Exploring the familial impact of cold case homicides

Since the disappearance of Susan Powell, there have been little to no leads. Except for the everpresent suspicion surrounding her husband, Josh Powell, and his father, Steven Powell, all the evidence has been merely circumstantial. For this reason, the case was ruled and continues to be classified as “cold.” Not only does a cold case leave endless unanswered questions, but it also has a profound impact on the family left behind. This paper examines the stories of 12 survivors of cold case homicides and identifies 5 themes within their stories; time spent with related survivors, becoming overprotective of surviving family members, the impact of survivors existing relationships, pressure to stay strong, and difficulty maintaining family traditions.

From the research I’ve done on this case, I can recognize these themes within both the Cox family, Susan’s family, and the Powell family. The idea that stands out the most to me is, “Becoming overprotective of surviving family members.” The two sons, Braden and Charlie, were the subjects of this overprotective nature on both ends of the family. With the rising suspicion around Josh and the knowledge regarding Steve Powell’s inappropriate behavior, the Cox family was convinced that Charlie and Braden should remain out of Josh’s custody. While on the Powell side, they were confident that the Cox family wasn’t a good environment for the two boys. Like other cold case homicides, each person left behind is merely trying to hold onto their lost loved one.