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Family Annihilators: The Psychological Profiles of Murderous Fathers

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Family Annihilators: The Psychological Profiles of Murderous Fathers

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Abstract

Yardley, Wilson, and Lynes (2014), in their study of British family annihilators between 1980 and 2012, established four profiles of familicide offenders: self-righteous, disappointed, anomic, and paranoid. This paper located 39 cases of familicide within the United States between 2009 and 2019 using LexisNexis. Familicide is defined as a domestic crime where a father murders at least one of his biological children and the children's mother. Cases were categorized by analyzing the relationship between the offenders' primary motives and features of the crime and offender. Primary motives were family breakdown, appearance, financial distress, mental illness, and protection. Features included domestic violence, financial distress, mental illness, divorce, affairs, custody disputes, jealousy, and substance use. The behaviors of the offender after the familicide, such as completed or attempted suicide, denial, or fleeing, were also considered. From this analysis, two new profiles of familicide emerged: the self-preserving offender who is triggered by a threat to their individual well-being and the mentally ill offender who is triggered by a serious mental disorder or disability. Understanding each profile and the associated features of familicide can help protect at-risk families by identifying the warning signs and intervening before the crime takes place.

Keywords: familicide; psychology; domestic violence; financial distress; mental illness; stress

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Introduction

Familicide is broadly defined as one family member killing multiple other family members, where the goal is to destroy the family unit (Malmquist, 1980, p. 298). As a whole, familicide is relatively rare in comparison with other forms of crime. The most common form of familicide is the murder of at least one child and a spouse/ex-spouse/intimate partner (Liem, Levin, Holland, & Fox, 2013, p. 351; Wilson, Daly, & Daniele, 1995, p. 275). These events are considered a type of mass murder as multiple people are killed in a short period of time in one setting (Fox & Levin, 2013, p. 47). The two components of familicide are uxoricide, or the killing of one's wife, and filicide, the killing of children by their parents (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 276).

In almost every case, the familicide is premeditated and the perpetrator views his family members as property, such that he maintains the right to end their lives (Scheinin, Rogers, & Sathyavagiswaran, 2011, p. 327). Regardless of motive or history, this typically stems from the belief that they are solely responsible for their family's needs (Marzuk, 1992, p. 3181). Perpetrators need to maintain their masculinity, which is tied to the family unit, as well as control and power over their family members. When these factors are threatened, they act out against the family violently and fatally (Yardley, Wilson, & Lynes, 2014, p. 131). When fearing abandonment, offenders adopt a Medea complex ('if I cannot have them, no-one can'), exemplified through the murders (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 315). Studies of these cases provide insight into how the psychological processes of marital conflict and parent-child conflict interact (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 278).

Literature Review

In this thesis, only male offenders will be considered, as they are the predominant familicide offenders (96%) (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 311). The majority of these offenders are between 30 and 50 years old and use a firearm as their method of killing (Liem et al., 2013, p. 355). Typically, child victims are the biological offspring of the offender (78% of familicide offenders in the Netherlands and 96% of offenders in Britain killed their biological children) (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 311; Yardley et al., 2014, p. 128). Additionally, after the murders, about half of the offenders committed suicide (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 285).

Across cases in the United States (U.S.) between 2000 and 2009, there was an average of 2.81 victims, where the adult was primarily female, and the children were slightly more female than male (52% female, 48% male) (Liem et al., 2013, p. 355). Though 20% of the cases involved stepchildren, spouses were almost always the primary source of the offenders' anger (Liem et al., 2013, p. 356; Wilson et al., 1995, p. 289). 69% of offenders lived with all of their victims during the crime, while an additional 10% lived with at least one of the victims; most of the offenses occurred within the victims' homes. 73% of the murders involved a firearm, and the remaining 27% were conducted in more intimate manners, such as sharp and blunt force trauma and strangulation.

The distribution of familicides was relatively even among U.S. states with the exception of an uptake in Texas (Liem et al., 2013, p. 356). The occurrence of familicides across rural, suburban, and urban cities only varied by about 5%. Regionally, the South had the most familicides (46%), including Texas, followed by the Midwest (24%), the West (23%), and the Northeast (6%) (Fridel, 2017, p. 13). August had the highest rate of familicides, as children were

out of school and therefore more accessible to offenders; for the same reason, weekends throughout the year saw more familicides than weekdays (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 124-125).

The offenders reflect law-abiding citizens and sufficient husbands and fathers before their offense; there was rarely a legal violent history or excessive substance abuse (Scheinin et al., 2011, p. 329). A minority of offenders had histories of criminality, mental illness, or need for social service assistance. Additionally, offenders had been employed throughout a wide diversity of fields (Yardley et al., 2014, p. 126). In all cases, there was some history of unsolved problems contributing to the seemingly abrupt outburst. Offenders attempted to separate their feelings of low self-esteem, depression, and large goals from their definition of the self: outbursts of violence bridged the two (Malmquist, 1980, p. 303).

Theories of Crime

The most relevant criminological theories to familicides are Durkheim's anomie, Merton's strain theory, Agnew's General Strain Theory, and developmental or life-course theories. Each of these offer different possible roots of the perpetrators' criminality, as well as contributing motives to their offenses.

Anomie. Emile Durkheim, in his book *The Division of Labor in Society*, defines 'anomie' as lawlessness (Durkheim, 1893, p. ix). In modern translation, Durkheim's anomie is thought of as 'normlessness,' where the breakdown of social norms results in mayhem, such that individuals are more likely to commit crime (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). Durkheim also developed the theory of 'anomic suicide,' in which an offender believes that the family is no longer representative of what he thinks the unit should reflect and, as means of resolving dissonance, the father murders the family and then kill himself (Auchter, 2010, p. 11).

Strain. Robert Merton expanded on Durkheim's concept of anomie and developed strain theory, which posits that people who are unable to achieve wealth through conventional means experience strain. To resolve anomie, people must adjust their outlook or behaviors through conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, or rebellion (Merton, 1968, p. 194). Concerning familicide, retreatism is related to extended suicides, in which the offender kills his family and himself to escape from life strain. Rebellion is related to homicide, in which the offender views his family as the source of strain and kills them, but not the self, as a means of resolve (Liem, 2010, p. 158).

Robert Agnew adapted Merton's strain theory to form the General Strain Theory, where individuals experience multiple types of strain beyond economic distress. This occurs when people are either blocked from reaching their goals, stripped of positive stimuli, or exposed to negative stimuli (Agnew & White, 1992, p. 319). Negative stimuli, including anomie, personal or occupational failure, and consistent frustration, cause strain, threatening individual power. Such strain also extends to the family, as offenders believe that their families cannot care for themselves, and when they are no longer able to provide for the family, the father resorts to murder. If strain exists outside of the family, the offender is more likely to attempt suicide than if the family is viewed as the source of strain (Harper & Voight, 2007, p. 306).

Developmental/Life-Course. In addition to life circumstances around the time of the offense, other risk factors to familicide are often formed in childhood and persist into adulthood. Childhood trauma and/or poor attachment to parents can lead the child to develop maladaptive tendencies and traits. For example, disorganized, preoccupied, dismissive, ambivalent, and/or avoidant parents often produce anxious and angry children prone to violence. Abuse or neglect, as well as parental separation, can cause the child to develop a fear of abandonment, which may

be carried into adulthood (Johnson & Sachmann, 2017, p. 133). Additionally, a study analyzing familicide perpetrators with a history of mental disorders found that 10% of offenders had experienced sexual and/or physical child abuse (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 312). These factors combined can result in behavioral and emotional fluctuations, where the individual struggles to manage rage, maintain a positive self-image, empathize with others, acknowledge their trauma, and describe their feelings. Such issues often contribute to regular dissociation in the face of difficulties (Johnson & Sachmann, 2017, p. 137). Additionally, feelings of humiliation, negative self-image, frustration, and failure since childhood can incite depression in offenders (Fox & Levin, 2003, p. 52). In combination, all of these factors increase the risk that the child will be an offender of familicide in his adulthood.

Pre-Familicide Trends

Beyond experiences of anomie, strain, and childhood trauma, other risk factors for familicides emerge among analyses of offenders. Perpetrators of familicide often reflect distinct trends of psychodynamics, domestic violence, and trait vulnerability that give additional insight into their biopsychosocial profiles (Johnson & Sachmann, 2017, p. 125).

Family Breakdown. A history of domestic violence was the most common risk factor in familicide cases, as 51% of familicide offenders in the U.S. between 2000 and 2009 had previously been suspected of or charged with domestic violence (Liem et al., 2013, pp. 354-355). Another study analyzing familicide in 12 American cities found that only 25% of offenders had previous arrests related to domestic violence (Auchter, 2010, p. 10). Domestic violence, including stalking, physical restraint, controlling behaviors, violent threats, and denial of separation or rejection, was most predictive of familicide when combined with other risk factors such as childhood abuse, trait vulnerability, and psychosis (Johnson & Sachmann, 2017, p. 137).

Additional risk factors existing alongside domestic violence that amplify the risk of familicide include access to a gun, previous violent threats, and extreme jealousy and/or depression (Auchter, 2010, p. 11).

A review of familicide literature across various different times and locations revealed repeated patterns of dissatisfaction, marital strife, possessive and controlling tendencies, as well as economic, emotional, verbal, physical, sexual, and social domestic abuse. Most offenders also threatened to hurt themselves and/or others, including their spouse, if the spouse attempted to leave the offender or have extramarital relations (Johnson & Sachmann, 2017, p. 139). Marital disputes, isolation from the spouse, divorce, and custody disputes over children are other accelerants to familicide, as the offender becomes overly focused on violent behavior as a means of stress relief (Scheinin et al., 2011, p. 329).

Financial Distress. Another primary motive of familicide is financial struggles, which greatly increases the risk of familicide when combined with a history of domestic violence (Auchter, 2010, p. 11). However, the extent of economic influence in familicides differs across studies and populations. In the three-decade review of all British familicide cases, financial stress was the primary motive in 29% of cases, while 18% of total familicide offenders were unemployed (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123). In a study investigating offenders of familicide who received mental health analysis and/or treatment before their offense, 41% of the offenders were unemployed (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 311). An analysis of the correlation between the unemployment rate and familicides was found to be significant between 1976 and 2007, but additional affective factors prevent the conclusion of causation (Liem et al., 2013, p. 357). Therefore, while economic stress is influential in cases of familicide, other risk factors must also be taken into account when determining motive.

Mental Illness. As early as 1806, mental health issues were thought to be a factor in familicides. Peter Edes proposed the familicide profile 'insanity,' characterizing those diagnosed with severe mental illnesses (Edes, 1806). In an analysis of Britain familicide offenders, only 10% of the primary motives were associated with mental health problems, where half had forms of psychosis and the other half committed honor sacrifice killings (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123). However, analysis of offenders in the Netherlands found psychosis to account for 22% of the primary motives, while 65% of the total offender population qualified as having a personality disorder; 22% maintained substance abuse disorders, 17% mood disorders, and an additional 17% psychotic disorders (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 312).

Described in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), personality disorders include antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, and narcissistic personality disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Trait vulnerabilities associated with these disorders include narcissism, emotional instability, dependency, and low self-control, which are speculated to contribute to offender victim-blaming (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 314). Other trait vulnerabilities increasing the risk of perpetrating familicide include an inability to define and appropriately attribute the source of stress, differentiate between the self and others, shifting self-anger onto others, destructive tendencies, high emotional reactivity, low self-control, perceiving experiences as threats of rejection or abandonment, and extreme jealousy. Other than personality disorders and traits related to them, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression also increase vulnerability to perpetrating familicide (Johnson & Sachmann, 2017, p. 137).

A history of mental illness can be difficult to deduce due to a lack of records; however, most offenders previously displayed symptoms consistent with various mental illnesses (Johnson

& Sachmann, 2017, p. 127). Additionally, because about half of familicide offenders complete suicide, it is sometimes impossible to determine if the offender was mentally ill at the time of their offense (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 285). In the Netherland study, 44% of offenders had a documented history of mental illness and care, while only 4% had a previous record of violent criminal history (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, 312). In each of the familicide instances, the crime was planned in advance and later linked to feelings of emotional distress (Johnson, 2006, p. 457).

   Social Status and Paternal Expectations. Compared to family discord, economic difficulties, and psychopathy, offenders' beliefs of social status and family appearance are significantly more difficult to measure. These variables are predominantly mental, making it nearly impossible to gauge the extent of expectations maintained by now dead perpetrators or uncooperative live offenders. Additionally, the importance of family and status relative to other life factors are highly subjective, such that even if data were obtained, systematic analysis would be very difficult. Therefore, there is very little existing data collection or analysis on the influence of expected and/or perceived social status and family appearance on the commission of familicide.

Post-Familicide Trends

   Suicide. Across studies, the rate of suicides attempted or completed by familicide offenders was significant. In the U.S., between 2000 and 2009, 64% of offenders committed suicide (Liem et al., 2013, p. 355). A study of 109 familicide cases in Britain and Canada found half of the men committed suicide after their attack (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 289). In Britain, between 1980 and 2012, about 68% of familicide perpetrators committed suicide (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123).

Psychotically depressed or schizophrenic offenders are more likely to view suicide as an avenue to reunite their family, whereas nonpsychotic offenders do not hold this belief and thus are less likely to commit suicide. However, suicide cannot be used as a categorizing factor, as attempts may fail and the deceased cannot be interviewed (Malmquist, 1980, p. 303). Notably, the Britain study across three decades discerned between those who completed suicide and those who attempted: only 18.6% of total familicide offenders did not seek suicide (Yardley et al., 2014, p. 128).

Remorse. All surviving fathers insisted that they previously loved and continue to love their children deeply, displayed signs of mourning, and described their children's murder from the perspective of a bystander. The fathers separate themselves from their crimes, viewing their anger as the offender rather than the self. In their rage, all objects were viewed as evil and in need to be destroyed. Post-offense reflection shows dichotomized views of the murdered, such that the suffering caused by the family member and their murder are separated from the actual individual and their immortalization in the mind of the offender (Malmquist, 1980, p. 303).

Psychological Profiles

Trends and Proposals. Peter Edes noted in a review of early American familicides that, while profiles emerge, they are not exclusive, such that offenders may fit multiple characterizations (Edes, 1806). The typical perpetrator of familicide is the male head of household who is either depressed, paranoid, or intoxicated (Marzuk, 1992, p. 3181). Common themes emerge among all familicide perpetrators. For one, offenders hold the belief that they have a right over their family members' lives (Scheinin et al., 2011, p. 329). Relatedly, they maintain the need for power, such that murder begets feelings of control (Fox & Levin, 2003, pp. 58-59). In most cases of familicide, the spouse was the primary source of the offenders' anger,

where the children were viewed as supporters or extensions of their mother (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 289).

Frazier asserted in 1975 that two major familicide profiles exist: murder-by-proxy and suicide-by-proxy, both of which use murder as a form of control. Murder-by-proxy characterizes offenders who are estranged from their spouse, view the wife and the children as enemies, and kill their family members out of rage and malice. Suicide-by-proxy describes offenders who feel depressed and worthless, often suffering from financial issues, who kill their family as a way of saving them from life's problems (Frazier, 1975).

Similarly, authors of a 1995 article pose two types of familicide offenders in which the motivation for the crime differs. The hostile accusatory offender is angry at his spouse for infidelity and/or attempts to separate and he often expresses open displays of violence and anger prior to the murder. The despondent non-hostile offender is depressed and believes he is committing mercy killings, saving his family from the father's failures or larger life disasters. These perpetrators tend to not have the same level of exposed domestic violence as hostile offenders. It is proposed that accusatory offenders kill their children because they either do not care for them or view them as supporting their mother; despondent offenders kill their children and spouse out of love and protection (Wilson et al., 1995, pp. 277-288).

Other analyzers of familicide cases develop even more thorough categorizations of offenders, proposing four profiles of perpetrators rather than just two. In 1980, a general taxonomy was put forth: (1) those obsessed with confirming their spouse's infidelity, (2) those who lose their ability to deny their life difficulties and become enraged and violent, (3) those who become debilitated by overwhelming guilt and need for love as their obsessive defenses collapse, and (4) those who experience depression or psychotic delusions, such as

schizophrenics, who believe life is too burdensome and/or may experience paranoid episodes

leading them to mercy killings (Malmquist, 1980, p. 302). The first two are reminiscent of the

hostile accusatory offender, where the familicides reflect murder-by-proxy. Alternatively, the

last two represent the despondent non-hostile offender committing suicide-by-proxy.

More recently, in a 2008 analysis of offenders with disabilities, four distinct categories of

offending motives were rendered: narcissistic rage (26%), psychosis (22%), fear of abandonment

(22%) and 'other' (30%) (Liem & Koenraadt, 2008, p. 313). The accepted profiles today are self-

righteous, disappointed, anomic, and paranoid (Yardley et al., 2014, p. 131). Before

extrapolating on these categories, early conceptualizations of them are discussed.

A general type of familicide perpetrators are those who kill out of revenge and/or

pathological jealousy (Fox & Levin, 2003, p. 50). The offender believes that his spouse has been

unfaithful to him and thus must pay; he murders the children to further harm their mother and to

punish them for supporting her (Marzuk, 1992, p. 3181). Therefore, these crimes appear to be

crimes of passion, as they are driven by extreme emotion, but they are largely planned in

advance and maintained by gross philosophies of punishment (Edes, 1806, p. 14). Prior to the

offense, the offenders may have a history of violent vengeance fantasies and alcoholism (Cohen,

1995, p. 743).

Another pattern of offenders, especially those who committed familicides early in

American history, are those who maintain religious fanaticism, marked by extreme and

unintelligible/disconnected beliefs, where murder is committed in adherence to their religious

views (Edes, 1806, p. 15). More modern exemplifications of this typology of offenders are those

who believe their families are not idyllic, such that the onset of planning the offense is triggered

by losing a job/source of income and/or a relationship with one's significant other. An additional

type of offender is similarly triggered but kills to profit from the elimination of their family, such that they can escape the perceived failure and start anew (Fox & Levin, 2003, p. 60).

Lastly are perpetrators with mental illnesses or disorders, including depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, and personality disorders. The first display typical symptoms of depression, such as difficulty concentrating, thinking, sleeping, feeling guilty and meritless, loss of pleasure in hobbies, work, and other activities, and suicidal thoughts (Cohen, 1995, p. 745). Additionally, the depressed perpetrator views himself as a failure and, in conjunction with extreme financial and/or social stress, believes that the family cannot function without him. (Marzuk, 1992, p. 3181; Scheinin et al., 2011, p. 329). Therefore, the murders, viewed as extended suicides or mercy killings, are of the loyalty typology, where the offender kills to save his family from further suffering (Fox & Levin, 2003, p. 59; Marzuk, 1992, p. 3181). In these cases, while the actual murder may be extremely violent and gruesome, the offender handles the dead bodies with great respect and often meticulously positions them in a loving manner (Cohen, 1995, p. 746). Other offenders, with acute psychosis or schizophrenia, are marked by delusions and hallucinations to which they react violently. These perpetrators may also experience paranoia and dissociation from reality, which aids in their rage towards external entities, including the family members victimized (Cohen, 1995, p. 276).

Established Taxonomy. One of the most comprehensive studies of familicides was an analysis of cases in Britain between 1980 and 2012. The authors of the explanatory article define family annihilators as those who murder one or more of their children and who may or may not kill their spouse and/or themselves (Yardley et al., 2014, p. 119). Therefore, because this definition is more inclusive than that of this paper, the given statistics could not be used at face

value. However, details for each case analyzed were provided, such that separate statistics fitting this thesis' definition of familicide could be computed; those will be the statistics provided.

Of the 59 cases studied by Elizabeth Yardley, David Wilson, and Adam Lynes, 28 fit the definition of familicide in which the offender murders his spouse and at least one of his children. Of these perpetrators, 68%[1] committed suicide after the commission of the murders. The most prominent primary motive was the breakdown of the family unit, characterizing 47% of crimes, followed by financial distress at 29%, then honor killings at 11%. Interestingly, while 18% of offenders were unemployed at the time of the crime, all offenders driven by financial struggles were employed. There were two cases with unique motives: one offender was suffering from grief and the other was attempting to cover up the sexual assault of his stepdaughter. 61% of offenders used a single method in the murders and the remaining 39% used multiple combinations of up to three methods of murder.

As Table 1 shows, there are four established profiles discussed in this paper: self-righteous, disappointed, anomic, and paranoid. Table 2 describes the distribution of primary motivations of offenders within each profile, and Table 3 describes the distribution of various features of the offender and/or crime. Table 4 compares how prevalent each motive and feature is across all perpetrators of familicides, regardless of profile. The categorization of 7% (two offenders) was not possible, as not enough information was collected to make a determination. Both uncategorized offenders used one method to kill their families while only one committed suicide (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123).

Self-Righteous. The most common classification, categorizing 32% of offenders, was the self-righteous profile. These perpetrators blame their spouse for the collapse of the family unit

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[1] ((Total number of offenders who committed suicide)/(Total number of familicide offenders)) x100 = (19/28) x 100 = .678x 100 = 67.8% of familicide offenders committed suicide

and all other life problems, which elicits a desire to retaliate against them. This offender type holds the nuclear family unit and their sole ability to support them at the center of their masculinity. The family is viewed as a failure when the father cannot provide or other people provide in place of him for the family. The offender attempts to regain control and power by eliminating the family whom he designates is the primary threat against his success. This offender often has a history of controlling, narcissistic, and dramatic behavior, which may also occur during the murders (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 131-133).

Self-righteous offenders account for 37% of the suicides committed by familicide perpetrators, while 78% of men in this category committed suicide. As alluded to by the description, the primary motive in every self-righteous case analyzed was the breakdown of the family (100%). This population made up 70% of all offenders driven by family breakdown. 22% of self-righteous offenders were unemployed at the time of their crime. 67% used one murder method and the remaining 33% used multiple methods (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123).

Disappointed. The disappointed offender also views the family as vital to his masculinity and maintains that the family must represent the offender's idyllic representation of a family unit to be successful. When the family does not conform to this prototype, the perpetrator becomes outraged and views the family as a failure. His solution to this problem is to destroy the family through murder. These offenders represented 29% of total familicide offenders (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 134-135).

Within the disappointed profile, 38% of offenders committed suicide after their offense, making up 16% of total suicides. The primary motives for disappointed offenders were sparser: 50% were driven by family breakdown, 38% by mercy, and 12% by financial distress. Motives concerning mercy drove what was considered 'honor killings,' in which the offender kills his

family to save them from life strains. Notably, honor killings were only represented by disappointed offenders. 25% of disappointed offenders were unemployed, and half used one method of killing compared to the other half who used multiple (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123).

Anomic. Representing 21% of offenders, the anomic profile is named after Durkheim's concept of anomie, or a breakdown of social norms. In these cases, the father views success as purely economic, such that the family must reflect financial success through 'markers' such as a luxurious house, cars, and hobbies. When the father and/or the family experience financial struggles and can no longer maintain their outward appearance of high status, the father believes that the family unit is a failure and useless, leading to its elimination (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 135-136).

This profile was the most uniform, as every anomic offender was driven by financial stress (100%) and committed suicide after the familicide (100%). Of total offenders, anomic represented 75% of those driven by financial stress and 32% of those who committed suicide. 67% of offenders utilized a single killing method and the remaining 33% used multiple methods to murder their family (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123).

Paranoid. Paranoid perpetrators view threats to their survival and success as deriving outside of the family. The offender holds their ability to protect their family at the core of his masculinity, such that threats to this ability lead the offender to become suspicious of their spouse and society. Out of fear of losing his children, and therefore his role as a father, in addition to the potential harm against his children, the perpetrator murders the family. This way, he is infinitely the protector of the children and they cannot experience additional suffering. 11%

of offenders analyzed were categorized as paranoid perpetrators (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 136-137).

Representing 10% of total suicides, 67% of familicide offenders committed suicide after their attacks. Two unique motives were associated with this profile: bereavement, or grief, and concealment, where a perpetrator sought to hide his history of sexually abusing his stepdaughter. The third motive represented was financial stress; each motive was equally represented by one of the three paranoid offenders analyzed. 67% of offenders used multiple methods to kill, whereas the remaining 33% only used one (Yardley et al., 2014, pp. 122-123).

TABLE 1: Familicide Offender Profiles (Britain, 1980-2012)

	Self-righteous	Disappointed	Anomic	Paranoid
Core of offender's masculinity	Ability to support his family	Family appearance of success and perfection	Family appearance of financial success	Ability to protect his family
Motive(s)	Family breakdown	Family breakdown Mercy Financial distress	Financial distress	Protect family from external harm
Offender's definition of failure	He is not the family provider	Family appears unsuccessful and imperfect	Family is financially unsuccessful	Inability to keep the family safe
Who the offender blames	Spouse	Spouse	Spouse and children	The outside world and/or himself
Objective in familicide	Revenge Regain control	Revenge Honor the children Escape strain	Escape the family and strain	Save the family from experiencing strain

Descriptions provided characterize the typical offender in each profile as described by Yardley et al. (2014).

TABLE 2: Primary Motives (Britain, 1980-2012)

	Self-righteous	Disappointed	Anomie	Paranoid
Family breakdown	100%	50%	0%	0%
Financial	0%	12%	100%	33%
Honor	0%	38%	0%	0%
Bereavement	0%	0%	0%	33%
Sexual abuse	0%	0%	0%	33%

Percentages provided describe characterizations of offenders within each individual profile as described by Yardley et al. (2014).

TABLE 3: Features (Britain, 1980-2012)

	Self-righteous	Disappointed	Anomie	Paranoid
Suicide	78%	38%	100%	67%
Unemployed	22%	25%	0%	0%
Single Method	67%	50%	67%	33%
Multiple Methods	33%	50%	33%	67%

Percentages provided describe characterizations of offenders within each individual profile as described by Yardley et al. (2014).

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TABLE 4: Motives and Features Across Profiles (Britain, 1980-2012)

Committed Suicide	68%	Attempted Suicide	14%
Family Breakdown	46%	Financial	29%
Honor	11%	Bereavement	4%
Sexual Abuse	4%	Unemployed	18%
Single Method	61%	Multiple Methods	39%

Percentages provided describe characterizations of offenders across all profiles as described by Yardley et al. (2014).

Methods

The primary objective of this paper is to classify father perpetrators of familicide in the U.S. between 2009 and 2019. The profiles of self-righteous, disappointed, anomic, and paranoid offenders have established criteria that are used as determinants in categorizing offenders. Some

perpetrators fit multiple categories and others did not represent any. The outlying cases were then compared to form new profiles.

The independent variables are the primary motives and additional features of the crime and offender. Because of the multitude of influential factors contributing to the commission of familicide, it is important to note that additional confounding variables most likely exist. Dependent variables studied, in addition to the actual crime of familicide, included the fathers' attempt to or completion of suicide, denial or admission of guilt, and the expression of remorse. The analyses are correlational and, because the independent variables are preexisting and cannot be experimentally manipulated, causation between the independent and dependent variables cannot be concluded.

The qualitative data was collected through case studies via the LexisNexis database, which contains legal, public, and news sources. Two rounds different of keywords were entered: "familicide *or* family murder *or* murder suicide *or* murder-suicide *or* father kill *or* father murder *or* husband kill *or* husband murder" and "murder suicide *or* murder-suicide *or* homicide suicide *or* homicide-suicide *and* father *or* family *or* son *or* sons *or* daughter *or* daughters *or* child *or* children."

Search results were further restricted by geographic limits within the U.S. and time limits from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2019. Applicable news articles were analyzed for relevant information, including details about the offender, victims, and the crime itself. The cases were then categorized into the established Yardley et al. profiles. The outlying cases were reanalyzed for patterns to help form new profiles. While the profiles were not exclusive, such that a single offender may fit multiple categories, fathers of familicide were profiled under the most appropriate category for analytical purposes.

Results

Case Analysis

Through the LexisNexis search and news article review, 39 cases of familicide were identified to have occurred in the U.S. between 2009 and 2019. In each of these cases, the father murdered at least one of his biological children and their mother. Table 5 contains general information about each offender considered, including their name, race, and age at the time of the offense. Further, the year when and the state where the familicide was perpetrated, the victims' name, relationship to the offender, and age at the time of the murder, and whether the offender attempted, completed, or did not attempt suicide at all can be observed. The profile of the offender is also included, as is their primary motivation and additional features of the offender and/or crime.

Regarding race, 27 offenders were white (69%), 5 were Hispanic (13%), 4 were black (10%), 2 were Asian, and 1 was American Indian. This distribution can be visualized in Graph 1. The youngest offender was 22 at the time of the familicide and the oldest was 82. The average age at which an offender committed familicide was 42, and the mode was 53.

FIGURE 1: Offender Race

Legend:
- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Asian
- American Indian
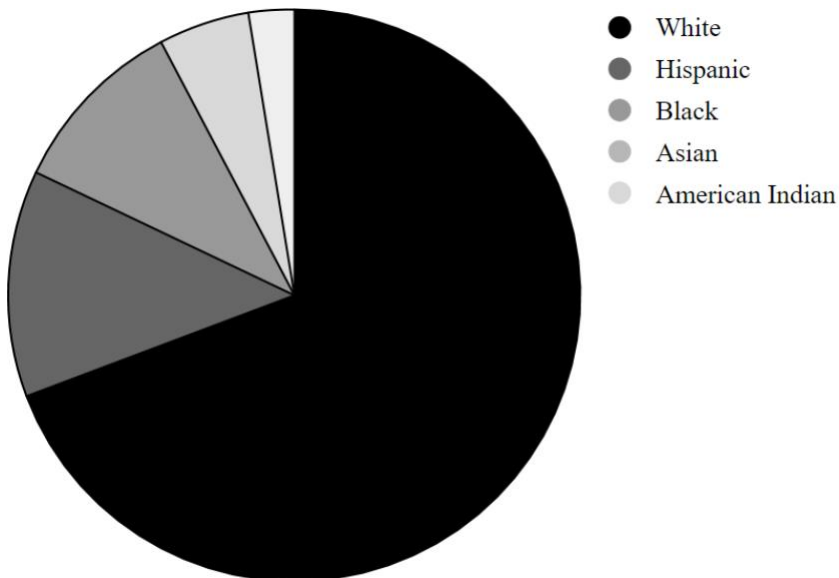
The most common number of victims in each instance was 3 (38% of cases) or 4 (31% of cases), as seen in Graph 2. Of the children murdered, 40 were female (41%) and 58 were male (59%). 61% of all victims were the biological children of the offender, and 28% were women romantically involved with the offender. 13 victims were other relatives of either the offenders' or the children's' mothers' family. 1 was a stepchild of the offender, and 2 were complete strangers to the offender and the victims.

FIGURE 2: Number of Victims Per Incident
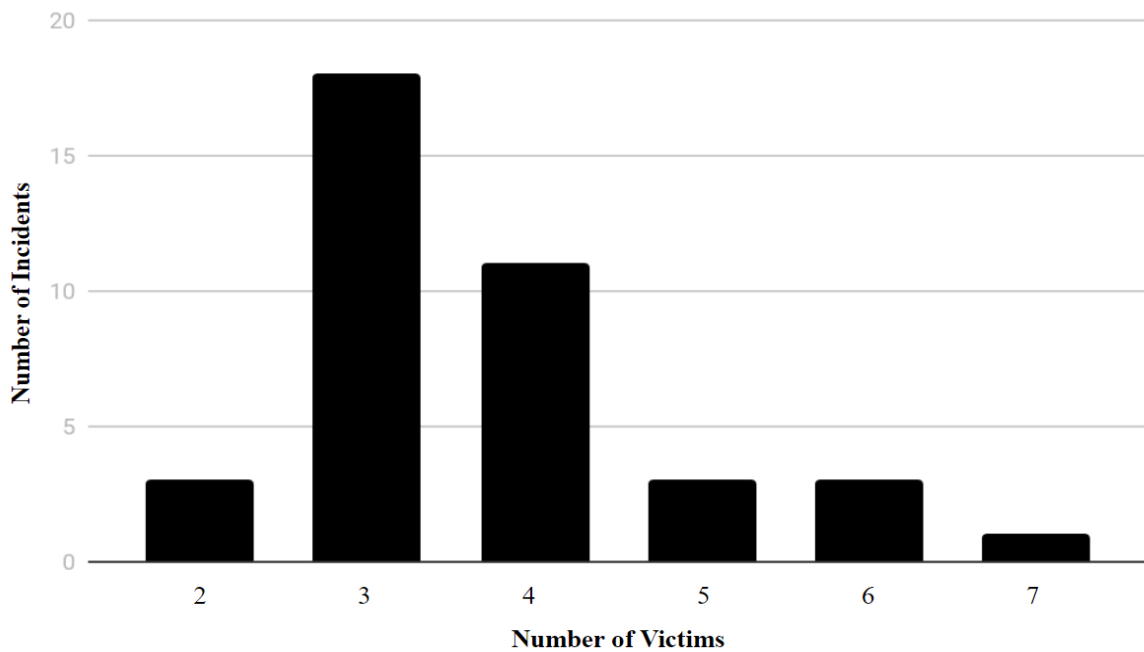
31% of the murders occurred in 2009, and the number of familicides spiked again every 2-3 years. The spread of familicides over time can be seen in Graph 3. California saw the most familicides between 2009 and 2019, followed by Florida, New York, and Virginia. The number of incidents per state and the number of victims per incident can be observed in Graph 4.

FIGURE 3: Number of Familicides Over Time
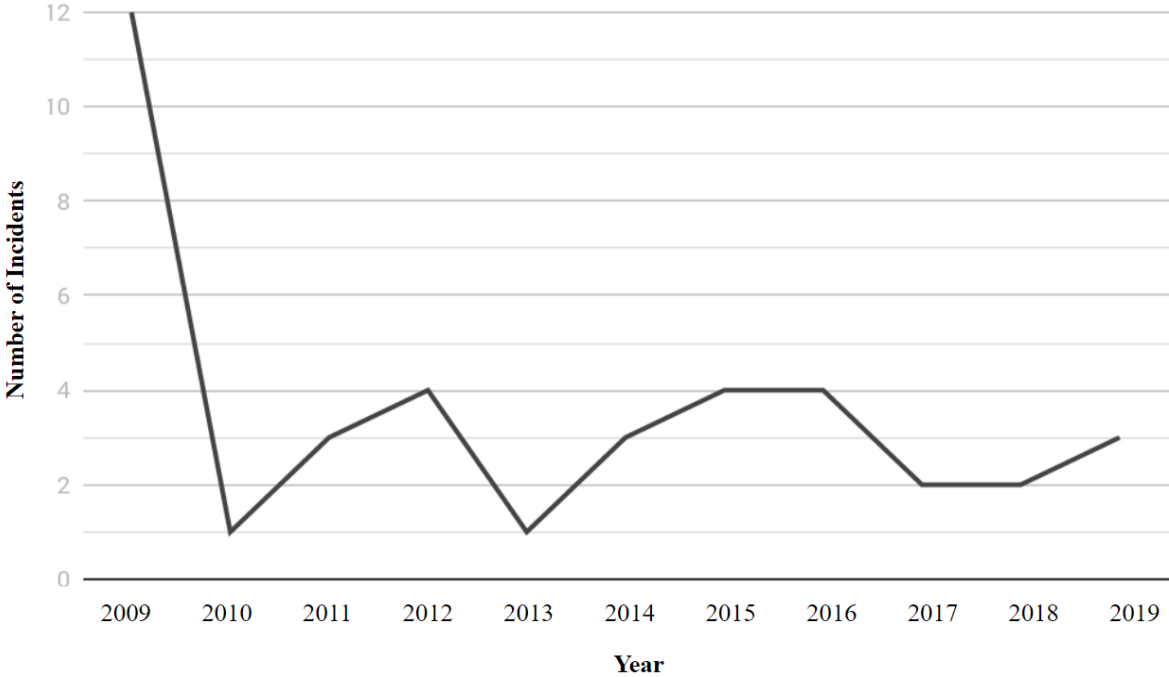
FIGURE 4: Familicides Across the U.S., 2009-2019
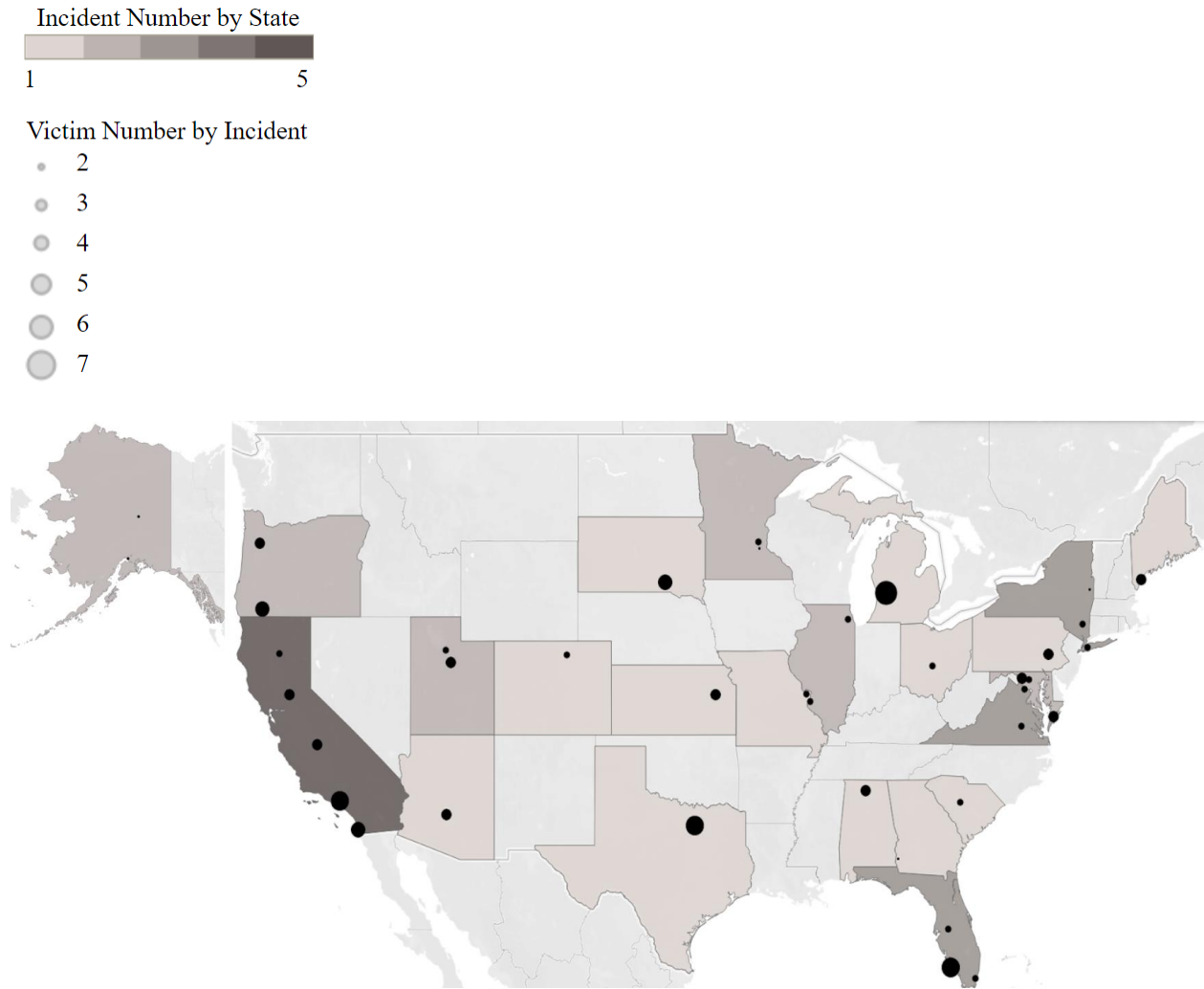
The primary motives noted were family breakdown, financial distress, mental illness, appearance, and protection/honor. 49% of offenders were motivated by family breakdown, 28% by financial distress, 10% by mental illness, 8% by appearance, and 5% by protection/honor. Graph 5 visually shows the distribution of offenders' primary motivations.

FIGURE 5: Primary Motivation Across Profiles
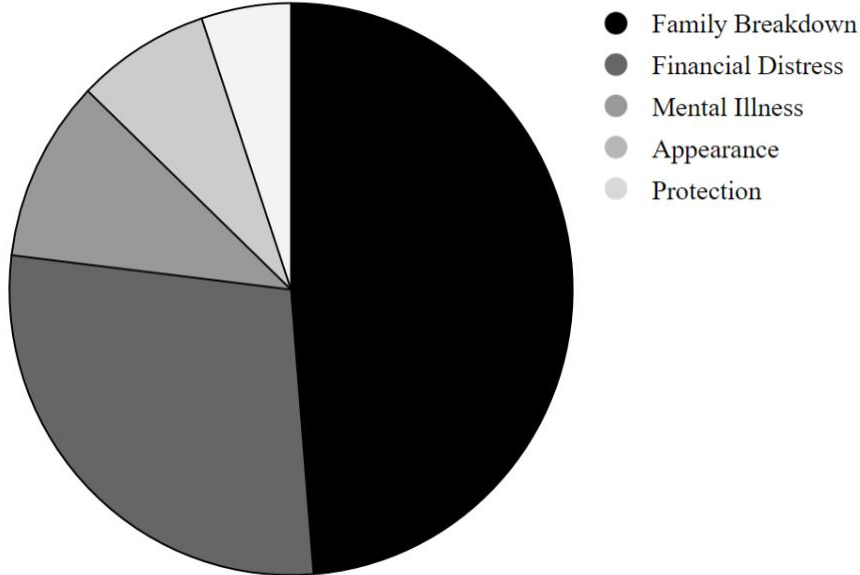
The features identified involved the independent history of the offender, the offender's patterns of behavior with his family, and challenges the family faced as a unit. In 44% of cases, the offender had a history of domestic violence. Also in 44% of cases, the offender and the adult female victim were in the process of separating or already separated, and 18% of offenders expressed severe jealousy over their significant other. Among offenders, 33% had a history of mental illness, 10% had history with the criminal justice system, and 10% had a history of substance use. 23% of cases involved financial distress, 21% included custody disputes, and 5% involved either mentally or physically ill children. Two offenders were unemployed at the time of the crime. Only one offender was having an extramarital affair while five of the offenders' significant others were having or were suspected of having an affair. Five offenders were accused of other crimes prior to their commission of familicide. These results are summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 5: Features Across Profiles (U.S., 2009-2019)

Suicide*	87%	Custody	21%	Legal History	33%
Domestic Violence	44%	Financial Distress	23%	Substance History	10%
Separation	44%	Unemployment	5%	Other Crime	13%
Jealousy	18%	Mental Illness	33%	Single Method	92%
Wife Affair	13%	Ill Children	6%	Multiple Methods	8%
Offender Affair	3%				

Percentages provided describe characterizations of offenders across all profiles in the US, 2009-2019.
*Includes attempted and completed suicide

Shooting was the most common method of murder across familicide cases (79%). Two offenders strangled their victims, one drowned their children, and one stabbed their family members. Graph 6 displays the distribution of murder methods used by familicide offenders. Three fathers used multiple methods of killing their family. After the crime, 87% of offenders either completed or attempted suicide. Only 5 offenders did not attempt suicide at all. Table 6 also provides summaries of the percentage of fathers who killed with a single method or multiple methods and those who attempted or completed suicide.

FIGURE 6: Methods of Murder
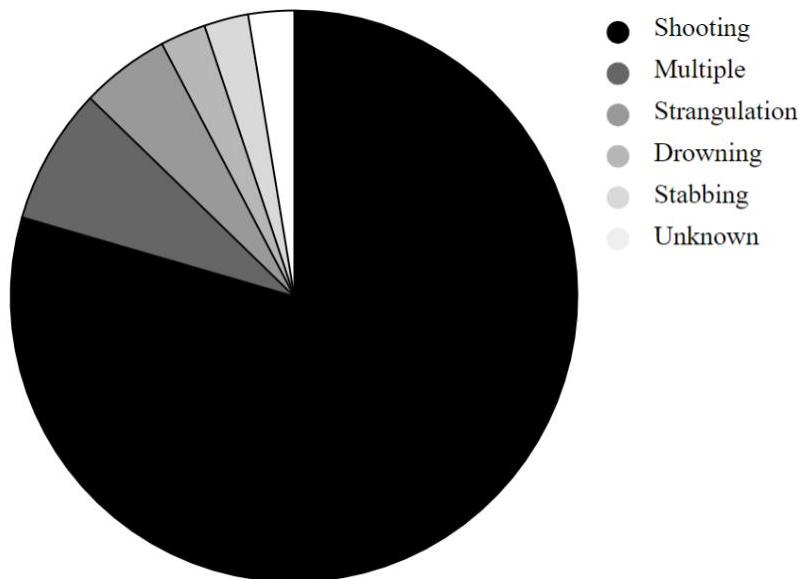
TABLE 6: Familicide Cases Within the U.S., 2009-2019

Name	Race	Age	Year	State	Method	Victims	Relationship	Age	Suicide	Profile(s)	Motive	Features
Pablo Josue Amador	Hispanic	53	2009	FL	Shooting	Maria Amador	Wife	47	Completed	Self-Preserving	Appearance	Sexual abuse of child
						Priscila Amador	Daughter	14				
						Rosa Amador	Daughter	13				
Glen Edward Baxter	Black	27	2015	AZ	Drowning	Danica Baxter	Wife	25	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Separation
						Reighn Baxter	Son	3				Custody
						Nazyiah Baxter	Son	2				Domestic violence
						Zariyah Baxter	Daughter	1				
Troy Bellar	White	34	2009	FL	Shooting	Wendy Bellar	Wife	31	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Separation; Custody
						Ryan Bellar	Son	7				Domestic violence
						Zack Bellar	Son	5 mo.				Legal history
Joshua Boren Sr.	White	34	2015	UT	Shooting	Kelly Boren	Wife	32	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Wife affair; Custody
						Joshua Boren Jr.	Son	7				Jealousy
						Haley Boren	Daughter	5				Domestic violence
						Marie King	Relative	55				Drug history
Jorge Chavez	Hispanic	25	2017	SC	Shooting	Marisso Reynoso	Girlfriend	26	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Separation
						Elijah Chavez	Son	4				Mental Illness
						Ezra Chavez	Son	1				Domestic violence
Chris Coleman	White	32	2009	IL	Strangulation	Sheri Coleman	Wife	31	Not attempted	Self-Preserving	Appearance	Avoid divorce
						Garett Coleman	Son	11				Separation
						Gavin Coleman	Son	9				

Thomas Comer	White	73	2016	MO	Shooting	Carole Comer	Wife	71	Completed	Mentally Ill	Mental Illness	Depression
						John Comer	Son	50				Paranoia
						Rebecca Comer	Daughter	45				
Jordan Adam Criado	Asian	53	2011	OR	Stabbing &	Tabash Paige-Craido	Wife	30	Attempted	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Separation
					Smothering	Elijah Craido	Son	7				Jealousy
						Isaac Craido	Son	6				
						Andrew Craido	Son	5				
						Aurora Craido	Daughter	2				
David Crowley	White	29	2015	MN	Shooting	Komel Crowley	Wife	28	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Domestic violence
						Raniya Crowley	Daughter	5				
Charles L. Dalton Sr.	White	38	2009	MD	Shooting	Jennifer Dalton	Wife	37	Completed	Anomic	Financial Distress	
						Charles L. Dalton Jr.	Son	14				
						Emmaline E. Dalton	Daughter	7				
Mesac Damas	Black	33	2009	FL	Stabbing	Guerline Dieu Damas	Wife	32	Not attempted	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Wife affair
						Michzach Damas	Son	9				Custody
						Marven Damas	Son	6				Domestic violence
						Maven Damas	Son	5				Legal history
						Megan Damas	Daughter	3				Jealousy
						Morgan Damas	Daughter	1				

Name	Race	Age	Year	State	Method	Victim	Relationship	Victim Age	Suicide	Type	Category	Stressors
Rodrick Shonte Dantzler	Black	33	2011	MI	Shooting	Jennifer Heeren	Ex-Girlfriend	29	Completed	Mentally Ill	Mental Illness	Bi-polar disorder
						Kamrie Herren-Dantzler	Daughter	12				Legal history
						Rebecca Heeren	Relative	52				Drug, alcohol history
						Thomas Heeren	Relative	51				
						Kimberlee Emkens	Ex-girlfriend	23				
						Amanda Emkens	Relative	27				
						Marissa Emkens	Relative	10				
Steven Dym	White	56	2017	NY	Shooting	Loretta Dym	Wife	50	Completed	Paranoid	Financial Distress	Stealing accusations
						Caroline Dym	Daughter	18				
Kevin Garner	White	45	2009	AL	Shooting	Tammy Garner	Wife	40	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Wife affair; Custody
						Chelsie Garner	Daughter	16				Separation
						Karen Beaty	Relative	48				Jealousy
						Bobby Beaty	Relative	11				Domestic violence
Shankar Nagappa Hanagud	American Indian	53	2019	CA	Unknown	Jyothi Shankar	Wife	46	Not attempted	Anomic	Financial Distress	Federal tax liens
						Varum Shankar	Son	20				
						Guari Hanagud	Daughter	16				
						Nischal Hanagud	Son	13				
McKay Hutton	White	22	2016	AK	Shooting	Emily McDonald	Wife	22	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Domestic violence
						Teagan Hutton	Daughter	8 wks.				
						Linda Hutton	Relative	54				
Barry C. Jernigan	White	35	2014	VA	Shooting	Renotta Jernigan	Wife	30	Completed	Disappointed	Financial Distress	Separation
						Alexis Kellas	Step-daughter	9				Loss of jobs
						Seth Jernigan	Son	2				

Name	Race	Age	Year	State	Method	Victim	Relationship	Victim Age	Suicide	Type	Cause	Trigger
James Kraig Kahler	White	46	2009	KS	Shooting	Karen Kahler	Wife	44	Not attempted	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Wife affair
						Emily Kahler	Daughter	18				Separation
						Lauren Kahler	Daughter	16				Mental Illness
						Dorothy Wight	Relative	89				Jealousy
Nikolay Lazukin	White	27	2012	OR	Shooting & Asphyxiation	Natalya Lazukin	Wife	26	Completed	Mentally Ill	Mental Breakdown	Seeking drugs
						Angelica Lazukin	Daughter	3				Attacked a stranger
						Zoe Lazukin	Daughter	1				
						Devin Matlock	Stranger	21				
Matthew Lowell Justice	White	37	2010	GA	Shooting	Amy Justice	Wife	36	Completed	Anomic	Financial Distress	Bankrupt years prior
						Garrett Justice	Son	14				
Ervin Antonio Lupoe	Hispanic	40	2009	CA	Shooting	Ana Lupoe	Wife	43	Completed	Anomic	Financial Distress	Mortgage debt
						Brittney Lupoe	Daughter	8				
						Jaszmin Lupoe	Daughter	5				
						Jassely Lupoe	Daughter	5				
						Benjamin Lupoe	Son	2				
						Christian Lupoe	Son	2				
Justin Matern	White	36	2009	UT	Shooting	Melissa Matern	Wife	36	Completed	Disappointed	Family Breakdown	Separation
						Gabriel Matern	Son	6				Financial Distress
						Raiden Matern	Son	4				Mental Illness
Mark Meeks	White	51	2009	OH	Shooting	Jennifer Dallas-Meeks	Wife	40	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Wife affair
						Abbigail Meeks	Daughter	8				Jealousy
						Jimmy Meeks	Son	5				

Shane Miller	White	45	2013	CA	Shooting	Sandy Miller	Wife	34	Completed	Disappointed	Financial Distress	Separation; Custody
						Shelby Miller	Daughter	8				Money laundering
						Shasta Miller	Daughter	5				Drug history
William Parente	White	59	2009	NY	Bludgeoning	Betty Parente	Wife	58	Completed	Paranoid	Financial Distress	Fraud accusation
					Asphyxiation	Stephanie Parente	Daughter	19				
						Cathrine Parente	Daughter	11				
Albert Peterson	White	57	2012	VA	Shooting	Kathleen Peterson	Wife	52	Completed	Mentally Ill	Mental Illness	Paranoia
						Matthew Peterson	Son	16				Suicide attempts
						Christopher Peterson	Son	13				
Steven Pladl	White	42	2018	NY	Shooting	Katie Fusco	Daughter/Wife	20	Completed	Self-Preserving	Family Breakdown	Domestic violence
						Bennett Pladl	Grandson/Son	7 mo.				Incest
						Tony Fusco	Relative	56				
Esteban Quintero-Gonzales	Hispanic	37	2012	VA	Shooting	Evelyn Colon-Matias	Ex-girlfriend	27	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Custody
						Jesus Quintero-Colon	Son	10				
						Ana Quintero-Colon	Daughter	9				
						Zayday Reyes	Stranger	27				
David Schladetzky	White	53	2019	MN	Shooting	Kjersten Schladetzky	Wife	39	Completed	Disappointed	Financial Distress	Separation; Custody
						William	Son	11				Unemployed
						Nelson	Son	8				
Mark Short Sr.	White	40	2016	PA	Shooting	Megan Short	Wife	33	Completed	Disappointed	Financial Distress	Separation
						Lianna Short	Daughter	8				Work demotion
						Mark Short Jr.	Son	5				Medical bills
						Willow Short	Daughter	2				Domestic violence

Name	Race	Age	Year	State	Method	Victim	Relation	Victim Age	Status	Type	Motive	Reason
Avtar Singh	Asian	47	2012	CA	Shooting	Harvinder Kour	Wife	-	Completed	Self-Preserving	Family Breakdown	Domestic violence
						Kanwarpal Singh	Son	17				Wanted for murder
						Kanwaljit Singh	Son	15				
						Jay Singh	Son	3				
Joel Smith	White	33	2014	ME	Shooting	Heather Smith	Wife	35	Completed	Disappointed	Family Breakdown	Domestic disputes
						Jason Montez	Son	12		Mentally Ill		Mental Illness
						Noah Montez	Son	7				Financial Distress
						Lily Smith	Daughter	4				
Frank Stack Sr.	White	82	2014	IL	Shooting	Joan Stack	Wife	82	Completed	Paranoid	Protection	Mentally disabled
						Mary Stack	Daughter	57				children
						Frank Stack Jr.	Son	48				
Jose Valdivia	Hispanic	31	2019	CA	Shooting	Sabrina Rosario	Wife	29	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Separation
						Zeth Valdivia	Son	11				Domestic violence
						Ezekiel Valdiva	Son	9				
						Zuriel Valdivia	Son	7				
						Enzie Valdivia	Son	3				
Christopher Watts	White	33	2018	CO	Strangulation	Shannon Watts	Wife	34	Not attempted	Self-Preserving	Appearance	Avoid divorce
						Bella Watts	Daughter	4				Marry mistress
						Celeste Watts	Daughter	3				Separation

Scott Westerhuis	White	41	2015	SD	Shooting	Nicole Westerhuis	Wife	41	Completed	Paranoid	Protection	Failing business
						Michael Westerhuis	Son	16				White-collar crime
						Conner Westerhuis	Son	14				Financial Distress
						Jaeci Westerhuis	Daughter	10				
						Kailey Westerhuis	Daughter	9				
Christopher Allan Wood	White	34	2009	MD	Shooting	Francie Billotti-Wood	Wife	33	Completed	Anomic	Financial Distress	Debt
						Chandler Wood	Son	5				Mental Illness
						Gavin Wood	Son	4				
						Fiona Wood	Daughter	2				
Aziz Yazdanpanah	White	56	2011	TX	Shooting	Fatemah Rahmaty	Wife	55	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Separation
						Nona Yazdanpanah	Daughter	19				Unemployed
						Ali Yazdanpanah	Son	14				Financial Distress
						Zoreh Rahmaty	Relative	58				Jealousy
						Mohamad Hossein Zarei	Relative	59				
						Sara Fatemeh Zarei	Relative	22				
Curtis Young III	Black	24	2016	AK	Shooting	Desiree Leandra Gonzalez	Girlfriend	27	Completed	Self-Righteous	Family Breakdown	Domestic violence
						Zaiden E Young	Son	4				Legal history
						Zariella A Young	Daughter	17 mo.				

Profiling

The most common profile of familicide offenders was self-righteous (39%). 15% of offenders were categorized as disappointed, 13% as anomic, and 10% as paranoid. Two additional profiles emerged: self-preserving (13%) and the mentally ill (10%). Graph 7 shows the profile distribution of familicide offenders within the U.S. from 2009 to 2019.

FIGURE 7: Familicide Profiles of U.S., 2009-2019 Offenders
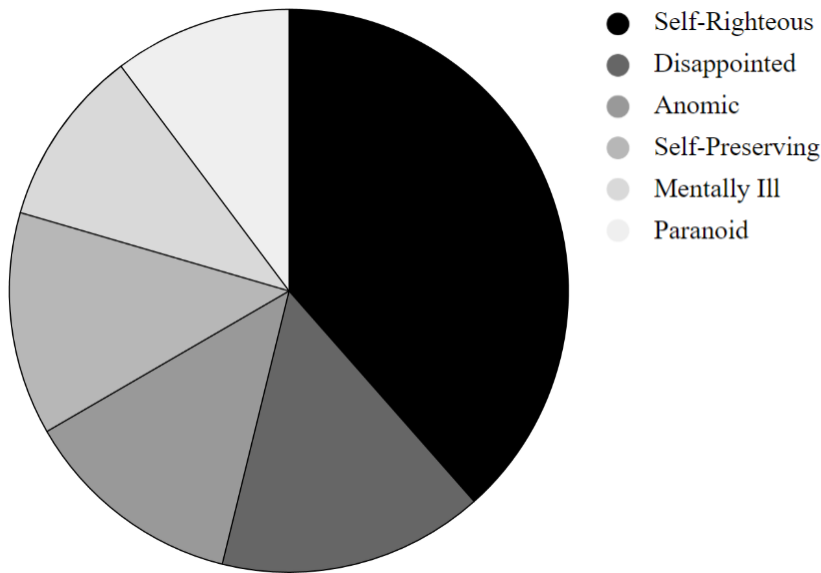
All offenders categorized as self-righteous offenders were primarily motivated by family breakdown. Domestic violence and separation were prominent features in these cases. Multiple cases had features of jealousy, custody disputes, and spousal affairs. Offender histories of mental illness or legal involvement were also present in some cases. 80% of self-righteous offenders killed their victims by shooting and only one offender used multiple methods of murder. All but two of the self-righteous offenders committed suicide.

Disappointed offenders were driven by a combination of family breakdown and financial distress. Family breakdown was the primary motive in 33% of these cases and financial distress was the primary motive of 66% of disappointed offenders. The most prevalent features in cases

of familicide by a disappointed offender were separation, financial distress, and domestic violence. Multiple cases involved custody battles and offender mental illness. All of these offenders used shooting as their sole method of murder and all offenders committed suicide after their offense.

All anomic offenders were primarily motivated by financial distress. The only other feature identified was a history of mental illness in one anomic offender. The method of killing for one offender is unknown, but all the others used shooting only. All but one of these fathers attempted and committed suicide.

Of paranoid offenders, half were primarily motivated by financial distress and the other half were motivated by a need to protect their family. Three of the four paranoid fathers were accused of committing another crime prior to the family murder. In these cases, the father killed the family to protect all members from involvement in the criminal justice system. In the outlying case, the father killed two of his children who were severely mentally handicapped, his wife, and then himself. In this case, the father was becoming too old to care for his family and their particular needs. One offender used multiple methods to kill and the other three used shooting only. All paranoid fathers committed suicide.

In cases involving mentally ill offenders, there was no other defined motive and rarely any other features present than mental illness. In one case, the offender had both a legal and substance use history. All other fathers did not have any internal or external conflicts beyond mental illness. Thus, in these cases, mental illness is what caused the offender to murder his family. All but one offender, who used multiple methods, killed their family by shooting only. Every mentally ill father committed suicide after his offense.

Familicide offenders profiled as self-preserving killed their families to protect themselves, with complete disregard for their family members. 60% of these offenders were motivated primarily by their personal appearance, and 40% were motivated by family breakdown. Multiple offenders had a history of domestic violence, separation from their significant other, or had been accused of a serious crime prior to the familicide offense. All used a single method to kill- either shooting or strangulation. Only 60% of these offenders committed suicide.

Table 7 shows the distribution of primary motivations of offenders within each profile. Similarly, Table 8 describes the prevalence of various features of the offenders and crimes committed within each profile.

TABLE 7: Primary Motives Within Profiles (U.S., 2009-2019)

	Self-Righteous	Disappointed	Anomic	Paranoid	Mentally Ill	Self-Preserving
Family Breakdown	100%	33%	0%	0%	0%	40%
Financial Distress	0%	67%	100%	50%	0%	0%
Mental Illness	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Appearance	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	60%
Protection	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%

Percentages provided describe characterizations of offenders within each individual profile in the US, 2009-2019.

TABLE 8: Features Within Profiles (U.S., 2009-2019)

	Self-Righteous	Disappointed	Anomic	Paranoid	Mentally Ill	Self-Preserving
Suicide*	87%	100%	80%	100%	100%	60%
Domestic Violence	67%	50%	0%	0%	0%	60%
Separation	53%	83%	0%	0%	0%	40%
Jealousy	40%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Wife Affair	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Offender Affair	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%
Custody	40%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Financial Distress	7%	67%	100%	25%	0%	0%
Unemployed	7%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mental Illness	20%	33%	20%	0%	100%	0%
Ill Children	0%	17%	0%	25%	0%	0%
Legal History	20%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%
Substance History	7%	17%	0%	0%	25%	0%
Other Crime	0%	17%	0%	75%	0%	40%
Single Method	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Multiple Methods	7%	0%	0%	25%	25%	0%

Percentages provided describe characterizations of offenders within each individual profile in the US, 2009-2019.
*Includes attempted and completed suicide

Discussion

From the analysis of familicide cases in the U.S. between 2009 and 2019, two new profiles of familicide emerged in addition to those established by Yardley et al.

Mentally ill offenders are motivated to commit familicide primarily by their mental illness and there are rarely any other coexisting motives or familicide-related features present. Note, these offenders are seriously ill and will not have only major depressive disorder and/or generalized anxiety. Serious depressive disorders, trauma- and stressor-related disorders, dissociative disorders, and disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorders may be considered.

The illnesses that should be most seriously considered as risk factors to the commission of familicide are serious psychotic disorders, bipolar disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and personality disorders.

Self-preserving offenders are driven to kill for reasons of protecting only themselves, without an interest in the outcome of the family. These offenders are more likely to not commit suicide, deny guilt, and flee prosecution. When these offenders do commit suicide, they are typically fearful of facing prosecution for other crimes in addition to the familicide.

Compared to Yardley et al.'s findings of 28 cases of familicide in Britain between 1980 and 2012, there were 39 familicide perpetrators between 2009 and 2019 in the U.S. With respect to computational disparities due to the differences in the time periods of data collection, there is more than four times the amount of familicide cases in the U.S. per year. Familicide offenders in the U.S. were significantly more likely to use a single method to kill their families, but only slightly more likely to commit suicide after the murders.

While distribution of offenders in both Britain and the U.S. across the self-righteous and paranoid profiles are roughly even, U.S. offenders were less likely to be either disappointed or anomic. While only 7% of British offenders were categorized into another profile of 'unknown,' 23% of U.S. offenders belonged to other profiles (mentally ill (10%) and self-preserving (13%)). The differences in profile prevalence between Britain offenders of familicide from 1980 to 2012 and U.S. familicide perpetrators between 2009 and 2009 are summarized visually in Graph 8.

FIGURE 8: Comparison of Familicide Profiles
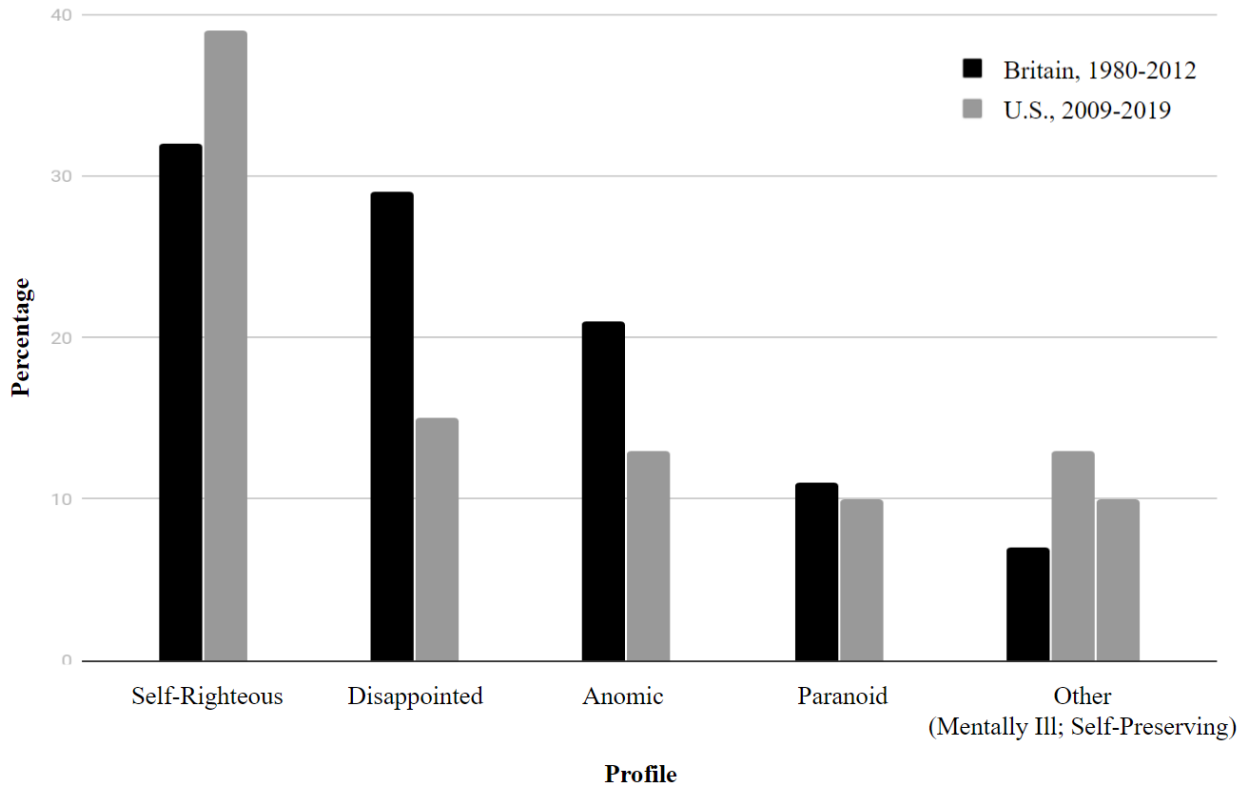
Conclusion

In this study of U.S. perpetrators of familicide, two new profiles of offenders emerged. Mentally ill offenders are motivated to kill their family by a severe mental illness. There are rarely other motivations of features positively correlated with familicide present in these cases. Self-preserving offenders kill to protect themselves only. These murderers are usually facing external stress, such as personal financial distress or crime accusations, and are less likely to attempt or complete suicide than other familicide offenders.

These findings are intended to improve law enforcement agents, children and family services personnel, and the general public's understanding of familicide and family annihilators. Recognizing factors positively correlated with familicide should encourage both public and private individuals to intervene as a means to prevent family murder before it occurs.

Limitations

The qualitative case studies conducted were correlational, as the independent variables contributing to familicide could not be manipulated. Consequently, causation between these factors and the commission of family murder cannot be concluded. Additionally, the spectrum of stimuli contributing to the crime is vast and largely unknown, including childhood experiences, perceptions and emotions, and personal philosophies and beliefs. Therefore, many confounding variables contribute to the perpetration of familicide.

The primary source of data collection was the LexisNexis database, which contains published news articles. Therefore, the information in the articles analyzed was subject to personal bias by the author, dramatic license, and informational fallacies. Also, any information left out of the articles, as well as any cases that did not receive news coverage, were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, the distribution of cases among profiles may not be representative of all familicide cases.

Future Research

Continued analysis and categorization of familicide cases should continue with time as new instances occur. This will allow trends of familicide over time, as well as the emergence of new categories, to be analyzed. Further exploration of cases between 2009 and 2019 is also warranted, as the information in this analysis was limited. Cases outside of the U.S. and/or prior to 2009 should be profiled as well.

Profiling familicide offenders and examining the influencing factors in the commission of the murders provides insight into factors exacerbating the likelihood of the crime. Therefore, the information discussed in this paper, as well as information gained from further research,

maintain important implications. Identifying the risk factors and trends associated with

familicide promotes intervention to prevent a family murder.

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