



# Fetal Kidnapping/Abduction A Depraved and Evil Crime

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## **Introduction**

Fetal Kidnapping/Abduction murders of pregnant women for their unborn babies are brutal and savage crimes.

The offender literally cuts and rips the fetus from the victim mother's womb in a bizarre replication of a cesarean section procedure. This type of homicide is statistically rare, but not without precedent. The first recorded incident of Fetal Kidnapping took place in 1974 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. However, this case was not recorded in the previous cited research. Regrettably these horrific cases, which occur sporadically, have escalated over the years. In fact, Fetal Kidnapping/Abductions have tripled since these cases were first recorded in 1987.

In an article published in 2002 by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences entitled, “*Newborn Kidnapping by Cesarean Section*” authored by Burgess, et al. the authors presented **six (6)** cases as reference in the clinical identification of a new category of personal cause homicide for *The Crime Classification Manual* now in its Third Edition.

### Clarification of Terms and Current Research

The author prefers **not** to use the clinical term *Cesarean section* because it connotes a medical procedure. A **Cesarean section** is a surgical procedure in which the abdomen and uterus are incised and a baby is delivered transabdominally. The procedure is normally performed when conditions exist in which a vaginal delivery might be hazardous to the mother and/or infant. The well-being of mother and child is taken into consideration during a Cesarean section. Obviously, an offender who commits such a reprehensible crime is not concerned about the victim mother.

Offenders who wantonly rip the fetus from the mother-victim’s womb demonstrate an unspeakable evil as they slaughter the innocent victim-mother for her unborn child.



This figure illustrates how an offender can cut across the abdomen to remove the fetus from the victim mother. Courtesy of Medical Legal Art Illustration, Copyright 2005 Medical Legal Art, [www.doerport.co](http://www.doerport.co)

In 2005, the author conducted a separate study that would relate to law enforcement considerations in these type cases. The research of 2005 established Seven (7) documented cases of homicide in which the offender(s) killed a pregnant woman, described as a victim mother, for the purpose of obtaining the victim mother’s fetus.

The author also has included **Two (2)** Attempt Theft of Fetus cases for a total of **Nine (9)** incidents. These findings were published in an article entitled; ***Homicides Involving the Theft of a Fetus from a Pregnant Victim.*** (Geberth 2006)

In 2015 the author conducted additional research into these heinous crimes which indicated that the number of cases of Theft of Fetus had increased and **nearly doubled since 2005**. I had identified **fourteen (14)** cases of

homicide due to Fetal Kidnapping/Abduction and two Attempt Theft of Fetus cases for a total of **sixteen (16) incidents**. These results were published in an article for PI Magazine ***Fetal Kidnapping: The Extraction of a Fetus from a Pregnant Woman*** which was very timely because there was a case which occurred in the Bronx that very same year and the Bronx District Attorney's office used the information from that publication during the prosecution. This research is published in my textbook Practical Homicide Investigation under "***Homicides Involving Theft of a Fetus.***"

### **Current Statistics**

Currently, my research indicates that there are now **Twenty-Three (23)** cases of Fetal Kidnapping/Abduction in the United States. These include **Twenty (20)** cases of fetal kidnapping/Abduction and **Three (3)** attempted cases. **Nineteen (19)** pregnant mother-victims were killed and **Eight (8)** of the newborns died as a result of the attack and/or traumatic birth. **Fifteen (15)** of the Fetus/Babies survived. **Four (4)** Mother-victims survived by physically resisting and/or managing to escape from their female offender.

### **Causes of Death**

There wasn't any specific modality of death employed in any of the cases. The offenders used whatever means were available to them at the time of the attack. **Four (4)** Victims were shot **Six (6)** victims were stabbed **Six (6)** Victims died from Blunt Force Trauma **Five (5)** victims were strangled **One (1)** was suffocated **One (1)** cause of death was unknown .

### **Victim Body Disposition**

**Fifteen (15)** of the offenders disposed of or hid their victim's bodies. **Four (4)** of the offenders left the bodies of their victims in the crime scene. **Fourteen (14)** victim mothers were killed in the perpetrator's home. **Four (4)** victim-mothers were killed in their own home and **Five (5)** victim-mothers were killed at an outside location usually in an open park or wooded area.

### **Offender Profile**

In each of the **Twenty-Three (23)** cases the primary offender was a female 19 to 46 years of age. Research indicated that most of the offenders involved in these cases are females acting alone. However, in **Three (3)** of the cases the female perpetrator enlisted assistance from others who were involved in the premeditated plot. One case involved the female attacker and two male friends who were acquainted with the mother-victim.

The attacker who knew the baby was of mixed race wanted to obtain a light-skinned baby for her boyfriend. Another case involved a female attacker and her

boyfriend who assisted in the fetal kidnapping/Abduction. The baby died and the mother-victim was saved when she called **9-1-1** for help. The third case was perpetrated by a mother and her daughter who attacked the mother-victim for her baby.

The boyfriend helped to destroy evidence. The baby who had been named Yadiel by the family of the mother-victim died after 54 days in the natal care unit. **Twenty-One (21)** of the offenders had faked their pregnancies convincing family and friends that they were about to give birth. Some of the offenders, who had put on weight dressed in maternity clothing. Some of the offenders made preparations for their “newborn” including setting up nurseries, visiting the hospital and showing “their” sonograms to friends and families.

There is an element of organized planning involved in these cases because they need the “right” victim, the “right” opportunity and the “right” timing to extract the fetus from their victims.

In some cases the offenders may have lost a baby of their own or might not have been able to become pregnant.

In **Twenty-Two (22)** of the cases the female offenders had met the victim-mothers through casual introduction. They targeted friends and neighbors and co-workers. Some engaged pregnant strangers on-line through Facebook and Craigslist and other social media. **One (1)** event was a Stranger/Kidnapping with blitz-style attack to obtain a fetus.

***I believe that the increase in these type cases may very well be related to the easy access to news and information online in which perpetrators seek to claim others' fetuses as their own. These include You Tube presentations and programs on how to conduct a caesarean section by watching the Discovery Channel.***

In **Thirteen (13)** cases the offenders offered the victim-mother gifts and/or baby clothing, supplies or strollers, advice and assistance. In **Five (5)** of the cases the offenders had specifically preselected their victims based the mother-victim's due date. They then coincided their alleged “birth time” with their respective targets. They then stalked waited for the right opportunity. The offenders were able to manipulate their victims by conning them until they were ready to attack.

**Four (4)** of the **Twenty-Three (23)** offenders cases went to their respective victims' homes to initiate the fetal kidnapping/abduction and homicide. **Fourteen (14)** of the Twenty-Three cases the fetus was taken at the perpetrator's home. **Five (5)** of the offenders the victim mother to an isolated location. In **One (1)** case 9, the offender went to the victim's trailer home to initiate the crime and then transported the victim to a rural location.

**Eighteen (18)** of the **Twenty-Three (23)** victim-mothers were killed before the fetus was cut from the womb. **One (1)** of the victim -mothers was left to bleed to death **One (1)** victim mother survived but the baby was dead and **Three (3)** mother victim survived with their babies. In two of the cases the victim-mothers had their other children killed as well.

### ***Offender Motive***

The primary motivation underlying these murderous acts was to sustain a relationship with a male partner by providing him with a child. **Twenty-One (21)** of the women had faked pregnancy. **Nineteen (19)** of the women had convinced their significant others that they were pregnant. In **Four (4)** cases dealt with obsession and mental illness.

From an investigative standpoint, this suggests that the motivation involves some significant planning and preparation. The cases that I have cited here clearly represent organized and criminal behavior. The psychopathology of these offenders may very well encompass some form of delusional thinking but not to the point of insanity. The women offenders in this study were fully conscious of their actions and intentions. They chose to kill the victim mother for her unborn child to fulfill a narcissistic need. The offenders then disposed of the victim mother to effectively cover up their crime and avoid detection. In my opinion, this psychopathology is more consistent with psychopathy than psychosis.

### **Abduction Investigative Strategies**

Police Response:

The initial police response to a *report of a missing pregnant woman* must include immediate notification to detectives and an APB broadcast description of the victim mother. Research on this type of offense indicates that the offender will most likely accomplish this crime within less than 2 hours of the abduction. In fact, the author recommends an Amber Alert type of response, which will actively inform the media and the community of this event. An attempt should be made to obtain assistance from federal authorities early in the investigation.

### ***Detective Response***

Detectives should immediately begin a neighborhood canvass to ascertain whether the victim mother had been seen in the company of another pregnant woman. In most of these cases, the offender has initiated some sort of casual relationship with her potential target. It is not unlikely that the offender has visited or interacted with the victim mother on prior occasions. The canvass may provide

the investigators with offender descriptions, license plate numbers, and other identification information. An attempt should be made to obtain assistance from federal authorities early in the investigation.

### ***Additional Information***

The value of transmitting this information in an Amber Alert format is that people who may have had suspicions about a friend or neighbor purporting to be pregnant and would not have thought of notifying the police might now have a different frame of reference. In the cases that I reviewed, there was always someone (usually another woman) who had expressed doubt about the offender's alleged pregnancy or the sudden appearance of a newborn. Interviews with investigators who had been involved with these types of cases validate this assumption.

In **Ten (10)** cases the offender brought the fetus/baby to the hospital. Subsequent medical examination revealed that the offender women had not given birth. Authorities were notified and the offenders were arrested. The living children were properly identified through DNA and returned to the biological father and/or family of the mother-victim. **Eight (8)** of the offenders continued the charade until police investigators caught up with them.

### **Summary**

These crimes are unimaginably evil. They devastate the surviving families of the victim-mother and horrify the general public with the calculated, cunning and, brutal details of such heinous acts.

**In my opinion, the infants that do survive such a traumatic birth are truly "Miracle Babies."**

There are unique behavioral profiles to these offenders and this research provides examples of offender's motivations, manipulations, and preparation for their crimes, including victim selection and modus operandi. Additionally, whenever these "evil" crimes occur the news media reacts as if such events were without precedence or unheard of and the authorities many times were at a loss to effectively and intelligently respond.

This information can serve as a **Frame of Reference** in the investigation and response to these types of incidents.

## Author:



Commander (Ret.) NYPD Vernon Geberth, M.S., M.P.S. Fellow, AAFS has over 48 years of law enforcement experience. He is a nationally renowned lecturer, author, educator, consultant and expert witness on the subject of homicide death investigation. His textbook, ***Practical Homicide Investigation*** is considered “The Bible” in the field of death investigation.

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