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The Cultural Complex of Innocence: An Examination of Media and Social Construction of Missing White Woman Syndrome

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THE CULTURAL COMPLEX OF INNOCENCE:
AN EXAMINATION OF MEDIA AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
OF MISSING WHITE WOMAN SYNDROME

by

Sarah Land Stein

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2012
ABSTRACT

THE CULTURAL COMPLEX OF INNOCENCE:
AN EXAMINATION OF MEDIA AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
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This study examined the etiology and promulgation of the sociological phenomenon known as missing white woman syndrome. It was hypothesized that missing white woman syndrome may not be entirely attributable to racial disparity as has been claimed in the past. Rather, citing the work of Dr. Carl Jung, the researcher believed that missing white woman syndrome may be partially explained by a concept known as a cultural complex. The cultural complex that was hypothesized for purposes of this study is one related to innocence: That is, as a western society, we have been culturally overexposed to the blonde, Caucasian female as the archetypal image of innocence through art, literature, and other media platforms. The researcher first collected 1,323 cases of missing persons from The Charley Project; an online, representative sample of missing persons in the United States. Demographic information was collected for purposes of statistical analysis. The researcher then randomly selected 533 missing persons’ cases from Google, CNN, and MSNBC. It was discovered primarily that blonde, Caucasian female are portrayed in a more positive and innocent manner by the media, and also receive a higher caliber of investigation into their disappearance than their Caucasian counterparts with varying hair colors and minorities.
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................................................... iii  
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................... vi  
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .................................................................................. vii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................1

   Assumptions  
   Definition of Terms  
   Hypotheses and Research Questions  
   Theoretical Frameworks  
   Current Study  
   Justification of the Study  
   Conclusion

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ....................................................................................11

   Missing White Woman Syndrome: Historical Development  
   Theoretical Rationale  
   The Development of the Cultural Complex of Innocence: Art History  
   Blonde Hair, Blue Eyes, and Fair Skin in Literature  
   Blondes in the Media  
   Blondes in Visual Media (Film)  
   Stereotypical Kidnappings: Characteristics, Scope, and Law Enforcement Reaction  
   Adult Abduction

III. METHODOLOGY .............................................................................................44

   General Methodology and Rationale  
   Objectives  
   Research Questions and Hypotheses  
   Data Sources and Collection  
   Qualitative Data  
   Analysis of Data  
   Benefits, Risks, and Limitations  
   Conclusion
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Methodological Revisions
Analytic Plan
Stepwise Results
Conclusion

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Research Questions
Theoretical Frameworks
Limitations
Policy Implications
Future Research
Conclusion

APPENDIXES

REFERENCES
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Demographic Information.................................................................63
2. Correlation Matrix...........................................................................65
3. Mean Distributions - Total LE, TI Terms, and Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal.................................................................68
4. Total Law Enforcement Stepwise Regression Model..........................69
5. Total Investigation Terms Stepwise Regression Model....................71
6. Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal Stepwise Regression Model.....73
7. Total Articles Stepwise Regression Model..........................................75
8. Means Comparison - Total Articles................................................76
9. Average Article Length Stepwise Regression Model..........................77
10. Means Comparison - Average Article Length....................................77
11. Total Words by Law Enforcement Stepwise Regression Model..........80
12. Means Comparison - Total Words by Law Enforcement....................80
13. Media Negative Portrayal Stepwise Regression Model......................82
14. Means Comparison - Media Negative Portrayal................................84
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Charley Project Information..................................................................................48
2. Portrayal of Victim................................................................................................52
3. Elements of Media Coverage.................................................................................53
4. Investigations........................................................................................................54
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

From faces on milk cartons to Facebook groups, the search for a missing person has gone viral. Approximately 800,000 individuals are reported missing annually in the United States (NISMART, 2002). With such an inundation of missing, lost, or abducted individuals, the media and public cannot provide sufficient attention to each victim. The question then becomes, which victims are selected for media coverage; and furthermore, why? It has become a trend in American culture that attractive Caucasian females typically receive more media attention when missing (Smart & Benson, 2005; Stillman, 2007). The media coverage of cases like those of Elizabeth Smart, Natalee Holloway, Dru Sjodin, and Brooke Wilberger has become so flagrant that the term missing white woman syndrome, also known as missing pretty girl syndrome, was coined to explain the sociological phenomenon. The term missing white woman syndrome was thought to be originally invoked by University of Maryland Professor Sheri Parks in 2006 (Foreman, 2006). The term is used to explain the phenomenon that occurs when victims perceived as attractive receive extensive public and media attention, while more devalued victims such as minorities, prostitutes, and drug addicts are routinely ignored (Giacopassi & Wilkinson, 1985). Media critiques, as well as journalists, often assert that missing white woman syndrome is primarily attributable to racial disparity (Gilchrist, 2010; Johnson, 2004; Liebler, 2010).

Assumptions

There are four general assumptions associated with the sociological phenomenon known as missing white woman syndrome: (1) the syndrome exists to the extent that
Caucasian victims of abduction often receive more media attention than their minority counterparts; (2) the syndrome is primarily attributable to racial disparity; (3) devalued victims (such as drug addicts or prostitutes) do not receive comparable media attention when compared to other missing persons; and (4) blonde haired and blue eyed Caucasian women may receive more media attention when compared with Caucasian females with varying characteristics.

As to the existence of missing white woman syndrome, there is limited statistical support. Stillman (2007) reported an alarming trend pertaining to national media coverage of child abduction victims. It was discovered that between the years of 2000 and 2005, 76% of child abduction cases featured on CNN pertained to Caucasian victims, whereas only 53% of abduction victims are Caucasian (Hargrove & Haman, 2005).

Speaking to the possibility that missing white woman syndrome is wholly attributable to racial disparity, little scholarly research exists. However, a plethora of media pundits have speculated it is the root of the problem. For example, Alex Johnson (of MSNBC) stated in 2004 that, if missing, it helps if the victim is young, white, and female. Johnson juxtaposed the cases of Shelton Sanders and Dail Dinwiddie to enumerate on this point. Both Sanders and Dinwiddie were in their mid-twenties, students at the University of South Carolina, and by all accounts upstanding citizens. The primary discrepancy between the two is that Mr. Sanders was an African American male and Ms. Dinwiddie was a Caucasian female. At best, only local papers covered the disappearance of Mr. Sanders, while many national media outlets garnered Dinwiddie’s case with attention. Johnson (2004) argued that racism, inherent to American culture, was to blame.
In reference to the concept that devalued victims (prostitutes, drug addicts, etc.) are routinely ignored by the media when reported missing, Jiwani and Young (2006) discovered that women in Canada who were involved in sex-work are only given a fraction of the media attention that more wholesome women receive when reported missing. Similarly, Giacopassi and Wilkinson (1985) reported that when prostitutes are abducted for the purposes of sexual assault, their cases receive little to no media attention and are often overlooked by local law enforcement. Rule (2004), speaking to the phenomenon of the Green River Killer (Gary Ridgway), noted a particularly interesting phenomenon associated with devalued victims: that one of the only instances in which a devalued victim will receive media attention is when there is speculation that a serial predator may be at large. However, the attention paid to the victim is secondary to the glorification of the mysterious predator; the victim is merely an afterthought.

The final assumption correlated with the sociological phenomenon known as missing white woman syndrome is the possibility that blonde haired and blue eyed Caucasian females are the preferred victims of the media and the public. It has been speculated (whether directly or indirectly) by several media pundits that victims of abduction who have blonde hair and blue eyes receive more media attention than their Caucasian counterparts with varying physical features. Several mass communication professionals have repeatedly cited the cases of Natalee Holloway, DruSjodin, Elizabeth Smart, and JonBenet Ramsey as the stereotypical face of missing white woman syndrome (Malkin, 2005; Ridley, 2007; Robinson, 2005). The assumptions that missing white woman syndrome is primarily attributable to racial disparity and that blonde haired, blue
eyed Caucasian females may represent the stereotypical profile for the phenomenon are
the two concepts that inspired this research.

Definition of Terms

1. Charley Project: An online, non-profit, representative database of missing
   persons’ cases in the United States and internationally.

2. Collective Unconscious: An amalgamation of archetypes that psychically bond all
   members of a society. Archetypes are defined as symbols or images engrained in
   a cultural identity and recognized as symbolic of a particular event or emotion

3. Cultural Complex: A layer of the collective unconscious occupied by cultural
   patterns and images that lie on the periphery of consciousness as subliminal
   assumptions

4. Media: All stories related to the randomly selected population of missing persons’
   cases collected from Google news, CNN, and MSNBC.

5. Missing White Woman Syndrome: The intense preoccupation with attractive,
   Caucasian females who are abducted or go missing.

6. Racial Disparity: The preferential treatment of one racial group over another.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

From the aforementioned assumptions, nine research questions and corresponding
hypotheses were developed. The researcher desired not only to discover whether there is
evidence of *missing white woman syndrome*, but additionally to identify the factors which
may contribute to its promulgation, and moreover, if *missing white woman syndrome*
does exist, how the syndrome affects the (1) amount of media dedicated to any given
missing person’s case, (2) portrayal of an abduction victim by the media and the public,
and (3) caliber of the investigation by law enforcement into the individual’s
disappearance. Additionally, the researcher desired to examine whether blonde haired,
blue eyed Caucasian females were at higher risk for abduction than their Caucasian
counterparts with varying characteristics, and/or minorities.

The research questions and hypotheses that will guide this research are as follows:
(1) is there a higher incidence of adult, female abduction victims (over age eighteen) who
are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than adult, female Caucasian victims with
other physical features? (There will be a higher incidence of abduction of adult Caucasian
females (over age eighteen) with blonde hair and blue eyes than other physical
descriptions); (2) is there a higher incidence of minority abductions (e.g. African
American, Latina, Asian), than Caucasian abductions for individuals under the age of
eighteen? (There will be a higher incidence of Caucasian abductions for individuals under
the age of eighteen); (3) is there a higher incidence of minority abductions (e.g. African
American, Latina, Asian), than Caucasian abductions for individuals over the age of
eighteen? (There will be a higher incidence of Caucasian abductions for individuals over
the age of eighteen); (4) is there a higher incidence of child abduction victims (under age
eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than Caucasian child
abduction victims with other physical features? (There will be a higher incidence of child
abduction victims (under age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes
than other physical features); (5) will being Caucasian and having blonde hair and blue
eyes affect the amount of media exposure given to a victim? (Being Caucasian and
having blonde hair and blue eyes will increase the amount of media coverage); (6) will a
victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes be viewed more positively by
the media? (A victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes will be viewed more positively by the media); (7) will a victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes be viewed more positively by the public? (A victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes will be viewed more positively by the public); (8) will a victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes receive a higher caliber of investigation? (A victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes will receive a higher caliber of law enforcement attention in regards to their investigation); (9) will other demographic features (prostitution, drug use, socioeconomic status, and mental illness) affect the amount of media, victim portrayal, and caliber of investigation? (A victim engaged in prostitution, suffers from a mental illness, uses drugs, or has a lower socioeconomic status will not receive as much media, be portrayed as positively, or receive a high caliber of investigation into their disappearance.

Theoretical Frameworks

The researcher then began to consider what other factors, outside the confines of racial disparity, could be contributing to missing white woman syndrome. A hypothesis that occurred was that perhaps as a Western culture, we have been conditioned to iconize the blonde haired, blue eyed Caucasian female as the ultimate depiction of innocence. Given this notion, one theoretical framework was selected to guide this line of inquiry: the cultural complex as described by Carl Jung and elaborated upon by Singer and Kimbles (2004). To support this theoretical framework, the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism, posited by Blumer (1969), and the criminological theory of the social construction of crime by Quinney (2001) were also considered as the three share a great deal of philosophical foundation. The common theme that stretches across the
borders of these three theories originating from psychology, sociology, and criminology, is that a universal, objective truth is elusive, if not impossible. As such, societies must implement methodologies by which to identify people, places, and objects. These definitions are molded by every day experiences, stimuli, and reactions from others. In this particular inquiry, it is thought that through a myriad of media platforms such as art, literature, and film, that the blonde Caucasian female has come to be recognized by Western society as the archetypal image of innocence. Thus, this symbol associated with the blonde is perhaps amplified in relation to missing persons’ cases; almost as if, when a blonde woman is abducted, we are collectively losing our innocence.

Support has been shown to exist for the theory that the blonde has been elevated to archetypal status as a symbol of innocence. In reference to art, particularly the Renaissance period, the works of Titian, Botticelli, Veronese, Bardone, and Carpaccio collectively glorified the image of the blonde as the epitome of beauty, light, and some would argue, innocence (Bloch, 1997). As to literature, the juxtaposition of blondes and brunettes, the innocent and the wicked, is a longstanding tradition; the beginning of which was arguably rooted in the works of Chaucer and his predilection for portraying blondes as symbols for youth, beauty, and light (Biggam, 1993). Additionally, Carpenter (1936) cites the works of Melville and Hawthorne to illustrate how blondes were often portrayed as pure heroines, while dark haired maidens were often depicted as wicked temptresses and villains. Finally, as to film, Reznick (1989) cites heroines in Walt Disney films are often portrayed as blonde haired and blue eyed, and are often depicted as innocent and naive: Cinderella, Alice, Tinkerbell, and Sleeping Beauty. Conversely,
Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* is portrayed as strong-willed, independent, and intelligent; though she is not primarily admired for her beauty in the film.

**Current Study**

The design of this project was constructed with the aforementioned research questions, hypotheses, and theoretical frameworks in mind. The researcher chose to utilize the Charley Project – an online, representative database of missing persons’ cases both from the United States and internationally. For purposes of this study, only cases from the United States between the years 2000 and 2009 were selected. The researcher collected the following demographic information for each female classified on the Charley Project as endangered missing, missing, or non-family abduction: age, height, weight, hair color, eye color, race, time of abduction, month of abduction, location of abduction, mental illness history, prostitution history, drug use history, socioeconomic status, and perpetrator information. Once the cases from the Charley Project were collected (n = 1,323), 533 cases were randomly selected for the purposes of examining media information correlated with each case. The researcher obtained online news reports from Google, CNN, and MSNBC for each case and recorded the following information pertaining to each article: (1) length; (2) how many times the victim was referred to in a positive or innocent manner by the media and/or readers who left comments; (3) how many times the victim was referred to in a negative manner by the media and/or readers who left comments; (4) the total number of reader comments associated with each article; (5) the total number of law enforcement officials in each article; (6) the total number of words attributed to law enforcement officials in each article; (7) the total number of articles pertaining to each victim; and (8) the total number
of investigation terms in each article. Using the demographic information collected from the Charley Project as independent variables, forced entry and stepwise regression models were run for the following dependent variables: Total Articles, Average Article Length, Media Innocent, and Positive Portrayal, Media Negative Portrayal, Total Law Enforcement, Total Words by Law Enforcement, and Total Investigation Terms.

Justification of the Study

While there is an abundance of speculation on the part of media pundits as to the cause of missing white woman syndrome, little scholarly research has addressed the issue; this research project aims to fill that void. Secondly, this research aims to contribute to the literature on adult abduction; in relation to the voluminous literature on child abduction, research on adult disappearances is sadly lacking. Third, this research seeks to identify which factors (other than race) may be responsible for the development and promulgation of missing white woman syndrome (e.g. a cultural complex of innocence). Finally, this research will examine other elements of media coverage to ascertain whether it has a direct effect on the solvability of abductions(such as the amount of media exposure given to a victim, the portrayal of said victim by the media, and elements of the investigation into their disappearance). As such, it is believed that the justifications for this study warrant the forthcoming explorations.

Conclusion

The social phenomenon of missing white woman syndrome directly affects the integrity of the criminal justice system. Stillman (2007) suggests that a certain demographic of abducted women, those who are attractive, middle to upper class status, and Caucasian, are receiving disproportionate amounts of consideration by the press and
the public. Further, if a Caucasian female abduction victim is fortunate enough to be blessed with blonde hair and blue eyes, it appears, as evidenced by the cases of Elizabeth Smart, Natalee Holloway, DruSjodin, and Brooke Wilberger, that both the media and their audience become more interested (Gilchrist, 2010). The media are meanwhile disregarding other victims of abduction and their families: society’s devalued victims such as minorities, prostitutes, drug addicts, and unfortunately, less attractive individuals (Giacopassi & Wilkinson, 1985).
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Missing White Woman Syndrome: Historical Development

A preliminary review of the literature regarding the history of *missing white woman syndrome* in the media revealed there were a series of high profile abductions of young, attractive Caucasian females across the United States in 2002. Beginning with 20-year old Rachel Cooke on January 10 and ending with 27-year old Laci Peterson on December 24, there were a total of eight high profile cases of Caucasian females covered during the course of one year (2002). In addition to the aforementioned Cooke and Peterson cases, there were also the abductions of Danielle Van Dam, Ashley Pond, Miranda Gaddis, Elizabeth Smart, Samantha Runnion, and Cassandra Williamson (Smart & Benson, 2005). Only Laci Peterson did not fit the traditional description of a missing Caucasian woman who might receive such media attention; but despite being a brunette of Hispanic origin, she nonetheless received considerable national media. Other high profile cases of missing white women also helped trigger scholarly inquiry into *missing white woman syndrome*. Cases such as Elizabeth Smart and Natalee Holloway received massive amounts of media attention, with Holloway’s case representing a particular point of contention among scholars that white women, particularly those who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes, receive disproportionate amounts of media attention when compared to victims with other physical descriptions (Wanzo, 2008).

An alarming discrepancy appears to exist regarding media treatment of Caucasian and non-Caucasian child victims. Between the years 2000 and 2005, 76% of child abduction cases featured on CNN involved Caucasians (Stillman, 2007), whereas only 53% of abduction victims are actually Caucasian (Hargrove & Haman, 2005).
Unfortunately, little scholarly research has addressed the phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome*; however, there is a plethora of commentary from journalists who acknowledge that *missing white woman syndrome* is a critical problem in media.

In 2004, for example, Alex Johnson, a correspondent for MSNBC suggested that if missing, “it helps to be young, white, and female” indicating these victims are given disproportionate media attention. Johnson compares two missing persons’ cases regarding young people who were both preparing to enter graduate school at the University of South Carolina to illustrate this point. First, Shelton Sanders was an upstanding 25-year old African American man who disappeared on June 19, 2001. Second, Dail Dinwiddie was an upstanding 23-year old young woman who went missing on September 24, 1992 after attending a U2 concert. She was last seen leaving a bar alone and was never seen again. Johnson suggests the discrepancy was unconscionable in the sense that only local papers (at best) covered the Sanders case, whereas Dinwiddie’s case was covered by media outlets in Michigan, Minnesota, Georgia, Florida, and Wisconsin, contingent upon the origin of the tips. Johnson did not, however, take into account that media coverage could be explained by the fact that tips regarding Dail’s case originated from all over the country. Johnson concludes that, ultimately, Shelton Sanders was African American and Dail Dinwiddie was a white woman. Beyond this, he offers no explanation for the discrepancy in coverage, promulgating the belief that *missing white woman syndrome* is attributable solely to racial disparity.

In 2005, *Washington Post* op-ed author Eugene Robinson addressed the phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome*. He cites Natalee Holloway, Elizabeth Smart, Chandra Levy, Laci Peterson, Lori Hacking, and JonBenet Ramsey as victims
who captivated the hearts of Americans, and then goes on to suggest this phenomenon is caused by inherent racism in America. In support of this premise, Sheri Parks (a professor at the University of Maryland) also discussed the Holloway case as an example of *missing white woman syndrome* while appearing on Anderson Cooper 360 (in 2006), and concurred that the issue is attributable to racism. Ridley (2007), a reporter for the *Huffington Post*, began one of his articles by citing the cases of Kelsey Smith, Laci Peterson, Natalee Holloway, Chandra Levy, JonBenet Ramsey, DruSjodin, Taylor Behl, and Elizabeth Smart as classic examples of the *missing white woman syndrome*. Four of those seven victims (Natalee, JonBenet, Dru, and Elizabeth) had similar physical characteristics: blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair skin. Ridley concurs with his colleagues that *missing white woman syndrome* is despicable and that it is attributable to racism.

In contrast to the racism argument, though, CNN correspondent Tom Foreman (2006) questioned whether *missing white woman syndrome* is derived from racism, or rather is simply a reality of the news business. He notes it is often pretty, white, young females that attract the most attention, and are viewed often times as “helpless” (p. 1), which captures the public’s attention. Malkin (2005) also cites Natalee Holloway as a classic example of *missing white woman syndrome* but raises an interesting issue regarding social class: missing middle to upper class women may receive more media attention because their family members are well spoken and present themselves in a cohesive manner to television audiences.

An interesting contribution to the scholarly literature on *missing white woman syndrome* is the work of Gilchrist (2010), who studied the phenomenon in Canada with a comparison of news coverage of aboriginal women and Caucasian women. Gilchrist
states that more than 500 aboriginal women have either disappeared or been murdered in Canada since the 1980s, yet press coverage on these victims has been minimal. She further determined that aboriginal women who disappeared received three and a half times less coverage than Caucasian women who were more likely to be portrayed favorably by the media. Gilchrist concludes these issues are indicative of continued racism and classism in Canada. Jiwani and Young (2006) conducted a similar study by analyzing 128 articles from *The Vancouver Sun* over a five year period (2001-2006) regarding missing and murdered women in Vancouver’s downtown Eastside. The authors discovered that the devalued victims of Canada involved aboriginal women and women involved in sex-work, whereas socially respectable white women were given more press coverage.

Liebler (2010) suggests that *missing white woman syndrome* is, at least partially, attributable to racism, and proposes that the remaining factors are age and social status. She conducted a textual analysis of 31 media pieces (from 2004 to 2006) and determined that newspaper columnists were most likely to acknowledge and critique the existence of *missing white woman syndrome*, placing blame on cable television networks. Liebler surmises that racial disparity is the underlying reason for *missing white woman syndrome*. Few solutions have been offered to address this controversial phenomenon, save for Liebler who argued to reconstruct media agendas to serve a more racially diverse demographic. The question remains whether *missing white woman syndrome* is wholly attributable to racial disparity or whether alternative explanations exist?
Theoretical Rationale

There are several theoretical frameworks that may provide alternative explanations as to why *missing white woman syndrome* has evolved in American culture. The theoretical rationale of this research rests upon an amalgamation of criminological, sociological, and psychological schools of thought: Carl Jung’s (1902) concept of the collective unconscious, Jung’s concept of the cultural complex (elaborated upon by Singer & Kimbles, 2004), Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism, and Quinney’s (2001) social reality of crime. Critical Race Theory will also be considered.

Quinney (2001) argues there are four components regarding how people initially observe, study, and absorb crime: ontology, epistemology, causation, and theory construction. Quinney asserts these four elements create the social reality of crime. Ontology suggests there is no universal, objective reality. Epistemology suggests that when shaping our views of crime, individuals will compare their views with others around them. Causation is particularly applicable to the phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome*. If a causative equation is constructed to explain an issue, that equation must be sensitive to the nature or context of that social phenomenon. In relation to *missing white woman syndrome*, this means that the context in which the social phenomenon occurred must be determined (e.g. due to racial disparity or unconscious conditioning). Finally, in theory construction, our views on crime and social phenomenon are solidified via cultural reinforcements.

Blumer’s (1937; 1969) concept of symbolic interactionism rests on the works of Charles Horton Cooley (1902), John Dewey (1925), and George Herbert Mead (1934). Cooley (1902) coined the concept of the looking-glass self, which is comprised of three
main components: (1) how one imagines he or she appears to another person; (2) how a person believes the other individual is judging his/her appearance; and finally (3) a reaction to that judgment. Dewey discussed the continuity of communication between the soul and experience, asserting that aesthetics, art, education, and politics shape our perceptions of the world, and that objective reality is improbable. Finally, Mead (in *Mind, Self, and Society*) suggested the notion that the mind is a dynamic process and lies within society itself, not within the individual. Blumer’s concept of symbolic interactionism is also comprised of three elements: (1) human beings have the capacity to formulate thoughts which are molded and influenced by social interactions; (2) people internalize symbols via social communication; and finally (3) symbols may be altered by social conditions and / or interactions.

The final theoretical frameworks to be addressed are those proposed by Carl Jung – the collective unconscious (as cited in Jung, 2012) – and the cultural complex, which was expounded upon by Singer and Kimbles (2004). Jung proposed that the collective unconscious is an amalgamation of archetypes that psychically bond all members of a society. Archetypes are defined as symbols or images engrained in a cultural identity and recognized as symbolic of a particular event or emotion. The collective unconscious thus has the potential to form what has now been defined as a cultural complex (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). A cultural complex, as defined by Jung, is the process by which certain objects or individuals are defined collectively by the symbols associated with them.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) mirrors the thought that *missing white woman syndrome* is primarily attributable to racial disparity. Born out of a desire by scholars, legal activists, and concerned citizens in the 1960s who sought to examine the state of
America’s civil rights movement, as well as the fundamental structure of the United States legal, social, and political systems, CRT contributed to the examination of race and status in America. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) assert that the primary tenet of CRT is the fundamental acceptance of racism as normative within American culture: particularly engrained in law, court systems, educational curricula, and politics. CRT argues, quite simply, that via the American collective’s attempt to mollify racial tensions since the 1960s, our culture has in fact produced a counterintuitive result: an increase in racism (Freeman, 1977). The works of the following individuals contributed to the birth of critical race theory (Caldwell, 1996): Derrick Bell, Alan D. Freeman, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, and Jean Stefancic.

One of Bell’s (1976) first works calls to task the ruling of Brown v. Board of Education (1954) arguing that universal desegregation of educational institutions was not the cure-all remedy that minority families had been seeking. Bell, citing Brown v. Board of Education (1954) postulates that as a direct result of desegregation, racial equality was assumed to exist. The point Bell stresses is that simply declaring that educational institutions are desegregated does nothing to improve race relations; conversely, by attempting to assimilate racial cultures, tensions between these groups are in fact elevated. In his 1980 publication, Bell recorded observations recounted to him from several desegregated schools. The themes he observes are that white families will remove their children from desegregated schools and that administrators are so concerned with racial equality that developing a curriculum that caters to all races appears to be mired in the mud. Freeman (1977) critiqued the United States’ antidiscrimination laws, and in turn attacked the Supreme Court for their austerity in relegating persons of color to
offender status more often than victim status. Crenshaw (1988), in her discourse on the civil rights movement and antidiscrimination laws, suggests that while antidiscrimination laws were effective in mollifying symbolic acts of racism against individual African Americans, a secondary effect was that African Americans were relegated to second-class status.


Gotanda concludes that American law proscribes that in public structures (such as businesses, etc.) race may not be considered. However, within the private sphere of social relations, race will always be considered a possible discriminatory factor because people frequently choose to socialize with members of their own race. With regard to the non-recognition of race by the Court, Gotanda suggests that the demand put upon formal structures in the United States (such as businesses and employers) actually promulgates racial discrimination; that is, by forcing employers and other actors not to acknowledge different races, racist tendencies are sublimated and actually become stronger, and
hamper racial equality. Gotanda next addresses the treatment of racial categories by the Supreme Court, arguing that exclusivity of racial categories affirms white supremacy; essentially that the pure image of a White is often contrasted by the negative social connotation of being Black. With regard to formal race and unconnectedness, the author suggests there are three categories of racial identity for African Americans throughout the history of the United States: status, formal, and historical race. Status race refers to the continued stigma of this identity despite the abolition of slavery. Formal race refers to the Supreme Court’s separate but equal holding in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) through which the legal system unwittingly promoted racial segregation and subjugation by suggesting that racial groups were not meant to be assimilated. Finally, historical race refers to the underlying theme of racism in the United States.

Gotanda cites social change regarding color-blind constitutionalism as imperative to eradicating racism in the United States. We must first recognize that race is not singular, and each racial group must maintain independence from a collectively assimilated and universal category of race. The author also calls for recognition of white supremacist tendencies in Supreme Court rulings by Justices themselves, demanding an active stance in obliterating racial injustices in rulings, opinions, and dissents.

What can be done about this dilemma? Matsuda (1987) suggests a novel, philosophical concept known as looking to the bottom. In order to conquer racial disparity within the legal, political, and social branches of the United States, several initiatives must be undertaken. The first is the acceptance of inherent racism in the legal structure. The second is a new system of jurisprudence whereby legislators and law enforcers must consider their position within the social strata. Only by looking to the
bottom, Matsuda suggests, will the privileged recognize the distinct oppression felt by the perpetual underclass. From this critical self-analysis and subsequent awareness, the author implies that a new system of jurisprudence may be created that will nullify residual tensions from poorly constructed legislation from the civil rights movement.

If it is demonstrated that *missing white woman syndrome* may at least be partially attributable to racial disparity, a call for social change by the public in reference to equality in media coverage may be seen. Horn (2003), for example, identifies that a critical element in promulgating racism in American culture is born from hidden curriculums in media reporting, and applies critical awareness of race to our educational infrastructure. The author calls for a revision of elementary and secondary educational curricula regarding how media is integrated into the classroom to advance equality in terms of gender, class, and race. The author cites that children are particularly malleable to hidden agendas in media reports, but suggests that educators may also be ignorant to such hidden agendas. This message relates to the current study on *missing white woman syndrome* in a very disturbing way: if African American, Asian, or Latino/a children only see white children or white adults being represented in the media when reported missing, they may cultivate the belief that they are not as important as Caucasian counterparts. Further, educators may be unwittingly solidifying an unconscious belief within Caucasian children that they are superior. The following literature will examine how Americans as a society have come to view the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and fair-skinned female as the ultimate depiction of beauty and innocence.
The Development of the Cultural Complex of Innocence: Art History

Two primary sources will be utilized to review the depiction of a fair skinned, blonde-haired, blue-eyed female as the icon of innocence in artwork. The first source is Janson’s History of Art (Davies et al., 2010), a comprehensive review of art literature from ancient to modern times. The second source is Honour and Fleming (2005), which provides a similar review structure of art from ancient to more contemporary times. Combining the works of Janson with Honour and Fleming, the following periods of art will be discussed to illustrate how they significantly contributed to the development of the cultural acceptance of blonde haired, blue-eyed, and fair skinned females as the iconic symbolic image of innocence (Etcoff, 1999; Pitman, 2003): Renaissance (1415 A.D.-1598 A.D), Impressionism (1861 A.D.-1898 A.D.), and Modern Art (1950 A.D.-2011 A.D.). It should be noted that Appendix A features a sample of the artwork discussed in the following sections; however, not all pieces were included to reduce redundancy.

Renaissance

The artistic revolution of utilizing a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Caucasian female to depict a portrait of innocence roughly began in what is known as the Quattrocento, the 15th century period in Italy that marked the transition from the Medieval period to the Renaissance. Artists in this era sought to promulgate the rebirth of European society through depicting images of light and beauty in their work (Bloch, 1997; Pitman, 2003). Specifically, several Renaissance artists were instrumental in catapulting the archetype of blonde haired, blue eyed Caucasian females as the epitome of innocence (whether consciously or unconsciously). Bloch cites several paintings in which the blonde archetype of beauty is epitomized (1997, p. 3): In the Ceremonial category, Bloch (1997)
lists the painting of *Santa Ursula* by Carpaccio and the *Marriage of St. Catherine* by Paris Bordone. In the *Mythological* category, Bloch (1997) lists the paintings *Venus and Her Mirror*, *Venus and Lutenist*, and *Rape of Lucretia* by Titian, and *Venus and Adonis*, *Venus and Mars*, and *Lucretia* by Veronese. Finally, in the *Florence* category, Bloch (1997) lists *Primavera* and *Portrait of a Lady* by Botticelli.

Carpaccio’s main work depicting the innocent image of a blonde is entitled *Santa Ursula* (completed in 1495). In this portrait, the viewer observes a blonde sleeping in a large canopy bed and facing an open window. In the window, there also is an angel with blonde hair watching over the sleeping woman. The second work of this period is the *Marriage of St. Catherine* by Paris Bordone (completed in 1524). In this portrait, a young St. Catherine, depicted as a blonde, is being dragged away by a male; this portrait depicts the innocence and (in some ways) the powerlessness of a blonde.

One of Titian’s most well-known pieces was entitled *Venus of Urbino* (in 1538). The *Venus* is seen nude on a bed with golden locks flowing over her shoulders. In one hand she clutches a bouquet of red flowers; and uses the other hand to conceal her genitalia. Yet another of Titian’s works, *Venus and Her Mirror* (1555), is a reflection of the idealized beauty of the blonde. Venus is posed in a sitting position, her lower body draped in crimson velvet, with her upper body exposed. Her golden hair is piled atop her head and adorned with jewels. The third significant Titian piece is entitled *Venus and the Lute Player* and was thought to have been completed between 1565 and 1570 (Bloch, 1997). In this piece, the power of the blonde with regard to sexuality is arguably conveyed. The Venus is reposed nude on a bed with only a small piece of sheet covering her genitalia. The final work completed by Titian (in 1571) is entitled *Rape of Lucretia*. 
This painting was based on a sonnet by William Shakespeare recounting the tale of
Lucretia; a blonde-haired historical figure in the Roman Empire who was raped by Sextus
Tarquinius, son of the King, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus; the last King of Rome. .

Veronese is the second artist within the mythological category (as defined by
Bloch). Completed in 1580, his *Venus and Adonis* contributed significantly to the
definition of the blonde archetype. Simms (1997) describes the myth of Aphrodite and
Adonis as follows: (1) Aphrodite falls in love with Adonis when struck with Cupid’s
arrow; (2) Adonis returns Aphrodite’s love but was slayed by a wild boar (thought to
have been sent by the Greek goddess Artemis, who was envious of Adonis’s superb
hunting skills) during a hunting expedition; (3) Adonis falls, and dies in Aphrodite’s
arms. In the rendition of this myth by Veronese (1580), the viewer observes the death
scene of Adonis as he lay prone in the arms of Aphrodite, the blonde-haired fair-eyed
Greek goddess of beauty. Veronese’s second painting (completed in 1578), *Venus and
Mars*, depicts Venus, the goddess of love, seen nude with Mars, the god of war. Venus is
depicted as blonde and surrounded by blonde cherubs. The third and final painting by
Veronese is reminiscent of Titan’s 1571 *Rape of Lucretia*. In this piece (completed in the
mid-1580s), simply entitled *Lucretia*, the woman is again depicted as blonde.

Bloch finally turns to Botticelli and lists one painting, *Primavera* (completed in
1482), as a representative work incorporating the blonde into Renaissance art. This
portrait depicts mythological figures en masse celebrating the birth of primavera, or
spring. Zirpolo (1991) describes the following sequence of events in this painting: the
painting must be interpreted from right to left, with the following events occurring:
Zephyrus, the west wind, pursues the nymph Chloris, who is depicted as a blonde.
Transformed by the wind, Chloris morphs into Flora; the third figure from the right in the painting, also blonde, lays flowers at Venus’s feet. The three graces stand next to Venus, all of whom are companions and depicted as different shades of blonde. The *Birth of Venus* has also been selected for inclusion as a significant piece by Botticelli because it arguably illustrates the illustrious beauty of the blonde. Completed by Botticelli in 1486, it is perhaps the best known of his works. The painting itself was allegedly inspired by a hymn published in Florence in 1488 by a Greek refugee by the name of Demetrios Chalcondyles (Mack, 2005). The text of the hymn is as follows:

> Of august gold-wreathed and beautiful Aphrodite I shall sing to whose domain
> belong the battlements of all sea-loved Cyprus where, blown by the moist breath of Zephyros, she was carried over the waves of the resounding sea on soft foam.
> The gold-filleted Horae happily welcomed her and clothed her with heavenly raiment (2005, 85-86)

In this painting, Venus is seen being born out of the sea, nude, on half of a sea shell. Venus is depicted with flowing blond hair which she uses to cover her genitalia.

*Impressionist Art*

One of the main characterizations of the Impressionist period was the utilization of light in artwork; often times the light in a painting and how it is reflected is meant to emulate the passage of time (Denvir, 1990). An interesting development for the blonde occurred during this era – there was little to no implication of the sexuality of the blonde. The works of three artists will be discussed: Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), Edgar Degas (1834-1917), and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919).
Mary Cassatt was an American painter (Matthews, 1994) who utilized two interesting themes throughout the progression of her works of art: (1) the features of blonde hair, blue eyes, and very fair skin to emulate innocence through depictions of children, and (2) often paint the Mothers within a scene as having dark brown hair, whereas their children would have golden hair and blue eyes. The paintings that Cassatt produced emphasized the innocence of the features of blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair skin with female children as follows: *Child in a Straw Hat* (1886), *Sara in a Green Bonnet* (1901), *Two Children at the Seashore* (1884), and *Sara Holding a Cat* (1908). Each of these paintings depicts an innocent childhood scene, all of which involve female children with blonde hair and fair skin. Cassatt’s paintings which illustrated the physical disparities between mother and child and possibly proffered the image of innocence as children having blonde hair and blue eyes are as follows: *Woman and Child Driving* (1881), *Helene de Septeuil* (1890), *The Child’s Caress* (1890), *Baby’s First Caress* (1890), *Mother Playing with her Child* (1897), *Mother Combing her Child’s Hair* (1891), *The Caress* (1902), *Young Mother Sewing* (1902), and *Sleepy Baby* (1910).

The second artist who put forth works influencing the cultural perception of the blonde haired, blue eyed, fair skinned female was the French impressionist Edgar Degas (1834 - 1917) (Turner, 2000). Interestingly, there is only one painting by Degas that depicts a solitary blonde female, entitled *Dancer in Green* (completed in 1848). Her ornate blonde hair is piled atop her head and festooned with flowers. Though no scholar has made reference to the fact that Degas was attempting to promote innocence in his works, the piece has the potential to reflect the emotion all the same.
Pierre-August Renoir (1841-1919) is the final artist whose works influenced the perceptions of fair skinned, blonde haired, blue eyed females (Renoir, 1962). The following pieces by Renoir contributed to the iconic image of the blonde as innocent: *A Girl with a Watering Can* (1876), *The Swing* (1876), *On the Terrace* (1881), *Jeune Filles au Piano* (1892), *La Promenade* (1906), and *Bather with Blonde Hair* (1904-1906). The Impressionist era can be described as one of the best known art periods (Turner, 2000). It could be argued that the works from this period were instrumental in ushering in the cultural complex surrounding the perceptions of blonde haired, blue eyed, and fair skinned females as a depiction of lust, innocence, and pure beauty.

Modern Art

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) was an American painter known for his idealistic paintings of American culture and embraced the innocence of the contemporary society (Claridge, 2001). One of his more poignant pieces, *After the Prom* (completed in 1957), emulates innocence by depicting high school sweethearts at a soda fountain. The young lady is portrayed as a Harlow blonde, dressed in a light blue and white gown. This image has the potential to resonate with the collective psyche that there is no time more innocent and joyful than young love, and that Rockwell chose to depict the female as blonde possibly speaks to this.

Conversely, the modern artist Andy Warhol chose to sexualize the blonde instead of emphasizing innocence through that physical feature. Warhol (1928-1978) capitalized on the boom of modern sexuality (Guiles, 1989). Aside from his famous renditions of Campbell’s soup cans, Warhol’s most glorified work may be said to be the portraits done of Marilyn Monroe in 1962. Andy Warhol chose to capitalize on Monroe’s
transformation into a sex symbol, and though his rendition of Marilyn Monroe is not in any way scandalous, it nonetheless iconizes the portrayal of the ultimate beauty in that timeframe of American history as a blonde with blue eyes.

Blonde Hair, Blue Eyes, and Fair Skin in Literature

The etiology of the word blonde stems from the Latin blandus, literally translated as “charming” (Warner, 1994). Warner also cites that the adjective blonde has two meanings that are interchangeable in French, Italian, German, and Spanish, translating to “beauty” and “light”. The use of blonde hair as a symbolism for innocence in literature can be traced first to the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, an English poet and writer who lived from 1343-1400. Biggam (1993) states that in Chaucer’s works, blonde hair is most commonly a depiction of youth and beauty, with blonde hair often being described as golden. The works of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne were also significant. Carpenter (1936) cites that beginning in 1840, the distinction between blonde and dark hair became clear. Dark haired women in literary works were symbolic representations of sinful desires, while blonde characters were created to depict purity and innocence. Carpenter (1936) cites four novels produced by these authors that solidified the cultural perceptions of blonde haired and fair skinned females as icons of innocence and beauty: Mardi (1849) and Pierre (1852) by Melville, and The Blithedale Romance (1852) and The Marble Faun (1860) by Hawthorne.

In the fictional work Mardi (1849), Melville describes a quest by a young sailor to find Yillah, a blonde haired, blue eyed maiden said to live on an isolated island and sheltered from the impurities of the world. The dichotomy between light and dark hair and their symbolism is introduced when Hautia, the other female protagonist, is
introduced. She is depicted as a seductress and attempts to lead the young hero away from his quest for Yillah, though she does not succeed (Melville, 1849). In Melville’s *Pierre* (1852), Pierre becomes enthralled with the other female protagonist in the story, Lucy, who is married to the caretaker of Pierre’s Mother’s property. The dichotomy between the fair and dark haired ladies is even more pronounced in *Pierre* than in *Mardi*, as Isabel (Pierre’s fiancée), who is dark haired, recognizes Pierre’s longing for Lucy, who is blonde haired and blue eyed, and even refers to her as an angel.

The two works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and *The Marble Faun* (1860) also present the disparity between the personas of blondes and brunettes, in that blondes are seen as innocent and pure, and brunettes are seen as seductive temptresses who have a wicked past. In *The Blithedale Romance*, Priscilla and Zenobia are the female protagonists locked in a rivalry for the male protagonist’s affections. Priscilla, the blonde haired, blue eyed female is sweet and demure, whereas the dark-haired Zenobia is condemned for her seductive ways and for a past sin of indiscretion. Consumed by guilt, Zenobia takes her own life and Priscilla wins the affections of the male suitor. In the final novel discussed by Carpenter (1936), *The Marble Faun* (Hawthorne, 1860), two female protagonists are once again introduced: one blonde haired, one dark haired. Once again in *The Marble Faun* (Hawthorne, 1860), it is shown that the label of being a brunette is that of trickery, sinfulness, and sexual experience, whereas the label of a blonde is one of purity, grace, innocence, and beauty.

The second category of literature that reflects the blonde mythology of innocence and beauty is that of fairy tales, whose myths are internalized by children and unconsciously promulgated and reinforced as the child begins to age (Westland, 1993).
The depiction of blonde haired, fair skinned, and occasionally blue eyed females as innocent, beautiful, and sweet in fairy tales may contribute to the cultural complex of how blondes are perceived. In several fairy tales, Cinderella, Rapunzel, and Sleeping Beauty, yet another cultural myth of the blonde is introduced, that being one which is helpless and unable to fend for herself; in essence, her fate most often rests in the hands of a strong, male protagonist who comes to her rescue (Tremper, 2006). Westland’s study of schoolchildren’s responses to gender roles in fairy tales somewhat supports this assertion. The female students, when presented with the typical, blonde haired, blue eyed, and fair-skinned damsel in distress, were reticent to embrace the story. When asked what should be changed about the story, they responded they would make the female protagonist stronger and more independent. The physical description of these fairy tale characters was not lost on these students either, with several responding that the blonde hair was meant to be innocent.

The first example of a fairy tale that contributes to the cultural complex of innocence pertaining to the blonde is a rendition of Beauty and the Beast (illustrated by Anne Anderson in 1935). In this classic story, (originally written by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve in France in 1740), Beauty, the enchanting young woman who frees the beast from his curse, is depicted as blonde haired. Anderson also completed illustrations for another fairy tale, The Miller’s Daughter, in which the daughter was depicted as blonde-haired and blue eyed.

Cinderella also contributed to the possibility of a cultural complex of innocence pertaining to blondes. The original tale of Cinderella is, interestingly enough, attributed to a Greek author, Strabo (First century B.C.). Once again, in this tale, we see the female
protagonist as a helpless, vulnerable, and innocent victim. The helpless and innocent characterization of Cinderella is often emphasized by the coloring of her hair. Yolen (1977) cites that America’s Cinderella must be presented during performances as a helpless, meek blonde.

In a third fairy tale (originally written in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm), Rapunzel, locked in a tower by a wicked witch, is commanded to let her hair down so the witch may climb the tower to visit her. Rapunzel’s hair is described as golden and meant to emulate innocence and beauty (Round, 2005). Additionally, the witch (described as having dark hair) is envious of Rapunzel’s beauty, in large part because of her beautiful hair. The dichotomy of the blonde and brunette is once again emphasized.

Blondes in the Media

One common media phrase is that sex sells. Indeed, the blonde haired, blue-eyed, and fair-skinned female became rapidly sexualized in media outlets like movies and advertisements. This fact supports the assertion that these physical characteristics in—and-of themselves share an interesting dichotomy: that blondes are innocent and sexual—it is often this dichotomy of underlying roles that allows for such a diversified market; men view sexual appeal, and women conversely view beauty, innocence, and a desire to emulate these female archetypes of beauty (Round, 2005).

Rich and Cash (1993) examined the contextualization of hair color spanning four decades (1950 to the end of the 1980s). The aim of the research was to examine the social construction of the blonde metaphor and the cultural reactions to this depiction of the blonde. The research involved examining 750 images from Ladies Home Journal, Vogue, and Playboy. It was discovered that the rate of blondes appearing in magazine
ads far exceeded that of blondes in the general population. Further, the average proportion of blondes depicted in magazine advertisements was lowest in the 1960s and reached its peak during the 1970s. Additionally, the authors found that *Playboy* magazine featured a significantly higher number of blondes (particularly in the centerfolds) than did the ladies’ magazines (Rich & Cash, 1993).

Englis, Solomon, and Ashmore (1994) examined the contents of *Cosmopolitan, Glamour, Mademoiselle, Self, Seventeen, Vogue*, and *Men’s Magazine* to determine the frequency of various physical characteristics in advertisements. The blonde-haired, light skinned female fell under the category of classic beauty and is defined by the authors as:

Classic Beauty: blonde/light hair, WASPish appearance. Although most observers (at least within Euro-American culture) probably associate the notion of classic good looks with blonde hair and Nordic facial features, fashion experts do not currently view Aryan features as a prerequisite for Classic beauty. (p. 63)

There were a total of 46 advertisements that contained a model with the classic beauty features, outranked only by the *trendy* category (with 51 advertisements), which is not unexpected as the goal of fashion magazines is to sell trendy items and concepts.

Blondes in Visual Media (Film)

It has been shown that what children observe in visual media outlets influence various psychological developments, such as world perceptions and perceptions of self (Calvert, Huston, Watkins, and Wright, 1982). After the initial development of these world perceptions, what we are exposed to as adults in film and television either reinforces or refutes various classifications, stereotypes, and perceptions.
Arcus, as seen in Reznick (1989), cites that one of the most popular and world-renowned source of childhood visual media is the media mogul Walt Disney. Reznick states there are several female protagonists depicted in Walt Disney animated features whose physical characteristics are meant to reflect various elements of their personalities: Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland, Tinkerbell (from Peter Pan), and Sleeping Beauty. Each of these characters displayed naiveté and helplessness, yet was beautiful and innocent, blonde haired and blue eyed. Conversely, the female protagonist in Beauty and the Beast, Belle, was a brunette with brown eyes and depicted as strong, independent, and extremely intelligent. Additionally, Belle was appreciated for her brains and strength, and not particularly for her beauty.

From art, literature, and film, there is evidence to support the assertion that Americans have been unconsciously conditioned through a myriad of platforms to perceive a blonde-haired, blue eyed, and fair skinned female as innocent and beautiful; thereby supporting the theoretical existence of a cultural complex (in this case one of innocence) as proposed by Jung (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). The following literature will provide a discussion surrounding the facts of missing children and missing adults.

*The Prevalence of Missing Children*

The National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children (NISMART) enacted by the Department of Justice in conjunction with the 1984 Missing Children’s Assistance Act, and reported, in 1982, 154,341 cases of missing children. In NISMART’s 2002 report, it was shown there were 788,591 reported cases of missing children, with 876,213 persons total being reported missing (therefore 87,622 persons were over the age of eighteen); that is a 469% increase in missing children from
reports in 1982. While this figure is alarming, NISMART’s 2002 report clarified this number by aggregating cases into categories.

The majority of youths reported missing were runaway (left home voluntarily) and/or throwaway children; approximately 357,600 children fell into this category (roughly half the population). The next most common category was missing – benign explanation, (a child reported missing for at least one hour but located in short order without any report of injury and/or abduction) approximately 340,500 children. There were 61,900 cases of children reported as Missing, lost, or injured: children who become lost and do not know how to find their way home, or sustain injuries from non-abduction related event. There were 56,500 cases of Family abductions (defined as the illegal taking of a child in reference to a previously agreed upon custody contract). Attempted Non-Family Abduction (children who are involuntarily moved more than 20 feet and held for a period of time) is the next most common category of missing children, with 12,100 cases classified in this category. Finally, there is the category that every parent fears: Stereotypical kidnapping (stranger abduction, where the child does not know the perpetrator and vice versa, the child is transported 50 miles or more, and the abductor demands ransom, sexually assaults, and/or kills the child). There are approximately 115 such cases annually in the United States (NISMART, 2002).

The statistics above reveal that approximately 2,000 children are reported missing every day in the United States, translating to an incidence rate of 11.4 per 100,000 children. Kappeler and Potter (2005) also report that only approximately 140 children are murdered annually in the United States as a direct result of child abduction, and state that
the societal reaction to the missing child phenomenon has been a gross exaggeration in response to a somewhat rare event.

*Social Construction of the Missing Children Phenomenon*

To test the effects of mass media viewing regarding instances of child abduction, Fritz and Altheide (1987) administered a self-report survey to 96 respondents prior to and following the viewing of a two-part documentary on child abduction. The authors found that the moral panic of the child abduction phenomenon is correlated with media coverage; in almost all media coverage of child abduction, sexual molestation or assault is the overriding theme. Stereotypical kidnappings are the least likely to occur, yet these are precisely the cases which receive the most media attention (Kappeler & Potter, 2005). Best (1987) argued that the lack of a clear and centralized definition of child abduction, terrifying examples of rare instances of child sexual assault and homicide, and inflated statistics are all examples of framing rhetoric to exploit the issue of child abduction.

*The Lindbergh Baby: The Federal Kidnapping Act*

The first case of child abduction to truly affect the social consciousness of the United States was the kidnapping of the infant son of Charles Lindbergh on March 1, 1932. Approximately two months later (May 12), the baby’s remains were located a short distance from the Lindbergh family residence, the cause of death being blunt force trauma to the head (Fass, 2010). The murder of the Lindbergh baby spurned the first piece of legislation to combat child abduction in the United States: the Federal Kidnapping Act, which made the kidnapping of a child across state lines a federal crime.

*Etan Patz: The Milk Carton and National Missing Children’s Day*
Etan Patz was abducted from New York City on May 25, 1979. Patz was never recovered and his fate never discovered; he was declared legally dead in 2001. However, Cyrus Vance Jr., District Attorney for Manhattan, reopened Patz’s case in 2010 (Falcon, 2010). Patz was the inspiration for putting faces of missing children on the sides of milk cartons and was the first child to be featured in this manner. National Missing Children’s Day was created in Etan’s memory, and is now held annually on May 25 (Cohen, 2009).

Adam Walsh: Code Adam, NCMEC, and Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act

On July 27, 1981, Reve Walsh went to a local Sears store in Hollywood, Florida to look at lamps that were on sale. Her son, Adam, was separated from his mother for mere minutes before she returned to find him missing. Adam’s body was found decapitated in a drainage ditch some days later, more than 50 miles from the abduction site. Convicted serial killer Otis Toole took credit for the sexual assault and murder of Adam but was never prosecuted for the crime. However, in 2008, detectives in Hollywood, Florida declared Adam’s case closed as they were satisfied that Toole had indeed committed the crime (Holland, 2008). John Walsh, Adam’s father, is credited with four significant developments in relation to the prevention and investigation of child abduction: the television program America’s Most Wanted, the Code Adam program, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), and the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (signed into law by President Bush on July 27, 2006) which requires States to establish the following on their sex offender registry: a classification of each offender by level of dangerousness, categorized into three tiers, with Tier 3 being the most dangerous and Tier 1 being the least dangerous.

Jacob Wetterling: The Jacob Wetterling Act
On October 22, 1989 (in St. Joseph, Minnesota), 11-year old Jacob Wetterling was given permission to ride his bike to the Tom Thumb convenience store to rent a video with his brother and a playmate. At approximately 9:15 P.M., about a quarter mile from Jacob’s home, the three boys were approached by a Caucasian male wearing a mask and carrying a gun. The man commanded the boys to lie down on the ground, asked Jacob’s brother his age, and then told him to run and not look back; he did the same with Jacob’s friend and also released him. Finally, the man asked Jacob his age and then led him away to a wooded area. Jacob’s body was never recovered nor there have been any arrests.

In response to Jacob’s abduction and presumed murder, and despite the fact it has never been discovered that the man who abducted Jacob was indeed a sex offender, The Jacob Wetterling Act, passed in 1994, was the first piece of legislation to mandate state-sponsored sex offender registry systems. Essentially, a released sex offender must register with the local police department of their town of residence, and must consistently verify their name and address with said department and any other police departments where they may work or move to at a future date. The Jacob Wetterling Act has been criticized for violating both offenders’ Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable search and seizure as well as violating the Double Jeopardy clause in the sense that registration is a continued punishment (Lewis, 1996).

Megan Kanka: Megan’s Law

On July 29, 1994 (in New Jersey), seven-year old Megan Kanka was invited by a neighbor, Jesse Timmendequas, to play with his new puppy. Unbeknownst to Megan or her family, he was a sex offender recently released from prison. Timmendequas sexually assaulted Megan at least twice, manually strangled her, and then dumped her body in
Mercer County Park. He was subsequently arrested, placed on trial, convicted, and ultimately sentenced to death for Megan’s murder.

Megan’s parents, Maureen and Richard Kanka, circulated a petition to mandate public notification when a sex offender moves into the community. The petition collected 400,000 signatures; a mere 89 days after the petition was circulated, New Jersey instituted the first version of what came to be known as *Megan’s Law*. In 1996, President Bill Clinton federalized *Megan’s Law*, thus mandating a public sex offender registry be accessible to the general population, whereas previously, as proscribed by the Jacob Wetterling Act, only law enforcement had been privy to information regarding the status, location, and offenses of released sex offenders (Zgoba, 2004).

*Amber Hagerman: The AMBER ALERT*

On January 15, 1996, Amber Hagerman was abducted by a man in a black pick-up truck while riding her bike near her grandparents’ home in Arlington, Texas. Two days later, Amber’s body was recovered from a creek bed: the autopsy revealed she had been sexually assaulted numerous times, and died as a result of a ‘slit’ throat. The AMBER Alert system provides email, telephone, radio, television, and electronic highway billboard messages with information regarding when the child was last seen, as well as both the child’s and abductor’s descriptions, including the abductor’s vehicle if available (Griffin & Miller, 2008).

*Stereotypical Kidnappings: Characteristics, Scope, and Law Enforcement Reaction*

From the above mentioned cases and legislation created as a result of these emotionally charged cases, let us now examine the components of a stereotypical
kidnapping: (1) victim demographics, (2) perpetrator characteristics, (3) frequency and (4) how law enforcement responds to these cases.

Boudreaux, Lord, and Dutra (1999) define abduction as “the coerced, unauthorized, or illegal movement of a child for the purpose of a criminal act” (p. 540). While it is certainly true that not all pedophiles and / or child molesters are abductors, individuals who commit crimes of child abduction most frequently do so for the purposes of sexually molesting and / or assaulting the victim. Lanning and Burgess (1995) reported the most frequent motivation for child abduction by male offenders is sexual gratification, followed by ransom, revenge, or profit. Hanfland, Keppel, and Weiss’s (1997) study of 621 instances of child abduction revealed that 60% and 53% (respectively) had been previously convicted of violent crimes and sexually-motivated crimes against children. In regards to racial and other similar demographic information, a study of the National Incident-Based Reporting System in 1997 (of 1,214 cases of child abduction) provided the following: 24% of reported abductions were committed by strangers and 95% of the abductors were male (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2000). Hanfland et al. further reported that of those instances of child abduction, 71% of the abductors were Caucasian, while females who abducted and murdered juveniles represented only 1.5% of the subject population. From these studies, though relatively limited, it can be ascertained that in cases of non-family, stranger abductions, it is likely the offender will be male, Caucasian, and previously convicted of a similar offense against a child.

Boudreaux, Lord, and Jarvis (2001) applied routine activities theory to examine the role of access to a child, the child’s vulnerability, and other elements of child abduction. The elements of routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) are as
follows: motivated offender, suitable target, and absence of a capable guardian. It was determined that the lack of vigilant guardianship was the most influential factor as to whether a child was abducted. Further, it was found that elementary age children, that is, children five to 12 years of age, are the most common targets of sexual predators. Interestingly, the authors discovered that gender was not a critical factor regarding the risk of child homicide; as male and female victims were equally murdered by abductors.

Given that a relatively large percentage of child abductors have previous convictions for crimes of a sexual nature against a child (Boudreaux et al., 2001), it is also important to understand the psychodynamics of pedophilia. Groth and Birnbaum (1978) identified two types of pedophile: fixated and regressed. The fixated pedophile begins offending against children during puberty, will molest children throughout his life course, and is not capable of forming age-appropriate intimate, sexual or emotional relationships. The second type of pedophile, the regressed offender, will typically not begin offending until reaching his mid-to-late thirties, but is capable of forming age-appropriate intimate, sexual and emotional relationships and will often marry. The offender will most often target his own children and/or step-children. The authors indicated this is due to the fact that the regressed offender himself was molested as a child by a parent or step-parent. As such, the offender has repressed those memories and, when those memories begin to surface, the pedophile will regress to the child-like state when he was molested: however, instead of playing the role of the victim he can now identify with the role of the abuser and regain his power. Regressed pedophiles therefore, according to the researchers, are not inherently sexually attracted to children. Rather, their desire to offend is rooted in psychological trauma from their childhood. As such,
the authors suggest that psychological assessment and treatment is often effective with the regressed offender. In contrast, they concluded the fixated pedophile is nearly impossible to cure, noting that their sexual predilections for prepubescent children are insatiable and psycho-behavioral treatment is almost always unsuccessful. The physical, criminal, and psychological framework of a typical child abductor has not been established. The abductor is most often male (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2000), Caucasian, and has a previous conviction for a sexual offense against a child (Hanfland et al., 1997). The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) reports that a child abducted by a stranger for the purposes of sexual molestation and/or assault will usually (76%) be murdered by their abductor within the first three hours.

With regards to investigative and preventive techniques in child abduction cases, there is also particular attention paid to issues such as the effectiveness of supermarket posters, CART (Child Abduction Recovery Teams) and AMBER Alert (Boudreaux & Lord, 2005; Hanfland et al., 1997; Lampinen, Arnal, & Hicks, 2008). Zgoba (2004) attributes many child safety legislation initiatives to moral panic and emotional responses to sensational cases. Lampinen et al. discovered that supermarket posters are marginally effective in assisting in the recovery of missing children, in that people pay little attention to the posters, and cannot recall physical details about the child in question. Boudreaux and Lord spoke to prevention techniques that could be made by law enforcement agencies to combat the occurrence of child abduction by suggesting that social service agents, academics, and child educators must work together to create evidence-based prevention policies. Finally, Hanfland et al. provided behavioral profiles of typical
abductors to law enforcement for use in child abduction and homicide cases in an effort to prevent future crimes, and more effectively investigate contemporary cases.

This literature contributes to the phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome* (though with child abduction this term is a misnomer) by demonstrating that child abduction is a gross tragedy which is constantly present in both the collective conscious and unconscious of American culture. The following portion of the literature review will discuss adult abduction literature in comparison to that of child abduction literature.

**Adult Abduction**

In 2000, there were 87,622 individuals over the age of eighteen who were reported missing (NISMART, 2002). Though a considerable number, the scholarly attention paid to these cases is relatively sparse and related to the following: instances of sexual assault where the adult victim was detained briefly and then released, and the abduction, sexual assault, and murder of devalued victims (e.g. prostitutes, drug addicts). Additionally, Coker, Walls, and Johnson (1998) conducted a study of 6,213 incidences of sexual assault reported in South Carolina from October 1991 to September 1994 via NIBRS (National Incident Based Reporting System). The categories of sexual assault included sodomy, vaginal rape, and sexual assaults involving objects. Of the female sample population (*n* = 1,740), 28.5% of the victims sustained traumatic physical injuries. It was discovered that the risk of non-genital traumatic injury increased when female victims (though not males) were kidnapped and sexually assaulted elsewhere. The authors cite that this increased risk for traumatic injury is due to several factors: the perpetrator being allotted a prolonged period of time during which to commit the assault, the degree of isolation at the assault site, and the number of assailants.
The abductions of devalued adult victims (such as prostitutes or drug addicts) are rarely given much attention unless there is a serial killer at work, which has more to do with social fascination than concern for victims (Rule, 2004). Giacopassi and Wilkinson (1985) examined the incidence of sexual assault and kidnapping of devalued victims. The authors assert that legal reforms, such as the redefinition of the term rape to such phrases as sexual assault, are means to mitigate the seriousness of the crime and to promulgate the discrimination against devalued victims of sexual assault, which occasionally involves abduction.

There is currently one piece of legislation in place to assist in the recovery of missing adults. Kristen’s Law was named for Kristen Modafferi, an 18 year old young woman who vanished (in June 1997) from the San Francisco area. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children only assists in cases of individuals under the age of eighteen, and as such, aside from local law enforcement, Kristen’s family did not have alternative resources to assist with their search. In 2000, Kristen’s Law was passed and allowed the Attorney General to distribute grants to public agencies, non-profit organizations, or private organizations to assist with searches for missing adults. Additionally, Kristen’s Law led to the development of the National Center for Missing Adults, which now serves as the national clearinghouse for missing adults.

A second development to assist with adult disappearance cases is Silver Alert - a free online program available to any senior or individual with cognitive impairment (e.g. Down’s syndrome, autism, or mental illness). Once registered, the individual receives a Silver Alert bracelet or pendant that signifies enrollment in the program. The information
provided is stored in an online database that hospitals or caretakers may access if an individual is missing (National Silver Alert Program, Inc., 2011).

There is a substantial void in scholarly research pertaining to missing adults. The literature is lacking with regard to victimology, perpetrator characteristics, law enforcement and societal response. There is a vast discrepancy between legislation enacted to combat child and adult abduction. There are at least five pieces of federal legislation pertaining to child abduction, but only Kristen’s Law addresses missing or abducted adults. Further research is needed to address (1) why missing or abducted adults receive little societal attention in comparison to children; and (2) to examine demographic information regarding missing adults. This research is a modest effort to contribute to the scant body of scholarship on the topic of missing and abducted adults.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research endeavor seeks to discover what factors other than racial disparity may contribute to the promulgation of *missing white woman syndrome*, which is defined (for purposes of this analysis) as intense preoccupation by the media with Caucasian females who have been abducted; particularly those who are attractive and of middle to upper class socioeconomic status. Additionally, if these victims have blonde hair and blue eyes, media and public attention is heightened (Foreman, 2006; Stillman, 2007).

The term *abduction* is defined as “the coerced, unauthorized or illegal movement of a child for the purpose of a criminal act” (Boudreaux et al., 1999, p. 540).

General Methodology and Rationale

This study will employ a mixed methods approach. Sherman (2003) cites that quantitative and qualitative data are not adversarial in nature but rather complementary in that the two simultaneously achieve a more in depth understanding as well as constructs a sturdier framework for the study. Furthermore, he argues the distinction between the two does not lie within the actual data, but rather in the form of analysis, and that when the design and collection are sound, both can be equal contributors to the development of policy. The importance of combining quantitative and qualitative data within this study cannot be overstated. A quantitative value for the percentage of abduction victims with blonde hair and blue eyes will provide information to the criminal justice community regarding the prevalence of this type of victim. In reference to the qualitative portion of the study, it is critical to understand the motivation of both the media and the public in terms of their fascination with blonde haired/blue eyed abduction victims. As such, this
study’s qualitative content analysis approach will allow for better understanding of the portrayal of abducted women, which will then allow for enhanced comprehension of the latent content: motivation, feelings, and degree of fascination with the case.

Various scholars have lauded the value of content analysis regarding criminal justice topics. Barlow, Barlow, and Chiricos (1995) used content analysis to assess Time magazine articles to determine whether political agendas underlie the images and prevalence of crime, whereas Collins, Farrell, McKee, Martin, and Monk-Turner (2011) used the technique to examine news magazine coverage to describe how crime reporting in the United States tends to be more sensational and violent. Adorjan (2011) gauged the emotionality of news consumers regarding youth crime in Canada via content analysis of various news outlets. Welch, Fenwick, and Roberts (1995) also provided support for the importance of content analysis through an examination of four national newspapers, and determined that both state officials (such as politicians) and media writers were influential in constructing moral panics related to crime in various geographic regions of the United States. Quinney (2001) suggests that definitions of crime and victimology are constantly remodeled. With that framework in mind, a content analysis of media reports and reader comments of contemporary and historical cases of abduction would contribute to Quinney’s belief that the social construction of reality is malleable. The content analysis of these media reports and reader comments may support this belief by demonstrating that the social construction of innocence has gravitated towards victims with blonde hair and blue eyes.
Objectives

The objectives of this study are divided into two categories: (1) collection of data from the Charley Project, and (2) content analysis of media coverage. The first objective is to determine whether there is a higher incidence of Caucasian women with blonde hair and blue eyes that are abducted as opposed to Caucasian women with varying physical features, and also to determine the rate of minority abductions (e.g. abductions of African American, Latina, and Asian women and juveniles) in comparison to Caucasian women. This data will be derived from the Charley Project. The second objective is to examine which variables contribute to determining the frequency of media coverage, level of public interest in abduction cases, and portrayal of a victim by the media. Finally, the research seeks to determine if the physical characteristics of a victim contribute to the quality of the police investigation surrounding the individual’s disappearance. The final two objectives will be achieved by analyzing the content of media coverage and responses from media consumers pertaining to various missing persons cases. To reiterate, the following research questions and hypotheses will guide this research:

Research Questions and Hypotheses

(1) Is there a higher incidence of adult, female abduction victims (over age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than adult, female Caucasian victims with other physical features? (There will be a higher incidence of abduction of adult Caucasian females (over age eighteen) with blonde hair and blue eyes than other physical descriptions); (2) is there a higher incidence of minority abductions (e.g. African American, Latina, Asian), than Caucasian abductions for individuals under the age of eighteen? (There will be a higher incidence of Caucasian abductions for individuals under
the age of eighteen); (3) is there a higher incidence of minority abductions (e.g. African American, Latina, Asian), than Caucasian abductions for individuals over the age of eighteen? (There will be a higher incidence of Caucasian abductions for individuals over the age of eighteen); (4) is there a higher incidence of child abduction victims (under age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than Caucasian child abduction victims with other physical features? (There will be a higher incidence of child abduction victims (under age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than other physical features); (5) will being Caucasian and having blonde hair and blue eyes affect the amount of media exposure given to a victim? (Being Caucasian and having blonde hair and blue eyes will increase the amount of media coverage); (6) will a victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes be viewed more positively by the media? (A victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes will be viewed more positively by the media); (7) will a victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes be viewed more positively by the public? (A victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes will be viewed more positively by the public); (8) will a victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes receive a higher caliber of investigation? (A victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair and blue eyes will receive a higher caliber of law enforcement attention in regards to their investigation); (9) will other demographic features (prostitution, drug use, socioeconomic status, and mental illness) affect the amount of media, victim portrayal, and caliber of investigation? (A victim engaged in prostitution, suffers from a mental illness, uses drugs, or has a lower socioeconomic status will not receive as much media, be portrayed as positively, or receive a high caliber of investigation into their disappearance.)
Data Sources and Collection

The source for the collection of victim data will be The Charley Project: a non-profit, online, and representative list of missing individuals in the United States. Given there is not a centralized database (to date) of all missing persons in the United States, the Charley Project was considered the most comprehensive source available.

All cases of abducted females (except for family abductions) from the years 2000 to 2009 will be coded into SPSS. The purpose of this timeframe is twofold: One, an adequate sample of missing persons can be obtained for periods of time both before and after the emergence of the term *missing white woman syndrome* (in 2002). Two, an adequate sample size for the purposes of selecting a random sample of victims for the qualitative portion of the study can be obtained.

*Figure 1.* Charley Project Information. Figure I depicts the victim, abductor, and abduction information that will be gathered from the Charley Project.
These independent variables are segregated into three categories of relevant information: victim information, information relevant to the abduction, and perpetrator information. These independent variables were selected for the following reasons: the physical description of the victim is imperative to provide the foundation for examining the phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome* and the blonde-haired, blue-eyed phenomenon. The researcher also believes it is important to collect information regarding whether the victim has tattoos, a history of mental illness, a history of drug use, and or a history of prostitution to examine the role, if any, of those factors. It may be shown that lifestyle choices such as drug use or medical conditions such as mental illness may also influence decisions regarding media portrayal and public perception of victims.

Elements of the abduction itself are important to consider. For example, abductions in foreign, tropical locations (such as Natalee Holloway) may have more mystique and public appeal versus a case of a child who is abducted on their way to school. Additionally, it is important to know what (if any) relationship the abductor had with the victim (e.g. former romantic partner, acquaintance, etc.) to examine whether such a prior relationship may influence the amount of media coverage devoted to a case.

The physical characteristics of the victim will be coded numerically. Information such as race, hair color, distinguishing marks, mental illness history, drug use history, and socioeconomic status will also be coded as numerical values (See Appendix B). Following data entry, the analyst will stratify the data by the following criteria: Region: eastern, midwestern, southern, and western (See Appendix B for list of States), Year of Abduction, Ethnicity (Caucasian versus non-Caucasian) and blonde Caucasian versus non-blonde Caucasian. In order to ensure an adequate sample size, 20 blonde and 20 non-
blonde Caucasian females, and 20 minority females will be selected using stratified random sampling for every year between 2000 and 2009. Each of these 600 cases yielded will then be analyzed in regard to media coverage and reader comments.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative portion of this study will be a non-traditional content analysis of the following online news sources: Yahoo News, CNN, MSNBC, and Google News. Stories that pertain to the random sample of 600 missing women will be analyzed. These four networks were selected as they are the most visited news networks on the internet (Alexa, the Web Information Company, 2011). The utilization of these four online news sites will be beneficial for several reasons: not every missing person case selected will receive national news coverage; as such, sources such as Yahoo and Google News that also retrieve local news coverage will control for this problem. Additionally, having access to these local news mediums may be helpful in the sense that reader comments may be more personal and insightful if the readers knew the victim personally; for example, if the individual is missing from a small town.

One difficulty with this methodology is that the amount of media coverage per case is unknown. That is, if a high profile case such as that of Natalee Holloway is selected, the amount of media coverage would be unmanageable. Conversely, if an obscure case is selected, there may be too little information to conduct a proper content analysis. As such, it may be necessary to either cap the amount of articles examined for a high profile case, or conversely, obtain a better-known case from the sample population. Above all however, it is critical to the reliability of the study to locate all relevant media
coverage on Yahoo News, CNN, MSNBC, and Google News. To maximize returns on media results, various Boolean operators will be utilized (See Appendix D).

The qualitative portion of this study seeks to gather information regarding the following dependent variables: portrayal of victim, elements of media coverage, and investigations. Additionally, the work of Stuart Hall (1973) in reference to encoding and decoding will be considered during the analysis portion of the research and reflected upon during the discussion chapter. Hall posits three concepts/processes involved in media production and consumption. He suggests that messages sent by the media are never fixed, that the meaning in messages sent by the media are never transparent, and most importantly, that readers are not passive receptors of this information; rather, they decode the information received by the media source and take an active role in analyzing and processing the information. These three concepts/processes will be examined during the content analysis via the portrayal of the victim as well as the elements of media coverage by carefully scrutinizing the ratios of media positive/negative portrayal of the victim to the reader positive/negative portrayal of the victim as well as the number of, length, and importance of all articles associated with each victim.

The collective dependent variable portrayal of the victim will be assessed via: number of words used by the media to characterize the victim as innocent (e.g. sweet or naïve), number of words used by readers to characterize the victim as innocent, number of negative words toward the victim used by the media (e.g. promiscuous, poor student), number of negative words toward the victim used by the readers, number of positive words toward the victim used by the media (e.g. honor roll student, excellent character),
and the number of positive words toward the victim used by the readers. Each of the six
categories will be considered a dependent variable (see Figure 2).

The group of dependent variables *elements of media coverage* will be assessed via: average word length of all combined articles pertaining to the victim, total number of reports from the independent and combined news sources, total number of reader comments pertaining to each case for all combined news reports, and importance of the article (i.e. where it was originally placed on the news website; front page, or under a subsection such as crime). Each of the four variables within media coverage will be a separate dependent variable (see Figure 3).

![Figure 2. Portrayal of Victim.](image-url)
Figure 3. Elements of Media Coverage.

The group of dependent variables related to Investigation (see Figure 4) will be assessed by the following: number of law enforcement officials mentioned in the report, number of law enforcement officials’ quotes in the article, total percentage of the article devoted to law enforcement officials quotes (derived from word count), urgency of the investigation, and total number of words in the article that pertain to investigative activities. Law enforcement officials are classified as police officers, sheriffs, FBI agents, or any other law enforcement representative. Four of the five variables listed under investigation (with the exception of FBI) will be analyzed as a dependent variable.
Analysis of Data

Once all qualitative information is collected, the researcher will utilize forced entry and stepwise regression to explain the variance in and possibly predict the amount of media coverage, the portrayal of a victim, and the caliber of an investigation for any given missing person case. The independent variables that will be included in this analysis are those demographic characteristics obtained from the Charley Project.

Benefits, Risks, and Limitations

Benefits

The greatest potential benefits of this study will be (1) the determination of whether the term missing white woman syndrome actually exists, (2) to introduce an alternative explanation for missing white woman syndrome other than race: while there
may be racial disparity which influences the amount of media coverage given to Caucasian versus minority victims, there is also disparity in the amount of media coverage given to Caucasian victims with blonde hair and blue eyes versus Caucasian victims with varying features; and (3) it will contribute to the literature on adult abductions; while there is a plethora of literature regarding child abduction, the attention given to adult victims is sadly lacking.

Risks and Limitations

The only foreseeable risk is coding bias by the researcher; however, this will be controlled by using objective search terms and definitions. One limitation of this study is the lack of control for offender motivations in victim selection. This study cannot provide information as to whether victims were selected because they had blonde hair and blue eyes, or whether they were simply convenient targets. Another limitation of this study can be found in the qualitative portion of the research. A good deal of information regarding the general population’s opinions on missing persons will come from reader comments associated with news stories attributed to the victim sample population. However, it is impossible to determine any demographic information about these readers (such as age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, education level, etc.) unless that information is provided in the response. As such, the sample population of media readers may not be entirely representative, and the information may not be wholly generalizable.

Conclusion

This study can contribute to the field of criminal justice in three imperative ways: to fill a gap in the literature, to raise social awareness, and to improve investigative and communication skills of law enforcement officials. There is a significant lack of
attention paid to the abduction of individuals over the age of eighteen save for a few articles on the risk of traumatic injury to adults who have been kidnapped for the purposes of sexual assault and the denigration of devalued victims (Coker et al., 1998; Giacopassi & Wilkinson, 1985; Rule, 2004).

This study has the potential to reveal unconscious biases within the general public towards minority victims and Caucasian victims with other than with blonde hair and blue eyes. Raising this social consciousness could increase the attention paid to, and possibly solvability of, minority cases of abduction. This study also may influence and enhance law enforcement approaches to abduction cases by increasing awareness of potential prejudice towards certain victims. The findings of this research may assist with the improvement of law enforcement communication skills, such as new strategies for communication with the media and the public regarding a minority victim of abduction. These subtle changes in communication skills may increase solvability as more members of the public may feel inclined to assist in abduction cases.

As stated earlier, the criminal justice system is inextricably bound with the media (Surette, 2010). As such, it is important that research and literature contribute to the development of improved communications between the criminal justice system and the media, as well as between the media and the public. This research is a humble attempt to shed light on the existence of missing white woman syndrome with its examination of the rates of Caucasian and minority abductions (for individuals over and under the age of eighteen) and to determine incidence rates of abductions of blonde-haired, blue-eyed, Caucasian females versus Caucasian females with varying physical characteristics. This research also seeks to explain the amount of media coverage attributed to a random
sample of missing persons selected from the Charley Project, as well as to predict the amount of news coverage for a given victim with similar characteristics in the future. Through a careful amalgamation, or hybrid of quantitative and qualitative research techniques, it is possible that the phenomenon of missing white woman syndrome may be more fully understood.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

As stated in Chapters I and III, the purpose of this project is to examine the correlations between certain demographic variables obtained from the Charley Project (referencing victims of abduction) and the dependent variables media coverage, victim portrayal, and investigations. In collecting media articles pertaining to 533 missing persons’ cases, the researcher was able to partially explain variance in media coverage based on demographic information. As such, this chapter will be divided into four sections: (1) methodological revisions; (2) demographic information pertaining to both the original sample and the sample comprised of randomly selected cases for which qualitative data was collected; (3) a priori tests; and (4) stepwise regression analysis.

Methodological Revisions

The original intent of the study was to randomly select 600 cases from the Charley Project. The sample was to be comprised of 200 blonde Caucasian females, 200 non-blonde Caucasian females, and 200 minorities accounting for both juveniles (under age 18) and adults (age 18 and over). However, unforeseen challenges precluded the selection of an even 600 cases. It was first discovered there were only 126 cases (of 1,323) under the age of 18 years. Given such a small percentage, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Charley Project does not include all missing children cases in the United States and therefore may not be representative of all abduction victims under 18 years of age. As such, all children under 18 years of age (n = 59) were removed from the random sample. Against that backdrop, abduction victims evaluated in this project
ranged from 18 to 95 years of age, and the most common victims were between the ages of 18 and 25 - which are consistent with national averages (NISMART, 2002).

The second challenge was there were only 189 cases of blonde Caucasian females (as opposed to the desired 200) spanning across the 10-year period. There were 230 blondes in the initial Charley Project population; however, 41 were minorities and thus excluded. A third challenge emerged when it was discovered that a specific abductor was described in only 17.8% \((n = 224)\) of the cases. Analyses then revealed that no independent variables pertaining to the abductor were significant, and as such, the final media population was reduced to 533 cases. Next, Yahoo was removed from the list of news sources once it was discovered that the server does not maintain news archives.

Another methodological revision involved reader comments. Of the 533 cases, only one-third \((n = 181)\) had reader comments associated with the articles. This relatively small number suggests there was an insufficient sample size on which to base sound statistical conclusions. Additionally, comments were almost exclusively devoted to theories of the case, criticism of the investigation, and theories related to suspects. This seems to indicate that readers, at least those who take the time to comment online, may be more interested in being armchair detectives than concerned about the victim. Unfortunately, despite the desire to explore victim portrayal in relation to reader comments, the inclusion of these responses into regression models was inappropriate.

The final methodological revision was that only the dependent variables Total Articles, Average Article Length, Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal, Media Negative Portrayal, Total Law Enforcement, Total Words by Law Enforcement, and Total Investigation Terms were analyzed. A correlations matrix revealed that Media Innocent
Portrayal and Media Positive Portrayal were highly correlated ($r = .75$). As such, the two categories were collapsed into one, simply adding the values from the two columns. The dependent variable ‘importance’ was also removed as it was impossible, in many cases, to tell where the article originated. Given these demographic modifications and alterations to the dependent variables, six research questions and corresponding hypotheses remained (of the original nine); research questions 2, 4, and 7 were removed.

(1) Is there a higher incidence of adult, female abduction victims (over age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than adult, female Caucasian victims with other physical features? (There will be a higher incidence of abduction of adult Caucasian females (over age eighteen) with blonde hair and blue eyes than other physical descriptions); (2) is there a higher incidence of minority abductions (e.g. African American, Latina, Asian), than Caucasian abductions for individuals under the age of eighteen? (There will be a higher incidence of Caucasian abductions for individuals under the age of eighteen); (3) is there a higher incidence of minority abductions (e.g. African American, Latina, Asian), than Caucasian abductions for individuals over the age of eighteen? (There will be a higher incidence of Caucasian abductions for individuals over the age of eighteen); (4) is there a higher incidence of child abduction victims (under age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than Caucasian child abduction victims with other physical features? (There will be a higher incidence of child abduction victims (under age eighteen) who are Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes than other physical features); (5) will being Caucasian and having blonde hair and blue eyes affect the amount of media exposure given to a victim? (Being Caucasian and having blonde hair and blue eyes will increase the amount of media coverage); (6) will a
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Table 1 illustrates demographic information for both the Charley Project sample population and the reduced media population. For purposes of this chapter, demographic information pertaining to the media population will be discussed. As to racial distribution, Caucasians were most heavily represented (68.7%), followed by African Americans (16.9%), Hispanics (6.9%), Asians (4.1%), Native Americans (1.7%), and Mixed race victims (1.7%). In reference to hair color, blondes (35.5%) and brunettes (34.9%) were the most common colors. As to eye color, brown eyes were most frequent (49.7%), followed by blue (29.5%), hazel (11.4%), and green (9.0%). As to distinguishing characteristics, most victims had no tattoos (26.7%). Only 9.0% of the population was using drugs, and only 2.6% were engaged in prostitution. Additionally,
11.3% of the population was suffering from a mental illness at the time of their abduction. Moreover, most abduction victims were from the lower (46.3%) and middle (50.5%) socioeconomic strata.

As to month of abduction, January/February (21.0%) and May/June (20.1%) were the most common months during which victims were abducted. In reference to location of abduction, other location (42.4%) and residence (27.2%) were the most frequent.

When considering region, abductions from Southern states were the most common (47.3%), followed by Western (31.1%), Midwestern (11.4%), and Eastern states (10.1%).

As to the time a victim was abducted, the demographics were: Unknown (60.8%), night (12.9%), evening (8.8%), afternoon (8.6%) and morning (8.8%). Finally, as to victims from the Charley Project who were cross-listed on the FBI website, a very small percentage was represented in the media population (1.9%).

In reference to the aforementioned hypotheses (in relation to the initial sample derived from the Charley Project), it can be seen that hypothesis 1 regarding frequency of blonde abduction was not supported (17.4%), as brunettes (44.6%) and victims with black hair (29.2%) were more frequent victims of abduction. Additionally, Hypothesis 1 was not supported in reference to victims with both blonde hair and blue eyes as there were only 122 (9% of 1,323 from the Charley Project) and 105 (19% of the 533 media population) cases respectively. Hypothesis 3 regarding frequency of Caucasian abduction over minority abduction was supported (58.7%). However, the Charley Project does not include all cases of missing persons in the United States; and as such, these findings are not wholly generalizable. Lastly, it should be noted that regression results for particular significant subgroups within the population may be limited in their explanatory
value given small frequencies: Mixed race victims \((n = 9)\), victims engaged in prostitution \((n = 14)\), victims with a high level of socioeconomic status \((n = 17)\), and victims who were cross-listed on the FBI website \((n = 10)\).

Table 1

*Demographic Information*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Charley Project ((N = 1,323))</th>
<th>Media Population ((N = 533))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>777 58.7</td>
<td>366 68.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>304 23.0</td>
<td>90 16.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>37 6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>48 3.6</td>
<td>22 4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
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<td>9 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
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<td>9 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hair Color</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blonde</td>
<td>230 17.4</td>
<td>189 35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunette</td>
<td>590 44.6</td>
<td>186 34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>61 4.6</td>
<td>20 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>386 29.2</td>
<td>122 22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>16 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eye Color</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>276 20.9</td>
<td>158 29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>811 61.3</td>
<td>266 49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>102 7.7</td>
<td>48 9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazel</td>
<td>134 10.2</td>
<td>61 11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1,020 77.1</td>
<td>390 72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>303 22.9</td>
<td>143 26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pros</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1,296 98.0</td>
<td>519 97.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27 2.0</td>
<td>14 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>608 46.0</td>
<td>247 46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Income</td>
<td>682 51.5</td>
<td>269 50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Income</td>
<td>18 1.4</td>
<td>17 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>15 1.1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Illness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1,087 82.2</td>
<td>424 79.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Charley Project (N = 1,323)</th>
<th>Media Population (N = 533)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan / Feb</td>
<td>221 16.7</td>
<td>112 21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar / Apr</td>
<td>209 15.8</td>
<td>86 16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May / Jun</td>
<td>247 18.6</td>
<td>107 20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul / Aug</td>
<td>226 17.1</td>
<td>92 17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep / Oct</td>
<td>217 16.4</td>
<td>75 14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov / Dec</td>
<td>202 15.3</td>
<td>61 11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>349 26.4</td>
<td>145 27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Residence</td>
<td>178 13.5</td>
<td>63 11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot</td>
<td>163 12.3</td>
<td>68 12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park / outdoor</td>
<td>59  4.5</td>
<td>29  5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>569 43.0</td>
<td>226 42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5  .4</td>
<td>2  .4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>149 11.3</td>
<td>54 10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern</td>
<td>153 11.6</td>
<td>61 11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>605 45.7</td>
<td>252 47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>416 31.4</td>
<td>166 31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>122 9.2</td>
<td>47  8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>119 9.0</td>
<td>46  8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>126 9.5</td>
<td>47  8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>147 11.1</td>
<td>69 12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>809 61.1</td>
<td>324 60.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates the correlations among the seven dependent variables selected for stepwise regression. The highest significant correlations were those between ‘total investigation terms’ and ‘total law enforcement’ (r = .914), ‘total law enforcement’ and ‘media innocent and positive portrayal’ (r = .788), and ‘total investigation terms’ and ‘media innocent and positive portrayal’ (r = .787). Though there is a high degree of correlation between these variables which arguably could measure the same items, the researcher elected to keep the variables separate as opposed to constructing a merged...
variable because -- as will be seen in forthcoming tables -- ‘total investigation terms’ produced an additional explanatory variable that ‘total law enforcement’ and ‘media innocent and positive portrayal’ did not; further, ‘media innocent and positive portrayal’ explained substantially more variance (R² = .340) than did ‘total law enforcement’ (R² = .253) and ‘total investigation terms’ (R² = .257).

Table 2

*Correlation Matrix* (n = 533)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TA</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>MIPP</th>
<th>MNP</th>
<th>TLE</th>
<th>TWLE</th>
<th>TI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>.420</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIPP</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNP</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.420</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLE</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWLE</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TI</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td>.415</td>
<td>.787</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note: TA (Total Articles), AL (Article Length), MIPP (Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal), TLE (Total Law Enforcement), TWLE (Total Worlds by Law Enforcement), TI (Total Investigation Terms)

Analytic Plan

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the results generated from stepwise regression models. The researcher chose this statistical method to explain variance in media coverage pertaining to the following dependent variables: Total Articles, Average Article Length, Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal, Media Negative Portrayal, Total Law Enforcement, Total Words by Law Enforcement, and Total
Investigation Terms. A brief description of the assumptions of multivariate analysis will be given first, followed by a synopsis of a series of stepwise regression tables.

Assumptions of Multivariate Data Analysis

Several assumptions must be met when using multivariate analysis. First, normality refers to the degree to which a sample distribution is evenly distributed. Homoscedasticity and homogeneity of variance and covariance matrices require that the dependent variable display the same amount of variance across the range of independent variables in the model. Linearity assumes that independent variables will form a straight line due to maintaining a constant unit change for the dependent variable for each unit of change in independent variables. The absence of multicollinearity is desired as it indicates that each independent variable maintains an independent relationship with the dependent variable. Finally, whether or not error terms are normal, independent, and homoscedastic; the researcher wishes to note that the residual values are unassociated with data errors and within normal boundaries. All multivariate assumptions were met.

Stepwise Results

Stepwise regression results were generated for seven dependent variables and will be presented in two sections: (1) Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal, Total Law Enforcement, and Total Investigation, and (2) Total Articles, Average Article Length, Total Words by Law Enforcement, and Media Negative Portrayal. The purpose of dividing the dependent variables into sections is to (1) demonstrate the high correlations among the three dependent variables in section one, and (2) to illustrate the similarities among the three stepwise regression models in section one. The general purpose of generating stepwise regression models for these dependent variables was to explain the
variance in (1) the amount of media attention a missing person will receive, (2) how that victim of abduction will be portrayed by the media, and (3) how their demographic information may affect the caliber of the investigation into their disappearance.

The independent variables in the model are as follows: Cross-listed on FBI site, Height Victim, Prostitution, Eye Color Victim, Location Abduction, Age of Victim, Race Victim, Mental Illness Victim, Month Abduction, Region Abduction, Victim SES (socioeconomic status), Distinguishing Characteristics, Time Abduction, Weight Victim, Hair Color Victim, and Drug Use Victim. It should be noted that all Tolerance values were designated at or approaching 1.000 in all excluded variable tables generated during the stepwise regressions, indicating there were no issues with multicollinearity among the independent variables not selected for inclusion in the model. Additionally, separate coding legends were created for each of the seven dependent variables to align the nominal variables into linear form for use in the regression models (see Appendix C).

*Total Law Enforcement, Total Investigation Terms, & Media Innocent/Positive Portrayal*

The dependent variables ‘total law enforcement’, ‘total investigation terms’, and ‘media innocent and positive portrayal’ were selected for a sequential, collective discussion given that each model produced the same contributory variables with the exception of the addition of ‘drug use’ to the ‘total investigation terms’ model. Table 3 reflects the variables selected for inclusion among these three models (cross-listed on FBI site, time abduction, hair color, region abduction, location abduction, and drug use) as well as the numbers, means, and standard deviations for these significant predictors.
Table 3

*Means Distributions – Total LE, TI Terms, and Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Law Enforcement</th>
<th>Total Investigation</th>
<th>Media Innocent / Positive Portrayal</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed FBI Site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>11.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning/Afternoon</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blonde</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern/</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.19</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Abduction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown Residence</td>
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<td>.51</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Residence</td>
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<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot Residence</td>
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<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
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<td>1.68</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park/Outdoor Area</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>3.60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 presents the stepwise regression results for the dependent variable ‘total law enforcement.’ The purpose of analyzing this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables (representing demographic information derived from the Charley Project and selected for inclusion in the model by SPSS) could explain how many law enforcement officers would be mentioned in any given article associated with a missing person.

### Table 4

**Total Law Enforcement Stepwise Regression Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE b</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>7.394</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>9.337</td>
</tr>
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<td>Time Abduction</td>
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<td>.221</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>4.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>3.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Abduction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>2.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Abduction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>2.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.542</td>
<td>.313</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 533, SE = 2.443, F = 35.675, R = .503, R² = .253, Adj R² = .246, p = < .05

The most significant variable in this model (β = .357) accounted for approximately two thirds (16.1% of 25.3%) of the total variance in the dependent variable and indicated that a missing person’s case featured on the FBI website would generate, on average, 7.394 more law enforcement officials mentioned in any given article pertaining to their abduction. The second most significant variable in this model (β = .198) accounted for roughly one quarter more (6.0% of 25.3%) of the total variance in the dependent variable and indicated that a missing person’s case occurring at night (b = 0.52) produces approximately one additional mention of a law enforcement official when compared to abductions occurring in the morning / afternoon. Hair color – which serves as the focal point of this study – was found to be the third most significant variable.
in reference to the total law enforcement model ($\beta = .116$) but accounted for little of the overall variance in the model (1.5% of 25.3%, or 5.9%); hair color of a victim did, however, indicate that abductions of blonde women produce .688 more law enforcement officials per article; a blonde victim generates significantly more mention of law enforcement officials per article (Mean = 1.74) than when victims have any other hair color (Mean = .83) (see Tables 3 and 4).

Region of abduction and location of abduction collectively add less than 2% variance beyond that accounted for by the three aforementioned variables, and as such will not be discussed with great detail. However, mentions of law enforcement officials in media articles are highest when abductions occur in the Eastern (Mean = 2.19) (and to a slightly lesser degree Southern, Mean = 1.25) United States. Regression results also indicated that region of abduction ($\beta = .093$) can increase the amount of law enforcement officials per article by .403 per unit change in region. The final contributing variable for this model ($\beta = .089$) indicated that those victims abducted from a park or other outdoor area received the most law enforcement officials per article (Mean = 2.55), followed by residence (Mean = 1.68), parking lot (Mean = 1.48), and outside residence (Mean = 1.18). Additionally, regression results indicated that location abduction can increase the total number of law enforcement officials per article by .179 per unit of location change (see Tables 3 and 4).

The standard error of the estimate reflects the model would be accurate within $\pm 2.443$ law enforcement officials 68% of the time. This model (see Table 4) supports the portion of hypothesis 8 that blonde haired victims of abduction would receive more
attention from law enforcement officials than victims with any other hair color even when controlling for a multitude of abduction-related influences.

Table 5 presents the stepwise regression results for the dependent variable ‘total investigation terms.’ The purpose of analyzing this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables (representing demographic information derived from the Charley Project and selected for inclusion in the model by SPSS) could explain how many investigation terms would be mentioned in any given article associated with a missing person.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE b</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>9.199</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>9.219</td>
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<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>4.385</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hair Color</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>3.629</td>
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<td>.242</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>2.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Abduction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>2.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Use</td>
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<td>.257</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>2.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.504</td>
<td>-2.986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 533, SE = 3.078, F = 30.390, R = .507, R² = .257, Adj R² = .249, p < .05

The most significant variable in this model (β = .352) accounted for more than one half (15.6% of 25.7%) of the total variance in the dependent variable and indicated that a missing person’s case featured on the FBI website would generate, on average, 9.199 more investigation terms in any given article pertaining to their abduction. The second most important variable in the model (β = .182) captured an additional 5.2% (or roughly one fifth) of the total model variance: victims abducted at night received the highest amount of investigation terms per article (Mean = 3.33), with evening and morning / afternoon producing fairly similar but still fewer investigation terms per article.
(Means = 2.83 and 2.09 respectively). Moreover, the regression results indicated that time of abduction can increase total investigation terms per article by .602 per unit of time change. Hair color, which was the focal point of this study, was the third most significant variable (β = .138) in reference to total investigation terms and accounted for 2% (of 25.7%) of the model variance; it indicated that women with blonde hair would average 1.027 more investigation terms per article. Specifically, women with blonde hair received (Mean = 2.26) received just more than one additional investigation term per article than victims with any other hair color (Mean = 1.03) (see Tables 3 and 5).

Region of abduction, location of abduction, and whether a victim used drugs collectively add less than 3% variance beyond that accounted for by the three aforementioned variables, and as such will not be discussed with great detail. The model did indicate, though, that victims abducted from Eastern states (Mean = 2.93) received significantly more investigation terms per article when compared with abductions from the Southern (Mean = 1.58) and Midwestern / Western states (Mean = .98). Additionally, regression results indicated that region of abduction (β = .105) can increase investigation terms per article by .575 per unit change in region. Moreover, the regression results indicated that location of abduction can increase total investigation terms per article by .239 per unit of location change: victims who were abducted from a park or other outdoor area received the highest number of investigation terms per article (Mean = 3.45), followed by victims abducted from their residence (Mean = 2.22). Lastly, victims who were abusing drugs (β = .082) at the time of their abduction received significantly fewer investigation terms per article (Mean = .79) than those who were not using drugs (Mean
= 1.46) (see Tables 3 and 5). However, regression results revealed that drug usage can increase total investigation terms per article by .688.

The standard error of the estimate reflected that this model would be accurate within ± 3.078 investigation terms 68% of the time. This model (see Table 5) supports the portion of hypothesis 8 that blonde victims of abduction received approximately twice the amount of investigation terms per article versus those victims with varying hair colors even when controlling for a multitude of other abduction-related influences. Hypothesis 9 was also supported by this model, namely those victims abusing drugs at the time of their abduction received fewer investigative terms than victims not using drugs.

Table 6 presents the stepwise regression results for the dependent variable ‘media innocent and positive portrayal.’ The purpose of analyzing this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables (representing demographic information derived from the Charley Project and selected for inclusion in the model by SPSS) could explain how frequently any given missing person would be referred to in an innocent or positive manner in any given article.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE b</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>10.535</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>12.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>1.247</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>5.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>3.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Abduction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.332</td>
<td>.465</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>2.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Abduction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>2.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.919</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.919</td>
<td>-2.837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 533, SE = 2.531, F = 54.318, R = .583, R² = .340, Adj R² = .334, p = .000

The most significant variable in this model (β = .461) accounted for almost three fourths (24.7% of 34.0%) of the total variance in the dependent variable and indicated
that a missing person’s case featured on the FBI website would generate, on average, approximately 10 more innocent or positive terms per article. The second most important variable in the model ($\beta = .191$) captured an additional 4.6% of the total variance (of 34.0%) and indicated that blonde victims ($\text{Mean} = 1.24$) receive more innocent or positive victim portrayals per article (see Table 6).

Women with blonde hair ($\text{Mean} = 2.03$) received nearly four times the innocent or positive descriptions per article than victims with any other hair color ($\text{Mean} = .57$). Time of abduction ($\beta = .125$) represented only 2.7% of the total variance (of 34.0%) and indicated that time of abduction can increase innocent or positive portrayal per article by .360 per unit of time change. Victims abducted at night were portrayed the most as innocent or positive ($\text{Mean} = 2.48$), followed by evening ($\text{Mean} = 2.10$) and finally, morning / afternoon ($\text{Mean} = 1.72$). The next most significant variable in this model ($\beta = .098$) represented 1.2% of the total variance (of 34.0%) and indicated that region of abduction can increase innocent or positive portrayal per article by .465 per unit of region change: Eastern ($\text{Mean} = 2.56$), Southern ($\text{Mean} = 1.00$), and Midwestern or Western states ($\text{Mean} = .70$) (see Tables 3 and 6).

The variable location of abduction ($\beta = .101$) also had a significant effect on how many times they were referred to as innocent or positive: Park or other outdoor area ($\text{Mean} = 1.90$), residence ($\text{Mean} = 1.89$), parking lot ($\text{Mean} = 1.35$), and outside residence ($\text{Mean} = 1.00$). Moreover, regression results reveal that location abduction can increase innocent or positive portrayal per article by .222 per unit of location change.

The standard error of the estimate for this model reflects that the model would be accurate within ± 2.531 innocent or positive words describing the victim 68% of the time.
This model supports the portion of hypothesis 6 that victims of abduction with blonde hair received significantly more positive or innocent terms per article versus those victims with varying hair colors (see Tables 3 and 6).

Table 7 presents the stepwise regression results for the dependent variable ‘total articles.’ The purpose of analyzing this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables (representing demographic information derived from the Charley Project and selected for inclusion in the model by SPSS) could explain how many articles would be devoted to a given missing person case.

**Table 7**

*Total Articles Stepwise Regression Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$SE\ b$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>20.360</td>
<td>2.806</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>7.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>2.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>1.936</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>2.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>- .207</td>
<td></td>
<td>.497</td>
<td></td>
<td>- .417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 533$, SE = 8.623, $F = 25.190$, $R = .354$, $R^2 = .125$, Adj $R^2 = .120$, $p = .000$

The most significant variable in this model ($\beta = .301$) accounted for 10.7% (or roughly 85%) of the total variance (of 12.5%); it indicated that a missing person’s case featured on the FBI’s website would generate, on average, 20 more articles. Time abduction ($\beta = .109$) accounted for 1.1% of the total variance (of 12.5%) and demonstrated that time of abduction can increase the number of articles associated with each victim by .937 per unit of time change. Victims abducted at night (Mean = 4.12) garnered more articles per unit of change than victims abducted during the evening (Mean = 3.23) or morning / afternoon hours (Mean = 1.28). Month abduction ($\beta = .086$) accounted for a mere .7% of the total variance (of 12.5%) and indicated that the month of abduction can increase the number of articles attributed to a victim by 1.94 per unit of
month change. Victims abducted during the months of January or February (Mean = 3.45) receive more articles than victims abducted during other months (Mean = .70).

The standard error of the estimate reflects the model was able to capture the number of articles devoted to each victim within ± 8.62 articles 68% of the time. This model tested Hypothesis 5; but was not supported (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 8

*Means Comparison – Total Articles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>4.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>56.657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning/Afternoon</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>14.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>22.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January/February</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>19.824</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 presents the stepwise regression results for the dependent variable ‘average article length.’ The purpose for the analysis of this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables selected for inclusion in the model could determine the average article length associated with any given missing persons case.
Table 9

*Average Article Length Stepwise Regression Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE b</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>77.196</td>
<td>13.886</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>5.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution Victim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>470.387</td>
<td>92.071</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>5.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>226.353</td>
<td>69.191</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>3.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Color</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>43.590</td>
<td>16.953</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>2.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Abduction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>42.809</td>
<td>17.906</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>2.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>234.750</td>
<td>109.127</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>2.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>-15.010</td>
<td>36.519</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.411</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 533, SE = 337.109, F = 15.873, R = .392, R² = .153, Adj R² = .144, p = .000

Time abduction (β = .227) accounted for 7.1% (or almost one-half) of the total variance explained by the model (of 15.3%) and indicated that time of abduction can increase the average article length associated with each victim by 77.196 words per unit of time change. Victims abducted at night (Mean = 374.57) received the most words when compared with victims abducted in the evening (Mean = 259.89) and morning / afternoon (Mean = 223.55) (see Tables 9 and 10).

Table 10

*Means Comparison – Average Article Length*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>99.69</td>
<td>301.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon/Morning</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>223.55</td>
<td>336.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>259.89</td>
<td>349.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>374.57</td>
<td>543.624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>158.17</td>
<td>319.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>647.14</td>
<td>1058.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>160.58</td>
<td>354.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>383.04</td>
<td>482.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>126.44</td>
<td>257.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green/Hazel</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>185.62</td>
<td>463.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>235.97</td>
<td>426.709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>128.07</td>
<td>225.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>165.33</td>
<td>415.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>162.92</td>
<td>353.993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>274.78</td>
<td>360.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>164.95</td>
<td>363.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>487.90</td>
<td>251.305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prostitution (β = .207) accounted for 3.7% (or approximately one fifth) of the total variance explained by the model (of 15.3%) and indicated that a victim engaged in prostitution would generate, on average, 470.387 more words in an average article. Victims engaged in prostitution (Mean = 647.14) received words than victims who were not involved in prostitution (Mean = 158.17). The extent to which this result is generalizable is unknown; however, given there were only 14 victims engaged in prostitution at the time of their disappearance of the total sample population of 533 victims. Month abduction (β = .131) accounted for 1.8% of the total variance explained by the model (of 15.3%) and indicated that month of abduction can increase average article length by 226.353 words per unit change in month. Victims abducted in December (Mean = 383.04) had more words written compared to victims abducted in other months (Mean = 160.58) (see Tables 9 and 10).

Region abduction (β = .097) accounted for a mere 1.1% of the total variance explained by the model and indicated that region of abduction can increase average article length by 42.809 words per unit in region change: victims abducted from Eastern states (Mean = 274.78) had the highest average article length, followed by Southern (Mean = 162.92), Western (Mean = 165.33), and Midwestern states (Mean = 128.07) (see
Tables 9 and 10). Eye color ($\beta = .104$) accounted for .9% of the total variance explained by the model (of 15.3%) and indicated that eye color can increase average article length by 43.590 per unit of change in eye color. The means for eye colors were as follows: Blue (235.97), Green or hazel (185.62), and Brown (126.44). Cross-listed on FBI site ($\beta = .088$) accounted for .7% of the total variance explained by the model (of 15.3%) and indicated that a missing person’s case featured on the FBI’s website would generate, on average, 243.750 more words in reference to average article length. Those victims featured on the FBI’s website (Mean = 487.90) received more words per article than victims who were not (Mean = 164.95).

The standard error reflects that the model was accurate in reference to average article length within $\pm 337.109$ words 68% of the time. This model partially supported hypothesis 5 that victims of abduction with blue eyes received a higher average article length than did those victims with varying eye colors (see Tables 9 and 10).

Table 11 presents the stepwise regression results for the dependent variable ‘total words by law enforcement.’ The purpose of analyzing this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables selected for inclusion in the model could explain the amount of total words within any given article pertaining to a missing person case attributed to law enforcement officials.
Table 11

Total Words by Law Enforcement Stepwise Regression Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE b</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>101.645</td>
<td>20.011</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>5.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>7.554</td>
<td>2.653</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>2.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>7.960</td>
<td>2.894</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>2.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>13.841</td>
<td>5.740</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>2.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Abduction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>7.421</td>
<td>3.206</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>2.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-6.134</td>
<td>4.445</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 533, SE = 62.119, F = 13.157, R = .333, R² = .111, Adj R² = .103, p = < .05

The most significant variable in this model (β = .211) accounted for 5.4% of the total variance (of 11.1%) and indicated that a missing person’s case listed on the FBI’s website would generate, on average, 101.645 more words from law enforcement: such ‘listed’ victims (Mean = 126.10) received more words from law enforcement per article than victims not listed on the FBI website (Mean = 14.22) (see Tables 11 and 12).

Table 12

Means Comparison – Total Words by Law Enforcement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Listed on FBI Site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td>61.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>126.10</td>
<td>148.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>32.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22.47</td>
<td>52.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night/Evening</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>30.67</td>
<td>72.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37.26</td>
<td>159.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>37.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January/February</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>22.25</td>
<td>68.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.81</td>
<td>60.899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34.60</td>
<td>156.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>33.683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blonde</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>28.27</td>
<td>101.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location Abduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>9.28</td>
<td>38.844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park or outside area/</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>15.51</td>
<td>37.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Residence Residence</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>31.11</td>
<td>109.885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time abduction (β = .122) accounted for 2.1% of the total variance (of 11.1%) and indicated that total amount of words by law enforcement can be increased by 7.554 words per unit of time change: victims abducted in the afternoon (Mean = 37.26) garnered more words from law enforcement than victims abducted during nighttime / evening hours (Mean = 30.67) and in the morning (Mean = 22.47). Month abduction (β = .114) accounted for 1.7% of the total variance (of 11.1%) and indicated that total words by law enforcement can be increased by a value of 7.960 per unit of month change; August (Mean = 34.60) produced the greatest number of law enforcement words, followed by December (Mean = 29.81), January / February (Mean = 22.25), and other months (Mean = 10.89) (see Tables 11 and 12).

Hair color (β = .100), which is the focal point of this study, accounted for 1.0% of the total variance (of 11.1%) and indicated that hair color can influence total words from law enforcement by a value of 13.841; women with blonde hair (Mean = 28.27) received more words per article from law enforcement officials than victims with other hair colors (Mean = 10.11). Location abduction (β = .098) accounted for .9% of the total variance (of 11.0%) and indicated that location of abduction can increase total words by law enforcement by 7.421 words per unit of location change: residence (Mean = 31.11), park or other outdoor area (Mean = 15.51), and other locations (Mean = 9.28).

The standard error reflects that the model could accurately show the amount of words attributed to law enforcement officials per article within ± 62.119 words 68% of
the time. This model supports the component of hypothesis 8 that blonde victims of abduction would receive significantly more total words by law enforcement officials per article than victims with varying hair colors (see Tables 11 and 12).

Table 13 presents results for the dependent variable ‘media negative portrayal.’ The purpose of analyzing this dependent variable was to determine the degree to which the linear combination of independent variables selected for inclusion in the model could determine how frequently a victim of abduction would be negatively portrayed by the media in any given article.

Table 13

**Media Negative Portrayal Stepwise Regression Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>( b )</th>
<th>( SE , b )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month Abduction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>.675</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim SES</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.106</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region Abduction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td></td>
<td>.685</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \( n = 533, \; SE = .791, \; F = 12.229, \; R = .374, \; R^2 = .140, \; Adj \, R^2 = .129, \; p = .000 \)

Mental illness (\( \beta = .205 \)) accounted for 4.0% (or approximately one quarter) of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated that mental illness would generate, on average, .431 more negative terms per article: victims suffering from a mental illness (or when mental illness status was unknown) (Mean = .56) received more negative terms per article than victims not suffering from a mental illness (Mean = .14). Race (\( \beta = .149 \)) accounted for 3.1% of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated that race can increase negative terms per article by .261 per unit of race change. Mixed race victims of abduction (Mean = 1.38) received the greatest share of negative terms, followed by
Caucasians (Mean = .28) and all other races (African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American) (Mean = .04). Month abduction (β = .134) accounted for 1.8% of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated that the month of abduction can increase negative terms per article by .228 per unit of month change. December (Mean = .64) received the highest rate of negative terms, followed by February (Mean = .45), and other months (Mean = .17) (see Tables 13 and 14).

Prostitution (β = .128) accounted for 1.9% of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated that a victim engaged in prostitution would generate .675 more negative terms per article. Victims engaged in prostitution (Mean = .93) received more negative terms per article than victims not engaged in prostitution (Mean = .20). Victim socioeconomic status (SES) (β = .121) accounted for 1.5% of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated socioeconomic status can increase negative terms per article by .719. Upper class victims of abduction (Mean = 1.09) garnered more negative terms per article than both the middle and lower classes (Mean = .20). The generalizability of this result is limited, though, because there were very few upper class victims (see Tables 13 and 14).

Age (Min = 18, Max = 91) (β = -.106) accounted for .9% of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated that age each year of age would, on average, produce .006 fewer negative terms per article. The ages with the highest means for negative terms per article were 53 (Mean = 1.00), 46 (Mean = .75), and 18 (Mean = .65). Region abduction (β = .090) accounted for .8% of the total variance (of 14.0%) and indicated that region abduction can increase negative terms per article by .093 per unit of region change. Eastern states (Mean = .37) had the highest average of negative terms, whereas Western
states (Mean = .31), Southern states (Mean = .16), and Midwestern states (Mean = .10) received progressively fewer negative terms per article.

The standard error reflects that the model could accurately demonstrate the number of negative terms per article within ± .791 words 68% of the time. This model supports Hypothesis 9 that victims suffering from mental illness and / or engaged in prostitution would be more negatively portrayed by the media (see Tables 13 and 14).

Table 14

*Means Comparison – Media Negative Portrayal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Predictors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Illness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes/Unknown</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>1.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>2.774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Month Abduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1.578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prostitution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>2.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim SES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region Abduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwestern</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>1.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>1.121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

From the above results, it can be observed that several hypotheses supporting a cultural complex of innocence were demonstrated to be statistically significant. For example, blonde victims of abduction were likely to be portrayed more positively and/or innocently by the media, and received a higher caliber of investigation into their disappearance. In reference to racial disparity, it was demonstrated that mixed race victims were more likely than Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American victims of abduction to be viewed negatively by the media. Unexpected results included the continued appearance of time, region, and location of abduction in the models correlated with the seven dependent variables. All results will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this research was to determine whether demographic information pertaining to victims of abduction explains variance in current media coverage regarding the total number of articles generated for a victim, the manner in which a victim is portrayed by the media, and the caliber of the investigation. The researcher hypothesized that blonde-haired, blue-eyed Caucasian females would receive more media attention, be portrayed in a more positive light, and receive a higher caliber investigation. Also (as stated earlier), Research Questions 2, 4, and 7 were unable to be examined due to methodological revisions. The results from the six remaining research questions and corresponding hypotheses listed in Chapter IV will now be discussed.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Frequency of Blonde Haired and Blue Eyed Abduction

It was hypothesized there would be a higher incidence of blonde haired, blue eyed abduction victims across the United States; possibly as a consequence of predators being influenced by the cultural complex of innocence. However, from the initial sample population of 1,323 cases of missing persons from the years 2000 to 2009 listed on the Charley Project, the researcher’s hypothesis was not supported. Table 1 indicated there were only 230 cases of abduction victims with blonde hair; and, though not displayed in the table, only 122 (9%) of the Caucasian victims had blonde hair and blue eyes. As to the 533 victims within the media population, 105 (19%) were Caucasian and had blonde hair and blue eyes. Victims with brown hair were by far the most common victims (n = 590). However, it should be noted that brown hair transcends racial groups whereas
blonde hair generally does not. While the sample was representative in terms of regions
of the United States, it was by no means a comprehensive sample of missing persons in
the United States; as such, it can only be firmly stated that there was not a higher
incidence of blondes being reported as abducted on the Charley Project website.

Research Question 3: Frequency of Caucasian Abduction vs. Minority Abduction

It was hypothesized there would be a higher incidence of Caucasian victims of
abduction than minority victims. From the initial sample population of 1,323 cases of
missing persons (2000–2009) listed on the Charley Project, the researcher’s hypothesis
was supported. There were 777 cases of Caucasian abduction versus 546 cases of
minority abduction (Table 1), of which African American (n = 304) comprised the largest
group; Hispanic (n = 167), Asian (n = 48), Native American (n = 14), and mixed race
heritage were present in relatively small numbers. The limitation in these frequencies can
be found in the sample size; the cases listed on the Charley Project are not representative
of the entire population of missing persons in the United States.

Research Question 5: Frequency of Media Reports Hair Color and Race

The third research question related to the amount of media generated for a given
case. It was hypothesized that blonde Caucasian victims of abduction would receive
more media attention than their Caucasian counterparts with varying hair colors, that
victims with blonde hair and blue eyes would receive more media attention, and that
Caucasian victims would receive more media attention in general than minority victims.
The hypotheses were partially supported, keeping the limitation in mind that unequal
group sizes and other factors may have influenced these results. With regard to race,
Caucasians more than doubled, and blondes nearly doubled, the number of total articles
received by their racial and non-blond counterparts. It was discovered that eye color was significant predictor of Average Article Length; it also was demonstrated that the average article length for victims with blue eyes was nearly doubled compared with victims of other varying eye colors (e.g. green, hazel, and brown). From these findings, one can reasonably conclude that blonde haired Caucasian victims do receive more media attention than their non-blond Caucasian counterparts; and further, that Caucasians receive more media attention than minority victims in relation to instances of abduction.

Research Question 6: Media Portrayal in Relation to Hair Color and Race

It was hypothesized that blonde Caucasian victims of abduction would be portrayed in a more innocent and positive light when compared to Caucasians with other hair colors, as well as minority victims in general. It was further hypothesized that minority victims would be portrayed more negatively than Caucasian victims. Both hypotheses were supported. Caucasian victims were most frequently described in an innocent or positive manner (with an average of more than one term per article); the means for all other racial groups in reference to innocent or positive portrayal were significantly lower. Blondes were most frequently portrayed as innocent or positive, followed (though not closely) by brunettes, redheads, and victims with black hair.

A common thread throughout the media reports was that of motherhood. Often, in media titles there would be maternal references; this fact would be repeated throughout articles in order to perhaps increase the view of the victim as innocent or sympathetic. Case examples where this occurred include Claudia Darlene Bamber, Janice Kay Matney, and Sharon Ivy Jones. Bamber was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Caucasian female who disappeared on August 13, 2001 after dropping off her daughter at daycare. The media
portrayed her as a beautiful woman who dearly loved her two-year old daughter. Media reports focused on the description of Bamber provided by her mother, namely that Claudia would call her every morning and every evening, had a beautiful smile, and would never leave her child (Dennis, 2001; Jewell, 2002). Similarly, Matney was a brunette Caucasian female who disappeared April 3, 2002 from Ottowa, Illinois; she was last seen at home by her live-in boyfriend. Information found on the Charley Project website indicated she had a history of drug abuse and depression; however, media reports focused primarily on the fact that she was a mother, and as such seemed to present a more sympathetic portrayal of her character and personality (Churney, 2009). Lastly, Jones was an attractive, African American female who disappeared in the early morning hours of September 22, 2002 from her residence in Norfolk, Virginia. In news articles, media professionals portrayed her innocence by focusing on her position as a teacher’s assistant at an elementary school as well as the mother of a young child (Roy, 2002).

Interestingly, it seemed that non-blonde Caucasian females who were reported missing were often focused on as mothers, whereas blonde Caucasian females were often portrayed as innocent with reference to their physical characteristics such as blonde hair.

Mixed race victims were actually the highest racial demographic to be portrayed negatively by the media, followed by Caucasian, Hispanics, Asians, African Americans, and Native American victims. Red-haired victims were most likely to be portrayed negatively, followed by blonde victims, brunettes, and victims with black hair. Examples of negative media portrayal can be observed in the cases of Jennifer Rayleen Casper-Ross, Tammy Sue Lynn Passineau, and Kelsey Emily Collins. Ross was a Caucasian brunette with significant blonde highlights; she disappeared while working as a showgirl
in Reno, Nevada on May 5, 2005. The article seemed to focus more on her illicit activities, history of depression, and life as a showgirl than the actual investigation (O’Malley, 2008). Passineau likewise disappeared (from Syracuse, New York on April 11, 2004). Though the article describing her disappearance did not paint her in a negative light, it gave more attention to the sex offender who allegedly mentioned the young drifter’s name while in prison (Kates, 2004). Finally, in the case of Collins (a mixed race victim), the article (Oppmann, 2011) focused on her sordid past as a party-girl, thief, and somewhat promiscuous teen. Kelsey was 18 years old at the time of her disappearance on May 9, 2005, and had recently testified against the pimp who forced her to engage in prostitution. She vanished shortly after her testimony, never to be seen again. Rather than focusing on her disappearance, the story’s title *Sex Trafficking Victim Testifies, Then Vanishes* reflected the primary theme of the article: sex.

From the above, blonde Caucasian victims were portrayed in a more innocent and positive manner than their Caucasian counterparts with varying hair colors, and that Caucasian victims were portrayed in a more positive and or innocent manner than minority victims. However, unequal group sized may have contributed to these results.

**Research Question 8: Caliber of Investigation Blonde versus Non-Blonde Caucasians and Caliber of Investigation Caucasian versus Minority**

It was hypothesized that an abduction victim who is Caucasian and has blonde hair will receive a higher caliber of investigation than non-blonde and minority abduction victims. This hypothesis was supported. Regression analysis determined that blonde victims received the (1) highest number (followed by redheads, brunettes, and victims with black hair) and (2) most frequent law enforcement officials per article (followed by
Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, mixed race victims, and Native Americans). It was also found that Caucasians had the highest number of ‘investigation terms’ per article, followed by African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, and mixed race victims; it was also determined that blondes received more than double the number of investigation terms per article than victims with any other hair color.

A significant finding related to both Total Law Enforcement and Total Investigation Terms was whether the case of a missing person featured on the Charley Project was also cross-listed on the FBI’s website. Of the 533 cases, only 10 were cross-listed; however, the differences in means related to the two dependent variables listed above were startling. In relation to Total Articles, cases not listed on the FBI’s site received, on average, .86 articles. However, for the ten cases that were cross-listed on the FBI’s website, the mean number of articles was 23.00. In reference to the dependent variable Total Investigation Terms, a case not listed on the FBI’s site received, on average, 1.27 investigative terms per case; however, if the case was listed on the FBI’s website, the number of investigative terms per case on average was 11.60.

When factored by race and hair color, it is evident that Caucasian, blonde victims of abduction receive a higher caliber investigation into their disappearance than do their Caucasian counterparts with other hair colors, and certainly minority victims. Additionally, blue-eyed victims will receive more investigation terms per article than their counterparts with varying eye colors, and will receive lengthier articles pertaining to their disappearance. However, there are limitations to those conclusions relating to both sample size and distribution of races. For example, there were fewer cases of minority
victims by individual racial groups such as African American, as compared to Caucasian victims. As such, the sample may have been insufficient to draw these conclusions.

Research Question 9: Other Demographic Variables Contribution to Frequency of Media and Media Portrayal

The researcher also sought to examine whether other demographic variables contributed to the frequency of media reports and the manner in which a victim was portrayed by the media. It was hypothesized that if a victim of abduction had a mental illness, a history of prostitution or drug use, or was from a lower socioeconomic status, she would be portrayed more negatively by the media and received less media attention. All hypotheses were supported with the caveat that unequal group sizes may have influenced the results. With regard to mental illness, victims not reported as suffering from any mental disorder received far fewer negative terms per article than those with a reported mental illness received. In terms of frequencies of media reports, those with mental illness received approximately half the amount of media than victims without a mental illness received. Victims engaged in prostitution at the time of their disappearance received more than three times the negative terms per article than those victims not engaged in prostitution. In terms of frequencies of media reports, victims engaged in prostitution received approximately a quarter fewer articles than those victims not engaged in prostitution. In reference to drug use, victims who had a drug habit at the time of their disappearance received approximately three times the amount negative terms per article compared to those victims not abusing drugs. In relation to frequency of media reports, those victims using drugs received almost one and a half fewer articles on average than victims not abusing drugs at the time of their disappearance. Finally, in
reference to socioeconomic status, the results were somewhat surprising in that upper-class victims, with the fewest number of cases, received the most negative terms; in fact, more than four times the amount lower class victims received, and three times more negative terms per article than middle class victims received. As to the frequency of media reports, middle class victims generated the most media attention. Following middle class victims were upper class victims, and lower class victims.

These findings are consistent with the research of Giacopassi and Wilkinson (1985) regarding devalued victims of society. It appears that abducted women who suffer from a mental illness, are engaged in prostitution, or had a drug habit at the time of their disappearance were not considered relevant by major media networks. Two cases consistent with this finding were those of Nikole Kristina Bakoles and Kathy Sue Haskell. Bakoles was a 19-year old young mother with a history of drug abuse and abusive relationships. After disappearing from Midvale, Utah, the single story featuring her disappearance on ABC 4 News (in Utah) began by singling out the fact that Nikole was an unwed mother and drug addict (Family Seeks Clues and Closure – The Unsolved Case of Nikole Bakoles, 2011). In Haskell’s case, the young woman disappeared from her residence during the evening hours of October 16, 2002. There was no media per se related to her case; merely a story featured in Racing West informing racing enthusiasts that a certain driver would be featuring Ms. Haskell’s picture for the missing person of the month. At the time of her disappearance, Ms. Haskell was suffering from depression (Charley Project). These two cases suggest that those victims with mental illness or a history of drug abuse are not deemed as worthy of media attention.
There was an additional factor of note in relation to devalued victims. Rule (2004) stated that some victims generate media only when it is suggested there may be a serial predator involved (as in the case of the Green River Killer), where disappearances of prostitutes did not become suspect until the body count rose to a level that could only be attributable to the work of a serial killer. There were three particular cases that were examined for media content during the course of this research that seemed somewhat in alignment with this theory. Though the cases generated media on their own, once the media and to some extent, law enforcement believed that the cases might be linked to other disappearances, the media attention increased dramatically. The cases involved the disappearances of Jennifer Joyce Kesse, Brianna Maitland, and Maura Murray.

Jennifer Joyce Kesse was reported missing from the Orlando, Florida area on January 24, 2006 when she failed to report for work. She was last seen at her apartment; it is believed she was abducted that morning. Her car was later found at an apartment complex relatively near her residence (Ramati, 2008). Ms. Kesse was an attractive (with blonde hair and green eyes) and successful woman with no history of drug use, mental illness, or deviant behavior. A similar case in Georgia (one year earlier on October 22, 2005) aroused the suspicions of investigators and family members when Tara Grinstead (a 30-year old teacher) was reported missing after also failing to report for work. She was also known to be a stable woman, with no history of drug use, mental illness, or deviant behavior. She was last seen leaving a party at a friend’s home; her vehicle was found in the driveway and the clothes she had been wearing that evening were reportedly found inside the home with little to no signs of a struggle. The similarities in the cases caused investigators to consider whether the cases might be linked. However, after
extensive media attention and investigation, it was determined that different offenders likely targeted these two women (Womack, 2008). The possibility these cases may have been related led to a good portion of the media attention generated for Jennifer Kesse.

Two other abduction cases also tend to support Rule’s (2004) assertion that the possibility of a serial offender increases the likelihood of media attention. First, Maura Murray, a 21-year old nursing student at UMass Amherst, disappeared during the evening hours of February 9, 2004. For reasons still unknown, she told her professors and employer that she had to leave town due to a death in the family. There had been no death. Maura all but emptied her bank accounts, packed some of her belongings, looked up directions to Vermont, and bought approximately $40 worth of alcohol before taking off in her car (Conway, 2007). On Route 118 in Haverhill, New Hampshire, Maura’s vehicle went off the road and suffered damage. A school-bus driver stopped to offer assistance, but she declined. The school-bus driver called police and when the first officer responded to the scene approximately ten minutes after the call, Maura had vanished and has never been seen again (Conway, 2007).

One month and ten days later (on March 19, 2004), Brianna Maitland, 17-year old with some growing pains and who had recently moved out of her mother’s house, finished her shift at the Black Lantern Inn and left in her vehicle at approximately 11:20 P.M.. When Brianna failed to arrive at her destination, she was reported missing; her abandoned vehicle was found approximately one mile from the Black Lantern Inn and backed partially into an abandoned barn. There was no damage to the vehicle, no signs of a struggle at the scene, and two of Brianna’s yet-to-be redeemed paychecks were on the passenger seat (Mikkillnenni, 2008). Brianna Maitland has never been found.
The similarities between these cases led the victims’ families and investigators, to wonder if the cases were connected. Both victims were young, attractive, petite, and brunettes. Both victims had disappeared while driving on desolate roads during the evening hours in neighboring states. At both scenes, there was no sign of a struggle and in both cases, the victims were never seen alive again (Heslam, 2004). The interest in the link between these two cases could have explained some of the variance in the disproportionate number of articles that were devoted to the cases. Thus, there is some support for Rule’s (2004) theory that media exposure is heightened when a serial predator is suspected. Even in instances where the victim has already received significant media attention, the possibility of a serial killer fascinates the American public. However, it is tragic that in these situations the victim frequently appears to be forgotten, and the mysterious silhouette of a phantom killer that is glorified by the media and the public.

Theoretical Frameworks

The first theoretical framework relied upon the concept that missing white woman syndrome is wholly attributable to racial disparity. The notion that disparate media attention depends on a victim’s race has not been supported with research but still remains the hypothesis of some commentators and scholars. This research was guided by the work of Carl Jung and the concept of a cultural complex which is related to the collective unconscious (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). This theory is aligned with Blumer’s (1969) theory of symbolic interactionism and Quinney’s (2001) social reality of crime.

Racial Disparity

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was born out of a desire by scholars, legal activists, and concerned citizens in the 1960s who sought to examine the state of America’s civil
rights movement as well as the fundamental structure of the United States legal, social, and political systems. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) assert that the primary tenet of CRT is the fundamental acceptance of racism as normative within American culture and is particularly engrained in the legal and education systems as well as politics. CRT is aligned with *missing white woman syndrome* in the sense that many media scholars believe that racism is inherent in the reporting of news. In reference to cases of abduction victims, media professionals suggest that racial disparity is to blame for the underreporting on missing minorities (Foreman, 2006; Johnson, 2004; Robinson, 2005).

This research sought to examine whether the primary contributing factor to the sociological phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome* was indeed racial disparity, or if there were other contributing factors. The results were somewhat mixed and difficult to interpret. Given the fact that there were unequal group sizes for Caucasian blonde, Caucasian Non-Blonde, and Minorities (African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Mixed Race), the significance of the findings is limited. There was support for the notion that racial disparity contributes to the concept of *missing white woman syndrome* found in the independent variable Hair Color. That is, victims with black and brown hair, which were primarily associated with the minority populations in the sample, were found to receive different treatment than Caucasian victims with the same hair color, and Caucasians with blonde hair. These victims received less media attention in general, were less likely to be portrayed in a positive and or innocent manner, and often times received less attention from law enforcement as reflected by the media.

The frequency of media reports on major news networks such as CNN and MSNBC in relation to the race of abduction victims is also interesting. The vast majority
of articles used in this research were derived from Google. Surprisingly, CNN and MSNBC featured very few missing persons’ cases that were in the sample population. However, when abduction victims were featured on those sites, the distinction in representation between Caucasian and minority cases was somewhat disturbing. On CNN, the following cases within the sample population were featured (numbers in parentheses indicate the number of articles associated with each victim). Leah Toby Roberts (1), Jennifer Joyce Kesse (8), Maura Murray (4), Lisa Michelle Stebic (2), Kyla G. Porter (2), Renee M. Pernice (1), and Kelsey Emily Collins (1). With the exception of Collins, all of the victims listed were Caucasian females. MSNBC featured the following cases: Jennifer Joyce Kesse (4), Lisa Michelle Stebic (2), Kimberly Whitton (1), and Cherryl Lamont Pearson (2). With the exception of Pearson (a successful Pediatrician), all of the victims were Caucasian females. Following review, there does appear to be a degree of racial disparity when these two news sources are examined. However, this is a limited sample size and the results may not be generalizable (as noted in Chapter IV).

Race was found to be predictor variable in reference only to media negative portrayal. Given that hair color was found to be a significant predictor in several models, whereas race was found to be significant in only one, racial disparity may exist to some degree within media reports, yet there may be another factor contributing to the development and perpetuation of missing white woman syndrome.

The Cultural Complex

Jung proposed that the collective unconscious is an amalgamation of archetypes that psychically bond all members of a society. Archetypes are defined as symbols or images that are engrained in a cultural identity and are recognized by all members of that
culture as being symbolic of a particular event or emotion. The collective unconscious then, this psychic bond between all members of a culture, has the potential to form what has now been defined as a “cultural complex” (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). A cultural complex is defined as the process by which certain objects or individuals are defined collectively by the symbols associated with them (Singer & Kimbles, 2004).

The researcher hypothesized that the phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome* cannot be wholly attributed to the concept of racial disparity, but rather western culture, and particularly the United States, has been unconsciously conditioned to view the blonde-haired, blue-eyed Caucasian female as an archetypal symbol of innocence. This conditioning has occurred due to cultural overexposure to various media platforms which feature the blonde-haired, blue-eyed Caucasian female as innocent, beautiful, and frail. Support for this hypothesis was provided throughout the research process.

It was statistically demonstrated in various regression models that hair color was a significant predictor for several dependent variables (total law enforcement, total investigation terms, media innocent and positive portrayal, and total words by law enforcement); meanwhile, eye color was only found to be a significant predictor of average article length. However, the results were striking and did partially support the theory that blue-eyed victims would garner more media attention; nearly twice the average article length as victims with varying eye colors. More significantly, though, blonde Caucasian females were more likely to be portrayed in an innocent and / or positive manner by the media. These women were more likely to receive more media attention than their Caucasian counterparts with varying hair colors, and certainly more media attention than minority victims. Further, blonde victims of abduction were
actually shown to receive, to some degree, a higher caliber of investigation into their disappearance than other Caucasian women with different hair colors, and a higher caliber of investigation over minority victims of abduction. Additionally, blonde haired victims were more likely to have more law enforcement officials mentioned in a given article related to the investigation than other demographic groups in the sample.

The researcher hypothesized that while perhaps there were elements of racial disparity occurring in relation to the sociological phenomenon of *missing white woman syndrome*, there was an even more significant factor at play: the collective unconscious. By obtaining results that showed to some degree that there is disparity not only among Caucasians and minorities who are victims of abduction in relation to the amount of media coverage and the quality of media portrayal, but that there is also disparity among Caucasians with varying physical descriptions, there are significant implications. These results indicate to some degree that there is a cultural complex of innocence in relation to blonde-haired victims of abduction. As stated previously, a cultural complex, as defined by Jung, is the process by which certain objects or individuals are defined collectively by the symbols associated with them (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). This research has shown to some degree, that the blonde-haired Caucasian female has evolved over the centuries in Western culture to become synonymous with innocence.

Limitations

There exist a few limitations in reference to the current study: (1) the social construction of the concept of *missing white woman syndrome* was not able to fully be explored given that the researcher had to exclude reader comments from the analysis; (2) by no means is 533 cases a comprehensive sample of missing person’s cases; (3) the
juvenile population (victims of abduction under the age of eighteen) was removed from the analysis; and (4) while there were 200 minority cases included in the sample population, the group sizes within the 200 pertaining to individual racial groups (African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and mixed race victims), were unequal. The researcher however, felt that it was important to consider each sub-set of races as an individual category within this discussion (if not in regression models themselves) to determine if there were significant differences between minority groups. Nonetheless, this limitation precludes the results from being completely generalizable to the greater population; however, the results obtained were found to be valid, reliable, and statistically significant. As such, the researcher felt that these limitations were not a significant hindrance to the research.

Policy Implications

Despite the limitations described above, it is believed policy implications can be derived from this research which may influence media professionals, law enforcement officials, legislators, and the public. It has been shown through this research that to some degree, the amount and quality of media coverage related to cases of abduction victims is correlated with FBI Involvement, the location from which a victim was abducted, hair color, and whether the victim has a history of drug use, prostitution, or mental illness. As such, there are implications that apply to each category of individuals listed above.

Media Professionals

As described earlier, the independent variables affecting the amount and quality of media coverage, as well as the portrayal of an abduction victim were hair color, FBI involvement in the case, age, socioeconomic status, region of abduction, time of
abduction, month of abduction, eye color, location of abduction, and whether a victim has a history of drug use, prostitution, or mental illness. It was also demonstrated that victims who are both Caucasian and have blonde hair were more likely to receive more media attention and be more frequently portrayed in a positive or innocent manner. As such, media professionals should be cognizant that there appears to be a cultural complex of innocence surrounding a blonde-haired, Caucasian victim of abduction, and consciously break the cycle of perpetuating the missing white woman phenomenon.

Another significant factor affecting the amount and quality of media reports is whether the Federal Bureau of Investigation was involved in the inquiry into a missing person’s case. In instances where the FBI was involved, the victim was more likely to receive media coverage, and be portrayed in an innocent or positive light. Media professionals should be aware of the fact that just because the FBI is not involved in the case of a missing person, it does not make the situation any less dire or urgent.

The location from which a victim was abducted also influenced the portrayal of a victim. If a victim was abducted from a park or other outdoor recreational area, they tended to be portrayed in a more innocent or positive light. The media should recognize that regardless of where a victim is abducted from does not mitigate the fact that a person’s life may be in danger. Whether the victim was jogging in a park or leaving a bar at two o’clock in the morning should not be a concern.

Other factors affecting media portrayal included age, socioeconomic status, region of abduction, race, time of abduction, month of abduction, and eye color. In reference to age, there appears to be a ‘magic number’ of sorts; that is, if a child is 12 years old or younger, there is the assumption by the media they have been abducted;
however, if the child is over the age of 12, it is generally assumed the child has disappeared voluntarily.

As to socioeconomic status, and as mentioned earlier, upper class victims received more negative terms per article. Media professionals should be cognizant that socioeconomic status should not be a factor when covering an abduction investigation. As to race, mixed race victims were the most likely to be negatively portrayed; as such, media professionals should make a concerted effort to focus on the victim herself, not her race. In reference to region, time, and month of abduction, the following was demonstrated: Eastern states provided more media coverage to victims, victims abducted at night received the most attention from the media, and often, victims abducted during the month of August received the most attention from the media. The researcher can only speculate as to why this is: as to region, perhaps more coverage is provided on the east coast due to the pace of lifestyle; as to time of abduction, perhaps victims at night receive the most attention because websites are updated close to the 10:00 news; finally, in reference to month abduction, summer months are generally slow in regards to news, and perhaps abduction cases carry more sensationalism. The final factor contributing to media reports (specifically the dependent variable ‘average article length’ was that of eye color. Victims with blue eyes were found to have almost twice the average article length as victims with other eye colors. Media professionals must again be aware of their own internal bias and perhaps recognize that they may be unconsciously favoring these victims because they perceive them to be more innocent.

Finally, whether the victim had a history of prostitution, drug use, and or mental illness also affected the way in which she was portrayed; victims with these qualities
were much more frequently portrayed in a negative manner. Rule (2004) stated that often times, these devalued victims go unnoticed until it is thought that there is a serial predator at large; and even then, the victims are ignored and the predator is glorified.

**Law Enforcement Officials**

Often times when an adult is reported missing, law enforcement does not pursue the case as aggressively as if the victim were a child. There is a common misperception that adults may leave voluntarily and as such not necessarily in any danger. As evidenced by the 533 cases of missing adults examined during the course of this inquiry, this is clearly not the case. Law enforcement officials must be cognizant of the fact that adults may be in just as much danger in the cases of abduction as a juvenile victim.

One of the most applicable policy implications in relation to law enforcement was found in the relationship between FBI involvement and media frequency as well as investigative terms. Involving the FBI during the preliminary phases of an investigation may affect the solvability of a missing person’s case in the sense that, according to these findings, media attention increases significantly. It is unknown at this time why this phenomenon occurs; however, it may be due to the fact that if the FBI is involved, their presence may give the impression that law enforcement perceives the case as important and this status is absorbed by the media.

Another factor that is relevant to law enforcement officials as a result of these findings is the relationship between the location a victim was last seen at and media attention as well as investigative terms. Law enforcement officials may err by assuming that when a victim is last seen in a public place such as a parking lot for example, that they may have gotten a ride with someone else, rather than pursuing the case as a
possible abduction. It was shown that when a victim disappears from a park or other outdoor recreation area that the average investigation terms per article increases; the researcher believes this is due to the fact that there are very few scenarios other than abduction if an individual disappears during a jog or from a park. As such, law enforcement should be cognizant of the fact that the location of where a victim was last seen should not dictate the investigative agenda.

Finally, the hair color of a victim was shown to be a significant predictor of both the number of law enforcement officials mentioned in articles related to a missing person’s case, and the number of investigative terms provided in the article. As this research has somewhat demonstrated, there appears to be a cultural complex of innocence that is relevant to blonde haired victims of abduction. Law enforcement officials should keep in mind that the physical description of a victim does not delineate their personality, nor should it affect the caliber of investigation into her disappearance.

Legislators

As discussed in Chapter II, there has been a plethora of legislative efforts dedicated to combating the issue of child abduction. However, there have been very few efforts to address adult abduction other than the Silver Alert and Kristen’s Law. For that matter, it is unknown specifically how many missing adults there are in the United States. It is recommended that grant funds be provided to examine the true extent of the problem of missing adults, and further, that legislation similar to the AMBER Alert be enacted for cases involving adult abductions. Though it would be somewhat more challenging to determine the validity of an adult abduction, a legislative initiative such as this would at least provide each adult victim the opportunity to receive at least some media attention.
Public

As evidenced by this research, there appears to be a cultural complex of innocence pertaining to blonde-haired Caucasian victims of abduction. That is, the general public appears to have accepted the blonde-haired, Caucasian female as the archetype of innocence, which is somewhat related to the development and perpetuation of *missing white woman syndrome*. Given this fact, it is critical that the public become aware of their unconscious bias and demand that equal attention be given to all cases, and not simply to those victims who are perceived as innocent.

Future Research

There are several possibilities for future research. First and foremost, it is critical to replicate this study with a much larger sample population. Additionally, equal group sizes of Caucasians and all minority groups should be included for comparison. Another future research project may involve replicating the study with both a juvenile and adult population to determine the differences between groups in reference to media coverage and quality of portrayal and investigations. As stated earlier, motherhood seemed to be a critical factor in portraying the victim in an innocent or positive light. Future researchers may want to explore the differences in media coverage and victim portrayal between groups of women who do and do not have children. Finally, this study exclusively examined women; future researchers should consider gathering a sample of male abduction victims for comparison purposes.

Additional research suggestions may be made in reference to media and law enforcement personnel. Researchers may wish to distribute surveys to media professionals to examine which factors may influence the promulgation of *missing white*
woman syndrome. It may also be beneficial to survey law enforcement officials to examine what (if any) bias exists in the midst of such investigations.

Conclusion

This research was initiated to explore the sociological phenomenon known as missing white woman syndrome. This phenomenon has been characterized as the unprecedented preoccupation with attractive Caucasian females who are victims of abduction or who inexplicably disappear (Foreman, 2006). Smart and Benson (2005) claimed that the phenomenon began during the early winter, spring, and summer months of 2002 which has come to be informally known as the summer of missing children. During this period, there were eight high profile cases of abductions or murders of attractive, young Caucasian females: Rachel Cooke, Ashley Pond, Danielle Van Dam, Miranda Gaddis, Elizabeth Smart, Samantha Runnion, Cassandra Williamson, and Laci Peterson. Of these eight victims, three had blonde hair. It had been previously speculated, particularly by scholars in the mass communication field, that Caucasian victims, sometimes with blonde hair receive priority media treatment (Foreman, 2006; Malkin, 2005). Media pundits have also speculated that racial disparity is primarily responsible for the initial development and perpetuation of missing white woman syndrome (Johnson, 2004; Foreman, 2006). Given these speculations, the researcher was interested to examine what demographic variables truly affected the volume of media coverage, portrayal of victims, and the investigations into their disappearances.

The researcher began this inquiry by asking two simple questions: can missing white woman syndrome be wholly attributed to racial disparity? If not, what other factors may be contributing to the phenomenon? The researcher, whose parents are both
Jungians, then began to wonder if perhaps western societies had developed what Singer and Kimbles (2004), following up on the theories of Carl Jung, have referred to as a cultural complex. Jung hypothesized the existence a collective unconscious which underlies individual and cultural perceptions, responses and behaviors. Within the collective unconscious are deposited centers of image and process that he called archetypes, which appear as symbols that are collectively or individually experienced as powerful attractors and organizers of perception and emotional response. One layer of this collective unconscious is occupied by cultural patterns and images that lie on the periphery of consciousness as subliminal assumptions referred to by Singer and Kimbles (2004) as cultural complexes, which instigate a process by which certain objects or individuals are defined and evaluated by the symbols associated with them.

If western society had developed a cultural complex in relationship to the way we view missing persons, what was it? The researcher began to hypothesize that western society has come to identify the blonde-haired (and possibly blue-eyed) Caucasian female with the archetypal image of innocence. Taking this hypothesis further, the researcher found that throughout western history, the blonde-haired Caucasian female has been portrayed as an emblem of innocence in art, literature, and film. For example, the blonde female was used, particularly in Renaissance paintings, to portray youth, light, beauty, and innocence (Bloch, 1997). In reference to literature, the works of Hawthorne and Melville often included blonde heroines and brunette villains, portraying the blondes as innocent or pure (Carpenter, 1936). From examining these media outlets and determining that support was lent to the notion of a cultural complex of innocence being developed in reference to blonde-haired, Caucasian females, the researcher designed the questions to
be answered during the course of the study; keeping in mind that racial disparity would also possibly play a significant role in explaining missing white woman syndrome.

It was discovered that in relation to quantity of media coverage, the portrayal of a victim, and the caliber of an investigation into a missing person’s case, that blonde, Caucasian females received preferential treatment. Through careful analyses of qualitative information from articles found on Google, CNN, and MSNBC, it was found that blonde, Caucasian victims of abduction are generally portrayed in a more innocent and positive manner by the media, and receive a higher caliber of investigation into their disappearance. These results were validated in relationship to both Caucasian victims with varying hair colors, as well as minority victims of abduction.

The problem of both juvenile and adult abduction is pervasive in American culture. Over 800,000 individuals are reported missing annually in the United States (NISMART, 2002). With an epidemic of this magnitude, which surpasses homicides and suicides annually and combined, it is a wonder that more is not being done to bring these missing persons home to their families, and to seek justice for those who may no longer be able to speak for themselves. This inquiry into the etiology and promulgation of missing white woman syndrome was a humble attempt to shed light on which victims receive most media attention, and what factors lead the media and law enforcement to believe that some victims of abduction are more deserving of investigation and justice than others. No family asks for their daughter to be torn from their arms, and no victim of abduction asks for their life to be stolen. In that sense, all victims are innocent.
APPENDIX A

ART

RENAISSANCE

Carpaccio, V. (1495) – Santa Ursula

Bordone, P. (1524) – Marriage of St. Catherine

Titian (1538) – Venus of Urbino
Titian (1555) – *Venus and her Mirror*

Titian (1565-1570) – *Venus and the Lute Player*

Titian (1571) – *Rape of Lucretia*
Veronese, P. (1580) – *Venus and Adonis*

Veronese, P. (1578) – *Venus and Mars*

Veronese, P. (1580-1589) – *Lucretia*
Botticelli, S. (1482) – *Primavera*

Botticelli, S. (1486) – *The Birth of Venus*

**IMPRESSIONISM**

Cassatt, M. (1886) – *Child in a Straw Hat*
Cassatt, M. (1884) – *Two Children at the Seashore*

Cassatt, M. (1908) – *Sara Holding a Cat*

Cassatt, M. (1890) – *Baby’s First Caress*
Cassatt, M. (1897) – *Mother Playing with her Child*

Cassatt, M. (1891) – *Mother Combing her Child’s Hair*

Cassatt, M. (1902) – *The Caress*

Cassatt, M. (1910) – *Sleepy Baby*
Degas, E. (1848) – *Dancer in Green*

Renoir, PA. (1876) – *A Girl with a Watering Can*

Renoir, PA. (1876) – *The Swing*
Renoir, PA (1881) – *On the Terrace*

Renoir, PA. (1892) – *Jeunes Filles au Piano*

Renoir, PA. (1906) – *La Promenade*
Renoir, PA. (1904-1906) – *Bather with Blonde Hair*

**MODERN**

Rockwell, N. (1957) – *After the Prom*

Warhol, A. (1962) – *Marilyn Monroe*
The Charley Project – Demographic Variables

1. Gender of victim (ALL FEMALE)
2. Age of victim (in years)
3. Height of victim (in inches)
4. Weight of victim (in pounds)
5. Hair color of victim
   1 = blonde
   2 = brunette
   3 = red
   4 = black
   5 = other
6. Eye color of victim
   1 = blue
   2 = brown
   3 = green
   4 = hazel
7. Race of victim
   1 = white
   2 = black
   3 = Hispanic
   4 = Asian
   5 = Native American
   6 = Mixed Race
8. Location of Abduction
   1 = residence
   2 = outside residence (e.g. front yard)
   3 = parking lot
   4 = park or other outdoor recreational area
   5 = other
9. Time of Day of Abduction
1 = morning (6 A.M. – 11:59 A.M.)
2 = afternoon (12 P.M. – 5:59 P.M.)
3 = evening (6 P.M. – 10:59 P.M.)
4 = night (11 P.M. – 5:59 A.M.)
5 = unknown

10. Month of abduction

1 = January
2 = February
3 = March
4 = April
5 = May
6 = June
7 = July
8 = August
9 = September
10 = October
11 = November
12 = December

11. Date of the month (in numbers)

12. Year of abduction (in numbers)

13. Vehicle Involved?

0 = no
1 = yes

14. Description of vehicle

1 = sedan
2 = sports car
3 = van
4 = sports utility vehicle
5 = truck
6 = other
7 = not applicable

15. Suspect Information

a. Relationship to victim?
0 = no
1 = yes
2 = unknown

b. Relationship

1 = Relative
2 = spouse
3 = romantic partner
4 = former romantic partner
5 = acquaintance
6 = not applicable
7 = unknown

c. Gender of abductor

0 = male
1 = female

d. Age of abductor (in numbers)

e. Approximate height or specific height of abductor (in inches)

f. Approximate weight or specific weight of abductor (in pounds)

g. Hair Color of abductor

1 = blond(e)
2 = brunette
3 = red
4 = black
5 = other
6 = unknown

h. Eye Color of abductor

1 = blue
2 = brown
3 = green
4 = hazel
5 = unknown

i. Race of abductor

1 = white
2 = Black
3 = Hispanic
4 = Asian
5 = Mixed race
6 = unknown

j. Case Classification

1 = Endangered Missing
2 = Missing
3 = Non-Family Abduction

k. Distinguishing Characteristics (tattoos)

0 = no
1 = yes

l. Victim Socioeconomic Status (SES)

1. Attained from U.S. census at factfinder.census.gov
2. Based on median family income for city
1 = Low-Income (0 - $20,999)
2 = Middle-Income ($21,000 – $50,999)
3 = High-Income ($51,000 – $100,999)
4 = Unknown

m. Drug Use Victim

0 = no
1 = yes
2 = unknown

n. Mental Illness History

0 = no
1 = yes
2 = unknown

16. Region of Abduction

1 = Eastern
   i. Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont
2 = Midwestern
ii. Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin

3 = Southern

iii. Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, DC, West Virginia

4 = Western

APPENDIX C

REGRESSION CODING LEGEND

1. Total Articles

   a. Hair Color
      i. Blonde = 1
      ii. Other = 0

   b. Eye Color
      i. Green = 3
      ii. Brown = 2
      iii. Blue = 1
      iv. Hazel = 0

   c. Race
      i. Caucasian = 1
      ii. Other = 0

   d. Location Abduction
      i. Park or other outdoor area = 4
      ii. Residence = 3
      iii. Parking Lot = 2
      iv. Outside Residence = 1
      v. Other / Unknown = 0

   e. Time Abduction
      i. Night = 3
      ii. Evening = 2
      iii. Morning / Afternoon = 1
      iv. Unknown = 0

   f. Region Abduction
      i. Eastern = 3
      ii. Southern = 2
      iii. Midwestern = 1
      iv. Western = 0

   g. Month Abduction
      i. January / February = 1
      ii. Other = 0

   h. Victim SES
      i. Upper Class / Middle Class = 1
      ii. Lower Class = 0
i. Mental Illness
   i. No = 2
   ii. Unknown = 1
   iii. Yes = 0

j. Drug Use
   i. No = 2
   ii. Unknown = 1
   iii. Yes = 0

2. Average Article Length
   a. Hair Color
      i. Blonde = 2
      ii. Red = 1
      iii. Other = 0
   b. Eye Color
      i. Blue = 2
      ii. Green / Hazel = 1
      iii. Brown = 0
   c. Race
      i. Caucasian = 2
      ii. Non-white / Non-black = 1
      iii. Black = 0
   d. Location Abduction
      i. Park or other outdoor area = 3
      ii. Parking Lot = 2
      iii. Residence / Outside Residence = 1
      iv. Other = 0
   e. Time Abduction
      i. Night = 3
      ii. Evening = 2
      iii. Afternoon / Morning = 1
      iv. Unknown = 0
   f. Month Abduction
      i. December = 1
      ii. Other = 0
   g. Region Abduction
      i. Eastern = 3
      ii. Southern = 2
      iii. Western = 1
      iv. Midwestern = 0
h. Victim SES
   i. Upper Class = 1
   ii. Other = 0
i. Mental Illness
   i. Unknown = 2
   ii. Yes = 1
   iii. No = 0
j. Drug Use
   i. Yes / Unknown = 1
   ii. Other = 0
3. Media Innocent and Positive Portrayal
   a. Hair Color
      i. Blonde = 1
      ii. Other = 0
   b. Eye Color
      i. Green = 3
      ii. Blue = 2
      iii. Hazel = 1
      iv. Brown = 0
c. Race
   i. Caucasian = 1
   ii. Other = 0
d. Location Abduction
   i. Park or other outdoor area = 4
   ii. Residence = 3
   iii. Parking Lot = 2
   iv. Outside Residence = 1
   v. Other / Unknown = 0
e. Time Abduction
   i. Night = 3
   ii. Evening = 2
   iii. Morning / Afternoon = 1
   iv. Unknown = 0
f. Month Abduction
   i. December / January / February = 1
   ii. Other = 0
g. Region Abduction
   i. Eastern = 3
   ii. Southern = 2
   iii. Midwestern / Western = 1
h. Victim SES  
   i. Upper Class = 2  
   ii. Middle Class = 1  
   iii. Lower Class = 0  

i. Mental Illness  
   i. Unknown = 2  
   ii. No = 1  
   iii. Yes = 0  

j. Drug Use  
   i. Unknown = 2  
   ii. No = 1  
   iii. Yes = 0  

4. Media Negative Portrayal  
   a. Hair Color  
      i. Red = 2  
      ii. Blonde = 1  
      iii. Other = 0  

b. Eye Color  
   i. Blue = 2  
   ii. Green = 1  
   iii. Other = 0  

c. Race  
   i. Mixed Race = 2  
   ii. Caucasian = 1  
   iii. Other = 0  

d. Location Abduction  
   i. Park or other outdoor area = 2  
   ii. Parking Lot = 1  
   iii. Other = 0  

e. Time Abduction  
   i. Night = 1  
   ii. Other = 0  

f. Month Abduction  
   i. December = 2  
   ii. February = 1  
   iii. Other = 0
g. Region Abduction
   i. Eastern = 3
   ii. Western = 2
   iii. Southern = 1
   iv. Midwestern = 0
h. Victim SES
   i. Upper Class = 1
   ii. Other = 0
i. Mental Illness
   i. Yes / Unknown = 1
   ii. No = 0
j. Drug Use
   i. Yes / Unknown = 1
   ii. No = 0

5. Total Law Enforcement
   a. Hair Color
      i. Blonde = 1
      ii. Other = 0
   b. Eye Color
      i. Green = 3
      ii. Blue = 2
      iii. Hazel = 1
      iv. Brown = 0
c. Race
   i. Mixed Race = 2
   ii. Caucasian = 1
   iii. Other = 0
d. Location Abduction
   i. Park or other outdoor area = 4
   ii. Residence = 3
   iii. Parking Lot = 2
   iv. Outside Residence = 1
   v. Other / Unknown = 0
e. Time Abduction
   i. Night = 3
   ii. Evening = 2
   iii. Morning / Afternoon = 1
   iv. Unknown = 0
f. Month Abduction
   i. December / January / February = 1
   ii. Other = 0

g. Region Abduction
   i. Eastern = 3
   ii. Southern = 2
   iii. Midwestern / Western = 1

h. Victim SES
   i. Upper Class = 2
   ii. Middle Class = 1
   iii. Lower Class = 0

i. Mental Illness
   i. Unknown = 2
   ii. No = 1
   iii. Yes = 0

j. Drug Use
   i. Unknown = 2
   ii. No = 1
   iii. Yes = 0

6. Total Words by Law Enforcement
   a. Hair Color
      i. Blonde = 1
      ii. Other = 0

   b. Eye Color
      i. Green = 3
      ii. Blue = 2
      iii. Hazel = 1
      iv. Brown = 0

   c. Race
      i. Caucasian = 1
      ii. Other = 0

   d. Location Abduction
      i. Residence = 2
      ii. Park or other outdoor area / outside residence = 1
      iii. Other = 0

   e. Time Abduction
      i. Afternoon = 3
      ii. Night / Evening = 2
      iii. Morning = 1
      iv. Unknown = 0
f. Month Abduction
   i. August = 3
   ii. December = 2
   iii. January / February = 1
   iv. Other = 0

g. Region Abduction
   i. Eastern = 3
   ii. Southern = 2
   iii. Midwestern / Western = 1

h. Victim SES
   i. Upper Class = 1
   ii. Other = 0

i. Mental Illness
   i. No / Unknown = 1
   ii. Yes = 0

j. Drug Use
   i. No / Unknown = 1
   ii. Yes = 0

7. Total Investigations
   a. Hair Color
      i. Blonde = 1
      ii. Other = 0
   b. Eye Color
      i. Green = 3
      ii. Blue = 2
      iii. Hazel = 1
      iv. Brown = 0
   c. Race
      i. Caucasian = 1
      ii. Other = 0
   d. Location Abduction
      i. Park or other outdoor area = 4
      ii. Residence = 3
      iii. Parking Lot = 2
      iv. Outside Residence = 1
      v. Other / Unknown = 0
e. Time Abduction
   i. Night = 3
   ii. Evening = 2
   iii. Morning / Afternoon = 1
   iv. Unknown = 0
f. Month Abduction
   i. December / January / February = 1
   ii. Other = 0
g. Region Abduction
   i. Eastern = 3
   ii. Southern = 2
   iii. Midwestern / Western = 1
h. Victim SES
   i. Upper Class = 2
   ii. Middle Class = 1
   iii. Lower Class = 0
i. Mental Illness
   i. Unknown = 2
   ii. No = 1
   iii. Yes = 0
j. Drug Use
   i. Unknown = 2
   ii. No = 1
   iii. Yes = 0
8. Miscellaneous
   a. Cross-Listed on FBI Site
      i. Yes = 1
      ii. No = 0
   b. Distinguishing Characteristics
      i. Yes = 1
      ii. No = 0
   c. Prostitution
      i. Yes = 1
      ii. No = 0
APPENDIX D

NEWS SOURCE VARIABLES FOR MSNBC, CNN, AND GOOGLE NEWS:

PORTRAYAL OF VICTIM, ELEMENTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE, & INVESTIGATIONS

1. Portrayal of Victim
   a. Number of words innocent (media)
   b. Number of words negative (media)
   c. Number of words positive (media)

2. Elements of Media Coverage
   a. Average length of reports
   b. Total number of reports
   c. Average number of reader comments per article

3. Investigations
   a. Total number of law enforcement officials mentioned for all articles
   b. Average number of law enforcement officials mentioned per article
   c. Total number of urgent words
   d. Total number of words related to investigation
   e. Cross-listed on FBI website
      0 = no
      1 = yes
APPENDIX E

BOOLEAN OPERATOR CHART

Boolean Operators for searches on Yahoo News, MSNBC, CNN, and Google News regarding random stratified sample selected from the Charley Project.

1. No Operator = Narrow search – retrieve records containing the words directly adjacent to each other (Example: Natalee Holloway)
2. And = Narrow search – finds records containing all the words ‘and’ separates (Example: Natalee AND Holloway)
3. Or = Broaden search – finds sources containing any of the words ‘or’ separates (Example: Natalee OR Holloway)
4. Not = Narrow search – finds sources that have the first word but eliminates the word after ‘not’ (Example: Natalee NOT Holloway)
5. Within “X” = Words within a specific radius of each other (Example: Natalee WITHIN 3 Holloway)
6. Near = Locates words within ten words of one another (Example: Natalee NEAR Holloway)
7. Before = Puts words in a relative order (Example: Natalee BEFORE Holloway)
8. After = Puts words in a relative order (Example: Natalee AFTER Holloway)
9. * = Truncated – expands to include all forms of root word (Example: Kidnapped* kidnap, kidnappers, kidnapping)
REFERENCES


Sentencing Project. (2000). Retrieved from


