Western Europe the penal policy seems harsh, it was milder than for other forms of homicide in Finland (and presumably also in Sweden, where the same criminal legislation remained in force until the 1860s).

The Chronological and Regional Incidence

The fluctuations in the rates of filicides in Finland followed the results of Roth's comparative analysis of early modern child murders, including neonaticides, in New England. All kinds of child murders first decreased in the eighteenth century as food supplies increased and the agricultural economy stabilized, only to increase dramatically from the 1820s onwards. Roth sees the nineteenth-century growth of neonaticide and infanticide rates as a result of a complex social development, which included intensifying pressures on young unwed mothers, the decreasing proportion of women who married, the declining value of children as a productive resource, the rising costs of raising them to maturity, and the declining quality of life for most children from the 1820s on. In New England, new revivalist movements also exacerbated the situation of unwed mothers by stigmatizing extramarital sexual relations and the pregnancies resulting from them (Roth 2001, 119–20; for Sweden, Bergenlöv 2009, 202–26). Despite the great geographical distance between Finland and New England, the same economic factors characteristic of the nineteenth-century Western world may partly explain the parallel development in Finland, where the number of filicides rose in the provinces of Savo and Karelia in the 1810s. The connection between filicide and the economic situation of the population can also be observed in wider geographic areas in the 1830s, from which a comprehensive body of trial material concerning the whole of Finland is preserved (see appendix 1, tables 1a–1e).

Although homicide rates in general usually fall in times of economic depression, the number of all kinds of filicides tends to increase. Many studies have shown a connection between famine and filicide, or child abandonment, and the same link also seems to have existed in nineteenth-century Finland (Conley 1999, 75; Howarth and Leaman 2004). The reasons for filicide during the years of crop failure are obvious: the weaker the overall nutrition situation was, the more difficult it became to feed offspring (cf. Roth 2001, 109–14).

In times when the harvest was normal, and thus the price of food and the demand for labor were reasonable, problems in providing for children appeared only occasionally as a motivation for crime. Thus, there was a plateau period in filicides from the early 1840s until the mid-1850s (see appendix 1, tables 1c-1d).

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On the contrary, most of these crimes were concentrated in three periods of crisis: the years following the Finnish War of 1808–09; the early 1830s, when there was a severe hunger crisis in Eastern and Northern Finland; and the winter and spring after the crop failures and epidemics of 1856.

In the period 1807–13, the nutritional situation was especially weak in Central and Northern Finland because of a series of crop failures (Turpeinen 1991, 310–31; Kauranen 1999, 16, 93). As a result, there were dramatic cases of filicides in Ostrobothnia and Northern Karelia where actually all parental child homicides reported from 1810s were poverty-related, if the latter is defined as filicide committed by the lowest strata of the society or the same crime with the motivation of economic distress (see appendix 1, table 1a). The situation of Southern Finland cannot be studied since no homicide trial material from the 1810s has survived. The most severe hunger crisis of the period of this study took place in Northern Finland in 1832 and 1833, resulting locally in an even more dramatic rise in mortality than in the years of the great famine of the late 1860s (Kauranen 1999, 16). The period of crisis is reflected in the numbers of filicides, which peaked in Finland in the 1830s. It is still paradoxical that there were only three trials of parental child homicides in the province of Oulu in Northern Finland in the 1830s; furthermore, trials where unmarried mothers were charged with filicide were lacking both there and in the province of Vaasa. This may have been because of high mortality among single parents themselves, and, very likely to underreporting of the crimes as local authorities had more acute larger-scale problems to solve than individual violent crimes within the family. Instead of that, the typical filicide of the early 1830s (like the late 1850s) was committed by parents who, debilitated by hunger and disease, had acted in the throes of delirium or were suffering from an aberration triggered by malnutrition (thirteen cases in the 1830s, and five cases in the years 1857–59 in Finland) (e.g., VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot Jan 16, 1834; Feb 11, 1834). An example in this sense was the case of Gabriel V., a tailor in Heinola in Southern Häme, who, because of a severe food shortage in the spring of 1857, had to work on the railway construction site in order to be able to feed his family. The man had had to work hard even when he had fallen victim to pneumonia, but finally he had had to stay in his cottage. There, while hallucinating because of a high fever, he had wounded his two small children with tailor's scissors. When people from the neighborhood came to help, he told them with his face shining with joy that he had served the Savior by dispatching his beloved innocent children to heaven. After that, the taylor lost consciousness and had to spend one month in a hospital to recover. Similar family tragedies also

took place in the province of Savo, and even on the southern coast of Finland (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot; alistusakti 34/1857). Nearly two-thirds of the reported filicides of the decade were related to poverty (see appendix 1, table 1b).

In the period 1856–57, a large proportion of the population of Finland was suffering from malnutrition. Most maternal and paternal filicides took place then in the province of Savo, crofter areas of the province of Häme, and in Helsinki, where many underemployed landless people and single mothers ended up after seeking permanent work opportunities elsewhere, often without success. In the 1850s, over three-quarters of filicides were poverty-related (appendix 1, table 1d). Around the same time, neonaticides likewise increased, finally peaking before the great famine of 1867–68 (Ervasti 1995, 72–74).

The hard times following the mid-1850s were also reflected in the deaths of some illegitimate children in Helsinki, now the capital of Finland. At the end of April 1855, Maria Lovisa L. drowned her three-month-old illegitimate son Gustav. She had been in deep distress when she committed her crime. After giving birth to her son, she had tried to make a living as a seamstress, but she failed to earn enough money to support herself. According to witnesses, Maria was so poor that even the clothes she wore were borrowed. At the end of April, Maria asked her son's father, who had previously given them some support, for help. This time, however, he refused. After returning home, Maria's landlady, who had been looking after her son, reproached her for being away too long. Dismayed by two consecutive setbacks, Maria said that she had come to the conclusion that it would be better to save the child from continuing distress and hunger. She went to the seashore and drowned him. That same afternoon, she got work in a laundry and moved to a new abode arranged by her employer, whom she had told that she had found a place in the countryside where her son would be taken care of. However, an infant was later found in the water and was identified as her son (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot; alistusakti 42/1855).

The case was not unique in Helsinki in those years. For example, in spring 1857, a twenty-three-year-old woman called Erika Sofia A. drowned her two-year-old illegitimate son in a puddle in the woods in the Kallio area. Erika had walked nearly sixty-five miles with her child to the capital to look for a job and a livelihood after her poor parents' food stocks had run out in the spring. However, she could not find any employment, and to get by with her son, she was reduced to begging and selling sticks gathered from the woods. Since Erika and her son had to spend the night during the late spring in the forest, Erika began to fear that she would be

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apprehended by the police as a vagrant. When she thought about her own situation, she started to feel that her son was actually the only obstacle preventing her from gaining access to a more regular life. Consequently, she ended up drowning him just before Midsummer's Day in 1857 (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot ja alistusakti. 62/1857). As in the cases of Anna G. and Lovisa B. in the 1810s, the recurrence of two very similar and almost simultaneous crimes within the same region in the 1850s also resulted in a more severe sentence for the perpetrator of the latter crime. The Justice Department of the Senate sentenced the seamstress Maria to hard labor for six years, while Erika's sentence was for sixteen years. This may indicate that the sentences passed for recurrent cases at some level also reflected the deterrent objectives of the control policy.

Attitudes toward unwed mothers who killed their non-neonate children were twofold. Although giving birth to an illegitimate child in principle damaged a woman's reputation, they were not considered to be as morally degenerate as murderers of neonates (cf. Bergenlöv 2002, 256–57). Unwed mothers nevertheless had borne the legal and economic responsibility for their act and also had had to endure the social opprobrium brought about by the Church's statutory ritual shaming practices. They had tried to cope in their lives regardless of the difficulties they had to face as a result of single motherhood (Frykman 1977, 134–58). Although single mothers had had to endure the disgrace attached to their illicit sexual relationships and to put themselves at the mercy of others, the limits of their tolerance of shame were often exceeded if they faced the risk of being caught up in the system of societal disciplinary sanctions. For example, Erika Sofia (above), who was forced to live with her son in the woods outside Helsinki, became afraid of being apprehended as a vagrant and ended up killing the child before the threat of being sent to a hard-labor institution (the sanction for vagrancy) was carried out. One of the motives for some paternal filicides was actually the same.

Where did the filicides committed by distressed parents take place? Paternal child murders were mostly concentrated in North Karelia, while the cases with single mothers as perpetrators came to light throughout the province of Häme in central southern Finland and in the capital, Helsinki, in the province of Uusimaa, and in a lesser extent also in the provinces of Southern and Northern Ostrobothnia in the west and north-west of Finland (see appendix 1, table 1e). In Häme and the nearby region of Helsinki, the crimes were connected with high levels of illegitimate fertility (Ervasti 1995, 76–79; Miettinen 2012, 156–57; Turpeinen 1981, 14–15), and near the towns of Vaasa, Kuopio, Hämeenlinna, and Helsinki, some

single mothers were also prosecuted for lethal child neglect (THO. Alist. as. päätös-taltiot 45/1839; 12/1841; 45/1841). Of all cases of filicides studied here, 22 out of a total of 130 took place in towns or parishes in their immediate neighborhood.

Province	Unwed Mothers	Poverty-Related In Total	Filicides In Total
Uusimaa	9	10	16
Turku	1	4	10
Häme	9	11	19
Heinola / Mikkeli	5	10	13
Kuopio	3	12	14
Vaasa	4	10	17
Oulu	2	7	10
Vyborg	2	10	10
All counties in total	35	74	109

Table 2. Filicides committed by unwed mothers / All poverty-related filicides / Filicides in total in Finland by location in 1830–59. Source: The verdicts and files of the Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg courts of appeal, and the Senate, 1810–19, 1830–60.

In Southern Ostrobothnia, where violent crime of all kinds was at an exceptionally high level during the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of marital murders and fratricides was many times higher than in the rest of Finland (Ylikangas 1998, 11–43, for example). However, the difference in filicides was not nearly as pronounced even if they were not an unknown phenomenon there. This may indicate a certain level of underreporting of filicides because of extremely high rates of other homicides, for at least the perpetrators of reported child homicides in Ostrobothnia had lived, on average, in harder circumstances than the perpetrators elsewhere in Finland. In Southern and Northern Ostrobothnia, where the rate of illegitimate births and neonaticides was low (Ervasti 1995, 76–79; Turpeinen 1981, 14–15), it seems that the attitudes toward single mothers were especially deprecatory. For example, in May 1838, the dean of Southern Ostrobothnia, Erik Johan Snellman, was harsh in his treatment of Margareta H., who had given birth to an illegitimate son only five days earlier. Walking a route of sixty-five miles to meet her son's father, she visited the parsonage in Alavus with her newborn son in her arms. However, the vicar not only refused to let her and her child spend the night at the parsonage, but also refused to confirm the emergency baptism given for her son, who was ill. Next day on the road, not having eaten, Margareta had taken fright as the child seemed to have stopped breathing, and drowned him in Kangasjärvi

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Lake, where she also tried to drown herself (THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltiot 62/1839; 98/1840). In addition, Anna G., who wandered around Northern Ostrobothnia begging with her sick child in 1810, stated in court that the local people usually gave her nothing. And in Southern Ostrobothnia, Anna H., the mother of a one-year-old daughter, wanted to move back to her birthplace in Sweden to avoid the shame that she had had to face in the locality on account of her illegitimate child. After giving birth to her daughter, she had been forced to quit her job as a housemaid, and, subsequently, without a job or source of livelihood, had lived in destitution with her relatives. She tried to escape from the dire situation by poisoning her daughter with nitric acid. The shame she claimed to have faced was probably a reference to the disapproval of the local community. In fact, the reason for her deed was again the lack of available work opportunities resulting from the fact that she was responsible for taking care of her child. Problems of this kind often diminished as the child grew older, but in this case the mother had totally exhausted her savings on the child's maintenance (VHO. Alistusakti 92/1840; alist. as. päätöstaltio 11/1846; Miettinen 2012, 260).

It is noteworthy that filicide trials of unmarried mothers were most rare (only one case) in Southwest Finland (Province of Turku), which was the most prosperous area of the country. Such crimes were perhaps prevented there by the existence of a more advanced poor-relief system than was the case in the rest of Finland (Pulma 1994, 48–49). Still, begging for their children's living seems to have been considered especially humiliating there since two other parental filicides were motivated by the stress and anxiety that begging had caused (e.g., THO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 67/1837).

On the other hand, filicides committed especially by unmarried mothers were not a feature of Finland's poorest regions, either. There were only a few filicide trials where mendicant mothers were accused in Savo and Karelia in Eastern Finland, although the poverty of the landless proletariat there reached its nadir suddenly as the labor-intensive slash-and-burn method of cultivation started to tail off in the 1830s. Unlike Western Finland, where the agrarian proletariat lived in separate cottages, the under-privileged of Eastern Finland lived as dependent lodgers in the porches and saunas of farmhouses and were, therefore, more tightly bound to the large households of landed peasant farmers (Pulma 1994, 51–55). Single mothers, too, would seem to have been protected by such patriarchal bonds. At least there were always eyes to watch over an illegitimate child when its mother had some casual work to do.

There was one other factor that alleviated the situation of unmarried mothers in Eastern Finland: St. Petersburg, with all the opportunities it offered, was not far away. It was possible to seek a new life there; for example, a single mother could work as a wet nurse for the city's founding hospital (Pulma 1987, 36–38). Nevertheless, walking there with a child to carry was burdensome, and not all the mothers who undertook the journey reached their destination. One of them was a tenant farmer's widow called Valborg H. from Mäntyharju in Southeastern Finland, who was carrying her nine-week-old illegitimate twins on the road to St. Petersburg in August 1842. In Muolaa, on the Karelian Isthmus, she buried the twins under a fallen tree. However, the bodies were found, and the mother was indicted for the murder of her children (ViHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 24/1844). There is no doubt that Valborg had become exhausted carrying her twins on the 200-mile journey. In some nomadic cultures, twins are commonly killed for similar reasons (Ball and Hill 1996).

Paternal Filicides: Contrasting Ideals and Realities

Before industrialization, which started in Finland in the 1870s, the cornerstone of society was a patriarchal family unit headed by a landed freeholder peasant master in which he and the mistress of the farm each had their own responsibilities. The master's duty was to provide a livelihood for the family, raise the children, and instill in them a sense of order and fear of God, while the mistress, for her part, had to take care of the household duties and the well-being of its members (Pulma 1994; Hanska and Vainio-Korhonen 2010). The system was supported by informal social safety nets, communities of relatives and the neighborhood that, for example, ensured the survival of single mothers, and of motherless or fatherless children. As the demographic focus shifted to population groups below the landed peasants, an increasing proportion of the adult population was separated from this patriarchal lifestyle and its safety nets, many ending up pursuing an itinerant life as vagrants, dependent lodgers, or single mothers, and more and more children as beggars. Coincidentally, attitudes toward the proletariat became less compassionate, as happened elsewhere in Europe, too. This was reflected, for example, in the fact that the marriages of dependent lodgers started to arouse moral indignation from the 1840s onwards because their child support became the responsibility of their home parishes (see, for example, the texts of J. V. Snellman in the newspaper *Saima*, Snellman 1845; 1846a-c; Häkkinen 2006).

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In fact, the precarious situation of dependent lodger families made them one of the major sources of filicides in nineteenth-century Finland. Thus, closer scrutiny gives rise to a hypothesis that the patriarchal bonds of large freeholder peasant households prevented filicide from being one-sided. The children of the landless proletariat typically became victims of homicide when the perpetrator and her child ran the risk of being excluded from the community of the farm household rather than after this had already happened. An example of this is the case of a family of dependent lodgers in Nilsjä in Northern Savo in Eastern Finland. The parents reacted to their eviction from the sauna in which they had lived in the middle of the freezing cold of February by opening up the entrance to the sauna to create a draught, in which they then left their scantily clad five-month-old daughter for several hours. The child soon caught a fever and died, and the parents were prosecuted for manslaughter (ViHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 38/1856).

Although by the 1830s begging children had become a common and permanent phenomenon in Eastern Finland, some parents preferred to sacrifice their children's lives rather than put them on the road to beg for charity. The obligations of patriarchal bonds—that is, the responsibilities not only of heads of households but also of fathers regardless of their social position—are also reflected in the fact that all the paternal multi-victim filicides to be found in the research material were carried out in a situation in which the father feared that his child or children would starve or be homeless. Paternal filicides were often preceded by a distraint or an eviction order, especially in North Karelia, and also both of the crimes of this type committed in Eastern Finland between 1748 and 1808 were motivated by economic distress (Koskivirta 2003; 2009).

Paternal multi-victim filicides were undoubtedly crimes of desperation in their most extreme form. In 1833, in Liperi, after a distraint, a father of eight children, the cottager Anders R., killed his wife, three of his children, and a tenant who had lived in his cottage. The Senate, however, regarded his acts as the result of a mental aberration. Unlike him, Elias N., a tenant farmer and dependent on poor relief in Jääski, killed four of his children with an axe while drunk just before Christmas 1849 and was held fully responsible for his crime. Right before his act, the creditors had commandeered the family's last sheep, and the parish authorities threatened the family with eviction. Elias himself had been afraid that his children would become itinerant waifs (VHO. Päätöstaltio Di 98 6/1834. Senaatin oikeusosasto SOO Ea 1055; ViHO. Päätöstaltio 17/1853).

Dependence on other people's charity was perceived as particularly shameful to able-bodied fathers and was a background factor for a filicide committed by a recently widowed former soldier, Anders T., in March 1811. Anders, who was known to be hard-working but bibulous, had, after the Finnish War, roamed the roads of Northern Finland with his twelve-year-old daughter, looking for job opportunities and had stolen grain from farm storehouses in order to survive. In late autumn 1811, the absence of the daughter from the company of her father attracted the attention of the local people in Kiiminki, and Anders explained that Maria was with relatives in Kemi. However, the local authorities became curious of Maria's fate after Anders had tried to sell his daughter's clothes, and, moreover, had told some men of the village who had asked about her that they could be sure that Maria would never again open their doors to beg for her morsels (of bread). In the interrogation, he confessed to having beaten his daughter to death on the road in October 1811 (VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio 45/1811; Senaatin [hallituskonseljin] oikeusosasto 1812/SOO Ea77a).

The case of Anders reflects not only the difficult situation of the former soldiers after the Finnish War but also the parental challenges of landless widowed men. It is significant that nearly 40 percent of all reported filicides in this nineteenth-century trial material were committed by single parents of both sexes since the offspring of widowed men also ran the risk of becoming victims of filicide. This may be a phenomenon characteristic of the nineteenth century because studies of eighteenth-century homicides in Finland do not reveal such crimes. This development reflects the worsening opportunities for the lowest stratum of society to marry (or, in this case, remarry), with the result that children were seen as a greater obstacle than before to a new marriage. The harshness of everyday realities was present in the fate of the one-and-a-half-year-old daughter of a widowed farmhand, Heikki Ä., in Pielisjärvi, North Karelia. After his wife's death in 1830, he proposed to a housemaid serving in the neighborhood, but she did not want to commit herself to a man who already had children. Then Heikki answered her by telling that his children would not live long, and soon after that, he was accused in the local court of child homicide (VHO, päätöstaltio; alistusakti 83/1831).

The large share of widowed men among the perpetrators of filicide also reflects the difficulties experienced by single men without land of their own in taking care of their children alone. On the other hand, the fact that social support was available for the children of widowed mothers, whose predicament raised compassion in

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society, probably prevented them from resorting to filicide (only one trial, which resulted in acquittal).

Irrespective of the sex of the perpetrator, many homicidal acts were connected with the perpetrators' dependence on the goodwill of their freeholder peasant masters. For example, the crying of a sick child could cause fear of eviction. This fear was often justified, as is exemplified in the case of a former soldier, Olli K., who, after the Finnish War, had become a dependent lodger. In the autumn of 1811, he, his wife, and their four children had to move to a new place in North Karelia because their crying infant had annoyed the masters of the farm. As the loud crying continued in their new dwelling place, and as his wife had moreover told him that she had to go with their children to beg for their living, Olli, when drunk, stabbed his eighteen-month-old son to death (VHO. Alist. as. päätöstaltio ja alistusakti 24/1812).

Infectious diseases also raised the fear of exclusion among parents who were dependent on their hosts. This was the cause of the extreme act of one Eva S., a dependent lodger who drowned her sick three-year-old illegitimate daughter in a well. She had concealed her daughter's illness as she feared that, if it were discovered, they would be driven off the farm where they were living and would become homeless vagrants. Eva managed to give the impression that her daughter's death was an accident, as she was known to love the child very deeply (ViHO. Päätöstaltio 6/1855).

The more the rural proletariat increased, the greater the share of the population excluded from the socialization and care that had taken place in freeholder peasant household units (Pulma 1987, 1994), and such a fate also was feared by landless parents.

SOME SOCIETAL REACTIONS

As in many Western European countries, there was a lively discussion about neonaticide in the press in Finland, especially in the late 1850s. However, child homicide in which the victims were not newborns was not recognized as a social problem in Finland because it was overshadowed by the more acute issue of neonaticide. In addition to neonaticides, two maternal filicides of illegitimate children that took place in Helsinki the latter half of the 1850s (see above) may have inspired Tsar Alexander II to propose that the neonaticide problem be solved by building a network of foundling homes in Finland, following existing Russian and Western European examples. Especially in the eighteenth century, such homes had been

established in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe partly to prevent infanticide (neonaticide) and partly to protect the honor of families whose daughters had given birth to illegitimate children (Ransel 1988, 8–105). Resulting from extreme economic exigencies, married couples also had to abandon their children to foundling homes in nineteenth-century Russia and Southern Europe (Fuchs 2005, 230–31).

The Tsar's proposal, however, was abruptly rejected by the Finnish debaters as having a morally corrupting effect on lower-class women, an argument typical of northern Protestant societies, whose value systems stressed individuals' own responsibility for their actions. The foundling hospitals were also alleged to be unlawful as they offered an opportunity for unwed mothers to conceal their crime of fornication. Another reason for rejecting these institutions was that they had caused severe problems elsewhere since child abandonment had increased to vast proportions in countries where these institutions had been established—for example, in France, Italy, Ireland, and Russia. Moreover, the high mortality in these institutions was the main argument evinced to oppose their establishment in Finland (Ransel 1988, 30–105). In the United Kingdom, a bare subsistence for poor single mothers was also provided in austere workhouses (Bartley 2000, 105), but similar institutions in Finland were mainly associated with penitentiaries and thus shunned by many single mothers who did not want to lose what was left of their respectability by being designated as vagrants, which would be a legal ground for committing them to such an institution.

In the Finnish public debate of the late 1850s, the (assumed) free sex lives of proletarian women were seen as a greater moral threat than the occasional loss of innocent lives, and raising the people's moral standards was regarded as the only way to prevent neonaticide. The corruption of sexual morals, which in fact was a result of the reduced economic ability of members of the landless proletariat to get married, was blamed not on such structural factors but rather on the immorality of the individual perpetrators and the liberal law reforms of the Swedish King Gustav III in the late eighteenth century, which had aimed to reduce the public humiliation that illegitimate mothers had to endure after giving birth (newspaper articles about foundling homes and neonaticides: "Om hittebarnshus," *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, No. 126, June 4, 1858; "Landsorterna," *Helsingfors Tidningar*, No. 44, June 4, 1858; "Hittebarnshus utan prydnad," *Vasabladet* No. 26, June 26, 1858; "Ett och annat om Barnhus," *Åbo Underrättelser* No. 51, July 2, 1858; "Något om barnamord," *Åbo Tidningar*, No. 56, July 20, 1858; "Om barnhus," *Åbo Tidningar*, No. 89, November

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12, 1858; [untitled], *Åbo Tidningar*, No. 93, November 26, 1858; also Lindstedt Cronberg 1997).

It is obvious that the extent of child abandonment was not as great in Finland as in countries with foundling hospitals, but the price for this was undoubtedly paid in the numbers of neonaticides and filicides. Child beggary also increased to become a visible social problem in Finland, a development that also hardened common attitudes toward the rural underclass. For example, there were cases where orphaned children under seven years of age were left on their own to survive by begging from house to house at the mercy of local people in order to avoid burdening the parish poor-relief funds (VHO, *alistusakti Ece* 28:1849).

Instead of establishing foundling homes, Tsar Alexander II issued a decree aimed at the prevention of neonaticide in May 1861 (“Hittebarnshus i Finland,” *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, No. 126, June 4, 1858; “Åtgärder förekommande af barnamord,” *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, No. 128, June 5, 1861). The new element in this provision was that the responsibility of families and midwives to supervise unmarried women was in principle extended from the pre-natal to the post-natal period. Families and midwives were ordered to inform the poor-relief authorities if a parturient lacked a source of livelihood. It is very possible that the Tsar’s decree was also an expression of his desire to prevent the filicides of older illegitimate children; at least he was acquainted with the tragic histories leading to up these crimes from dealing with clemency pleas relating to them.

CONCLUSIONS

In pre-industrial Europe, a child homicide victim was most often an illegitimate newborn infant who was murdered or abandoned by its mother. Homicides in which the victims were older children of the perpetrators have been overshadowed by these neonaticides, both in terms of the concern that they caused to contemporaries and as an object of systematic research. The marginality of the murders of non-neonate children is reflected in the fact that, for example, in Finland in the 1850s, the reported parental child homicides of victims over twenty-four hours old, here referred to as filicides, accounted for only 5 percent of the sum total of neonaticides.

The source material of this study consists of 130 non-neonate filicide trials from the 1810s to the 1850s in Finland. Although these crimes were rare, the changes in the nature of filicide reflected the increasing social problems in pre-industrial nineteenth-century Finland. Over half of both maternal and paternal offenders

came from the lowest strata of society. Moreover, unlike in the eighteenth century, unmarried mothers were accused in court not only of neonaticide but also increasingly of the filicide of their non-neonate children. In a third of all filicide cases and in two-thirds of maternal filicides, the perpetrator was a single mother, and the main motivation for the crime was overwhelmingly economic. The reasons for the development were population growth and the proletarianization undermining single mothers' opportunities to earn a living for themselves and their children.

Owing to the large number of non-neonate infanticides and filicides committed by single mothers, maternal filicides accounted for a majority (60 percent) of all child victims in this material, while as many as two-thirds of the *legitimate child victims* were killed by their fathers. The age of the victims of paternal filicide was noticeably higher than that of the victims of maternal filicide, and particularly of those killed by single mothers, whose victims were mostly under three years of age.

However, difficulties in supporting the children as well as the diminishing opportunities for marriage were reflected not only in filicides committed by single mothers but also in those perpetrated by widowed fathers. Even more dramatic consequences of a dire economic situation were the simultaneous filicides of more than one victim committed by fathers who were crofters or dependent lodgers under threat of eviction following distraint or in a delusional febrile state caused by malnutrition. All in all, the livelihood problems of one or both of the parents were a background factor in half of the filicide cases in this research material, and nearly 40 percent of the reported perpetrators were single parents.

Crimes of desperation of this kind, that is, child homicides motivated by dire distress over the livelihood of the members of the family, took place in periods of crisis and were, therefore, overshadowed by contemporary social problems on a larger scale. Consequently, the filicide of older children did not arouse moral panic or concern among the authorities, nor, unlike neonaticide, was the phenomenon discussed in the press. Moreover, non-neonate filicide committed by unmarried women was not seen as a matter of sexual morality on the same scale as neonaticide. Although they were unmarried, women who committed non-neonate filicide had not concealed their pregnancies in order to avoid the judicial and economic consequences of their illicit extramarital relationships, nor had they used murder as a tool to maintain their virtuous reputation. Rather, their acts of filicide were most often the result of a dire situation following their unsuccessful attempts to live up to their responsibilities in supporting their children.

Even so, apart from the attempt to conceal the shame ensuing from an

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extramarital pregnancy, many of the background factors that were present in neonaticide also lay behind the filicide of older children committed by unmarried mothers. The loss of work and social isolation, the fear of which motivated many neonaticides, had also become everyday realities for some single mothers who committed non-neonate infanticide or filicide. Mainly because they feared that they would have a corrupting effect on the sexual morality of proletarian women, the authorities, who stressed individuals' responsibility for their actions, refused to create specific forms of social support for mothers of illegitimate children, a measure which might have prevented not only neonaticide but also other types of filicide. This is demonstrated by the fact that reported filicides committed by poor widowed mothers, whose dire situation usually aroused compassion in their communities and whose moral right to poor relief was not questioned, were extremely rare.

APPENDIX 1

Tables 1a–1e: Filicides in Finland: three types of poverty-related filicides and total number of filicides, chronological and regional incidence in years 1810–19 (district of Vaasa court of appeal, including three provinces), and years 1830–59 (Grand Duchy of Finland, i.e., the jurisdictional districts of Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg courts of appeal including seven provinces).

Province / Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Kuopio	6	1	0	7	7
Vaasa	1	1	0	2	2
Oulu	1	1	1	3	3
Total, Provinces	8	3	1	12	12

Table 1a. Filicides in 1810–19, District of Vaasa court of appeal.

Province/Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	3	0	1	4	7
Turku	0	2	1	3	4
Häme	4	1	0	5	8
Heinola/Mikkeli	2	1	0	3	5
Kuopio	2	4	0	6	8
Vaasa	1	0	1	2	7
Oulu	0	2	0	2	3
Vyborg	0	0	3	3	3
Total, Provinces	12	10	6	28	45

Table 1b. Filicides in 1830–39, Grand Duchy of Finland.

Province/Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	2	0	0	2	3
Turku	1	0	0	1	5
Häme	2	1	0	3	5
Heinola/Mikkeli	2	1	0	3	5
Kuopio	1	0	0	1	1
Vaasa	1	2	1	4	4
Oulu	0	1	1	2	3
Vyborg	2	0	0	2	2
Total, provinces	11	5	2	18	28

Table 1c. Filicides 1840–49, Grand Duchy of Finland.

Province/Type of Poverty	Um**	OP	O	PRF Total	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	4	0	0	4	6
Turku	0	0	0	0	1
Häme	3	0	0	3	6
Heinola/Mikkeli	1	1	2	4	3
Kuopio	0	1	4	5	5
Vaasa	2	0	2	4	6
Oulu	2	0	1	3	4
Vyborg	0	5	0	5	5
Total, provinces	12	7	9	28	36

Table 1d. Filicides 1850–59, Grand Duchy of Finland.*

Province/Type of Poverty	PRF**	Fil. Total
Uusimaa	10	16
Turku	4	10
Häme	11	19
Heinola/Mikkeli	10	13
Kuopio	12	14
Vaasa	10	17
Oulu	7	10
Vyborg	10	10
Total, provinces	74	109

Table 1e. Number of poverty-related filicides and all filicides, Grand Duchy of Finland 1830–1859.

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* Poverty-related filicides (PRF) here: verdicts being passed on single mothers, farmhands, cottagers, dependent lodgers, former soldiers and their wives, vagrants, and beggars. Crofters, freeholder peasants and craftsmen and their wives are not considered to be poor except in cases where economic distress or hallucinations due to disease caused by malnutrition were a background factor for their crimes. Figures are based on the number of victims.

** Um: Unmarried mothers, OP: other poor, O: Other filicides with a background of economic distress, Fil. Total: total number of filicides.

In the figures presented elsewhere in this article, filicides motivated by other reasons than economic distress even if the accused was a member of the poorest population groups are excluded when dealing with the proportion of poverty-related filicides compared to all filicides.

Sources for tables 1a–1e: The verdicts and files of Finnish courts of appeal and the Senate, 1810–20 (Vaasa court of appeal), 1830–60 (Turku, Vaasa, and Vyborg courts of appeal). In addition to the figures shown in tables 1a–b, the figures of this article include two cases of filicide from the district of Turku court of appeal committed in the 1810s, material which was found in the archive of the Senate. It also includes six cases of filicides committed in the 1820s, the verdicts on which were given in the 1830s.

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