

1-22-2026

## Paternal Filicide in the Context of Divorce and Child Custody

Andrea Chase  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Andrea Chase

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Tracy Mallett, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty

Dr. Andrea Goldstein, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2026

Abstract

Paternal Filicide in the Context of Divorce and Child Custody

by

Andrea Chase

MS, National University, 2007

BA, San Diego State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

February 2026

## Abstract

This qualitative study examined the troubling intersection of parental separation, domestic violence and paternal filicide, issues that profoundly challenge societal and legal frameworks. Although domestic violence and marital dissolution are recognized risk factors for child maltreatment, their role in paternal filicide, specifically when motivated by parental separation, has been understudied. Using a purposeful and criterion-based sampling strategy, cases were drawn from the Center for Judicial Excellence database of children murdered during divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. After applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final sample consisted of 113 biological fathers responsible for the deaths of 263 children (aged 0–17) in the United States between 2008 and 2020. A thematic analysis of publicly available online news reports about these filicides was conducted to identify contextual patterns as well as key characteristics and behaviors of fathers who commit filicide following marital separation. Results highlight significant histories of abuse against mothers and the failure of government officials to protect their children. Findings also emphasize the presence of displaced aggression, rumination, and revenge planning. This study aligns with prior research advocating for the identification of psychosocial risk factors among filicidal fathers and the implementation of proactive legal and mental health interventions. These findings underscore the need for reforms in family court, mental health assessments, and domestic violence prevention strategies to mitigate risks associated with custody disputes, ultimately preventing future child homicides.

Paternal Filicide in the Context of Divorce and Child Custody

by

Andrea Chase

MS, National University, 2007

BA, San Diego State University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

February 2026

## Dedication

First, and foremost, I want to dedicate this dissertation to all the families affected by domestic homicide and the loved ones they tragically lost. I also want to dedicate this publication to the mothers and children named in this study. May this research help promote the needed systemic change to prevent future tragedies like theirs from ever occurring again.

Then, to the love of my life, my husband, Randy Chase and my strong, intelligent, talented, and beautiful twin daughters, Angie and Lilah. My ability and endurance to complete this dissertation would never have been possible without their constant love and support. I feel incredibly blessed to be their wife and mother.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and love to my dad, Jim Dellet for empowering me to always trust my intuition and introducing me to the wonders of psychology. Thank you to my mom, Carol Dellet, for modeling and instilling the importance of learning and helping those most in need. Thank you to Nanny, my maternal grandmother, Flossie Gluyas for making me feel like the most lovable girl in the world.

And thank you to my therapist, my shepherd, Kelly Sullivan, MFT for opening my eyes to recognize domestic violence and abuse, guiding me through the most difficult times of my life and showing me how to be the best person that I can be for myself and my children.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Center for Judicial Excellence and their work tracking and publishing child homicide data in the United States and their reporting on the number of reported family court failures and the preventable deaths of children. Their work made this research possible, and I hope my findings will contribute to their mission “to protect vulnerable children in the family court system and to strengthen the integrity of all courts by creating judicial accountability.”

I would also like to acknowledge the Family Violence Appellate Project for their work “to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors of domestic violence and their children by helping them obtain effective appellate representation.” It was an honor to work at the organization while preparing and conducting this research and gain invaluable experience educating, advocating, and promoting the improvement of the legal system and the system’s treatment and protection of survivors and their families.

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be a co-founder and co-executive director of Solomon Family Solutions, a nonprofit child and family welfare agency in Southeast Tennessee. The countless pro-bono hours I provided over the course of 10 years (2015-2025) assisting parents and their children navigate the maze of civil and juvenile court litigation fraught with domestic violence and abuse gave me the most valuable education and experience to bolster my formal educational pursuits and this research.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	3
Filicide—Parents Killing Children .....	4
Filicide Motivated by Revenge.....	4
Problem Statement.....	7
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Research Questions.....	10
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for the Study.....	12
Theoretical Framework—Displaced Aggression Theory .....	13
Conceptual Framework Using Displaced Aggression Theory and Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigms to Explore Paternal Filicide in Custody Disputes .....	15
Nature of the Study.....	16
Definitions.....	18
Assumptions.....	19
Scope and Delimitations .....	23
Limitations .....	26
Significance.....	29
Contributions to Forensic Psychology .....	30

Contributions to Practice and Policy.....	30
Implications for Positive Social Change.....	31
Summary.....	31
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	34
Introduction.....	34
Literature Search Strategy.....	37
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.....	38
Theoretical Framework—Displaced Aggression Theory .....	39
Conceptual Framework Using Displaced Aggression Theory and Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigms to Explore Paternal Filicide in Custody Disputes .....	40
Human Aggression.....	42
Theories of Human Aggression .....	43
Displaced Aggression .....	47
Literature Review.....	54
Impacts of Divorce and Parental Separation on Children.....	59
Impacts of Parental Conflict and/or “High Conflict Divorce” on Children.....	60
Impacts of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) on Children .....	63
Domestic Homicide .....	64
Filicide .....	66
Summary and Conclusions .....	70
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	73

Introduction.....	73
Research Design and Rationale .....	75
Role of the Researcher .....	78
Methodology .....	80
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	91
Credibility .....	91
Dependability .....	92
Confirmability.....	93
Transferability.....	93
Ethical Procedures .....	94
Informed Consent.....	95
Rigor and Transparency .....	96
Avoidance of Conflicts of Interests and Power Differentials .....	96
Summary .....	97
Chapter 4: Results .....	99
Introduction.....	99
Data Collection .....	99
Data Analysis .....	103
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	110
Credibility .....	110
Dependability .....	111
Confirmability.....	112

Transferability.....	112
Results.....	113
Research Question 1a.....	120
Research Question 1b .....	123
Research Question 2 .....	128
Summary .....	141
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	143
Introduction.....	143
Interpretation of the Findings.....	146
General Findings.....	146
Research Questions 1a, 1b, and 2 .....	148
Limitations of the Study.....	174
Recommendations.....	177
History of Domestic Violence .....	179
Role of Government Agencies.....	182
Displaced Aggression—Rumination .....	183
Sentencing for Criminal Convictions.....	185
Implications.....	187
Theoretical Implications .....	188
Empirical Implications.....	188
Methodological Implications .....	189
Recommendations for Practice .....	190

Implications for Positive Social Change.....	191
Conclusion .....	192
References.....	194
Appendix A: Results Summary—Age of Fathers.....	227
Appendix B: Results Summary—Fathers’ Socioeconomic Status .....	229
Appendix C: Results Summary—Fathers’ Mental Health History.....	231
Appendix D: Results Summary—Fathers’ Criminal History .....	234
Appendix E: Results Summary—Fathers’ Threats to Harm Child or Mother.....	237
Appendix F: Results Summary—Fathers’ Admissions .....	239
Appendix G: Results Summary—Fathers’ Denials or Retractions of Admissions .....	242
Appendix H: Results Summary—Fathers’ Statements Regarding Mother .....	245
Appendix I: Results Summary—Fathers’ Statements Regarding Others .....	247
Appendix J: Results Summary—Fathers’ Statements Regarding Motivation.....	249
Appendix K: Results Summary—Statements Regarding Mental Health .....	251
Appendix L: Results Summary—Fathers’ Crimes Against Others .....	254
Appendix M: Results Summary—Fathers’ Crimes Against Mother .....	256
Appendix N: Results Summary—Relationship Between Father and Mother .....	259
Appendix O: Results Summary—Restraining Orders or Orders of Protection .....	263
Appendix P: Results Summary—Court Ordered or Stipulated Parenting Plans .....	266
Appendix Q: Results Summary—DV Advocacy Comments .....	270
Appendix R: Results Summary—Authorities’ Underestimated Threats .....	273
Appendix S: Results Summary—Comments of Court During Sentencing .....	278

Appendix T: Results Summary—Convictions and Sentencing .....	281
Appendix U: Results Summary—Child Protective Services’ Failures .....	284
Appendix V: Results Summary—Information Regarding Fathers’ Motivation.....	288
Appendix W: Results Summary—Information Regarding Crime Scenes and Victims .....	291
Appendix X: Narrative of Cases .....	299

## List of Tables

Table 1. Models of Human Aggression .....	50
Table 2. A 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis .....	89
Table 3. Filicides Motivated by Physical Abuse to Include the Names and Ages of Children, Causes of Death (COD), and the Age of Fathers .....	117
Table 4. Filicides Motivated by Marital Separation to Include the Names and Ages of Children, Causes of Death (COD), and the Ages of the Fathers .....	119
Table 5. Filicides Motivated by Psychological State to Include Names and Ages of Children, Causes of Death (COD), and the Ages of Fathers .....	120
Table 6. Filicides Motivated Categorized as Other to Include the Name and Age of Child, Cause of Death (COD), and Age of Father .....	120
Table 7. Research Findings on History of Domestic Violence to Include Fathers’ Characteristics, Behaviors, and Events Surrounding the Filicides Organized by the Victim Children’s Names .....	181
Table 8. The Fathers’ Sentencing for Their Criminal Convictions in Ascending Order From the Least Amount of Time to the Most Organized by the Children’s Names .....	187

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Research indicates that parental separation, especially when accompanied by domestic violence, can create a dangerous environment for children. In numerous cases, fathers who were involved in the tragic deaths of their children were often involved in divorce and custody disputes. For example, Corey Micciolo, a 6-year-old boy, died from injuries inflicted by his father despite his mother's repeated reports of abuse to authorities (Egan, 2021). Similarly, Madison and Zachary Zimmer, ages 13 and 10, were killed by their father amid escalating tensions related to divorce proceedings (Hahn & Palattella, 2021). In a separate incident in Alabama, a man killed his estranged wife, her mother, and several children shortly after a court issued a protection order during divorce proceedings (Parker, 2021). These cases highlight a troubling trend of fathers who perpetrate filicide during periods of marital separation and custody disputes. According to the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE), hundreds of child homicides have occurred in situations involving high-conflict custody battles, often with significant histories of domestic violence. This study addressed the social implications of these tragic events by exploring the behaviors and characteristics of fathers who commit filicide following parental separation, as well as the events surrounding such tragedies.

This research aimed to promote positive change by enhancing preventive measures, refining early intervention strategies, and advocating for policy reforms in family courts and mental health assessments to better protect children from potential risks. In the United States, between 2008 and July 2021, 803 children were murdered by a

parent within the context of a divorce or parental separation (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). Of the 803 children murdered, the CJE contend that 110 murders were "preventable," meaning that family courts placed children into the custody of a parent known to be violent and dangerous (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). CJE's mission is to build a system of accountability for family courts that fail to protect children during divorce and parental separation (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021).

CJE has been tracking the number of children murdered during divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes since 2008 (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). By tracking and publicizing this information, CJE aims to raise awareness and promote policy change in the family legal system, a legal system that CJE claims is tragically failing many children and families in the United States and abroad (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021).

Chapter 1 provides background on filicide, identifies gaps in the existing literature, and discusses the social problem and the purpose of the study. It presents two research questions, outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework, describes the study's nature, defines key terms, and addresses the study's assumptions, limitations, and significance. This insight is crucial given the ongoing challenges in accurately identifying high-risk families before violence occurs, particularly in custody disputes involving parents with histories of domestic abuse. The findings help practitioners and legal professionals better assess risk and implement timely interventions by analyzing common themes and circumstances surrounding these tragedies.

Additionally, this research may help inform policies and laws regarding child custody and parental access by identifying specific risk factors and behavioral indicators that are often overlooked in family court proceedings. By highlighting the recurring patterns in cases of filicide, such as prior domestic violence, coercive control, and escalating behavior during custody disputes, this study supports the development of more rigorous risk assessment tools for use by judges, custody evaluators, and other court-appointed professionals. Utilizing more evidence-based approaches may then lead to more thoughtful and cautious decisions about custody and visitation, particularly in high-conflict or abusive situations, ultimately prioritizing child safety over parental access rights.

Lastly, the present study highlights the need for increased accountability among those responsible for evaluating families and making recommendations to the court. The findings may inform training standards, performance evaluations, and oversight mechanisms for guardians ad litem, social workers, and custody evaluators to ensure that their assessments are grounded in current research on family violence and child endangerment. Overall, this research promotes reforms that improve individual case outcomes and strengthen systemic protection for at-risk children.

### **Background**

This study centered around fathers who commit filicide during parental separation, divorce, and child custody litigation. The background of this topic laid the foundation for the problem statement, purpose, nature, and research questions of this qualitative study.

### **Filicide—Parents Killing Children**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 4,366 children died due to violence-related injury/homicide within the United States in 2019 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], n.d.). Biological parents committed most child homicides (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018; Dixon et al., 2014; Jaffe et al., 2014; Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, 2018; Resnick, 2016; Woner, 2013). Fathers killed their children at equal or higher rates than mothers and often did so for different reasons (Debowska et al., 2015; Flynn et al., 2013; Liem & Koenraadt, 2008). For instance, fathers were more likely than mothers to be motivated to intentionally kill their children out of revenge or jealousy of their spouse/partner, as well as causing the accidental death of their children by using excessive physical force (Adhia et al., 2019; McCarroll et.al, 2017).

### **Filicide Motivated by Revenge**

To better understand the phenomenon of filicide, research has focused on classifying filicides according to the perpetrators' motivation. Resnick (1969) classified filicide into five motivational categories, including filicide motivated by revenge. The description of revenge as a motivational category depicted parents acting out of revenge against the other parent by killing their children (Resnick, 1969). Resnick explained that revenge filicide was distinct from the different categories because the filicidal parents' purpose was to deliberately cause the co-parents to suffer (Resnick, 1969). As an example, Resnick (1969) highlighted a case study by Rheingold (1964) in which a woman beat her three-year-old child to death with a claw hammer because she believed

her husband was leaving her for another woman and wanted to take the child with him (Rheingold, 1964 as cited in Resnick, 1969).

Bourget and Bradford (1990) also used motivation to classify and understand filicide, categorizing filicide into five groups: 1) pathological, 2) accidental, 3) retaliating, 4) neonaticide, and 5) paternal filicide. Bourget and Bradford (1990) described parents motivated by retaliation as a volatile group who commit filicide to manipulate their spouses and cause them to suffer. Interestingly, over half of the homicidal parents studied by Bourget and Bradford (1990) suffered from severe psychosocial stress (i.e., family stress and marital separation) before committing filicide.

Wilczynski (1995) studied 48 cases of filicide occurring in England and Wales in 1984. Based upon her review, she classified the 48 filicides into 11 categories of motive (Wilczynski, 1995). Of the 11 classifications, there was one for "'retaliating' killings: jealousy of, or rejection by, the victim" (Wilczynski, 1995, p. 366). Notably, men committed these types of filicides more often, typically in the context of severe marital conflict and domestic violence. In these cases, perpetrators of domestic violence may abuse not only their partner or wife directly but also third parties, such as children, as proxies (Hayes, 2017). Men used this form of violence as another way to coerce obedience from their wives and domestic partners (Alder & Polk, 2001).

Léveillé and Donyon (2019) helped to identify three primary motivations of filicidal males, including marital separation, fatal physical abuse, and the psychological state of the individual (Léveillé & Donyon, 2019). Léveillé and Donyon (2019) studied 50 men who committed filicide in the province of Quebec between the years 1997

and 2012. Léveillé and Doyon (2019) found that 54% of filicides occurred in the context of marital separation and/or child custody disputes. Debowska et.al. (2015) discovered filicidal fathers were predominantly motivated by marital problems and retaliation against their romantic partners by displacing aggression onto their children.

Remarkably, perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) often involve children or threats to harm children to undermine or attack the parent-child relationship (Carruthers, 2016; Hayes, 2017). Violence toward an intimate partner was a factor in many filicides occurring during separation (Adhia et.al., 2019; Jaffe et.al., 2014), and fathers committed revenge filicide more often than mothers (Adhia et al., 2019; McCarroll et.al, 2017). Intimate partner violence against women is a primary factor in many filicides, and retaliatory filicides (i.e., spousal revenge filicides) are also recognized as a form of violence against women (Adhia et al., 2019; Carruthers, 2016; Hayes, 2017).

A critical gap in the literature involves understanding the dynamics that precede and surround filicide, particularly in the context of parental separation and domestic conflict. Filling this gap is essential for improving the ability of mental health and legal professionals to identify individuals and families at the highest risk before tragedy occurs (Bourget et al., 2007; Jaffe et al., 2014). Existing research emphasizes the need to raise awareness of the diverse and sometimes subtle warning signs that filicide may be imminent, including escalating domestic violence, coercive control, and deteriorating family relationships (Holland et al., 2018). Increased awareness can lead to earlier, more targeted interventions by professionals equipped to assess and respond to these risk factors.

Additionally, there is limited research focused explicitly on the psychosocial issues of filicidal males, such as relationship breakdowns, unresolved custody disputes, and emotional instability, which are often present in these cases (Debowska et al., 2015; Léveillé & Doyon, 2019). Continued exploration of these factors can help refine risk assessment tools, inform policy reforms, and ultimately prevent child fatalities by ensuring at-risk families receive timely support and protective measures. Addressing these research gaps is crucial to advancing a preventive framework that prioritizes child safety in legal, clinical, and social service settings.

### **Problem Statement**

While paternal filicide is a rare event compared to the widespread prevalence of domestic violence, it disproportionately occurs within families impacted by intimate partner violence (IPV). In many of these cases, a mother's attempt to leave an abusive relationship is a precipitating factor for the father's decision to kill his children (Jaffe et al., 2014). Child homicides committed in the context of divorce and parental separation frequently overlap with histories of domestic violence, yet there is limited in-depth research examining this relationship (Jaffe et al., 2012).

IPV is one of the strongest predictors of intimate partner homicide (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014), and these homicides often result in harm to others beyond the primary target with nearly half of such cases involving the deaths of children under the age of 18 (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014). Greater exploration of the intersection between IPV, custody disputes, and filicide is essential to inform risk assessment strategies and protective interventions aimed at preventing these devastating outcomes.

Jaffe and Juodis (2006) identified three specific situations in which domestic violence leads to the killing of children. One of these situations occurs when an intimate partner seeks revenge after the relationship has ended. A history of family violence is often associated with paternal filicide (Bourget et.al., 2007). Retrospectively examining child homicides in the context of domestic violence provides important lessons on the missed opportunities for intervention (Reif & Jaffe, 2019). Legal and mental health professionals being able to identify potentially volatile legal cases, highly contested and hostile divorces, is important to prevent filicide from occurring (Debowska et al., 2015; Holland et.al., 2018). Adhia et al. (2019) indicated that a clearer understanding of how and why a parent is killing children during conflicts such as divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes is needed to improve and prevent child homicides.

There is a growing body of research recognizing that filicides committed by fathers during or after parental separation represent an alarming and underexamined form of family violence. Scholars across disciplines, including psychology, criminology, and family law, have emphasized the urgent need to understand the link between domestic violence, custody disputes, and child homicide (Jaffe et al., 2014; Bourget et al., 2007; Debowska et al., 2015). Existing studies have consistently shown that intimate partner violence is a significant risk factor not only for intimate partner homicide but also for child fatalities, particularly during times of separation and legal conflict (Smith et al., 2014; Lyons et al., 2020). Despite this recognition, few studies have systematically explored the specific behavioral patterns, psychosocial characteristics, and warning signs

exhibited by filicidal fathers, primarily through the lens of publicly available narratives such as news reports.

This gap in the literature underscores the need for research that captures the broader contextual dynamics underlying these tragic events. The present study addressed this need by thematically analyzing online news reports of children murdered by their fathers within the context of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. This analysis aimed to enhance understanding of risk factors and behaviors associated with these crimes and contribute to more effective prevention strategies within legal, mental health, and child welfare systems.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the behaviors and psychosocial characteristics of fathers who commit filicide, as well as the contextual events surrounding these acts, particularly within the framework of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. The phenomenon of interest was paternal filicide occurring in the context of familial breakdown, with a focus on understanding the role of domestic violence, coercive control, and post-separation conflict. The study sought to develop a deeper understanding of these tragic incidents to inform prevention efforts by enhancing the practices of legal, mental health, and child welfare professionals.

To address this goal, the study employed qualitative methods to analyze publicly available online news reports detailing cases in which fathers killed their children during or after divorce and custody disputes. Through thematic analysis, this study aimed to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the perpetrators' behaviors, relationship

dynamics, histories of domestic violence, and interactions with legal and child protection systems. By illuminating these factors, the research intended to contribute to the knowledge that informs more accurate risk assessments and more effective preventative interventions in high-conflict family situations.

### **Research Questions**

This study adopted a constructivist-interpretive paradigm to explore how individuals construct meaning through their lived experiences within specific social and relational contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995). Constructivism emphasizes that reality is subjective and socially constructed, while the interpretive approach seeks to understand these lived realities from the perspectives of those experiencing them. Within this framework, knowledge is not discovered but co-created through interaction between the researcher and the data. As Hathaway (1995) observed, interpretive inquiry recognizes that human experiences are often nonlinear, emotionally complex, and contextually grounded, requiring researchers to immerse themselves in participants' narratives and interpret meaning as it emerges.

Anchored in Displaced Aggression Theory, this study examined how fathers experiencing psychological strain from divorce, custody loss, or perceived rejection may redirect anger and frustration toward their children, leading to filicidal outcomes. Displaced Aggression Theory posits that when individuals feel powerless to retaliate against the actual source of their frustration, such as a former partner or the family court system, they may instead target more vulnerable individuals, like children. This framework supported the interpretive aim of understanding how personal histories,

emotional dynamics, and systemic pressures intersect in the construction of meaning around paternal violence.

To investigate this phenomenon, the study was guided by two research questions:

**RQ1:** Based upon thematic analysis of online news reports of children murdered by fathers during divorce and child custody disputes, what are the reported characteristics and behaviors of fathers who commit filicide in this context?

This question aimed to identify patterns in psychosocial traits, emotional responses, and behavioral tendencies associated with these fathers. Drawing on Displaced Aggression Theory, the study explored how factors such as unresolved anger, coercive control, prior domestic violence, and perceived loss of authority within the family system may have contributed to extreme violent acts. Key themes included obsessive rumination, emotional instability, and motives tied to retaliation or perceived injustice. In line with the interpretive paradigm, the analysis focused on understanding how these fathers may have made sense of their experiences in ways that justified or rationalized their actions.

**RQ2:** Based upon thematic analysis of online news reports of children murdered by fathers during divorce and child custody disputes, what are the events surrounding fathers committing filicide in this context?

This question examined the broader contextual and situational dynamics that may have escalated toward filicide. The study considered environmental and interpersonal stressors, such as contentious custody battles, denied visitation, and prolonged legal disputes, as potential triggers for displaced aggression. Additionally, the analysis explored how interactions with the child's mother, law enforcement, and child protection

services may have influenced the emotional and behavioral trajectory of the perpetrator. Consistent with Hathaway's (1995) interpretive lens, the focus was on how these events were experienced and understood by the fathers, and how those experiences may have shaped their responses.

Together, these research questions were designed to deepen understanding of the psychological mechanisms and social conditions that contribute to paternal filicide in the context of family dissolution. The findings aim to inform legal and mental health professionals by highlighting identifiable warning signs, psychosocial risk factors, and recurring patterns of displaced aggression. Grounded in the constructivist and interpretive paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995), this study emphasized the importance of capturing subjective human experiences to make meaning of a profoundly complex and tragic phenomenon.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for the Study**

This study was grounded in a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, which posits that reality is not singular or objectively measurable, but instead socially constructed and shaped through human experience and interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995). Within this framework, knowledge emerges through the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and the data, making it especially appropriate for investigating emotionally complex and contextually situated phenomena such as paternal filicide. This approach prioritizes subjectivity, context, and meaning-making, offering a lens through which to understand behavior within intimate family relationships.

As Hathaway (1995) emphasized, interpretive qualitative inquiry seeks to uncover the subjective meanings individuals attach to their lived experiences. It enables researchers to examine how people perceive, narrate, and respond to the challenges they encounter, particularly within high-conflict relational dynamics. In this study, the interpretive paradigm provided a structured yet flexible framework to examine how fathers perceive and make sense of their experiences with divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes, and how these perceptions may be linked to acts of violence against their children.

### **Theoretical Framework—Displaced Aggression Theory**

This study is grounded in Displaced Aggression Theory, which was introduced by Dollard et al. (1939) in their seminal work on the frustration-aggression hypothesis. The theory posits that when individuals experience frustration and are unable to retaliate against the source of that frustration due to fear, social constraints, or a lack of access, they often redirect their aggression toward a less threatening and more accessible target. Hovland and Sears (1940) provided early empirical support for this mechanism, and subsequent developments by Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) and Denson et al. (2006) further refined the theory to include both immediate and chronic triggers of displaced aggression.

In the context of paternal filicide, Displaced Aggression Theory explains that when a father feels frustrated, due to losing custody, sensing injustice, or experiencing rejection by a former partner, he may enter a state of psychological tension. If he cannot retaliate against the source of his frustration, such as his former spouse or the legal

system, he often redirects that aggression toward another target. Children, due to their accessibility and emotional salience, may become symbolic proxies for the actual target of anger and are thus at increased risk of harm.

This theory provided a lens through which the motivations behind paternal filicide were interpreted not as random or inexplicable acts, but as behaviors embedded in a cognitive-emotional framework of loss, powerlessness, and revenge (Debowska et al., 2015; Jaffe et al., 2012). As Debowska et al. (2015) noted, filicide perpetrated by men in the context of family conflict often exhibits patterns of retaliatory violence, with children perceived as extensions of the estranged partner or judicial authority.

From a methodological viewpoint, the study employed Displaced Aggression Theory to provide a non-deterministic interpretive framework that helps understand how individuals express their subjective emotional states through behavior. It directly informed the key research questions, which sought to uncover how fathers frame and rationalize their actions within the broader context of psychological and social stressors associated with family dissolution.

Moreover, the Displaced Aggression Questionnaire (DAQ) (Denson et al., 2006) has demonstrated construct validity in identifying personality and behavioral tendencies associated with redirected aggression, including domestic violence. This theoretical framework aligns closely with the themes expected to emerge from qualitative data on paternal filicide cases, particularly those involving histories of coercive control, threats, or intimate partner violence.

## **Conceptual Framework Using Displaced Aggression Theory and Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigms to Explore Paternal Filicide in Custody Disputes**

This study's conceptual framework drew on Displaced Aggression Theory in tandem with the constructivist and interpretive paradigms to explore the phenomenon of paternal filicide within the context of custody disputes and parental separation. The framework posited that psychological stressors such as humiliation, perceived loss of control, or rejection, especially when compounded by ongoing litigation, interpersonal conflict, and unresolved domestic abuse, can escalate into acts of displaced violence.

In this process, a father projects his feelings onto his child as a way to express anger towards the co-parent or legal authority. Research increasingly supports this perspective, linking custody conflicts and post-separation abuse to potentially lethal outcomes for children (Brown & Tyson, 2012; Debowska et al., 2015; Jaffe et al., 2014). Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides a more detailed review of this literature, outlining empirical evidence on the psychological, relational, and legal dynamics that converge in cases of retaliatory filicide.

The conceptual framework supported the research design and methodological choices, specifically through its use of secondary data sources (e.g., online news reports of filicide cases), which offered access to narratives of fathers' behaviors and the contexts in which lethal violence occurred, the application of thematic analysis, which was consistent with interpretive inquiry and allowed for the identification of patterns across narratives, such as revenge motivations, histories of coercive control, or symbolic targeting of children.

The framework centers on several key elements that establish logical connections. It relies on Displaced Aggression Theory to explain how individuals may redirect violence. Furthermore, the framework aligns with constructivist and interpretive paradigms, providing a perspective for exploring meaning. Methodologically, it utilizes qualitative analysis of publicly available narrative data, which supports the goal of understanding subjective experiences. The research aims to interpret behavioral patterns and meaning-making processes within high-conflict familial breakdown.

Additionally, this framework enhances the study's relevance to legal, clinical, and social work practices by identifying early warning signs and psychological indicators often overlooked in formal assessments. As Hathaway (1995) underscored, qualitative research generates knowledge and reshapes how professionals interpret and respond to real-world crises. This study contributes to that objective by illuminating the psychosocial underpinnings of one of the most tragic forms of family violence, filicide committed in the shadow of familial dissolution and legal conflict.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study employed a qualitative research design, grounded in the constructivist and interpretive paradigms, to explore the phenomenon of paternal filicide within the context of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. Qualitative methods are well-suited for research questions that seek to understand how individuals interpret and construct meaning from their experiences, particularly in emotionally complex, morally troubling, and socially situated events such as filicide. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation,

engaging deeply with the data to uncover patterns, meanings, and themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldana, 2016).

Researchers employ a qualitative approach to examine subjective behaviors that are specific to their contexts and are not easily quantifiable. This study did not aim to measure or predict paternal filicide statistically; instead, it focused on interpreting the psychosocial dynamics and perceived motivations behind these acts as outlined in secondary data sources. The constructivist paradigm, as articulated by Guba and Lincoln (1994), supported the view that reality is co-constructed through language, context, and interaction. Hathaway (1995) also emphasized that interpretive research seeks to understand how individuals construct meaning within specific social contexts. This orientation was appropriate for examining filicide, a phenomenon often linked to interpersonal conflict, identity loss, and retaliation within high-stakes family situations.

The specific phenomenon under investigation was the behavior and characteristics of fathers who murder their children during or following divorce, parental separation, or custody disputes. These cases frequently involve histories of domestic violence, coercive control, unresolved grievances, and complex emotional responses to perceived loss or rejection. Understanding how these dynamics were described and represented in public narratives, such as in the news media, helped uncover warning signs and psychosocial patterns that may inform prevention strategies.

The study used thematic analysis as its methodological approach to investigate this phenomenon. Thematic analysis is a flexible and widely used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (or "themes") within textual

data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). It allows for both inductive and deductive analysis, making it well-suited for studies that explore sensitive and context-rich topics. In this study, the researcher utilized online news articles about paternal filicide as secondary data sources. These publicly available narratives provided detailed accounts of the events, relationships, and social contexts that led up to and surrounded the murders.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, which includes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-point checklist for quality thematic analysis to ensure methodological rigor and transparency, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 and depicted in Table 2.

In summary, the study's design and methodological choices sought to interpret how people describe, understand, and socially construct paternal filicide in the context of family breakdown. This approach enabled a nuanced understanding of the psychosocial dynamics and meaning-making processes that precede and accompany these tragic events, thereby contributing to both the scholarly literature and practical efforts to enhance child protection in high-conflict custody cases.

### **Definitions**

Definitions of key terms that lack commonly understood meanings are provided below for the reader's clarification and understanding. Many of these terms have different meanings throughout the scientific literature, so it was necessary to express how these words are defined and understood for this study.

*Child*: A young human between the ages of birth and 17 years.

*Child custody*: A legal term describing a child's care, control, and maintenance, which the court may award to a parent (West's Encyclopedia of American Law, 2008).

*Domestic homicide*: The death of a human caused by a current or former intimate partner, as well as the death of a person associated with domestic violence, such as children, new romantic partners, family members, friends, and third-party interveners (Juodis et al., 2014).

*Father*: A biological father.

*Filicide*: The act of a biological parent killing their child(ren) aged 0 – 17 years.

*Parent*: A biological mother or father.

*Intimate partner violence (IPV)*: Violent and abusive behavior within the context of marriage, cohabitation, or any other formal or informal union between two adults. Violent and abusive behavior includes acts of physical aggression (i.e., slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating), sexual aggression (i.e., forced intercourse and sexual coercion), psychological aggression/coercive control (i.e., intimidation, constant belittling, and humiliating, isolating from family and friends, and not allowing them to work out of the home) (World Health Organization, 2021).

### **Assumptions**

Qualitative research is grounded in interpretive and constructivist paradigms, which assert that knowledge arises from human experiences that are inherently dynamic, contextual, and not always governed by linear logic (Hathaway, 1995). According to Hathaway (1995), interpretive inquiry includes phenomenological, hermeneutical,

experiential, dialectical, naturalistic, inductive, and relativist approaches. It emphasizes understanding meaning as it is constructed and experienced by individuals within specific social and cultural contexts. In this paradigm, the researcher became immersed in the stream of events and interactions, engaged directly with the phenomenon to interpret how individuals perceived and assigned meaning to their experiences.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) advanced the constructivist paradigm, which built upon the interpretive foundation by positing that individuals interpret and co-construct reality through social interaction and language. From this perspective, multiple subjective realities exist, generating knowledge through the dynamic interplay between the researcher and the researched. The constructivist paradigm posits that the researcher's role is not to discover objective truth, but to illuminate how individuals construct meaning in their lived experiences. These epistemological and ontological assumptions aligned with the current study, which sought to explore the behaviors and events surrounding paternal filicide through socially situated narratives derived from online news reports.

In this paradigm, knowledge is considered valid only when it is understood within the context in which it arises. For example, an interpretive or constructivist researcher does not aim to define a singular, objective culture or truth but instead documents how culture or meaning is experienced and articulated by participants within a particular setting (Hathaway, 1995). Reality, therefore, is a product of the co-constructed understanding between participants and researchers. In this study, the researcher conducted thematic analysis to examine and interpret the behaviors and circumstances of

fathers who commit filicide as described in the data. The aim was to uncover the psychosocial meanings that arise from these accounts, rather than to establish a definitive truth about the fathers themselves.

As applied here, thematic analysis was a fitting method within the constructivist framework. It facilitated the examination of participants' perspectives (in this case, as represented in the news reports) and identified patterns. It allowed for a nuanced interpretation of complex, emotionally charged phenomena (Nowell et al., 2017). It was particularly well-suited for analyzing text-based data, such as interview transcripts or news reports, and was valuable for uncovering individuals' values, knowledge, and lived experiences (Caulfield, 2022). Because thematic analysis relies heavily on the researcher's interpretive lens, it was essential to engage in reflexivity, critically reflecting on how personal biases and judgments may shape the analysis and findings (Caulfield, 2022).

Qualitative research involves several assumptions and beliefs accepted as accurate, even if they cannot be definitively proven. These assumptions are not incidental but critical to the study's integrity and meaningfulness. Initially, the researcher assumed that the selected online news reports would provide reasonably accurate, fair, and detailed accounts of the events they describe. This assumption was essential because these reports served as substitutes for first-person narratives, representing the social discourse surrounding filicide. Without this assumption, the researcher would compromise the reliability of the data and undermine the credibility of the study.

In addition, the researcher assumed that individuals quoted or referenced in the news articles, including family members, witnesses, neighbors, and law enforcement personnel, were accurately represented and genuinely expressed their uncoerced perceptions of events. This assumption played a crucial role in the study's objective of interpreting meaning from socially situated narratives; without it, the researcher would not have been able to analyze the narratives effectively for emerging themes.

Next, the researcher assumed that the data set provided sufficient depth and variability to achieve thematic saturation, at which additional data no longer produces new codes or patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This assumption underpins the credibility and completeness of the thematic analysis. Without thematic saturation, the findings might be partial or skewed, weakening interpretive claims.

The researcher also assumed that, by employing reflexivity and methodological rigor, she could interpret the data to preserve the integrity of the participants' representations while generating meaningful insights. This assumption played a crucial role in interpretive research, where the researcher acts as the primary instrument for analysis.

These assumptions were necessary due to the indirect nature of the data, the epistemological commitment to multiple constructed realities, and the reliance on human interpretation as a methodological tool. While none of these assumptions could be empirically verified, they were fundamental to the study's design, implementation, and interpretive goals. Without them, the study's framework would collapse, and its insights

into the psychosocial dynamics of paternal filicide would be rendered incoherent or invalid.

Overall, these assumptions were consistent with the constructivist and interpretive paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995), which accept that research involves co-constructed meanings rather than objective discoveries. Acknowledging and critically reflecting on these assumptions enhances the transparency and integrity of the research, affirming its foundation in qualitative inquiry.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study focused on the phenomenon of paternal filicide within the context of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. It sought to explore the psychosocial characteristics, behaviors, and events surrounding these cases. While prior research examined filicide more broadly, this study narrowed its focus to cases involving fathers who kill their children during or following custody-related family breakdown to better understand themes of displaced aggression, retaliatory violence, and control loss within this unique relational context.

The study's scope relied on a curated list of U.S.-based paternal filicide cases collected and maintained by the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE). From this list, cases were selected based on research criteria using online news media documentation. Once identified, the news reports were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring patterns and meaning. The data collection focused on incidents in the United States between January 2008 and December 2020. The researcher applied the following inclusion criteria: the perpetrator was the biological father, he committed

homicide against his biological child or children, and the incident occurred in the context of a divorce, parental separation, or ongoing child custody dispute.

The researcher applied the following exclusion criteria: cases involving maternal filicide, stepparents, other caregivers, or non-biological fathers; familicide cases where multiple family members, such as spouses or siblings, were killed; and cases in which the father committed or attempted suicide immediately after the filicide. Research indicates that fathers who die by suicide following filicide exhibit different psychological and motivational profiles compared to those who do not (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008).

This study intentionally limited its analysis to online news reports. Due to access limitations and the study's exploratory nature, it did not include legal documents, court transcripts, clinical records, or interviews. While other theoretical frameworks, such as attachment theory, evolutionary psychology, and psychodynamic theory, were relevant to the broader study of filicide, this research did not apply them directly. Instead, the study focused on Displaced Aggression Theory, which provided a specific psychological perspective for interpreting revenge-driven violence directed at secondary targets. This approach aligned more closely with research that examined symbolic retaliation in custody conflicts.

The conceptual framework integrated Displaced Aggression Theory with constructivist and interpretive paradigms, allowing for the exploration of how filicide was not merely an individual act of violence but a socially and psychologically constructed event. This framework supported the study's goals of identifying themes related to coercive control, loss of access, and retaliatory motives. It aligned them with the

qualitative research design and methodology, specifically thematic analysis of publicly available narrative data. Chapter 2 provides a detailed explanation of the conceptual and theoretical framework.

The boundaries of the study, namely its focus on a narrow population (filicidal fathers in the U.S. during a defined period), the exclusive use of online news data, and reliance on a single theoretical lens, were intentionally chosen to ensure analytic depth and conceptual clarity. However, these boundaries also limit the transferability of findings.

In qualitative research, researchers employ the concept of transferability to describe how their findings can be applied to different contexts or populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, transferability is moderate but inherently limited by design. The data reflect cases from the U.S. that media narratives have presented rather than accounts directly from participants or clinical sources. Therefore, researchers should exercise caution when applying these findings to other countries, legal systems, or different populations, such as those involving maternal filicide, custodial grandparents, or blended families. The researcher did not plan for the findings to be applied more broadly or generalized statistically. However, they may be analytically transferable to similar high-conflict family settings where the themes of domestic violence, perceived injustice, and loss of control are present.

The researcher chose this focus to conduct a thorough, theory-based investigation into a critically important yet under-researched issue in family violence and child protection. This topic holds significant implications for legal professionals, mental health

experts, and child welfare practitioners who work on custody evaluations and high-risk family assessments.

### **Limitations**

This study had several limitations, primarily from its reliance on secondary data sources, particularly online newspaper reports. These limitations include the potential inaccuracy and bias inherent in witness accounts (i.e., hearsay), the journalistic intent and framing of news articles, and the inconsistent quality, depth, and relevance of available information. These factors limit the dependability of the data and raise challenges related to thematic consistency, generalizability, and the reliability of case categorization and analysis.

As discussed at more length in Chapter 5, the use of secondary data introduced several inherent methodological concerns. Newspaper articles, while publicly accessible and often rich in narrative detail, are not produced for research purposes. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, such documents may lack the specificity, objectivity, and analytical rigor required for scholarly inquiry. Many reports reflected journalistic priorities, which can result in incomplete or sensationalized portrayals of events. Moreover, they frequently relied on secondhand accounts rather than direct observation or official documentation, raising concerns about the accuracy and authenticity of the information presented.

The emotional and psychological states of those interviewed, such as bereaved mothers or witnesses, may also impact the reliability of the reported accounts.

Recollections are often shaped by trauma, time, and context, which can complicate the

researcher's ability to extract precise and consistent information. Moreover, the disparity in media coverage between cases created challenges; while some incidents received significant attention and thorough reporting, others remained largely undocumented. This unevenness may have introduced unintended bias into the study, as high-profile cases with richer data more heavily shaped the findings.

The researcher employed a rigorous and transparent data selection process to mitigate these challenges. The researcher selected cases based on clearly defined inclusion criteria and cross-referenced them across multiple news outlets whenever possible. This triangulation strategy aimed to enhance the reliability of the findings and mitigate the influence of isolated or potentially inaccurate narratives. Nevertheless, the limitations of the data source remained, particularly about missing or inconsistent information about critical variables such as mental health diagnoses, legal histories, or patterns of prior abuse.

Another significant limitation relates to the reliability of the categorization process used to analyze case motivations. The researcher applied Marcus-Newhall et al.'s (2000) Displaced Aggression Framework, comprising six elements (initial provocation, affective response, situational constraints, rumination, revenge planning, and displaced aggression), in conjunction with Léveillé and Doyon's (2019) typology of motivational categories (marital separation, physical abuse, and psychological condition). While this dual-framework approach brought structure to the analysis, the interpretive nature of qualitative classification introduced a degree of subjectivity. Another researcher,

applying the same criteria, might categorize some cases differently based on alternative interpretations of events.

To enhance the credibility of the classification process, the researcher also drew on explicit statements of intent when available. In several analyzed cases, clear admissions or collateral reports provided more definitive insights into the father's motivations. These cases were considered the most reliable data points for motivational classification. However, across the broader sample, the researcher acknowledges varying degrees of confidence depending on the clarity and consistency of the available information.

The researcher's positionality also represented a recognized limitation. As a survivor of domestic violence and a professional advocate for families affected by interpersonal violence, the researcher brought both a depth of insight and a potential source of bias to the analysis. In qualitative research, where the investigator serves as the primary instrument of interpretation, personal experiences and worldview inevitably shape data analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). While the researcher deliberately applied a systematic analytical framework and upheld scholarly rigor, lived experiences significantly influenced her interpretive choices.

Considering these limitations, several methodological strategies were employed to maintain research integrity, including the use of multiple sources per case to enable cross-verification, a thematic analysis focused on cross-case patterns rather than isolated narratives, transparent documentation of inclusion criteria and selection processes, and

acknowledgment of varying confidence levels in motivational classifications. These efforts aimed to balance the limitations of the data with the need for analytical rigor.

Ultimately, while these methodological constraints necessarily shaped the study's findings, they offer a foundation for future research. Subsequent studies would benefit from integrating primary data sources such as legal case files, court transcripts, clinical evaluations, and practitioner interviews to supplement and validate the thematic patterns identified here. Such work is critical for deepening our understanding of paternal filicide in the context of domestic violence and family court litigation.

### **Significance**

This research fills a critical gap in the literature by exploring the behaviors and psychosocial characteristics of filicidal fathers, as well as the circumstantial dynamics surrounding filicides that occur within the context of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. The study was distinctive in its use of thematic analysis of online news coverage of such cases in the United States, a methodological approach not previously applied to this specific population or context. The Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE) has tracked over 800 child fatalities associated with ongoing family court litigation, including custody, visitation, and child support disputes. The data analyzed in this study are drawn from these cases (CJE, 2021). These cases highlighted the intersection of domestic violence, legal decision-making, and systemic failures, which collectively form the basis of what CJE terms a "family court crisis."

### **Contributions to Forensic Psychology**

This study contributes to the field of forensic psychology by enhancing the understanding of the psychological mechanisms and situational stressors that may drive fathers to commit filicide during family breakdown. The application of Displaced Aggression Theory provided a theoretical framework for interpreting these acts not as isolated or inexplicable, but as behavior emerging from perceived injustice, powerlessness, humiliation, and a loss of control. By identifying consistent psychosocial themes, such as coercive control, obsessive rumination, prior domestic violence, and symbolic retaliation, the study offers forensic psychologists new interpretive tools for assessing risk and intent in high-conflict custody disputes. This research also supports the development of evidence-informed risk assessments, essential in forensic evaluations of family violence, parenting capacity, and legal decision-making.

### **Contributions to Practice and Policy**

The findings of this study may inform and enhance the practices of judges, custody evaluators, mental health professionals, guardians ad litem, and child protection workers who are tasked with making decisions regarding parenting time, visitation, and child safety. By shedding light on specific behavioral patterns and risk indicators that may precede filicide, the study supports the need for more rigorous screening procedures, better-informed custody recommendations, and trauma-informed intervention strategies. Furthermore, the results may influence family court practices and public policy by advocating for mandatory domestic violence training for all professionals involved in custody litigation, supporting the development of structured risk assessment protocols for

use in court proceedings, encouraging policy reforms that prioritize child safety over presumed parental rights, particularly in high-conflict or abuse-involved custody cases.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

Consistent with the scope and limitations of the study, the findings have the potential to promote positive social change by advancing child safety, family justice, and professional accountability. First, the study increases awareness of the dangerous consequences of overlooking domestic violence and coercive control in custody decisions. The study emphasizes real-world cases where unstable or abusive parents caused the deaths of children during court-ordered visits. This highlights the critical need for reform in how courts assess and manage risks in child custody situations.

Second, the research advocates for greater accountability among professionals who provide custody evaluations and recommendations to the court. The findings help shape training standards, performance evaluations, and oversight mechanisms for individuals working with vulnerable families in the legal system.

Ultimately, this research contributes to long-term social change by disrupting systemic patterns that permit dangerous behaviors to remain unrecognized or minimized within legal and clinical settings. As a result, the study lays a foundation for evidence-based reforms in child protection and family law that center the well-being and safety of children.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 established the critical need for further investigation into paternal filicide within the context of divorce and child custody litigation, an area that remains

underexplored in the existing literature. This knowledge gap has significant implications for child protection, legal decision-making, and forensic risk assessment. Understanding the behaviors, psychosocial characteristics, and contextual dynamics that precede paternal filicide may help professionals more accurately identify fathers at heightened risk of harming their children and ultimately inform improvements to child custody policies and legal practices.

The purpose of this study was to explore and interpret the characteristics and behaviors of filicidal fathers and the events leading up to these killings, specifically when they occur in the context of divorce, parental separation, and custody disputes. To achieve this objective, the researcher conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of online news reports. This approach allowed for the identification of recurring themes across cases, providing deeper insight into the psychosocial dynamics and environmental stressors that may contribute to filicide during familial breakdown.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, which builds the foundation for this study by synthesizing prior research relevant to the topic. The chapter includes a description of the literature search strategy, an overview of the conceptual framework, and a detailed review of five interrelated areas: the impacts of divorce and parental separation on children, the effects of parental conflict or "high-conflict divorce," the influence of intimate partner violence (IPV) on child well-being, patterns and risk factors associated with domestic homicide, and theoretical and empirical perspectives on filicide.

This review contextualized the study within existing research, justified the use of Displaced Aggression Theory, and highlighted the importance of investigating filicide through psychological and relational dynamics.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Despite growing awareness of domestic violence and its impacts on children, paternal filicide committed during or following divorce and child custody disputes remain an underexamined and alarming form of family violence. While rare compared to the broader prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV), paternal filicide occurs disproportionately within families already impacted by IPV, particularly when mothers attempt to separate from abusive partners (Jaffe et al., 2014). Studies show that a significant number of child homicides committed by fathers overlap with histories of domestic violence, yet few investigations have examined this intersection in depth or within the context of legal conflict, custody disputes, and familial breakdown (Jaffe et al., 2012).

IPV is one of the strongest predictors of intimate partner homicide, and these homicides frequently extend beyond the intimate partner to include children. Nearly half of all intimate partner homicides involve the deaths of children under 18 (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014). Research has consistently shown that custody disputes and post-separation conflict often intensify abusive dynamics, increasing the risk of retaliation and lethal violence (Adhia et al., 2019; Reif & Jaffe, 2019). Jaffe and Juodis (2006) identified a particularly dangerous filicide subtype: fathers who kill their children as an act of revenge against the mother for ending the relationship. Such cases are often missed opportunities for intervention by legal or mental health professionals (Debowska et al., 2015; Holland et al., 2018).

There is a growing interdisciplinary consensus, across psychology, criminology, and family law, regarding the need to better understand how domestic violence, coercive control, and high-conflict legal disputes contribute to paternal filicide (Bourget et al., 2007; Jaffe et al., 2014; Debowska et al., 2015). Although some research explored risk factors such as prior threats, mental health issues, and controlling behavior, there is limited systematic analysis of the behavioral patterns and psychosocial characteristics of filicidal fathers through narrative sources such as news media. Existing studies rarely captured how post-separation stress, histories of DV, and symbolic retaliation manifest in the lead-up to these fatal acts. This gap in the literature necessitated a qualitative inquiry that could interpret the complex emotional, social, and legal contexts in which these crimes occur.

The present study addressed this gap by conducting a qualitative thematic analysis of online news reports of paternal filicide cases in the United States, specifically those that occurred in the context of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. By analyzing publicly available reports, this research aimed to enhance understanding of risk indicators, recurring themes, and missed intervention points, ultimately contributing to more effective risk assessment and prevention strategies within legal, clinical, and child protection settings.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the behaviors and psychosocial characteristics of fathers who commit filicide, as well as the contextual events surrounding these acts, particularly within the framework of divorce, separation, and custody disputes. The phenomenon of interest was paternal filicide occurring in the

context of familial breakdown, with particular focus on the role of domestic violence, coercive control, and post-separation hostility.

To address this aim, the study employed qualitative methods to analyze publicly available online news reports of children murdered by their fathers during or after separation-related legal conflict. Through thematic analysis, the study sought to identify recurring patterns in perpetrator behavior, family dynamics, IPV histories, and institutional responses (e.g., court rulings, custody evaluations, protective orders). By illuminating these patterns, the study contributes to forensic psychology, risk assessment practices, and prevention efforts in high-conflict custody and domestic violence cases.

This chapter presents the literature review, which provided the foundation for the study's conceptual and theoretical grounding. It began with a description of the literature search strategy and a discussion of the conceptual framework, including the application of Displaced Aggression Theory to explain how frustration and perceived loss of control may be redirected toward children during familial conflict.

The remainder of the chapter was organized into five major, interrelated areas of research: 1) the impacts of divorce and parental separation on children; 2) the effects of parental conflict and high-conflict divorce on family dynamics; 3) the impact of intimate partner violence (IPV) on child well-being and safety; 4) the literature on domestic homicide, particularly in the context of IPV and custody disputes; and, 5) the phenomenon of filicide, including motivations, risk factors, and gendered patterns, culminating in a focus on paternal filicide driven by spousal revenge. Together, these areas provided a critical foundation for understanding the complex and multi-layered

factors that contribute to paternal filicide during periods of legal and relational instability.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

A comprehensive and iterative literature search was conducted to identify scholarly sources relevant to the topic of paternal filicide, particularly in the context of divorce and child custody litigation. The search process involved multiple academic databases including ProQuest Central, APA PsycArticles, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, and Thoreau Multisearch, which aggregates results from various academic resources. The initial strategy was to narrow the results to peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure the inclusion of credible and scholarly material. Initial search terms included: "filicide" (9,462 results); "spousal revenge filicide" (1,012 results); "child homicide" (231,165 results); "intimate partner violence and child fatalities" (29,754 results); "filicidal fathers" (5,525 results).

To further refine the literature to more recent studies, the same keywords were re-searched with date filters applied to limit results to publications from 2015 onward. This refinement yielded: 3,419 results for *filicide*; 413 for *spousal revenge filicide*; 23,998 for *child homicide*; 18,002 for *intimate partner violence and child fatalities*; and 2,137 for *filicidal fathers*.

In the next phase of the search, Boolean operators and additional keywords such as “divorce,” “parental separation,” and “domestic violence” were combined with the original search terms. This step further reduced the number of sources to those most directly relevant to the intersection of child homicide and family dissolution, thus enhancing the specificity and quality of the literature reviewed.

As articles were selected and reviewed, backward citation tracking was used to examine reference lists, which led to the identification of seminal works dating back to 1969. These foundational studies, although older, provided essential context for understanding historical trends and theoretical frameworks in filicide research. This was particularly valuable given the limited number of recent studies specifically focusing on spousal revenge filicide during divorce or custody disputes.

In total, 72 peer-reviewed journal articles were reviewed and included in the reference list. These works addressed various aspects of filicide, intimate partner violence, child homicide, and paternal filicide related to separation or divorce. Despite the large number of studies on general filicide, it was observed that very few studies, and no known dissertations or conference proceedings, specifically explored thematic analysis of online news reports involving paternal filicide during divorce and child custody litigation. This gap highlighted the novelty and significance of the present study.

In summary, the literature review supported the unique contribution of this research in analyzing how marital separation and child custody conflicts may influence paternal filicide, using a thematic approach to online news media. The iterative search strategy and incorporation of both recent and foundational research ensured a strong theoretical foundation while also identifying the need for further empirical investigation in this underexplored area.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

This study was grounded in a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, which posits that reality is not fixed or objectively measurable but is instead socially constructed and

shaped through human experience and interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995). In this paradigm, knowledge is co-created through engagement between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied, making it especially well-suited for investigating emotionally charged and morally complex topics such as paternal filicide within the context of divorce, child custody disputes, and intimate partner violence.

As Hathaway (1995) emphasized, interpretive qualitative inquiry focuses on how individuals make sense of their lived experiences and the social contexts in which they are situated. This perspective enables researchers to explore how fathers interpret and respond to emotionally fraught events, such as separation, custody loss, and feelings of rejection, and how these subjective interpretations may contribute to acts of displaced violence against their children. The constructivist-interpretive paradigm thus provided both theoretical and methodological foundation for this study, guiding an inquiry into the meaning fathers attribute to their experiences and how those meanings intersect with extreme acts of violence.

### **Theoretical Framework—Displaced Aggression Theory**

At the center of this study is Displaced Aggression Theory, which emerges from early aggression models and has been refined over time to explain how aggression may be redirected toward less threatening or more vulnerable targets. This theory was initially introduced by Dollard et al. (1939) through the frustration-aggression hypothesis, which posited that aggression is always a consequence of frustration. Hovland and Sears (1940) provided empirical support for this idea, demonstrating that when individuals are blocked from retaliating against the true source of their frustration or harm, they may instead

displace aggression onto more accessible targets. Freud's psychoanalytic concept of displacement, where individuals redirect anger from its original source to a safer substitute, also underpins this foundational framework.

Subsequent theorists, including Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) and Denson et al. (2006), expanded Displaced Aggression Theory by identifying it as a multidimensional process that involves an initial provocation, negative affect, situational constraints, rumination, revenge planning, and ultimately aggressive behavior toward a substitute target. Debowska et al. (2015) suggested that this theoretical model is particularly relevant for understanding child homicides in the context of intimate partner violence and family breakdown. Fathers may perceive their children as symbolic extensions of their estranged partners or as proxies for the perceived injustices of the legal system, leading to retaliatory violence aimed at causing emotional harm to the other parent. Within this framework, Displaced Aggression Theory offers a cognitive-emotional explanation for paternal filicide, framing it as an extreme and tragic response to feelings of powerlessness, humiliation, and revenge (Debowska et al., 2015; Jaffe et al., 2012).

### **Conceptual Framework Using Displaced Aggression Theory and Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigms to Explore Paternal Filicide in Custody Disputes**

The conceptual framework for this study was grounded in Displaced Aggression Theory (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000; Denson et al., 2006) and informed by broader theories of aggression, including the General Aggression Model (GAM) and the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Integrated with the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, this framework shaped the study's qualitative methodology by emphasizing

how fathers in high-conflict divorces may interpret and respond to experiences of perceived powerlessness, rejection, or blocked goals, such as custody loss or estrangement from their children.

As Ravitch and Carl (2016) described, a conceptual framework serves as the “connective tissue” of a study, linking theoretical foundations, methodological decisions, and research aims. In this study, it connected the psychological processes of displaced aggression to real-world narratives of paternal filicide, as interpreted through thematic analysis of online news reports. The framework posited that some fathers, unable to retaliate against more powerful or unreachable sources of frustration, like former partners or the legal system, may redirect aggression toward their children, who are viewed as emotional proxies or symbols of the estranged partner. This displacement is further facilitated by processes such as rumination, emotional dysregulation, and revenge ideation, key themes explored within the narrative data.

Aligned with the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, the framework guided the study’s thematic analysis to identify narrative patterns of prior domestic violence, coercive control, threats of harm, symbolic language in filicide events, and interactions with family court or protective services. This orientation allowed the researcher to remain focused on understanding not only the observable behaviors and psychosocial characteristics of fathers who commit filicide, but also the broader contextual and situational dynamics that shape these tragic events.

Ultimately, by systematically connecting theory, paradigm, method, and data, this conceptual and theoretical framework strengthened the study’s contribution to forensic

psychology, legal risk assessment, and child protection practice. It emphasized the importance of interpreting the subjective experiences and contextual meanings that inform paternal filicide in the emotionally charged landscape of family dissolution.

### **Human Aggression**

To understand displaced aggression, it is necessary to examine broader theories of human aggression. Human aggression is behavior intended to cause harm to a person who does not want to be harmed (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Importantly, the perpetrator of aggression must believe that their behavior will cause harm and that the target of aggression is motivated to avoid the harm (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). In other words, accidental harm, incidental harm, and pain caused in sexual masochism are not considered aggression (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Similarly, violence is aggression, but aggression is not always violent (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Distinction may also be drawn between hostile aggression and instrumental aggression. Hostile aggression is impulsive, thoughtless, unplanned, driven by anger, motivated to cause harm, and based upon a reaction to a perceived provocation (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Dutton, 2007).

Alternatively, instrumental aggression is characterized by proactive and premeditated harm intended to achieve a goal that is not necessarily harmful but maybe for financial gain (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Dutton, 2007). For instance, robbery and physical assault are both aggressive acts. However, the perpetration of each is likely based upon different motivations (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

## **Theories of Human Aggression**

Researchers have developed multiple theories to help explain and understand the phenomenon of human aggression (Allen & Anderson, 2017). The Frustration–Aggression Model, Cognitive Neoassociation Theory, Social Learning Theory, Script Theory, Excitation Transfer Theory, Social Interaction Theory, and General Aggression Model (GAM) are among the theories used to explain human aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Denson et al. (2006) asserted, "The GAM is the most recent comprehensive social psychological model of aggressive behavior" (p. 1047).

Anderson and Bushman (2002) developed GAM and integrated several of the "mini theories" listed above to consolidate and incorporate how each overlap with the others. GAM has three main components to help understand the cause and development of human aggression: "...(a) person and situation inputs; (b) cognitive, affective, and arousal routes through which these input variables have their impact; and (c) outcomes of the underlying appraisal and decision processes" (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 34).

### ***GAM Inputs: Person Components***

Everything a person brings to a situation, such as personality traits, attitudes, and genetic predispositions, is the "person components" of GAM inputs (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Individuals exhibit stable personality traits that remain consistent over time and across various situations. These traits arise from their continual application of cognitive frameworks, such as schemata and scripts (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). These knowledge structures influence a person's selection of situations to seek out

or avoid, contributing to the consistency of personality and ultimately creating the individual's preparedness to aggress (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Certain personality traits predispose people to high levels of aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Anderson and Bushman (2002) found that individuals with inflated or unstable self-esteem are likely to become angry and act out aggressively when their image is threatened. There are also distinctions made between males and females regarding their aggressive tendencies. For example, males commit more violent acts (i.e., homicide and aggravated assault) compared to females, and males prefer direct aggression as opposed to indirect aggression, which is typically preferred by females (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Beliefs, attitudes, values, long-term goals, and scripts also add to a person's tendency to aggress (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The belief in one's efficacy to successfully carry out an aggressive act and the expectation that it will produce the desired outcome increases the likelihood of that individual being aggressive (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Positive attitudes about the use of violence influence the tendency to act out aggressively (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Beliefs about what others should or should not do (i.e., values) influence a person's propensity to be aggressive (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Also, "[f]or many people, violence is a perfectly acceptable method of dealing with interpersonal conflict, perhaps even a preferred method" (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 36).

### ***GAM Inputs: Situational Components***

Various situational factors may influence the level of aggression used by a person (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Anderson and Bushman (2002) stated that aggressive cues, provocation, frustration, pain and discomfort, drugs, and incentives are key situational factors to consider. "Aggressive cues are objects that prime aggression-related concepts in memory" (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 37). Research has found that the presence of guns increases aggressive behavior of angry research participants compared to the presence of other items that could be used as a weapon (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Researchers have found that violent television shows, movies, video games, images, and words related to weapons increase aggression in individuals through cognitive cueing effects (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

One of the primary causes of human aggression is interpersonal provocation, including insults, slights, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and perceived interference with attaining goals (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Interference or blocking the attainment of a goal (also known as frustration) increases aggression against the person considered responsible for the interference, as well as against people who may not be responsible at all (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Dollard et al., 1939). The phenomenon of displaced aggression occurs when the target of aggression is not the person who caused the initial frustration (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Denson et al., 2006; Dollard et al., 1939; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). Displaced aggression is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Pain and discomfort, drug use, and various incentives (i.e., personal wants and desires) also influence levels of aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Researchers have found that high temperatures, loud noises, and unpleasant odors increase human aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Drug and alcohol consumption increases levels of aggression, as well as people's wants and desires for a variety of objects deemed valuable (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

### ***GAM Routes: Cognition, Affect, Arousal, and Interconnections***

Interactions between input variables, such as the individual and the situation, along with internal mental states like cognition, emotion, and arousal, actively shape behavioral outcomes (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Hostile thoughts, scripts, mood, and emotion, as well as expressive motor responses and overall arousal, are influenced by a person's traits (as previously described) and varying situations (also described), resulting in a range of aggressive responses (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Researchers Anderson and Bushman (2002) found that media violence, frequent activation of aggressive concepts, physical pain, exercise, and facial expressions all contribute to increased acts of aggression. Importantly, cognition, affect, and arousal are all interconnected and highly influential on one another (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

### ***GAM Outcomes: Appraisal and Decision Processes***

The final phase in GAM "...focuses on the outcomes of events through the assessment of appraisal and decision processes" (Allen & Anderson, 2017, p. 10). *Outcomes* are the responses from the interplay of *inputs* and *routes*, ranging from automatic to highly controlled responses (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Immediate

appraisal of the person and situation factors is the first step in the outcomes stage (Allen & Anderson, 2017). After the individual makes an initial appraisal, they will decide on the best response based on their available resources, such as time and cognitive capacity. If they find the results of the immediate appraisal important but unsatisfactory, they will then begin the reappraisal process to explore alternative perspectives on the situation (Allen & Anderson, 2017). If no criterion is met, an impulsive action may result, and depending upon the immediate appraisal, the act might be either aggressive or nonaggressive (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

Overall, GAM provides a helpful framework for understanding human aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). GAM has been applied to a variety of aggression scenarios, including intimate partner violence and male-on-female aggression, and it integrates biological, social, cognitive, and developmental approaches, taking a wide range of factors to help make sense of human aggression (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

Next, the focus of the discussion shifts to a form of human aggression known as displaced aggression. As briefly noted above, displaced aggression occurs when the target of aggression is not the person who caused the initial frustration; frustration is an identified situational factor in the GAM and is defined as "the blockage of goal attainment" (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 37).

### **Displaced Aggression**

Dollard et al. (1939) explored the relationship between frustration and aggression. They began their exploration on the premise that aggression is always a consequence of frustration (Dollard et al., 1939). The researchers dissected the

frustration-aggression sequence and described its components. Their frustration-aggression model consisted of (a) instigation (an antecedent condition causing a predicted response), (b) strength of instigation, (c) goal-response (a reaction reducing the strength of the instigation to act), (d) reinforcement (the goal-response acting as a reward), (e) frustration (interference with goal-response), (f) substitute response (substitution for goal response), and (g) aggression (a goal-response to injure the person perceived to be causing the frustration) (Dollard et al., 1939). Dollard et al. (1939) further explained that

Aggression is not always manifested in overt movements, but may exist as the content of

a fantasy, dream, or even a well-thought-out plan of revenge. People may direct their emotions at the source of their frustration, or they might displace those feelings onto an innocent target or even turn them inward, resulting in behaviors associated with masochism, martyrdom, or suicide (p. 10).

Dollard et al. (1939) credited Freud for formulating the principle of displacement. According to Freud, displacement is a defense mechanism in which a person redirects aggression from its original source to a less threatening person (Dollard et al., 1939). As an example, Freud described a female patient frustrated with her husband and fantasizing about killing her child because the child reminded her of her husband (Dollard et al., 1939).

Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) described displaced aggression as a stable phenomenon, and people who are provoked and unable to retaliate respond more aggressively toward an innocent and unprovoking third party. Marcus-Newhall et al.

(2000) summarized the process of displaced aggression as (a) an initial provocation inducing (b) negative affect, (c) activating associated thoughts, memories, physiological reactions, and motor responses, but when there are (d) situational constraints, such as fear of punishment or unavailability of the provocateur, direct retaliation may not be possible, (e) causing rumination and subsequent displaced aggression.

Slotter et al. (2020) studied displaced aggression in the context of IPV to help understand and predict when partners might behave aggressively toward each other or when they might displace aggression against a third party. They employed the I-cubed model (I3), developed by Slotter and Finkel (2011), to frame their study. The I3 model was used to predict when an intimate partner might act out aggressively toward another by considering the relative strength of 3 factors: (a) instigating triggers, (b) impelling forces, and (c) inhibiting forces (Slotter et al., 2020). Interestingly, these three considerations are like the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002), Marcus–Newhall et al.'s (2000) description of displaced aggression, and the frustration-aggression model (Dollard et al., 1939). Table 1 below presents a side-by-side comparison of the elements of each theory discussed above.

**Table 1***Models of Human Aggression*

General aggression model (GAM)	Frustration aggression model	Marcus–Newhall et al. displaced aggression model	I <sup>3</sup> model— IPV aggression
Person and situation inputs	Instigation	Initial provocation	Instigating triggers
Cognitive, affective, and arousal routes	Strength of instigation/ goal response	Negative affect	Impelling forces
Outcomes of the underlying appraisal and the decision-making process	Frustration	Activation associated thoughts, memories, physiological reactions, and motor responses.	Inhibiting forces
	Substitute response/ aggression	Situational constraints render direct retaliation unreasonable or impossible.	
		Rumination	
		Displaced aggression	

Slotter et al. (2020) posited that romantic partners with high anxiety attachment experiencing an urge to aggress will likely displace aggression to a third party to avoid jeopardizing their relationship. Although researchers also noted that a person's attachment style is likely not enough to explain displaced aggression, they suggested that a higher level of self-control would also be necessary (Slotter et al., 2020). The results of Slotter et al. (2020) supported these notions. They found that romantic partners with high attachment anxiety predict less IPV when individuals have high levels of self-control, and alternatively, those with less anxiety and less self-control are more likely to engage in IPV (Slotter et al., 2020). Thus, findings support that attachment anxiety can inhibit IPV but also compel the use of displaced aggression (Slotter et al., 2020).

According to Denson et al. (2006), displaced aggression occurs when a person is unable or unwilling to retaliate against the person who caused them harm and instead directs their aggression toward an innocent target. Denson et al. (2006) studied displaced

aggression and the differences between those who displace aggression versus those who do not. They posited that individuals with a greater tendency to ruminate play a significant role in the variance of displaced aggression (Denson et al., 2006). In other words, people with a greater tendency to ruminate over provocation are more likely to displace aggression than those who do not ruminate.

Denson et al. (2006) described the tendency to displace aggression as a character trait and that individuals with this trait predominately use rumination to cope with provocation. When ruminating, these people will persistently focus on their anger and plan retaliation (Denson et al., 2006). In principle, the act of rumination maintains the feelings, cognition, and arousal of aggression initially experienced, thus causing adverse emotional reactions to those subsequently encountered (Denson et al., 2006; Salguero et al., 2020).

Research has indicated that some people have a greater tendency toward aggression compared to others (Denson et al., 2006). However, the cited research focused on instances of direct aggression and did not consider occurrences of displaced aggression (Denson et al., 2006). Denson et al. (2006) hypothesized that although there are similarities in the psychological processes used with direct and displaced aggression, three components distinguish the trait to displace aggression: (a) angry rumination, (b) revenge planning, and (c) behavioral displaced aggression. Their study and research supported their hypothesis.

Salguero et al. (2020) evaluated the interplay between metacognitive beliefs (i.e., belief about one's cognition involving monitoring, controlling, and interpreting one's

thoughts; metacognition is an internal guide allowing people to recognize their thoughts, which in turn influences their reactions (Hett et al., 2017)), anger rumination, anger levels, and displaced aggression. The researchers anticipated that "...1) anger rumination would be related to higher levels of anger and displaced aggression; 2) metacognitive beliefs would also be related with higher levels of anger rumination, anger levels, and displaced aggression; and (3) anger rumination would mediate the relationships between metacognitive beliefs and both anger levels and displaced aggression" (Salguero et al., 2020, p. 166).

To test their hypothesis, Salguero et al. (2020) used a convenience sample of students and a snowball sampling approach to recruit non-student participants ranging in age from 18 to 82 years old. Researchers provided participants with electronic questionnaires that included the Meta-Cognitions Questionnaire-30 (MCQ-30), the Anger Rumination Scale (ARS), the Dimensions of Anger Reactions – Revised (DAR), and the Displaced Aggression Questionnaire (DAQ) (Salguero et al., 2020). Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and internal consistency were computed using the participants' responses (Salguero et al., 2020).

Researchers found a "...positive and significant correlation between all variables of interest: metacognitive beliefs, anger rumination, anger levels, and displaced aggression, indicating that people with higher levels of maladaptive metacognitive beliefs and higher anger rumination showed higher levels of anger and a higher tendency to use displaced aggression" (Salguero et al., 2020, p. 166). More specifically, those found to

have a greater tendency to ruminate were associated with higher levels of anger and a greater propensity to displace aggression (Salguero et al., 2020).

Participants with higher levels of metacognitive beliefs also had a greater tendency to ruminate when angry and experience more intense feelings of anger (Salguero et al., 2020). Salguero et al. (2020) further noted that "...metacognitive beliefs are a transdiagnostic factor in psychopathology and a predictor of both maladaptive emotion regulation strategies (e.g., rumination and worry) and emotional distress" (Salguero et al., 2020, pp. 166-167). Lastly, researchers found a positive correlation between metacognitive beliefs and displaced aggression (Salguero et al., 2020).

Displaced aggression helped to provide a systematic way to thematically analyze the online news reports of fathers killing their children in the context of divorce and child custody litigation, such as evaluating the sequences, patterns, and characteristics of the filicidal fathers' behaviors using Denson et al. (2006) Displaced Aggression Questionnaire (DAQ) and Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) understanding of the process of displaced aggression.

Although Slotter et al. (2020) and Salguero et al. (2020) provided additional insight and understanding of the phenomenon of displaced aggression, the matters of a perpetrator's attachment style (Slotter et al., 2020) and metacognition (Salguero et al., 2020) were deemed too difficult to assess or ascertain using thematic analysis of online news reports. Therefore, the theoretical and conceptual framework consisted of Denson et al. (2006) and Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) focus on reported details about initial

provocations, resulting affect, situational constraints, rumination, revenge planning, and acts of displaced aggression (Denson et al., 2006; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000).

### **Literature Review**

Filicide represents an extreme violation of deeply held societal norms surrounding parenting and morality, even in cultures where violence is often accepted as a response to anger and frustration (Carruthers, 2016; Dekel et al., 2018). Unlike other forms of homicide, child killings are perpetrated by both women and men at nearly equal rates; however, research consistently shows that their underlying motivations often differ (Carruthers, 2016; Dekel et al., 2018). Among these cases, revenge-motivated filicide, where a parent kills a child to retaliate against a former partner, is frequently preceded by a history of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Dekel et al., 2018). These acts typically occur in the context of parental separation or divorce and are predominantly committed by fathers (Adhia et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2014; Carruthers, 2016; McCarroll et al., 2017).

While paternal filicide is a rare event compared to the widespread prevalence of IPV, it disproportionately occurs within families already impacted by domestic violence (Jaffe et al., 2014). In many cases, a mother's attempt to leave an abusive relationship serves as a precipitating factor for the father's decision to kill his children (Jaffe et al., 2014). Research highlights that child homicides committed during divorce and parental separation frequently overlap with histories of IPV, yet there remains limited in-depth exploration of this relationship (Jaffe et al., 2012). Scholars have identified spousal revenge as a key motivation in these cases, where fathers retaliate against a mother's

decision to end the relationship by harming what she values most: their children (Jaffe & Juodis, 2006; Bourget et al., 2007).

IPV is recognized as one of the strongest predictors of intimate partner homicide (IPH) (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014), with research indicating that nearly half of these homicides involve additional victims, including children under the age of 18 (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014). Despite this alarming connection, there remains a lack of systematic research examining the intersection of IPV, custody disputes, and filicide risk (Adhia et al., 2019). Retrospective analyses of child homicides within domestic violence contexts have emphasized the importance of recognizing missed opportunities for intervention (Reif & Jaffe, 2019), particularly in high-conflict custody disputes where family violence histories are present (Debowska et al., 2015; Holland et al., 2018).

A growing body of research acknowledges that filicides committed by fathers during or after parental separation represent an alarming and underexamined form of family violence (Jaffe et al., 2014; Bourget et al., 2007; Debowska et al., 2015). Existing studies consistently highlight IPV as a significant risk factor for both IPH and child homicide, especially during periods of relationship dissolution and legal conflict (Smith et al., 2014; Lyons et al., 2020). However, there is still a critical gap in understanding behavioral patterns, psychosocial characteristics, contextual events, and warning signs exhibited by filicidal fathers, particularly through publicly available sources such as news reports.

The current body of research employed a variety of methodological approaches reflecting the complexity of filicide and its underlying dynamics. Qualitative studies

often explored the psychosocial contexts of filicide, IPV, and family dynamics using case studies, narrative analyses, or fatality reviews (Carruthers, 2016; Dekel et al., 2018; Johnston, 1994; Websdale, 2010; Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). Conversely, many studies utilized quantitative methods, analyzing large datasets to examine prevalence rates, risk factors, and child outcomes associated with divorce, parental conflict, IPV, and filicide (Brown et al., 2014; Amato, 1995; Emery, 1982; O'Hara et al., 2019; Whiteside, 1998; Beck et al., 2013; Campbell, 2017; Liem & Koenraadt, 2018; Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). A few studies, such as Myers et al. (2021), adopted mixed-method approaches, integrating quantitative data with qualitative case analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of perpetrators' psychological vulnerabilities.

Despite these contributions, significant gaps remain. There is a distinct lack of systematic qualitative research focused on fathers who kill their children as a form of retaliatory violence against a former partner. Furthermore, the intersection of family court practices, IPV histories, and filicide risk has been insufficiently explored despite anecdotal evidence and advocacy by organizations like the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE, 2021). Another underexamined area is the representation of filicide in media narratives, which often serve as the public's primary source of information on these cases.

Given the deeply subjective and context-specific nature of fathers' motivations in revenge-motivated filicide, a qualitative research design was the most appropriate for this study. Specifically, thematic analysis of online news reports provided a practical means to examine rich narrative data, facilitating the identification of patterns in behaviors,

motives, and contextual factors. This approach enabled a nuanced examination of how displaced aggression manifests in the context of divorce and custody disputes, where primary data collection is often not feasible.

This study was grounded in constructivist and interpretive paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995), which prioritized understanding individuals' meaning-making processes within specific social contexts. Such an approach was well-suited for examining the emotionally charged phenomenon of paternal filicide, focusing on subjective interpretations rather than broad generalizations. While secondary data sources like news narratives have limitations, including potential media bias and lack of depth, they remain a valuable resource for exploring this understudied form of family violence.

Using this theoretical and methodological framework, the study addressed two central research questions. The first question explored the reported behaviors and psychosocial characteristics of fathers who commit filicide within the context of divorce and custody disputes. Studies show that fathers who commit filicide often have a history of IPV and frequently seek revenge against a former partner who has initiated separation or legal proceedings (Dekel et al., 2018; Jaffe et al., 2014; Bourget et al., 2007). However, while studies have identified IPV as a critical risk factor, few have provided in-depth analyses of the specific behavioral patterns and psychological vulnerabilities of these fathers, particularly in the context of contested custody disputes (Myers et al., 2021).

The second research question examined the events and dynamics surrounding these filicide incidents as portrayed in media narratives. Media reports, though secondary

sources, offered valuable insights into how such cases are framed publicly, often providing detailed accounts of family histories, legal conflicts, and escalation of violence. Previous research noted the role of media in shaping societal perceptions of domestic homicide (Websdale, 2010). The study highlights the importance of conducting systematic analyses of how paternal filicide is represented in this field (Carruthers, 2016). This gap was significant, as media narratives often become the primary source of public awareness and can influence policy discourse and professional practices in family law and child protection.

Together, these research questions aimed to uncover recurring patterns and contextual factors that contribute to revenge-motivated paternal filicide, providing a deeper understanding of this complex and underexamined phenomenon. By framing the analysis through Displaced Aggression Theory, the study sought to explore how fathers' unresolved anger and frustration toward a former partner become redirected toward their children during times of relationship dissolution and legal conflict. This theoretical lens was previously applied in broader aggression research but remained underutilized in filicide studies, representing an opportunity to bridge psychological theory with real-world cases (Denson et al., 2006).

The choice of thematic analysis of online news reports was particularly meaningful in addressing these gaps. Given the ethical and practical challenges of studying filicidal fathers through direct interviews or clinical samples, media narratives provided a feasible alternative for gathering qualitative data on these rare but devastating events. This approach enabled the systematic identification of themes related to motives,

behaviors, and contextual factors across multiple cases, providing insights that are both contextually rich and relevant to forensic psychology, legal professionals, and child protection practitioners.

Ultimately, this research sought to advance the literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of paternal filicide in the context of IPV, divorce, and custody disputes. By doing so, it aimed to inform policy development, enhance risk assessment frameworks, and support more effective intervention strategies to protect vulnerable children and families at risk of lethal violence.

To fully understand the tragic phenomenon of paternal filicide within the context of family breakdown, it was essential to examine interconnected domains such as divorce, parental separation, parental conflict, IPV, and domestic homicide. Divorce and separation often act as catalysts for emotional volatility and heightened conflict, while histories of IPV and ongoing disputes exacerbate tensions, increasing the potential for violence. Domestic homicide represents the most extreme outcome of these conflicts and provides critical context for understanding how such tragedies unfold. A comprehensive review of these domains was thus necessary to frame the analysis of paternal filicide within its broader social and familial context.

### **Impacts of Divorce and Parental Separation on Children**

Parental separation and divorce have significant implications on the setting in which children are nurtured and socialized, which makes both an important topic of interest for social scientists, child welfare experts, and policymakers (Amato, 2000; Damota, 2019). More than half of all divorces involve children with an estimated one

million children experiencing parental divorce every year (Amato, 2000). However, divorce in the United States is on a steady decline since the 1980s (Eyo, 2018; Marquardt et al., 2012; Reynolds, 2020), but cohabitation of couples is increasing (Copen et al., 2012; Marquardt et al., 2012). Children living in two-parent homes have sharply declined between 1968 and 2020 (from 85% to 70%) (Hemez & Washington, 2021). Additionally, the number of children residing with only their mothers has doubled since 1968, increasing from 7.6 million to 15.3 million in 2020 (Hemez & Washington, 2021).

Although common in society, divorce is considered a significant life stressor with potentially negative impacts on the physical and mental health of all involved (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, n.d.; Damota, 2019). Science has indicated that children of parental divorce experience lifelong issues, including academic failure, poor peer relationships, and lack of commitment in relationships (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, n.d.; Damota, 2019). However, other research found that some divorces have positive implications for families that have been embroiled in chronic conflict, abusive, and violent interactions (Amato, 1995; Hetherington, 1979; Damota, 2019). Empirical evidence suggests that interparental conflict may better explain the causes of childhood problems than parental separation or divorce (Amato, 1995; Emery, 1982; Malcore et al., 2009).

### **Impacts of Parental Conflict and/or “High Conflict Divorce” on Children**

Hetherington (1979) stated that intact families afflicted with chronic conflict are more detrimental to families and children than stable divorced households. An absent

parent is also better for children than a hostile, rejecting, or inaccessible parent within the home (Hetherington, 1979). Most children can cope with and adapt to the short-term effects of divorce and parental separation, but when there is continued adversity, developmental disruptions may occur (Herrington, 1979; Johnston, 1994; Malcore et al., 2009).

Children exposed to chronic stress are at an increased risk of harm compared to a single stressful experience (Herrington, 1979). Furthermore, the parents' response to divorce and the quality of the child's relationship with both parents immediately following the divorce have a significant influence on the child's ability to cope and adjust (Herrington, 1979; Johnston et al., 1989; Johnston, 1994; O'Hara et al., 2019).

Notably, Emery (1982) and Hayes (2017) found that parental conflict does not always end with the marriage; in fact, conflict may increase after divorce. Parental conflict that extends beyond parental separation and divorce (especially in cases of shared/equal parenting time and frequent exchanges of children) is associated with children at greater risk of being caught and used in parental disagreements (Amato et al., 1995; Johnston et al., 1989). The more often these children have contact with both parents in a "high conflict family," the greater the likelihood they will have adjustment problems, as well as emotional and behavioral problems (Amato et al., 1995; Johnston et al., 1989; Laletas & Khasin, 2021).

In contrast, O'Hara et al. (2019) found no significant indirect effects on children 9-18 years old exclusively involving interparental conflict but noted associations between children's reported quality of relationship with each parent and interparental conflict;

children reported a lower quality relationship with parents perceived to be instigating conflict with the other parent. O'Hara et al. (2019) recommended that future research focus on multiple measures of interparental conflict (e.g., initiator, intimate partner violence, impact on emotional security) to capture the complexities of interparental conflict exposure that children experience and impacts on their mental health. It was further noted that interparental conflict due to abusive and violent parents is a safety concern and should be given more attention and priority compared to other forms of interparental conflict when developing parenting time schedules for children (O'Hara et al., 2019).

Laletas and Khasin (2021) defined "high conflict divorce" as chronic and protracted legal battles over child support, child custody, visitation, or methods of child-rearing. Indeed, conflict is expected with divorce, but Johnston (1994) noted that the distinction between normal and pathological conflict is in the duration and patterns of conflict. Most divorcing parents manage to cooperate and support their children effectively. However, it is estimated that around 20-30% of divorcing parents experience high levels of conflict and tension (Whiteside, 1998).

Whiteside (1998) described that the most dysfunctional families in this high-conflict group interact with frequent arguing, blaming, physical attacks, denigration, and sabotage of the other parent's relationship with the child, low parental self-esteem, unclear boundaries, and neglectful or rigid and authoritarian parenting styles. These families consume a disproportionate share of professional services and resources in family courts compared to families not impacted by patterns of high conflict (Carter &

Frenkel, 2020; Coates et al., 2004; Cry & Godbout, 2020; Fidler & Bala, 2020; Whiteside, 1998).

### **Impacts of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) on Children**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) adds more complexities to navigating divorce and parental separation. Depner et al. (1992) found in their study of divorcing and separating parents that 65% of the families alleged IPV by one or both parents. In two other studies of high-conflict families, approximately 40% of the participants described experiencing IPV as severe and involving battering and threatening to use a weapon (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Johnston, 1994). Johnston (1994) noted that there is often a history of IPV and a likelihood of continued violence after divorce in cases marked by ongoing disputes over custody of children. Some victims of IPV reported increased and more severe violence after separation (Beck et al., 2013; Campbell, 2017; Hardesty, 2002; Hotton, 2001).

IPV is an action intended to assert or gain power and control over a domestic partner or spouse (Watson & Ancis, 2013). These actions or patterns of behavior may consist of physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and/or economic abuse (Watson & Ancis, 2013). In the United States, IPV among married and cohabiting couples is a serious public health concern (Breiding et al., 2014; Schafer et al., 1998; Smith et al., 2016; Zolotor et al., 2007).

Child and adolescent exposure to IPV is also a significant public health concern, with an estimated 8 to 15 million children being exposed to IPV each year in the United States (Latzman et al., 2017). "Exposure to IPV" means children may have directly

witnessed, intervened, participated, overheard, observed effects of, or heard about the violence secondhand (Black et al., 2020). It is not uncommon for children to be exposed to IPV, and of those exposed, over half will likely report some other form of child maltreatment occurring in the home (Zolotor et al., 2007).

Physical violence between parents increases the risk of parent to child violence (Amato et al., 1995; Beck et al., 2013), and perpetrators of IPV often undermine or attack the parent-child relationship by involving the children in violence or making threats to harm children (Beck et al., 2013; Carruthers, 2016; Hayes, 2012; Hayes, 2017). Overall, children exposed to IPV are associated with suffering negative, severe, and long-lasting effects such as reduced cognitive ability, lower educational achievement, as well as psychological and physical health problems (Beck et al., 2013; Latzman, 2017).

### **Domestic Homicide**

Given that IPV is often a precursor to lethal violence, it is crucial to examine domestic homicide as a continuum of escalating abuse, particularly in the context of separation. Domestic homicide is one of the most extreme types of violent behavior (Liem & Koenraadt, 2018). The different forms of domestic homicide include the killing of intimate partners, children, parents, siblings, or other family members (Liem & Koenraadt, 2018).

Websdale (1999) noted that domestic homicide is a rare occurrence, and interpersonal violence and IPV are much more prevalent. Importantly, IPV does not always result in homicide, but domestic homicide rarely occurs without a history of IPV (Websdale, 1999). While analyzing intimate relationships ending in death, Websdale

(1999) found consistent patterns of conflict, antagonism, and despair leading up to domestic homicides.

There are notable gender differences between victims and perpetrators of domestic homicides. For instance, women are more likely to be victims of domestic homicide and more likely to be killed after separation compared to men (Hayes, 2012; Hotton, 2001). Approximately 33% of female homicide victims have been killed by their male spouses, whereas 10% of male homicide victims were killed by their female spouses (Liem & Koenraadt, 2018). The motives for these homicides can also be distinguished by gender. Men are typically motivated to kill their domestic partners based upon jealousy, possessiveness, and fear of abandonment, and women who kill their spouses are more likely to have acted in self-defense, protection of their children, or after years of suffering physical violence (Dekel et al., 2019; Liem & Koenraadt, 2018).

The United States has the highest rate of child homicides in the developed world (Alder & Polk, 2001). The most significant risk of child homicide occurs during the first 24 hours of a child's life, followed by the first year of life (Alder & Polk, 2001). Alder and Polk (2001) stated that homicide is the leading cause of injury-related death for children under the age of 1, and it is the only cause of death of children under the age of 15 that has increased in the last 30 years. Notably, men typically make up about 85% to 90% of the perpetrators of homicide in contrast to perpetrators of child homicide, where some studies have found almost equal rates of perpetration between men and women (Alder & Polk, 2001). Men and women commit child homicide for different reasons,

thus making child homicides complex and not having a singular explanation; further exploration into these tragedies is needed and recommended (Alder & Polk, 2001).

### **Filicide**

There are several definitions for filicide used throughout the scientific literature. For instance, Mariano et al. (2014) defined filicide as "...the killing of one or more children by a parent, stepparent, or other parental figure" (p.1), Carruthers (2016) defined filicide as "...the murder of a child by a parent" (p. 31), and Myers et al. (2021) defined filicide "... as the purposeful killing of one's child of any age. Perpetrators may include biological parents, stepparents, adoptive parents, or other established parental figures" (p. 206). Brown et al. (2019) defined filicide as:

the unlawful killing of a child by a parent or parent equivalent, such as a stepparent or grandparent. The age parameters of the children were from 0–17 years of age, thus excluding parents killing adult children aged 18 years or older. The offenders included biological mothers and fathers, adoptive mothers and fathers, stepparents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents (with guardianship), acting alone or in combination. Foster parents were included (pp. 16–17)

For the objectives of this study, filicide is defined as the act of a biological parent killing their child(ren) aged 0 – 17 years old. Both mothers and fathers commit filicide, but estimations regarding the proportion at which each commits filicide vary throughout the literature (Carruthers, 2016). The variation in data reflects the overall difficulty researchers face in collecting and analyzing information from filicidal cases; filicide is a challenging phenomenon to study due to the ethical and methodological issues that

researchers must overcome (Carruthers, 2016; Myers et al., 2021). Despite this, some progress has been made in filicidal research (Carruthers, 2016).

To date, most research has focused on maternal filicide and very little on paternal filicide (Erikson et al., 2016; Friedman & Resnick, 2011). Maternal filicide perpetrators tend to have higher rates of depression and psychiatric disorders compared to their male counterparts (Erikson et al., 2016). Younger filicidal mothers are socioeconomically poor with limited resources, under stress, and lacking family and community support (Mariano et al., 2014). Older filicidal mothers commonly lack criminal histories and suffer more mental illness than younger mothers (Mariano et al., 2014). Older mothers were also more likely to have received mental health care predating the filicide (Mariano et al., 2014).

Fathers attempt or complete suicide after filicide more often than mothers (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Mariano et al., 2014). They are also more likely to kill their spouse as well as kill multiple victims (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Mariano et al., 2014). Fathers use more violent means of causing death compared to mothers (Mariano et al., 2014). Fathers use firearms, stabbing, head injuries, hitting, and kicking (Mariano et al., 2014). Mariano et al. (2014) found that fathers were 3 times more likely to use firearms than mothers. Perpetrators of paternal filicide have similar socio-demographic characteristics (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). They are older, poorly educated, and most are unemployed at the time of the filicide (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). About one-third of filicidal males were married, with 17% separated at the time of the crime (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). Perpetrators reported having a

history of juvenile delinquency, being abused as children, having significant alcohol and/or drug use, and a history of physically or emotionally abusing their child(ren) and spouses/partners prior to committing filicide (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

Depression and paranoia are two of the most common diagnoses for male perpetrators of filicide, although reported rates of mental illness vary in the literature (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). Males commit suicide after committing filicide 2 to 4 times more often than their female counterparts, although many of these men committed familicide and not just filicide; suicide rates are higher among perpetrators of familicide than filicide, and men commit familicide more often than women (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) found in their study that psychosocial issues varied between subgroups of male perpetrators based on their motivation. For instance, perpetrators motivated by spousal revenge were found to have stable employment, ranged in age between 25 and 47 years old, experienced intimate relationship difficulties, harbored tremendous anger toward their partners, and had a history of perpetrating spousal abuse and threatening harm to their former partner. Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque (2020) also found that perpetrators showed signs of narcissistic personality disorder and paranoia and lacked acceptance of their intimate relationship ending (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

Researchers have employed various classification methods to enhance our understanding of filicide (Erikson et al., 2016). According to Resnick (1969, 2016) and Friedman and Resnick (2011), there are five major categories of filicide based on the

perpetrator's motivation: fatal maltreatment, altruism, acutely psychotic, unwanted child, and spousal revenge. Fatal maltreatment filicide results from child abuse, neglect, or factious disorder by proxy (Friedman & Resnick, 2011). Altruistic filicide occurs when a parent believes death is in the child's best interest (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Resnick, 1969; Resnick, 2016). Filicides categorized as acute psychotic take place when a parent kills their child as the result of their psychological condition (i.e., psychosis, depression, or hallucinations) (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Resnick, 1969; Resnick, 2016). Children killed by parents because of the perceived hindrance the children may cause are considered unwanted children (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Resnick, 1969; Resnick, 2016). Lastly, spousal revenge, also referred to as retaliatory filicide, results when a parent seeks to harm the other parent emotionally and severely by killing their child (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Resnick, 1969; Resnick, 2016).

### ***Spousal Revenge/Retaliatory Filicide***

Spousal revenge or retaliatory filicide is defined as "...the killing of a child by a parent in order to make the other parent suffer" (Mariano et al., 2014, p. 2). Out of all the motivational categories, spousal revenge filicide is the least understood (Myers et al., 2021). Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) found that the primary motivation for males committing filicide was retaliation against one's spouse because of spousal separation. Spousal separation often triggers intense narcissistic rage in perpetrators, who view their child(ren) as a significant emotional symbol for the other parent (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

Other common factors of filicidal males motivated by spousal revenge include a lack of criminal history prior to the filicide, no known history of previous violent behavior against their children, stable employment record, ranging in age from 25 to 47 years old and experiencing relationship problems with their partners (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). These men experience tremendous anger toward their former spouses and likely have committed IPV against them or made threats of violence toward their former spouse's new partner (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). The breakup and disputes over child custody trigger these behaviors (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). Overall, these men appear to be particularly vulnerable psychologically in the context of their romantic relationships ending (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). While not the primary focus, this study will remain cognizant of mental health narratives and systemic failures as contributing or confounding factors.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The phenomenon of paternal filicide in the context of divorce, separation, and custody disputes represents a profoundly disturbing yet underexplored form of family violence. While research has extensively documented the impacts of intimate partner violence (IPV) on family systems and the heightened risks of intimate partner homicide (IPH) during relationship dissolution, the specific dynamics that lead fathers to kill their children as a form of spousal revenge remain insufficiently examined.

Major themes in the literature emphasize that paternal filicide disproportionately occurs within families with histories of IPV, often precipitated by a mother's attempt to leave an abusive relationship or assert custodial rights (Jaffe et al., 2012; 2014; Bourget

et al., 2007). High-conflict custody disputes, coercive control, and rising post-separation violence significantly impact the context of these issues (Debowska et al., 2015; Adhia et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2020). However, despite this growing body of knowledge, significant gaps remain. Specifically, the discipline lacks systematic qualitative analyses that examine how these risk factors intersect in individual cases of paternal filicide, especially within the emotionally charged and legally complex contexts of divorce and custody disputes. Moreover, while quantitative studies have established correlations between IPV, custody disputes, and child homicide, they often failed to capture the nuanced psychosocial dynamics and behavioral patterns of filicidal fathers. Moreover, researchers have rarely examined how media narratives portray these cases, even though they serve as both sources of public knowledge and reflections of societal attitudes toward family violence (Carruthers, 2016; Websdale, 2010).

This study addressed these critical gaps by conducting a qualitative thematic analysis of online news reports of paternal filicide cases in the United States, specifically those occurring within the context of divorce, separation, and child custody disputes. By analyzing publicly accessible narratives, this research sought to uncover recurring patterns in perpetrator behavior, psychosocial characteristics, family dynamics, and systemic responses. The study utilizes Displaced Aggression Theory (Denson et al., 2006; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000) and draws on constructivist and interpretive paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hathaway, 1995) to provide a theoretical framework. It explores how individuals may redirect their feelings of frustration, blocked goals, and

perceived loss of control toward children, viewing them as proxies for the estranged partner.

The findings extend existing knowledge in forensic psychology, criminology, and family law by offering a more profound, contextually rich understanding of revenge-motivated paternal filicide. Specifically, this study contributes to the field by systematically identifying behavioral indicators and situational dynamics that preceded filicide, informing risk assessment frameworks, legal interventions, and child protection strategies. The methodological choice of thematic analysis allowed for a nuanced exploration of these complex phenomena, addressing the limitations of prior research that relied primarily on quantitative data or isolated case studies. In doing so, this study not only fills a significant gap in the literature but also provides practical insights for multidisciplinary efforts aimed at preventing child homicides within the broader context of IPV and high-conflict family dynamics.

The next chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in this study, detailing the selection criteria for cases, data collection procedures, analytical strategies, and ethical considerations that guide the analysis of online news reports.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of paternal filicide in the context of divorce, separation, and child custody disputes is a profoundly troubling yet underexplored form of family violence. While previous research has established connections between intimate partner violence (IPV), coercive control, and heightened risks of intimate partner homicide (IPH), there remains a critical gap in understanding the specific psychosocial dynamics and behavioral patterns that lead fathers to kill their children as an act of spousal revenge. Existing studies have primarily relied on quantitative analyses or isolated case studies, with limited qualitative research examining how these factors converge in individual incidents, particularly through publicly accessible narratives such as news reports. Addressing this gap is crucial for improving risk assessment frameworks, informing preventive interventions, and enhancing professional responses in high-conflict family contexts.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the behaviors and psychosocial characteristics of fathers who commit filicide, as well as the contextual events surrounding these acts, specifically within the framework of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. The phenomenon of interest focused on paternal filicide occurring amid familial breakdown, with an emphasis on understanding the role of domestic violence, coercive control, and post-separation conflict. By developing a deeper understanding of these tragic incidents, the study aimed to inform the practices of

legal, mental health, and child welfare professionals, ultimately contributing to the prevention of such incidents and the development of improved protective interventions.

To achieve this aim, the study employed qualitative methods to analyze publicly available online news reports detailing cases where fathers killed their children during or after divorce and custody disputes. Through thematic analysis, the research sought to identify recurring patterns related to perpetrators' behaviors, relationship dynamics, histories of IPV, and interactions with legal and child protection systems. The findings are intended to advance the body of knowledge in forensic psychology and family violence research, providing insights that can support more accurate risk assessments and targeted preventative strategies in high-conflict family situations.

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in conducting the study. The study begins with a description of the qualitative research design and the rationale for employing thematic analysis as the primary analytical method. The chapter then presents a restatement of the research questions guiding the inquiry, followed by a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis procedures, including criteria for selecting relevant news reports. Additionally, the chapter addresses issues of trustworthiness, discussing strategies employed to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings. Finally, ethical considerations relevant to the use of publicly available data are reviewed. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach that underpins this study.

## **Research Design and Rationale**

In seeking to understand the phenomenon of paternal filicide in the context of divorce and child custody litigation, the study addressed two research questions:

RQ1: Based upon thematic analysis of online news reports of children murdered by fathers during divorce and child custody disputes, what are the reported characteristics and behaviors of fathers who committed filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes?

RQ2: Based upon thematic analysis of online news reports of children murdered by fathers during divorce and child custody disputes, what are the events surrounding fathers committing filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes?

This study examined the phenomenon of paternal filicide committed within the context of divorce, parental separation, and child custody disputes. Specifically, it focused on cases where fathers kill their children as an act of spousal revenge, a tragic and extreme manifestation of family violence. For this study, filicide was defined as the intentional killing of a child (aged 0-17 years) by a biological parent. Spousal revenge filicide refers to the subtype of filicide in which the killing is motivated by a desire to harm or retaliate against the child's other parent emotionally, often in the aftermath of relationship dissolution, contested custody, or perceived loss of control (Mariano et al., 2014; Resnick, 1969; 2016).

The central phenomenon of this study involved understanding how intimate partner violence (IPV), coercive control, and post-separation conflict intersect with paternal filicide in high-conflict family situations. IPV encompasses physical, sexual,

emotional, psychological, and economic abuse used to exert power and control over an intimate partner (Watson & Ancis, 2013). Coercive control refers to persistent, controlling behaviors designed to dominate and isolate a partner, often escalating post-separation (Stark, 2007). High-conflict custody disputes further exacerbate these dynamics, contributing to emotional volatility and, in extreme cases, lethal violence.

Given the complex, subjective, and emotionally charged nature of these dynamics, this study employed a qualitative research design grounded in the constructivist-interpretive research tradition. The constructivist paradigm asserts that reality is socially constructed and understood through individuals' subjective experiences and the meanings they assign to events (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The interpretive tradition emphasizes exploring how people make sense of their lived experiences within specific social and cultural contexts (Hathaway, 1995). This approach aligned with the study's aim of examining how displaced aggression, powerlessness, and familial conflict are reflected in paternal filicide cases.

The choice of a qualitative research tradition was justified by the nature of the research questions, which sought to explore not only the occurrence of filicide but also the behaviors, psychosocial characteristics, and contextual events surrounding these acts. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on measuring variables and testing hypotheses across large samples, qualitative inquiry enables an in-depth examination of complex social phenomena, uncovering patterns, themes, and meanings that are often overlooked by statistical analyses (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). As Dey (1993) noted, qualitative

research prioritizes describing phenomena, classifying them, and analyzing how concepts interrelate within their unique contexts.

To access rich, descriptive data on paternal filicide cases, this study used thematic analysis of publicly available online news reports. Since direct access to filicidal fathers created ethical and feasibility challenges, media narratives offered valuable secondary data that reflected both the facts of the cases and societal interpretations of these events. The Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE) has tracked and cataloged cases of child homicides committed by parents since 2008, specifically monitoring incidents where divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support were relevant factors. Utilizing CJE's database, this study conducted systematic internet searches to locate detailed news reports, which provided contextual information about the incidents, perpetrator characteristics, histories of IPV, and family court involvement.

By applying qualitative thematic analysis to these narratives, the study captured the complex interplay of personal, relational, and systemic factors that culminate in revenge-motivated filicide. This method enabled the identification of recurring patterns and emergent themes related to displaced aggression, family violence, and legal conflict, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

In summary, the qualitative constructivist-interpretive tradition offered the most appropriate and practical framework for addressing the study's goals. It enabled the exploration of deeply personal and context-specific phenomena, supported theory-informed analysis through Displaced Aggression Theory, and aligned with the study's

goal of informing prevention strategies within legal, mental health, and child protection systems.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It is, therefore, essential to understand the researcher's identity and its influence on the research process.

Positionality refers to the intersection of the researcher's role and identity within the research context and setting. In contrast, social location, or social identity, encompasses aspects such as gender, race, class, culture, sexual orientation, and other identity markers (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The researcher for this study was a survivor of domestic violence. After escaping the abuse in 2008, she made a personal and professional commitment to transform her traumatic experiences into a source of advocacy and social impact. She enrolled in law school with the explicit goal of supporting and defending children and families affected by domestic violence. During her final year of law school, she co-founded a nonprofit child and family welfare agency providing forensic-based support services, including supervised visitation and family mediation. Recognizing a critical need for broader systemic understanding, she subsequently pursued a Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology with a specialization in Victimology.

Through her doctoral coursework and extensive review of empirical literature, the researcher developed a deeper understanding of the psychological, legal, and social implications of domestic violence. It was during this academic journey that she

encountered literature and data on domestic homicide, particularly cases involving fathers killing their children during divorce, separation, or custody litigation. Discovering the work of the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE), she became committed to supporting their mission of protecting children from court-ordered custody with violent parents. The absence of focused research on retaliatory paternal filicide in these contexts further fueled her resolve to explore this issue. This study was thus conceived to address that gap and to contribute to the growing body of literature aimed at preventing lethal outcomes in family court settings and promoting positive social change.

Given the researcher's lived experience and advocacy background, it was critical to acknowledge and actively manage potential biases. While the researcher's proximity to the topic offered unique insights and empathy, it also presented the possibility of interpretive bias. To address this, the study employed strategies such as reflexivity and journaling during the research process. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document thoughts, feelings, and evolving perspectives during data collection and analysis, thereby ensuring transparency and self-awareness.

No incentives were being offered for participation in this study, as it involved the analysis of publicly available data and did not require direct interaction with human subjects. As such, concerns related to coercion, power differentials, or conflicts of interest were nonexistent. However, given that the research involved reviewing cases of child homicide, often tied to intense family conflict, there was an ethical imperative to handle the data with sensitivity, respect, and academic rigor. While the researcher did not conduct this study within her current workplace or agency, she acknowledged the ethical

responsibility to separate her roles as an advocate and researcher. This separation was maintained through strict adherence to research protocols, institutional ethical guidelines, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process.

The researcher's role in this study included designing a qualitative research protocol using thematic analysis, obtaining IRB approval, identifying relevant case materials from the Center for Judicial Excellence database and coinciding online media reports, coding and analyzing the data, and reporting findings in an objective and academically grounded manner. This methodological approach, grounded in transparency and reflexivity, supported the integrity of the study while honoring the lived experiences that motivate it.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a purposeful and criterion-based sampling strategy to select cases of paternal filicide for analysis. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research to deliberately select information-rich cases that can provide deep insights into the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2015). Within this approach, criterion sampling involved selecting all cases that met a specific set of predefined criteria, ensuring that the sample was directly relevant to the research questions and study purpose (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE) maintains a comprehensive database of child homicides committed by parents in the United States, specifically tracking cases where divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support were mentioned in news coverage (CJE, 2021). This database provided a practical and credible source for

identifying cases that aligned with the study's focus on revenge-motivated paternal filicide within the context of familial breakdown.

Using the CJE's compiled list of child homicides, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was applied to ensure the selected cases aligned with the study's focus on paternal filicide in the context of familial breakdown. Cases were included if the perpetrator was the biological father of the deceased child(ren), the homicide occurred within the context of divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support disputes as reported in news coverage, and the child victims were aged 0 to 17 years at the time of death.

To maintain a clear focus on the phenomenon of revenge-motivated paternal filicide, cases were excluded if the perpetrator was a mother, stepfather, or other parental figure, if the child victims were over the age of 17, or if the father attempted or completed suicide following the filicide. The exclusion of familicide-suicide cases was necessary to avoid conflating differing motivational dynamics and to concentrate specifically on acts of filicide directed toward harming the child's mother through retaliatory violence (Friedman, Hrouda, Holden, Noffsinger, & Resnick, 2005). This deliberate application of criteria ensured that the sample directly reflected the study's research questions and theoretical framework.

The careful application of inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured that the chosen sample was consistent in its relevance to the study's primary focus: paternal filicide as a form of revenge against a spouse in the context of divorce and custody disputes. This approach enhanced the credibility and applicability of the findings.

The researcher identified the biological fathers who committed filicide using publicly available records of cases maintained by the CJE. She confirmed that each case met the study's inclusion criteria based on information reported in news articles. These articles explicitly mentioned the perpetrator's biological relationship to the child(ren) and provided relevant contexts such as divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support disputes. The ages of the child victims ranged from 0 to 17 years. Only cases documented in news reports with clear factors, as identified by the researcher, were included in the final sample. This approach ensured that all selected participants met the established criteria for the phenomenon of revenge-motivated paternal filicide.

To organize and visualize the research sample, the researcher developed a case table. This table cataloged essential details, including the names of victims, ages at the time of death, causes of death, and the city and state where the homicide occurred. Based on this review, the final sample included 263 children (aged 0 to 17) murdered by their biological fathers in the United States between 2008 and 2020. Of those, 80 children were killed alongside siblings in multiple-victim incidents, while the remaining 183 cases involved individual child killings. In total, 113 biological fathers were responsible for these filicides: 81 fathers killed one child, and 32 fathers killed multiple children (siblings).

The decision to focus exclusively on biological fathers who killed their children during separation-related conflicts reflected the study's aim to explore how displaced aggression, coercive control, and familial conflict culminate in these acts of lethal violence. Purposeful and criterion sampling was essential in capturing cases that directly

reflect the phenomenon under investigation, as opposed to generalized filicide cases driven by other motives (e.g., altruism, psychosis, fatal maltreatment).

By analyzing publicly available news reports on at least 113 filicidal fathers, this study engaged in an in-depth thematic exploration of behavioral patterns, psychosocial dynamics, and contextual factors leading to revenge-motivated paternal filicide. This sampling strategy is well-aligned with the study's constructivist-interpretive research tradition, which prioritizes the examination of meaning-making processes within specific social contexts and supports the qualitative goal of developing a contextually rich understanding of these rare but devastating events.

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, responsible for systematically identifying, selecting, and interpreting relevant information from secondary data sources. To locate detailed news reports on the sample cases of paternal filicide, the researcher conducted targeted Internet searches, initially using the Google News ([news.google.com](https://news.google.com)) search engine. However, due to inconsistent results, the researcher switched to the general Google search engine, which yielded more comprehensive and relevant articles.

The search strategy involved entering the names of child victims from the CJE database along with keywords like "murder," "custody dispute," "divorce," and "child support." From these results, the researcher identified the name of the perpetrator, the biological father. Then, she conducted a second Google search using the name of the father. This method facilitated the identification of publicly available online news

articles that provided case-specific information regarding the circumstances of the homicides, perpetrator behaviors, and contextual factors leading up to the crimes.

Once located, the researcher tracked, organized, and logged each news article by counting the number of results from search engine queries and systematically cataloging them. Articles were organized and categorized according to the names of child victims (alphabetized by last name), along with article headlines, publication dates, names of news organizations, authors, and website links. This meticulous documentation ensured a transparent and organized data collection process.

The researcher anticipated that multiple news reports would be available for each case, thus increasing opportunities to gather and analyze rich, contextual data. This expectation was confirmed, as many cases had several articles providing diverse perspectives and details. The depth and breadth of data gathered through these news reports enabled the researcher to reach data saturation, defined as the point at which additional data fails to yield new themes or insights (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Through this iterative process, the researcher achieved saturation, confirming that she had collected enough data to address the study's research questions.

The researcher chose the data source of online news reports of filicides for several reasons: 1) easy access to a large amount of qualitative data; 2) no need to transcribe data because it is already typed; and 3) to minimize ethical issues, given the sensitivity of the topic. Research utilizing documents (i.e., archival data research) is a methodology that is becoming increasingly popular in social science research (Tight, 2019). With the advent of the Internet, secondary data (i.e., data not collected initially by the researcher) has

become more accessible than ever before (Tight, 2019). Secondary data often provides larger datasets, allowing individual researchers or small teams of researchers access to more data than they may be able to gather primarily (Tight, 2019).

The use of publicly available online news reports as the primary data source, combined with a systematic and targeted search strategy, was deemed sufficient to address the study's research questions. News reports often provide detailed narratives that include descriptions of the perpetrator's behaviors, psychosocial characteristics, family dynamics, history of intimate partner violence (IPV), and interactions with legal systems, elements directly aligned with the study's aim of exploring the contextual and behavioral factors surrounding paternal filicide in divorce and custody disputes.

Given the sensitive and rare nature of the phenomenon, direct access to perpetrators or primary data was not easily feasible; thus, news articles offered a practical and appropriate alternative for gathering rich, descriptive data. Additionally, the researcher's role as the primary instrument in identifying, selecting, and analyzing these narratives ensured a focused and in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, consistent with the study's qualitative, constructivist-interpretive framework. The depth and variety of media coverage across multiple sources further enhanced data sufficiency by allowing triangulation of information within each case, thereby supporting a comprehensive and credible thematic analysis that answers the research questions.

The researcher read the content of each news article to begin familiarizing herself with the qualitative data and taking notes on potential items of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend reading and re-reading textual data to

become intimately familiar with the dataset. In addition, Braun & Clarke (2013) recommend keeping a record of interesting data points, loose impressions, conceptual ideas, and more specific and concrete issues that emerge as familiarity with the data sets develops. This process is informal and does not aim to be systematic or precise at this stage. However, this does not mean that the process is passive (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Researchers should actively, analytically, and critically engage with the data to uncover its meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Thematic analysis involves identifying data related to the research questions and coding them in pattern-based forms that are either selective or comprehensive (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Selective coding is the process of gathering specific types of data from a data corpus, such as analyzing a bowl of M&M candies and removing only specific colors (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Complete coding requires the researcher to identify "anything and everything of interest or relevance to answering the research questions" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 206). Complete coding requires that all relevant data related to the research questions be coded (Braun & Clarke, 2013). After the code was fully developed, the researcher moved to selective coding, as previously described (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The "codes identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant for answering the research questions" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207). A code can be a word or brief phrase that captures the essence of what the researcher believes is valuable and relevant to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In thematic analysis, codes

serve as the building blocks of comprehensive analysis and can be either data-derived or researcher-derived (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Data-derived codes, also known as semantic codes, are codes based on the meaning of the data and reflect the language and concepts directly from the content of the data body (Braun & Clarke, 2013). "Researcher-derived codes go beyond the explicit content of the data; they are latent codes which invoke the researcher's conceptual and theoretical framework to identify implicit meanings within the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207).

For this study, the researcher intended to use both complete and selective coding to answer the research questions. To start, the content of each news article was copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document, divided into two sections: a data section and a code section. The coding process was designed to capture the diversity and patterns within the data, aiming to gain an understanding of the phenomenon as it appears within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Once coding was completed, selective coding was employed; however, the researcher alternated between the two methods as more codes were identified that would help answer the research questions.

Thematic analysis is a very fluid, flexible, and organic process. The collation of coded data is the final stage of the complete coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher must collate all instances of text where the code appears in the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend collating all data excerpts for similar codes in one place rather than collating each code individually. Originally, the

researcher intended to complete this task manually, but she ultimately used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to facilitate the coding process.

Using CAQDAS has strengths and limitations (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Some noted strengths include the ability to organize data effectively, quickly search for codes, and manage large amounts of data efficiently, as well as enhance the efficiency, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Alternatively, limitations of CAQDAS include the cost of the computer program, the time required to learn it, and the potential risk of becoming detached from the data, which can result in less immersion and, consequently, less insight (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a step-by-step guide to conducting thematic analysis, along with a checklist of criteria to evaluate the analysis. The checklist includes five process areas: 1) transcription, 2) coding, 3) analysis, 4) "overall," and 5) written report (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Each of these five areas have criteria to measure the quality of the method, which comprise the 15-point checklist (See Table 2) (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

**Table 2***A 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis*

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for “accuracy”
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in coding process
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive
Analysis	7	Data have been analyzed-interpreted, made sense of- rather than just paraphrased or described
	8	Analysis and data match each other—the extracts illustrate the analytic claims
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data topic
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts in provided
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done—i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just ‘emerge’

*Note.* Adapted from “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology” by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006,

*Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp. 77 -101.

The researcher found this process and checklist a helpful guide when analyzing news reports of children murdered by fathers during divorce and child custody disputes. Once coding was complete, the next step involved selective coding, focusing on displaced aggression.

Debowska et al. (2015) theorized that displaced aggression theory might offer insight into filicide motivated by retaliation or revenge because the perpetrator displaces their aggression onto more vulnerable targets (i.e., children). As described previously, displaced aggression occurs when hostility is taken out on someone other than the one initially causing frustration or anger (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Denson et al., 2006; Dollard et al., 1939; Hovland & Sears, 1940; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000; Salguero et al., 2020; Slotter et al., 2020). Denson et al. (2006) described differences in individuals who tend to use displaced aggression, noting that these differences are measurable and predictable using the Displaced Aggression Questionnaire (DAQ).

The DAQ was correlated with the theoretical construct of domestic violence and was found to be a reliable and valid instrument to assess individual differences in the tendency to displace aggression (Denson et al., 2006). The DAQ consists of 31 Likert scale questions divided into three areas: 1) angry rumination, 2) behavioral displaced aggression, and 3) revenge planning (Denson et al., 2006). These three areas overlap with Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) theory of displaced aggression. Thus, focus on identifiable themes related to the perpetrators' 1) initial provocation, 2) resulting affect, 3)

situational constraints, 4) rumination, 5) revenge planning, and 6) acts of displaced aggression will be of most interest since displaced aggression frames this study.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research assures readers of the study's rigor, significance, and overall value (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Trustworthiness is evaluated through four essential criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. These elements work collectively to validate that the research findings are authentic representations of the data and are not shaped by researcher bias or flawed methodology. Given the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry, researchers must remain reflexive and diligent in mitigating potential biases at every stage of the research process from design through analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

#### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth and plausibility of the findings, specifically whether the researcher's interpretations accurately reflect the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Comparable to internal validity in quantitative research, credibility ensures that the study has captured and conveyed the complex realities of the phenomenon under investigation.

In this study, credibility was established through systematic and transparent analytic procedures applied to online news reports of paternal filicide cases, as tracked by the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE). Although there were no live participants to provide direct validation, credibility was strengthened by triangulating multiple news sources for each case, ensuring a robust and corroborated understanding of events. The

researcher employed a consistent process of thematic content analysis, maintaining alignment between emergent themes and the language, framing, and factual reporting found in the data. Careful documentation of the coding process, theme development, and decision-making procedures further reinforced the reliability of interpretations. By faithfully representing the patterns that emerged from the data, the study supports a credible and accurate portrayal of paternal filicide within the context of divorce and custody disputes.

### **Dependability**

Dependability concerns the consistency and stability of the research process over time. It parallels the concept of reliability in quantitative research and emphasizes the importance of a well-documented and traceable methodological approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

To ensure dependability, the researcher maintained detailed records of all stages of the research process, including the development of research questions, the criteria used for case selection, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted using a replicable and transparent process, and a comprehensive audit trail was created to enable future researchers to follow the same procedures. This audit trail included documentation of each Google search query, the number of sources reviewed per case, article publication dates, journalist and outlet names, and direct URL links. These efforts collectively enhance the stability and consistency of the research and allow for its replication under similar conditions.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the study's findings are shaped by the data and not by researcher bias, personal interest, or subjective interpretation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). It emphasizes objectivity and transparency, particularly in demonstrating how conclusions are drawn from the evidence.

To promote confirmability, the researcher employed reflexive practices and maintained detailed methodological documentation to ensure that all interpretations could be traced back to the original data. The audit trail used to establish both dependability and confirmability includes records of raw data sources, coding decisions, and analytical memos that explain how themes were derived. By offering a transparent and verifiable analytic process, the study demonstrates that its findings are grounded in the data rather than assumptions, thus supporting the integrity of the conclusions.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or transferred to other contexts, populations, or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is comparable to external validity in quantitative research and requires rich, detailed descriptions that enable readers to determine the relevance of the study's findings to their own contexts.

The scope of this study was purposefully delimited to paternal filicide cases occurring in the United States between January 2008 and December 2020, as tracked and maintained by the CJE. Thematic content analysis was conducted on publicly available online news reports, focusing specifically on incidents in which biological fathers killed

their children in the context of divorce or child custody disputes. The study excluded cases involving maternal perpetrators, stepparents, other caregivers, and incidents of familicide where the father also attempted or completed suicide, based on distinctions noted in the existing literature.

Given these delimitations, the potential for transferability is moderate but constrained by the study's narrow population and data source. However, by offering thick, context-rich descriptions of each case and identifying consistent patterns and themes, the research may provide valuable insights into broader understandings of paternal filicide in contested family dynamics. Readers are encouraged to assess the relevance of these findings based on the cultural, legal, and systemic similarities to their own settings or areas of interest.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Several ethical issues were carefully considered prior to conducting this study. As Orb et al. (2001) emphasized, research inherently creates a tension between the goal of generating knowledge for the betterment of society and the imperative to protect the rights, privacy, and safety of research subjects. At its core, ethical research focuses on “doing good” and “avoiding harm” (Orb et al., 2001, p. 93). Researchers must therefore critically assess informed consent, conflicts of interest, recruitment methods, research procedures, and the transparent reporting of findings (Connelly, 2014).

Given the highly sensitive nature of paternal filicide and its devastating impact on families and communities, the researcher deliberately chose to analyze secondary data, specifically, publicly available online news reports, to minimize ethical risks. This

approach avoided direct engagement with perpetrators, victims' families, or any vulnerable populations, thereby eliminating the possibility of re-traumatization or emotional harm that could arise from interviews or primary data collection. Furthermore, this strategy ensured that the researcher did not involve participants from their own work environment, thereby avoiding potential conflicts of interest or power differentials that could otherwise arise in studies involving vulnerable populations or professional relationships.

### **Informed Consent**

While informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement to protect research participants (LaRossa et al., 1994), its application in this study differs from traditional research involving human subjects. The data analyzed in this study was obtained from news reports that are publicly available and part of the public record. These reports previously disclosed and published identifying information about the perpetrators and victims. As such, while informed consent in the conventional sense was not obtained, the use of publicly accessible information is considered ethically permissible in qualitative research, where the data are part of the public domain and consent is implied through public disclosure (Tripathy, 2013).

Nevertheless, the researcher approached these sensitive narratives with care, respect, and ethical mindfulness, ensuring that the data were used solely for the purpose of scholarly analysis and to inform child protection and violence prevention efforts.

### **Rigor and Transparency**

To uphold ethical standards in the use of secondary data, the researcher ensured maximum rigor and transparency throughout the research process (Ruggiano & Perry, 2019). This included maintaining a detailed audit trail documenting the search strategies, selection criteria, and organization of data. Recognizing that news reports were not originally created for research purposes, the researcher critically evaluated the relevance, credibility, and contextual fit of each source (Tripathy, 2013). Only reports from reasonably reputable and well-established news organizations were included or at least cross-referenced, and the criteria for source selection were explicitly defined and documented to ensure transparency and quality control.

Additionally, the limitations of using secondary data were openly acknowledged, including potential media bias, the selective nature of reporting, and the lack of direct access to primary participants. However, given the study's focus on media narratives as reflections of public discourse and as practical sources of case-specific information, the use of these reports was deemed appropriate and ethically sound.

### **Avoidance of Conflicts of Interests and Power Differentials**

Importantly, the researcher ensured that the study design did not involve the researcher's own professional environment or clientele, thereby avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring no power differentials existed between the researcher and the subjects of the study. Since the data was derived from publicly reported cases unrelated to the researcher's workplace or professional duties, concerns of coercion, undue influence, or professional bias were effectively mitigated.

## Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological framework and research design employed to explore the phenomenon of revenge-motivated paternal filicide within the context of divorce, separation, and child custody disputes. Grounded in a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, this qualitative study utilized thematic analysis of publicly available online news reports to examine the behaviors, psychosocial characteristics, and contextual dynamics of fathers who killed their children in acts of retaliatory violence against a former partner.

The chapter began by detailing the research design and rationale, emphasizing the suitability of qualitative methods for examining emotionally charged and context-specific phenomena that are not easily captured through quantitative approaches. The research tradition was defined, and the central concepts of filicide, intimate partner violence (IPV), coercive control, and displaced aggression were contextualized within the study's framework.

A purposeful and criterion-based sampling strategy was employed, with cases identified through the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE) database. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the selected sample directly reflected the study's focus. In total, the sample comprised 113 biological fathers responsible for the deaths of 263 children between 2008 and 2020 in the United States.

The chapter also described the instrumentation and data collection procedures, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Systematic Google searches were conducted to locate relevant news reports, which were

then organized using a structured tracking system. The sufficiency of these data sources was justified based on their relevance, richness, and alignment with the study's research questions.

The data analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of patterns and themes across cases while maintaining alignment with Displaced Aggression Theory. The chapter also addressed trustworthiness and rigor, detailing strategies to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, including audit trails, reflexivity, and transparency.

Ethical considerations were carefully examined, particularly regarding the use of secondary data, informed consent, avoidance of power differentials, and conflicts of interest. The chapter concluded with a discussion on how the study adhered to ethical research practices while minimizing risks to individuals and communities affected by the sensitive nature of the topic.

The methodology outlined in this chapter provides the foundation for addressing the study's central research questions and contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychosocial dynamics underlying paternal filicide in family conflict contexts.

The following chapter, Chapter 4: Results, presents the findings of the thematic analysis, highlighting the key themes and patterns that emerged from the data. These results provide insight into the behaviors, psychosocial characteristics, and contextual factors associated with revenge-motivated paternal filicide, offering a critical contribution to forensic psychology, child protection, and family violence research.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to thematically explore online news reports of biological fathers killing their children to gain more understanding and answer the following research questions: What are the reported characteristics and behaviors of fathers who commit filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes? And what are the events surrounding fathers committing filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes?

In this chapter, a detailed description of the data collection process, as well as the methodology used to thematically analyze the collected data, including the identification of primary themes and subthemes, is discussed. An examination of the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis is also included. Lastly, identified themes are presented systematically to address the research questions.

### **Data Collection**

The Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE) tracks children killed by a parent in the U.S. when divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support is mentioned in news coverage (CJE, 2021). A purposeful and criterion sampling of biological fathers responsible for their children's deaths from CJE's compiled list of homicides was used.

Cases of children killed above the age of 17 were excluded. Mothers, stepfathers, and other parental figures as the perpetrators of the homicides were also excluded. Initially, it was planned to exclude biological fathers who attempted or committed suicide after killing their children; however, ultimately, only fathers who

successfully committed suicide were excluded, as cases of attempted suicide were nebulous as to whether the fathers intended to take their own lives or not. Many alleged attempts were superficial when compared to the methods used in the filicides.

To help visualize the research sample, a table was created to organize all cases that matched the research criterion. The chart included the names of victims, the ages of victims at the time of death, causes of death, and the city and state where the death occurred. Based upon the initial review of the research sample, the sample included 263 children (ages 0 to 17) murdered in the United States between 2008 and 2020 by their biological fathers in contexts of divorce, parental separation, custody, visitation, or child support.

Initially, it was estimated that 113 biological fathers were responsible for the deaths of 263 children in cases of filicide occurring within the context of divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support disputes. Among these, 81 fathers killed one child, while 32 fathers killed multiple children (siblings). Of the 263 child victims, 80 were killed alongside siblings, and the remaining 183 were individual killings. However, upon further analysis and application of the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria, the final number of fathers meeting the study's criteria was revised to 64. Consequently, news reports on 64 filicidal fathers were thematically analyzed to answer the research questions.

Data collection initially relied on the Google News search engine to locate relevant reports, but this method yielded limited results. In response, the researcher switched to using the standard Google search engine, which provided broader and more

reliable access to pertinent news articles. The researcher systematically tracked, organized, and logged these reports, documenting the number of articles retrieved and categorizing them by the child victims' names (alphabetized by last name), along with headlines, publication dates, news sources, authors, and website links. As anticipated, many cases had multiple news reports, which enriched the data pool and facilitated a more comprehensive analysis. Data saturation was achieved when additional articles ceased to produce new information or insights relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Several notable challenges emerged during the data collection process. There was significant inconsistency in the depth and availability of information, with some cases receiving extensive media coverage while others were reported sparsely. Variability in terminology across sources required careful contextual interpretation to ensure accurate inclusion of cases. Additionally, technical barriers such as paywalls and broken links occasionally limited access to specific reports, though these obstacles were mitigated by seeking alternative sources. The researcher also encountered a high volume of duplicate articles due to syndicated content, necessitating diligent cross-referencing to avoid redundancy and maintain data accuracy. In some cases, evolving investigations led to updated reports, requiring attention to publication dates to ensure the most current information was used. Despite these challenges, the researcher's systematic search strategy and organized tracking procedures ensured the collection of sufficiently rich, relevant, and credible data to effectively address the study's research questions.

The researcher read the content of each news article to familiarize herself with the qualitative data and take notes on potential items of interest. The articles were re-read to become intimately familiar with the dataset. A record of notable data points, along with more specific and concrete issues that emerged, was also used to become more familiar with the datasets. As recommended for thematic analysis, the researcher actively, analytically, and critically considered the meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Thematic analysis involves identifying data related to the research questions and coding them in pattern-based forms that are either selective or comprehensive (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For this study, the researcher used both complete and selective coding to answer the research questions. To start, the written content of each article was copied and pasted into an Excel worksheet. Initially, the researcher had intended to use Microsoft Word for this process but found Excel to be more useful due to its tab feature. The tabs enable easier organization and allow for toggling between cases.

The next step was to employ selective coding, focusing on displaced aggression. Debowska et al. (2015) theorized that displaced aggression theory might offer insight into filicide motivated by retaliation or revenge (i.e., marital separation) because the perpetrator displaces their aggression onto more vulnerable targets (i.e., children). As described previously, displaced aggression occurs when hostility is taken out on someone other than the one initially causing frustration or anger (Allen & Anderson, 2017; Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Denson et al., 2006; Dollard et al., 1939; Hovland & Sears, 1940; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000; Salguero et al., 2020; Slotter et al., 2020).

Denson et al. (2006) described differences in individuals who tend to use displaced aggression, noting that these differences are measurable and predictable using the Displaced Aggression Questionnaire (DAQ). The DAQ was correlated with the theoretical construct of domestic violence and was found to be a reliable and valid instrument to assess individual differences in the tendency to displace aggression (Denson et al., 2006).

The DAQ consists of 31 Likert scale questions divided into three areas: 1) angry rumination, 2) behavioral displaced aggression, and 3) revenge planning (Denson et al., 2006). These three areas overlap with Marcus-Newhall et al. (2000) theory of displaced aggression. Thus, the researcher focused on identifiable news content related to the perpetrators' 1) initial provocation, 2) resulting affect, 3) situational constraints, 4) rumination, 5) revenge planning, and 6) acts of displaced aggression to frame the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Once coding was completed, selective coding was employed; however, the researcher alternated between each method as more codes were identified that would help answer the research questions. The collation of coded data was the final stage of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher collated all instances of text where the code appeared in the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend collating all data excerpts for similar codes in one place rather than collating each code individually. This process was initially attempted *by hand* using Excel Worksheets. However, NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software

(CAQDAS), was used instead, as the amount of data was much more than initially anticipated.

CAQDAS has strengths and limitations (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher found that it increased the organization of the data, allowing for easier access to finding codes and making it helpful in managing the large amount of data. It increased the overall efficiency, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the coding process, as described by Braun and Clarke (2013). Alternatively, the researcher found that the most significant limitation of CAQDAS was the time required to learn the computer program, and in some ways, it was more challenging to remain immersed in the data compared to the work done using Excel worksheets.

Once the initial coding was completed, categories of motivation as described by Léveillé and Donyon (2019), marital separation, fatal physical abuse, and psychological state of the individual were utilized to parse the cases and data to make the information more manageable. To do this, the researcher reviewed each case, thinking about the reported fact pattern in the context of the three possible motivations. For instance, in terms of displaced aggression, if the initial provocation stemmed from the child's behavior and the father's resulting affect was getting angry and attempting to discipline or punish the child, resulting in the child's death, this situation suggests that the father's motivation was to *parent* and not kill the child. Thus, it would be filicide motivated by physical abuse.

Similarly, if the fact pattern included information that the initial provocation was the father hallucinating prior to or during the homicide, this case would be categorized

under filicides motivated by the psychological state of the father. Fact patterns indicating that the initial provocation stemmed from the mother ending the relationship with the father, leading to the father threatening to harm the child or the mother prior to the killing, were categorized as filicides motivated by marital separation (to include unmarried couples).

Only one of the 64 cases did not fit any of these patterns using the criteria for displaced aggression; thus, it was placed in the "Other" category. In that case, the father intentionally murdered his child to collect on a life insurance policy, suggesting that the father was motivated by financial gain and not the motivations relevant to this study.

Overall, the categorization method resulted in 39 cases of fatal physical abuse, 19 filicides motivated by marital separation, 5 cases in the psychological state category, and 1 case that did not fit into any of the three categories (i.e., other). Basic demographic information in each category was evaluated to include ages of perpetrators, ages of victims, and causes of death. Notably, the marital separation category was the only category that had multiple killings by one perpetrator, and victims were, on average, older than the other categories.

In addition, elements of displaced aggression, beyond the initial provocation and resulting affect, were more apparent in the marital separation category compared to the other motivational categories. For example, in cases involving a father punishing a child for their behavior, although there are inferences of displaced aggression (e.g., initial provocation and resulting affect, but no examples of rumination or revenge planning), it is of a different nature and quality than those cases in the marital separation category,

which include examples of initial provocation, resulting affect, rumination, and revenge planning. Thus, cases categorized as filicides motivated by marital separation were of most relevance to answering the research questions because they consistently met the elements of the conceptual framework of the study (displaced aggression).

The following themes relevant to answering the first research question (RQ1) emerged as follows:

*Age of Father (Theme)* - The ages of fathers were consistently provided in the news articles, varying between the age of the father at the time of the homicide and the age of the father at the time of their criminal convictions, which was less consistent. So, the ages of the fathers at the time of the homicide were tracked; however, for cases where the father's age was identified only post-filicide, that age was used and noted to indicate deviation.

*Father's Socio-Economic Status (Theme)* - information about the father's socio-economic status to include employment status, housing, access to a vehicle, and educational level.

*Father's Mental Health (Theme)* - information related to the father's mental health history, such as a history of depression, suicide, substance abuse, etc.

*Father's Criminal History (Theme)* - information related to the father's criminal history, including allegations, charges, and convictions.

*Remarkable Statements by Father (Theme)* - statements to include threats to the child, threats to the mother, admissions regarding the homicide, retraction of admissions, denial statements regarding homicides, remarks about the mother, remarks about others,

any statements regarding motivation to kill, and fathers' statements regarding mental health.

*Father's Violent Behaviors (Theme)* - information related to fathers' crimes against others and crimes against their children's mothers.

The following themes relevant to answering research question two (RQ2) emerged as follows:

*Information from Collateral Contacts (Theme)* - information related to the fathers' relationship with their children's mothers, restraining orders, orders of protection, court-ordered parenting time, and stipulated or agreed-upon parenting time.

*State Involvement (Theme)* - Examples of state agency involvement to include underestimation of fathers' behaviors and family dynamics, court comments made during fathers' sentencing, convictions and sentencing outcomes, failures of Child Protective Services, and observations and comments made by community advocates.

*Father's Motivation to Murder (Theme)* - information related to the fathers' motivations to kill their children.

*Crime Scene and Victims (Theme)* - locations and conditions of the victims' bodies.

Notably, many of the themes were quite broad and required further analysis to provide more specific answers to the research questions. The researcher turned attention to the marital separation category to explore the themes further because the cases in this category demonstrated a higher rate of identifiable displaced aggression than the other categories, as previously discussed. To achieve this, the researcher re-examined the 19

cases categorized as marital separation and identified the major themes associated with each case. Based on the news reporting within each theme, the following sub-themes were developed:

*Threats to Harm Child or Mother* - direct quotes of threats such as in text messages, information described from court documents/police records, as well as statements made by mothers and other witnesses.

*Admissions of Fathers (Post Homicide)* - statements made by the father admitting committing the homicide.

*Denials of Fathers or Retractions of Admissions (Post Homicide)* - statements made by the father denying responsibility for the homicide and statements retracting statements admitting to the homicide.

*Statements Regarding Mother* - any statements or remarks made by the father related to the mother of the child prior to the homicide.

*Statements Regarding Others* - any statements or remarks made by the father related to anyone other than the mother, including the child.

*Statements Regarding motivation* - any statements or remarks made by the father related to his motivation to commit homicide.

*Statements Regarding Mental Health* - any statements or remarks made by the father or others related to the father's mental health.

*Crimes Against Others* - any statements or information related to the father's crimes against others, not including the mother of his child.

*Crimes Against Mother* - any statements or information related to the father's crimes against the mother of his child.

*Relationship Between Mother and Father* - any statements or information related to the relationship between father and mother prior to the homicide.

*Restraining Orders and Orders of Protection* - any statements or information related to restraining orders or orders of protection related to the father.

*Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time* - any statements or information related to the father's and mother's co-parenting arrangements to include orders made by the court or agreements made between the parents.

*Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat*-any statements or information related to authorities' response or lack of response to reported concerns about the father and his ability to parent his child and co-parent with the mother safely.

*Comments of Court during Sentencing* - any statements or information related to the court's commentary during the father's sentencing.

*Convictions and Sentencing* - any statements or information related to the father's conviction and sentencing for the homicide of his child.

*Child Protective Services' (CPS) Failure* - any statements or information related to CPS' response or lack of response to reported concerns about the father and his ability to parent his child safely.

*DV Advocacy Comments* -any statements or information related to comments made by community domestic violence advocates.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research ensures that the study is rigorous, transparent, and meaningful, affirming the significance and value of the research findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). As discussed in Chapter 3, the four key criteria used to assess trustworthiness are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Addressing each of these elements enables the researcher to demonstrate the study's integrity, particularly in mitigating bias throughout the research design, data collection, and analysis processes.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the degree to which the researcher's interpretation of the data accurately reflects the source material. Qualitative research aligns with the concept of internal validity, focusing on the researcher's ability to convey complex themes, patterns, or meanings within the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

In this study, credibility was established by ensuring a close alignment between the themes generated through analysis and the original content of online news reports describing paternal filicide cases. Although there were no live participants, the use of publicly available and verifiable news articles provided a consistent and reliable data source. To maintain credibility, a systematic thematic content analysis was applied to these reports, following transparent and well-documented procedures for coding and theme development. Thematic consistency was further strengthened by triangulating multiple news sources for each case when available, which allowed for corroboration of details and greater depth in pattern identification.

The scope of the study focused on paternal filicide cases tracked and maintained by the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE). Cases included were limited to those occurring in the United States between January 2008 and December 2020, only those in which the perpetrator was identified as the biological father, and children within the age range of 0 to 17 years. By faithfully representing events and themes as reported in the data and by using a rigorous and standardized analytic process, the study ensured an accurate and credible portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Dependability**

Dependability addresses the consistency and repeatability of the research process. It involves establishing a logical, traceable, and documented methodology that allows others to follow and potentially replicate the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In this study, dependability was ensured through detailed documentation of each stage of the research process. This included the development of research questions, the creation of inclusion and exclusion criteria, data collection protocols, and coding and analysis procedures. Each Google search used to locate online news articles was recorded, along with the number of search results, article content, publication date, source, and URL. This comprehensive audit trail provides transparency into how decisions were made and how data were managed.

The inclusion criteria limited the dataset to online news articles reporting paternal filicides identified by the CJE. Exclusion criteria ruled out cases involving mothers, stepparents, or other caregivers, as well as incidents of familicide and cases where the father attempted or committed suicide post-filicide. This distinction aligns with existing

literature, which often separates these categories based on differing psychological and contextual factors. By maintaining a coherent and reproducible methodological framework, the study enhances the dependability of its findings.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research, ensuring that the study's findings are shaped by the data rather than the researcher's biases, motivations, or assumptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). It emphasizes transparency in both the analytic process and the rationale behind interpretive decisions. To ensure confirmability, the researcher maintained a detailed audit trail mirroring the approach used to ensure dependability. All steps, from data collection to thematic coding and analysis, were explicitly documented. Records included the search terms used, the resulting articles, and the procedures for developing themes. This audit trail enables others to trace the process by which raw data were transformed into findings, thereby reinforcing that conclusions are grounded in evidence from the data rather than being influenced by personal perspective. This level of transparency supports the confirmability of the research.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied to other contexts, populations, or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is the qualitative equivalent of external validity and depends on providing detailed, rich descriptions of the study context, allowing readers to assess its relevance to their settings. In this study, transferability was supported by the provision of detailed, contextually rich descriptions of paternal filicide cases. The data were drawn exclusively from CJE's

publicly available list of U.S. cases and supplemented with online news articles that described events occurring between 2008 and 2020. While the cases spanned multiple states, the inclusion was still bound using a single centralized tracking source (CJE) and delimited to a specific population (i.e., biological fathers who committed filicide within the context of divorce or custody disputes).

Given these design constraints, the potential for transferability is moderate. The findings offer valuable insights into the thematic patterns and media portrayals of paternal filicide in the U.S., but generalization to other populations (e.g., maternal filicide), other cultural contexts, or alternative data sources (e.g., court records or psychological autopsies) should be approached with caution. Readers and future researchers must assess the degree of relevance based on the similarity of cultural, legal, and media contexts. Nevertheless, the study's methods and analytic framework may be transferable to similar research inquiries focused on filicide in other populations or jurisdictions.

## **Results**

Online news reports of biological fathers who killed their children in the context of divorce and child custody were thematically analyzed to learn more about their characteristics, behaviors, and events surrounding the homicides. Hundreds of news articles were read and re-read to become intimately familiar with each of their stories, answering the research questions and, more broadly, to improve knowledge and understanding of such fathers, thereby assisting in their identification and preventing filicides from occurring in future cases.

Using the conceptual framework of displaced aggression, the voluminous amount of data regarding the 64 fathers was further analyzed, seeking information that might draw distinctions with each father's motivation for killing their child(ren). Specifically, the researcher reviewed each case, seeking information that would demonstrate the elements of displaced aggression (i.e., initial provocation, resulting affect, situational constraints, rumination, revenge planning, and acts of displaced aggression).

While considering displaced aggression, the researcher also concurrently considered the three categories of motivations of filicidal fathers described by Léveillé and Doyon (2019): marital separation, physical abuse, and psychological condition. Interestingly, the identification of the initial provocation for each case was determinative of which category a case would be included in. In addition, filicides motivated by marital separation predominantly included most, if not all, elements of displaced aggression compared to the other categories that typically only included information as to the fathers' initial provocation and effect. Overall, the researcher found that identifying the initial provocations of each case, as well as the presence or absence of rumination and revenge planning, easily distinguished the cases within each category.

Since most cases in the marital separation category encompassed all elements of displaced aggression, those cases were deemed most significant to answer the research questions: What are the reported characteristics and behaviors of fathers that commit filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes? And what are the events surrounding fathers committing filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes?

Although the cases motivated by physical abuse and psychological conditions were of interest to the researcher, those cases involving filicides provoked by parental separation were of most interest compared to the fathers being provoked by the child's behavior or the father's psychological condition primarily due to its relationship to the conceptual framework (displaced aggression) of this study.

Each motivational category was collated and generally compared (in terms of the number of cases per category, the age of fathers, the age of children, and the causes of death). Tables 3-6 present the general information for each category. Filicides motivated by physical abuse produced the highest number of cases (39 of 64). This finding aligned with existing research on paternal filicide as cases of children dying as the result of excessive and severe punishment occur at a higher frequency than other motivational categories (Adhia et al., 2019; McCarroll et al., 2017).

The following motivational category with the highest number of cases was marital separation. Léveillé and Donyon (2019) studied 50 men who committed filicide in the province of Quebec between the years 1997 and 2012. They found that 54% of the filicides were committed in the context of marital separation and/or child custody disputes (Léveillé & Donyon, 2019). Debowska et al. (2015) discovered that filicidal fathers were predominately motivated by marital problems and retaliation against their romantic partners by displacing aggression onto their children.

There were 19 cases of paternal filicide motivated by marital separation out of the 64 cases meeting research criteria (approximately 30%), which is less than found in the Léveillé and Donyon (2019) study even despite a larger sample size. It was also found

that children in this category were, on average, older than in the other categories. The average age of fathers was less than those in the psychological state category but higher than the average age of fathers in the physical abuse category. For instance, perpetrators motivated by spousal revenge were found to range in age from 25 to 47 years old. In the present study, the age range of fathers motivated by parental separation is 23 to 51 years old.

Men perpetrate filicide more often due to anger, jealousy, and marital and life discord (Mariano et al., 2014). Men also tend to use more violent means to commit filicide than women; men shoot, stab, hit, kick, and cause head injuries more often than women (Mariano et al., 2014). Here, the researcher found that fathers killing siblings was only found in the marital separation category. The causes of death included suffocation (3 of 19), being thrown off a bridge (3 of 19), being stabbed (2 of 19), severe head trauma (2 of 19), drowning (2 of 19), house fire (1 of 19), poisoned (1 of 19), cut-throat and shot in the head (1 of 19), hatchet (1 of 19), and vehicular homicide (1 of 19); only one case included the use of firearm.

**Table 3**

*Filicides Motivated by Physical Abuse to Include the Names and Ages of Children, Causes of Death (COD), and the Age of Fathers*

Names of children	Age at death	COD	Age of father
Aaron Bowman, Jr.	18 mo.	Beat to death	28
Afton Allison	6 yrs.	Beat to death	-
Alayna Adair	3 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	24
Alycia Mesiti-Allen	14 yrs.	Drugged/poisoned	41
Amari Rayard Barnhill	2 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	21
Amelia King	1 yr.	Hyperthermia	34
Autumn Shibley	3 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	26
Ayden Baskey	19 mo.	Severe head trauma	25
Breazia Davis	18 mo.	Blunt force trauma	24
Chavon Robinson	22 mo.	Severe head injuries	26
Chloe Lewis	6 mo.	Strangulation	20
D'Anthony Herron	2 mo.	Blunt force trauma	-
Deagan Jackson	16 mo.	Blunt force trauma	26
Diella Ludwig	2 mo.	Blunt force trauma	24
Elijah Exilasse	4 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	27
Emilio Marocho	7 mo.	Beat to death	23
Eric Forbes	12 yrs.	Beat to death	34
Isaac Gallegos	2 yrs.	Beat to death	27
Ja'mari Myckahi Jones	17 mo.	Blunt force trauma	18
Jacob Navarrete	18 mo.	Stabbed to death	29
Jakariah Patterson	2 yrs.	Beat to death	21
Janessa Shannon	13 yrs.	Beat to death	37

Names of children	Age at death	COD	Age of father
Jayden Villegas-Morales	2 yrs.	Severe head injuries	29
Jeriel Ortiz	5 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	28
John Taylor Baxley	3 yrs.	Beat to death	31
Kamryn Schlitter	17 mo.	Severe head injury	25
Kaylene Herodias	4 mo.	Shaken baby syndrome	20
Kyla Hall	22 mo.	Severe head injuries	24
Melonia Hamber	2 yrs.	Beat to death	22
Mya Carr	5 yrs.	Beat to death	22
Naomi Jones	3 mo.	Severe head injuries	22
Richard Barbone	7 mo.	Severe head injuries	19
Ronderique Anderson	16 mo.	Severe head injuries	23
Shelby Maddox	28 days	Blunt force trauma	25
Sophia Ortiz	4 mo.	Shaken baby syndrome	23
Summer Adkins	2 yrs.	Suffocated	31
Tushambi Evans Jr.	2 yrs.	Beat to death	28
Za'Mya Lila Williams	3 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	34
Zion Nelson	3 yrs.	Beat to death	-

**Table 4**

*Filicides Motivated by Marital Separation to Include the Names and Ages of Children, Causes of Death (COD), and the Ages of the Fathers*

Names of children	Age at death	COD	Age of father
Aeden Moreno	7 mo.	Threw off bridge	21
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	6 yrs.*	Drowning	41
Austin & Logan Jackson	14 yr.*	Firearm; shot to death	40
Ayden Shackelford	5 yrs.	Vehicular homicide	25
Chad "CJ" Johnson	3 yrs.	Blunt force trauma	36
Dominic Nunn	8 yrs.	Severe head trauma	38
Dylan Redwine	13 yrs.	Severe head trauma	59
Edward & Bradley Garcia	3 yrs.*	Stabbing	23
Gary DeToma, Jr.	5 yrs.	Suffocation	42
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	10 yr.*	House fire	42
Jayson Holland	3 yrs.	Poisoned	38
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	8 yrs.*	Stabbing	30
Laila Miller	3 yrs.	Cut the child's throat and shot her in the head	-
Makenzie Moira Main	17 mo.	Drowning	38
Matthew Hernandez	9 yrs.	Hatchet	36
Nakota Kelly	10 yrs.	Suffocation	37
Phoebe Jonchuck	5 yrs.	Threw off bridge	25
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	5 yrs.	Suffocation	35
Turner Jordan Nelson	3 yrs.	Threw off bridge	40

**Table 5**

*Filicides Motivated by Psychological State to Include Names and Ages of Children, Causes of Death (COD), and the Ages of Fathers*

Names of children	Age at death	COD	Age of father
Calandra Balas	7 yrs.	DUI vehicular homicide	-
David Sherrill	13 yrs.	Killed with an ax	51
Erika Meese	14 mo.	Severe head trauma	47
Maliyah Lindsay	20 mo.	Blunt force trauma	35
Sergio Axel Aguiar	2 yrs.	Beaten to death	27

**Table 6**

*Filicides Motivated Categorized as Other to Include the Name and Age of Child, Cause of Death (COD), and Age of Father*

Name of child	Age at death	COD	Age of father
Malaysia Matamoros	2 years	Asphyxiation	31

### **Research Question 1a**

Research Question 1a: What are the characteristics of biological fathers that murder their children in the context of divorce and child custody?

#### ***Age of Father (Theme)***

The average age of fathers in the motivational category of marital separation is 36 years old. The age range of fathers in this category is 21 - 59 years old. The most common age of fathers is 38 years old. The median age of fathers is 37.5 years old. Appendix A provides the names of the children, ages of fathers, and the source of the provided information with references.

***Father's Socioeconomic Status (Theme)***

The socioeconomic status of fathers in the motivational category of marital separation varied. The areas of socioeconomic status included employment, educational level, military experience, housing, and vehicle (access to or ownership of) at the time of the filicide. Appendix B provides the names of the children, information found regarding fathers' socioeconomic status, and the source of the provided information with references. Regarding the fathers' employment at the time of the filicides, there was one unemployed father, 2 stay at home dads, one disabled veteran, and 14 fathers with unknown employment status. One father had some college education, but the educational level and background of 18 fathers were unknown. Three fathers had known military experience with one described as a disabled veteran at the time of the filicide and the other two having served at some point in their lives. The military experience and status of the remaining 15 fathers are unknown. It was specifically noted or referenced that 6 fathers had housing, and one that did not. There was no information provided regarding the current housing for 12 of the 19 fathers. Regarding vehicles, it was found that one father did not have a vehicle, one father had a vehicle, but there were 17 cases where the ownership or access to a vehicle was unknown.

***Fathers' Mental Health (Theme)***

Fathers' mental health information is related to the fathers' mental health history such as a history of depression, suicide, and substance abuse. Appendix C provides the names of the children, information found regarding fathers' mental health history, and the source of the information provided with references.

Overall, the mental health history was provided for 8 of the 19 fathers. Of those 8 fathers, 4 fathers had co-morbidity and 4 had a single mental health condition. Two fathers had a history of depression. One had a history of suicidal ideation, and another had a history of suicide attempts. Three fathers experienced childhood trauma including the loss of a father, child abuse, as well as a shortage of oxygen at birth. One father was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. One father was reported to possibly suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

One father behaved in ways to suggest possible paraphilia issues. One father had head trauma. Two fathers physically harmed themselves after the filicides.

It was reported that one father had an extensive criminal history suggesting possible antisocial personality disorder. One father was described to have a history of mental illness with no other details provided. One father was described as acting erratically and frightening prior to the filicide, and the co-parent in this case requested that father undergo mental health treatment. There was no information provided pertaining to mental health histories for 11 of the 19.

### ***Father's Criminal History (Theme)***

Information related to the fathers' criminal history to include allegations, charges, and convictions. Appendix D provides the children's names, information regarding the fathers' criminal histories, and the source of information with references.

Criminal history data was available for 7 of the 19 fathers. One father had a "ticketed disturbance." One father was said to have had "prior dealings with law enforcement" with no other details provided. Two fathers had criminal charges for

domestic violence, and one of those same fathers was also charged with corporal injury of a spouse as well as a comment that he had a “history of violence.” One father had no criminal history. One father had several criminal charges to include an illegal immigration status, social security fraud, misusing documents, a history of violence against children, and information about the United States trying to deport the father back to his home country, but the home country refused to take him back. There was no criminal history information available for 11 of the 19 fathers.

### **Research Question 1b**

Research Question 1b: What are the behaviors of biological fathers that murder their children in the context of divorce and child custody?

### ***Remarkable Statements by Father (Theme)***

This information is in reference to remarkable statements by father to include threats to the child, threats to the mother, admissions regarding the homicide, retraction of admissions, denial statements regarding homicides, remarks about the mother, remarks about others, any statements regarding motivation to kill, and fathers’ statements regarding mental health. Due to the myriads of data identified in this area, the researcher divided all remarkable statements into sub-themes.

**Threats to Harm Child or Mother (Subtheme).** The first subtheme is direct quotes of threats to harm the child or mother via text messages, information described from court documents/police records, as well as statements made by mothers and other witnesses. Appendix E documents fathers’ threats to harm either their child(ren) or the

mothers of their children organized by the children's names in addition to the source of the information with references.

Threats were documented by 3 fathers. One father threatened to make their child *disappear*, threatened to *put mother in the ground* and *put something on her body to make her disintegrate faster*, as well as the father physically assaulting mother and not allowing mother to take the child to her family's house without his permission.

One father threatened the mother that he would *kill their child and keep the mother alive so she would have to live without him*. And one father threatened the mother that he would *burn down their family home*. There was no information about threats made by the other 16 fathers.

**Admissions of Fathers (Post Homicide; Subtheme).** This sub-theme is statements made by the fathers admitting to committing the filicides. Appendix F shows post-homicide admissions of fathers organized by children's names and the sources of information with resources. There was information documenting that 9 of the 19 fathers admitted to killing their children.

**Denials of Fathers or Retractions of Admissions (Post Homicide; Subtheme).** The following are statements made by fathers denying responsibility for the homicide and retracting statements admitting to the homicide. Appendix G shows fathers' statements denying responsibility of homicides and retraction of admissions organized by the victims' names and information sources with references. There was information available on 6 of the 19 fathers. Two fathers pleaded not guilty. One father pleaded "not guilty by reason of insanity." One father denied killing the child. One father blamed the mother's

new boyfriend for the filicide. One father initially admitted to the filicide, but then later sought to retract his confession. And one father stated that he was medicated and likely attacked when his child went missing while in his care.

**Statements Regarding Mother (Subtheme).** The following statements or remarks were made by the fathers related to the mother of the child prior to the homicide. Appendix H provides fathers' statements regarding the mothers of their children organized by the children's names and the sources of information with resources.

Information related to 5 of the 19 fathers was discovered. One father stated that mother was *self-righteous and manipulative*. This same father accused mother of *nothing mattering to her and that she wanted to play games and be childish*. One father posted on social media that he *loved the mother of his child*. One father stated *mother was making accusations against him because she wanted to get her way regarding visitation and child support*.

One father stated that *the mother of his child was not a woman because she was unable to conceive without fertility treatment*. This same father also claimed that *mother set him up and tried to get the cops to suspect him*. One father blamed *the mother as being the reason he killed their child*.

**Statements Regarding Others (Subtheme).** The following are statements or remarks made by the father related to anyone other than the mother to include the child. One father made false allegations against mother's new boyfriend that he was responsible for the filicide. Appendix I includes the statements made organized by children's names and information sources with resources.

**Statements Regarding Motivation (Subtheme).** The following includes any statements or remarks made by the father related to his motivation to commit homicide. Appendix J provides the statements organized by the children's names and the information sources with resources.

Four fathers made statements regarding their motivation to kill their children. One father admitted he killed his daughter because his wife, the mother of the child, was divorcing him. One father admitted that he killed his child because the mother was giving him a hard time and it cost him a lot of money. One father admitted to killing his son because of his estranged wife, mother of his child. One father admitted to killing the child to hurt the child's mother.

**Statements Regarding Mental Health (Subtheme).** The following are statements or remarks made by the father or others related to the father's mental health. Appendix K provides the statements organized by the children's names and the information sources with references.

There were statements regarding 4 of the fathers' mental health conditions or concerns. A mother remarked that 1 father *became a different person* and began *doing unusual things* like threatening to take poison. Another mother reported that 1 father became paranoid and controlling after she became pregnant with their daughter.

This same mother reported that she noticed father became depressed and started sleeping all day, as well as father talking about committing suicide. One father stated that he sometimes hears voices. Another father described hearing voices saying that if he and his daughter didn't die then everybody was going to hell.

***Fathers' Violent Behaviors (Theme)***

The following is information related to fathers' crimes against others and crimes against their children's mothers. Due to the multitude of information identified in this area, the researcher divided all information related to fathers' crimes into sub-themes.

**Crimes Against Others (Subtheme).** This sub-theme includes information related to the fathers' crimes against others not including the mother of their children. Appendix L provides fathers' crimes against others organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

There was data that 2 of the 19 fathers abused their children. Children of 1 father were afraid of him because if they did not do what he wanted, he would beat them. One father behaved violently and attacked his son over a long period of time. This same father also kicked the child in the shin for spilling milk, pushed his head into a plate of spinach, and pulled his son down a flight of stairs.

**Crimes Against Mother (Subtheme).** The following includes any statements or information related to the fathers' crimes against the mother of their children. Appendix M provides fathers' crimes against the mothers of their children organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

There was information on 7 of the 19 fathers. One father called mother names, shoved her, pushed and forcefully poked her in the chest. The same father also threatened to assault her more violently. He also would not allow the mother to take their child to see her family. The mother reported being afraid of the father hurting their child. The

father also had a history of domestic violence against the mother. Another father abused the mother for years.

One father was abusive and began drinking and cheating on his wife during their marriage. It was reported that domestic problems were growing between mother and father. One father threatened mother that she was *going to have a bad day*. One mother reported that father was acting irrationally and was back on drugs. She was worried for the safety of their children. This same father was charged with domestic violence and corporal injury on a spouse. Lastly, one father threatened to beat mother.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2: What are the events surrounding fathers committing filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes?

### ***Information From Collateral Contacts (Theme)***

The following information is related to information from collateral contacts pertaining to the fathers' relationship with their children's mothers, restraining orders, orders of protection, court ordered parenting time, and stipulated or agreed to parenting time. Sub-themes were created to better manage and organize the information.

**Relationship Between Mother and Father (Subtheme).** This sub-theme includes any statements or information related to the relationship between father and mother prior to the homicide. Appendix N includes data related to the relationship between mothers and fathers organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

It was described that one father's relationship with his child's mother declined once she became pregnant with their child. He called the mother names, shoved, pushed her, and poked her in the chest. He also demanded that the mother never take their child without his approval. The father demanded that the mother not bring their child around her family. However, he took their child wherever he wanted, and he would not tell the mother where he was going. The mother unsuccessfully applied for a restraining order despite the father's aggressive and erratic behavior to include the father leaving the baby alone on a bed and leaving the house and hiding mother's graduation dress after she moved out of their home. Information regarding a second father described him as refusing to tell the mother where he was staying with their children during his parenting time.

Neighbors described a third father's home he shared with the mother and his children as unusually quiet given the number of children living there, but the home also attracted law enforcement on occasion due to hearing children screaming.

In a fourth case, the mother reported that the father texted threatening he would burn their home. In a fifth case, the father admitted that he and his wife were having marital problems. The mother realized overtime that the father was paranoid and wanted to control everything. The father also implied that his marriage to the mother was more important than his daughter. It was reported that a sixth father had a history of not seeing his children.

In the seventh case, the child disclosed abuse to DCS, but DCS did not substantiate because there were no marks on the child. It was further reported that the

father was angry because the mother let their son play baseball, which made the child late for his parenting time. He threatened to call the police and take the mother to court for not bringing the child to him on time. The mother thought the father would hurt their child physically, or abduct him, but she never imagined he would kill him.

The mother's and father's relationship in the eighth case was described as rocky and full of drugs and fighting. It was described in the ninth case that the mother was fearful of every move she made because the judge in the custody case always believed the father. The mother filed for a restraining order documenting how the father said she wasn't a woman because she could not get pregnant and how he hacked into her social media.

Lastly, in the tenth case, the mother left the father because she no longer loved him and was intimidated by his drinking problem. The mother further stated that she did not want her son to grow up around that kind of behavior. They lived with each other for years before having their baby and stayed together for about 6 months after the baby was born.

**Restraining Orders and Orders of Protection (Subtheme).** The following information includes any statements or information related to restraining orders or orders of protection related to father. Appendix O provides information about the cases that involved restraining orders and orders of protections and information sources with references.

The first case described how the mother was afraid the father was going to do something to her son, so she applied for a temporary restraining order. In the second case,

a judge denied a mother's request for a permanent restraining order despite the father's reported erratic behavior.

The mother in case three was granted a protective order against the father the day before he murdered one of their children. The father violated the restraining order and took the couple's children without her permission. In the fourth case, a judge denied the mother's request for a restraining order despite her reports of the father being back on drugs, acting irrationally, and posing a threat to their children. The father, in case number 5 was difficult to deal with when he did not get what he wanted, so the mother would typically do what he wanted. The father threatened to beat the mother. The child reported that he was scared to go to the father's home because he would be abused. The child reported to DCS that his father would hit him and yell at him, but they did not help him.

In case 6, the mother was fearful of every move she made. She tried to get a restraining order against the father just months before he killed their son. In the last case, the mother filed for a protective order due to the father leaving notes on her car and calling her names, without explanation, the mother withdrew her complaint a few days later.

**Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time (Subtheme).** The following information includes any statements or information related to father's and mother's co-parenting arrangements to include orders made by the court or agreements made between the parents. Appendix P provides information about court orders or stipulated parenting

arrangements between the fathers and mothers organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

The mother and father in the first case worked out a custody agreement. In the second case, the judge ordered the father to have supervised visitation. The judge also ordered the father out of the marital home and to have no contact with the mother.

In case 3, the father had court ordered parenting time. In the fourth case, the father and mother were due to finalize a custody agreement just prior to the father killing their son. The father in the fifth case was granted custody of his children.

In the sixth case, the judge ordered parents into mediation, and they reached an agreement. Part of the agreement was that they were never to withhold parenting time even if one suspected abuse or other issues, if so, then they would have the court deal with it.

In case 7, after the mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, the father agreed to take care of their daughter. Finally, in the eighth case, the court ordered joint custody for the parents.

**DV Advocacy Comments (Subtheme).** The following includes any statements or information related to comments made by community domestic violence advocates. Appendix Q provides domestic violence advocacy comments organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

In the first case, the mother sought a protective order based on the father's history of abuse and threats against the mother and their child, but the court did not grant the request. Domestic violence experts stated that they believe these tragedies are

avoidable. Research demonstrates at least 75% of contested custody cases involve domestic violence, yet there have been no reforms adopted to ensure the protection of children. Those uneducated in domestic violence believe the death of a child is an exception. They went on to say that judges need to be more educated about the dynamics of domestic violence.

In the second case, advocates described having long asserted that the court operates on a two-track system of justice where people with representation receive preferential treatment compared to those without an attorney.

In case three, a new law was named after a child murdered by his father, named Piqui's law that would prohibit reunification therapy with fathers facing criminal charges. In the fifth case, the State's attorney described the crime as a vengeful act intended to cause pain to the mother.

***State Involvement (Theme)***

This theme provides examples of state agency involvement to include examples of their underestimation of fathers' behaviors and family dynamics, comments of the courts made during sentencing of fathers, convictions and sentencing, failures of Child Protective Services, and observations and comments made by community advocates. Due to the amount of data, sub-themes were created to make the information more organized and manageable.

**Authorities (Other Than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat (Subtheme).** The following descriptions include any statements or information related to the authorities' response or lack of response to reported concerns about father and his

ability to safely parent his child and co-parent with mother. Appendix R provides data related to authorities' response or lack of response to reported concerns about fathers and their ability to safely parent their children organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

In case one, the judge granted a temporary order of protection but rejected a permanent order stating that there was no clear and convincing evidence that the alleged acts of abuse occurred. The authorities believed that the father was of no threat, and the judge stated that the father presented no contentious threat to the mother and child.

In the second case, the mother called the police when the father did not bring the children back. The police stated that they were unable to assist her and to call back on Monday. In case three, the sheriff department simply described the father as estranged from his wife with on and off again access to the children. The two older children were later found dead.

In case three, the police said they had no prior contact with the family about any domestic problems. In case four, the judge admitted that she had no knowledge of family law when she took the bench. She granted custody of the child to a father that had a long history of domestic violence against the mother.

In case 5, the mother asked the court to order supervised parenting time for the father and child, but the judge ordered them to mediation instead. Father's attorneys argued that the police did not have a right to enter his home without a warrant when a second welfare check for the child was called and indicated that the father murdered his

child. The police did not enter the home the first time they received a call about a welfare check.

In case 6, the police interviewed the father at the church where he went begging to be baptized. They decided he was *ok* and let him go with the child. Hours later, she was dead. Information from the seventh case indicates that the mother was afraid because the judge always seemed to believe the father over her. Mother contacted the police to report her son missing. The police suspected the father harmed the child, but did not have enough evidence to arrest him.

**Comments of Court During Sentencing (Subtheme).** The following include any statements or information related to the court's commentary during the father's sentencing. Appendix S provides the comments made by the court during the fathers' sentencing organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

There were 3 cases that included information about the judge's commentary during sentencing. In case 1, the judge stated to the father during sentencing that, "Not only did you violently and intentionally kill your 7-month-old son, but you taunted his mother as you committed the act with text messages that were aptly described as 'demonic' — just so you could add to her unfathomable grief."

In the second case, the judge stated, "As a father, it's your obligation to protect your son and keep him from harm, and instead of that, you inflicted enough injury on him to kill him in your living room. After the passion of whatever caused you to act the way you did subsided, you didn't think about Dylan. You thought about yourself. You sanitized the crime scene. You hid Dylan's body, and you went so far as to remove the

head from the rest of his body. After all this time and listening to what was heard in this courtroom, you still take absolutely no responsibility for what you did to Dylan. I have trouble remembering a convicted criminal defendant that has shown such an utter lack of remorse for his criminal behavior.” In the third case, the Judge said to the father that he had “completely and utterly failed to accept responsibility for his actions.”

**Convictions and Sentencing (Subtheme).** Any statements or information related to the father’s conviction and sentencing for the homicide of his child. Appendix T provides information regarding the convictions and sentencing of the fathers organized by the children’s names and information sources with references.

Of the 19 cases, 13 provided information about the fathers’ sentencing. One father was sentenced to 3 consecutive life terms without parole. One father was sentenced to 2 consecutive life terms. Three fathers were sentenced to life, although one of the fathers would be eligible for parole in 30 years. One father was sentenced to 70 years. Another father was sentenced to 50 years. One father was sentenced to 48 years. Two fathers were sentenced to 26 years to life. One father was sentenced to 25 years to life. One father was sentenced to 13 years in prison. One father was sentenced to 10 years in prison. The 6 remaining cases did not provide any information related to sentencing.

**Child Protective Services’ (CPS) Failure (Subtheme).** The following includes any statements or information related to CPS’ response or lack of response to reported concerns about the father and his ability to safely parent his child. Appendix U provides information regarding CPS’s response or lack of response to reported concerns about the

father and his ability to safely parent his child(ren) organized by the children's names and information sources with references.

There were 7 of the 19 cases that provided information about CPS' failure. In one case, CPS failed to submit anything that would allow the court to extend the restraining order against the father. In addition, CPS failed to follow-up and conduct a second safety assessment after the restraining order ended. In the second case, the mother repeatedly warned CPS of her situation with the father of her child.

In case 3, it was alleged that the child's death would not have happened but for the failure of CPS and other state officials and law enforcement. In the fourth case, there was a CPS complaint 3 weeks before the filicide. In the fifth case, DCS investigated the father due to claims of abuse, but unsubstantiated the abuse due to the father's denial, accusing the mother of making allegations because she was not getting the visitation and child support that she wanted, as well as the child being free from bruises and marks. The child disclosed abuse to DCS and expressed fear about going to the father's home. The father lied to DCS reporting that he had no criminal record. DCS stated that the father had no substantiated history, no criminal history, no diagnosis, no domestic violence, no drug or alcohol use. The other reported that the child was afraid to go over to the father's house after he hung up on him during a phone conversation. DCS was called 6 times in 4 years.

In case 6, the father was failed by the system as a child and did not receive the needed mental health treatment or care from child protective services. Then when that child later became a father, a report was made to the Department of Children and

Families hotline regarding his child, and the worker did not send anyone to talk to him. In the seventh case, DCS did not take Mother's concerns seriously. The remaining 12 cases did not include information about failures of child protective services.

***Father's Motivation to Murder (Theme)***

The following is information related to the fathers' motivations to kill their children. There was information available for 15 cases. Appendix V provides information related to the fathers' motivations to kill their children organized by the children's names and information sources with resources.

In one case, the father killed his son because the mother ended the relationship with him. It was also described that mother's and father's relationship took a turn for the worse when mother refused a marriage proposal. In the second case, the couple was involved in a long-running custody battle suggesting that the father killed his son due to this. In case 3, the father wanted to hurt the mother because she left him. In case 4, the child did not want to go to his dad's house. While at the house, the child found pictures of the father wearing lingerie while eating what appeared to be feces from a diaper. In the fifth case, the father's motivation to kill his child was due to a custody dispute. In case 6, the parents were involved in a bitter custody battle and wanted sole custody of their two children.

In the seventh case, the father fought paternity and waged a custody battle against the mother. In case 8, the father killed his child for revenge against his ex-wife. In the ninth case, there was an ongoing custody fight between parents.

In case 10, Father killed his daughter because his wife was divorcing him, and he wanted to inflict pain and suffering upon his wife. In case 11, it was specifically stated that there was no explanation given. In the twelfth case, the father killed their son to hurt the mother. In case 13, the father killed his daughter so mother could never get custody of her and because he was bitter that his own mother loved the child with affection that she never showed him. In case 14, the father admitted that he killed his son because he was angry with his estranged wife. In the fifteenth case, the father killed the child to cause the mother pain. Four cases did not include information regarding potential or known motivations for the fathers killing their children.

### ***Crime Scene and Victims (Theme)***

The following information includes the locations and conditions of the victims' bodies. There was information available from 17 of the 19 cases. Appendix W provides information about crime scenes and victims organized by children's names and information sources with references.

In the first case, the father threw his son off the 90-foot-high bridge. In the second case, the father drowned the children in a hotel bathtub. In the third case, the children's bodies were found in their father's home. In case 4, the child was killed in a car accident. In the fifth case, the injuries were described as consistent with domestic abuse and it appeared that it wasn't the first time that the child had been abused. In case 6, the child died because of head trauma.

In the seventh case, the father sanitized the crime scene, hid the child's body and removed his head from the rest of his body. The child went missing on Nov. 19, 2012.

The boy's body was found in June 2013 during a search of the mountains. The child's head was found in late 2015 by hikers, nearly two miles away from where his body was found. Experts testified that the boy likely died from a skull fracture as well as sharp force injuries.

In the eighth case, the children's bodies were found in the basement of the home. In the ninth case, one of father's co-workers went to check on him because he had failed to show up for work that day and discovered the tragedy. The co-worker continued knocking and finally a 4-year-old child came to the door. The co-worker went inside, and he found the father in a bedroom with his 5-year-old son, and he appeared to be deceased.

In case 10, one child did not actually die in the fire, and he succumbed to his injuries later at the hospital. In case 11, the authorities said an autopsy and toxicology test revealed a deadly cocktail of drugs in the boy's system, including toxic levels of cocaine, acetaminophen and the active ingredient in Benadryl. The father intentionally gave the child the drink with the drugs mixed in.

In the twelfth case, the child was stabbed and shot sometime before the father was killed during a shootout with officers. The child was found inside the car with a gunshot wound and her throat slit. The incident began early Saturday afternoon with a domestic dispute over child custody. Police called to numerous 911 calls for shots fired.

Authorities said they discovered the child's maternal grandfather and great grandmother wounded inside a home. They remain in critical but stable condition at a local hospital. After the child was stabbed and shot by her father, he was then killed in a gun battle with police while fleeing the scene of another crime and leading cops in a high-speed chase.

In case 13, the father went into the backyard, grabbed a hatchet, broke through the sliding glass door and brutally attacked his son, who was sleeping on the couch. The child died at the scene from blunt force trauma to the head. In the fourteenth case, there was blood spatter, blood smears and brain matter in the apartment's bathroom. There was also a small amount of blood in the apartment's entrance. The child's body was never recovered.

In the fifteenth case, the child's body was recovered from Tampa Bay. In case 16, the father confessed to using a jacket to smother his son and leaving his body by a tree. The father searched the internet for "wilderness areas near Solvang," where the boy's body was found. In case 17, the father threw the toddler off the bridge into the frigid river. The remaining 2 cases did not have information regarding the crime scenes.

### **Summary**

Online news reports of biological fathers killing their children during divorce and child custody disputes were thematically explored to gain more understanding and answer the following research questions: what are the reported characteristics and behaviors of fathers that commit filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes? And what are the events surrounding fathers committing filicide in the context of divorce and child custody disputes?

To do this, a detailed description of the data collection process as well as the methodology used to thematically analyze the collected data to include identification of primary themes and subthemes are discussed. Fathers in the motivational category of marital separation were found to meet more characteristics of those that displace

aggression compared to the other categories. Due to this, focus on fathers in this motivational category were deemed of most interest and value to answer the research questions because of their relationship to the theoretical framework of displaced aggression used for this study. An examination on the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis was also included. Lastly, identified themes were presented systematically to address the research questions accompanied by data tables referencing information sources.

In the next chapter, a final analysis comparing findings with information described in the literature review will be conducted. Recommendations and the implications of results will also be discussed followed by the final conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

Paternal filicide frequently occurs in families marked by intimate partner violence (IPV), and in many instances, the mother's decision to leave an abusive relationship is a precipitating factor in the father's lethal actions against their children (Jaffe et al., 2014). Although child homicides that take place during divorce or parental separation often overlap with domestic violence, this intersection has received limited research attention (Jaffe et al., 2012). IPV is among the strongest predictors of intimate partner homicide (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014), and many of these homicides involve additional victims with nearly half of whom are children under the age of 18 (Lyons et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014).

Jaffe and Juodis (2006) identified three distinct contexts in which children are killed in situations involving domestic violence, one of which includes revenge directed at a partner who has ended the relationship. A documented history of family violence is often associated with paternal filicide (Bourget et al., 2007). Retrospective examinations of such cases can reveal critical missed opportunities for intervention (Reif & Jaffe, 2019). Scholars and practitioners have emphasized the importance of identifying volatile, high-conflict custody disputes early to prevent the risk of child homicide (Debowska et al., 2015; Holland et al., 2018). Similarly, Adhia et al. (2019) stressed the need for a deeper understanding of how and why parents commit filicide in the context of divorce and custody disputes to create better informed prevention strategies.

Between 2008 and July 2021, 803 children in the United States were murdered by a parent amid divorce or separation (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). Of these, the CJE identified 110 deaths as “preventable,” having occurred in cases where family courts awarded custody or visitation to a parent with a known history of violence or dangerous behavior (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to thematically examine online news reports of biological fathers who killed their children in the context of divorce and custody litigation. The aim was to better understand the characteristics and behaviors of these fathers, as well as the situational dynamics surrounding the filicides. This study sought to contribute to the existing literature on paternal filicide and support efforts to identify fathers at the highest risk of lethal violence and help to prevent future tragedies. The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Based on a thematic analysis of online news reports, what are the reported characteristics and behaviors of fathers who commit filicide during divorce and child custody disputes?

RQ2: Based on a thematic analysis of online news reports, what are the events and contextual circumstances surrounding these filicides?

To answer these questions, 64 cases of paternal filicide in the United States, occurring between 2008 and 2020, were analyzed. These cases were selected from a larger dataset of 803 child homicides compiled by the CJE, all of which involved divorce, separation, custody, visitation, or child support disputes. Thematic analysis was used to

identify patterns related to fathers' demographic characteristics, mental health and criminal histories, notable behaviors, and statements.

Each case was then analyzed through the conceptual framework of displaced aggression, which includes five elements: initial provocation, emotional response, situational constraints, rumination, and revenge planning. Cases were categorized into one of four filicide motivations: marital separation, fatal physical abuse, psychological state, or other (Léveillé & Doyon, 2019). Nineteen of the 64 cases, involving 25 child victims, were classified as motivated by marital separation and aligned with all five elements of displaced aggression, making them central to addressing the study's research questions.

In sum, this study underscores the critical intersection between domestic violence, parental separation, and paternal filicide. Findings suggest that the dissolution of parental relationships, particularly in families with a history of IPV, can escalate to child homicide when unaddressed risk factors go unmitigated. Thematic analysis revealed patterns of displaced aggression, prior contact with authorities, and failures in protective systems. These findings support the need for earlier identification of at-risk fathers and comprehensive legal and mental health interventions. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on filicidal behavior and calls for systemic reforms aimed at protecting children amid high-conflict family disputes.

## Interpretation of the Findings

### General Findings

Prior research focused on the motivations, characteristics, and behaviors of filicidal fathers, as well as the varying context in which these homicides occurred. In the current study, 19 cases of filicides motivated by marital separation were thematically analyzed with findings that align with prior research with some minor variations, as well as extending knowledge in the discipline.

Of the 64 cases of paternal filicide reviewed, 19 cases were categorized as motivated by marital separation (29.6%). The percentage of cases falling within the motivational category of marital separation was less than that found in the Léveillé and Donyon (2019) study. In that study, 54% of the cases were motivated by marital separation. In addition, Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) found that the main motivation for males committing filicide was retaliation against one's spouse because of spousal separation.

Because of research's previous findings, the present study's researcher anticipated a higher proportion of cases falling into the marital separation category like that found in the Léveillé and Donyon (2019) and Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) studies, but it was less. These results are likely to be due to the differing research methods. For example, in the Léveillé and Donyon (2019) study, researchers studied 50 fathers that killed their children and assessed the cases using "A Multivariate Intra-Family Homicide Analysis Grid," a tool developed by Léveillé, Dubé, Martins Borges and Lefebvre (2005).

The grid standardized variables such as sociodemographic variables, psychological variables, and situational variables. In the Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020), a sample of 50 fathers that committed filicides in Quebec (1997 - 2012), and from this sample, 5 clinical cases were selected and presented in vignettes to expand the study of the psychosocial profiles of these men (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

In contrast, the present study reviewed and thematically analyzed news reports of filicides using qualitative and deductive methods to arrive at the results instead of inductive and quantitative analysis used in the prior studies. Sample sizes were also different. Thus, there remains some questions regarding what percentage of paternal filicide is motivated by marital separation.

Another general observation made in the present study was the methods used by fathers to kill their children included firearms, stabbing, head injuries, vehicular homicide, drowning, throwing the child off a bridge, and poisoning. Prior research made similar findings about fathers who perpetrate filicide. These fathers tend to use more violent means to commit filicide such as using firearms, stabbing, head injury, hitting, and kicking to kill their children compared to filicidal mothers (Mariano et al., 2014).

Lastly, a notable finding in the present study was that only fathers in the marital separation category killed siblings. This aligned with prior research that found fathers more often kill multiple victims compared to filicidal mothers (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Mariano et al., 2014), although highlighted a possible distinction among the varying motivation categories, which adds to existing knowledge.

## **Research Questions 1a, 1b, and 2**

### ***Research Question 1a: Characteristics of Fathers***

Fathers' characteristics included the age of the fathers, their socio-economic status, mental health history, and criminal history. The ages of fathers aligned with prior research findings that fathers who commit filicide motivated by marital separation are older in age compared to fathers in other motivational categories.

Findings on socioeconomic status were inconclusive because they did not align with previous studies nor expanded existing knowledge. However, the characteristics of the father's mental health history confirmed past research and validated the significance of fathers having a mental health history of depression and childhood trauma. Fathers' criminal histories of domestic violence were found to be the most remarkable and distinguishing characteristic.

**Age of Fathers.** The age range of fathers in the motivational category of marital separation was 21 years old to 59 years old. In prior studies, the age of fathers in this same motivational category was 25 years old to 47 years old (Léveillé & Donyon, 2019). Léveillé and Donyon (2019) also found that fathers in this motivational category tended to be older (35-44 years old) compared to the others.

In the present study, the average age of fathers was 36 years old, the most common age of fathers was 38 years old, and the median age of fathers was 37.5 years old, which aligns with previous findings. Fathers that committed filicide motivated by marital separation were found to be older than fathers in other categories (mid-30's to mid-40's).

**Socioeconomic Status.** In prior research, perpetrators of paternal filicide were found to have similar socio-demographic characteristics (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). Specifically, they were found to be poorly educated, and most were unemployed at the time of the filicide (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). In the present study, employment status for most of the fathers was unknown with one father being characterized as unemployed, one father was a disabled veteran, and 2 fathers were stay at home dads.

Regarding education, in the present study, one father had some college education, but the educational level and background of 18 fathers were unknown. Overall, employment status and educational level were predominately unknown, so a definitive conclusion regarding these characteristics of fathers was not possible to ascertain.

In addition to employment status and education, this study also looked at housing and access to a vehicle. It was specifically noted or referenced that 6 fathers had housing, and one that did not. There was no information provided regarding the current housing for 12 of the 19 fathers.

Regarding vehicles, it was found that 3 fathers had a vehicle, or at least access to a vehicle. It was specifically stated that one father did not have a vehicle. No information was available regarding owning or having access to a vehicle for 15 fathers. Due to the lack of available information, it is not possible to make any specific conclusions regarding the socioeconomic characteristics related to housing or access or ownership of a vehicle for the fathers.

**Mental Health History.** Fathers' mental health history is related to information about the fathers' mental health such as a history of depression, suicide, and substance abuse. Overall, the mental health history was provided for 8 of the 19 fathers (42%), but most of the cases (11 of the 19) lacked information related to the fathers' mental health histories.

In the present study, almost half of the fathers had varying mental health histories and conditions. For instance, one father had a history of suicidal ideation, and another had a history of suicide attempts. One father was described to have a history of mental illness with no other details provided. One father was reported to possibly suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One father behaved in ways to suggest possible paraphilia issues. One father had head trauma. Two fathers physically harmed themselves after the filicides.

Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque (2020) found that perpetrators showed signs of narcissistic personality disorder, paranoia, and lacked acceptance of their intimate relationship ending (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). In the present study, one father was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and one father was described as acting erratically and frightening after the parents' relationship ended and prior to the filicide. It was also reported that one father had an extensive criminal history suggesting possible signs of antisocial personality.

Fathers experiencing depression were found in both the present study and past research, although with differing rates. In the present study, two of the 8 fathers (25%) had a history of depression. Yet, Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) found that

depression was one of the most common diagnoses for male perpetrators of filicide, which was not the case in the current study; although, out of the available information for eight fathers, 25% of the fathers had a history of depression (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). Given the findings of both the prior study and current study, fathers characterized as having a mental health history of depression is a notable characteristic.

Three fathers in the current study (38%) experienced childhood trauma to include the loss of a father, child abuse, as well as a shortage of oxygen at birth. In past research, perpetrators reported having a history juvenile delinquency and being abused as children (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). Thus, another noteworthy characteristic of fathers that commit filicide is their mental health history of childhood trauma.

Past research used a standardized method of assessing fathers' mental health histories, but in the present study, the researcher had to rely upon the information journalists reported, which was inconsistent. However, mental health histories which included depression and childhood trauma were remarkable as they stood out in both prior research and the current study.

**Criminal History.** Information related to the fathers' criminal history to include allegations, charges, and convictions. Criminal history data was limited to only 7 of the 19 cases (37%), and there was no information provided on 11 of the 19 fathers.

One father had no criminal history. One father had a "ticketed disturbance," and another father was said to have had "prior dealings with law enforcement" with no other details provided. One father had several criminal charges to include an illegal immigration status, social security fraud, misusing documents, a history of violence

against children, and information about the United States trying to deport the father back to his home country, but the home country refused to take him back. Two fathers had criminal charges for domestic violence, and one of those same fathers was also charged with corporal injury of a spouse as well as a comment that he had a “history of violence.”

Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) found that the fathers in their study had histories of perpetrating spousal abuse and threatening harm to their former partner, although they also found that fathers motivated by marital separation did not have a criminal history (i.e., no criminal charges or convictions which would not include allegations) (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

In the present study, there were only 7 cases that provided information related to criminal history, but 3 of the cases (43%) referenced the fathers committing domestic violence prior to the filicides, which is worth noting. Based upon the findings in both the past and current studies, a father’s history of domestic violence, to include allegations and not necessarily resulting in a criminal charge or conviction, is a characteristic that may help distinguish fathers that commit filicide versus those that do not.

***Research Question 1b: Behavior of Fathers***

The behaviors of the fathers in this study included a range of remarkable verbal and behavioral expressions: threats to harm their children, threats against the mothers of their children, admissions to killing their children, retractions or denials of those admissions, derogatory remarks about the children's mothers, statements regarding motivations for the filicides, and disclosures about their mental health. In addition to

these verbalized behaviors, many fathers also committed acts of physical violence against both their children and the children's mothers.

**Remarkable Statements by Fathers.** While remarkable statements of this nature have not been extensively analyzed in previous filicide research, many of the sentiments expressed are consistent with existing literature on domestic violence and the emotional volatility present in contentious parental relationships (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). More specifically, these statements appear to reflect deep interpersonal conflict, unresolved rage, and a desire to control or punish the other parent, typically the mother, especially in the context of separation, divorce, and custody disputes.

Interpreted through the lens of displaced aggression theory, these behaviors may reveal how fathers redirected intense emotional arousal, often triggered by perceived provocations from the child's mother, onto a more vulnerable target: the child. In this dynamic, the mother represents the original source of anger or rejection, and the child becomes a substitute victim through whom the father could express his hostility, assert control, or exact revenge. The threats, admissions, and derogatory remarks made by these fathers can thus be understood as both literal and symbolic acts of displaced aggression, in which the child's death serves not only as a physical act of violence but as a message intended for the mother.

Such statements, whether confessional, accusatory, or reflective, offer important insight into the psychological motivations behind filicide. They underscore the need for future research to examine verbal and behavioral cues within high-conflict familial

environments, particularly where displaced aggression may be operating as a mechanism of lethal violence.

***Threats to Harm Child or Child's Mother.*** Threats to harm the child or the child's mother were present in 3 of the 19 cases (16%), representing a relatively small but meaningful subset of the sample. These findings align with prior research indicating that fathers who commit filicide often have a history of intimate partner violence (IPV) and exhibit threatening behaviors toward their former partners (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020). In each of these cases, the fathers explicitly communicated violent intent prior to the filicide, targeting either the child, the mother, or both.

Although the number of cases involving threats was limited, their significance should not be understated. Threats of harm are a recognized form of domestic violence and often serve as early indicators of escalation (Campbell et al., 2003). In this context, the presence of threats may help distinguish fathers at heightened risk of lethal violence during periods of family dissolution, such as divorce or custody disputes. Notably, these threats frequently co-occurred with other risk factors such as prior criminal history or documented abuse, underscoring their potential predictive value.

From the perspective of displaced aggression theory, these threats exemplify emotional arousal coupled with revenge planning. The mother, as the perceived source of provocation, whether through separation, custody actions, or perceived betrayal, becomes the psychological target of the father's rage. However, when direct retaliation is obstructed or less impactful, the child becomes the displaced object of aggression. In this way, the child is used as a vehicle to inflict maximum emotional suffering on the mother,

thereby transforming verbal threats into instruments of psychological and physical control.

Overall, although only 16% of cases involved explicit threats, the content and context of these behaviors underscore the role of IPV and emotional displacement in filicidal violence. These findings reinforce the importance of closely monitoring threatening statements during custody disputes, particularly when other risk factors are present.

*Admissions of Fathers (Post Homicide).* Nine of the 19 fathers (47%) openly admitted to killing their children following the filicide, a strikingly high proportion given the severity and stigma of the crime. This behavior, largely unexplored in prior research, presents critical insights into the post-homicide psychology of filicidal fathers. The frequency of such admissions raises questions about the underlying motivations and communicative intent behind these disclosures.

One possible interpretation is that these admissions serve as a final method of psychological control, particularly over the child's mother. Rather than remaining silent or denying responsibility, some fathers may have deliberately confessed ensuring the mother fully grasped the extent of their loss and emotional devastation. In this light, the confessions function not merely as legal admissions of guilt but as interpersonal acts of vengeance, psychological weapons directed at the surviving parent.

Viewed through the lens of displaced aggression theory, these admissions may represent the culmination of revenge planning and emotional expression. The mother, as the perceived provocateur, remains the psychological target, while the child serves as the

proxy victim. The father's post-homicide confession may thus be intended to solidify the causal link between the mother's actions (e.g., separation, custody disputes) and the child's death, thereby displacing blame onto her and deepening her suffering.

These findings suggest that admissions of guilt post-filicide merit further empirical exploration. They may be especially important for informing legal and psychological assessments of risk, motive, and post-offense behavior, as well as for guiding interventions in high-conflict custody and separation cases where threats or coercive control are present.

*Denials of Fathers or Retractions of Admissions (Post Homicide).* In contrast to the fathers who admitted to the filicides, 6 of the 19 fathers (32%) denied responsibility for the homicides, and at least one father initially admitted guilt but later retracted his statement. This pattern of denial and retraction has not been systematically examined in prior filicide research and represents a novel area of inquiry. These contradictory behaviors, admitting to a crime and then later denying it, may reflect internal psychological conflict, legal strategizing, or external pressure from the criminal justice system.

While the displaced aggression model more directly explains behaviors driven by the desire to punish or communicate with the child's mother through harm to the child, its relevance to denial and retraction is less overt. However, these behaviors may still reflect ambivalence about the act of aggression once the emotional state that drove it has subsided. Retractions may represent an attempt to restore social standing, regain control, or manage shame and guilt, which can emerge once the consequences of the act are

realized and the displaced emotional target, often the child, is no longer present (Gudjonsson, 2003).

Furthermore, denials may signal efforts to displace blame entirely shifting responsibility away from the self to preserve a coherent self-image or reduce legal culpability (Bandura, 1999). These behaviors, though less clearly linked to the core mechanisms of displaced aggression, nonetheless underscore the emotional instability and psychological complexity often present in filicidal fathers, particularly in the high-conflict context of child custody and marital dissolution.

***Statements Regarding Child(ren)'s Mother.*** Fathers' verbal statements about the mothers of their children prior to committing filicide emerged in 5 of the 19 cases (26%). This area of behavior has not been systematically explored in previous research, making these findings a meaningful contribution to the literature on filicide and domestic violence. While the statements alone may not appear especially remarkable, their thematic content reveals patterns of verbal abuse and emotional targeting that warrant further analysis.

In at least two cases, fathers' statements can be clearly categorized as verbal abuse, an established form of intimate partner violence. For instance, one father described the child's mother as "self-righteous" and "manipulative," accusing her of emotional games and selfishness. Another father dehumanized the mother by stating she was "not a woman" due to her need for fertility treatments. Additional remarks made by other fathers included derogatory and hostile language, though not all comments rose to the level of explicit threat. Nevertheless, these verbal attacks illustrate patterns of emotional

fixation, rumination, and projected blame, all central components of displaced aggression (Miller et al., 2003).

Within this framework, the mother is viewed as the primary source of provocation, typically due to marital separation, rejection, or perceived disrespect. However, when direct confrontation is constrained (e.g., due to court orders, custody arrangements, or loss of control), the child may become the displaced target of the father's rage. These verbal expressions thus provide insight into the fathers' emotional states and motivations in the lead-up to the filicides, highlighting the psychological processes that can culminate in retaliatory violence.

In all, these statements, though limited in number, reflect key behavioral markers of displaced aggression. They suggest that verbal hostility and demeaning characterizations of the mother may precede or co-occur with more overtly violent intentions, supporting the argument that family courts and mental health professionals should treat such expressions as potential indicators of escalating risk.

***Statements Regarding Others.*** Fathers' statements about others were not previously studied in the context of filicide, and data on this behavior was minimal in the current study. In one instance, a father falsely accused the mother's new boyfriend of being responsible for the filicide. While the limited data on this behavior does not provide significant insight for addressing the current research question, it does suggest an interesting avenue for future exploration.

False accusations against others may reflect an attempt to deflect responsibility and project blame, a core component of displaced aggression. This act of displacing

blame onto another individual may serve to protect the father's self-image, redirect emotional distress, and reduce feelings of guilt associated with the crime. Like the admissions and denials made by fathers, these behaviors may indicate attempts to manipulate or distort reality in a way that absolves the father of accountability and re-establishes control over the narrative.

In the context of displaced aggression, such projections could be seen to manage internal emotional conflict by targeting an external, less threatening figure instead of confronting the intense feelings of guilt and shame tied to harming the child. Thus, although the findings in this area were minimal, the implications for further research into post-homicide behaviors, including false accusations, and their impact on the legal system are notable.

*Statements Regarding Motivation.* Four fathers in this study made statements regarding their motivation for killing their children, a behavior not previously explored in research on filicide. These statements offer valuable insights into the psychological and emotional states of fathers after committing such crimes and contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play. The researcher observed that these statements reflected a pattern of behavior like admissions of guilt and suggested a desire to hurt or punish the mothers, mirroring tendencies of fathers who admitted to committing filicide.

From a displaced aggression perspective, these admissions may represent an attempt to channel intense emotional distress and anger that were originally directed toward the mothers of their children but instead were displaced onto the child. The motivations described by these fathers may not solely reflect psychotic tendencies but

rather a strategic and emotionally charged effort to make the mothers feel the full weight of their pain, guilt, and responsibility.

Such admissions might serve to underscore their desire for the mothers to understand that their children's deaths were a consequence of the mothers' actions, such as leaving them or pursuing divorce. In this way, the fathers may have been attempting to reassert control over the situation, attempting to manipulate the emotional landscape of the mother to evoke regret, guilt, or sorrow. This aligns with the displaced aggression model, where the emotional aggression toward one's partner, fueled by anger or frustration, is redirected onto the child, often in an extreme, irreversible form.

Given that two of these fathers were identified as having characteristics of domestic violence, their statements could further illustrate how unresolved emotional conflict and relationship dysfunction can escalate into violence, particularly when combined with feelings of betrayal or loss.

Future research could explore whether these statements reflect a deeper, subconscious need to punish the mothers or if they are part of a broader pattern of emotional fixation and rumination, typical of displaced aggression. Additionally, understanding the complex interplay between domestic violence, emotional regulation, and filicide may offer important insights into both prevention and legal management of such cases.

***Statements Regarding Fathers' Mental Health.*** Statements made about fathers' mental health have not been explored in previous studies of filicide, yet in this study, four fathers made statements that revealed aspects of their mental health histories, particularly

references to paranoia and hallucinations. While prior research on filicide has identified acute psychosis as a potential motivator for filicide, where parents kill their children due to severe mental health conditions such as psychosis or depression (Friedman & Resnick, 2011; Resnick, 1969; Resnick, 2016), the behaviors and context surrounding these fathers suggest a different dynamic at play.

In this study, despite the presence of paranoid thoughts and hallucinations in some fathers, these cases did not conform to the typical pattern of psychotic filicides. Rather than acting due to a detached or psychotic perception of reality, the fathers' actions appeared to be motivated by spousal revenge and marital separation. The displaced aggression model provides a useful framework here: the fathers' internal emotional turmoil, rooted in anger or frustration toward their former partners, seemed to be displaced onto the child. Paranoia and hallucinations may have been symptoms of emotional distress or mental health conditions, but the fathers' actions indicate that their emotional aggression toward the mothers, who were the initial sources of perceived provocation, was redirected onto the child as the displaced target.

For instance, one father threatened the mother by stating he would kill their children and keep her alive to endure the loss, another admitted to killing his daughter due to the mother's divorce decision, and a third father blamed the mother directly for the killing. These behaviors illustrate a clear alignment with the displaced aggression framework: the fathers' motivations were less about psychosis and more about punishing the mother for the emotional pain caused by separation or divorce. In some cases, the

fathers' mental health issues may have intensified the emotional distress and sense of betrayal, amplifying their desire for retribution.

Thus, while the fathers' mental health histories, including references to paranoia and hallucinations, are noteworthy, the displaced aggression model suggests that their actions were more likely influenced by marital conflict and the desire to inflict harm on the mother, with the child tragically becoming the displaced target of their aggression. The findings align with prior research on fathers' histories of trauma and depression, but they also challenge the notion that filicides with mental health involvement are exclusively psychotic in nature. Instead, the interplay of mental health issues and emotional distress arising from marital dissolution seems to have contributed to these extreme acts of violence.

**Violent Behaviors of Fathers.** Fathers' crimes against their children and their children's mothers cross over with the characteristic of fathers' criminal history; however, like the characteristic, these behaviors included may not have led to criminal charges or convictions.

***Violent Behavior Against Their Children (Crimes Against Others).*** Fathers' crimes against their children were supported by prior studies, although in this study, data was available in only 2 of the 19 cases (11%), both of which involved fathers who had previously abused their children. This finding aligns with Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020), who noted that fathers motivated to commit filicide due to marital separation often have a history of harming their children.

From the perspective of the displaced aggression model, these acts of child abuse prior to the filicides suggest that the children were already being used as outlets for the fathers' unresolved anger and frustration, emotions likely stemming from conflict with the child's mother. Rather than directing aggression at the perceived source of provocation (the mother), the fathers displaced it onto their more vulnerable children, who symbolized the mother, and the loss of control or perceived betrayal associated with marital separation. These earlier acts of violence may then be interpreted as precursors to filicide, revealing a pattern of emotional displacement and escalating aggression.

*Violent Behavior Against Mother (Crimes Against Mothers).* Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020) found that the fathers in their study experienced intimate relationship difficulties, harbored tremendous anger toward their partners, and had a history of perpetrating spousal abuse and threatening harm to their former partner. In the present study, statements and information related to the fathers' crimes against the mothers of their children aligned with these prior findings. Specifically, data on fathers' criminal histories (Appendix D) and threats to harm their children or the children's mothers (Appendix E) further underline the prevalence and significance of domestic violence within these families prior to the filicides.

From a displaced aggression framework, this pattern reinforces the interpretation that the child became a surrogate target of aggression originally directed at the partner. The intense anger and prior abuse toward the mother suggest that she was the perceived source of provocation, often tied to marital separation, custody disputes, or perceived betrayal. However, due to factors such as loss of access or legal constraints, direct

violence toward the mother may have been perceived as inaccessible or insufficient to convey the father's emotional retaliation. Instead, the aggression was redirected toward the child, whose harm would inflict greater psychological suffering on the mother. This displacement of violent intent supports the understanding of filicide as an extreme manifestation of interpersonal violence rooted in power, control, and emotional retaliation within the context of fractured intimate relationships.

***Research Question 2: Events Surrounding the Filicides***

There were a variety of events surrounding the filicides, including detailed information from collateral contacts that described the fathers' relationships with their children and the children's mothers, the presence of restraining orders or orders of protection, court-ordered parenting time, and stipulated or agreed-upon parenting arrangements. These contextual factors were further shaped by accounts of state involvement with the families, documented motivations to kill, and crime scene reports.

Analyzed through the lens of displaced aggression, these surrounding events often reveal escalating tension in the fathers' interpersonal environments particularly marked by feelings of loss, humiliation, or powerlessness during custody disputes or post-separation parenting conflicts. The presence of restraining orders or state-imposed limits on father-child contact may have intensified these fathers' emotional distress, reinforcing a perception that the mother was the cause of their perceived injustice or marginalization.

As a result, the child became a tragically symbolic target, harmed not solely for who they were, but for what they represented: the mother's power, success in court, or emotional attachment. These displaced acts of aggression were not random but served to

inflict maximum psychological pain on the mothers, fulfilling a distorted logic of revenge and control. The broader social and legal circumstances, then, acted not just as background but as catalysts in transforming interpersonal grievances into fatal violence.

**Information From Collateral Contacts.** Information from collateral contacts described fathers' relationship with their children's mothers, restraining orders, orders of protection, court ordered parenting time, and stipulated or agreed to parenting time.

***Relationship Between Mother and Father.*** The relationships between the fathers and mothers demonstrated a high level of acrimony and anger toward the children's mothers leading up to the filicides, a pattern that aligns with prior research. Fathers in these cases often perpetrated both physical violence and verbal abuse, including threats to the lives of the children. Consistent with findings by Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020), filicidal fathers motivated by marital separation and divorce frequently experience profound relational conflict, harbor intense anger toward their partners, and have documented histories of domestic violence against both mothers and children. The trigger for these fatal behaviors is often a relationship breakdown or escalating conflict over child custody (Léveillé & Vignola-Levesque, 2020).

From a displaced aggression perspective, these findings highlight how the child becomes a surrogate target for the father's unresolved rage toward the mother. In this framework, the child is not attacked due to direct animosity but rather as a proxy through which the father can exact revenge or express control over the mother, especially when traditional avenues of control (e.g., the relationship, custody, or legal dominance) have been lost. The father's violence is redirected from its original source (the partner) to a less

defended and more emotionally impactful target (the child), amplifying the harm inflicted on the mother both emotionally and symbolically.

Additionally, these findings provide deeper insight into the behavioral warning signs and institutional touchpoints prior to the killings. Notably, three of the ten fathers had documented contact with law enforcement, child protective services, or the court system before committing the filicides, missed opportunities that could have signaled risk when viewed through the lens of escalating displaced aggression and prior domestic abuse.

***Restraining Orders and Orders of Protection.*** Restraining orders and orders of protection as they relate to fathers who ultimately murdered their children have not yet been a focus of prior research. Therefore, the findings in this study contribute new insights into paternal filicide cases motivated by marital separation and divorce. Information was available on 7 of the 19 fathers studied (37%). Among those, three mothers (43%) were denied protective orders, one mother applied for a protective order, one mother withdrew her petition, one was granted protection, and in one case, the father violated the order of protection. These outcomes raise significant concerns about systemic gaps in safeguarding at-risk families during periods of heightened conflict.

Viewed through the lens of displaced aggression, the denial or failure of protective mechanisms may inadvertently escalate the father's emotional turmoil. Fathers already inclined toward viewing the legal system as biased or emasculating may experience the denial of a protective order or its ineffectiveness as a signal that their former partner retains power or influence. This can further activate the displaced

aggression mechanism, whereby the father, unable or unwilling to attack the perceived source of his distress directly (the mother or the court), targets the child as a symbolic proxy. Aggression, rooted in emotional injury and loss of control, becomes lethally redirected toward the most vulnerable party, his own child, in a tragic attempt to inflict suffering on the mother.

This dynamic is especially troubling given the advocacy work of the Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE), which has documented 803 child murders between 2008 and July 2021. The CJE attributes 110 of these killings to preventable court decisions, where custody or visitation was granted to a parent known to be violent and dangerous (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). These findings underscore the urgent need for courts to fully consider the potential for displaced aggression in custody disputes, particularly in families with histories of domestic violence. Future research into the effectiveness and judicial handling of restraining orders, especially in high-conflict custody cases, could help inform court reforms and enhance protective measures for children and survivors of IPV.

***Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time.*** Statements and information related to fathers' and mothers' co-parenting arrangements, whether ordered by the court or mutually agreed upon, represent a notable and previously unexamined area in filicide research. These findings offer valuable insight into how family courts manage custody and parenting time in cases involving a documented history of domestic violence.

Particularly troubling were cases in which courts mandated parenting time for abusive fathers or compelled shared parenting schedules through mediation. In some

instances, courts explicitly ordered a parent not to withhold parenting time, even when there were reasonable suspicions or evidence suggesting the child was at risk of abuse. These judicial decisions may inadvertently contribute to environments where displaced aggression is more likely to manifest.

From a displaced aggression perspective, when fathers who harbor unresolved anger toward their former partners are granted forced or unsupervised access to their children, the child may become a convenient proxy for retaliatory violence. The inability to regain control over the co-parenting dynamic or reverse perceived losses in the breakup can heighten the father's emotional dysregulation. The child, symbolically tied to the mother, becomes the displaced target of that aggression. Thus, court decisions that overlook the psychological volatility of violent fathers and prioritize parental access over child safety may unintentionally place children in harm's way.

These findings reinforce the Center for Judicial Excellence's (CJE) warnings about systemic failures in family court practices. The CJE has emphasized that court-ordered contact with abusive parents can result in preventable child fatalities. Given that this study involved cases that ended in the death of children, future research should critically examine how displaced aggression and emotional targeting intersect with court-mandated co-parenting arrangements, especially in high-conflict custody disputes involving IPV. Such work is essential for informing family court reforms and strengthening safeguards for vulnerable children.

***DV Advocacy Comments.*** The comments made by community domestic violence advocates add important insight into the understanding of fathers who murdered their

children in the context of marital separation and divorce. These advocates' observations underscore the systemic gaps in policies and procedures that fail to adequately protect families affected by domestic violence, an issue that aligns closely with the Center for Judicial Excellence's (CJE) ongoing concerns.

From a displaced aggression perspective, the inadequacy of protective measures and the courts' failure to recognize the risks posed by violent or coercively controlling fathers may create conditions that allow emotional distress and vengeful intent to escalate unchecked. When courts prioritize parental rights over documented histories of abuse, fathers who perceive the legal system as favoring the mother may redirect their anger and loss of control toward their children, who serve as both emotional extensions of the mother and accessible targets. In this way, inadequate legal responses can unintentionally exacerbate the risk of displaced aggression culminating in lethal outcomes.

These advocates' insights highlight the urgency for more research and reform to ensure the legal system adequately accounts for the psychological dynamics like displaced aggression that can drive filicide. Improving court practices and strengthening protective policies are not only essential to child safety but also to preventing the misuse of the legal system as a conduit for retaliatory violence.

**Involvement of the State.** State agency involvement was another common theme identified throughout the cases. The involvement included more specific details in the underestimation of fathers' behaviors and family dynamics by authorities, comments of the courts made during sentencing of fathers, convictions and sentencing, and potential failures of Child Protective Services (CPS).

*Authorities (Other Than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat.*

Statements and information related to authorities' responses, or lack thereof, to report concerns about a father's ability to safely parent and co-parent provide valuable insight into the systemic failures that may precede filicide, particularly in cases motivated by marital separation. In this study, law enforcement and/or the courts were involved in at least 6 of the 19 cases (32%) prior to the filicides, yet their interventions were insufficient to prevent the children's deaths. These findings contribute to growing concerns about missed opportunities by state authorities to protect vulnerable children in the context of domestic violence.

Through the lens of displaced aggression, the failure of authorities to act on warnings or patterns of abusive behavior may have inadvertently enabled the escalation of paternal rage. When fathers perceived that they had lost control over their family, or that the legal system sided with the mother, their unresolved anger and sense of powerlessness may have been redirected toward their children, an emotionally charged but more vulnerable target. This mechanism of displaced aggression reinforces how institutional inaction or dismissiveness can heighten risk, particularly when fathers are already exhibiting signs of coercive control, verbal aggression, or threats.

Future research focused on the role of law enforcement and judicial systems in the lead-up to filicide could illuminate how certain responses may influence the trajectory of displaced aggression, and ultimately, deadly violence. Understanding these dynamics is essential to reforming practices that can prevent such tragedies.

***Comments of Court During Sentencing.*** Judges' commentary during sentencing adds to the knowledge about cases involving filicide motivated by marital separation and divorce. In this study, three cases included comments by judges, providing rare insight into the court's perception of the depravity and intentionality behind the fathers' actions. These remarks can offer critical reflections on how the justice system interprets motive, emotional state, and accountability in such cases.

From a displaced aggression perspective, judges' comments may also help to underscore the underlying dynamics of power, control, and redirected rage that characterize these crimes. In many instances, judges remarked on the deliberate nature of the fathers' actions, their lack of remorse, or their apparent desire to emotionally devastate the child's mother, patterns that align closely with the concept of displaced aggression. This form of aggression occurs when the individual cannot retaliate against the source of their frustration (often the mother) and instead harms a more vulnerable proxy (the child) to fulfill the same psychological drive for retribution and control.

These judicial insights not only validate the psychological frameworks used to analyze filicide but also highlight how legal narratives might begin to incorporate the complexities of emotional displacement and coercive control in family violence cases. Future researchers can build upon these findings to further examine how courts conceptualize motive in filicide and how that understanding can influence sentencing, prevention, and intervention strategies.

***Convictions and Sentencing.*** The fathers' convictions and sentencing for the homicides of their children add critical insight to the literature on filicide, particularly in

cases motivated by marital separation and domestic conflict. Of the 19 cases analyzed, sentencing information was available for 13. The sentences varied widely from 3 consecutive life sentences without parole to as little as 10 years in prison highlighting the inconsistencies in how the justice system addresses these severe crimes.

When viewed through the lens of displaced aggression, these sentencing outcomes take on additional meaning. Displaced aggression theory suggests that the fathers redirected their anger, resentment, and need for control typically aimed at the child's mother onto their children, who became tragic proxies in their quest for emotional retaliation. The severity of some sentences (e.g., multiple life terms) may reflect judicial recognition of the calculated cruelty and symbolic targeting of the child to inflict enduring psychological harm on the mother. In contrast, lighter sentences could indicate a failure to fully grasp the underlying dynamics of coercive control and emotional displacement that characterize these crimes.

This disparity in sentencing also raises questions about how consistently the courts recognize the role of emotional manipulation, revenge motives, and prior patterns of domestic abuse, central elements of displaced aggression, in their legal assessments. Future research could explore whether more consistent recognition of displaced aggression as a motivational factor might lead to greater uniformity in sentencing and better-informed judicial responses to filicide in the context of intimate partner conflict.

***Child Protective Services' (CPS) Failure.*** CPS' response to reported concerns about the father and his ability to safely parent his child had not been previously researched. In 7 of the 19 cases (37%), there was information suggesting a failure by CPS

to protect the children. As with the findings related to law enforcement and court involvement, these results indicate that child protective services were already engaged with the families prior to the filicides. These were missed opportunities to prevent the fatalities.

The pattern also raises concerns about how displaced aggression may factor in risk assessments. In several filicide cases, the fathers may have redirected anger or frustration, potentially stemming from custody disputes, relationship breakdowns, or external stressors, toward the child as a vulnerable target. Without appropriate identification of such psychological risk factors, CPS investigations may overlook critical behavioral warning signs. This underscores the need for more robust screening tools, deeper psychological risk analysis, and improved case management protocols to recognize and respond to threats of displaced aggression in family violence contexts.

**Motivation to Murder.** Fathers' motivations to kill their children align with prior research on filicide committed by fathers driven by marital separation and spousal revenge. Information was available for 15 of the cases (79%), supporting this trend. The findings also demonstrate the significance of domestic violence in these cases and the fathers' extraordinary anger and resentment toward the mothers of their children, consistent with Léveillé and Vignola-Levesque (2020).

These acts of violence may also be understood through the lens of displaced aggression, where the child becomes a proxy target for the father's unresolved anger toward the mother. In contexts marked by power struggles, separation, and a perceived loss of control, some fathers appear to externalize their emotional turmoil by harming the

child, an act that simultaneously punishes the mother. This displacement of aggression underscores the need for professionals to assess not only direct threats, but also the emotional and psychological dynamics that may place children at risk in the context of intimate partner conflict.

**Crime Scene and Victims.** The locations and conditions of the victims' bodies support prior research. Fathers tend to use more violent means of causing death than mothers, including firearms, stabbing, head injury, hitting, and kicking (Mariano et al., 2014). Additionally, Mariano et al. (2014) found that fathers were three times more likely to use firearms than mothers.

These methods of killing may reflect not only the severity of the violence but also the underlying emotional and psychological drivers, such as displaced aggression. In cases where fathers experience intense anger, humiliation, or loss related to a partner or marital separation, the child may become a substitute target for this aggression. The brutality of the acts, especially when involving excessive force or weapons, may signify the father's attempt to exert control or retaliate against the mother by inflicting ultimate harm through the child. This interpretation reinforces the need for filicide risk assessments to include indicators of displaced aggression in the context of family violence and separation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is subject to several limitations, primarily stemming from the use of secondary data sources, particularly online news reports. These limitations include the potential inaccuracy and bias inherent in witness accounts (i.e., hearsay), journalistic

reporting, and the varying quality, depth, and relevance of the available information.

Furthermore, challenges arise related to the reliability of case categorization and thematic analysis, as well as the potential subjectivity of the researcher.

As previously discussed, the use of secondary data from newspaper articles presents inherent challenges. These include the retrospective nature of reporting, the emotional and psychological impact on individuals recounting traumatic events (e.g., mothers who lost children to filicide), and the general inconsistency in the richness and specificity of the information provided. Additionally, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, newspaper articles are not created for research purposes and may not include the types of data necessary to effectively address specific research questions. The authenticity and accuracy of such articles may therefore be limited, especially when accounts are filtered through journalistic lenses or based on hearsay rather than direct observation.

To mitigate these limitations, the researcher employed a rigorous approach to data selection, prioritizing sources that appeared most comprehensive and relevant. Multiple articles from various news outlets were often reviewed for each case, which allowed for triangulation and strengthened the reliability of findings. However, disparities in media coverage posed another challenge: some cases received extensive coverage, while others were minimally reported. The reasons for this disparity remain unclear and may warrant future study. Nevertheless, cases with more media attention provided greater detail for thematic analysis, potentially resulting in findings disproportionately shaped by higher-profile cases and limiting generalizability.

Given that journalists, rather than social scientists, authored the primary data sources, the depth and analytical rigor of the data were inherently constrained. Information related to the fathers' psychological characteristics, behaviors, and the context of the filicides was inconsistent and often lacking the nuance found in studies that utilize direct data collection methods. While online news articles offer broad accessibility, their content reflects journalistic priorities rather than research objectives, thus limiting their utility for scholarly analysis.

Additionally, many of the data points used in this study were secondhand accounts of what others observed, believed, or heard, rather than firsthand testimonies. This reliance on hearsay diminishes the overall reliability of the data when compared to studies that incorporate interviews, court documents, or official investigative reports.

Another significant limitation pertains to the reliability of the categorization method used to classify the 19 cases based on motivational typologies. The researcher applied Marcus-Newhall et al.'s (2000) displaced aggression framework, consisting of six elements: (1) initial provocation, (2) resulting affect, (3) situational constraints, (4) rumination, (5) revenge planning, and (6) displaced aggression, to evaluate each case. This analysis was conducted alongside Léveillé and Doyon's (2019) three motivational categories: marital separation, physical abuse, and psychological condition. For example, if a father's behavior was precipitated by a breakup or custody dispute and included threats of harm prior to the homicide, the case was classified as motivated by marital separation. However, this process is inherently subjective. Another researcher employing the same criteria might classify cases differently, either including or excluding certain

cases based on alternative interpretations. This variability underscores the potential impact of researcher subjectivity on the reliability of the findings.

To strengthen confidence in the categorization, the researcher also considered explicit statements of motivation found in the news sources. In eight cases, motivations were clearly articulated: four fathers directly admitted their intentions to harm the child's mother through the filicide, while four others were inferred from collateral reports. These admissions provided the most reliable data points for motivational classification, though the researcher maintains varying degrees of confidence in the categorization across the full sample.

Finally, the researcher's positionality must be acknowledged. In qualitative research, where the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation, personal identity, experience, and worldview inevitably shape the analytical lens (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The researcher, a survivor of domestic violence, has dedicated her professional life to advocating for children and families affected by such violence. While this background brings valuable insight and sensitivity to the study, it may also have introduced unconscious bias in the interpretation of findings. Despite concerted efforts to maintain objectivity and uphold rigorous methodological standards, the potential for such bias remains a recognized limitation.

### **Recommendations**

This study offers meaningful contributions to the existing literature on paternal filicide by both affirming prior research and providing new insights into the complex

interplay between domestic violence, systemic intervention, and fatal outcomes. The findings underscore the critical role of domestic violence as a precursor to paternal filicide and highlight the significant influence that government agencies, such as child protective services and family courts, can exert on families navigating the child welfare and legal systems. These implications point to the urgent need for reform in the policies and practices governing the management and protection of children and families impacted by domestic violence, particularly in the context of family court litigation.

Moreover, this study advances understanding of displaced aggression by identifying rumination as a potentially predictive factor in filicides motivated by marital separation. The presence of prolonged, emotionally charged rumination, a key feature of displaced aggression, served to distinguish these cases from those driven by other motivations such as mental illness or a history of physical abuse. While further investigation is warranted, this finding may inform the development of more refined risk assessments and targeted interventions for families affected by domestic violence and involved in high-conflict custody or divorce proceedings.

Finally, the sentencing outcomes for convicted fathers in the study varied considerably, raising important questions about consistency and equity in the criminal justice system's handling of paternal filicide. For example, one father received a life sentence while another, also found guilty of killing his child, was sentenced to only ten years. This variability suggests the need for further research into the legal, procedural, or contextual factors influencing sentencing decisions in such cases. Although prior studies have explored gender disparities in filicide sentencing, comparing outcomes for mothers

versus fathers, there appears to be a gap in the literature specifically addressing sentencing disparities among fathers. Investigating this issue could yield important insights for both criminal justice policy and victim advocacy.

### **History of Domestic Violence**

The results of this study support the overall significance of domestic violence (DV) as a risk factor for paternal filicide. DV was evident in the fathers' characteristics, behaviors, and the events surrounding the filicides. For instance, fathers' characteristics included criminal histories involving DV; their behaviors included threats to harm both their children and the children's mothers, admissions of killing their children to intentionally inflict emotional pain on the mothers, derogatory statements about the mothers, violent behavior toward both the children and the mothers prior to the filicides, and collateral reports describing the relationships as highly acrimonious and volatile leading up to the fatal events. In several cases, mothers had also sought restraining orders and protective orders against the fathers before the filicides occurred.

These patterns not only underscore the well-established link between DV and child maltreatment (Zolotor et al., 2007; Amato et al., 1995; Beck et al., 2013), but they also highlight the psychological mechanism of displaced aggression, in which the child becomes a surrogate target of the father's hostility toward the mother. Displaced aggression may be especially pronounced in high-conflict relationships where the father perceives the child as emotionally or symbolically connected to the mother. In such instances, the child's harm becomes a strategic expression of control or revenge. This aligns with prior findings that perpetrators of DV often involve children in violence either

through direct harm or threats (Beck et al., 2013; Carruthers, 2016; Hayes, 2012; Hayes, 2017).

Further contextualizing these findings, Depner et al. (1992) reported that more than half of divorcing and separating parents with histories of alleged DV by one or both parties, and nearly half of high-conflict families experienced severe violence, including threats involving weapons (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Johnston, 1994). Johnston (1994) also observed that such violence often persists or escalates post-separation, particularly in custody disputes. Other research confirms that DV survivors often experience intensified violence after separation (Beck et al., 2013; Campbell, 2017; Hardesty, 2002; Hotton, 2001). Notably, all 19 cases in the present study involved an escalation of violence following separation, culminating in domestic homicide.

Liem & Koenraadt (2018) identified child killing as a form of domestic homicide, while Websdale (1999) emphasized that although not all DV ends in homicide, domestic homicide rarely occurs without a DV history. Websdale also documented recurring patterns of conflict, antagonism, and despair, elements mirrored in all 19 paternal filicide cases examined here. The evidence strongly supports the need to recognize displaced aggression as a key dynamic in these cases, especially when evaluating risk during and after separation. Table 30 illustrates how each case aligns with the thematic categories associated with domestic violence and the potential for displaced aggression to inform lethal outcomes.

**Table 7**

*Research Findings on History of Domestic Violence to Include Fathers' Characteristics, Behaviors, and Events Surrounding the Filicides Organized by the Victim Children's Names*

Characteristics, behaviors, and events indicating a history of domestic violence							
Child victims	Father's criminal history	Statement regarding mother	Threats to harm child or mother	Crimes against others	Crimes against mother	Relationship between mother & father	Restraining orders/orders of protection
Aeden Moreno	-	Insulted mother	Threats to harm child and mother	-	Physical and verbal abuse	Physical, verbal, psychological abuse	Temporary Restraining Order; Permanent Restraining Order denied
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-	Threats to harm child	-	-	Psychological abuse	Restraining order denied
Ayden Shackleford	-	-	-	-	-	-	Order of protection granted
Dominic Nunn	Domestic violence	-	-	Physically harmed child	-	Verbal abuse	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-	Threats to harm child and mother	-	"Abusive"	Verbal and psychological abuse	Temporary Restraining Order granted
Laila Miller	-	-	-	-	"Growing domestic problems"	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-	-	-	Verbal abuse	Psychological abuse	-
Matthew Hernandez	Domestic violence	-	-	-	Physical abuse	-	Restraining Order denied
Nakota Kelly	Domestic violence	-	-	Physically harmed child	Verbal abuse	Physical, verbal, and psychological abuse	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-	-	-	-	"Fighting"	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	Insults mother	-	-	-	"Bitter Divorce"	Restraining order denied
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-	-	-	-	Psychological abuse	Petitioned for a restraining order; mother withdrew request

### **Role of Government Agencies**

The Center for Judicial Excellence (CJE) advocates for greater accountability within the family court system, particularly in cases where courts have failed to protect children during divorce and parental separation proceedings (Center for Judicial Excellence, 2021). Between 2008 and July 2021, CJE documented 803 cases in which children were murdered by a parent in the context of custody, divorce, or child support disputes. Of these, 110 deaths were deemed preventable by CJE, as they involved courts placing children into custody of a parent with a known history of violence and dangerous behavior.

The present study revealed that 14 of the 19 filicide cases involved prior contact with at least one government agency, including the judiciary, law enforcement, and child protective services (CPS). Four distinct themes emerged regarding the interactions between these agencies and the families in question. Specifically, law enforcement and/or the courts were involved in at least 6 of the 19 cases prior to the filicides. Notably, seven mothers had sought protective orders, either restraining orders or orders of protection, shortly before their children were killed. In all seven cases, these requests were denied by the courts.

Additionally, CPS was involved in 7 of the cases, with findings suggesting missed opportunities to intervene and prevent harm to the children. In 8 cases, co-parenting arrangements were identified as a contributing factor, including court-ordered or stipulated agreements that granted fathers access to their children. Several of these fathers had documented histories of domestic violence.

News reports noted court records that revealed troubling patterns in judicial decision-making, including instances where fathers with violent backgrounds were granted parenting time. In some cases, mothers were compelled to mediate with their abusers and enter into parenting agreements under pressure. One particularly concerning example involved a court ordering joint custody between a mother and a known abusive father, explicitly instructing the mother not to withhold parenting time, even when she suspected ongoing abuse of the child.

These findings substantiate CJE's concerns regarding the systemic shortcomings of family courts in protecting children from violent parents. The intersection of domestic violence, judicial decision-making, and fatal outcomes underscores an urgent need for further research into family court practices, especially as they relate to custody arrangements in high-risk situations. Given that these cases ultimately resulted in the deaths of children, this area warrants immediate and sustained scholarly and policy attention.

### **Displaced Aggression—Rumination**

The conceptual framework of displaced aggression provided a valuable lens through which to examine the motivations in paternal filicide cases. Displaced aggression theory posits that when individuals experience an initial provocation but are unable or unwilling to retaliate directly, often due to social, legal, or situational constraints, they may redirect their aggression toward a more vulnerable or accessible target (Denson et al., 2006). In this study, the researcher reviewed each case for the core elements of displaced aggression: the initial provocation, the resulting affect (such as anger,

humiliation, or perceived betrayal), the presence of situational constraints, rumination, revenge planning, and the final act of redirected violence.

Incorporating this framework alongside Léveillé and Doyon's (2019) three motivational categories for paternal filicide, marital separation, physical abuse, and psychological condition, enabled a more nuanced analysis of case dynamics. Notably, the presence of rumination and revenge planning was most clearly observed in cases where filicide was motivated by marital separation. In these cases, fathers appeared to obsessively reflect on perceived losses, such as diminished control, alienation from their children, or betrayal by their partners. This repetitive and emotionally charged cognitive process intensified their negative affect, thereby increasing the risk of retaliatory violence.

Rumination is a key mechanism within the displaced aggression model that differentiates spontaneous violence from premeditated, targeted aggression. Research has shown that rumination amplifies the effects of anger and resentment, leading to greater likelihood of aggression being redirected toward secondary targets (Bushman et al., 2005). In the context of paternal filicide, the child, who is emotionally associated with the mother, becomes a symbolically potent substitute target. This mechanism can explain why certain fathers may plan or justify filicide to hurt the mother emotionally, rather than acting solely from psychological instability or physical abuse history.

The distinction found in this study, that rumination and revenge planning were more evident in cases of filicide linked to marital separation than in other motivational categories, has significant implications. It suggests that ruminative thought patterns

related to custody loss, relationship breakdowns, and perceived injustices in the family court system may serve as early warning signs. These patterns may not only reflect internal psychological deterioration but also indicate a calculated risk to the child's safety, especially when the father feels powerless or aggrieved.

Future research should explore displaced aggression with a more focused lens on rumination as a measurable and observable risk factor. Studies incorporating interviews, psychological assessments, or behavioral indicators of rumination in high-conflict custody or divorce cases may lead to improved identification of fathers at elevated risk for filicide. Risk assessment tools used by family courts, custody evaluators, and child protective services could be enhanced by including criteria related to displaced aggression, particularly obsessive thinking, revenge ideation, and a history of unresolved interpersonal conflict. Integrating this framework may ultimately contribute to earlier interventions and better protection of children in volatile family dynamics.

### **Sentencing for Criminal Convictions**

The sentencing outcomes for fathers convicted of the homicides of their children in this study were remarkably inconsistent. Contrary to the researcher's initial expectation of greater uniformity, the 13 cases analyzed revealed a wide range of prison terms, from as little as 10 years to three consecutive life sentences. Table 31 presents the sentencing data in ascending order, organized by the names of the victimized children.

This substantial variability raises critical questions. It remains unclear why one father received a life sentence while another, also found guilty of filicide, was sentenced to only 10 years. The inconsistency suggests the possible influence of case-specific

factors such as plea deals, judicial discretion, evidentiary strength, or the presence of aggravating and mitigating circumstances. However, without further comparative analysis or court records, definitive explanations remain elusive.

Notably, there is a lack of prior research specifically examining the adjudication and sentencing of fathers convicted of filicide motivated by marital separation. While Beyer et al. (2019) investigated sentencing patterns in 100 paternal filicide cases using snowball sampling, that study did not categorize cases by motivation. Nonetheless, their findings also demonstrated a broad range of sentencing outcomes. According to their results, paternal filicide convictions resulted in the following sentences: life without parole (14%), life with parole (14%), 21–30 years (9%), 11–20 years (8%), 0–10 years (4%), 31–40 years (3%), life without parole plus additional time (4%), 41–50 years (1%), and 61–70 years (1%).

In comparison, the current study observed similar sentencing patterns, albeit with slight differences in distribution: life without parole (15%), life with parole (7.6%), 0–10 years (7.6%), life without parole plus additional time (15%), 41–50 years (15%), and 61–70 years (7.6%). The present study also included additional sentencing categories not identified in the previous research, such as 25 years to life (7.6%) and 26 years to life (15%). Both studies converge on the finding that life without parole is a common sentencing outcome for fathers convicted of filicide.

The absence of research focusing on sentencing within the specific context of divorce, custody disputes, or filicide motivated by marital separation underscores a critical gap in the literature. Further investigation into how courts adjudicate and sentence

such cases would contribute to a deeper understanding of judicial responses to paternal filicide and potentially inform policy and practice in family and criminal justice systems.

**Table 8**

*The Fathers' Sentencing for Their Criminal Convictions in Ascending Order From the Least Amount of Time to the Most Organized by the Children's Names*

Names of children	Fathers' sentencing for criminal convictions
Jayson Holland	10 years
Dylan Redwine	48 years
Turner Jordan Nelson	50 years
Aeden Moreno	70 years
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	25 years to life in prison
Makenzie Moira Main	26 years to life in prison
Matthew Hernandez	26 years to life in prison
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Life in prison with possibility of parole
Phoebe Jonchuck	Life in prison
Gary DeToma, Jr.	Life in prison
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Life in prison
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	2 consecutive life sentences
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	3 consecutive life sentences

### **Implications**

This qualitative study examined the phenomenon of revenge-motivated paternal filicide within the context of divorce, separation, and custody disputes, using a thematic analysis of publicly available online news reports. The findings provide important contributions at theoretical, empirical, methodological, and practical levels, while

offering actionable insights for legal, mental health, and child welfare professionals. The implications span individual, family, organizational, and policy levels, contributing to both scholarly knowledge and real-world applications.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Theoretically, this study reinforces and expands upon existing frameworks of Displaced Aggression Theory (Denson et al., 2006; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000) and coercive control dynamics in the context of post-separation violence. The findings support the notion that paternal filicide can function as an extreme form of retaliatory violence, wherein fathers, unable to maintain control over a former partner, displace aggression onto their children as symbolic proxies. By applying these theoretical models to real-world cases, the study illustrates how blocked goals, rumination, emotional dysregulation, and control dynamics interact in the escalation to lethal violence.

Furthermore, this research highlights the need for integrative theoretical models that bridge psychological, criminological, and family systems perspectives, recognizing filicide not as an isolated act, but as the culmination of prolonged coercive and violent patterns in familial relationships. The study thus contributes to advancing theory on family violence escalation and lethal outcomes in custody-related contexts.

### **Empirical Implications**

Empirically, this study adds to a growing body of literature that establishes a clear link between intimate partner violence (IPV), custody disputes, and the heightened risk of paternal filicide. By systematically identifying recurring themes such as prior threats, coercive behaviors, psychological instability, and escalating post-separation conflict, the

findings offer nuanced insights into the behavioral and contextual factors that characterize high-risk cases.

This study's focus on revenge-motivated paternal filicide addresses a significant gap in empirical research, particularly regarding fathers who kill their children to harm or punish a former partner. The identification of consistent psychosocial and behavioral patterns provides valuable evidence that can inform the development of risk assessment tools and intervention strategies for use in family courts and child welfare settings.

### **Methodological Implications**

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the value and feasibility of using secondary data, specifically online news reports, to explore complex and sensitive phenomena that are otherwise difficult to study due to ethical, legal, and practical constraints. While recognizing inherent limitations, such as media bias and variability in reporting depth, the study illustrates how triangulation across multiple news sources, coupled with systematic data organization and thematic analysis, can yield rich, meaningful insights.

This methodological approach offers a replicable model for other researchers seeking to explore underreported or sensitive topics where direct data collection is impractical or unethical. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of critical source evaluation, transparency, and reflexivity in secondary data research, contributing to best practices in qualitative methodologies.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

The findings of this study have several important practical implications for professionals working within the legal, mental health, and child welfare systems. First, there is a critical need to enhance risk assessment protocols by incorporating validated, evidence-based tools that specifically evaluate histories of domestic violence (DV), coercive control, and post-separation violence. Identifying patterns of threats, obsessive behaviors, and retaliatory motivations is essential for safeguarding children in custody disputes.

Additionally, professional training and education must be expanded to equip judges, custody evaluators, guardians ad litem, social workers, and mental health practitioners with the skills to recognize and interpret coercive control dynamics and escalating violence post-separation. Training should extend beyond identifying physical violence to include psychological and behavioral precursors of lethal family violence. Furthermore, the development and implementation of standardized custody evaluation practices are recommended, ensuring that professionals making custody-related recommendations are guided by empirical evidence focused on child safety, rather than default assumptions about shared parenting rights. Effective intervention also requires interdisciplinary collaboration between legal, clinical, and child welfare professionals; multidisciplinary case reviews and coordinated approaches can improve risk identification and safety planning in high-conflict cases.

Lastly, this study supports the need for policy and legislative reform, including mandates for the use of evidence-based risk assessments in family court proceedings

involving DV allegations. Such reforms should prioritize child safety and recognize the heightened risks posed by post-separation coercive control and retaliatory filicide, ultimately aiming to protect vulnerable children from preventable harm.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

This research contributes to positive social change by providing actionable knowledge that can inform risk assessment, professional practice, and policy development aimed at protecting vulnerable children. By enhancing understanding of the psychosocial and behavioral dynamics underlying paternal filicide, this study supports the development of better-informed custody determinations, targeted interventions, and preventive measures.

At a broader societal level, the findings can help shift public and professional discourse to recognize the lethal risks of coercive control and the importance of child-centered decision-making in custody disputes involving DV. By equipping professionals and policymakers with empirically grounded insights, the study advances efforts to reduce child homicides in high-conflict family situations.

In summary, the study's implications are multifaceted, offering theoretical validation, empirical contributions, methodological guidance, and practical recommendations for addressing the intersection of DV, custody disputes, and paternal filicide. While limited to publicly available secondary data, the research provides a meaningful foundation for enhancing risk assessments, informing professional practices, and supporting systemic reforms aimed at protecting children from lethal family violence.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study reinforce the critical intersection between domestic violence, parental separation, and paternal filicide. This research highlights how the history of domestic violence and the dissolution of parental relationships can trigger lethal aggression against children, often as a final act of control or revenge directed toward the mother. Through a thematic analysis of secondary data sources, this study identified consistent behavioral patterns, psychosocial characteristics, and contextual circumstances surrounding these tragic events.

Central findings include the repeated presence of domestic violence in the fathers' histories, threats made against mothers and children, and alarming signs of displaced aggression, including rumination, revenge planning, and obsessive behavior following relationship breakdowns. In nearly all cases, government officials, such as judges, law enforcement, or child protective services, were involved prior to the filicides, yet no effective intervention occurred to safeguard the children. This represents a critical failure of systems designed to protect vulnerable families.

The implications of this study emphasize the need for systemic reform. Findings support the development and implementation of evidence-based risk assessment tools for use by judges, custody evaluators, and other legal professionals when making custody and visitation decisions. They also call for improved education, training, and accountability for professionals involved in family court litigation and child protection, especially in cases where domestic violence is present. Additionally, the research

advocates for more cautious and informed judicial decision-making that prioritizes child safety over default assumptions about shared parenting or parental access rights.

By identifying recurring patterns in high-conflict custody disputes that escalate to filicide, this study contributes meaningfully to social change. It provides vital insights that can inform mental health and legal practitioners, influence public policy, and ultimately help to prevent future tragedies. A particular emphasis is placed on the need to assess for coercive control, prior threats of harm, and psychological indicators such as rumination and depression, risk factors often overlooked in traditional custody evaluations.

The key takeaway from this study is clear: when domestic violence, obsessive rumination, and unresolved custody disputes converge, children's lives are placed at extraordinary risk. Recognizing and responding to these warning signs, early, decisively, and with informed professional judgment, is not just a matter of good practice; it is a matter of life and death. By using the lessons learned from these tragedies, the legal and mental health systems have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to better protect children and prevent future acts of paternal filicide.

## References

- ABC7. (2022, May 22). Md. father accused of killing son, 3, with lethal drug cocktail sentenced to 10 years. Fox17 Nashville. <https://fox17.com/news/nation-world/md-father-accused-of-killing-son-with-lethal-drug-cocktail-sentenced-to-10-years>
- Adhia, A., Austin, S.B., Fitzmaurice, G.M., & Hemenway, D. (2019). The role of intimate partner violence in homicides of children aged 2-14 years. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 56 (1) (2019), pp. 38-46.
- Alder, C., & Polk, K. (2001). *Child victims of homicide*. Cambridge University Press.
- Allen, J. J., & Anderson, C. A. (2017). General aggression model. In P. Roessler, C. A. Hoffner, & L. van Zoonen (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*. Wiley-Blackwell. <http://doi:10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0078>
- Almasy, S. & Mossburg, C. (2017, August 23). California dad gets 25 years to life for murder of 5-year-old. CNN News. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/23/us/california-man-son-murder-sentence/index.html>
- Amato, P. R., Loomis, L. S., & Booth, A. (1995). Parental divorce, marital conflict, and offspring well-being during early adulthood. *Social Forces*, 73(3), 895-915.
- Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of marriage and family*, 62(4), 1269-1287.
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. (n.d.). *Children and divorce*. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-)

[Guide/Children-and-Divorce-001.aspx](#)

Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 27-51.

Associated Press. (2008, March 31). Police: father who drowned 3 kids 'One at a time' in hotel tub charged with murder. Fox News.

<https://www.foxnews.com/story/police-father-who-drowned-3-kids-one-at-a-time-in-hotel-tub-charged-with-murder>

Associated Press. (2015, July 8). *Dad admitted throwing baby off bridge, then jumping.*

The Star Advertiser. <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2015/07/08/breaking-news/dad-admitted-throwing-baby-off-bridge-then-jumping/>

Associated Press (2015, July 9). Disturbing texts reveal final moments before father throws baby from bridge. Fox 6 Now.

<https://www.fox6now.com/news/disturbing-texts-reveal-final-moments-before-father-throws-baby-from-bridge>

Associated Press. (2017, February 16). *Dad says he 'dropped' infant son, didn't intend to kill him.* The Seattle Times. [https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/mom-](https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/mom-testifies-at-trial-of-man-accused-of-killing-infant/#:~:text=The%20boy's%20mother%2C%20Adrienne%20Oyola,the%20child%20at%20the%20bridge.)

[testifies-at-trial-of-man-accused-of-killing-infant/#:~:text=The%20boy's%20mother%2C%20Adrienne%20Oyola,the%20child%20at%20the%20bridge.](https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/mom-testifies-at-trial-of-man-accused-of-killing-infant/#:~:text=The%20boy's%20mother%2C%20Adrienne%20Oyola,the%20child%20at%20the%20bridge.)

Associated Press. (2017, May 31). *Man who threw baby off bridge gets 70 years in*

*prison.* AP News. <https://apnews.com/fa8ac743f9a54932a73256b13ccd6a3a/Man-who-threw-baby-off-bridge-gets-70-years-in->

[prison?utm\\_campaign=SocialFlow&utm\\_source=Twitter&utm\\_medium=APEast  
Region](https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/california/story/2020-01-08/california-man-sentenced-after-his-2-children-died-in-fire)

Associated Press. (2020, January 8). California man sentenced after his 2 children died in fire. The San Diego Union Tribune.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/california/story/2020-01-08/california-man-sentenced-after-his-2-children-died-in-fire>

Associated Press. (2020, October 27). Father of 2 slain Kansas boys charged with capital murder. KAKE Com. [https://www.kake.com/story/42822360/father-of-2-slain-](https://www.kake.com/story/42822360/father-of-2-slain-kansas-boys-charged-with-capital-murder)

[kansas-boys-charged-with-capital-murder](https://www.kake.com/story/42822360/father-of-2-slain-kansas-boys-charged-with-capital-murder)

Associated Press. (2021, October 8). *Colorado father gets 48 years in death of 13-year-old son*. AP News. [https://apnews.com/article/colorado-durango-child-abuse-](https://apnews.com/article/colorado-durango-child-abuse-3b1fd02b61c51de8e0c8520788311fa1)

[3b1fd02b61c51de8e0c8520788311fa1](https://apnews.com/article/colorado-durango-child-abuse-3b1fd02b61c51de8e0c8520788311fa1)

Auzenne, J. (2010, June 2). Father receives two life sentences for murdering sons. WAFB

Channel 9. <https://www.wafb.com/story/12582212/father-receives-two-life-sentences-for-murdering-sons/>

Baltimore Sun. (2015, July 7). *Missing baby's body found in Connecticut River*. The

Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2015/07/07/missing-babys-body-found-in-connecticut-river/>

Bandura, A. (1999). *Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities*.

Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3(3), 193–209.

[https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0303\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_3)

Barry, S. (2015, July 9). *Final text messages made public in probe of baby believed*

*thrown from Middletown, Conn., bridge.* MassLive.

[https://www.masslive.com/news/2015/07/disturbing\\_text\\_messages\\_made.html](https://www.masslive.com/news/2015/07/disturbing_text_messages_made.html)

Beck, C. J., Anderson, E. R., O'Hara, K. L., & Benjamin, G. A. H. (2013). Patterns of intimate partner violence in a large, epidemiological sample of divorcing couples. *Journal of family psychology*, 27(5), 743.

Belmond Independent. (2014, September 10). *Three perish in auto accidents.* The

Belmond Independent. [https://www.belmondnews.com/news/three-perish-in-auto-accidents/article\\_e3ff3c9a-dc3b-5789-8dfe-6d05ba978561.html](https://www.belmondnews.com/news/three-perish-in-auto-accidents/article_e3ff3c9a-dc3b-5789-8dfe-6d05ba978561.html)

Benjamin, S. (2021, October 8). Colorado father sentenced to prison for killing 13-year-old son, Dylan Redwine. The Durango Herald.

<https://www.durangoherald.com/articles/colorado-father-sentenced-to-prison-for-killing-13-year-old-son-dylan-redwine/>

Beyer, K. R., Hickey, E., & Bishop-Deaton, D. (2019). An analysis of mothers and fathers who kill their children: examining offense characteristics and adjudication outcomes. *2019 Program & Posters.5.*

<https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/symposium2019/5/>

Bishop, T. (2009, October 15). *Castillo pleads guilty in killings of 3*

*children.* The Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2009/10/15/castillo-pleads-guilty-in-killings-of-his-3-children/>

Black, C. (2010, July 21). *Ga. Father Gary DeToma May Face Death Penalty for*

*Murder of 5-Year-Old Son.* CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ga-father-gary-detoma-may-face-death-penalty-for-murder-of-5-year-old-son/>

- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2019). *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation* (Fourth Ed.).
- Bluestein, G. (2014, May 31). *Father who pleaded guilty to killing son wants to withdraw confession*. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. <https://www.ajc.com/news/father-who-pleaded-guilty-killing-son-wants-withdraw-confession/qrMxm9HosDqt8WDdBYTjxL/#:~:text=Father%20who%20pleaded%20guilty%20to%20killing%20son%20wants%20to%20withdraw%20confession&text=Gary%20DeToma%20was%20sentenced%20to,him%20to%20withdraw%20that%20confession.>
- Bravo, C., Devine, R., & Coronado, L. (2020, January 8). *Outbursts before dad sentenced for condo fire that killed 2 kids*. NBC Channel 7 San Diego. <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/man-to-be-sentenced-for-condo-fire-that-killed-2-kids/2240896/>
- Brown, T., Tyson, D., & Arias, P. F. (2014). Filicide and parental separation and divorce. *Child Abuse Review*, 23(2), 79–88. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/car.2327>
- Bourget, D., & Gagné, P. (2005). Paternal filicide in Quebec. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 33(3), 354–360.
- Bourget, D., Grace, J., & Whitehurst, L. (2007). A review of maternal and paternal filicide. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 35, 74-82.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative*

*Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage.
- Breiding, M. J., Chen, J., & Black, M. C. (2014). *Intimate partner violence in the United States--2010*.
- Brown, T., Bricknell, S., Bryant, W., Lyneham, S., Tyson, D., & Arias, P. F. (2019). Filicide offenders. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* [electronic resource], (568), 1-17.
- Brown, T., Tyson, D., & Arias, P. F. (2014). Filicide and parental separation and divorce. *Child Abuse Review*, 23(2), 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2327>
- Brown, T., & Tyson, D. (2012). An abominable crime: Filicide in the context of parental separation and divorce. *Children Australia*, 37(4), 151–160. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2012.36>
- Bushman, B. J., Bonacci, A. M., Pedersen, W. C., Vasquez, E. A., & Miller, N. (2005). Chewing on it can chew you up: Effects of rumination on triggered displaced aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(6), 969–983. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.6.969>
- California Protective Parents Association. (2025). *Piqui's law: keeping children safe from family violence act*. <https://www.cprotectiveparents.org/piquis-law-sb-331>
- Campbell, E. (2017). How domestic violence batterers use custody proceedings in family courts to abuse victims, and how courts can put a stop to it. *UCLA Women's LJ*,

24, 41.

- Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C., Campbell, D., Curry, M. A., & Sharps, P. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. *American Journal of Public Health, 93*(7), 1089–1097. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.93.7.1089>
- Carruthers, G. (2016). Making sense of spousal revenge filicide. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 29*, 30–35.  
<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.05.007>
- Carter, D. K., & Frenkel, D. N. (2020). Parenting coordination and confidentiality: A (not-so) delicate balance. *Family court review, 58*(1), 68-82.
- Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: It is easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning, 10*, 807-815.
- Caulfield, J. (2022). *How to do thematic analysis: A step-by-step guide & examples*. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Web-based injury statistics query and reporting system (WISQARS) [online] National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC (producer); 2019.  
[www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars)
- CBS Baltimore. (2011, January 28). Sentenced: Md. Man Tossed Toddler Son Off Key Bridge. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/sentenced-md-man-tossed-toddler-off-key-bridge/>
- CBS News. (2008, March 31). *Father Confesses To Drowning Children*. CBS.  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/father-confesses-to-drowning-children/>

CBS News. (2010, July 15). Gary DeToma, Jr. Murdered. CBS News.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/gary-detoma-jr-murdered/>

CBS News. (2017, February 10). *Trial begins for man accused of tossing infant from*

*bridge*. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trial-begins-for-man-accused-of-tossing-infant-from-bridge/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *WISQARS fatal injury reports, national, regional and state, 1981–2021*. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>

Center for Judicial Excellence. (2021, March 15). Child murder data.

<https://centerforjudicialexcellence.org/cje-projects-initiatives/child-murder-data/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2018). Child abuse and neglect fatalities 2017:

Statistics and intervention. Retrieved December 26, 2020, from

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/fatality.pdf>

CNN Wire. (2015, July 7). *Restraining order denied against dad suspected of jumping off*

*Connecticut bridge with infant son*. KTLA Channel 5.

<https://ktla.com/news/nationworld/father-22-suspected-of-jumping-off-connecticut-bridge-with-infant-son-search-for-baby-continues/>

CNN Wire. (2015, July 9). *Chilling text messages reveal final moments before father*

*throws baby from bridge*. KDVR Fox 31. <https://kdvr.com/news/nationworld-news/chilling-text-messages-reveal-final-moments-before-father-throws-baby-from-bridge/>

Coates, C. A. (2004). Models of collaboration in family law: Parenting coordination for

high-conflict families. *Family Court Review*, 42, 246.

Collins, D. (2014, August 19). *Details released on abduction, homicide of girl*, 3. WBAL

TV Channel 11. <https://www.wbaltv.com/article/details-released-on-abduction-homicide-of-girl-3/7088756>

Connelly, L. M. (2014). Ethical considerations in research studies. *MedSurg Nursing*, 23(1), 54–55.

Copen, C. E., Daniels, K., & Vespa, J. (2012). First marriages in the United States; data from the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth.

Cordero, C. (2022, April 22). 5 years after South Pasadena boy's murder, his mother tries to find peace and purpose. ABC 7 Eyewitness News. <https://abc7.com/aramazd-andressian-jr-murder-of-5-year-old-boy-south-pasadena-death/11778078/>

Cyr, F., & Godbout, É. (2020). Clinical ratings of parenting capacity and Rorschach protocols of parents involved in child custody disputes. *Journal of Child Custody*, 17(2), 97–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15379418.2020.1756494>

Cry, F., Poitras, K., & Godbout, É. (2020). An interdisciplinary case management protocol for child resistance or refusal dynamics. *Family Court Review*, 58(2), 560–575. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12487>

Daily Mail Reporter (2010, December 1). *Father jailed for killing his three-year-old son by throwing him off a bridge*. Daily Mail.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1334500/Father-receive-maximum-50-years-prison-throwing-3-year-old-son-bridge.html>

Daily Mail Reporter (2013, March 1). Phillip Hernandez: Judge ordered father to keep

custody of his sons just 4 months before 'he killed his 9-year-old with a 'hatchet.'

Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2286761/Phillip-Hernandez-Judge-ordered-father-custody-sons-just-4-months-killed-9-year-old-hatchet.html>

Damota, M. D. (2019). The effect of divorce on families' life. *Academia Edu*, 46.

Day, C. (2017, May 13). Middletown dad sentenced to 70 years for dropping son to his death off Arrigoni bridge. *The Register Citizen*.

<https://www.registercitizen.com/news/article/Middletown-dad-sentenced-to-70-years-for-dropping-11962228.php>

Debowska, A., Boduszek, D., & Dhingra, K. (2015). Victim, perpetrator, and offense characteristics in filicide and filicide-suicide. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 21, 113-124. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.01.011>

Dekel, B., Abrahams, N., & Andipatin, M. (2018). Exploring adverse parent-child relationships from the perspective of convicted child murderers: A South African qualitative study. *PloS one*, 13(5), e0196772.

Denson, T. F., Pedersen, W. C., & Miller, N. (2006). The displaced aggression questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(6), 1032-1051.

Depner, C. E., Cannata, K. V., & Simon, M. B. (1992). Building a uniform statistical reporting system: A snapshot of California Family Court Services. *Family & Conciliation Courts Review*, 30(2), 185–206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.174-1617.1992.tb01045.x>

Devine, R. & Garske, M. (2019, March 2). *Family worries new law could mean no trial*

*for father in deadly Rancho Bernardo apartment fire.* NBC Channel 7 News San Diego. <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/henry-lopez-children-killed-in-rancho-bernardo-condo-fire-new-law-no-trial/2880/>

Devine, R. & Stickney, R. (2019, April 30). Judge rules dad in fatal Rancho Bernardo condo fire may not use new law to avoid trial on basis of mental illness. NBC Channel 7 News San Diego. <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/henry-lopez-condo-fire-2017-rancho-bernardo-trial-san-diego/159510/>

Dey, I. (2003). *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists.* Routledge.

Dixon, S., Krienert J.L., & Walsh, J. (2014). Filicide: A gendered profile of offender, victim, and event characteristics in a national sample of reported incidents, 1995–2009, *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 37:3, 339-355.

Dollard, J., Miller, N. E., Doob, L. W., Mowrer, O. H., & Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and Aggression.* Yale University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/10022-000>

Dutton, D. G. (2007). *The abusive personality: Violence and control in intimate relationships* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Edwards, A. (2015, July 9). Chilling text messages reveal final moments before dad threw baby from bridge. Fox 13 Salt Lake City.  
<https://www.fox13now.com/2015/07/09/chilling-text-messages-reveal-final-moments-before-dad-threw-baby-from-bridge>

Egan, L. (2021, July 13). Dad allegedly speeds up treadmill, making son fall several

times after calling him 'fat.' Boy mysteriously dies 13 days later: Reports. Crime Online. <https://www.crimeonline.com/2021/07/13/little-boy-dies-after-dad-speeds-up-treadmill-making-son-fall-several-times-after-calling-him-fat-reports/>

Emery, R. E. (1982). Interparental conflict and the children of discord and divorce.

*Psychological bulletin*, 92(2), 310.

Eriksson, L., Mazerolle, P., Wortley, R., & Johnson, H. (2016). Maternal and paternal filicide: case studies from the Australian Homicide Project. *Child abuse review*, 25(1), 17-30.

Eyo, U. E. (2018). Divorce: Causes and effects on children. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 6(5).

Fidler, B. J., & Bala, N. (2020). Concepts, controversies and conundrums of "alienation:" Lessons learned in a decade and reflections on challenges ahead. *Family Court Review*, 58(2), 576–603. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12488>

Findlay, P. (2008, April 2). *Wife in seclusion; ex told cops he killed their children*. Post and Courier. [https://www.postandcourier.com/news/wife-in-seclusion-ex-told-cops-he-killed-their-children/article\\_750d3597-b490-53cb-a712-5fdb273fd400.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/news/wife-in-seclusion-ex-told-cops-he-killed-their-children/article_750d3597-b490-53cb-a712-5fdb273fd400.html)

Flynn, S., Shaw, J., & Abel, K. (2013). Filicide: Mental illness in those who kill their children. *PLoS ONE* 8(4): e58981. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0058981>

Friedman, S. H., Hrouda, D. R., Holden, C. E., Noffsinger, S. G., & Resnick, P. J. (2005). Filicide-suicide: Common factors in parents who kill their children and themselves. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 33(4),

496–504.

Friedman, S. H., & Resnick, P. J. (2011). Child murder and mental illness in parents: implications for psychiatrists. *The Journal of clinical psychiatry*, 72(5), 0-0.

Gencer, A. & Fuller, N. (2008, April 1). *Court records document separated couple's tumultuous relationship*. The Baltimore Sun.

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2008/04/01/court-records-document-separated-couples-tumultuous-relationship/>

GetToText. (2022, February 3). *A father's chilling appeal to his wife after the murder of their baby*. GetToText.com. <https://gettotext.com/a-fathers-chilling-appeal-to-his-wife-after-the-murder-of-their-baby/>

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Competing paradigms in qualitative research*. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage Publications.

Gudjonsson, G. H. (2003). *The Psychology of Interrogations and Confessions: A Handbook*. Wiley.

Hahn, T., & Palattella, E. (2021, June 30). *Records: Greene Township father who killed children and himself was 'very angry' over divorce*. Go Erie.

<https://www.goerie.com/story/news/crime/2021/06/30/greene-township-murder-suicide-fire-under-investigation-richard-zimmer-erie/7808765002/>

Hardesty, J. L. (2002). Separation assault in the context of postdivorce parenting: An integrative review of the literature. *Violence Against Women*, 8(5), 597-625.

Hargrove, D. (2022, June 20). *San Diego man convicted of setting house fire that killed*

*his two children says conviction was based on faulty evidence.* CBS Channel 8.

<https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/investigations/san-diego-man-convicted-of-setting-house-fire-that-killed-his-two-children-seeks-appeal>

Harris, C. (2020, July 22). *Missing Boy Believed Dead After Allegedly Telling Mother 'Dad is Going to Kill Me' Ahead of Visit.* People.

<https://people.com/crime/missing-boy-dead-visiting-father-nakota-kelly/>

Harris, C. (2021, October 11). Mark Redwine sentenced to 48 years for murdering teenage son in 2012: 'Utter lack of remorse.' People.

<https://people.com/crime/mark-redwine-sentenced-to-48-years-for-murdering-teenage-son-in-2012-utter-lack-of-remorse/>

Hathaway, R. S. (1995). Assumptions underlying quantitative and qualitative research: Implications for institutional research. *Research in Higher Education* 36(5): 535-562.

Hatters Friedman, S., Hrouda, D. R., Holden, C. E., Noffsinger, S. G., & Resnick, P. J. (2005). Filicide-suicide: Common factors in parents who kill their children and themselves. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 33(4), 496–504.

Hayes, B. E. (2012). Abusive men's indirect control of their partner during the process of separation. *Journal of Family Violence*, 27(4), 333-344.

Hayes, B. E. (2017). Indirect Abuse Involving Children During the Separation Process. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(19), 2975–2997.

Hays, H. V. (2022, April 5). *Mother of boy allegedly killed by father files wrongful death*

*claim against Indiana DCS.* Indianapolis Star.

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2022/04/05/indianapolis-mother-sues-indiana-department-child-services-sons-wrongful-death/9470298002/>

Helling, S. (2019, March 25). *Fla. man threw 5-year-old daughter to her death — but defense claims he was insane at the time.* People Magazine.

<https://people.com/crime/john-johnchuck-threw-daughter-off-florida-bridge/>

Hemez, P., & Washington, C. (2021, April 12). *Number of children living only with their mothers has doubled in past 50 years.* U.S. Census Bureau.

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/number-of-children-living-only-with-their-mothers-has-doubled-in-past-50-years.html>

Hetherington, E. M. (1979). Divorce: a child's perspective. *American psychologist*, 34(10), 851.

Hett, D., Flowe, H. D., & Takarangi, M. K. (2017). *Metacognitive Beliefs in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.* Retrieved from

<https://www.thescienceofpsychotherapy.com/metacognitive-beliefs-in-post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>

Hoeffler, A. (2017). What are the costs of violence? *Politics, Philosophy, & Economics*, 16(4), 422–445.

<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/1470594X17714270>

Holland, K. M., Brown, S. V., Hall, J. E., & Logan, J. E. (2018). Circumstances preceding homicide-suicides involving child victims: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(3), 379-401.

- Hollingsworth, H. (2020, October 26). *Father of 2 slain Kansas boys has been in midst of divorce*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/general-news-4eda8ef4a3153d355abc27941dd89ad4>
- Hotton, T. (2001). *Spousal violence after marital separation*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.
- Hovland, C. I., & Sears, R. R. (1940). Minor studies of aggression: VI. Correlation of lynchings with economic indices. *The Journal of Psychology*, 9, 301-310.
- Hyman, D. (2016, July 6). *Aaden Moreno's mother intends to sue state DCF*. WTNH News 8. <https://www.wtnh.com/news/connecticut/middlesex/aaden-morenos-mother-intends-to-sue-state-dcf/>
- Jaffe, P. G., Campbell, M., Hamilton, L. H. A., & Joudis, M. (2012). Children in danger of domestic homicide. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 36, 71-74.
- Jaffe, P. G., Campbell, M., Olszowy, L., & Hamilton, L. H. A. (2014). Paternal filicide in the context of domestic violence: Challenges in risk assessment and risk management for community and justice professionals. *Child Abuse Review*, 23(2), 142–153. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/car.2315>
- Jaffe, P.G., & Joudis, M. (2006). Children as victims and witnesses of domestic homicide: Lessons learned from domestic violence death review committees. *Juvenile & Family Court Journal*, 57(3), 13-28. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1111/j.1755-6988.2006.tb00125.x>
- Johnson, L. (2022). *Judge denies motion to drop evidence in Nakota Kelly murder*. Fox 59. <https://fox59.com/news/indycrime/judge-denies-attempt-to-toss-out-evidence->

[in-nakota-kelly-murder/](#)

- Johnson, M. P. (2005). Domestic violence: It's not about gender—or is it? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(5), 1126–1130.
- Johnston, J. R., & Campbell, L. E. G. (1988). *Impasses of divorce: The dynamics and resolution of family conflict*. Free Press.
- Johnston, J. R., & Campbell, L. E. (1993). Parent-child relationships in domestic violence families disputing custody. *Family court review*, 31(3), 282-298.
- Johnston, J. R. (1994). High-conflict divorce. *The future of children*, 165-182.
- Johnston, J. R., Kline, M., & Tschann, J. M. (1989). Ongoing postdivorce conflict: Effects on children of joint custody and frequent access. *American journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59(4), 576-592.
- Johnston, J. R. (1994). High-conflict divorce. *The future of children*, 165-182.
- Juodis, M., Starzomski, A., Porter, S., & Woodworth, M. (2014). A comparison of domestic and non-domestic homicides: Further evidence for distinct dynamics and heterogeneity of domestic homicide perpetrators. *Journal of Family Violence*, 29(3), 299–313. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-014-9583-8>
- Kay, L.F. (2011, January 28). *Man gets 50 years for throwing 3-year-old son off Key Bridge*. The Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2011/01/28/man-gets-50-years-for-throwing-3-year-old-son-off-key-bridge/>
- KCCI News. (2014, September 7). *2 dead in collision, including 5-year-old*. KCCI Channel 8 Des Moines. <https://www.kcci.com/article/2-dead-in-collision-including-5-year-old/6896754>

- KFOR News. (2015, July 7). *Dad who allegedly jumped off bridge with baby accused of threatening mom*. Oklahoma News 4. <https://kfor.com/news/dad-who-allegedly-jumped-off-bridge-with-baby-accused-of-threatening-mom/>
- KXTV Staff. (2015, May 1). *Natomas man who bludgeoned son with hatchet is sentenced*. ABC10. <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/natomas/natomas-man-who-bludgeoned-son-with-hatchet-is-sentenced/103-181954898>
- Laletas, S., & Khasin, M. (2021). Children of high conflict divorce: Exploring the experiences of primary school teachers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 127, 106072.
- Larossa, R., Bennett, A. L., & Gelles, R.J. (1994). Ethical dilemmas in qualitative family research. In *The Psychosocial Interior of the Family (4th ed.)*, edited by Gerald Handel and Gail G. Whitchurch, 109-126. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Latzman, N. E., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Clinton-Sherrod, A. M., Casanueva, C., & Carr, C. (2017). Children's exposure to intimate partner violence: A systematic review of measurement strategies. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 37, 220-235.
- Liem, M., & Koenraadt, F. (2008). Filicide: a comparative study of maternal versus paternal child homicide. *Criminal Behaviour & Mental Health*, 18(3), 166–176. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/cbm.695>
- Liem, M., & Koenraadt, F. (2018). *Domestic homicide: Patterns and dynamics*. Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Léveillé, S., & Doyon, L. (2019). Understanding the motives behind male filicides to

better intervene. *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée*, 69(2), 73–81.

Léveillé, S., & Vignola-Lévesque, C. (2020). Toward a better understanding of the psychosocial issues and different profiles of male filicides. *The Journal of Psychology*, 154(7), 467-486.

Linskey, A. & Fuller, N. (2008, March 31). *3 children killed at city hotel*. Chicago Tribune. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2008/03/31/3-children-killed-at-city-hotel/>

Linskey, A., Gencer, A., & Fuller, N. (2008, March 31). *3 children killed at hotel*. Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2008/03/31/3-children-killed-at-hotel/>

Lopez, L. (2020, August 26). *New Domestic Violence Law Proposed After 5-Year-Old Boy's Death at Hands of Father*. NBC Channel 4 Los Angeles. <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/new-domestic-violence-law-proposed-after-5-year-old-boys-death-at-hands-of-father/2419303/#:~:text=It%27s%20been%20three%20years%20since,The%20case%20made%20national%20headlines.>

Lopez, L., Drechsler, P., & Kandel, J. (2017, August 24). *New details show how father planned to kill his 5-year-old son*. NBC Channel 4 Los Angeles. <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/father-had-planned-killing-of-5-year-old-son-for-months-probation-report/22634/>

Lyons, V. H., Adhia, A., Moe, C. A., Kernic, M. A., Schiller, M., Bowen, A., Rivara, F. P., & Rowhani-Rahbar, A. (2020). Risk Factors for Child Death During an

Intimate Partner Homicide: A Case-Control Study. *Child Maltreatment*,  
1077559520983901. [https://doi-  
org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/1077559520983901](https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/1077559520983901)

Mail Online Reporter. (2014, August 17). *Three-year-old girl dies after being 'stabbed and shot' by her own father during a high-speed car chase turned gun battle with police*. Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2727418/Three-year-old-girl-dies-stabbed-shot-father-high-speed-car-chase-turned-gun-battle-police.html>

Magdaleno, J. (2022, April 6). *'They would have been able to stop it': Nakota Kelly's mother wants DCS to admit wrongdoing*. IndyStar. <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/marion-county/2022/04/06/hayley-kelly-says-dcs-could-have-prevented-her-son-nakota-kelly-death-anthony-dibiah/9485332002/>

Malcore, S. A., Windell, J., Seyuin, M., & Hill, E. (2009). Predictors of continued conflict after divorce or separation: Evidence from a high-conflict group treatment program. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 51(1), 50-64.

Marble, A. (2021, August 26). *Father murders 3 children at Inner Harbor Hotel*. Medium. <https://critteranne.medium.com/father-murders-three-children-at-inner-harbor-hotel-e85ea8db58cb>

Marcus-Newhall, A., Pedersen, W. C., Carlson, M., & Miller, N. (2000). Displaced aggression is alive and well: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(4), 670-689.

- Mariano, T. Y., Chan, H. C. O., & Myers, W. C. (2014). Toward a more holistic understanding of filicide: A multidisciplinary analysis of 32 years of US arrest data. *Forensic science international*, 236, 46-53.
- Marquardt, E., Blankenhorn, D., Lerman, R.I., Malone-Colón, L., & Bradford Wilcox, B. (2012). *The President's Marriage Agenda for the Forgotten Sixty Percent, The State of Our Unions*. Charlottesville, VA: National Marriage Project and Institute for American Values. Retrieved from <http://nationalmarriageproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/SOOU2012.pdf>
- McCarroll, J. E., Fisher, J. E., Cozza, S. J., Robichaux, R. J., & Fullerton, C. S. (2017). Characteristics, classification, and prevention of child maltreatment fatalities. *Military Medicine*, 182, 1551-1557.
- Melendez, P. (2021, October 8). 'Cold Blooded' Dad Sent to Prison for Killing Son Over Lewd Diaper Pics. The Daily Beast. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/colorado-dad-mark-redwine-who-murdered-son-dylan-over-lewd-diaper-pics-sentenced-to-prison>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Wiley Publishers.
- Michallon, C., Collman, A., & Associated Press. (2017, February 16). *Father accused of murder who says he 'accidentally dropped his seven-month-old son off a bridge' re-enacts the moment before the fall in court with a doll*. Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4232110/Mom-testifies-trial-man-accused-killing-infant.html>

Middletown Press. (2017, May 31). *Middletown dad sentenced to 70 years for dropping son to his death from Arrogoni Bridge.*

<https://www.middletownpress.com/news/article/Middletown-dad-sentenced-to-70-years-for-dropping-11752035.php>

Miller, N., Pedersen, W. C., Earleywine, M., & Pollock, V. E. (2003). A theoretical model of triggered displaced aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7(1), 57–97. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0701\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0701_5)

Munoz, A. (2022, June 28). Mother of young boy murdered by father advocates for 'Piqui's Law.' ABC Channel 7.

<https://abc7.com/aramazd-andressian-jr-piquis-law-murder-of-5-year-old-boy/11999621/#:~:text=My%20request%20for%20sole%20custody,is%20smiling%20down%20from%20heaven.%22>

MyDeathSpace. (2008, April 1). Mark Castillo (41) drowned his three children in a hotel bathtub. [http://mydeathspace.com/article/2008/04/01/Mark\\_Castillo\\_\(41\)\\_drowned\\_his\\_three\\_children\\_in\\_a\\_hotel\\_bathtub](http://mydeathspace.com/article/2008/04/01/Mark_Castillo_(41)_drowned_his_three_children_in_a_hotel_bathtub)

Myers, W. C., Lee, E., Montplaisir, R., Lazarou, E., Safarik, M., Chan, H. C. (Oliver), & Beauregard, E. (2021). Revenge filicide: An international perspective through 62 cases. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 39(2), 205–215.

<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/bsl.2505>

NBC Washington. (2014, August 17). Police: Father killed daughter, dies in gun battle. NBC Washington Channel 4 News.

<https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/police-father-killed-own-daughter->

[dies-in-gun-battle-with-police/70765/](#)

Nieberg, P. (2021, July 17). *Colorado father convinced of killing 13-year-old son.*

Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/health-coronavirus-pandemic-ebe5253a7ce5eebf9dbf06fba150ba45>

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis:

Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>

Nuckols, B. (2010, November 30). Md. man pleads guilty to throwing son off bridge. San

Diego Union Tribune. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-md-man-pleads-guilty-to-throwing-son-off-bridge-2010nov30-story.html>

O'Hara, K. L., Sandler, I. N., Wolchik, S. A., Tein, J. Y., & Rhodes, C. A. (2019).

Parenting time, parenting quality, interparental conflict, and mental health problems of children in high-conflict divorce. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 33(6), 690.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of nursing scholarship*, 33(1), 93-96.

Ortiz, G. (2015, March 23). *Sacramento man convicted of killing son with hatchet.*

KCRA 3. <https://www.kcra.com/article/sacramento-man-convicted-of-killing-son-with-hatchet/6421219>

Palin, M. (2020, October 26). *Family ripped apart: dad wrote about 'demons' before*

*'killing his two young sons and abducting daughters, 3 and 7.'* The Sun.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/13028161/dad-wrote-about-demons-before->

[killing-his-sons/](#)

- Pamer, M. & Friel, C. (2017, August 23). *South Pasadena father sentenced to 25 years to life in murder of 5-year-old son*. KTLA News. <https://ktla.com/news/local-news/south-pasadena-father-to-be-sentenced-in-murder-of-5-year-old-son/#:~:text=Prosecutors%20believe%20Andressian%20Sr.,child's%20jacket%20near%20Lake%20Cachuma>.
- Parker, D. (2021, June 14). *First day of capital murder trial for man charged with killing 5 in New Market*. News 19. <https://whnt.com/news/first-day-of-capital-murder-trial-for-man-charged-with-killing-5-in-new-market/>
- Peek-Asa, C., Saftlas, A. F., Wallis, A. B., Harland, K., & Dickey, P. (2017). Presence of children in the home and intimate partner violence among women seeking elective pregnancy termination. *PLoS ONE*, 12(10), 1–12.  
<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186389>
- Percy, W. H., Kostere, K., & Kostere, S. (2015). Generic Qualitative Research in Psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 76-85.  
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/7>
- Pruitt, S.L. (2020, January 10). *California dad sentenced for drunkenly causing house fire that killed his 2 children*. Oxygen True Crime.  
<https://www.oxygen.com/crime-news/henry-lopez-sentenced-2017-house-fire-killed-children>
- Quintero, J. & Baker, P. (2017). UPDATE: Apple Valley man arrested on suspicion of murder after death of 8-year-old son. Daily Press.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/crime/2017/01/06/update-apple-valley-man-arrested/22766128007/>

Ravitch, S. M., and Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. SAGE Publications.

Reif, K., & Jafee, P. (2019). Remembering the forgotten victims: Child-related themes in domestic violence fatality reviews. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 98, 1-12.

Resnick, P. J. (1969). Child murder by parents: A psychiatric review of filicide. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 126(3), 325–334.

<https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1176/ajp.126.3.325>

Resnick, P. J. (2016). Filicide in the United States. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 58, S203–S209. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.4103/0019-5545.196845>

Reynolds, L. (2020). *Divorce rate in the U.S.: Geographic variation, 2019* (Family Profile No. FP-20-25). National Center for Family & Marriage Research.

<https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/reynolds-divorce-rate-geographic-variation-2019-fp-20-25.html>

Ruggiano, N., & Perry, T. E. (2019). Conducting secondary analysis of qualitative data: Should we, can we, and how? *Qualitative Social Work*, 18(1), 81–97.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325017700701>

Ruiter, J. (2017, October 10). *Lady lake dad drowned toddler because wife divorcing him, deputies say*. Orlando Sentinel.

<https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2017/10/10/lady-lake-dad-drowned-toddler-because-wife-was-divorcing-him-deputies-say/>

- Ryckaert, V. (2020, September 29). *'Letting my son down': At least 5 abuse complaints came before boy warned of his own death.* Indianapolis Star. <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2020/09/29/nakota-kellys-mother-speaks-unheeded-warnings-before-boys-death/5769464002/>
- Ryckaert, V. (2021, July 20). *The last visit: Nakota Kelly's short life ends in violence at his father's home.* WRTV Indianapolis News. <https://www.wrtv.com/news/local-news/crime/the-last-visit-nakota-kellys-short-life-ends-in-violence-at-this-fathers-home#:~:text=%22I%20just%20killed%20my%20son,phone%2C%20according%20to%20the%20affidavit.&text=When%20asked%20why%2C%20records%20say,The%20relative%20called%20the%20police.>
- Ryckaert, V. (2021, July 20). *'Unsubstantiated': DCS investigated at least five abuse complaints against Nakota Kelly's father.* WRTV News. <https://www.wrtv.com/news/local-news/crime/unsubstantiated-dcs-investigated-at-least-five-abuse-complaints-against-nakota-kellys-father#:~:text=In%20February%202017%2C%20Kelly%20told,Dibiah%20threatened%20to%20beat%20her.>
- Ryckaert, V. & Evans, T. (2020). *'Don't expect me to come home.' Horrific details emerge in death of 10-year old; father arrested.* Indianapolis Star. <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2020/07/21/indianapolis-police-search-missing-child/5477593002/>
- Sacramento Family Court Report. (2013, March 1). *Judge Sharon Lueras Held Responsible By Mom In Hatchet Death of Child by Phillip Hernandez.*

Sacramento Family Court Report News.

<https://sacramentocountyfamilycourtnews.blogspot.com/2013/03/Judge-Sharon-A-Lueras-Sacramento-Family-Court-Phillip-Hernandez-Child-Custody-Sacramento-Superior-Court-Jessica-Hernandez-Family-Law-Hatchet-Death-Matthew-Hernandez-Court-Executive-Officer-Chris-Volkers-Divorce.html>

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Salguero, J. M., García-Sancho, E., Ramos-Cejudo, J., & Kannis-Dymand, L. (2020). Individual differences in anger and displaced aggression: The role of metacognitive beliefs and anger rumination. *Aggressive Behavior*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21878>

Saunders, D. G. (2015). Research-based recommendations for child custody evaluation practices and policies in cases of intimate partner violence. *Journal of Child Custody*, 12(1), 71–92.

Schafer, J., Caetano, R., & Clark, C. (1998). Rates of intimate partner violence in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 88(11), 1702-1704.

Sentementes & Madigan. (2008, February 7). *Boy's mother holds out hope*. The Baltimore Sun. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2008/02/07/boys-mother-holds-out-hope/>

Simmons, A. (2013, May 14). *Man pleads guilty to stabbing three young sons*. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. <https://www.ajc.com/news/crime--law/man-pleads-guilty-stabbing-three-young-sons/17hHjRS7YWsfPLnH6abzjL/>

- Simon, M. K., & Goes, J. (2013). Assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and scope of the study. Retrieved from [https://nanopdf.com/download/assumptions-limitations-delimitations-and-scope-of-the-study-by\\_pdf](https://nanopdf.com/download/assumptions-limitations-delimitations-and-scope-of-the-study-by_pdf)
- Slotter, E. B., & Finkel, E. J. (2011). I<sup>3</sup> theory: Instigating, impelling, and inhibiting factors in aggression. In P. R. Shaver & M. Mikulincer (Eds.), *Human aggression and violence: Causes, manifestations, and consequences* (pp. 35–52). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/12346-002>
- Slotter, E. B., Grom, J. L., & Tervo-Clemmens, B. (2020). Don't take it out on me: Displaced aggression after provocation by a romantic partner as a function of attachment anxiety and self-control. *Psychology of Violence*, 10(2), 232–244. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000279>
- Smith, S. G., Fowler, K. A., & Nolon, P. H. (2014). *Intimate partner homicide and corollary victims in the United States, 2003-2009*. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-homicide.pdf>
- Smith, L. S., & Stover, C. S. (2016). The moderating role of attachment on the relationship between history of trauma and intimate partner violence victimization. *Violence against women*, 22(6), 745-764.
- Solomon, J., DeGregory, L., & Sampson, Z.T. (2019, April 16). John Jonchuck guilty of first-degree murder in 2015 death of his daughter, Phoebe. Tampa Bay Times. <https://www.tampabay.com/news/pinellas/crime/john-jonchuck-guilty-of-first-degree-murder-in-2015-death-of-his-daughter-phoebe-20190416/>

- Stanfield, F. (2017, October 10). Cops: Man killed toddler over divorce. Ocala Star Banner. <https://www.ocala.com/story/news/local/lady-lake/2017/10/10/cops-man-killed-toddler-because-wife-was-divorcing-him/18340841007/>
- Stanfield, F. (2019, February 26). *'You're going to have a bad day' Woman recalls chilling phone call when ex-husband said he killed baby.* Daily Commercial. <https://www.dailycommercial.com/story/news/local/tavares/2019/02/26/woman-recalls-chilling-phone-call-when-ex-said-he-killed-baby/5832479007/>
- Standfield, F. (2022, January 30). Lady Lake man charged in baby daughter's 2017 bathtub death goes to trial. Daily Commercial. <https://www.dailycommercial.com/story/news/courts/2022/01/30/jeremy-main-lady-lake-fl-murder-trial-man-charged-baby-daughters-2017-bathtub-death/9244333002/>
- Stanfield, F. (2022, February 18). *Jeremy Main, convicted of murdering his daughter, sentenced to life in prison.* Daily Commercial. <https://www.dailycommercial.com/story/news/crime/2022/02/18/jeremy-main-convicted-murdering-his-daughter-gets-life-prison/6844383001/>
- Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life.* Oxford University Press.
- TeSelle, M. (2013, February 27). *Boy killed in North Sacramento hatchet attack ID'd.* KCRA Channel 3 Sacramento <https://www.kcra.com/article/boy-killed-in-north-sacramento-hatchet-attack-id-d/6402756>
- The Columbian. (2015, July 9). *Police: Dad admitted throwing baby off bridge.* The

- Columbian. <https://www.columbian.com/news/2015/jul/09/police-dad-admitted-throwing-baby-off-bridge/>
- Tight, M. (2019). *Documentary research in the social sciences*. Sage Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529716559>
- Titilayo, A., Anuodo, O. O., & Palamuleni, M. E. (2017). Family type, domestic violence, and under-five mortality in Nigeria. *African Health Sciences*, 17(2), 538–548.
- Tripathy J. P. (2013). Secondary data analysis: Ethical issues and challenges. *Iranian Journal of Public Health*, 42(12), 1478–1479.
- True Crime Daily. (2018, March 19). *Dad kills young son to hurt ex-wife, spends weeks partying in Las Vegas before arrest*. True Crime Daily. <https://truecrimedaily.com/2018/03/19/dad-kills-young-son-to-hurt-ex-wife-spends-weeks-partying-in-las-vegas-before-arrest/>
- Truesdell, J. (2018, December 4). *Florida Dad Claims 'Voices' Made Him Throw 5-Year-Old Daughter to Her Death off Bridge*. People. <https://people.com/crime/john-jonchuck-man-threw-daughter-off-bridge-killed-her-heard-voices/>
- Vargas, E. & Goldstein, B. (2015, July 21). Court reform must follow death of little Aaden Moreno. CT Mirror. <https://ctmirror.org/2015/07/21/court-reform-must-follow-death-of-little-aaden-moreno/>
- Victor Valley News Group. (2017, January 6). *Father Arrested For Murder of 8-Year-old Apple Valley Boy*. VVNG. <https://www.vvng.com/father-arrested-for-murder-of-8-year-old-apple-valley-boy/>

- WAFB News. (2008, October 6). Father charged in kids' stabbing deaths. WAFB Channel 9 Baton Rouge. <https://www.wafb.com/story/9128291/father-charged-in-kids-stabbing-deaths/>
- Watson, L. B., & Ancis, J. R. (2013). Power and control in the legal system: From marriage/relationship to divorce and custody. *Violence against women*, 19(2), 166-186.
- Websdale, N. (1999). *Understanding domestic homicide*. UPNE.
- Websdale, N. (2010). *Familicidal Hearts: The Emotional Styles of 211 Killers*. Oxford University Press.
- West's Encyclopedia of American Law. (2008). Child Custody. Retrieved from <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Child+custody>
- Whiteside, M. F. (1998). The parental alliance following divorce: An overview. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 24(1), 3-24.
- Wilczynski, A. (1995). Child killing by parents: A motivational model. *Child Abuse Review*, 4, 365-370.
- WJZ News. (2014, August 18). *Police: Man Shot, Slit 3-Year-Old Daughter's Throat In Temple Hills*. CBS News Baltimore. <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/pg-county-police-man-shot-stabbed-3-year-old-daughter-to-death/>
- Woner, Robin Cherie. (2013). A review of fatal child maltreatment by parents [Unpublished master's thesis]. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.
- World Health Organization. (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates,

2018: Global, regional, and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women.

WSBTV (2010, July 13). Dad accused suffocating son to death. WSB-TV Channel 2 Atlanta. <https://www.wsbtv.com/news/dad-accused-of-suffocating-son-to-death/241662737/>

WSBTV (2011, February 13). *No Bond For Father Accused Of Killing 2 Sons*. WSB-TV Channel 2 Atlanta. <https://www.wsbtv.com/news/no-bond-for-father-accused-of-killing-2-sons/241794326/>

WSFA News. (2008, May 2). WSFA 12 News exclusive: Victim's aunt speaks. WSFA Channel 12 News. <https://www.wsfa.com/story/8262967/wsfa-12-news-exclusive-victims-aunt-speaks/>

WTHR Staff. (2022). Mother of deceased 10-year-old boy files lawsuit against DCS, Indianapolis father. WTHR Channel 13. <https://www.wthr.com/article/news/crime/nakota-kelly-hayley-kelly-anthony-dibiah-indianapolis-10-year-old-death-dcs-department-of-child-services/531-2009c4ab-1899-4328-962a-2fdd91c4f3cd#:~:text=On%20July%2019%2C%20Hayley%20said,so%20she%20left%20a%20voicemail.>

Yen, A. (2024, February 24). *Dad Caught Confessing to Son's Murder on Ring Camera Footage*. The Daily Beast. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/dad-david-de-jesus-contreras-caught-confessing-to-sons-murder-on-ring-camera-footage>

Zolotor, A. J., Theodore, A. D., Coyne-Beasley, T., & Runyan, D. K. (2007). Intimate partner violence and child maltreatment: Overlapping risk. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention, 7*(4), 305.

## Appendix A: Results Summary—Age of Fathers

*Age of fathers at the time of filicide, including names of children and the information source with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Age of Father</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	21	“Moreno, 21, who had recently been accused of threatening the child and the child’s mother, faces an additional count of murder with special circumstances — given the child’s age — and two counts of criminal violation of a restraining order” (CNN Wire, 2015).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	41	“Their father, identified by police as Mark Castillo, 41, was taken to University of Maryland Medical Center with what appeared to be minor self-inflicted cuts, authorities said” (Gencer et al., 2008).
Austin & Logan Jackson	40	“James Sherley, of the Leavenworth County Sheriff’s Department, said 40-year-old Donny Jackson and his wife are estranged and that he had ‘on-again, off-again access to the children’” (Associated Press, 2020).
Ayden Shackelford	25	“According to the state patrol, a car driven by Dustin R. Shackelford, 25, Houston, TX, was going south on Ida Avenue, while a Mack truck owned by Gold-Eagle Co-op and driven by Travis Nickell, 27, Goldfield, was going east on 140th Street” (Belmond Independent, 2014).
Chad “CJ” Johnson	36	“Montgomery police arrested Alvin Johnson, 36, who they say is the boy’s legal father” (Holyoke, 2008).
Dominic Nunn	38	“The 38-year-old Apple Valley man accused of killing his 8-year-old son pleaded not guilty to murder Tuesday morning, court records show” (Quintero & Baker, 2017).
Dylan Redwine	59	“Mark Redwine, 59, was found guilty of second-degree murder and child abuse in July after he killed his son, Dylan, inside his Durango, Colorado, home on Nov. 18, 2012” (Melendez, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	23	“Noe-Garcia, 23, was allegedly involved in a custody dispute with the mother of the three children and tried to blame the deaths of 3-year-old Bradley Garcia and 1-year-old Edward Garcia, and the wounding of Bradley’s twin brother, Joshua, on the mother’s current boyfriend, 28-year-old Antonio Cardenas-Rico, reports The Atlanta Journal-Constitution” (Black, 2011).
Chad “CJ” Johnson	36	“Montgomery police arrested Alvin Johnson, 36, who they say is the boy’s legal father” (Holyoke, 2008).
Dominic Nunn	38	“The 38-year-old Apple Valley man accused of killing his 8-year-old son pleaded not guilty to murder Tuesday morning, court records show” (Quintero & Baker, 2017).
Dylan Redwine	59	“Mark Redwine, 59, was found guilty of second-degree murder and child abuse in July after he killed his son, Dylan, inside his Durango, Colorado, home on Nov. 18, 2012” (Melendez, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	23	“Noe-Garcia, 23, was allegedly involved in a custody dispute with the mother of the three children and tried to blame the

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Age of Father</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
		deaths of 3-year-old Bradley Garcia and 1-year-old Edward Garcia, and the wounding of Bradley's twin brother, Joshua, on the mother's current boyfriend, 28-year-old Antonio Cardenas-Rico, reports <i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i> " (Black, 2011).
Gary DeToma, Jr.	42	"Gary DeToma, Jr. murdered according to <i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i> , the 42-year-old was indicted by a grand jury Tuesday in DeKalb County for the death of his son, Gary DeToma, Jr" (Black, 2010).
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	39	"Lopez, 39, of Rancho Bernardo, was convicted last fall of involuntary manslaughter, child endangerment and recklessly causing a fire in an inhabited home" (Associated Press, 2020).
Jayson Holland	38	"Thomas Everett Holland, 38, is charged with first-degree child abuse and manslaughter" (Bell, 2014).
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	30	"Ju 'wan Murphy, 8, and his brother, Tayshaun Murphy, 2, were murdered because of revenge against an ex-wife, East Baton Rouge Parish sheriff's deputies said" (WAFB, 2008).
Laila Miller	38	"The suspect — Frederick Roy Miller, 38, of Landover — grabbed 3-year-old Laila Miller, jumped into his Nissan Altima and sped away, the <i>Washington Post</i> reported" (Daily Mail, 2014).
Makenzie Moira Main	38	"Jeremy Main, 38, admitted to a Sumter County deputy after he turned himself in on Monday that he killed his daughter and "ruined his life," according to the affidavit. When he arrived at the Sumter County Sheriff's Office substation on County Road 466 in The Villages, he was bleeding from the wrists in a failed attempt to commit suicide, the report said" (Ruiter, 2017).
Matthew Hernandez	36	"Sacramento police allege that the boy's father, Phillip Raymond Hernandez, 36, is responsible for murdering his nine-year-old son, Matthew Hernandez, as the boy's great-grandmother looked on helplessly" (CBS News, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	37	Dibiah, 37, is being held in the Marion County Jail on a charge of murder (Bradley, 2020).
Phoebe Jonchuck	29	"Jonchuck, 29, was convicted in April of first-degree murder in the 2015 death of his 5-year-old daughter, Phoebe Jonchuck, whom he dropped off the Dick Misener Bridge into Tampa Bay some 60 feet below" (The Ledger, 2019).
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	35	"Aramazd Andressian Sr., 35, was dirty and dusty in April when police found him passed out, the palms of his hands with scratches, fingernails filled with dirt" (Lopez et al., 2017).
Turner Jordan Nelson	40	"Stephen Todd Nelson, 40, received the maximum sentence available after agreeing to plead guilty to second-degree murder and first-degree child abuse resulting in death" (Kay, 2011).

## Appendix B: Results Summary—Fathers' Socioeconomic Status

*Fathers' socioeconomic status at time of filicide to include names of children, data related to socioeconomic status, and the source of information with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Father's Socioeconomic Status</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	No job and no vehicle	"Respondent has no car and no job..." (CNN Wire, 2015).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Gymnast & Former Riverboat Card Dealer; Became a stay-at-home dad as Mother was a doctor.	"He was a gymnast and former riverboat card dealer from California" (Findlay, 2008).
Austin & Logan Jackson	Referenced father having a home and using a vehicle	"Officers who were called to the home at the 14900 block of Hillside Road found two boys dead and their sisters missing around 1pm on Saturday, police said. One of the children was supposed to be at a soccer game Saturday, but didn't show" (Palin, 2020).  "Earlier this evening, one of our troopers overheard Beckham County broadcasting a vehicle matching the description of the amber alert vehicle, getting fuel at the 26 mm on I-40" (Palin, 2020).
Ayden Shackelford	Father had a vehicle.	"According to the state patrol, a car driven by Dustin R. Shackelford, 25, Houston, TX, was going south on Ida Avenue, while a Mack truck owned by Gold-Eagle Co-op and driven by Travis Nickell, 27, Goldfield, was going east on 140th Street" (Belmond Independent, 2014).
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Referenced father having a home.	"The boys, 1-year-old Edward Garcia and 3-year-old Bradley Garcia, were found in the basement of the home, Smith said. He said another 3-year-old boy was also stabbed. The surviving child, who family members said was Bradley's twin, was flown to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Egleston, where he was in serious condition, police said" (WSBTV, 2011)

Names of Children	Father's Socioeconomic Status	Information Source with References
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Served in the military, but never deployed	"Lopez did serve in the military but was never deployed" (Devine & Stickney, 2019).
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	Father lived in an apartment.	"Murphy admitted to stabbing his 8-year-old and 2-year-old sons to death on Oct. 5, 2008, at the Bluebonnet Towers Apartments" (Auzenne, 2010).
Laila Miller	Disabled veteran; there is reference to father living at home with the child's mother.	<p>"Miller, a disabled Marine veteran, stopped twice to shoot at officers as he zoomed through nearby Temple Hills" (Daily Mail, 2014)."</p> <p>"Neighbors say domestic problems were growing at the house. WJZ poured through documents dating back to 2011 showing Miller was engaged in a custody battle with the girl's mother. Investigators say this is the writing on the wall for how easily domestic problems can take a tragic turn" (WJZ News, 2014).</p>
Makenzie Moira Main	Stay at home dad; Served in the Navy and had some college; previously employed.	<p>"The stay-at-home dad told Lake Sheriff's Detective Clay Watkins that he and his wife were getting a divorce. He said he had 'ruined his life' and asked for an attorney" (Stanfield, 2017).</p> <p>"According to his page, he works at Century Link and attended Iowa Central Community College. He also served in the Navy" (Stanfield, 2017).</p>
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	History of odd jobs and multiple moves; however, unknown at time of filicide. He also had a vehicle.	"At 18, Jonchuck was bouncing between friends' houses, working at a strip club, doing drugs" (Solomon et al., 2019).
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix C: Results Summary—Fathers' Mental Health History

*Fathers' mental health history at the time of filicide to include children's names, data, and the source of information with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Father's Mental Health</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	History of depression and suicidal ideations; father died during childhood.	<p>"He said he has suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts for years" (Michallon et al., 2017).</p> <p>"He told Vitale that Tony Moreno had lost his father at 6, 'his best source of unconditional love,' in an industrial accident" (The Middletown Press, 2017).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Increasingly erratic and frightening prior to murders; Mother asked him to receive psychiatric counseling; History of Mental Illness; Prior Custody Dispute with former wife; History of suicide attempts; Self harm post filicide	<p>"But he became increasingly erratic and frightening. Dr. Amy Castillo sought a protective order in Montgomery County District Court on Dec. 25, 2006, and asked that her husband, Mark Anthony Castillo, receive psychiatric counseling because he threatened to kill the children" (The Daily Record, 2008).</p> <p>"Like many people, she had watched her spouse become a different person. He could charm Amy and her neighbors. At the same time, he started doing unusual things, like threatening to take poison. Yet he refused to believe he needed help. Even a brief reunion didn't help. He became bitter and tried to tell other people she was the crazy one. Perhaps he believed it" (Marble, 2021).</p> <p>"He became a stay-at-home dad" (Findlay, 2008).</p> <p>"In 2001, the Castillo's bought a brick split-level house in Silver Spring, Md. Mark Castillo recently worked part time at a state-run sports center in Laurel, Md., where he taught gymnastics" (Findlay, 2008).</p> <p>"...history of mental illness and had been involved in a custody dispute with his former wife" (The Jamestown Sun, 2009).</p> <p>"Even before murdering his children, he attempted suicide once and was also committed twice. Yet a doctor appointed by the court stated, 'The acute risk of harm Mr. Castillo poses to his children is low, provided he continues with his psychotherapeutic treatment'" (Marble, 2021).</p>

Names of Children	Father's Mental Health	Information Source with References
		"Their father, identified by police as Mark Castillo, 41, was taken to University of Maryland Medical Center with what appeared to be minor self-inflicted cuts, authorities said" (Linskey et al., 2008).
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	Possible Paraphilia	"Prosecutors argued that Redwine killed Dylan in a fit of rage after they argued over embarrassing photos of Redwine wearing women's lingerie and eating feces from a diaper. Dylan's older brother testified that Dylan discovered the photos before he went missing" (Nieberg, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Possible PTSD	"Lopez could have been among the first to use a new defense strategy under a new state law which took effect in January. Under the law, a judge could consider dropping charges, if the defendant suffers from a serious mental disorder, including PTSD" (Devine & Stickney, 2019).
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	Head trauma	"Authorities said he suffered severe head trauma in a car crash in 2010 and had been involved in an ongoing custody dispute. "If we can figure that out,

Names of Children	Father's Mental Health	Information Source with References
		we can hopefully stop it from happening in the future," Magaw said" (Collins, 2014).
Makenzie Moira Main	Shortage of oxygen at birth; life of physical and emotional abuse; deep depression; borderline personality disorder	"They also agreed there were at least two mitigating factors in the life of the man marked from birth by a shortage of oxygen, and a life of physical and emotional abuse, deep depression, and borderline personality disorder" (Stanfield, 2022).
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	Unknown; although, father has an extensive criminal history	"It capped a long string of violent behavior authorities were made aware of, according to Kelly and her attorney. Attacks over milk, spinach In 2017, Nakota was kicked in the shin for spilling a glass of milk, Kelly said during the Wednesday news conference. His head also was allegedly pushed into a plate of spinach after he wouldn't eat the greens. In March 2018, Kelly said, her son was pulled down a flight of steps. All of the past incidents she described during the Wednesday news conference were flagged to the department prior to Nakota's death, she said" (Magdaleno, 2022).
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	Father suffered depression and hallucinated because of alcohol withdrawal.	<p>"The defendant attempted to commit suicide by drinking cleaning products upon returning home that night. After he recovered, Nelson told police that demons made him throw Turner off the bridge on Super Bowl Sunday in 2008. A clinical psychologist called as a defense witness testified that Nelson had depression and hallucinated because of alcohol withdrawal" (Kay, 2011).</p> <p>"A Johns Hopkins neuroscientist testified that Nelson was depressed and often hallucinated during the time of the murder" (CBS Baltimore, 2011).</p>

## Appendix D: Results Summary—Fathers’ Criminal History

*Fathers’ criminal history at time of filicide to include the names of children, data, and the sources of information with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Father’s Criminal History</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	-	-
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Ticketed for disturbance	“They lived at Runaway Bay Apartments in Mount Pleasant, where Mark Castillo was ticketed for creating a rush-hour disturbance by hawking a Furby doll in a cage in the median of Johnnie Dodds Boulevard on Dec. 23, 1998. He held a large white sign that said, “Show Me the Money” on one side and “Furby” on the other side, according to a police report” (Findlay, 2008).
Austin & Logan Jackson	Prior dealings with law enforcement; no other specific information	“Leavenworth County Undersheriff Jim Sherley said law enforcement ‘had (prior) dealings’ with Jackson” (Palin, 2020).
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	History of domestic violence	“...search through county court records revealed that Shakir Nunn had filed a restraining order against the children’s mother, Alisha Johnson, in early August — two weeks after Johnson had filed a restraining order against Nunn. The restraining orders appeared to stem from a domestic violence incident in early July in which Johnson was arrested on suspicion of battery on a spouse or cohabitant” (Quintero & Baker, 2017).
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-

Names of Children	Father's Criminal History	Information Source with References
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	Speeding ticket	"Court records show little, except a penchant for getting speeding tickets" (Stanfield, 2017).
Matthew Hernandez	History of violence and arrests; Charged with DV and pleaded no contest; charged with corporal injury on a spouse; Twice charged with corporal injury on a spouse	<p>"Hernandez was granted custody of Matthew and his now-12-year-old brother in 2009 despite a startling history of violence and arrests and their mother claiming he was a dangerous man" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).</p> <p>"In 2004, he was charged with domestic violence and pleaded no contest, and he was sentenced to 120 days in jail and five years of probation. In November 2005, he was again charged with corporal injury on a spouse and sent to prison. He served time between July 2006 and October 2007 and finished parole in November 2008" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).</p> <p>"Hernandez has a criminal background. In 2004, he pleaded no-contest to a charge of corporal injury to a spouse and served two years in state prison, according to Sacramento County court records. He served additional time in prison after he was convicted on the same charge in Yolo County, according to the California Department of Corrections" (TeSelle, 2013).</p>
Nakota Kelly	Long history of violence against the child; Father in the country illegally; Identity theft, social security fraud, and misusing documents; Attempts were made to deport Father, but his home country refused to accept him back.	"It capped a long string of violent behavior authorities were made aware of, according to Kelly and her attorney. Attacks over milk, spinach In 2017, Nakota was kicked in the shin for spilling a glass of milk, Kelly said during the Wednesday news conference. His head also was allegedly pushed into a plate of spinach after he wouldn't eat the greens. In March 2018, Kelly said, her son was pulled down a flight of steps. All of the past incidents she described during the Wednesday

Names of Children	Father's Criminal History	Information Source with References
		<p>news conference were flagged to the department prior to Nakota's death, she said" (Magdaleno, 2022).</p> <p>"Federal court records say Nchama was one of five names Dibiah has used. Records say the Nigerian national's birth name is Ejike Ibe. Dibiah was in the U.S. illegally" (Ryckaert, 2020).</p> <p>"He had stolen the identity of a man named Judson Mbanuzue, according to a criminal complaint filed Aug. 29, 2011, in the U.S. District Court in Indianapolis. Dibiah, authorities said, had lived with Mbanuzue's family for a few months in 2002. The complaint shows Dibiah was using Mbanuzue's name and Social Security number to work, take out loans, file tax returns and rent an apartment in Muncie" (Ryckaert, 2020).</p> <p>"Dibiah served a 34-month sentence in federal prison, federal court records show. A man without a country as his prison sentence was nearing an end in 2014, a judge ordered Dibiah to be deported. But Nigeria, his home country, refused to take him back, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesperson said. It is not clear why Nigeria declined to take Dibiah back. The Nigerian embassy did not respond to IndyStar's request for comment" (Ryckaert, 2020).</p>
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	No criminal history	"Aramazd Andressian Senior had no criminal record. "Never been arrested before, never even received a speeding violation or any kind of ticket," said L.A. County Sheriff's Homicide Detective Louie Aguilera" (True Crime Daily, 2018).
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix E: Results Summary—Fathers’ Threats to Harm Child or Mother

*Fathers’ threats to harm the child or the mother organized by the children’s names, data, and the sources of information with resources.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Threats to Harm Child or Mother (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	<p>Father struck Mother and told her that he could make the 7-month-old disappear.</p> <p>Father told Mother he would put her in the ground and put something on her to make her disintegrate faster.</p> <p>Father called Mother names, shoved her, pushed her and forcefully poked her in the chest.</p> <p>Father told Mother she was not allowed to take their son around her family without his permission.</p>	<p>“Moreno was recently accused of threatening the child and the child’s mother, according to court papers. Oyola alleged in a June restraining order application that the 22-year-old struck her and told her that he could make the 7-month-old disappear” (CNN Wire, 2015).</p> <p>"He told me how he could make me disappear and told me how he could kill me. I sometimes am scared to sleep. He told me he would put me in the ground and put something on me to make me disintegrate faster" (Baltimore Sun, 2015).</p> <p>“In June 2007, Amy Castillo filed an emergency motion to prevent Mark Castillo from having access to the children, records show. The outcome was unclear, but Mark Castillo filed motions to enforce a visitation agreement. Another court date was set for May. Lt. Paul Starks, a Montgomery County police spokesman, said "there was an active agreement for visitation, and he and she were working with that" (Linskey &amp; Fuller, 2008).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Threatened mother that he would kill their children and keep her alive so she would have to live without them.	“She sought a protective order December 25, 2006, and asked that the court order Castillo to receive counseling. "He has never actually hurt [the children], but did tell me that the worst thing he could do to me would be to kill the children and not me so I could live without them," she wrote in the petition. She also wrote that when her husband took the children for visits, he would not tell her where they were staying” (MyDeathSpace, 2008).
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-

Names of Children	Threats to Harm Child or Mother (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Father threatened to burn down the family's house.	“At his preliminary hearing in February 2018, prosecutors said his blood-alcohol level was 0.26 percent when it was taken at the hospital. According to court documents, Henry Lopez had allegedly threatened to burn down the family's home weeks before the fire. In a temporary restraining order obtained by NBC 7, the children's mother, Nikia Lopez, claimed her husband had texted her: 'I will burn all of this (expletive) down,' during a conversation the pair were having about a missing mortgage payment” (Devine & Garske, 2019).
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix F: Results Summary—Fathers' Admissions

*Fathers' admissions (post homicide) organized by children's names, data, and the sources of information with resources.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Admissions of Fathers (Post Homicide) (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	Admitted to throwing his son off the bridge.	"A man whose infant son was found dead in the Connecticut River admitted tossing the boy from a bridge before jumping into the water below, police said Wednesday" (The Columbian, 2015).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Admitted to killing his children.	"The bodies were discovered after the man called hotel security about 1:15 p.m. from his 10th-floor room at the Baltimore Marriott Inner Harbor at Camden Yards, saying that he had killed his children and was considering harming himself, said Officer Troy Harris, a city police spokesman" (Linskey & Fuller, 2008).
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Confessed to killing children.	"Detectives who interviewed Garcia-Nelasco at the hospital for over two hours finally obtained a confession" (Simmon, 2013).
Gary DeToma, Jr.	Admitted to suffocating his son.	"Police said DeToma admitted he suffocated his son, Gary DeToma Jr., inside their Decatur apartment Monday" (WSBT, 2010).
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-

Names of Children	Admissions of Fathers (Post Homicide) (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	Admitted to stabbing his children.	"Murphy admitted to stabbing his 8-year-old and 2-year-old sons to death on Oct. 5, 2008, at the Bluebonnet Towers Apartments" (Auzenne, 2010).
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	Admitted to killing his daughter.	"Jeremy Main, 38, admitted to a Sumter County deputy after he turned himself in on Monday that he killed his daughter and "ruined his life," according to the affidavit. When he arrived at the Sumter County Sheriff's Office substation on County Road 466 in The Villages, he was bleeding from the wrists in a failed attempt to commit suicide, the report said" (Ruiter, 2017).
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	Confessed to suffocating his child.  Father called relatives and confessed to killing his son.	"Dibiah was eventually located in Missouri and then charged with murder on July 20, 2020. Police claim Dibiah confessed to suffocating his son to death inside his apartment before disposing of the child's body" (Johnson, 2022).  "About two hours after that phone call with his mom, according to a probable cause affidavit, Dibiah made a frantic phone call to a relative in Texas. 'I just killed my son!' Dibiah screamed repeatedly into the phone, according to the affidavit. When asked why, records say Dibiah blamed the boy's mother because she 'had given him a very hard time and had cost him a lot of money in court.' The relative called the police" (Ryckaert, 2021).  "Anthony said he used a bag to suffocate his son until he stopped breathing,' IMPD Jonathan Schultz wrote in a probable cause affidavit. Anthony told (the friend) he then took his son to the bathroom to make sure he was dead, and he has now dumped the body. Security footage captured Dibiah making three trips from his apartment on Sunday. He loaded things into his vehicle and dumped a bag into a dumpster" (Ryckert & Evans, 2020).
Phoebe Jonchuck	Father stated that he told his daughter that he would never let anything happen to her but admitted that he did allow it to happen.	"Except in videos they watched. In one, Lazarou asks how he's feeling. 'Kind of sad,' Jonchuck says slowly, his speech slightly slurred. What makes you feel sad? the psychiatrist asks. In the video, Jonchuck hesitates. He says, sniffing, 'Because I was her father, and she loved me so much and I always told her I'd never let anything happen to her. And I did'" (Solomon et al., 2019).

Names of Children	Admissions of Fathers (Post Homicide) (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Confessed to smothering his son.	<p>“Andressian Sr. confessed to smothering his son after a trip to Disneyland” (Cordero, 2022).</p> <p>“Andressian confessed to using a jacket to smother his son, Aramazd Andressian Jr., known as "Piqui" and leaving his body by a tree, according to a probation report obtained by the NBC4 I-Team” (Lopez et al., 2017).</p> <p>“The father ultimately confessed to killing the child because he was angry at his estranged wife” (Lopez, 2020).</p>
Turner Jordan Nelson	Father admitted to Mother that he killed their son because of her and stated that she was now going to have to live with it in her heart.	“After throwing the boy from the bridge, Nelson called Ms. Johnson and told her, 'I killed our son and it's all your fault. You're going to have to live with this in your heart.' Robert Linthicum, one of Nelson's public defenders, said his client also did not want to go through the ordeal of a trial” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2010).

## Appendix G: Results Summary—Fathers’ Denials or Retractions of Admissions

*Denials or retraction of admissions of fathers organized by the victim children’s names, data, and information sources with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Denials of Fathers or Retractions of Admissions (Post Homicide) (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	Pled not guilty	“Tony Moreno has pleaded not guilty to murder charges” (CBS News, 2017).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	Denied killing his son.	“‘Innocent of all charges. Miscarriage of justice. Fake conviction. Sham trial,’ Redwine wrote. ‘... I take this circumstance very seriously and want to make clear that I too have lost a child I love more than life itself. I will fight for true justice, not for myself but for Dylan. I have always shown remorse for the things that I am guilty of. Stand against fake justice’” (AP News, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Blamed Mother’s new boyfriend for killing their children when he was the one to do it.	“A Lawrenceville man accused of stabbing his three young sons, killing two, and then blaming the attack on his ex-girlfriend’s new boyfriend pleaded guilty to murder charges Tuesday in Gwinnett County” (Simmons, 2013).
Gary DeToma, Jr.	Sought to retract confession	“Gary DeToma was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison after he pleaded guilty to suffocating his 5-year-old son. Now he’s trying to convince the Georgia Supreme Court to allow him to withdraw that confession” (Bluestein, 2014).

Names of Children	Denials of Fathers or Retractions of Admissions (Post Homicide) (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Pled not guilty to intentionally setting a fire to his home	“The children were sleeping when the fire erupted. The father was charged with five felonies involving the death of his children, including involuntary manslaughter, child endangerment and the reckless starting of a fire. He pleaded not guilty to all charges in December 2018” (Devine & Stickney, 2019).
Jayson Holland	Father initially stated that he woke up in the morning and found the boy unresponsive.	“Holland's son Jayson Maurice Holland was staying with him for the weekend. On Jan. 26, 2014, Holland woke up the next morning and claimed he found the boy unresponsive, according to police. Authorities said an autopsy and toxicology test revealed a deadly cocktail of drugs in the boy's system, including toxic levels of cocaine, acetaminophen and the active ingredient in Benadryl. A medical examiner ruled the boy's death a homicide, and Holland was later arrested at his home in Hyattsville, Maryland” (ABC7, 2017).
Ju ‘wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	Pled not guilty by reason of insanity.	“Jonchuck has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity” (Helling, 2019).
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Father claimed to be intoxicated by medication and did not remember what happened to his son or how to locate him.	“Andressian told investigators he had ingested a prescription medication that wasn’t his own that morning, deputies said. ‘He did not remember what happened to his child or any details that were useful in locating his son,’ Lt. Joe Mendoza of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department told reporters in May” (Almasy & Mossburg, 2017).  ““I was at the park with my son, and then I found myself waking up in Huntington Memorial Hospital hours later,’ the statement said. ‘I can only speculate that I must have been attacked in the park, given my unresponsive state and

Names of Children	Denials of Fathers or Retractions of Admissions (Post Homicide) (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	subsequent physical condition.' 'My family and I are heartbroken and grief-stricken that Aramazd Jr. is missing and may be in harm's way,' he added" (Almasy & Mossburg, 2017).

## Appendix H: Results Summary—Fathers’ Statements Regarding Mother

*Fathers’ statements regarding mothers organized by the victim children’s names, data, and the sources with resources.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Statements Regarding Mother (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	Stated the mother was self-righteous and manipulative; accused the mother that nothing matters to her; accused the mother of wanting to play games and be childish.	<p>“He should have asked himself why he went from being a great husband to a disturbed man who threatened to harm the children and yet called his wife ‘self-righteous’ and ‘manipulative’” (Marble, 2021).</p> <p>“Clearly nothing that matters to you. And why would I say I need to talk to you if it wasn’t important” (Associated Press, 2015).</p> <p>“No, and again it doesn’t matter now. Just remember you wanted to play games and lie and be childish when I tried to reach out” (CNN Wire, 2015).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Statements Regarding Mother (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	Father posted on social media that he loved the mother of his child.	“Jeremy Main's Facebook page appeared to show a loving husband and father, with photos of him with his daughter Makenzie and posts declaring ‘I love my wife, my angel’” (Ruiter, 2017).
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	Father stated Mother was making accusations against him because she wanted to get her way regarding visitation and child support.	“Kelly's lawsuit says Dibiah told DCS he didn't put his hands on Nakota. He claimed he would verbally discipline him, and that ‘this is all about the mother not getting her way in terms of visitation and child support’ (Magdaleno, 2022).
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Father would say that the mother of his child was not a woman because she was unable to get pregnant without fertility treatment.  Father claimed that Mother set him up and tried to get the cops to suspect him.	“She said that just months before her son's murder, she filed for a restraining order, documenting with the court how Andressian would tell her she was not a woman because she couldn't get pregnant, that he'd hacked into her social media and phone account and threatened Piqui” (Lopez, 2020).  “Andressian turned the focus on his ex-wife as a possible suspect. ‘He felt he had been set up,’ said Det. Boisvert. ‘Anytime we would question him, he would go back and ask us to look at Ana. He would start talking about the divorce, how contentious it was, that he had been followed’” (True Crime Daily, 2018).
Turner Jordan Nelson	Blamed Mother for killing their son.	“After throwing the boy from the bridge, Nelson called Ms Johnson and told her, ‘I killed our son and it's all your fault. You're going to have to live with this in your heart.’ Robert Linthicum, one of Nelson's public defenders, said his client also did not want to go through the ordeal of a trial” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2010).

## Appendix I: Results Summary—Fathers’ Statements Regarding Others

*Fathers’ statements regarding others organized by the victim children’s names, data, and the sources with resources.*

Name of Child	Statements Regarding Others (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with Resources
Aeden Moreno	-	-
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Father made false allegations against Mother's new boyfriend.	<p>“Just days before, Garcia made a threat complaint to police about a man with the last name Cardenas” (WSBTV, 2010).</p> <p>“Channel 2 obtained a Feb. 2 report in which Garcia identified the man as his ex-girlfriend's boyfriend. He said the man called him with the message, ‘I will kill you’” (WSBTV, 2011).</p> <p>“Garcia-Nelasco called 911 on Feb. 9, 2011, and said his children were stabbed and that he had been stabbed in the heart by the boyfriend of the boys’ mother” (Simmons, 2013).</p>
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>Statements Regarding Others (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with Resources</b>
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix J: Results Summary—Fathers’ Statements Regarding Motivation

*Fathers’ statements regarding motivation to include the children’s names, data, and information sources with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Statements Regarding Motivation (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	-	-
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju ‘wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-

Names of Children	Statements Regarding Motivation (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Makenzie Moira Main	Father admitted that he killed his daughter because the mother of his daughter was divorcing him.	<p>“When Jeremy Alan Main called his wife, Holly, Monday to say that he had killed their 18-month-old child, he told her that he did it because she was divorcing him.</p> <p>Main, a stay-at-home dad, told his wife that he killed their daughter because they were getting a divorce, investigators said (Stanfield, 2017).</p>
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	Father killed his child because mother was “giving him a hard time and cost him a lot of money.”	<p>“When asked why, records say Dibiah blamed the boy’s mother because she ‘had given him a very hard time and had cost him a lot of money in court’” (Ryckaert, 2021).</p>
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Father admitted to killing his son because he was angry with his estranged wife, mother of the child.	<p>“The father ultimately confessed to killing the child because he was angry at his estranged wife” (Lopez, 2020).</p>
Turner Jordan Nelson	Father admitted to killing his child to hurt the child’s mother.	<p>“After throwing the boy from the bridge, Nelson called Ms. Johnson and told her, 'I killed our son and it's all your fault. You're going to have to live with this in your heart.' Robert Linthicum, one of Nelson's public defenders, said his client also did not want to go through the ordeal of a trial” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2010).</p>

## Appendix K: Results Summary—Statements Regarding Mental Health

*Statements regarding mental health organized by children’s names with data and information sources plus references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Statements Regarding Mental Health (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	-	-
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Mother recalled Father becoming a different person and began doing unusual things like threatening to take poison.	“Like many people, she had watched her spouse become a different person. He could charm Amy and her neighbors. At the same time, he started doing unusual things, like threatening to take poison. Yet he refused to believe he needed help. Even a brief reunion didn’t help. He became bitter and tried to tell other people she was the crazy one” (Marble, 2021).
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-

Names of Children	Statements Regarding Mental Health (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	<p>Mother reported that Father became paranoid and controlling after she became pregnant with their daughter.</p> <p>Mother reported that she noticed Father became depressed and started sleeping all day.</p> <p>Father also talked about committing suicide.</p>	<p>“I was looking to have another baby,’ Farrington said in a recent deposition. ‘And so that was, you know, a huge motivator on my part. But I don’t even know how it went from being friendly to not,’ she added. ‘I knew that he always wanted to have a family. And what I needed from the relationship, I thought that he could give. Because I know that he’s not like an overachiever workwise. But that’s not what I needed because I can pay my own bills. I needed a caretaker for the baby. Because I had no intention of having a baby and putting her into daycare... for the first, maybe, 60 days, it was fine,’ she said. The problems started when she went to the doctor for the initial exam... he was upset because I was naked in there with another man. And at that point he said he was a dead man, that I just killed him. That if I loved him, I would haven't gone there. I said, ‘Well, this is the best doctor and that’s why I’m going here. I came to learn that he was very controlling. And paranoid. And I would constantly ask him why he was married to me.’ ‘Because I love you,’ he told her. Farrington was often able to work from home as a benefits expert with the Florida Department of Children and Families. Main's job was to take care of the house and the baby when she did have to work in an office. Instead, he was depressed and wanted to sleep all day. He also talked of suicide, but Farrington didn't think he was capable of killing himself” (Standfield, 2019).</p>
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	<p>Father stated that he sometimes hears voices.</p>	<p>“On July 19, Hayley said she got a text from Dibiah's cell phone that read, ‘Sometimes I hear voices, my son is in heaven.’ According to court documents, Hayley contacted DCS after receiving this text, but nobody picked up, so she left a voicemail” (WTHR, 2022).</p>
Phoebe Jonchuck	<p>Father described hearing voices saying that if he and his daughter didn’t die then everybody was going to hell.</p>	<p>“During interviews with a mental health doctor, Jonchuck said, ‘I was hearing voices saying that if me and Phoebe didn’t die, everybody was going to go to hell” (Truesdale, 2018).</p>

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Statements Regarding Mental Health (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix L: Results Summary—Fathers' Crimes Against Others

*Fathers' crimes against others organized by the children's names and information*

*sources with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Crimes Against Others (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with Resources</b>
Aeden Moreno	-	-
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	Children were afraid of their father; if they did not do what he wanted, he would beat them.	"Ramsey said there were several witnesses to Nunn's abuse of Johnson— including their children, who lived in fear of their father. 'All the kids were very scared of him. They thought if they didn't do what he said, they would get beat or get in trouble,' Ramsey said" (Quintero & Baker, 2017).
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-

Names of Children	Crimes Against Others (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with Resources
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	Father behaved violently and attacked his son over a long period of time. Father kicked child in the shin for spilling milk, pushed his head into a plate of spinach, and pulled his son down a flight of stairs.	“It capped a long string of violent behavior authorities were made aware of, according to Kelly and her attorney. Attacks over milk, spinach. In 2017, Nakota was kicked in the shin for spilling a glass of milk, Kelly said during the Wednesday news conference. His head also was allegedly pushed into a plate of spinach after he wouldn't eat the greens. In March 2018, Kelly said, her son was pulled down a flight of steps. All of the past incidents she described during the Wednesday news conference were flagged to the department prior to Nakota's death, she said” (Magdelano, 2022).
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix M: Results Summary—Fathers’ Crimes Against Mother

*Crimes against mothers of their children are organized by the children’s names and information sources with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Crimes Against Mother</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	<p>Father called Mother names, shoved her, pushed and forcefully poked her in the chest.</p> <p>He threatened to assault her more violently.</p> <p>Father would not allow Mother to take their child to see her family.</p> <p>Mother was in fear that Father would hurt their child.</p> <p>Father has a history of domestic violence against Mother.</p>	<p>“He called her ‘ugly’ and ‘stupid’ and shoved, pushed and ‘forcefully poked’ Oyola’s chest, she alleged. She told him to stop hitting her, she said. ‘He told me, ‘If you want me to show you hitting, I could show you,’ she wrote. ‘He has told me I cannot take my son without his approval. I can’t bring him around my family without his approval, but he could do anything he wants without letting me know. I fear for mine and my child’s safety. He could hurt my child’” (CNN Wire, 2015).</p> <p>“Dixon and Police Commissioner Frederick H. Bealefeld III are expected to hold a news conference today at police headquarters. Clifford, the police spokesman, said Mark Castillo seemed to have ‘some history’ of domestic violence” (Linskey &amp; Fuller, 2008).</p> <p>“Court records show a domestic dispute between him and Amy Castillo in December 2006” (Gencer &amp; Fuller, 2008).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	Mother suffered years of abuse at the hands of Father	“Ramsey said her sister endured constant abuse at the hands of Nunn throughout their 20-year relationship” (Quintero & Baker, 2017).

Names of Children	Crimes Against Mother	Information Sources with References
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Mother claimed that Father was abusive and began drinking and cheating on her during their marriage.	“Tensions were high during sentencing on Wednesday, with Lopez’s ex-wife and mother of the two children, Nikia Lopez, speaking to the court for nearly an hour, according to The Tribune. She claimed that her ex was abusive and had begun drinking and cheating while they were still together” (Pruitt, 2020).
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju ‘wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	Domestic problems were growing between Father and Mother.	“Neighbors say domestic problems were growing at the house. WJZ poured through documents dating back to 2011 showing Miller was engaged in a custody battle with the girl’s mother. Investigators say this is the writing on the wall for how easily domestic problems can take a tragic turn” (WJZ News, 2014).
Makenzie Moira Main	Threatened Mother that she was going to have a bad day.	“Jeremy Main, who reportedly called his wife at work and said, “You’re going to have a bad day,” goes on trial this week (Stanfield, 2022).
Matthew Hernandez	<p>Mother stated that Father was acting irrationally and was back on drugs. She was worried for the safety of their children.</p> <p>Father was charged with domestic violence and corporal injury on a spouse</p>	<p>“Jessica went to court last November to request custody of her two children. At a court hearing before Judge Lueras, the mother of two attempted to introduce evidence, including text messages, to support her assertion that her ex-husband was back on drugs, acting irrationally, and posed a threat to their children. Judge Lueras refused to consider the evidence, and denied the custody change request, according to news reports” (Sacramento Family Court Report, 2013).</p> <p>“In 2004, he was charged with domestic violence and pleaded no contest, and he was sentenced to 120 days in jail and five years of probation. In November 2005, he was again charged with corporal injury on a spouse and sent to prison. He served</p>

Names of Children	Crimes Against Mother	Information Sources with References
		time between July 2006 and October 2007 and finished parole in November 2008” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	Father threatened to beat Mother.	“In June 2018, she told DCS that Nakota was present when Dibiah threatened to beat her” (Ryckaert, 2021).
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix N: Results Summary—Relationship Between Father and Mother

*Relationship between father and the mother of his child(ren) organized by the children's names and information sources with references.*

Name of Child	Relationship Between Mother and Father (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Aeden Moreno	<p>The relationship between Mother and Father changed once Mother became pregnant with their child.</p> <p>Father called Mother names, shoved, pushed her, and poked her in the chest.</p> <p>Father demanded that Mother never take their child without his approval.</p> <p>Father demanded that Mother could not bring their child around her family.</p> <p>Father took the child wherever he wanted, and he would not tell Mother where he was going.</p> <p>Mother unsuccessfully applied for a restraining order due to Father's aggressive and erratic behavior.</p> <p>Father left the baby alone on the bed and left the house. Mother moved out of the home she shared with Father after Father allegedly hid Mother's graduation dress.</p>	<p>"Oyola's handwritten complaint says she lived with Moreno for two years and they were happy until she became pregnant. 'Everything changed,' she wrote" (CNN Wire, 2015).</p> <p>"He called her 'ugly' and 'stupid' and shoved, pushed and 'forcefully poked' Oyola's chest, she alleged. She told him to stop hitting her, she said. He told me, 'If you want me to show you hitting I could show you,' she wrote. He has told me I cannot take my son without his approval. I can't bring him around my family without his approval but he could do anything he wants without letting me know. I fear for mine and my child's safety. He could hurt my child" (KFOR News, 2015).</p> <p>"The baby's mother, Adrienne Oyola, a new high school graduate, told police she had unsuccessfully applied for a restraining order on June 17 because Moreno's behavior had become aggressive and erratic. She also told court staff that Moreno had left the infant alone on a bed and left the house. Oyola said she moved out with the baby on June 16, when Moreno allegedly hid her new graduation dress" (Barry, 2015).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	<p>Mother described that Father would not tell her where he was staying with the children during his visitation.</p>	<p>"She sought a protective order December 25, 2006, and asked that the court order Castillo to receive counseling. 'He has never actually hurt [the children], but did tell me that the worst thing he could do to me would be to kill the children and not me so I could live without them,' she wrote in the petition. She also wrote that when her husband took the children for visits, he would not tell her where they were staying" (CBS News, 2008, March 31).</p>

Name of Child	Relationship Between Mother and Father (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	<p>“One of the family's neighbors, Keith Lamirande, 41, said he didn't see the family much. "Cop cars would be called out there with quite a level of frequency ... for what I assume was domestic problems," said Lamirande, who has lived in the area for six years. Police were at the home last week, he added, recalling two police cars rushing to the house” (Gencer, et al., 2008).</p>
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	<p>In general, the family’s home was unusually quiet given there were several children living there, but the home also attracted law enforcement on occasion due to hearing children screaming.</p>	<p>“The Daily Press spoke to several neighbors Friday about the incident, who mentioned the home was unusually quiet for a family with several children — but also attracted attention from law enforcement due to several strange incidents” (Quintero &amp; Baker, 2017).</p> <p>“Wallace said, ‘They are over there quite a bit.’ Several other neighbors reiterated that statement, with some mentioning they heard what seemed like a child screaming on Halloween night, as well as other incidents involving Shakir Nunn. ‘We could hear the child screaming loudly from the bedroom inside my apartment,’ a neighbor who also lived at the apartment complex told the Daily Press who wished to remain anonymous. ‘Lots of (Sheriff’s officials) responded that night, but I don’t know what came out of it.’ ‘One time [Shakir Nunn] came home and kicked the door in,’ Nadine said. ‘He’s a pretty big guy. I’ve heard him yell at the kids a few times very sternly. He seemed to have sole custody of them, though. I never saw a woman there or the mother” (Quintero &amp; Baker, 2017).</p>

Name of Child	Relationship Between Mother and Father (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Mother reported that Father texted her that he will burn all of this (explicative) down during a conversation about missing mortgage payment.	“At his preliminary hearing in February 2018, prosecutors said his blood-alcohol level was 0.26 percent when it was taken at the hospital. According to court documents, Henry Lopez had allegedly threatened to burn down the family’s home weeks before the fire. In a temporary restraining order obtained by NBC 7, the children’s mother, Nikia Lopez, claimed her husband had texted her: ‘I will burn all of this (expletive) down,’ during a conversation the pair were having about a missing mortgage payment” (Devine & Stickney, 2019).
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju ’wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	<p>Father admitted that he and wife were having marital problems.</p> <p>Mother realized overtime that Father was paranoid and wanted to control everything.</p> <p>Father implied that his marriage to Mother was more important than his daughter.</p>	<p>“According to the arrest document, he ‘admitted to having marital problems with his wife,’ Holly Main, 37” (Ruiter, 2017).</p> <p>“She also explained that at the time of her marriage to this man, she never imagined ‘that there could be a ticking time bomb inside him.’ But she realized over time that Jeremy Main was paranoid and wanted to control everything. A week before Makenzie’s death, during a conversation in which the couple tried to explain themselves, the father reportedly told his wife: ‘I can’t believe I just lost the last thing. most important in my life. ‘You know, that’s not really the case. I shouldn’t be the most</p>

Name of Child	Relationship Between Mother and Father (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Matthew Hernandez	There was a history of Father not seeing his children.	important thing in your life. She should be,' Holly Farrington reportedly replied, referring to their daughter. 'You really don't know me well, do you?' the defendant reportedly concluded" (GetToText, 2022).  He wrote to the judge: 'It's been over three years since I last saw them. They are what matter, my view of life and what is important. I love them with all of my heart, and I want to give what I didn't have - a father.' But in 2012, their mother launched another fight to win full custody of the boys (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	Child disclosed abuse to DCS, but DCS did not substantiate because there were no marks on the child.  Father was angry because Mother let their son play baseball, which made the child late for Father's parenting time.  Father threatened he would call the police and take her to court for not bringing the child to him on time.  Mother thought Father would hurt him physically, or abduct him, but she never imagined he would kill him.  Father was difficult to deal with when he did not get what he wanted, and Nakota's mother would typically do what he wanted.  Father threatened to beat Mother; Nakota reported that he was scared to go to Father's home because he would be abused; Child reported to DCS that Father would hit him and yell at him.	"Kelly's lawsuit says Dibiah told DCS he didn't put his hands on Nakota. He claimed he would verbally discipline him, and that 'this is all about the mother not getting her way in terms of visitation and child support.' Allegations of physical abuse went unsubstantiated by DCS. The department said that the child was free from marks and bruises" (Magdaleno, 2022).  "Dibiah had another reason to be angry: Nakota's mother let their son play baseball, which meant his visit with his father would start a few hours late. Dibiah, she said, was welcome to attend Nakota's game, but he was unwilling or unable to make the two-hour drive from Indianapolis to Wabash. Dibiah told her he wanted his son at the time set by the judge. He threatened to call the police and take her to court. 'If I don't get my son today, I will take necessary actions including involving the police,' Dibiah said in a text to Kelly sent at 10:01 a.m. July 17, 2020" (Ryckaert, 2021).  "I feared he would hurt him and put marks on him and would run with him,' Kelly said. 'I never thought he would kill him' (Hays, 2022).
Phoebe Jonchuck	Mother's and Father's relationship was rocky and full of drugs and fights.	"Their relationship was rocky, riddled with drugs and fights" (Solomon, et al., 2019).

Name of Child	Relationship Between Mother and Father (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Not long after their son was born, the parents' marriage soured. They divorced and shared custody of their son. The parents would always exchange in a neutral location. Mother installed a dash-cam on her car to record the exchanges. Overall, the divorce was described as bitter.	"Not long after Piqui was born, the marriage between Ana and Aramazd soured. The couple divorced, and the court ordered joint custody. Under the terms of the visitation agreement, the couple was to exchange the child on neutral turf. "There was always a mutual agreement to meet at either a police station or somewhere in public," said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Detective Louie Aguilera. The divorce was a bitter one. Ana didn't trust Aramazd. She had a dash-cam installed in her car to record all exchanges of the child (True Crime Daily, 2018).
Turner Jordan Nelson	<p>Mother left Father because she no longer loved him and was intimidated by his drinking problem.</p> <p>Mother stated that she did not want her son growing up around that kind of behavior.</p> <p>They lived with each other for years before having their baby, and stayed together for about 6 months after the baby was born.</p>	<p>"She said she was shocked by Nelson's apparent suicide attempt. She left him about three years ago, she said, because she no longer loved him and was intimidated by his drinking problem. She said she did not want her son growing up around that kind of behavior. The couple met in 2000 and lived for a couple of years in Rock Hill, S.C., before moving back to their native Baltimore. They were together, she said, until six months or so after the birth of their son - whom they called T.J. - on Sept. 23, 2004. She did not completely move out of his home on Janper Court in Baltimore County until she was granted custody of Turner in May 2006" (Sentementes &amp; Madigan, 2008).</p>

#### Appendix O: Results Summary—Restraining Orders or Orders of Protection

*Cases involving restraining orders or orders of protections organized by children's names and information sources with references.*

Name of Child	Restraining Orders or Orders of Protection (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with Resources
Aeden Moreno	Mother was afraid he was going to do something to her son; Mother applied for a temporary restraining order.	A search began to find the child. Mom: 'I'm afraid he's going to do something to my son' documents show that a temporary restraining order was applied for on June 17 (CNN Wire, 2015, July 9).

Name of Child	Restraining Orders or Orders of Protection (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with Resources
		<p>“The boy's mother, Adrienne Oyola, 19, filed for a restraining order last month against Moreno amid a bitter custody dispute. She said in the application that Moreno "has told me he could make my son disappear any time of the day. He told me how he could make me disappear" (Associated Press, 2015, July 8).</p>
<p>Anthony, Austin, &amp; Athena Castillo</p>	<p>Judge denied Mother’s request for a permanent restraining order despite Father’s erratic behavior.</p>	<p>“Leading Up to the Murders on Saturday, March 29, 2008, Mark Castillo (not the heavy metal drummer) went to the Silver Spring, Maryland, house owned by his ex-wife, Dr. Amy Castillo, a pediatrician, to pick up their children for a scheduled visit. For once, she thought it would be OK. Although his behavior had been troubling, he looked fine on that day. Not that she had the power to stop him from seeing his children. The courts had not granted her a permanent protective order, not even when she described his erratic behavior. She had little choice but to let him take the children (Anthony, age 6; Austin, age 4; and Athena, age 2)” (Marble, 2021).</p>
<p>Austin &amp; Logan Jackson</p>	-	-
<p>Ayden Shackelford</p>	<p>Mother received a protective order against Father the day before the accident.</p> <p>Father violated the restraining order and took the couple’s children without Mother’s permission.</p>	<p>“Ashley Shackelford had received a protective order against Dustin the day before the accident” (Belmond Independent, 2014).</p> <p>“The station reported that the Britt Police Department received a report of a custody dispute from Ashley Shackelford who said Dustin Shackelford went against his restraining order and took his two kids without permission” (KCCI News, 2014).</p>
<p>Chad “CJ” Johnson</p>	-	-
<p>Dominic Nunn</p>	-	-
<p>Dylan Redwine</p>	-	-
<p>Edward &amp; Bradley Garcia</p>	-	-

Name of Child	Restraining Orders or Orders of Protection (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with Resources
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	The children's mother sought a temporary restraining order.	"At his preliminary hearing in February 2018, prosecutors said his blood-alcohol level was 0.26 percent when it was taken at the hospital. According to court documents, Henry Lopez had allegedly threatened to burn down the family's home weeks before the fire. In a temporary restraining order obtained by NBC 7, the children's mother, Nikia Lopez, claimed her husband had texted her: 'I will burn all of this (expletive) down,' during a conversation the pair were having about a missing mortgage payment'" (Devine & Stickney, 2019).
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	Judge denied Mother's request for a restraining order despite Mother's reports of Father being back on drugs, acting irrationally, and posing a threat to their children.	"Jessica went to court last November to request custody of her two children. At a court hearing before Judge Lueras, the mother of two attempted to introduce evidence, including text messages, to support her assertion that her ex-husband was back on drugs, acting irrationally, and posed a threat to their children. Judge Lueras refused to consider the evidence, and denied the custody change request, according to news reports. 'I blame her for Matthew's death,' Jessica told News10" (Sacramento Family Court Reporter, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Mother was fearful of every move she made; she tried to get a restraining order against Father just months before he killed him.	"I was fearful of every move I made because the judge always believed everything that he said,' Estevez said. She said that just months before her son's murder, she filed for a restraining order, documenting with the court how Andressian would tell her she was not a woman

Name of Child	Restraining Orders or Orders of Protection (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with Resources
		because she couldn't get pregnant, that he'd hacked into her social media and phone account and threatened Piqui” (Lopez, 2020).
Turner Jordan Nelson	Mother filed for a protective order due to him leaving notes on her car and calling her names. Without explanation, Mother withdrew her complaint a few days later.	“A year later, in May 2007, she filed a domestic violence complaint against him and was granted a temporary protective order. She said there had been no violence but that he had ‘acted threatening’ and she was afraid of him. ‘He has left notes on my car, call me names when I don't do what he wants me to do,’ she wrote by hand in the court document. Without explanation, she withdrew her complaint in a few days. All along, the documents say, Nelson and Johnson had been sparring over their son, about who was best equipped to take care of him” (Sentementes & Madigan, 2008).

#### Appendix P: Results Summary—Court Ordered or Stipulated Parenting Plans

*Court orders and stipulated parenting time between the fathers and mothers organized by the children's names and information sources with references.*

Name of Child	Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Aeden Moreno	Mother and Father worked out a custody agreement.	“The boy's mother, Adrienne Oyola, 20, testified Wednesday that her relationship with Moreno took a turn when she refused his marriage proposal in June 2015. The two worked out a custody agreement for Aeden, and it was Moreno's turn with his son the day Moreno had the child at the bridge” (Michallon, et al., 2017).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Judge ordered Father to have supervised visitation. Judge ordered Father out of the home and to have no contact with Mother.	“A judge had ordered that Mark Castillo's visits with the children be supervised. In September 2006, a Montgomery County circuit judge ordered that Mark Castillo undergo a psychological review, and later court entries show that he was undergoing therapy. But that December, when domestic violence issues emerged, a court ordered that Mark Castillo leave the home and have no contact with Amy Castillo” (Linskey & Fuller, 2008) .

Name of Child	Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	Father had court ordered parenting time.	"During the five-week trial, prosecutors said Dylan was last seen the night of Nov. 18, 2012, just before he went to visit his father. Friends and family testified that he was not looking forward to the trip. 'He did not want to see his father,' Cristen Baird, who dated Dylan at the time, testified during the trial. 'He was mandated by the court order to come to see his dad... He was not excited'" (Melendez, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	Father and Mother were due to finalize a custody agreement just prior to Father killing their son.	"The DeTomas had been married six years and were set to finalize a custody agreement last week. The boys' mother, Melanie DeToma, grew concerned when Gary DeToma failed to return the two boys on the morning of July 12. She notified police who went to DeToma's apartment but saw nothing out of the ordinary" (Black, 2010).
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-

Name of Child	Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Matthew Hernandez	Father was granted custody of his children.	“Hernandez was granted custody of Matthew and his now-12-year-old brother in 2009 despite a startling history of violence and arrests and their mother claiming he was a dangerous man. Police said that an initial investigation revealed that Hernandez went into the backyard of his home and grabbed a hatchet. He then broke a sliding glass door and found his son asleep on the couch. The other son was home but harmed during the attack. The hatchet was recovered at the scene” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	Judge ordered parents into mediation; the parents reached an agreement to never withhold parenting time if they suspect abuse or other issues and would have the court deal with it.	“Kelly asked the Wabash Circuit Court to require Nakota's visits with Dibiah be supervised on July 5, 2018, according to documents she provided to IndyStar. Instead, the court ordered the parents to meet with a mediator. On Nov. 30, 2018, records provided to IndyStar show Dibiah and Kelly signed a mediation agreement in which they agreed to set aside prior disputes and "to never withhold parenting time if they suspect abuse (or) other issues and will let the court deal with it" (Ryckaert, 2020).
Phoebe Jonchuck	After Mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Father agreed to take care of their daughter.	“Kerr was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis soon after Phoebe was born and became unable to drive. So, when they split up, Jonchuck said he would take care of their daughter” (Solomon, et al., 2019).
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Court ordered joint custody for the parents.	<p>"Once again, the evidence was ignored. My request for sole custody with supervised visits was denied, and eight days later, my ex-husband murdered my son," said Estevez. This would be the first of many steps toward meaningful reform, she said. "If what happened to my son can help other children, then I know that he is smiling down from heaven” (Munoz, 2022).</p> <p>“Not long after Piqui was born, the marriage between Ana and Aramazd soured. The couple divorced, and the court ordered joint custody. Under the terms of the visitation agreement, the couple was to exchange the child on neutral turf. "There was always a mutual agreement to meet at either a police station or somewhere in public," said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Detective Louie Aguilera. The divorce was a bitter one. Ana didn't trust Aramazd. She had a dash-cam installed in her car to record all exchanges of the child (True Crime Daily, 2018).</p>

---

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>Court Ordered and Stipulated Parenting Time (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

---

## Appendix Q: Results Summary—DV Advocacy Comments

*DV advocacy comments organized by the children's names and information sources with references.*

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>DV Advocacy Comments (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Sources with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	<p>Domestic violence experts understand these tragedies are avoidable. Mother sought a protective order based on Father's history of abuse and threats against Mother and their child, but the court did not grant the request.</p>	<p>"The child's mother had sought a protective order based on the father's history of abuse and threats against the mother and child. It is natural to want to believe this is a rare exception and the father was some kind of monster, but domestic violence experts understand these avoidable tragedies are all too common" (Vargas &amp; Goldstein, 2015).</p>
	<p>Research demonstrates at least 75% of contested custody cases involve domestic violence, yet there have been no reforms adopted to ensure the protection of children</p>	<p>"In many cases, like this one, a court ruling gave the father the access he needed to kill the child. In Connecticut, five children were slain since 2008 by abusive fathers involved in contested custody. The research demonstrates at least 75 percent of contested custody cases involve domestic violence, but the courts have yet to adopt evidence-based responses to abuse cases" (Vargas &amp; Goldstein, 2015).</p>
	<p>Those uneducated in domestic violence believe the death of a child is an exception.</p>	<p>"Prof. Bartlow interviewed the best judges who were most informed about domestic violence because they were the most interested and therefore willing to take the time to be interviewed. In answer to the question, no reforms had been undertaken because the judges all believed the tragedy in their community was an exception (Vargas &amp; Goldstein, 2015).</p>
	<p>Judges need to be more educated about the dynamics of domestic violence.</p>	<p>"We cannot forget about little Aaden Moreno and dismiss his killing as still another exception. No judge wants to be responsible for hurting children and surely Judge Barry Pinkus is heartbroken over his role in Aaden's death. In the transcript, Judge Pinkus denied the protective order because there wasn't a continuous threat of present pain or injury. Obviously, the judge could not save the child using the standard court responses but might have benefited from learning about domestic violence dynamics. There is now a substantial body of scientific research that would make judges' jobs easier, but our children will not be protected until we rely on domestic violence experts instead of general practitioners and</p>

Name of Child	DV Advocacy Comments (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
		integrate this important research into the standard practices. The ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Research from the Centers for Disease Control establishes that children exposed to domestic violence and child abuse live shorter lives and suffer more illnesses and injuries” (Vargas & Goldstein, 2015).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju ‘wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-

Name of Child	DV Advocacy Comments (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Matthew Hernandez	Advocates have long asserted that the court operates on a two-track system of justice where people with representation receive preferential treatment compared to those without an attorney.	"I blame her for Matthew's death," Jessica told News10. Jessica Hernandez did not have an attorney and represented herself in court. Sacramento Family Court watchdogs have long asserted that the court operates a two-track system of justice where members of the Sacramento County Bar Association Family Law Section and their clients receive preferential treatment from judges, court employees and at court hearings, while indigent, unrepresented litigants are treated as second-class citizens and often prohibited from exercising basic rights, such as introducing or objecting to evidence (Sacramento Family Court News, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Piqui's law would prohibit reunification therapy with fathers facing criminal charges.	<p>"The bill would also prohibit programs sometimes known as therapy reunification workshops in child custody or visitation rights proceedings. 'In at least two recent cases in California and Florida, children were sent to reunify with one father facing criminal charges and one under investigation for child pornography,' said Kathleen Russell, founding executive director of the Center for Judicial Excellence" (Munoz, 2022).</p> <p>Piqui's law protects children in family court by prohibiting courts from ordering certain services and treatments, as well as ensuring critical training for judicial officers (California Protective Parents Association, 2025).</p>
Turner Jordan Nelson	The State's attorney described the crime as a vengeful act intended to cause pain to the mother.	"But Julie Drake, the state's attorney's office's felony family violence division chief, described the crime as a vengeful act intended to cause pain to Turner's mother, Natisha Johnson, with whom Turner had disputes over visitation and child support. Drake said Nelson had not spoken of seeing demons before this incident" (Kay, 2011).

## Appendix R: Results Summary—Authorities' Underestimated Threats

*Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) underestimated threat organized by the children's names and information sources with references.*

Name of Child	Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Aeden Moreno	<p>Judge granted a temporary order of protection but rejected a permanent order stating that there was no clear and convincing evidence that the alleged acts of abuse occurred.</p> <p>Authorities believed that Father was of no threat.</p> <p>Judge stated that Father presented no contentious threat to the mother and child.</p>	<p>“Circuit Judge Joseph Dugan granted a temporary protective order but rejected a permanent order on Jan. 10, 2007. In explaining his decision, Dugan wrote there was “no clear or convincing evidence that the alleged acts of abuse occurred” (Findlay, 2008).</p> <p>“The June 25 contact involved Moreno talking to child’s mother, but no threats were made, Desmond said. “If this [contact] was a violent case and we thought there was imminent danger, then we would have walked the warrant over and said to the prosecutor, ‘Here, sign this,’” Desmond said. “But this was a case where the two of them just talked. There was no threat.” Moreno is at Hartford Hospital, where he was alert and stable, authorities said” (Edwards, 2015).</p> <p>“Respondent has no car and no job, and had smashed his own phone earlier that day,” the document reads. “I left the order of protection with the respondent’s mother who said she was trying to locate him and the child,” it says. The mother said she would bring the child to Middletown Police Department” (CNN Wire, 2015, July 9).</p> <p>“I’m just not convinced that there’s a continuous threat of present physical pain or physical injury,’ Pinkus said at the hearing. ‘I think the two of you don’t have a good relationship.’ With a temporary restraining order terminated, the judge advised the couple to file a custody application that sorted out a parental rights agreement and child support order for Aaden. Pinkus has declined to comment on his decision” (Baltimore Sun, 2015, July 7).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	<p>Mother called police when Father did not bring the children back; the police stated that they</p>	<p>“Meanwhile, his wife, Amy, called the authorities because her former husband had not brought back their children at the appointed time. But they told her they couldn’t help her, even as she called again on</p>

Name of Child	Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
	were unable to assist her and to call back on Monday.	Sunday. They told her to call back on Monday if he still hadn't brought back the children" (Marble, 2021).
Austin & Logan Jackson	Sheriff department simply described Father as estranged from his wife with on and off again access to the children. The two older children were later found dead.	"Maj. James Sherley, of the Leavenworth County Sheriff's Department, said 40-year-old Donny Jackson and his wife are estranged and that he had 'on-again, off-again access to the children.' The investigation began at around 1:30 p.m. Saturday after one of the siblings didn't show up for a soccer game, leading the children's mother and paternal grandmother to go to Jackson's home in Leavenworth, which is about 20 miles (32 kilometers) northwest of Kansas City, Kansas. The bodies of 14-year-old Logan Jackson and 12-year-old Austin Jackson were then found — one by the family and the other by law enforcement" (Hollingsworth, 2020).
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-

Name of Child	Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	<p>Judge admitted that she had no knowledge of family law when she took the bench. She granted custody of the child to a father that had a long history of domestic violence against the mother.</p>	<p>“A month after the Hernandez hearing, in a farewell letter to attorneys from the Sacramento County Bar Association Family Law Section, Lueras confessed that when she was assigned to the Family Relations Courthouse, she had no knowledge of family law. ‘[I] am sure it is no secret that I did not volunteer for my family law assignment,’ the judge wrote in the Family Law Counselor, a newsletter written by and for the Family Law Bar. ‘In fact, when I was first told that my new assignment would be family law, I was a bit stunned. I had never practiced family law, knew nothing about the subject matter, other than the fact that I have been divorced myself - I had never stepped into the family law courthouse...Coming from a primarily criminal law background, I was accustomed to the black letter law where judges are given some discretion. However, I have never seen the broad discretion that is afforded family law judges. To me this was a monumental responsibility. I did not know if I would be up for the task of always making the right decision and doing the right thing.’ Lueras closed the letter by thanking the lawyers for putting up with her. ‘Finally, I want to thank all of the individuals I have met in the past two years. You have put up with a new family law judge and presented her with the most challenging issues she has ever faced and because of this have hopefully made her a better judge,’ she said” (Sacramento Family Court News, 2013).</p> <p>“Court records show Hernandez and his ex-wife, who married in January 2001 and separated in April 2004, had a turbulent relationship with each other and the courts. In 2004, he was charged with domestic violence and pleaded no contest, and he was sentenced to 120 days in jail and five years of probation. In November 2005, he was again charged with corporal injury on a spouse and sent to prison. He served time between July 2006 and October 2007 and finished parole in November 2008. After his release, Hernandez fought for custody of the boys,</p>

Name of Child	Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Nakota Kelly	<p>Mother asked the court to order supervised parenting time for father and child, but the judge ordered them to mediation instead.</p> <p>Father’s attorneys argued that the police did not have a right to enter his home without a warrant when a second welfare check for the child was called and indicated that the father murdered his child.</p> <p>The police did not enter the home the first time they received a call about a welfare check.</p>	<p>CBS Sacramento reported” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013). .</p> <p>“Kelly asked the Wabash Circuit Court to require Nakota's visits with Dibiah be supervised on July 5, 2018, according to documents she provided to IndyStar. Instead, the court ordered the parents to meet with a mediator. On Nov. 30, 2018, records provided to IndyStar show Dibiah and Kelly signed a mediation agreement in which they agreed to set aside prior disputes and "to never withhold parenting time if they suspect abuse (or) other issues and will let the court deal with it” (Ryckaert, 2020).</p> <p>“INDIANAPOLIS — A claim that officers with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department had no right to enter the apartment of 10-year-old Nakota Kelly’s father has been denied. Attorneys for Anthony Dibiah filed a motion asking a Marion County judge to prevent evidence found by officers from being presented. They argued the officers had no justification to enter without a warrant. According to IMPD, officers were dispatched on July 19, 2020, around 11:45 a.m. for a welfare check of a child at an apartment in the 6000 block of West Lake South Drive. The welfare check happened after authorities received two phone calls where callers claimed that Dibiah had murdered his son” (Johnson, 2022).</p> <p>“According to the affidavit, several unidentified Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officers went to Dibiah’s apartment at 10:11pm on July 18, 2020, to check on the boy’s welfare. Police knocked but no one answered. The officers heard someone inside and saw Dibiah’s Jeep Patriot parked in the lot. Police did not go inside. ‘Officers determined they did not have reason to force entry and they left the building,’ Detective Jonathon Schultz wrote in the affidavit” (Ryckaert, 2021).</p>
Phoebe Jonchuck	<p>Police interviewed the father at the church where he went begging to be baptized; they decided he was ok and let him go with the child. Hours later, she was dead.</p>	<p>“That's why he went to a custody lawyer that last day, before Phoebe died. He told the lawyer, Genevieve Torres, he was the creator and asked her to read the Swedish Bible. The lawyer called police and child protective services. A Department of Children and Families hotline worker decided not to send anyone to talk to him. But deputies responded</p>

Name of Child	Authorities (other than Child Protective Services) Underestimated Threat (Sub-Theme)	Information Sources with References
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	<p>Mother was afraid because the judge always seemed to believe the father over her.</p> <p>Mother contacted the police to report her son missing. The police suspected the father harmed the child, but did not have enough evidence to arrest him.</p>	<p>that afternoon and interviewed Jonchuck at a church where he went begging for a baptism. They decided he was okay, then let him go, with Phoebe. Hours later, she was dead” (Solomon, et al., 2019).</p> <p>“I was fearful of every move I made because the judge always believed everything that he said,’ Estevez said. She said that just months before her son’s murder, she filed for a restraining order, documenting with the court how Andressian would tell her she was not a woman because she couldn’t get pregnant, that he’d hacked into her social media and phone account and threatened Piqui” (Lopez, 2020).</p> <p>“One spring morning the couple agreed on a rendezvous point for Aramazd Andressian to pick up his son for a trip to Disneyland. Piqui, 5, and his father had a full week to spend together. ‘He was supposed to return the child after seven days and the return was supposed to take place in San Marino at 8 that morning,’ said Det. Aguilera. Ana arrived at the designated location anxious to see her son. ‘She waited for hours at this drop-off place in San Marino to receive her child,’ said Aguilera. But father and son never arrived. Ana had not heard a word from either of them. ‘Obviously Ana became very, very concerned. She reported to the police that her son was missing,’ said L.A. County Deputy District Attorney Craig Hum” (True Crime Daily, 2018).</p> <p>“But authorities suspected Andressian did harm his child, and even though they didn’t have the evidence to arrest him, they never let him out of their sight. ‘What the detectives did was spend the next two months just building a case, piece by piece, watching his behavior, talking with other people who knew him,’ said L.A. County Deputy D.A. Craig Hum” (True Crime Daily, 2018).</p>
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

## Appendix S: Results Summary—Comments of Court During Sentencing

*Comments of court during sentencing organized by the children's names and information sources with references.*

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>Comments of Court during Sentencing (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	Not only did you violently and intentionally kill your 7-month-old son, but you taunted his mother as you committed the act with text messages that were aptly described as 'demonic' — just so you could add to her unfathomable grief	"Not only did you violently and intentionally kill your 7-month-old son, but you taunted his mother as you committed the act with text messages that were aptly described as 'demonic' — just so you could add to her unfathomable grief," Judge Vitale said at the sentencing, (Middletown Press, 2017).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	<p>"As a father, it's your obligation to protect your son and keep him from harm"</p> <p>"And instead of that, you inflicted enough injury on him to kill him in your living room. After the passion of whatever caused you to act the way you did subsided, you didn't think about Dylan. You thought about yourself. You sanitized the crime scene. You hid Dylan's body, and you went so far as to remove the head from the rest of his body"</p>	<p>"Footage of the sentencing shows Judge Jeffrey Wilson remarking on Redwine's lack of remorse and telling the killer he failed his teenage son. 'As a father, it's your obligation to protect your son and keep him from harm,' Wilson told Redwine ahead of the sentencing. 'And instead of that, you inflicted enough injury on him to kill him in your living room. After the passion of whatever caused you to act the way you did subsided, you didn't think about Dylan. You thought about yourself. You sanitized the crime scene. You hid Dylan's body, and you went so far as to remove the head from the rest of his body.' He further chastised Redwine for showing no emotion in court. 'After all this time and listening to what was heard in this</p>

Name of Child	Comments of Court during Sentencing (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with References
	<p>“After all this time and listening to what was heard in this courtroom, you still take absolutely no responsibility for what you did to Dylan”</p> <p>“I have trouble remembering a convicted criminal defendant that has shown such an utter lack of remorse for his criminal behavior”</p>	<p>courtroom, you still take absolutely no responsibility for what you did to Dylan,’ Wilson said. ‘I have trouble remembering a convicted criminal defendant that has shown such an utter lack of remorse for his criminal behavior” (Harris, 2017).</p>
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	<p>Judge said to the father that he had “completely and utterly failed to accept responsibility for his actions.”</p>	<p>“Superior Court Judge Steven Stone intervened and later gave Lopez the maximum sentence, saying he had ‘completely and utterly failed to accept responsibility for his actions””(Associated Press, 2020).</p>
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju ‘wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	-	-
Nakota Kelly	-	-
Phoebe Jonchuck	-	-
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	-	-

---

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>Comments of Court during Sentencing (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

---

## Appendix T: Results Summary—Convictions and Sentencing

*Convictions and sentencing of fathers organized by the children’s names and information sources with references.*

<b>Names of Children</b>	<b>Convictions and Sentencing (Sub-Theme)</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	Sentenced to 70 years.	“The sentence dealt to Moreno includes 60 years for his son’s murder and 10 years on the conviction for risk of injury” (Truesdell, 2018).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Sentenced to three consecutive life terms without parole. Judge recommended he be sent to a mental health facility.	“Oct 14, 2009, Mark Castillo finally pled guilty to the murders. He received three consecutive life terms without the possibility of parole. The judge recommended that he be sent to Patuxent Institution in Jessup, Maryland, because of its mental health facilities” (Bishop, 2009).
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	-	-
Dylan Redwine	Sentenced to 48 years in prison.	“Mark Redwine, the Vallecito father who was found guilty this summer of killing his 13-year-old son, Dylan, was sentenced Friday to 48 years in prison” (Benjamin, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Sentenced to life in prison and eligible for parole in 30 years.	“Elvis Noe Garcia-Nelasco, 25, was sentenced by Chief Superior Court Judge Melodie Snell Conner to life in prison. Gwinnett County District Attorney Danny Porter said that Garcia-Nelasco would be eligible for parole in 30 years (Benjamin, 2021).
Gary DeToma, Jr.	Sentenced to life in prison	“Gary DeToma was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison after he pleaded guilty to suffocating his 5-year-old son” (Bluestein, 2014).
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Sentenced to 13 years in prison.	“On September 16, 2019, a jury convicted Lopez of all charges. He was later sentenced to serve nearly 13 years in prison. An appellate court later looked at the claims that

Names of Children	Convictions and Sentencing (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with References
		<p>Lopez's phone caused the deadly fire but ruled that the 'iPhone malfunctioning was limited to Lopez's equivocal statement to Burow that he sometimes kept the phone under his pillow. Lopez, however, was badly discredited in the interview, during which he lied about his consumption of alcohol the night of the fire.' The court denied Lopez's appeal" (Hargrove, 2022).</p> <p>"Lopez was found guilty in September of two counts of involuntary manslaughter, two counts of child endangerment, and one count of recklessly causing a fire, The Baltimore Sun reports" (Pruit, 2020).</p>
Jayson Holland	Sentenced to 10 years.	"A Maryland father who was accused of killing his son with a lethal drug cocktail in Jan. 2014 was sentenced to 10 years in prison on Monday" (ABC7, 2017).
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	Sentenced to two consecutive life terms.	"The man who killed his two children in retaliation to his wife leaving will spend the rest of his life in prison. District Court Judge Don Johnson sentenced Clayton Murphy Jr., 30, to two consecutive life terms Wednesday morning after a plea bargain spared him from the death penalty" (WAFB News, 2008).
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	The jury rejected the death penalty, and sentenced father to 26 years to life.	"Jurors Friday rejected the state's bid for the death penalty for Jeremy Main, the man who drowned his 17-month-old baby in 2017 when his wife told him she wanted a divorce. They unanimously agreed that the act was heinous, atrocious, and cruel, and agreed with the statutory aggravators that Makenzie was younger than 12 and she was killed by a family member. But they rejected the notion that he had committed the murder in a cold, calculated premeditated way. They also agreed there were at least two mitigating factors in the life of the man marked from birth by a shortage of oxygen, and a life of physical and emotional abuse, deep depression, and borderline personality disorder" (Stanfield, 2022).
Matthew Hernandez	Sentenced to 26 years to life.	"In March, Phillip Raymond Hernandez was convicted by a Sacramento jury of first-degree murder and the use of a weapon in the Feb. 26, 2013, slaying of Matthew Hernandez. Phillip Hernandez received 26-years-to-life in prison" (KXTV Staff, 2015).
Nakota Kelly	-	-

Names of Children	Convictions and Sentencing (Sub-Theme)	Information Source with References
Phoebe Jonchuck	Sentenced to life in prison	“John Jonchuck is guilty of first-degree murder, a jury ruled Tuesday and should spend the rest of his life in prison for dropping his daughter, Phoebe, off a bridge into the chilly, dark waters of Tampa Bay. He was not facing the death penalty” (Solomon et al., 2019).
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Sentenced to 25 years to life.	A California man who had pleaded guilty to first-degree murder in the death of his 5-year-old son was sentenced Wednesday to 25 years to life (Almasy & Mossburg, 2017).
Turner Jordan Nelson	Sentenced to 50 years	“A man who killed his three-year-old son by throwing him off a bridge in Baltimore will receive a maximum of 50 years in prison under a plea bargain” (Kay, 2011).

## Appendix U: Results Summary—Child Protective Services’ Failures

*Child Protective Services’ Failure is organized by the children’s names and information sources with references.*

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>Child Protective Services’ (CPS’) Failure</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	CPS failed to submit anything that would allow the court to extend the restraining order.  CPS failed to follow-up and conduct a second safety assessment after the restraining order ended.	“Court documents filed on behalf of the estate of Aaden Moreno According to the paperwork, lawyers for Oyola and the Aaden Moreno estate allege that DCF was negligent and failed to adequately protect the baby, resulting in his death. The request claims ‘They failed to submit anything that would allow the court to extend the restraining order.’ It also claims ‘DCF failed to follow-up... in order to conduct a second safety assessment after the restraining order ended.’ The first assessment was done while the restraining order was in place and Moreno was banned from seeing the baby” (Hyman, 2016).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	-	-
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackleford	-	-
Chad “CJ” Johnson	Mother repeatedly warned CPS of her situation with Father and her child.	“Means tells WSFA 12 News she tried repeatedly to warn the Department of Human Resources of her situation. A representative for DHR says the organization is cooperating with the Montgomery Police Department. They've also launched what a spokesman calls ‘a thorough internal investigation’” (Hyman, 2016).
Dominic Nunn	It was alleged that the death would not have happened but for the failure of CPS and other state officials and law enforcement.	“If proper procedures would have been taken by CFS, the Apple Valley Sheriff’s station, and the county, this wouldn’t have happened.” Ramsey said her sister endured constant abuse at the hands of Nunn throughout their 20-year relationship” (Quintero & Baker, 2017).

Name of Child	Child Protective Services' (CPS') Failure	Information Source with References
Dylan Redwine	-	-
Edward & Bradley Garcia	-	-
Gary DeToma, Jr.	-	-
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	-	-
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	-	-
Laila Miller	-	-
Makenzie Moira Main	-	-
Matthew Hernandez	There was a CPS complaint 3 weeks before the filicide.	"A complaint was filed to Child Protective Services three weeks before a 9-year-old boy was allegedly killed by his father with a hatchet in California" (Ortiz, 2015).
Nakota Kelly	DCS investigated Father due to claims of abuse, but unsubstantiated the abuse due to Father's denial, accusing Mother of making allegations because she was not getting the visitation and child support she wanted, as well as the child being free from bruises and marks.	"Kelly's lawsuit says Dibiah told DCS he didn't put his hands on Nakota. He claimed he would verbally discipline him, and that "this is all about the mother not getting her way in terms of visitation and child support." Allegations of physical abuse went unsubstantiated by DCS. The department said that the child was free from marks and bruises" (Magdeleno, 2022).
	Child disclosed abuse to DCS and expressed fear about going to Father's home	"On July 19, Hayley said she got a text from Dibiah's cellphone that read, "Sometimes I hear voices, my son is in heaven." According to court documents, Hayley contacted DCS after receiving this text, but nobody picked up, so she left a voicemail" (WTHR Staff, 2022).
	Father lied to DCS reporting that he had no criminal record.	
	DCS stated that Father had no substantiated history, no criminal	"In June 2018, she told DCS that Nakota was present when Dibiah threatened to beat her. Kelly told IndyStar that Nakota told her he was

Name of Child	Child Protective Services' (CPS') Failure	Information Source with References
	<p>history, no diagnosis, no domestic violence, no drug or alcohol use</p> <p>Mother reported that child was afraid to go over to Father's house after he hung up on him during a phone conversation.</p> <p>DCS was called 6 times in 4 years.</p>	<p>afraid of going to his father's home because he knew he would be abused. Records she provided show that Nakota also told a caseworker that Dibiah hit him and yelled at him. When DCS visited Dibiah after each complaint, he denied abusing his son. He told caseworkers that Kelly was the problem, records show. She wanted more child support and was trying to cut his time with Nakota, he told caseworkers, according to the records provided by Kelly” (Ryckaert, 2020) .</p> <p>“Records show Dibiah lied in 2017 when he told a DCS caseworker he had no criminal record” (Ryckaert, 2020).</p> <p>“The lawsuit says Kelly "has made multiple child abuse complaints to DCS over the past few years without receiving any meaningful response or assistance." When she complained about the attack over spinach in 2017, DCS performed a home inspection. The department noted that Dibiah "had no substantiated history, no criminal history, no diagnosis, no domestic violence, no drug or alcohol use," according to the lawsuit” (Magdaleno, 2022).</p> <p>“A father's rage Nakota had hung up the phone on his father, according to court records. Dibiah would still be angry about it that weekend during Nakota's visit, the boy told his mother. Hayley Kelly, Nakota's mom, reported it to Department of Child Services caseworkers on July 14, 2020. The caseworker would later tell a homicide detective about it, but nothing happened to stop the visit before that weekend” (Ryckaert, 2021).</p> <p>“Hayley told 13News in October 2020, saying she called DCS six times in four years to report what Dakota was telling her” (WTHR Staff, 2022).</p> <p>“Court documents state that a DCS representative contacted Hayley two days later about the claim, saying the weekend visitation was required because it was court-ordered. Thus, Hayley dropped Nakota off at Dibiah's</p>

Name of Child	Child Protective Services' (CPS') Failure	Information Source with References
		<p>apartment for a weekend visitation from July 17-19" (WTHR Staff, 2022).</p> <p>"Hayley said she made multiple child abuse complaints to DCS across multiple years without getting any meaningful response or assistance" (WTHR Staff, 2022).</p>
Phoebe Jonchuck	<p>Father was failed by the system as child, and did not receive the needed mental health treatment or care from child protective services.</p> <p>Department of Children and Families hotline worker did not send anyone to talk to Father</p>	<p>"Born into strife in many ways, his life — and Phoebe's death — show failures in mental health treatment and child protective services. Jonchuck had prescriptions, but couldn't always afford to fill them, or didn't want to. When he didn't have insurance, he stopped going to treatment. The Department of Children and Families knew about Jonchuck and Phoebe and were called to check on them multiple times. Both were left in their broken homes" (Solomon, et al., 2019).</p> <p>"A Department of Children and Families hotline worker decided not to send anyone to talk to him. But deputies responded that afternoon and interviewed Jonchuck at a church where he went begging for a baptism. They decided he was okay, then let him go, with Phoebe. Hours later, she was dead" (Solomon, et al., 2019).</p>
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	DCS did not take Mother's concerns seriously.	<p>"The mother feels the courts and the Department of Children and Family Services are partially responsible for her son's death. She feels they didn't take her concerns seriously" (Cordero, 2022).</p> <p>"How dare you say that once a case is closed, you do not reopen it, even after being asked repeatedly to further investigate allegations," said Estevez. "How dare you say that Aramazd Senior kicking my son on his bottom and pinching his cheeks and yelling in his face that he was a bad boy was not enough to change custody, that it was simply bad parenting" (True Crime Daily, 2018).</p>
Turner Jordan Nelson	-	-

Appendix V: Results Summary—Information Regarding Fathers' Motivation

*Information regarding Father's Motivation (Not Father's Statements) organized by the children's names and information sources with resources.*

<b>Name of Child</b>	<b>Father's Motivation to Murder</b>	<b>Information Source with References</b>
Aeden Moreno	Father killed his son because Mother ended the relationship with him.  The relationship took a turn for the worse when mother refused a marriage proposal.	"Moreno was convicted of killing his son in retaliation for the boy's mother ending their relationship" (Day, 2017).  "The boy's mother, Adrienne Oyola, 20, testified Wednesday that her relationship with Moreno took a turn when she refused his marriage proposal in June 2015" (Associated Press, 2017).
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	The couple was involved in a long-running custody battle.	"Castillo's estranged wife, Amy Castillo, also lives in Montgomery County, a police source said. She was interviewed by detectives last night. Mark and Amy Castillo were separated, and online court records indicate that they have been involved in a long-running custody battle in Montgomery County" (Linskey, et al., 2008)..
Austin & Logan Jackson	-	-
Ayden Shackelford	-	-
Chad "CJ" Johnson	-	-
Dominic Nunn	Father wanted to hurt the mother because she left him.	"Ramsey said. 'I feel like he thought this was a game. He wanted to hurt Alisha because she left him.' Ramsey said there were several witnesses to Nunn's abuse of Johnson— including their children, who lived in fear of their father" (Quintero & Baker, 2017).
Dylan Redwine	Child did not want to go to his dad's house. Parents were involved in a contentious divorce and child custody battle.	"Text messages sent by Dylan to friends and family indicate the boy didn't want to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with his father. Their relationship had soured in recent months, especially after Dylan found photos of his father wearing women's lingerie while eating what appeared to be feces from a diaper, according to testimony presented during the five-week trial" (Benjamin, 2021).

Name of Child	Father's Motivation to Murder	Information Source with References
		"Public defender Justin Bogan suggested that her account was tainted by a contentious divorce and custody battle with Redwine" (Nieberg, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	Child custody dispute	"The 23-year-old Noe-Garcia was not married to their mother and was involved in a dispute with her over custody of the children" (ABC7, 2022).
Gary DeToma, Jr.	Parents were involved in a bitter custody battle and wanted sole custody of their two children.	"Although no motive has been revealed, DeToma was apparently involved in a bitter custody battle with his estranged wife and wanted sole custody of his two sons" (Black, 2010).  "Prosecutors say DeToma killed his son, Gary Jr., in 2010 to apparently get back at his estranged wife while their divorce was pending" (Bluestein, 2014).
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	-	-
Jayson Holland	Father fought paternity and waged a custody battle against the mother.	"Prior to the incident, Holland fought paternity of the little boy waging a custody battle" (ABC7, 2022).
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	Revenge against his ex-wife.	"Two small children were murdered because of revenge against an ex-wife, according to East Baton Rouge Parish sheriff's officials" (WAFB News, 2008).  Deputies say it was a revenge killing against his estranged wife.
Laila Miller	Ongoing custody fight between parents.	"The shooting could be related to an ongoing custody fight between Miller and the girl's mother, who was not present during the incident, according to the Washington Post. The parents have been fighting in the court system since after the girl was born in 2011" (WAFB News, 2008).
Makenzie Moira Main	Father killed his daughter because his wife was divorcing him.  He wanted to inflict pain and suffering upon his wife.	"But the stay-at-home dad, who is charged with killing his 17-month-old daughter by drowning her in the bathtub, said he did it because his wife was divorcing him, according to an arrest affidavit released Tuesday" (Ruiter, 2017).  "Main killed Makenzie for one reason, Williams said: To inflict pain and suffering on his wife, Holly Farrington" (Stanfield, 2022).

Name of Child	Father's Motivation to Murder	Information Source with References
Matthew Hernandez	No explanation.	"Hernandez was discharged from prison in 2008. "There is still no explanation for Hernandez's actions," read a news release from the Sacramento Police Department" (TeSelle, 2013).
Nakota Kelly	Father killed their son to hurt the mother.	"She believes Dibiah was angry, so angry that he killed their son. 'I think, I think he planned it. I don't think that it just came over him' she said. 'I think he kind of, he found out that I was sticking up for myself and he couldn't hurt me no more. And so that he took the only thing that mattered to me. One of the things that mattered most to me'" (Ryckaert, 2021).
Phoebe Jonchuck	Father killed his daughter so mother could never get custody of her and because he was bitter that his own mother loved the child with affection, she never showed him.	<p>"Prosecutors said he was acting out of vengeance, killing Phoebe so her mother could never get custody of her and because he was bitter that his own mother loved the little girl with affection, she never showed for him" (Solomon, et. al., 2019).</p> <p>"He filed injunctions against Kerr, trying to keep her from seeing Phoebe. During the month before he killed his daughter, Jonchuck started worrying that Kerr or his mother would take her from him" (Solomon, et.al., 2019).</p> <p>"Prosecutors painted a portrait of an angry, vengeful man who couldn't hold a job, cooked up money-making schemes and planned to kill his daughter at least a day in advance" (Solomon, et.al., 2019).</p>
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	Father admitted that he killed his son because he was angry with his estranged wife.	<p>"The father ultimately confessed to killing the child because he was angry at his estranged wife" (Yen, 2024).</p> <p>"Prosecutors believe Andressian Sr. killed his son to get back at Estevez during a contentious divorce" (Pamer &amp; Friel, 2017).</p>
Turner Jordan Nelson	Father killed the child to cause the mother pain.	"But Julie Drake, the state's attorney's office's felony family violence division chief, described the crime as a vengeful act intended to cause pain to Turner's mother, Natisha Johnson, with whom Turner had disputes over visitation and child support" (Kay, 2011).

Appendix W: Results Summary—Information Regarding Crime Scenes and Victims

*Information regarding the crime scenes and victims organized by children’s names and information sources with references.*

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
Aeden Moreno	Father threw his son off the 90-foot-high bridge.	<p>“The seven-month-old plunged off the 90-foot-high Arrigoni Bridge in July 2015” (Associated Press, 2017, May 31).</p> <p>“Kayakers discovered the boy’s body two days after he was dropped from the bridge, in the river 14 miles away” (Middletown, 2017).</p> <p>“An autopsy showed he suffered a skull fracture and drowned” (Truesdell, 2017).</p>
Anthony, Austin, & Athena Castillo	Father drowned the children in a hotel bathtub.	<p>“The parents divorced in February. Their battle over child visitation rights came to a horrific conclusion Saturday when police say Mark Castillo drowned the children in a Baltimore hotel bathtub” (Associated Press, 2008).</p> <p>“Until the darkness enters the picture, at about 6:00 p.m. In the hotel bathroom, Mark Castillo ran a bath for his two-year-old daughter, Athena. According to reports, he held her under the water for 10 minutes. He used a stopwatch to make certain of the time. We can only hope that she didn’t understand what was going on. He repeated this with four-year-old Austin and six-year-old Anthony. Four-year-old Austin fought against his father as he drowned him. By then, six-year-old Anthony realized something was wrong, and Mark Castillo later said that his oldest son looked scared and suspicious. But that wasn’t enough to stop him” (Marble, 2021).</p>
Austin & Logan Jackson	Children’s bodies were found in their father’s home. They were shot to death.	The homicide-abduction investigation began around 1:30 p.m. Saturday after the bodies of 14-year-old Logan Jackson and 12-year-old Austin Jackson were found in their father's home (Associated Press, 2020, October 27).

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
Ayden Shackelford	Child was killed in a car accident.	<p>“The affidavit says Leavenworth County deputies went to a home on Hillside Road at about 1:15 p.m. on Saturday, October 24 after Jackson didn’t show up for a soccer game with his four kids and wasn’t answering his phone. Court papers say relatives had found 12-year-old Austin and 14-year-old Logan Jackson shot to death” (Fox 4 News, 2020).</p>
Chad “CJ” Johnson	The injuries were consistent with domestic abuse, and it appears that this wasn't the first time that the child had been abused	<p>“Montgomery police arrested Alvin Johnson, 36, who they say is the boy's legal father. Authorities tell WSFA 12 News Johnson struck his own child at his North Montgomery home. ‘[The injuries were] consistent with domestic abuse, and it appears that this wasn't the first time that the child had been abused,’ said Captain Huey Thornton of the Montgomery Police Department” (WSFA News, 2008).</p>
Dominic Nunn	The child died because of head trauma	<p>“Authorities this morning confirmed the young boy, Dominic Nunn, a resident of Apple Valley died as a result of head trauma, and his father, Shakir Nunn, age 38, also a resident of Apple Valley, was arrested for his murder” (Victor Valley News Group, 2017).</p> <p>“Authorities responded to a report of an 8-year-old boy who was found not breathing inside the home Thursday evening. Deputies and paramedics arrived at the home, where they discovered Dominic unresponsive and performed CPR. Dominic was then transported to Desert Valley Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 7:28 a.m., despite lifesaving measures, authorities said” (Quintero &amp; Baker, 2017).</p>

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
Dylan Redwine	<p>Father sanitized the crime scene, hid the child's body and removed his head from the rest of his body.</p> <p>The child went missing on Nov. 19, 2012. The boy's body was located in June 2013 during a search of the mountains. The child's head was found late 2015 by hikers, nearly two miles away from where his body was found. Experts testified that the boy likely died from a skull fracture as well as sharp force injuries.</p>	<p>““First of all, you killed your son, a 13-year-old boy. At 13, he’s still a little boy,” Wilson said. ‘As the father, it’s your obligation to protect your son, keep him from harm. Instead of that, you inflicted enough injury on him to kill him in your living room. ‘After the passion of whatever caused you to act the way you did subsided, you didn’t think about Dylan. You thought about yourself, you sanitized the crime scene, you hid Dylan’s body, and you went so far as to remove his head from the rest of his body.’ Wilson said Redwine’s efforts to conceal Dylan’s body and lie about what happened caused suffering for Dylan’s family and the entire community”” (Benjamin, 2021).</p> <p>“Redwine reported Dylan missing on Nov. 19, 2012. The boy's body was located June 2013 during a search of Middle Mountain on the Vallecito Reservoir. Prosecutors alleged at trial Redwine removed his son's head, which wasn't found until late 2015 by hikers, nearly two miles away from where his body was found. Experts testified that the boy likely died from a skull fracture as well as sharp force injuries” (Harris, 2021).</p> <p>“A forensic anthropologist, Diane France, testified that Dylan suffered a fracture above his left eye. Two marks on the boy’s skull were likely caused by a knife or sharp tool at or near the time of death, France said” (Nieberg, 2021).</p> <p>“The sentencing hearing caps a nearly nine-year homicide investigation that began in November 2012, when Dylan disappeared while on a court-ordered visit to see his father” (Benjamin, 2021).</p> <p>“Forensic testing found traces of Dylan’s blood in his father’s living room, and a cadaver dog detected the recent presence of a corpse in the living room and in the bed of Redwine’s pickup truck. It wasn’t until June 2013 when the first partial remains of Dylan’s body were found about 8 miles up Middle Mountain Road, only a few miles</p>

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
		northeast of Redwine's home, as the crow flies. In November 2015, a pair of hikers found Dylan's skull about 1½ miles farther up the road" (Benjamin, 2021).
Edward & Bradley Garcia	The children's bodies were found in the basement of the home.	"The boys, 1-year-old Edward Garcia and 3-year-old Bradley Garcia, were found in the basement of the home, Smith said. He said another 3-year-old boy was also stabbed. The surviving child, who family members said was Bradley's twin, was flown to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Egleston, where he was in serious condition, police said" (WSBTV, 2011).
Gary DeToma, Jr.	One of father's co-workers went to check on him because he had failed to show up for work that day and discovered the tragedy. The co-worker continued knocking and finally a 4-year-old child came to the door. The co-worker went inside, and he found the father in a bedroom with his 5-year-old son, and he appeared to be deceased.	"On Monday afternoon, one of DeToma's co-workers went to check on him because he had failed to show up for work that day and discovered the tragedy. The co-worker continued knocking, knocking and finally a 4-year-old child came to the door. The co-worker went inside, and he found Mr. DeToma was in a bedroom with his 5-year-old son and [the child] appeared to be deceased,' Lee told WGCL" (CBS News, 2010).
Isabella & Cristo Lopez	Cristos did not actually die in the fire. Cristos succumbed to his injuries later at the hospital.	"Nikia Lopez told NBC 7 her son Cristos did not actually die in the fire. Cristos succumbed to his injuries later at the hospital. 'And I said, 'You need to go because your sister is waiting for you at Heaven's gate, and you need to go because I know she's scared,' Nikia Lopez said, tearfully. 'Right then and there he flatlined and he left me like a good boy. He was always a good boy,'" she added (Bravo, et.al, 2020).
Jayson Holland	Authorities said an autopsy and toxicology test revealed a deadly cocktail of drugs in the boy's system, including toxic levels of cocaine, acetaminophen and the active ingredient in Benadryl. Father intentionally gave the child the drink with the drugs mixed in.	"Holland's son Jayson Maurice Holland was staying with him for the weekend. On Jan. 26, 2014, Holland woke up the next morning and claimed he found the boy unresponsive, according to police. Authorities said an autopsy and toxicology test revealed a deadly cocktail of drugs in the boy's system, including toxic levels of cocaine, acetaminophen and the active ingredient in Benadryl. A medical examiner ruled the

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
		<p>boy's death a homicide, and Holland was later arrested at his home in Hyattsville, Maryland" (ABC7, 2017).</p> <p>"Prosecutors in the case believe Holland intentionally gave the child the drink with the drugs mixed in, the Office of the P.G. County State's Attorney states" (ABC7, 2017).</p> <p>"An autopsy and toxicology test revealed a deadly cocktail of drugs in the boy's system, including toxic levels of cocaine, acetaminophen and the active ingredient found in Benadryl" (ABC7, 2017).</p>
Ju 'wan & Tayshaun Murphy	Father stabbed his children to death at his apartment.	"Murphy admitted to stabbing his 8-year-old and 2-year-old sons to death on Oct. 5, 2008, at the Bluebonnet Towers Apartments" (Auzenne, 2010).
Laila Miller	<p>The child was stabbed and shot sometime before the father was killed during a shootout with officers</p> <p>Laila Miller was found inside the car with a gunshot wound and her throat slit.</p> <p>The incident began early Saturday afternoon with a domestic dispute over child custody. Police were called to numerous 911 calls for shots fired. Authorities said they discovered Laila's maternal grandfather and great grandmother wounded inside a home. They remain in critical but stable condition at a local hospital.</p> <p>The child after she was stabbed and shot by her father, who was then killed in a gun battle with police while fleeing the scene of another crime and leading cops in a high-speed chase.</p>	<p>"Authorities released new information Monday about the weekend abduction and killing of a 3-year-old Prince George's County girl. According to police, the child was stabbed and shot sometime before the suspect was killed during a shootout with officers over the weekend" (Collins, 2014).</p> <p>"Three-year-old Laila Miller was found inside the car with a gunshot wound and her throat slit--and investigators say there's no doubt her own father is behind the slaying" (WJZ News, 2014).</p> <p>"Inside the car, though, a heartbreaking discovery. "Somewhere in the middle of the chase, he made a conscious decision to kill his daughter," said Magaw. Three-year-old Laila was shot in the head and her throat was slit. Shortly after, she died in a nearby hospital. Police say the bullet used was not consistent with any fired by officers. A knife with blood was also found inside the car" (WJZ News, 2014).</p> <p>"His 3-year-old daughter suffering from trauma to the upper body was discovered in the car Miller was using to try to escape" (NBC Washington, 2014).</p>

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
Makenzie Moira Main	-	<p>“The incident began early Saturday afternoon with a domestic dispute over child custody. Police were called to numerous 911 calls for shots fired in the 4200 block of Farmers Place in Camp Springs. Authorities said they discovered Laila's maternal grandfather and great grandmother wounded inside a home. They remain in critical but stable condition at a local hospital. "At least one of the callers who was familiar with the circumstances knew that Laila had been taken by Miller," said police Major Jason Johnson” (Collins, 2014).</p> <p>“A 3-year-old girl has died in Maryland after she was stabbed and shot by her father, who was then killed in a gun battle with police while fleeing the scene of another crime and leading cops in a high-speed chase” (Mail Online Reporter, 2014).</p>
Matthew Hernandez	The father went into the backyard, grabbed a hatchet, broke through the sliding glass door and brutally attacked his son. The child, who was sleeping on the couch. The child died at the scene from blunt force trauma to the head.	“On February 26, 2013, Hernandez went into the backyard of his Natomas home, grabbed a hatchet, broke through the sliding glass door and brutally attacked his son, Matthew Hernandez, who was sleeping on the couch. The child died at the scene from blunt force trauma to the head” (Ortiz, 2015).
Nakota Kelly	<p>There was blood spatter, blood smears and brain matter in the apartment’s bathroom. There was also a small amount of blood in the apartment’s entrance.</p> <p>The child’s body has never been recovered.</p>	<p>“They did, however, find a crime scene and enough evidence to convince them that Nakota was dead. According to the probable cause affidavit filed in the case, investigators found what appeared to be “blood spatter, blood smears and brain matter” in the apartment’s bathroom. There was also a small amount of blood in the apartment’s entrance” (Johnson, 2022).</p> <p>“Nakota's body was not in the car with him and still has not been recovered” (WTHR Staff, 2022).</p> <p>“According to court papers, the scene was nothing short of horrendous when officers</p>

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
		<p>entered the apartment. There was blood all over the bathroom. Dibiah was gone, and there was no sign of the 10-year-old boy. The scene here and some of the images that are going to be depicted are just one of those things that will stay with you forever,” Mears said (Magdaleno, 2023).</p> <p>“Prosecutors say Dibiah got rid of Nakota’s body somewhere along that 375-mile trip. The boy’s remains have not been found” (Ryckaert, 2021).</p>
Phoebe Jonchuck	The child’s body was recovered from Tampa Bay.	<p>“Phoebe’s body was recovered from Tampa Bay on Jan. 8, 2015, about an hour after an off-duty police officer heading home said he saw Jonchuck’s white PT Cruiser stop on the Dick Misener Bridge in St. Petersburg” (Helling, 2019).</p>
Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.	<p>Father confessed to using a jacket to smother his son and leaving his body by a tree.</p> <p>Father searched the internet for ‘wilderness areas near Solvang,’ where the boy’s body was found.</p>	<p>“Andressian confessed to using a jacket to smother his son, Aramazd Andressian Jr., known as ‘Piqui’ and leaving his body by a tree, according to a probation report obtained by the NBC4 I-Team” (Lopez, et.al., 2017). “His mother asked if Aramazd Andressian Jr. ran away. ‘He hasn’t run away,’ Andressian said. ‘They’re lies. Don’t listen to them.’ The report shows Andressian searched the internet for ‘wilderness areas near Solvang,’ where the boy’s body was found. The report also says Andressian turned off his phone so he could not be tracked. Investigators say it’s a sign of planning the murder. The report says Andressian partied with prostitutes and went skydiving in Las Vegas following his initial release from custody” (Lopez, et.al., 2017).</p> <p>“Then, what he told cops was nothing short of evil. ‘The manner in which he killed him was particularly cruel,’ said Craig Hum. ‘His son was asleep in the car seat in the back of the car. His father, who was supposed to be protecting him, who was supposed to be taking care of him, stops the car, gets out of the car and then uses Aramazd Junior’s sweatshirt to smother him. And not only that, but once he had finished smothering his son</p>

Name of Child	Crime Scene and Victims	Information Source with References
Turner Jordan Nelson	Father threw the toddler off the bridge into the frigid river.	<p>and let go, when he let go, his son, his body was still twitching, so Aramazd Senior smothered him again (True Crime Daily, 2018)."</p> <p>"In 2017, in the midst of a bitter divorce and custody fight, Estevez's estranged husband - Aramazd Andressian of South Pasadena, smothered his 5-year-old son with the boy's own sweater, and left him in the woods of Santa Barbara County. The father at first claimed the boy had mysteriously vanished after a trip to Disneyland. For months, while Estevez frantically searched for her son, investigators say, the father partied in Las Vegas, until a trail of clues led to his arrest" (Lopez, 2020).</p> <p>"Piqui had been left alone in the cold, remote elements for two long months. Was he buried at all? 'He wasn't, he was laid out under a tree with some shrubbery on top of him,' said Det. Aguilera. 'The suspect had changed him and put him in pajamas and rested him there up against a tree'" (True Crime Daily, 2018).</p> <p>"Police say they believe that Nelson, 37, threw the toddler off the Key Bridge into the frigid Patapsco River on Sunday night. Shortly afterward, Nelson tried to kill himself by drinking household cleansers, police said, and was taken to University of Maryland Medical Center in critical condition" (Sentementes &amp; Madigan, 2008).</p>

## Appendix X: Narrative of Cases

Each case narrative includes information related to the various themes that helped to answer the research questions: characteristics and behaviors of the filicidal fathers and events surrounding the filicides. These narratives are intended to provide more context of the 19 fathers' characteristics, behaviors, and events surrounding the fathers killing their children.

### **Aeden Moreno**

Aeden Moreno was 7 months old when his father, Tony Moreno (Moreno) threw him off a 90 ft. high bridge. Moreno was 21 years old at the time of the filicide. He was unemployed and did not have a vehicle. Moreno had a history of depression and suicidal ideations. He also lost his father when he was 6 years old; his father died in an industrial accident.

There was no information provided about Moreno's criminal history, however there were details about Moreno's history of domestic violence against Aeden's mother. It was reported that Moreno would strike Aeden's mother and that he told her he could make the 7-month-old disappear. Moreno told Aeden's mother that he would put her in the ground and put something on her to make her disintegrate faster. He called Aeden's mother names, shoved her, pushed her and forcefully poked her in the chest. Moreno threatened to assault Aeden's mother more violently.

Moreno demanded that Aeden's mother never take their child without his approval. He also told her that she was not allowed to take their son around her family without his permission. Yet, Moreno would take the child wherever he wanted, and he

would not tell Aeden's mother where he was going. It was reported that Moreno left the house at one time leaving Aeden unattended on a bed. Moreno made statements about Aeden's mother, accusing her of being self-righteous and manipulative. He stated that she was not caring that nothing mattered to her, and that she just wanted to play games and be childish.

News reports described the relationship between Aeden's mother and father changed once Aeden's mother became pregnant. The relationship took a turn for the worse when mother refused a marriage proposal. Mother moved out of the home she shared with Moreno after he allegedly hid her high school graduation dress.

Aeden's mother expressed fear that Moreno was going to hurt Aeden. Aeden's mother unsuccessfully applied for a restraining order due to the father's aggressive and erratic behavior. She sought a permanent protective order based on Moreno's history of abuse and threats against her and Aeden, but the court did not grant the request.

The judge granted a temporary order of protection but rejected a permanent order stating that there was no clear and convincing evidence that the alleged acts of abuse occurred. Authorities believed that Moreno was of no danger. The judge stated that Moreno presented no threat to the mother and child. In addition, Child Protective Services (CPS) failed to submit anything that would allow the court to extend the restraining order; CPS failed to follow up and conduct a second safety assessment after the temporary restraining order ended. Ultimately, Aeden's mother and father were forced to work out a custody agreement, and Moreno killed Aeden during his parenting

time. It was reported that Moreno killed his son because Aeden's mother ended the relationship with him.

Moreno admitted to throwing Aeden off the bridge but later pleaded not guilty. Moreno was found guilty and sentenced to 70 years in prison. At sentencing, the judge stated that, not only did Moreno violently and intentionally kill his 7-month-old son, but he taunted the baby's mother as he committed the act with text messages that were aptly described as 'demonic' — just so Moreno could add to her unfathomable grief.

### **Anthony, Austin, and Athena Castillo**

Anthony, Austin, and Athena Castillo were drowned in a hotel bathtub by their father, Mark Castillo, during his parenting time. Anthony was 6 years old; Austin was 4 years old, and Athena was 2 years old at the time of their deaths. Castillo was 41 years old at the time of the filicides. He was described as a stay-at-home dad, and a former gymnast and riverboat casino card dealer. The children's mother was a medical doctor. News reports stated that Castillo was becoming increasingly erratic and frightening prior to the murders. The children's mother asked Castillo to receive psychiatric counseling. It was reported that Castillo had a history of mental illness to include suicide attempts and self-harm. Castillo was hospitalized twice for mental health concerns. Castillo's only criminal record was a citation for disturbing the peace.

Mother recalled Castillo becoming a different person and began doing unusual things like threatening to take poison. Castillo also threatened the children's mother by saying he would kill their children and keep her alive so she would have to live without

them. A neighbor reported that they would not often see the couple, but they did witness the police being frequently called out to the home.

According to the news reports, the couple was involved in a long-running custody battle. A judge previously ordered Castillo to have supervised visitation and undergo a psychological examination. A judge also previously ordered Castillo out of the home and to have no contact with the children's mother. Despite this history, when the mother tried to get a restraining order against Castillo due to his erratic and increasingly concerning behavior, the court denied the mother's request forcing her to continue providing Castillo contact with the three children.

The mother described that Castillo would often not tell her where he was staying with the children during his visit. The mother called the police when Castillo did not bring the children back; the police stated that they were unable to assist her and to call back on Monday. Castillo admitted to killing his children. Castillo was sentenced to three consecutive life terms without parole. The judge recommended he be sent to a mental health facility.

### **Austin and Logan Jackson**

Logan was 14 years old, and Austin was 11 years old when their father, Donald Jackson (Jackson) shot and killed them. Jackson was 40 years old at the time of the filicide. He reportedly had a home and a vehicle. There was no information provided regarding his mental health history. The only information provided regarding his criminal history was that he had prior dealings with law enforcement. It was reported that Jackson was estranged from his wife with on and off again access to the children.

Jackson and his wife, the mother of his children, were going through a divorce at the time of the filicides. The two boys were found dead at their father's home after authorities were notified by the maternal grandparents when they did not show up for a soccer game. Notably, the boys had two younger sisters who were later found alive in Jackson's custody. Jackson had abducted the two girls after killing the boys.

### **Ayden Shackelford**

Ayden was 5 years old when he died in a car accident. His father, Dustin R. Shackelford (Shackelford), age 25, was driving his vehicle when he collided with a Mack truck at an intersection. Unlike Ayden, Shackelford was wearing a seatbelt. Ayden's mother had just taken out an order of protection against Shackelford the day before the accident. Ayden's mother called the police to report that Shackelford and another man took her children without permission. The police referred to the situation as a custody dispute. Ayden's younger sibling, Chloe, aged 2 years old survived the car accident despite her also being unrestrained in the vehicle.

### **Chad "CJ" Johnson**

CJ was 3 years old when he died from blunt force trauma caused by his father, Alvin Johnson (Johnson), age 36. The injuries were consistent with domestic abuse, and it appeared that this was not the first time the child was injured. There was no information provided regarding Johnson's socioeconomic status, mental health history, or criminal history. CJ's mother repeatedly reported her concerns regarding Johnson to Child Protective Services (CPS), but an investigation never occurred.

**Dominic Nunn**

Dominic was 8 years old when his father, Shakir Nunn, age 38 killed him. Dominic died from head trauma. Nunn had a history of committing domestic violence against Dominic's mother. Dominic's mother filed a restraining order against Nunn. It was reported that Nunn's children were afraid of him. The children explained that they were afraid to be beaten if they did not do what their father asked. It was also reported that there were several witnesses to Nunn abusing Dominic's mother and the children. It was reported that Dominic's mother suffered years of abuse at the hands of Nunn. According to neighbors, the family's home was unusually quiet given there were several children living there, but the home also attracted law enforcement on occasion due to hearing children screaming. It was alleged that the death would not have happened but for the failure of CPS and other state officials and law enforcement. Witnesses stated that Nunn wanted to hurt Dominic's mother because she left him.

**Dylan Redwine**

Dylan died from severe head trauma at the age of 13 years old. His father, Mark Redwine (Redwine) was 59 years old when he was indicted for Dylan's murder. There was no information provided regarding Redwine's socioeconomic status, however there were references to Redwine's home. It was reported that Redwine killed Dylan in a fit of rage after they argued over embarrassing photos of Redwine wearing women's lingerie and eating feces from a diaper. Dylan's older brother testified that Dylan discovered the

photos before he went missing. Because of the discovered photos, there is question if Redwine suffered from a paraphilic disorder.

There was no information regarding Redwine's criminal record. Redwine initially denied killing his son. He insisted on not knowing where he was and alleged that Dylan ran away from home. Prior to going to Redwine's house, Dylan expressed himself not wanting to see his dad, but he was court ordered to visitation and therefore, had to go. There were also reports of Dylan's mother and Redwine being in a contentious divorce and custody battle.

After killing Dylan, Redwine sanitized the crime scene, hid the child's body and removed Dylan's head from the rest of his body. The child went missing on Nov. 19, 2012. The boy's body was found in June 2013 during a search of the mountains. The child's head was found in late 2015 by hikers, nearly two miles away from where his body was found. Experts testified that the boy likely died from a skull fracture as well as sharp force injuries.

At sentencing, the judge made several statements to Redwine, "As a father, it's your obligation to protect your son and keep him from harm, and instead of that, you inflicted enough injury on him to kill him in your living room. After the passion of whatever caused you to act the way you did subsided, you didn't think about Dylan. You thought about yourself. You sanitized the crime scene. You hid Dylan's body, and you went so far as to remove the head from the rest of his body...After all this time and listening to what was heard in this courtroom, you still take absolutely no responsibility for what you did to Dylan...I have trouble remembering a convicted criminal defendant

that has shown such an utter lack of remorse for his criminal behavior” (Harris, 2017). Redwine was sentenced to 48 years in prison.

### **Edward and Bradley Garcia**

Edward and Bradley were stabbed to death by their father, Elvis Noe Garcia (Garcia), age 23. Edward was 1 year old, and Bradley was 3 years old at the time of their deaths. Bradley’s twin brother, Joshua, was also injured, but did not die. Garcia and the boys’ mother were never married but were involved in a child custody dispute. Garcia confessed to killing the boys, but only after accusing the boys’ mother’s new boyfriend for the deaths. The boys’ bodies were discovered in Garcia’s basement. Garcia was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole in 30 years.

### **Gary DeToma, Jr.**

Gary was 5 years old when his 42-year-old father, Gary DeToma, Sr. (DeToma) suffocated him to death. DeToma and the boy’s mother were due to finalize a custody agreement just prior to the filicides. The boy’s mother grew concerned when DeToma did not return the boy home, so she contacted the police. The police went to DeToma’s apartment, but did not notice anything unusual at that time.

One of father’s co-workers went to check on him because he had failed to show up for work that day and discovered the tragedy. The co-worker continued knocking and finally a 4-year-old child came to the door. The co-worker went inside, and he found the father in a bedroom with his 5-year-old son, and he appeared to be deceased. DeToma admitted to killing his son.

“Although no motive has been revealed, DeToma was apparently involved in a bitter custody battle with his estranged wife and wanted sole custody of his two sons” (Black, 2010). “Prosecutors say DeToma killed his son, Gary Jr., in 2010 to apparently get back at his estranged wife while their divorce was pending” (Bluestein, 2014). DeToma pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison; however, DeToma later asked the court if he could withdraw his confession.

### **Isabella and Cristo Lopez**

Isabella, age 7 years old, and her brother, Cristo, age 10, died from injuries caused by a house fire set by their father, Henry Lopez (Lopez). Isabella died in the fire, but Cristos did not. Cristos succumbed to his injuries later at the hospital. Lopez was 39 years old when he was convicted of the murders. Lopez served in the military but was never deployed. It was reported that Lopez suffered from PTSD. There was no information provided regarding Lopez’ criminal history.

“According to court documents, Lopez allegedly threatened to burn down the family’s home weeks before the fire. In a temporary restraining order obtained by reporters, the children’s mother, Nikia Lopez, claimed her husband had texted her: ‘I will burn all of this (expletive) down,’ during a conversation the pair were having about a missing mortgage payment” (Devine & Garske, 2019).

One article stated that, “The children were sleeping when the fire erupted. The father was charged with five felonies involving the death of his children, including involuntary manslaughter, child endangerment and the reckless starting of a fire. He pleaded not guilty to all charges in December 2018” (Devine & Stickney, 2019).

During sentencing, the children's mother claimed that Lopez was abusive and began drinking and cheating on her during their marriage. The Judge told the father that he had "...completely and utterly failed to accept responsibility for his actions" (Associated Press, 2020). Lopez was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

### **Jayson Holland**

Jayson was 3 years old when his father, Thomas Everett Holland (Holland), 38, poisoned him to death. There was no information provided regarding Holland's socioeconomic status at the time of the filicide. There was also no information provided about Holland's mental health or criminal history. It was reported that Holland fought paternity of the child and waged a custody battle against the child's mother. "Holland's son, Jayson Maurice Holland was staying with him for the weekend. On Jan. 26, 2014, Holland woke up the next morning and claimed he found the boy unresponsive, according to police. Authorities said an autopsy and toxicology test revealed a deadly cocktail of drugs in the boy's system, including toxic levels of cocaine, acetaminophen and the active ingredient in Benadryl. A medical examiner ruled the boy's death a homicide, and Holland was later arrested at his home in Hyattsville, Maryland" (ABC7, 2017). Holland was ultimately convicted and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

### **Ju 'wan and Tayshaun Murphy**

Ju 'wan, age 8, and Tayshaun, age 2, were stabbed to death by their father, Clayton Murphy (Murphy), age 30. Murphy lived in an apartment, but there was no other information regarding his socioeconomic status. There was also no information provided regarding his mental health, or criminal history. Murphy admitted to stabbing both

children to death. It was reported by authorities that Murphy killed the two children out of revenge against the children's mother. Murphy was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences after accepting a plea deal to spare him the death penalty.

### **Laila Miller**

Laila was 3 years old when her father, Fredrick Roy Miller (Miller), age 38, cut her throat and shot her in the head. Miller was a disabled Marine veteran. Miller previously suffered head trauma in an auto accident. There were reports from neighbors that domestic problems were increasing in the child's home; however, the police reported that they had no prior contact with the family about any domestic problems.

Court records showed that Miller was engaged in a custody battle with Laila's mother, and that the child's death was related to the ongoing custody dispute. The parents had been fighting in the court system since Laila was born.

The news reported that the child was stabbed and shot sometime before Miller was killed during a shootout with police officers. Laila was found inside the car with a gunshot wound and her throat slit. The incident began early Saturday afternoon with a domestic dispute over child custody. There were numerous 911 calls received over gunshots being fired. Authorities said they discovered Laila's maternal grandfather and great grandmother wounded inside a home after Miller fled from the scene.

### **Mackenzie Moira Main**

Mackenzie was 17 months old when her father, Jeremy Main (Main), age 38 drowned the toddler in a bathtub. Main was a stay-at-home dad at the time of the filicide. It was reported that he had previously served in the Navy. Main experienced a

shortage of oxygen at birth. He also had a life of physical and emotional abuse, suffered from depression and borderline personality disorder. The only criminal record reported was Main receiving a speeding ticket. Main posted on his social media prior to the filicide that he, “Loves his wife, my angel.”

Main called his wife to tell her that he drowned their daughter and explained that he did because she was divorcing him. One news report stated, “Jeremy Main, ... called his wife at work and said, ‘You’re going to have a bad day,’...” (Stanfield, 2022).

During a deposition, the mother described Main’s demeanor changing once she became pregnant and went to the doctor for her initial exam. She stated that he became angry when she was naked on the exam table *with another man* (the doctor). Main told the mother that she *killed him*, and if she loved him, she would not have gone there.

The mother described Main being paranoid, very controlling, often depressed, wanting to sleep all day, and would talk about suicide. “A week before Makenzie’s death, during a conversation in which the couple tried to explain themselves, [Main] reportedly told his wife: ‘I can’t believe I just lost the last thing most important in my life.’ [The mother replied,] You know, that’s not really the case. I shouldn’t be the most important thing in your life, [our daughter] should be,’ ... ‘You really don’t know me well, do you?’ [Main] ...concluded” (GetToText, 2022).

Main admitted to killing his daughter and turned himself into the police. When he arrived at the police station, it appeared as though he had tried cutting his wrists in a failed attempt to kill himself. He explained to the police that he *ruined his life*. Main was sentenced to 26 years after the jury rejected the death penalty.

**Matthew Hernandez**

Matthew was 9 years old when his father, Phillip Raymond Hernandez (Hernandez), age 37, killed his son with a hatchet. It was reported that Hernandez and Matthew's mother had a *turbulent relationship*. Prior to the filicide, Hernandez was charged with domestic violence and corporal punishment of a spouse. He pled no contest and received 5 years of probation. Hernandez was charged again with corporal punishment of a spouse and sentenced to prison for 15 months and then was on parole for another year after his release.

The child's mother attempted to get custody of her two children. She tried to introduce evidence to include text messages to support her claim that Hernandez was back on drugs, acting irrationally, and posed a threat to their children, but the judge refused to consider the evidence and denied her custody change request.

There was a history of Hernandez being denied access to his children. He wrote the judge, "It's been over three years since I last saw them. They are what matter, my view of life and what is important. I love them with all of my heart, and I want to give what I didn't have - a father" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).

"Hernandez was granted custody of Matthew and his now-12-year-old brother in 2009 despite a startling history of violence and arrests and their mother claiming he was a dangerous man. Police said that an initial investigation revealed that Hernandez went into the backyard of his home and grabbed a hatchet. He then broke a sliding glass door and found his son asleep on the couch. The other son was home but harmed during the attack. The hatchet was recovered at the scene" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013). The child died at

the scene from blunt force trauma. There was a CPS report filed 3 weeks before the filicide. The police stated, “There is still no explanation for Hernandez's actions” (TeSelle, 2013). Hernandez was convicted of first-degree murder and the use of a weapon. He was sentenced to 26 years to life in prison.

Matthew’s mother blames the judge for his death, and believes she was discriminated against because she did not have an attorney. Watchdog groups long asserted that people represented by attorneys are giving preferential treatment over those that represent themselves. A month after Hernandez’s hearing, the judge that denied protection sought by Matthew’s mother was quoted as saying she had no experience and knew nothing about family law before taking the bench.

### **Nakota Kelly**

Nakota was 10 years old when his father, 37-year-old Anthony Dibiah (Dibiah) suffocated him to death. Dibiah had a long history of violence against Nakota. There were reports of Dibiah kicking Nakota, shoving Nakota’s face into a plate of food, and pulling Nakota down a flight of stairs. According to Nakota’s mother, these incidents were all reported to authorities. CPS investigated claims, but Dibiah denied putting his hands on the child, and would only verbally discipline him. Nakota’s mother reported receiving a text message from Nebiah stating that he hears voices, and his son is in heaven. The mother contacted CPS after receiving this text, but nobody picked it up, so she left a voicemail. The mother also told CPS that Nakota was present when Dibiah threatened to beat her.

Nakota disclosed abuse to CPS, but CPS did not substantiate because there were no marks on the child. Dibiah was angry because Nakota's mother let their son play baseball, which made the child late for his parenting time. Dibiah threatened he would call the police and take her to court for not bringing the child to him on time. Nakota's mother thought Dibiah would hurt Nakota physically, or abduct him, but she never imagined he would kill him.

Dibiah was also in the country illegally. He was convicted of identity theft, social security fraud, and misusing documents. He served 34 months in federal prison. There were attempts made to deport Dibiah, but his home country of Nigeria refused to take him back.

Dibiah admitted to suffocating his son in a telephone call to relatives. He blamed Nakota's mother stating that she had given him a *hard time* and *cost him a lot of money*. Dibiah stated that he suffocated Nakota with a bag until he stopped breathing and then disposed of his body in a dumpster. Dibiah reported that Nakota's mother was making false allegations against him because she wanted to get her way regarding visitation and child support.

Nakota's mother asked the court to allow Dibiah to only see Nakota in supervised visitation, but Judge ordered parents into mediation; the parents reached an agreement to never withhold parenting time even if they suspected abuse or other issues and would have the court deal with it.

After the filicide, Dibiah's attorneys argued that the police did not have a right to enter his home without a warrant when a second welfare check for the child was called

and discovered that the father murdered his child. DCS investigated Father due to claims of abuse, but unsubstantiated the abuse due to Father's denial, accusing Mother of making allegations because she was not getting the visitation and child support she wanted, as well as the child being free from bruises and marks. Child disclosed abuse to DCS and expressed fear about going to his father's home. Debiah lied to DCS reporting that he had no criminal record. DCS stated that Debiah had no substantiated history, no criminal history, no diagnosis, no domestic violence, no drug or alcohol use. Nakota's mother reported that he was afraid to go over to Dibiah's house after he hung up on him during a phone conversation. DCS was called 6 times in 4 years. The police did not enter the home the first time they received a call about a welfare check. "She believes Dibiah was angry, so angry that he killed their son. 'I think, I think he planned it. I don't think that it just came over him' she said. 'I think he kind of, he found out that I was sticking up for myself and he couldn't hurt me no more. And so that he took the only thing that mattered to me. One of the things that mattered most to me'" (Ryckaert, 2021).

### **Phoebe Jonchuck**

Phoebe was 5 years old when her father, Jon Jonchuck (Jonchuck), threw her off a bridge to her death. Jonchuck was 29 years old at the time of his conviction. Jonchuck had a history of odd jobs and multiple moves; however, at the time of the filicide, his employment was unknown. Phoebe's mother's and Jonchuck's relationship was described as *rocky and full of drugs and fights*. After Phoebe's mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Jonchuck agreed to take care of their daughter.

The Department of Children and Families hotline workers did not send anyone to talk to Jonchuck. Police interviewed Jonchuck at the church where he went begging to be baptized; they decided he was ok and let him go with the child. Hours later, Phoebe was dead. Jonchuck described hearing voices saying that if he and his daughter didn't die then everybody was going to hell.

Jonchuck killed his daughter so her mother could never get custody and because he was bitter that his own mother loved the child with affection, she never showed him. Jonchuck was failed by the system and did not receive the needed mental health treatment or care from child protective services. Jonchuck stated that he told his daughter that he would never let anything happen to her but admitted that he did allow it to happen.

Jonchuck pled not guilty by reason of insanity but was ultimately found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

**Piqui Aramazd Andressian, Jr.**

Piqui was 5 years old when his father, Aramazd Andressian Sr. (Andressian), age 35 suffocated him to death. Andressian had no prior criminal history. Andressian claimed to be intoxicated by medication and was likely attacked when the child went missing while in his care. He later admitted to killing his son.

Andressian would say that the mother of his child was not a woman because she was unable to get pregnant without fertility treatment. Andressian claimed that Piqui's mother set him up and tried to get the cops to suspect him. He ultimately admitted that he killed Piqui because he was angry with his mother.

Piqui's mother was fearful of every move she made because the judge in the custody case always believed Andressian. Just months before Andressian killed Piqui, Piqui's mother filed for a restraining order because of the things that Andressian would say to her and that he hacked into her social media. Despite Piqui's mother seeking sole custody of her son, the Court ordered joint custody for the parents. Piqui's mother never saw him again after he went with Andressian for his court ordered parenting time.

Piqui's mother contacted the police to report her son missing when Andressian did not bring the child back home. The police suspected the father harmed the child, but did not have enough evidence to arrest him. Piqui's mother believes that DCS did not take her concerns seriously when she reported safety concerns about Piqui's while in the care of Andressian.

Andressian admitted that he killed his son because he was angry with his estranged wife. Andressian confessed to using a jacket to smother Piqui and leaving his body by a tree. Andressian searched the internet for 'wilderness areas near Solvang,' where Piqui's body was ultimately found. Andressian pled guilty to first degree murder and was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. Piqui's death caused an outcry for better laws and protections in California. New legislation was passed as a result. Piqui's law protects children in family court by prohibiting courts from ordering certain services and treatments, as well as ensuring critical training for judicial officers (California Protective Parents Association, 2025).

**Turner Jordan Nelson**

Turner was 3 years old when his father, Stephen Todd Nelson (Nelson), age 40, threw him off a bridge to his death. There was no information provided about Nelson's socioeconomic status or his criminal history. It was reported that Nelson suffered depression and hallucinated because of alcohol withdrawal.

Turner's mother and Nelson lived together for years before having Turner and stayed together for about 6 months after he was born. Turner's mother stated that she left because she no longer loved Nelson, and she started feeling intimidated by his drinking problem. She explained that she did not want Nelson to grow up around that kind of behavior. Turner's mother filed a protective order due to Nelson leaving notes on her car and calling her names, but without any explanation, she withdrew her complaint a few days later.

"After throwing the boy from the bridge, Nelson called Ms. Johnson and told her, 'I killed our son and it's all your fault. You're going to have to live with this in your heart!...' (Daily Mail Reporter, 2010). Turner's mother stated that Nelson admitted to killing their son to hurt her. The State's attorney described the crime as a vengeful act intended to cause pain to the child's mother.

"The defendant attempted to commit suicide by drinking cleaning products upon returning home that night. After he recovered, Nelson told police that demons made him throw Turner off the bridge on Super Bowl Sunday in 2008. A clinical psychologist called as a defense witness testified that Nelson had depression and hallucinated because of alcohol withdrawal" (Kay, 2011). "A Johns Hopkins neuroscientist testified that

Nelson was depressed and often hallucinated during the time of the murder” (CBS Baltimore, 2011).

Nelson was sentenced to 50 years, which was the maximum sentence available after he agreed to a guilty plea of second-degree murder and first-degree child abuse resulting in death.