A Case Study of Missing Children in the Canadian Press

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory study that uses quantitative content analysis and framing analysis to examine how the local and national press covered three Canadian missing children, their families, neighbourhoods, and the support of their communities. During the first two weeks of coverage, the news focused primarily on the search for the child and relied most often upon police and 'unknown' sources to weave together complex narratives that incorporated gender, race, and class. Holly Jones was constructed as Toronto's emblematic child, and the press empathized with her traumatized mother. Cecilia Zhang also exemplified the ideal child and an innocent victim; she was the daughter of hardworking and devoted parents who had emigrated from China to pursue the 'Canadian dream.' In the case of Tamra Keepness, an Aboriginal child, the press emphasized the poverty of her inner city neighbourhood and focused on the conflict between her parents and the police.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Appendices	vi
Introduction	1
I. Understanding Missing Children and the News Media	5
1. Missing Children as a Social Problem	5
2. Virtuous Children and Their Idealized Childhoods	9
3. News as Socially Constructed	11
a. Sources	13
b. Local Versus National News Coverage	15
c. Newsmaking	16
d. Crime News, Human Interest Stories, and Victims	17
e. Race in the News	21
f. Class in the News	29
g. Gender and Parents in the News	31
h. Research Questions	35
II. Methodology	38
1. Quantitative Content Analysis	38
2. Qualitative Framing Analysis	43
III. Quantifying the News Coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra	47
1. The News Coverage	47
2. News Foci	50
3. Source Use	57
IV. Framing Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra	66
1. Three Missing Children	66
a. Holly Jones: An Angel	66
b. Cecilia Zhang: A ‘Lovely’ Girl	68
c. Tamra Keepness: ‘Aboriginal, short ...’	72
2. The Parents	74
a. Holly’s Hysterical Mother and Silent Father	74
b. Cecilia’s Grieving Parents	79
c. Tamra’s Frustrated Parents	87

3. The Homes and Neighbourhoods	97
a. A Respectable Home and 'Worldly' Neighbourhood	97
b. The Chinese Suburb of North York	101
c. Another 'Ramshackle' Home in Regina's Inner City	103
4. Community Support	111
a. 'Divine' Support for Holly	111
b. Fundraising for Cecilia	114
c. The Aboriginal Community's Search for Tamra	117
Conclusion	125
Endnotes	133
Appendices	136
References	154
Secondary References	154
Primary References	164

List of Appendices

A. Preliminary Search Results of Articles in National and Local Newspapers	136
B. Coding Sheet: News Foci	137
C. Updated Coding Sheet: News Foci	138
D. Coding Sheet: Source Analysis	139
E. Characteristics of Primary Sample: News Item Type, Placement, and Size	140
F. News Foci of Primary Sample	143
G. News Samples	151
H. Source Analysis Results	152

Introduction

When news breaks that a child has been abducted, the news media launch into a frenzy that few other crimes elicit. *Washington Post* columnist George Will has even referred to the coverage of missing persons and children as a ‘pornography of grief.’ In the days following the abduction of a child, the child’s disappearance dominates news headlines and captivates the public as they are bombarded with information about how the child disappeared, the search, and intimate details about the child’s personality, appearance, family, and neighbourhood.

Despite the prevalence of missing children in the Canadian news media, there are no academic studies focusing on the patterns and themes of this news coverage. This thesis provides the first step to understanding how the Canadian press covers missing children. It offers a case study of the coverage of three children who have gone missing in Canada within the past five years and captured the attention of local, national, and international news media.

Ten-year old Holly Jones was a Caucasian girl who lived with her siblings and parents, Maria Jones and George Stonehouse, in a working class neighbourhood of Toronto. She was reported missing on May 12, 2003 after she disappeared while walking a few blocks home from a friend’s house. An Amber Alert was issued that evening and the Toronto police commenced a massive search for the girl. The next morning her parents made a public appeal to whoever abducted their daughter. Unfortunately, Holly’s body parts were retrieved later that day and the search was transformed into an investigation to find her killer. Just over a month later, on June 20, following tips about two subsequent attempted child abductions in the same neighborhood, the police arrested

Michael Briere. He pled guilty to first-degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison; he cited child pornography as a cause of his actions.

Five months after Holly's disappearance, another Toronto girl was reported missing. Nine-year old Dong-Yue Cecilia Zhang¹ was the only child of Sherry Xu and Raymond Zhang; the family had emigrated from China in 1998 and lived in a middle class North York neighbourhood. Cecilia was last seen when she went to bed on October 19, 2003. The next morning, she was not in her bed, but a broken screen served as evidence of forced entry and indicated that Cecilia had been abducted. Her mother contacted the police that morning, which led to the issue of an Amber Alert and a large-scale investigation headed by the Toronto Police. In spite of this, Cecilia's skeletal remains were found March 27, 2004 and led to the arrest of her killer. Four months later, on July 22, Min Chen (an acquaintance of one of the family's student boarders) was arrested and charged with first degree murder for her death; his motives were never revealed.

The third case is that of five-year old Tamra Jewel Keepness. Tamra, an Aboriginal girl, lived with her siblings, mother, Lorena Keepness, and stepfather, Dean MacArthur. Tamra's biological father, Troy Keepness, was also active in Tamra's life. Tamra was last seen when she went to bed on the night of July 5, 2004 in her home in the poor, inner-city area of Regina. When her parents realized Tamra was missing the next morning, they contacted police. Although an Amber Alert was not issued, the police and search and rescue volunteers commenced an extensive search for Tamra. On July 12, Regina police called off the search, and two days later publicly conceded the missing girl had probably not wandered away on her own. At this point, they focused their resources

on the investigation of how Tamra disappeared and who may have abducted her. Meanwhile, volunteers continued the search, which was supported by the police. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of Tamra are still unknown.

These three missing children were chosen because they were all high-profile cases that received a significant amount of coverage – up to six stories per day in the local press. Their prominence in the Canadian news media provides the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of how missing children are covered. I selected these three missing children because they were all victims of stranger abductions within the past five years and they are all girls relatively close in age (between five and ten years old).² In addition, the backgrounds of the three girls were racially and socio-economically distinct: white and working class (Holly) versus Chinese and middle class (Cecilia) versus Aboriginal and lower class (Tamra). These variations provide contrast and allow for a fuller understanding of how race and class shaped the news coverage. Furthermore, it is my intent to examine the local and national newspaper coverage of these missing children, and the regional variation of these cases ensures that local press coverage from different Canadian cities (i.e., Toronto and Regina) will be used in my research.

In the following chapter, I offer a thorough literature review, commencing with past research explaining the emergence of missing children as a social problem and how children and childhood have been conceptualized in academic research. I then discuss the social construction of news; specifically, how gender, race, and class appear in the news media, and conclude with the research questions underlying my analysis. The methodology chapter explains how I approached the samples of news coverage with both quantitative content analysis and qualitative framing analysis. Following this, I will

present the findings of my analysis, compare the coverage of the three missing children, and consider the coverage in light of past research. In sum, I hope to present an in-depth, vivid picture of how Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness appeared in the Canadian press.

Chapter I: Understanding Missing Children and the News Media

Missing Children as a Social Problem

Social science research about missing children primarily focuses on the *construction* of missing children as a *social problem*. Intrigued by the amount of publicity committed to missing children, several researchers have examined “the transformation of missing children as personal tragedies into a major social problem” (Fritz & Altheide, 1987, p. 476). Before delving into why missing children emerged as a social problem, I will address how this problem and label were constructed and developed. Best (1987) suggests that the label ‘missing children’ originated in 1981, following U.S. Congress hearings that employed this term in reference to child snatchings (p. 103).

Organizations like Child Find (which originally focused on kidnappings by non-custodial parents) clearly found it advantageous to link their case to the widespread sympathy for parents whose children were abducted by strangers. The label ‘missing children’ made this link possible. (Best, 1987, p. 103)

The missing children problem has received significant media attention since the early eighties, but it was not the first youth-orientated problem to do so. In the 1960s, media and academic attention was directed towards the battered child syndrome and runaway youth; in the 1970s, attention shifted to the sexual abuse of children; and in the 1980s, missing children became a central concern (Staller, 2003).

In the early eighties, in the United States, the estimate that two million children were missing annually was widely circulated (Best, 2001, p. 11-12). Statistics such as this were essential in convincing the public that there were an excessive number of missing children and that this was, in fact, a widespread societal problem. However, such statistics about missing children were often unverified and unqualified (Bergman, 1986;

Best, 1999; Best, 2001; Forst & Blomquist, 1986). Furthermore, many of the initial statistical reports claimed to represent *only* children who had been abducted by strangers - but in fact also included the much more common cases of runaways and parental abductions (Fass, 1997; Fritz & Altheide, 1987).

Publicity about the escalating problem of missing children extended far beyond the inflated statistics and attention-grabbing claims; in fact, stories of missing children were picked up by both the news and entertainment media in the 1980s (Forst & Blomquist, 1991; Fritz & Altheide, 1987). The missing children problem was everywhere, from the pages of women's magazines to milk cartons and grocery bags. Fritz and Altheide found that the prevalence of missing children on everyday products, such as milk cartons, helped to bolster the news media's claims that the missing children problem had escalated into a social crisis.

One of the most well-known missing child cases in North America is that of Adam Walsh.³ His story was made into a docudrama that aired three times on broadcast television in 1983, and each time concluded with the faces of real missing children. Forst & Blomquist (1991) say that "the showing of 'Adam' marked the transformation of missing children from being the subject of human interest stories and personal tragedies to being a national cause" (p. 67). In 1987, Adam's father, John Walsh, became the host of "America's Most Wanted." The FOX program airs stories of criminals at large, unresolved crimes, missing persons and children, with the hope that viewers will call in with tips that will help solve the crime or find the missing person.

In addition to the televised broadcast, the show's website has a current list of missing children, as well as current and past Amber Alerts ("America's Most Wanted").

It is even possible to download a “ticker” for your computer that will notify you when an Amber Alert is in effect. The Amber Alert plan was developed in 1996 following the abduction and murder of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman. ‘Amber’ was adopted in commemoration of the young girl and is the abbreviation for: America’s Missing Broadcast Emergency Response. “The AMBER plan is a voluntary partnership between law-enforcement agencies and broadcasters to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child-abduction cases” (“Code Amber”). In Canada, provinces began implementing the program on an individual basis in 2002 (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, 2004). Zgoba (2004) posits that the system creates a false hierarchy (in which stranger abductions are constructed as most important) and questions whether the Amber Alert system is really protecting the most ‘at risk’ children. Nevertheless, the Amber Alert system, “ticker,” and nineteen year run of “America’s Most Wanted” attest to the public’s preoccupation with and concern for missing children. But what fuels this preoccupation and concern?

Social scientists suggest that children’s embodiment of innocence and purity positions them as valuable members of society who deserve the unrestrained protection of their parents, communities, and social institutions. Fass (1997) theorizes that missing children garner so much media attention because of the emotional sentiment directed towards children and childhood. Likewise, Best (1990) says children represent the future and vulnerability. Harrison (1995) found that there was little, if any, moral ambiguity about the value and innocence of missing children who received the greatest amounts of media coverage (p. 49). Considering these thoughts together, it is apparent that missing children’s prominence in the news media reflects cultural beliefs about children.

Child kidnapping emerged at a specific historical moment because it was embedded in the instruments of modern society and culture, both within a specific context of attitudes towards children and toward the obligation of parents, and molded by evolving political institutions like laws and the police and by cultural institutions like psychiatry and the media. (Fass, 1997, p. 9)

Fears about child abductions did not necessarily lead people to create a safer environment for all children and youth. Instead, Fass (1997) says that fears about child kidnappings intensified parents' fears about the vulnerability of their own children (p.6). Furthermore, Fritz and Altheide (1987) found that news stories about missing children tended to take an individual perspective, concentrating on how specific children and families were affected – instead of taking a more in-depth, analytical approach. This individualistic approach is consistent with the preference to blame 'evil' kidnappers that threaten children (and therefore society), as opposed to investigating possible systemic issues that lead to child victimization (Best, 1990). Despite a much higher incidence of parental abductions, stranger abductions have dominated the news (Beyer & Beasley, 2003).⁴ This is because social and cultural norms locate danger as 'out there' (versus in the home) and the media tend to focus on the more dramatic 'stranger danger.'

However, not all stranger abductions receive equal amounts of coverage in the news media. The coverage granted different cases can become controversial, since there is a common assumption that publicity (e.g., Amber Alerts) is the key to finding the missing child. A black mother in the U.S. criticized the lack of coverage that her daughter's abduction received, which she perceived to be a result of their race (Parker). Her belief is supported by the findings of a study by the Scripps Howard News Service which says, "For a missing child to attract widespread publicity and improve the odds of being found, it helps if the child is white, wealthy, cute and under 12" (Hargrove &

Haman, 2005, par. 1). In fact, Scripps found that over a five year period, approximately half of all missing children were white, but over three quarters of the missing children covered by CNN and two thirds of the missing children carried by the Associated Press were white. In addition, a spokesperson for the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children said that the news media are more likely to cover missing children who come from low crime neighbourhoods (Parker). This indicates that class and race are two determining factors in the amount and type of news coverage a missing child will receive.

Social science research has shown how inflated statistics, mainstream publicity, and the social value placed upon children led to the development of missing children as a social problem. However, it has not addressed how missing children are framed within the news media, which is the goal of this thesis.

Virtuous Children and Their Idealized Childhoods

The experience of childhood is generally influenced by gender, ethnicity, class, neighbourhood (rural, suburban or urban), as well as individual characteristics (James & Jenks, 1996). Similarly, Prout and James (1990) state that a “comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon” (p. 8). Nevertheless, the social experience of childhood is idealized and children are quite often expected to embody all that is virtuous. In a theoretical examination of childhood and child rights, Boyden (1990) notes that social acceptance is dependant upon conformity to traditional and idealized family models (that are based upon Western social values, Judeo-Christian beliefs, and capitalism). It is also important that children fit into a certain mould; if child victims do not appear entirely innocent, they

will be portrayed less sympathetically. For example, Brown (2004) noticed that children who were forced into prostitution were considered less innocent and childlike.

In contrast, JonBenet Ramsey clearly fit the image of the ‘good’ child. She was raised by white, heterosexual parents in an upper middle class neighbourhood, and was a beautiful, blonde-haired, blue-eyed beauty pageant winner (Conrad, 1999).⁵ Conrad says that the young and beautiful girl is the ‘emblematic child’ because she represents innocence, purity, and goodness (p.318). Children that stray from this norm are perceived as ‘contaminated’ by their race and/or class (Conrad, p. 338).

Irrespective of a child’s conformity to an idealized notion of childhood, the protection of all children is first and foremost the parents’ responsibility. To be ‘good’ parents, they must ensure their children are provided a carefree and safe childhood. In *Child Find: Canada’s #1 Tracker of Missing Children*, Maxwell and Gould (1989) provide parents with practical tips of how to safeguard children against kidnappings. Without a doubt, parents are expected to take precautions to prevent stranger abductions, and Staller (2003) found that the press held parents accountable even if their child ran away from home. In a quantitative press analysis of how American runaways were covered, Staller says that the press labeled some families of runaways as ‘troubled,’ which implies that the parents are causally linked to their child’s disappearance. Parents are responsible for protecting both the child and the experience of childhood.

“Childhood is socially constructed and central to this construction is the attribution of ‘specialness’ to children (as particularly cherished beings) and childhood (as a cherished state of being)” (Jackson & Scott, 1999, p. 86). These common assumptions and expectations about children, as particularly valuable yet vulnerable

beings, played a key role in the transformation of missing children into a social problem in the early eighties and indicate why missing children continue to be newsworthy.

News as Socially Constructed

This thesis adopts a social constructionist approach to the news. Instead of defining the news as a mirror of transpired events, social constructionists prefer to conceptualize the news as representations and constructions of events (Fowler, 1991; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). Bennett (1982) says,

the news is a manufactured product, not necessarily in the sense that it is contrived or invented but in the sense that it is the product of a culturally encoded and socially determined process of making which displays, in its content and form, the technical and ideological forces which bear on its construction. (p. 195)

Many early media studies focused on comparing media representations to ‘reality’ (Hall, 1997). For example, several researchers have assessed whether certain victims and offenders were under or overrepresented in the news media, and compared this data to the actual crime statistics of victims and offenders (see for example, Graber, 1980). While these studies paved the way for a clearer understanding of how the news media work, Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1991) argue that these studies are not in fact comparing media coverage to reality. Instead, they are a comparison of two interpretations; in this case, the interpretation of the media to that of the justice system.

Altheide (1996) considers cultural studies a more suitable approach to examine how individual, organizational and social forces interact to create symbolic, ordered, patterns of meaning in the news. By placing media texts within a broader socio-historical-cultural context, theorists can work to understand the intricate connections between the media and society (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). There is not a “world

outside, ‘out there’, which exists free of the discourses of representation. What is ‘out there’, is in part, constituted by how it is represented” (Hall, 1997, p. 340). Similarly, Cottle (2000) says that cultural studies theorists

are disposed to theorize news access in terms of *cultural and ritual power*, are sensitized to the *symbolic role* of news actors and how they *perform/enact* with the conventions and *textual structures* of news representation – *ritual, story, narrative* – and thereby contribute to and sustain wider *cultural myths* that resonate with *popular culture*. (p. 428-429)

When studying how news texts are constructed, one must consider how messages and meanings are processed. Hall (1980) argues that the encoding and decoding of meaning (within messages) are two distinct processes, and the meanings associated with each stage must not be assumed to be identical. However, this does not mean that meanings are arbitrary; instead, Hall suggests there are *dominant* or *preferred readings*. Though a text always has the potential for different interpretations, one meaning of the text is usually given preference. Preferential meanings are often consistent with the dominant cultural order, which a society or culture imposes as “classifications of the social and cultural and political world” (Hall, 1980, p. 134). In his study of how viewers ‘decoded’ television programs, Hall labeled their positions as either consensual (consistent with the preferred meaning), negotiated (a combination of the dominant and oppositional code), or oppositional (counter to the dominant position) (pp. 136-138). Though this thesis does not include audience research, Hall’s categorizations will be used to differentiate the positions of sources within the news texts. More precisely, is their position consensual, negotiated, or oppositional in relation to the primary source?

Sources

In his 1979 classic study of American national news media, Gans defined ‘knowns’ as sources who often occupy a position of power (e.g. a mayor) and are known by both journalists and the audience. These select sources comprised approximately three-quarters of those present in his news sample. Due to their more authoritative position, elite sources are considered more credible, more newsworthy, and thus appear more often in the news (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978).⁶ Conversely, sources who are not known to the general public, ‘unknowns,’ comprised between one-quarter and one-fifth of the total sources; victims were most prominent in this category (Gans). In their study of the Canadian news media, Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1991) found that individual (‘unknown’) sources were specifically used to provide a response, represent the ‘public reaction’ to events defined by the authorized knowers, and “express their emotions regarding a critical event that they were in or close to” (p.197).

Research regarding source access in the news media suggests that there is often a reciprocal relationship between journalists and certain ‘elite’ sources. As van Dijk (1991) explains, the

priority of access is mutual: elite sources have organizations that routinely and professionally approach journalists, and conversely, journalists will preferably turn to such sources because they are assumed to provide more, more regular, more reliable, and more newsworthy information. (p. 153)

Moreover, using sources who are publicly known and ‘prima facie credible’ is preferential because journalists are then exempt from timely and costly research to ensure source reliability (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 19). By relying on authoritative sources for news information, journalists are maintaining what Becker (1967) calls a ‘hierarchy

of credibility' (p. 241). Powerful officials and experts are assumed to be in the best position to define events and situations (because of their preferential access to information), and their interpretations are more likely accepted because of their accreditations (Becker). This creates a cyclical process that favours the voices of those residing in the upper echelons of society and reinforces their position as, what Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1987, 1991) call, 'authorized knowers.'

In the news media, accredited sources who are routinely selected to present their definitions of events are labeled the 'primary definers' (Hall et al., 1978, p. 58).

The primary definition *sets the limit* for all subsequent discussion by *framing what the problem is*. This initial framework then provides criteria by which all subsequent contributions are labeled as 'relevant' to the debate, or are exposed to the charge that they are not 'addressing the problem.' (Hall et al., 1978, p. 59)

The secondary definers, the news media, reproduce the interpretations of the primary definers (Hall et al.). Schlesinger (1989), however, argues that the assumption that information is transmitted from the primary definers through the secondary definers (i.e., the media) to the audience understates the power and influence of the media in framing sources and definitions. He also points out that Hall et al. do not adequately consider the possibility of more than one primary definer, or that the primary interpretation is a result of a complex interaction process between competing sources. Taking Schlesinger's criticisms into consideration can strengthen Hall et al.'s notion of primary definers. Obviously some sources are given preference over others, but this does not mean that an event is completely defined by a single source, or only sources, for that matter. Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) assert that interpretations may be developed *within* news organizations and/or by others outside of it. Sources can be selectively undermined and discredited by others (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999), and whether their

perspective is consensual, negotiated, or oppositional, all voices (to varying extents) shape the interpretation of an event.

Equally important to considering who the sources are, is *how* the source and his or her interpretation is framed (Fowler, 1991; Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987). Their placement within the article and amount of space they are allotted can position certain sources in more authoritative positions. Another distinction between sources is whether they are quoted directly or paraphrased. Tuchman (1978) explains that quotation marks can distance the reporter from the source's opinion; attributing information and viewpoints to sources and placing it in quotations make the reporter appear more objective and neutral. In addition, quotations can also signal credibility and prove that the journalist had direct access to the source (van Dijk, 1991). Thus, the context within which the quotation is placed merits significant attention in the analysis portion of this research. I will also explore how sources interact and compete to define the situation of each missing child.

Local Versus National News Coverage

Through their selection and framing of sources, details, and events, journalists and editors involved in the newsmaking process help shape public knowledge of people and events (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991; Tuchman, 1978). However, not all news is constructed in the same way or for the same purpose. For example, the local and national news media target different audiences, cover different communities and geographic regions. The local news, Kaniss (1991) argues, "has always played an important role in the way a city and region understands its problems, its opportunities and its sense of

locality” (p. 2). Differences between local and national news coverage are apparent in the following examples. Wykes (2001) found that the national news media blamed picketing coal miners for the violent conflicts with the British police in 1984. On the other hand, “local journalists had to sell their products to these communities and occasionally presented a very different picture,” which blamed police for instigating attacks on the families of miners (p. 74). In another comparative study, Husselbee and Elliott (2002) examined how racially and sexually motivated hate crimes were reported in the regional versus the national press. Contrary to local citizens’ expectations (that the national press would portray them as close-minded ‘hicks’), the researchers found that both the national and regional newspapers constructed the communities of Jasper, Texas and Laramie, Wyoming more favorably than unfavorably. Instead of portraying the communities as racist or homophobic, the press focused on the communities’ attempts to heal and recover from the murders (Husselbee & Elliot). These two examples illustrate that local and national news can be different in some contexts and similar in others. This thesis will attempt to provide a more nuanced understanding of similarities and differences between local and national press in Canada.

Newsmaking

How journalists and editors construct the news is a result of the organizational factors of newsmaking, as well as news values. Although this research will not examine how the news coverage of missing children is constructed at the organizational level (in the newsroom), it is important to note that these factors contribute to the social construction of the news. Organizational characteristics include, but are not limited to:

journalistic routines, time, ownership, medium constraints, source cooperation, interest group pressures, frequency of publication, readership, and financial pressures (see for example, Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991; Fleras & Kunz, 2001; Fowler, 1991; Hughes, 1940; Scheufele, 1999).

A second influential factor in the social construction of news is news values: What makes an event or person newsworthy? Galtung and Ruge (1973), in their classic research, suggest that the criteria for newsworthiness are: *frequency* (the development of the story should be compatible with the frequency of the publication); *intensity* (the event must pass a certain threshold of magnitude and then increase to retain its position in the news); *unambiguity* (it must be clearly interpretable); *meaningfulness* (in relation to the audience's own lives); *cultural proximity* (relevant and logical for the audience); *consonance* (compatible with the readers' expectations of the progression of a situation); *unexpectedness* or *rarity*; *continuity* (in the news following its initial appearance – follow-ups); *composition* (the entire news must present a range of issues); reference to *elite nations and people*; reference to something *negative* (pp. 63-69). They argue that the greater the number of these elements satisfied by a story, the more newsworthy it will be considered, and the more prominence it will be given in the news. These news values will be considered when I examine variations between the news coverage of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness.

Crime News, Human Interest Stories, and Victims

In addition to Galtung and Ruge's (1973) list of newsworthy elements, there are specific characteristics of crimes that can enhance their newsworthiness. In his chapter,

“The selection of crime news by the press,” Roshier (1973) found that the severity of the offense and unusual aspects of the crime increased its newsworthiness. Likewise, Graber (1980) observed that “the human conditions surrounding the crime are usually skipped, except when the crime is a freakish one or involves an unlikely victim or a socially prominent person” (p. 47). Roshier also observed that crime stories which appeal to readers’ emotions and create a human interest aspect tend to have greater news value.

Human interest stories focus upon average people who are faced with an unexpected or unusual crisis or tragedy. More precisely, Fine and White (2002) define human interest stories as those which “focus on the predicaments and circumstances of particular, but previously unknown, individuals in which the events are presented as irrelevant to public policy” (p. 58). To clarify, events categorized as human interest stories can lead people to call for legal or policy changes, but this is rarely an initial component of the story. In their analysis of the coverage of the cave entrapment of Floyd Collins,⁷ Fine and White identified three main elements of human interest stories. The story must “tap core psychodynamic themes,” be somewhat predictable in its time span, and encourage speculation about the progression of the case (Fine & White, 2002, p. 59).

Human interest stories in the news were first examined by Hughes (1940), in her book *News and the Human Interest Story* – a resource that remains widely cited today. She says that the ‘human interest’ label was first used to identify “the chatty little reports of tragic or comic incidents in the lives of the people” (Hughes, 1940, p. 12). Human interest stories attempt to establish identification between the audience and the subject of the story; the intent is to develop a human angle with which readers can connect (Fine &

White, 2002, p. 61). However, not all victims receive equal coverage. Herman and Chomsky (1988) found that

coverage of the worthy victim was generous with gory details and quoted expressions of outrage and demands for justice, the coverage of the unworthy victims was low-keyed, designed to keep the lid on emotions and evoking regretful and philosophical generalities on the omnipresence of violence and the inherent tragedies of human life. (p.39)

Fine and White's (2002) analysis shows that by establishing Floyd Collins as a religious, hardworking, and loyal man, the press was able to promote identification with many of the readers. "The story only gains significance if readers identify with the principal characters and setting, seeing in them either similarity to themselves or a meaningful and symbolic difference – and often both" (Fine & White, p. 66). Focusing on the humanitarian aspects facilitates audience identification with the victim, or what Fine and White term 'communal concern' (p. 78). On the other hand, human interest stories tend to abstain from political and solution orientated analyses of the situation (Fine & White). Likewise, MacDonald (2000) posits that the human interest story tends to exchange analysis for emotion – a strategy which is more likely to capture the attention of readers.

How identification and emotion are woven together to construct victims in the news will facilitate my analysis of how missing children and their families are constructed as victims. In his study of television news, Langer (1998) found that human suffering and identification with the victim were important elements in human interest stories. Referring to an example of a driver caught in a freak accident, Langer suggests that the "particularity of the driver's 'co-ordinates' in time and space – he has a specific age, he lives in a specific suburb, he is driving in a specific street and so on marks him and his routines as nothing but ordinary" (p. 82). The normalcy of the driver, the rarity of

such an accident, and the ease with which the audience could relate to this man, made him a newsworthy victim.

Dowler (2004) suggests that the worthiness of a victim is ultimately dependent upon his or her compliance to mainstream values. This means that victims who are Caucasian and middle or upper class will receive greater priority in the news media. In a study on perceptions of welfare and crime, Sotirovic (2003) found that when news reports framed poor people as deviant instead of weak, audiences considered them more blameworthy. In *Journalism and Justice: How Crime is Reported*, Grabowsky and Wilson (1989) state that, “harm which befalls ‘respectable’ citizens, children and the elderly will receive more coverage than incidents involving more marginal members of society” (p. 13). The elderly and children are considered more newsworthy because they are assumed to be even more vulnerable and innocent. Chermak (1995) says that the ‘better’ victims are those who are clearly innocent and more expressive of their pain, because audiences are more likely to identify with them (p. 93). Furthermore, the psychological pain of victims was mentioned in only one percent of his sample of crime news, far less than physical pain. Chermak rationalizes that this is because journalists and readers are more likely to understand and relate to physical pain. Clearly, some victims are more newsworthy than others, namely, those who are white, middle class, vulnerable, and emotional.

Victims are generally not considered to be guilty when a crime has been committed against them. However, some victims are blamed for the crimes that they are victimized by. In her study of how the news media cover sex crimes, Benedict (1992) found that some victims are constructed as more deserving or blameworthy than others.

She draws upon the example of a woman who, jogging alone in Central Park at night, was raped and beaten by a group of teenage boys. News stories suggested she ‘deserved’ the attack because *she* put herself at risk by jogging alone, at night (ch. 6).

In a separate example, examining two airline disasters, Entman (2004) observed that the passengers who died onboard Iran Air received less sympathetic and humanizing descriptions – compared to the passengers who died onboard the KAL flight.⁸ Specifically, words such as ‘victims’ and ‘people’ were used to invoke a humanistic element, as opposed to the Iran Air passengers, who were more commonly referred to as ‘civilians’ or ‘passengers’ (p. 38). The American news media framed the KAL crash as murder perpetrated by the Soviets and morally unacceptable, whereas the Iran Air crash was framed as a technical accident. The KAL accident was constructed as a much more important tragedy; in part because many of the passengers on that flight were American and it was politically advantageous for the White House to frame the Soviets as immoral and evil during the Cold War period (Entman). This example illustrates how the worthiness of victims is constructed and can be influenced by a variety of factors. In particular, this thesis will focus on three specific factors: race, class, and gender, and question to what degree they help shape the worthiness of missing children and their families as victims, in the news media.

Race in the News

Canada is often idealized as being a country uniquely free of racism (Szuchewycz, 2000; Williams, 2004). However, two studies examining the construction of racism in the news suggest that Canada’s race relations are less than ideal. In his

analysis of *The Globe and Mail*'s coverage of a federally commissioned study examining Canadian's attitudes of immigrants, Szuchewycz argues *The Globe and Mail* promoted a discourse that strategically denied racism. "These texts function to reinterpret, marginalize, or mitigate evidence of racism in Canada, and thus reinforce the dominant and preferred view of Canadian society as tolerant, pluralistic, and free of systemic racism" (Szuchewycz, p. 501). The author suggests that when this perspective is dominant, it is difficult for minorities to publicize situations in which they have been victims of racism. van Dijk (1992) takes a similar view; he says that when the existence of tolerance becomes a widely accepted myth, it is increasingly difficult for minorities to challenge inequalities, gain support from the dominant group, and take subsequent action. Another finding presented by Szuchewycz was that *Globe and Mail* articles framed immigrants as distinctly un-Canadian. 'Immigrant' was used to mean visible minority (even if they were born in Canada), whereas 'Canadian' referred to people who were white and Christian. This distinction presents a very particular image of 'who' is Canadian.

The second study, by Williams (2004), examined how gender and ethnicity/race helped shape the portrayal of Nadia Hama, a woman of Syrian decent.⁹ Williams found that newspaper articles linked Nadia Hama and "her alleged act to infanticide practices in 'ancient' and 'non-western' cultures" and often included details about her strange and exotic cultural background (p. 53). Even though she had an accent, Nadia's claims that she was the victim of racism were ignored because she 'looked white.' The denial of racism can be explained as an attempt at "positive ingroup presentation" (van Dijk, 1992, p. 89). By reversing or denying an accusation of racism, the claimant is often accused of

being overly sensitive or unreliable. From his research on the press, van Dijk points out that placing racism in quotations or saying ‘alleged’ racism leads the reader to question the accusation of racism and credibility of the source.

An alternate way of avoiding controversial claims of racism is by mitigation – substituting ‘intolerance,’ ‘tension,’ or ‘discrimination’ for ‘racism,’ a much more loaded word (Szuchewycz, 2000; van Dijk, 1992). Since blatant forms of racism are socially and legally unacceptable, more implicit and discrete forms of racism have become common (Entman, 1992; Ferguson, 1998; Ross, 1998; van Dijk, 1991, 1992).

“Contemporary racism is unobtrusive, often implicit, obliquely phrased, restricted to private domains, [and] embedded in codes” (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p. 37). Stuart Hall (1981) calls this inferential racism, which he distinguishes from overt racism. Overt racism is when media coverage openly adopts or supports a racist perspective. He defines the more common form, inferential racism, as “those apparently naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race, whether ‘factual’ or ‘fictional’, which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of *unquestioned assumptions*” (Hall, 1981, p. 36).

Racist discourse is commonly manifested in an ‘us versus them’ dichotomy (Omi, 1989; van Dijk, 1991). Fleras and Kunz (2001) state that in Canada, the mainstream media, whether intentionally or not, have been criticized for “‘framing’ minorities as a threat to the status quo, a risk to national interests, inconsistent with core values and institutions, and inimical to a united and prosperous Canada” (p. vii). The ‘us versus them’ theme positions visible minorities (‘them’) as the Other which stands in binary opposition to Western values and cultural norms (Ferguson, 1998; Omi, 1989). However,

not all minority groups are constructed in the same way, and research suggests that groups who exhibit traits similar to the dominant white majority occupy a position higher in the social hierarchy (Shah & Thornton, 1994). Williams (2004) and van Dijk (1991) note that gender, religion, class, etc., influence how a person of a racial minority is placed within the social hierarchy. For example, a visible minority who adopts a Western, middle class lifestyle will appear more favourably than someone who chooses to continue to live according to their traditional ethnic culture.

Several studies have critically analyzed how racial minorities are covered and constructed in the media and found consistently that visible minorities are discriminated against and constructed using stereotypes. In her examination of a Vancouver documentary about drug users and the local police, England (2004) observed that minority groups were framed as the ‘Other’ and portrayed as threatening in their marginalized inner city location. In their textual analysis of newsmagazine articles focusing on minority interaction, Shah and Thornton (1994) found that the most popular theme was conflict, with cooperation appearing only half as often. This frames minorities as deviant people who are seldom associated with peacefulness.

From their study of Chicago broadcast news, Entman & Rojecki (2000) observed that white victims were more common in the coverage – even though blacks were more often victims of crime in Chicago. Stories about white victims were also longer, compared to those about victims who were black. Dixon and Linz (2000) also reported that black and latino people were less likely to be portrayed as victims on broadcast news in Los Angeles, compared to white people. From these results, one can see that white victims are often considered to be more newsworthy than non-white victims.

While early studies about racial minorities in the news focused on their degree of visibility, more recent studies have attended to *how* minorities are being portrayed (Entman, 1992). In *Racism and the Press*, van Dijk (1991) states that “when they are agents, minorities tend to be more often responsible for negative actions, and when they are passive actors, they are less often represented as victims, while the opposite is true for majority actors” (p. 62). Fleras and Elliot (1999) use the simple analogy of a ‘shallows and rapids’ pattern to explain the news coverage of minorities. Normally, the mainstream press ignores or silences visible minorities (‘shallows’), and in situations of crisis or calamity, more coverage is granted (‘rapids’) (Fleras & Elliot, 1999, p. 337). The media also tend to stereotype visible minorities according to their race, instead of presenting each person as a unique individual (Omi, 1989; Shah & Thornton, 1994).

Upon reviewing the existing literature that examines visible minorities in the news, a significant gap in the research focusing on the portrayal of Asians was observed. The majority of studies that do exist are within the advertising and marketing domain and do not differentiate between Asian ethnicities (see for example, Cohen, 1992; Taylor, Lee, & Young, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997). They illustrate that Asian Americans are often portrayed as the ‘model minority’ through stereotypes that construct them as intelligent (especially in science and math), affluent, successful, and hard-working (Cohen, 1992; Taylor, Lee, & Young, 1994; Taylor & Stern, 1997). In addition, their perceived ability to assimilate and adopt western values positions them ‘favorably’ in relation to other minorities (Taylor, Lee, & Young, 1994). “‘Asians’ designation as ‘model’ minorities, the best of those in the ‘racial other’ category, says it all – all ‘racialized others’ groups are not equal in the eyes of whites” (Tuan, 1998, p. 8).

Consistent with research about minority groups in general, there is a tendency in the mainstream media to essentialize Asians as either good or bad. Thus, in contrast to the ‘model minority’ image, is one that portrays Asians as sly, untrustworthy, secretive, and associated with gangs (compiled from Boskin, 1980; Fleras & Elliot, 1999; Henry & Tator, 2002; Zia, 2000). In their study of the *Toronto Star* and *Toronto Sun*, Henry and Tator (2002) noted that the murder of one Asian man by another was assumed to be a result of gang activity – even though the police were *not* concluding this. A different study, conducted by Hier and Greenberg (2002) found that Chinese immigrants who arrived illegally in Canada by boat in 1999 were consistently constructed as the Other in the Canadian press. “As soon as the first boat arrived off the coast of British Columbia, the migrants were racialized in the news media, prematurely branded as ‘illegal,’ and lumped into a homogenous category: the Chinese/Asian ‘other’” (p. 139). Hier and Greenberg argue that by repeatedly referencing the origin of the immigrants (either Asia or China), there was a clear distinction and difference erected between them (the Others) and Canadians. These studies show that even though the ‘model minority’ image may align Asians with common North American values (i.e., hardwork and success), other representations rely on more deviant stereotypes and position them as Others.

Like Asians and other visible minorities, Aboriginal peoples have repeatedly been framed as the Other, in direct contrast to people of Caucasian descent.¹⁰ In *The White Man’s Indian*, Berkhofer (1978) takes a historical look at how Native Americans have been constructed in the American media.

Whether describing physical appearance or character, manners or morality, economy or dress, housing or sexual habits, government or religion, whites overwhelmingly measured the Indian as a general category against those beliefs,

values, or institutions they most cherished in themselves at the time. (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 27)

Bird (1999) says that the 'Indian as Other' theme has retained its popularity in the mainstream media, whether the Other is constructed as noble or evil. For example, the *Montreal Gazette* consistently depicted the Oka¹¹ blockade as an 'Indian versus us' conflict (Grenier, 1994). During the blockade, conflict and confrontation were two of the main themes in the Canadian media. Oka was constructed "as an armed confrontation involving criminal elements, rather than as a plea for justice involving aboriginal and treaty rights" (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p. 80). Furthermore, analysis of the coverage of Aboriginal peoples *prior* to the Oka crisis revealed that the *Montreal Gazette* "was indeed literally obsessed with conflict" when covering Aboriginal issues. (Grenier, 1994, p. 320). Peaceful protests were considered significantly less newsworthy and causal analyses of conflicts were largely absent from the paper (Grenier). Due to the intense media coverage of Native-White land disputes and standoffs, much of the recent academic research about Aboriginal peoples in the news has focused on these events, such as those at Gustafsen Lake (Lambertus, 2003) and Oka (Ferguson, 2002; Grenier, 1994; Skea, 1994).

Besides conflict, there are a number of identified stereotypes that characterize the news media's coverage of Aboriginal peoples. Among the most common are the savage, the noble and stoic warrior, the lazy drunk, the (Pochahontas) princess, and the squaw (see for example, Berkhofer, 1978; Bird, 1999; Freeman, 2005; Furniss, 2001; RCAP, 1996). Like simplistic portrayals of Asians, Aboriginals are commonly essentialized as either good *or* bad, leaving little room for more diverse representations. They are also

commonly framed as having and creating problems, which is illustrated by the axiom: the ‘Indian problem’ (Fleras & Kunz, 2001).

Examining sources in the news media can provide a supplementary angle from which to investigate the news coverage of Aboriginal peoples. In a case study that focused on the coverage of a public inquiry into the treatment of Aboriginal peoples by the Williams Lake regional justice system, Furniss (2001) found that the local press presented Aboriginal sources who spoke of financial or governmental procedural problems, but ignored those who testified that they were victims of racism. A separate study by Miller and Ross (2004) found that when American Indians were included, their “voice was frequently negated or undermined by words like ‘claimed,’ ‘what he called,’ or other devices to attack credibility” (p. 256). The authors also noticed that news articles and features tended to frame American Indians as passive and uneducated (Miller & Ross, 2004). A third study by Perkins and Starosta (2001) researched the coverage of a public controversy about treaty fishing rights. They found that Native Americans were rarely defined through official titles, positioned as the primary source, or allotted space for their ideas and comments without rebuttal. In contrast, these preferential positions and allowances were routinely made for non-Native sources. These three studies are cited to illustrate how Aboriginal sources are routinely silenced, undermined, and diminished in the mainstream press. In summary, several patterns emerge from news media research about visible minorities, and Asians and Aboriginals, in the news media; both groups are consistently oversimplified in their portrayals, described according to generic racial stereotypes, and constructed as the Other.

Class in the News

According to Skeggs (1997), respectability is “one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class” (p. 1). Without respectability, one is considered to have little social value. For the working class, respectability is more difficult to attain than for the middle and upper classes; it can be improved by work, but can easily be eroded by poverty and crime (Hall et al., 1978). Class is generally thought to be a less common identifier in Canada in comparison to race and/or ethnicity. Fleras and Elliot (1999) point out that “confrontation between groups is rarely framed within the discourse of class conflicts”; it is much more common to see cultural, racial, or gendered confrontations in the Canadian media (p. 145). Though class might not be a part of mainstream dialogue, a socio-economic hierarchy does prevail in Canada, and tends to be defined in terms of location (i.e., inner city or suburbs).

Inner city areas, in most cases, are stereotyped as dangerous, corrupt, and unsafe (Boskin, 1980). In *Victims in the News: Crime and American News Media*, Chermak (1995) suggests that the newsworthiness of the crime is partially determined by where the victim lives. Crime victims from suburban neighborhoods are regarded as more newsworthy because crime is perceived to be less common in the suburbs, and the residents are situated higher in the socio-cultural hierarchy (Chermak). “Some individual reporters thought serious crimes that occurred in suburban areas were more important because they perceived these victims as being able to react more emotionally than those living in the downtown area (Chermak, 1995, p. 68). Likewise, in Dowler’s (2004) content analysis of Canadian and American television news, suburban crimes were regarded as more newsworthy because they were presumed to be more isolated and

unexpected. “Essentially, the victims of ‘street’ crimes are minimized, while victims of ‘suburban’ crimes are glorified” (Dowler, 2004, p. 59). Furthermore, Gans (1979) found that poor people in the United States were less likely than affluent or middle class people to appear in national television news and news magazines. Lower class people who live in the inner city are perceived to be less newsworthy because crime is expected in these areas, and lower class people are generally perceived to be less important because they do not reflect mainstream, middle class values.

The news media tend to create a discourse in which inner city people are blamed when they are victimized. The rationale is that people living in poorer areas *choose* to live where they will be vulnerable and at risk; thus, it is their own fault if they become the victims of crime. Chermak quotes a reporter who says, “Victims are so fatalistic in the inner city: it is almost like they expected it to happen” (p. 68). This assignment of blame perpetuates an individualistic analysis that disregards the systemic and structural causes of poverty (Iyengar, 1990).

In his study of television news and the inner city, Cottle (1993) found journalists and producers routinely associated crime and criminality with the inner city (p. 71). In their famous study of the moral panic about mugging in Britain, Hall et al. (1978) found that crime and mugging were associated with the area of Handsworth; in fact, it became a ‘social fact’ that some areas produce more crime and criminals than others (p. 101). The researchers also looked at the relationship between the environment and social conduct and crime, and found that connections were consistently made between urban ‘decay’ and criminality. “Rather than trace the complex links between the deteriorated physical environment, patterns of cultural organization and individual acts of crime, the inference

is that a derelict and neglected house or street infects the inhabitants with a kind of moral pollution” (Hall et al., 1978, p. 115). Geographic location can also be linked to race; Gilens (1996) noticed this pattern in American newsmagazines which overrepresented black people as poor.

In Canada, socio-economic status is more commonly revealed through geographic locations, that is, the suburbs or inner city. The inner city is a place where crime is expected and therefore tends to be less newsworthy. In this thesis, I will use the location of the residence of the missing child as a marker for class. Moreover, I will attempt to discern how class is interwoven into the news discourses about Holly (who lived in a working class neighbourhood), Cecilia (who lived in a middle class neighbourhood), and Tamra (who lived in a poor, inner-city neighbourhood).

Gender and Parents in the News

The construction of fathers and mothers in the news media is another important area of investigation when considering how the parents of missing children are portrayed. The majority of research about how the roles of mothers and fathers are constructed resides in the fields of psychology and sociology. A brief overview of this literature will provide a background for understanding how expectations of mothers and fathers differ. Mass media studies, specifically news media studies that examine father figures, are limited; the majority of these studies focus on prime-time television’s popular father characters (e.g., Butsch, 1992; Greenberg, Hines, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Atkin, 1980; Heintz, 1992). On the other hand, research into how mothers are constructed in the news is significantly more abundant and diverse.

Expectations and assumptions about the separate roles of mothers and fathers are deeply embedded in the ideal of the western family. Satka (2003) says:

familial forms that differ from the traditional two-parent, heterosexual couple with children, where the father earns a living and the mother takes care of the home and children, are assumed to be deviant and in need of professional treatment. (p. 82-83)

Even though seemingly ‘normal’ families are often exposed as dysfunctional, parents are still expected to create a perfect, nurturing home that abides by middle class cultural and social norms (Kelley & Sequeira, 1997). Consistent with the idealized family, good mothers are presumed to be white, married, middle or upper class (Ikemoto, 1992); those not within this category are seen as second-rate. For example, single mother families are often seen as ‘deviant’ or ‘pathological’ because they do not fit the patriarchal model of a family headed and supported by a dominant male (Harris, 1996). In a different sense, race and class have the potential to symbolically ‘contaminate’ families and influence how the family will be portrayed by the media (Conrad, 1999). For example, during the committal of Rosa Richards (a woman who killed her young son), the “coverage was dominated by powerful representations of the demonic ‘bad mother’; not only violent but also sexually and emotionally indiscriminating, the single mother, the welfare mother” (Naylor, 2001, p. 158). The good mother is expected to be selfless (Ikemoto) and should accept the majority of the responsibility for the children (Kitzinger, 1990). Since it has become socially acceptable to blame mothers for care-taking inadequacies, this thesis will question to what extent mothers are held responsible when their child goes missing.

Phoenix and Woollett (1991) argue that the “social and psychological constructions of ‘normal’ mothers (with ‘normal’ being synonymous with ‘good’ and ‘ideal’) run counter to the reality of motherhood for many mothers” (p. 13).

Nevertheless, the image of the ‘good mother’ simplifies and naturalizes the role of motherhood; all mothers are expected to naturally be good, nurturing caregivers (Hasian & Flores, 2000). Although fathers report hearing more and more mixed messages about their role - protector, provider *and* nurturer (Atkinson & Blackwelder, 1993; Brownson & Gilbert, 2002) - mothers are still constructed as the more nurturing parent.

Maternal bonding, a concept which underlies many modern theories of mother-infant interaction, is believed to be fundamental to the successful nuclear family. Failure of bonding is thought to lead to abuse and neglect. (Boyden, 1990, p. 203)

It is the mother’s responsibility to develop and nurture a close relationship with the child, which is thought to be essential to the child’s well-being and development. In terms of emotional commitment and connection, the father’s role is secondary (Satka, 2003). Thus, when the father *does* take on the primary parenting role, it is portrayed as unnatural – by virtue of the label “Mr. Mom” (Vavrus, 2002). In a study of how stay-at-home fathers were portrayed on television news, Vavrus found that while the role reversal challenged traditional familial roles, it actually reinforced the nuclear, middle class family of two heterosexual parents financially supported by one of the parents. More commonly, men are expected to provide for the family and women are the care-givers – even if they begin a career (Gazso, 2004).

Women today are expected to be full-time mothers and to work in the paid labor force, are considered unmotherly if they demand day-care centers, greedy and unreasonable if they expect help from husbands, and lazy if they are single mothers who want to receive adequate welfare payments in order to be able to stay home for their children. (Chodorow, 1999, p. 213)

There is also the stereotype and expectation that mothers will be more emotional than fathers in times of crisis. Looking at historical kidnapping cases, Fass (1997) observed that upon learning of their child’s disappearance, mothers were often described

as ‘weak’, ‘hysterical’, or ‘collapsing’ (p. 104). In the coverage of the Charley Ross kidnapping,¹² the father and reporters spoke on behalf of the mother – without giving her the opportunity to express herself.

At the other end of the spectrum, mothers who fail to show an adequate amount of emotion have been found by some media researchers to develop negative public images. In a study of how a variety of sources construct women who endanger their newborns, Lowenhaupt Tsing (1990) found that one woman’s negative public image was a result of her lack of public grief. “The calm and reserve attributed to her signaled an anti-maternal identity” (Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1990, p. 287). When Ms. Hama’s daughter fell from a suspension bridge at a tourist attraction, she was “arrested and held for 24 hours of questioning without a lawyer. Police justified their actions by referring to her display of ‘inappropriate emotion’ when her daughter fell and her husband’s accusatory call to the police” (Williams, 2004, p. 53). On the other hand, men are expected to be confident, serious, and stern so that their masculinity remains intact (Wood, 2005).

Research of how ‘bad mothers’ are portrayed in the news magnifies the cultural expectations of the ‘good’ mother. Barnett (2005) examines how Andrea Yates (a Texan mother who, suffering from severe post-partum depression, drowned her five young children in 2001) was constructed in the news. She found that Andrea Yates was portrayed as a traitor not only to her husband and family, but also to the idealized notion of motherhood. Andrea had violated the maternal myth that mothers are extraordinarily powerful, inherently good, and blessed to be given the gift of motherhood. It is also important to note that the local coverage was not synonymous with national coverage; the local newspaper focused more on Andrea’s personal failure as a mother, whereas the

national newsmagazine attributed the murders in part to institutional and community failure to help her - despite her pleas (Barnett). By covering cases of exemplary ‘bad’ mothers, and those who do not fit the mould of the ideal mother (because of their actions, race, or lack of emotion), a mother’s nurturing role becomes further naturalized. On the other hand, fathers are stereotypically expected to be providers and their emotional attachment to their children is second to the mother’s.

This literature review has touched a number of different areas, which when taken together lay the foundation for my research about missing children in the Canadian news media. With these news media patterns and themes in mind, I will examine how the coverage of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness was constructed in the Canadian press. More specifically, I will explore the roles race, class, and gender play in the news media’s construction of each missing child and her family.

Research Questions

Social scientists have shown that children in western society embody innocence, vulnerability, and virtue, and children who are white, middle class and beautiful epitomize these qualities. Studies about crime coverage and human interest stories reveal that the news media are selective in who they present as worthy victims, tending to prefer the more vulnerable, more emotional, white and middle class. This raises the intriguing question of how ‘worthy’ Holly, Cecilia, Tamra, and their families appeared in the Canadian press. How did the quantity and quality of coverage vary between cases?

Researchers have found that people in positions of authority appear more often, and more often as primary definers of events in the news media. This brings up questions

about source use in the news coverage of the missing children. Which sources were most common, how were they presented, and who were primary definers most often?

Since academic research has yet to address *how* missing children are covered by the news media, I have examined how class, race, and gender are constructed in news discourse, and I will explore these three areas in my analysis. Even though gender, race, and class will undoubtedly become intertwined in the coverage of the missing children, there are particular issues I have observed about each and wish to consider. News media studies have found that minorities tend to be stereotyped and constructed in a simplistic manner, as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and the Other. Are Cecilia and Tamra and their families constructed using stereotypes and framed as the Other? Class is rarely explicitly referenced in popular discourse in Canada, and is instead disclosed by the location within a city (e.g., the inner-city or suburbs). Holly lived in a working class neighbourhood, Cecilia lived in the suburbs, and Tamra lived in the inner city. Since each child went missing from their home neighbourhood, did the location shape how their disappearances were framed? That is, since the inner city is often associated with criminality, was Tamra’s abduction to be expected? Were the three different communities constructed as more or less supportive of the family of the missing child? Regarding gender, and specifically mothers and fathers, stereotypical roles prevail in the news media: mothers are expected to be the primary caretaker of the children, and fathers are relegated to the more detached role of provider. In the context of the news coverage of missing children, are the mothers more responsible for the missing child? Are the mothers constructed as emotional and devastated, and how are the fathers framed? In researching these

questions, I will also keep in mind the similarities and differences that emerge between the national and local coverage, as well as among all three missing children.

Chapter II: Methodology

In order to examine the themes identified in the previous chapter within the news discourse of missing children, I conducted a case study of the Canadian press coverage of three missing children: Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness. As a research format, case studies can generate a tremendous amount of detail; the downfall is that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the cases (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

Nevertheless, the format is suitable to the exploratory nature of this thesis and the examination of a topic that has yet to be thoroughly researched: missing children in the news media. Though my findings may not have the potential to characterize all news media coverage of all missing children, the findings will serve as a starting point for future analysis. To fully investigate the news samples in both detail and depth, this study will combine a quantitative content analysis and qualitative framing analysis.

Quantitative Content Analysis

The goal of content analysis in this thesis is to provide a thorough and systematic examination of a large number of news items. Quantitative content analysis uses operationally defined categories to measure certain aspects of the content (i.e., words, themes, sources, etc.) of a large number of texts (Grossberg, Wartella, & Whitney, 1998; Neuman, 1997). By studying the frequency and prominence of specific variables, Neuman states that it is possible to observe common features throughout the coverage that may otherwise go unnoticed. This methodology, which is numerically based, “assumes repetition is the most valuable indicator of significance” (Ericson, Baranek, &

Chan, 1991, p. 50). In other words, the most common variables appear more important compared to the alternative themes, sources, etc. in the text.

One of the earliest content analysis theorists, Berelson (1952), said that content analysis was an objective methodology. However, several authors have refuted this objectivity ideal in recent years, on the basis that subjective positions and values are not easily ‘detachable’ from the researcher and research process (see Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999). Though complete objectivity is effectively unattainable, a number of studies have demonstrated that quantitative content analysis can provide credible and insightful knowledge about a variety of topics present in the news media. Examples include the coverage of illegal Chinese immigrants in Canada (Hier & Greenberg, 2002), the coverage of Native Americans and conflict related themes (Grenier, 1994), and patterns in news headlines and source use (Gans, 1979).

Despite the continued popularity of this methodology, there are some weaknesses that researchers have noticed. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1991) suggest that predetermined categories and definitions can lead to over-simplifying the content. Secondly, Deacon, Pickering, Golding, and Murdock (1999) state that content analysis has been dismissed for being “obsessed with frequency counts as indices of significance and unable to get much past the manifest content of communications to where the crucial meanings lie, beneath textual surfaces” (p. 115). Similarly, in her book *Feminist Media Studies*, van Zoonen (1994) says the researcher is restricted from venturing beyond the most manifest meanings into more latent observations and conclusions. To compensate for these shortcomings, a qualitative analysis will supplement the quantitative content analysis; this will permit a fuller understanding of the news coverage of missing children.

Combining methodologies ensures that my analysis is thorough and therefore lessens the potential of overlooking critical features of the news coverage. In support of this approach, Berg (2004) says that “by combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complex array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements” (p. 4). Before expanding on framing analysis, I will explain in detail the quantitative content analysis portion of my research.

I began by determining the sample for analysis. Local and national newspapers were chosen for three reasons: first, this permits a comparative analysis of local versus national coverage; second, it allows for a comparative analysis of how the three missing children were covered by a single (national) newspaper; and third, the analysis of local and national coverage widens the scope of my analysis, making it more comprehensive. For the local newspapers, the main daily from the home city of each missing child was included: the *Toronto Star* for Holly Jones and Cecilia Zhang, and Regina’s *Leader Post* for Tamra Keepness. The *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* were both originally considered as national newspapers. However, a preliminary search indicated that using one newspaper would be better suited for this thesis. The reason for this is twofold: first, the already high volume of articles about these missing children increases substantially if samples are drawn from two national newspapers instead of one. Second, on some days, the *Leader Post* and *National Post* carried identical news items, a result of both newspapers being owned by the CanWest Global Communications Corporation. Therefore, to create a manageable sample size and include as many different articles as possible, *The Globe and Mail* (national edition¹³) was chosen as the national newspaper

for this analysis. The electronic database Factiva was used to retrieve articles printed in the *Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail*, and Infomart for those printed in the *Leader Post*.

All types of news items were included in the search (i.e., news reports, columns, editorials, commentaries, and letters to the editor), so that a thorough sample of the news discourse would be available for analysis. For each search, the full text of the news item was searched using a keyword combination [e.g., “missing child*” or “missing girl” or “Holly Jones” or (“Holly” and “girl”) or (“Jones” and “girl”)] that would retrieve all relevant articles. A preliminary search found almost 300 news items printed about these three missing children in the first month of coverage (see Appendix A).¹⁴ During the initial two weeks of coverage just over 200 news items appeared, which was deemed a manageable number of news items for an in-depth analysis within the scope of this thesis. After reviewing all articles and removing those deemed irrelevant (including those which only appeared in the Toronto Metro edition of *The Globe and Mail*) there remained 67 articles about Holly, 49 about Cecilia, and 35 about Tamra.¹⁵ This entire sample of 151 articles was used for the quantitative content analysis.

The second step of content analysis requires the researcher to decide what will be coded: the unit of analysis. Gunter (2002) defines the unit of analysis as “the textual element that is to be counted” (p. 220). The study can focus on words, themes, characters, or entire articles (Berg, 2004). In the first stage of my analysis, I coded specific information (headline, newspaper, article type, byline, date, page number, and word count) about each news item and recorded this on a separate coding sheet (see Appendix B). Next, each article was closely read to determine its primary, secondary,

tertiary, and additional news foci (topics and/or themes). I followed the framework set out by Yioutas and Segvic (2003) in their study of the Clinton scandal, determining importance based on the information emphasized in the headline, sub-heads, and lead paragraphs (p. 5). Placement within the article and space allotment were additional factors that distinguished the primary focus from the secondary, tertiary, and additional foci. As Yioutas and Segvic noted in their research, the number of themes in each article varied. The original list of news foci was created by reading thirty articles – five local and five national news items about each child. Each focus was defined in relation to this study; Wimmer and Dominick (2000) emphasize that concise operational definitions ensure the content is analyzed systematically and effectively. Operational definitions of the following foci are included as a footnote: the disappearance, the search, missing child's personality, missing child's appearance, family, mother, father/stepfather, neighbourhood, community support, past cases, justice and politics, and prevention.¹⁶ After coding the entire sample of articles, all additional foci were noted and added to a revised list. To increase coding accuracy, the coding was repeated, using the revised list that included the additional news foci (see Appendix C).

Gunter (2002) points out that sampling is often a multi-step process when doing content analysis (p. 222). Accordingly, using the coding results from the primary analysis, a second more focused sample of news items was identified. The second sample was restricted to news items that focused on the missing child, her family, mother, father, house, and neighbourhood, as well as community support. This more specific sample was sought to probe the coverage of the child, her family, and community in greater depth.

Quantitative content analysis was used again to examine source use in this second sample. The source's name, whether he or she was quoted or paraphrased, and key descriptors (that established or refuted their credibility) were included in the analysis (see Appendix D). Additionally, I coded the source's position within the article – whether he or she was positioned as the primary definer or a less prominent, additional source. Additional sources were differentiated as consensual, oppositional, negotiated, or different from the dominant view(s) of the primary definer. Consensual, negotiated, and oppositional sources all presented information about the same news focus as the primary definer; sources who provided views about a news focus different from the primary definer were coded as 'different'. To clarify: 'consensual' sources adopted a perspective analogous to that of the primary definer; 'negotiated' sources provided a slightly different angle or view in comparison to that of the primary definer; and 'oppositional' sources presented interpretations of the situation or event that were in direct contrast to the perspective of the primary definer. By coding the position of the sources, I am able to observe how source competition shapes the news discourse of these missing children cases.

Qualitative Framing Analysis

In addition to the content analysis, the second sample of news items was probed further with qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis deconstructs what often appears as common sense in the news by “[picking] out what is relevant for analysis and [piecing] it together to create tendencies, sequences, patterns, and orders” (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1991, p.55). Framing analysis, a qualitative methodology, will supplement the

quantitative portion of my analysis and be carried out by closely reading all of the news items several times. Entman (1993) suggests that using framing analysis to supplement content analysis prevents the researcher from “treating all negative or positive terms or utterances as equally salient and influential” (p. 57).

Before discussing framing analysis, it is important to understand how ‘framing’ is conceptualized. “Framing is the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy” (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997, p. 56). Entman (2004), a key academic in the development of news framing analysis, says that framing refers to the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of an issue or situation that produce a preferred interpretation. By consciously or unconsciously increasing the salience of certain elements, the journalist simultaneously decreases the salience, impact, and ‘memorableness’ of other pieces of information (Entman, 1993, p. 52-3; Entman & Rojecki, 2004, p. 5).

When speaking of framing analysis, it is necessary to distinguish between media (or content) frames and individual frames (the mentally stored schemas used by people to understand situations), which are complimentary but different. Research focusing on individual frames adopts a more psychological approach and studies how people consciously and unconsciously utilize frames to process information (see for example, Johnson-Cartee, 2005; Scheufele, 1999). On the other hand, media frames¹⁷ are found within media texts. Specifically, this research will focus on media frames, and how Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness were framed by local and national newspapers.

Frames can be conceptualized as organizing devices, the result of complex negotiations among sources, journalists, and editors within the larger news organization (Gitlin, 1980; Miller & Ross, 2004). In the prologue of *Framing Public Life*, Reese (2003) says that “frames are *organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (p. 11). They exist as keywords, stereotypes, specific sources, and themes that develop and provide connections that promote preferred interpretations and/or judgments of the situation or issue (Entman, 1993; Entman & Rojecki, 2004).

Frames, then, *define problems* – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes* – identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments* – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies* – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely events. (Entman, 1993, p. 52)

The goal of framing analysis is to highlight the frames being employed and shed light on the often overlooked ways the news discourses construct cultural meanings (Miller & Ross, 2004). Several researchers have used framing analysis to analyze how different topics appear in the news media. For example, Pan and Kosicki (1993) examined how the local television news framed a Klu Klux Klan (KKK) rally. By considering the syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical structures of the text, they found that the event was framed as either a public disruption or as a free speech situation, two frames of varying social tolerance. Miller and Ross examined the coverage of American Indians in the *Boston Globe* and found that they were repeatedly constructed in relation to Anglo-Europeans and framed as the Other. The researchers suggest that frames create meaning through the contextualization and organization of information into recognizable themes. They also observed that there were often multiple frames of

American Indians in each article, such as the 'degraded Indian,' the 'generic outsider,' and the 'historic relic' (Miller & Ross). Entman (2004) points out that the magnitude of frames varies; some are more prominent than others. These past findings and observations will be considered when I carry out my framing analysis of the coverage of missing children.

Combining framing analysis with quantitative content analysis will provide multiple angles from which to research the national and local coverage of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness. I will address my research questions by investigating the quantity and characteristics of the newspaper coverage of each case, the foci of these news items, the sources that were cited, and finally, how the missing children, their families, and communities were framed.

Chapter III: Quantifying the News Coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra

The findings of my quantitative and qualitative analysis will be presented in two chapters. First, I will provide a comparative analysis of the first news sample, which includes all relevant news items that appeared in the first two weeks of coverage of each missing child. Here, I will focus on the amount, type, prominence, size, and foci of the news items. Next, I will discuss the findings of the quantitative content analysis of source use in the second sample (which includes all news items that focused on the child, family, house, neighbourhood, community support, and racial or cultural tensions).

The second stage of my analysis, which also utilizes the second sample of news items, will examine how the missing child, her family, and community were framed by the press. Guided by the previously stated research questions and supplemented by the findings of the quantitative content analysis, I will use framing analysis to examine how each missing child, her family, neighbourhood, and the support of the community were constructed in the news coverage.

The News Coverage

The first stage of the analysis, a quantitative content analysis, includes all of the news items printed in the first two weeks following each missing child's disappearance. News items were retrieved from the electronic databases of *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Leader Post* and each item was coded for its primary, secondary, tertiary, and additional news foci. Before discussing the content of the news items, I will describe the news coverage that each missing child received in the two weeks following her

disappearance. Specifically, the types of articles, their placement within the newspaper, and length will be examined.

This discussion will compare and contrast the characteristics of the local and national coverage of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness (see Appendix E). Each news item was coded as either a news article (including news reports and columns) or an opinion piece (including editorials, commentaries, and letters to the editor). The placement within the newspaper was also noted as either appearing on the front page, in the front section, or other sections. Finally, the length of the article was coded as short (less than 500 words), medium (500 to 1000 words), long (1000 to 1500 words), or extra long (more than 1500 words).

In the two week period immediately following Holly's Jones' disappearance, the *Toronto Star* printed forty-eight news items regarding her abduction and murder; this was the most printed in any newspaper about any of the missing children. The high volume of news items carried over a two week period clearly reveals the tremendous amount of attention that Holly's case received from the local news media. Holly also received the most coverage from *The Globe and Mail*; nineteen articles were printed about her, seventeen about Cecilia Zhang, and fourteen about Tamra Keepness.

The majority of news items in *The Globe* were news articles; only one opinion piece was carried for each of Cecilia and Tamra, but five were carried about Holly. The opinion pieces in the *Toronto Star* also significantly outnumbered opinion pieces in the local coverage of the two other missing children. The *Star* carried twenty opinion pieces about Holly, five times as many as the *Star* carried about Cecilia's case and five times as many as the *Leader Post* printed about Tamra. Letters to the editor and editorials both

present the reaction to an event or news story; the first is the reaction of the public and the latter the reaction of the newspaper. It follows that the public reaction to Holly Jones' case appears to be significantly greater – likely because her abduction led to her murder, and her body was recovered almost immediately, which made the case more dramatic.

As could be expected, each missing child received more attention in the local press than in the national newspaper; more specifically, each local newspaper carried approximately twice as many news items as the national newspaper. As mentioned above, forty-eight items about Holly were printed in the local newspaper (versus nineteen in *The Globe*). The *Star* printed thirty-five news items about Cecilia (versus seventeen in *The Globe*) and the *Leader Post* printed twenty-three news items about Tamra (versus fourteen in *The Globe*). The *Leader Post* carried less than half as many stories about Tamra as the *Star* carried about Holly. Interestingly, there was less variation between the national coverage of the three missing children, ranging from twelve to nineteen news items, in comparison to large variation in the local coverage. A partial explanation why Tamra received less attention was because the Regina police originally described her only as a missing child and she was not considered to have been abducted, which inevitably affects the significance of the crime and its newsworthiness. Although her parents believed otherwise, the police did not concede that there may have been criminal interference connected to her disappearance until July 14. (The first day of news coverage was July 7.) In addition, the *Toronto Star* was printed on Sundays while the *Leader Post* was not; this means that in the two week sample period, there were two less days of *Leader Post* coverage.

Though the local news coverage of Holly dramatically exceeded the local coverage of Tamra, the number of front-page local news items about Tamra was almost double compared to those about Holly. All but one of the news articles in the *Leader Post* appeared on the front page. In comparison, the *Star* printed seven front page stories about Holly and four about Cecilia. However, *The Globe* carried eleven front page stories about Cecilia, compared to only five in the *Star*. An interesting discrepancy is that Cecilia's abduction was considered a headline story at the national level more often than at the local level. Even though Holly received the most coverage (locally and nationally), *The Globe* carried five front page stories about each of the girls.

The majority of the news articles in the local coverage, across all cases, were medium length as well as those in *The Globe* about Holly and Tamra. Overall, the majority of the long stories were about Holly and Cecilia and appeared in the *Toronto Star*. The vast majority of *Globe and Mail* news articles (eleven out of thirteen) about Cecilia were long. The large number of short news items in the *Toronto Star* about Holly can be explained by the large number of letter to the editors, which were usually only a few hundred words.

News Foci

Now that we have seen the amount and type of coverage that each missing child received, I will describe the six most common news foci during the first two weeks of coverage (see Appendix F). The purpose of the quantitative content analysis was to determine *what* the news discourse focused upon, and to what degree. (*How* the

newspapers framed these topics and themes is the objective of the qualitative framing analysis.)

Each news item was coded for its primary, secondary, tertiary, and additional news foci. Despite almost twice as many local news items as national ones, they both contained over twenty primary news foci. This shows that the coverage focused on a broad range of topics, themes, and issues. The most common news focus throughout the entire sample was ‘the search,’ and information about the searches was included in over half of the news items. Moreover, ‘the search’ was also the primary focus of over one-third of the local and the national news items. This demonstrates that the newspapers’ coverage presumably catered to readers’ desire to know how the searches progressed and what was being done to locate the missing child and/or her abductor. Since the majority of news items published were news articles, this result could be expected, as details about the search represent the factual details of news reports and more in-depth coverage of the news columns.

Despite the commonality of the search as a news focus throughout all of the news items, the search encompassed different elements in each case. In the coverage of Holly Jones, coverage about the search included information about the search for her body and her killer. “Less than 24 hours after Holly vanished from her west-end neighbourhood, her dismembered remains were found along the Lake Ontario shore” (Millar & Powell, 2003, A1). These findings immediately transformed the search for a missing child into a murder investigation headed by the Toronto Police. Police divers combed the bottom of Lake Ontario searching for clues and her remaining body parts (“The search”, 2003, B1), forensic scientists studied evidence from her retrieved body parts (Millar, 2003, A1),

police collected surveillance tapes from surrounding area businesses (Freeze & Abbate, 2003, A11), as well as DNA samples from men residing and working in the area that Holly was abducted from (Millar & Stancu, 2003, E03). In this case, the police were in full control of all aspects of the search and volunteers played a very minor role.

In the coverage of Cecilia Zhang, the search was of a slightly different nature; news items focused on the search for a missing girl (who was hopefully unharmed), her abductor, and clues to her whereabouts. Unlike the search for Holly, which was conducted solely by the police, volunteers and neighbours also aided in the search for Cecilia. On the second day of coverage, the *Toronto Star* reported that there were “hundreds of cops ... knocking on doors, the officers and volunteers fanning out in a 2-kilometre radius, probing underbrush and ravines, sifting through garbage” (DiManno, 2003a, A1). A number of news articles also covered the police’s examination of two phone booths in nearby Brampton. Investigators “looked into two mysterious phone calls made to the Zhang house – with no one speaking – on the morning of Cecilia’s disappearance” (“As probe changes”, 2003, A1). Cecilia’s father, Raymond Zhang, also attempted to assist with the search for Cecilia by creating a website through which the kidnapper could contact the family or police but remain anonymous (Nersessian & Rush, 2003, A14).

In Regina, news items about the search initially focused on clues that would explain how Tamra Keepness disappeared – not necessarily who took her. The second day of coverage, July 8, focused on the combined search efforts of the Regina police and trained search and rescue volunteer groups (Pacholik, 2004a, A1). In the first week of coverage, news items about the search primarily included details about the locations

searched, and visions from native elders about the whereabouts of Tamra (Brethour, 2004, A1). News items discussed the Regina police's controversial decision to suspend the search on July 12, and the Aboriginal community's decision to head up their own search for Tamra (to which the police offered their support). On July 14, over a week following her disappearance, Regina police conceded that they suspected 'human interference' (Rhodes, 2004b, A1), and the search expanded to include a possible abductor. According to the press, the criminal investigation into Tamra's disappearance was also determined to uncover "what happened in the home the night Tamra vanished" (Hume, 2004a, A7). Amongst all three cases, the focus on the search was most prevalent in the news coverage of Tamra, appearing in nearly two-thirds of the news items in the initial two weeks of coverage.

Both the disappearance and community support appeared in almost half of the total news items, with information about the disappearance being slightly more common overall. Information about the disappearance revealed where the child was last seen and where she was (presumed) to have been abducted from. This information was, in most news items, closely tied to details about the search.

The next most common news focus was community support, which actually appeared more often than the disappearance, in the sample of local news coverage. Details about community support were included in approximately one-quarter of the news items in *The Globe*, half as often as information about the disappearance. However, community support was a much more common focus in local news coverage, as it was included in one-third of the news items about Holly, over half of the news items about Cecilia, and more than three-quarters of the news items about Tamra. Clearly, both the

Toronto Star and *Leader Post* considered the support expressed for the missing child and her family by the community more newsworthy than the national newspaper.

Like the search, community support was constructed slightly differently in the coverage of the three cases. In the Holly Jones case, news items focused on friends and neighbours who contributed to the toy and flower memorial built in Holly's family's front yard (Cotroneo & Calleja, 2003, A1), and the community members who attended a candlelight vigil (Millar, 2003, A1). A vigil was also a display of the community's support for Cecilia's family (DiManno, 2003b, A1). In addition, members of the Chinese community raised \$15,000 for the 'Help Return Cecilia' bank account (Nersessian & Rush, 2003, A14). In the news coverage of Tamra, community support came from search and rescue volunteers, members of the Aboriginal community who helped with the search, and local businesses who offered food and water for searchers (Hall, 2004, A1). As in the coverage of Holly and Cecilia, the local press also covered the support of family, friends, and strangers at a vigil held in Tamra's home (Pacholik, 2004b, A1).

The significant amount of local news attention directed towards the support of the community merits further consideration. Fine and White (2002) suggested that human interest stories, while tragic or devastating, can produce a sense of 'communal care.' In this case, by focusing on the community support for the families of the missing children, the 'good' of each community is emphasized, and readers are provided with the opportunity to identify not only with the victim, but with the goodwill of the community. Additionally, since more news items were published by the local newspaper, they had more space, and therefore the opportunity to move beyond the facts and updates about the search.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth most common news foci were (in order of importance): the family, the mother, and the neighbourhood. These three foci were common in both local and national coverage, appearing slightly more often in news items relating to Cecilia and Tamra. That news items consistently attended to these three foci illustrates that the news coverage of missing children incorporates human interest angles into both the news articles and opinion pieces. The abduction of a child not only constitutes crime news, but a more personalized story of parents, a family, and neighbourhood dealing with a missing child.

Besides the news foci that were common across all three cases, some additional news foci prevailed in the coverage of each missing girl. In the *Star*'s coverage of Holly, themes of justice appeared as a common focus, especially in opinion pieces. Holly's murder spurred many people to demand that her killer be 'brought to justice' and face harsh penalties. This news focus was most commonly introduced by sources in the news articles and by readers in letters to the editor. For example, two of the headlines read: "Demand tougher legislation" (Kehler, 2003, A27) and "Can't kill those who kill our kids" (Carr, 2003, A27). This pattern is reminiscent of Herman and Chomsky's (1988) finding that "expressions of outrage and demands for justice" were common in the news coverage of worthy victims (p. 39). The *Toronto Star* took this angle while *The Globe and Mail* dialogue tended to focus on a national registry for sexual-offenders (e.g., "What can be expected of a sex-offender registry?", 2003, A12). Several news items in the *Star* also spoke of Holly's murder being a tragedy, a nightmare for her family and the city. Both of these foci illustrate that there was a tremendous amount of public concern surrounding Holly's abduction and death.

In the coverage of Tamra Keepness, almost half of the news items focused on the details of the girl's appearance. Tamra's parents realized she was missing on the morning of July 7, but criminal interference was not apparent. So that the public would be able to recognize Tamra, a brief, factual description routinely appeared at the end of articles, similar to this: "Tamra is described as aboriginal with short bobbed brown hair, brown eyes, a dark complexion and a thin build. She is three feet five inches tall and weighs 40 pounds" (Pruden & Rhodes, 2004, A1).

A common focus of the news items about Cecilia Zhang was the appeal made by her parents. At a press conference, Sherry Xu and Raymond Zhang pleaded for the abductor(s) to return Cecilia to them, and Sherry read from a letter she had written to her daughter (Wong & Freeze, 2003a, A1). Portions of the letter were later included in both local and national newspapers. This appeal had heightened news value because it was the first time that Raymond and Sherry had addressed the public and media.

In review, the most prominent news focus across all cases was the search. Presented as crime news, the newspapers delivered ongoing information about the progression of the searches and investigations of the abductions (and murder in one case) of Tamra, Cecilia, and Holly. Of secondary importance was the disappearance of the girls – how did they become missing children? This focus corresponded closely to information about how the search for each missing child was conducted and progressed. The third most common news focus was the community support for the family and was carried significantly more often in the local news coverage, compared to national press coverage. The human interest element of the coverage was reinforced with the next most common foci – the mother, the family, and the neighbourhood. Elaborating upon how

these foci were framed will further develop our understanding of the news coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra.

Sources

To further examine how missing children, their families, and neighbourhoods were constructed in the news media, all news items that focused on the missing child's personality or appearance, family, mother, father, house, neighbourhood, community support, racism, or cultural differences constituted a secondary sample. Framing analysis was used to study all news items in this secondary sample, and a quantitative content analysis was used to examine source use amongst the news articles (reports and columns) (see Appendix G).¹⁸ Coding determined which sources were used, how much space they were allocated, and whether they were quoted or paraphrased. The source categories that emerged were: the police, mother, (step)father, unknown¹⁹ (neighbour, friend, relative, teacher, volunteer, etc.), expert or spokesperson (of an organization or the government), and the family's spokesperson. The source whose voice was most dominant in the article was labeled as the primary definer (as coined by Hall et al., 1988) and additional sources were coded as presenting a view that was either: consensual, negotiated, oppositional, or different from that of the primary definer. Eighty-four articles were coded for their source use, and 385 sources were identified.

The most common primary definers were the police, appearing in this dominant position in more than half of all national news articles and half of those in the local news coverage of Holly (see Appendix H). In the local news coverage of Cecilia and Tamra, the police were still the most common primary source, appearing in about one-third of the

news articles - slightly less than in the local coverage of Holly. Clearly, the police played a central role in the news discourse about all three missing children, as it was their interpretations of each case that appeared most prominently. The second most common primary definers were those categorized as 'unknowns,' and when considering all sources, 'unknowns' were the single most cited source category (followed by the police). These two categories illustrate that situations were defined not only by official, authoritative sources such as the police, but also general members of the public. Past research suggests that well-known, authoritative sources are often the most common definers of events in the news media, which is consistent with my finding of the police as the most common primary definer. However, the high prevalence of 'unknown' sources presents a unique characteristic of missing children news stories. Ericson, Baranek, and Chan (1991) suggest that a common purpose of unknowns is to provide a reaction to specific events, which they did. I suggest that police are cited because of their credibility and knowledge about the criminal aspects of the case, but friends, families, and neighbours are included because of invaluable information they can provide about the child, the family, and their background, which are necessary components of a human interest story.

The mothers of the missing children were cited in over one-third of the news articles, nearly twice as often as the fathers. While this observation suggests that mothers were deemed to be the more important parent, source visibility and accessibility must also be considered as influential factors. Holly's mother, Maria Jones, was often seen in the family's front yard, interacting with visitors and arranging the gifts and cards they left. On the other hand, the press noted that Holly's father, George Stonehouse, was

much more private, and appeared less often outside of the home (“The search”, 2003, B1). In the other two cases, the news coverage did not specifically discuss differences between the visibility of the child’s mother and father.

As mentioned, Cecilia’s parents’ first public appearance was at the press conference where they made an appeal to their daughter’s abductor. This appeal and comments made at the press conference were used even after the coverage of the appeal subsided, as it was one of the few moments of interaction reporters had with the parents. Tamra’s parents (mother, father, and stepfather) were accessible in the early days of their daughter’s disappearance, but in the second week of the search the newspapers said that the parents had requested privacy from the media. Despite the possibility that some parents were more visible or accessible than others, the greater attention to the mothers was consistent across the national coverage of all three cases and the local coverage of two cases. The only inconsistency was in the local coverage of Tamra, which can be partially explained by her having both a father and stepfather who were both coded under the father category. Therefore, the prevalence of the mothers in the news coverage about these missing children, as sources and a focus of the news, indicates that mothers are more newsworthy than fathers. How the parents are contextualized and framed will provide more insight into how they are depicted and constructed in the news coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra.

The additional sources’ positions (i.e., consensual, negotiated, oppositional, or different) are suggestive of the nature and tone of the news discourse about each case, in each newspaper. Generally, additional sources presented a view that was in agreement with the views of the primary definer. More precisely, the highest percentage of

consensual sources appeared in the national news coverage of Holly (over three-quarters), followed by the local news coverage of Holly and her case (two-thirds of the time). An example of a source who presented a consensual view is a neighbour of Holly Jones' family, Dennis Soules. Following the primary definer of the article, another neighbour who told reporters how she was horrified when she found out about Holly's murder, and Dennis added, "You never expect something like this to happen but I guess it can happen anywhere, even this close to home" (Stancu, 2003, A6). Thus, since the majority of additional sources were consensual, the dialogue defining this case was found to be generally consistent, with few negotiated, oppositional, or different views presented. This supports Hall et al.'s (1978) argument regarding primary definers that additional sources tend to present information relevant to the topic and interpretation set out by the primary definer. By my categorizations, all additional sources who were coded as consensual, negotiated, or oppositional were voicing their views on the topic or topics set out by the primary definer; only sources labeled as different discussed different matters.

A closer look at the findings reveals that the news discourse, though generally consistent, exhibited some subtler differences. News coverage of Tamra and Cecilia was slightly less cohesive; additional sources were constructed as consensual only about half of the time, and most of the remaining sources discussed information that was different to that set out by the primary definer. Hence, the news discourse was diverse, and regularly presented different sources to discuss matters different from those set out by the primary definer. Most often, journalists shifted the focus of the article, not a single source. For example, a Regina police spokesperson was the primary definer of a news report in *The Globe and Mail*, and says, "We don't at this time have any evidence that Tamra Keepness

has come to any harm, but we don't have any evidence that she's all right, so we have to consider and hold open every possibility'" ("Regina girl," 2003, A9). The reporter then provides a few details about the search unit, describes Tamra's disappearance, and says that Tamra's aunt was caring for Tamra's siblings. The aunt, an additional source, was coded as 'different' because her quotation is her account of how Tamra's mother and siblings were coping. This exemplifies that both the primary definer and additional sources can provide information about different news foci, and still both be constructed as relevant to the article.

Hall et al. (1978) suggested that sources who were framed as irrelevant and less credible were those who did not address the issue set out by the primary definer. However, since journalists and editors control the flow of the article, it is possible to include a number of different foci, and include different sources to address each. Furthermore, I suggest that additional sources who are constructed as *less credible* are those who speak to the same news focus as the primary definer, but directly oppose his or her interpretation of the situation.

Additional sources in the news coverage of Tamra were the least consensual; the highest percentage of oppositional sources, almost one-quarter, was found in the national news coverage and slightly fewer in the local news coverage. Oppositional sources presented a perspective that directly opposed that presented by the primary definer. For example, this passage appeared in a front page *Leader Post* news article: "While police say the family was notified Tuesday morning of the suspension of the search, Hanya Peigan, Tamra's great aunt, contended the family first learned about it from the media Tuesday morning" (Rhodes, 2004b, A1). The news coverage of Tamra also included the

greatest percentage of sources who were constructed as negotiated, in relation to the primary definer. This diversity of perspectives can be explained by two sources of conflict between the police and Tamra's parents: first, whether Tamra wandered away or was abducted; and two, whether the investigation should focus on the family members as suspects. News coverage in this case focused on the conflict, especially the frustrations of the family, and the racial tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Regina. (This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.) In contrast, the sources in the news coverage of Holly and Cecilia were constructed as generally unified and unconflicted, which therefore presented a more cohesive narrative about these missing children.

The quantitative content analysis also coded whether sources were paraphrased or directly quoted. As could be expected, the majority of sources were directly quoted and primary definers were quoted more often than additional sources. The latter finding can be explained by the fact that primary sources tended to have more information attributed to them, and thus there were more opportunities for direction quotations. Overall, the coding results show that quoting and paraphrasing was used similarly among cases and newspapers. How information was attributed to sources will be examined further in the framing analysis.

In sum, Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra all received substantial amounts of national and local press coverage (ranging from fourteen to forty-eight news items per newspaper over a two-week period). Holly received the most attention, followed by Cecilia, and then Tamra. The amount of coverage granted each missing child reflects the intersection of several factors that ultimately determine the perceived newsworthiness of the child and

case. Nonetheless, it is evident that the white child from a working class family received the most press coverage, followed by the Asian girl from a middle class family, while the Aboriginal girl from a poverty-stricken family received the least amount of coverage. The missing child that received the most front page coverage in the national press was Cecilia. In fact, her story appeared more than twice as often as Holly and Tamra's on the front page of *The Globe* and was also the subject of the majority of the long articles carried by this newspaper.

A unique characteristic of the news coverage of Holly was the considerable number of opinion pieces; almost half of the news items in the local coverage and a quarter of the items from the national coverage were opinion-based. This finding suggests that there was a strong public reaction (evident by letters to the editor and editorials) to Holly's abduction and murder, and the newspapers covered this.

The second goal of the quantitative content analysis was to determine the foci of the news coverage. Exceedingly, information about the search for the missing children (and their abductors) was the most common and most prominent focus. The second most common news focus varied between the national and local news coverage. The disappearance was the second most common focus in the national press, while community support was more common in the local press. Evidently, how the community came together to support the family of a missing child was of key significance to the local press, and was characterized by different elements in each case. Following the three most common foci (the search, disappearance, and community support) were the family, mother, and neighbourhood. The attention to the family and community indicate that the coverage of missing children largely focused on the 'human interest' qualities.

The third purpose was to examine source use amongst news articles that focused on the missing child, her family, and neighbourhood, as well as community support, racism, and cultural differences. The analysis results show that the most common primary definers were the police, followed by those categorized as ‘unknowns.’ However, the reverse was true when considering which source category was most common overall: the police came second to ‘unknowns.’ The prominence of the police’s role in defining the stories of the missing children substantiates past research that suggests that the most authoritative sources tend to occupy positions of power and are known to the public. The large number of ‘unknown’ sources suggests that the reactions of the public and those close to the victims were considered valuable and newsworthy. It is also noteworthy that mothers were cited almost twice as often as the fathers of the missing children; this finding substantiates past research that purports that mothers are generally perceived to be the more nurturing parent.

In addition to examining who were included as sources in the news coverage, I also coded how additional sources were positioned (i.e., consensual, negotiated, oppositional, or different) in relation to the primary definer. The results show that additional sources appeared most consensual in the news coverage of Holly. In fact, in the coverage of Holly, no sources presented perspectives that opposed that set out by the primary definer, and in the coverage of Cecilia, only a single source was coded as oppositional. The greatest occurrence of sources who presented negotiated or oppositional viewpoints was in the news coverage of Tamra. Thus, the sources were more conflicted and a less cohesive narrative characterized the story of Tamra’s disappearance, when compared to the coverage of Holly and Cecilia.

As was desired, the quantitative content analysis determined how much local and national news coverage Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra each received, the type of news items that were most prominent, what the dominant foci of the coverage were, and who was cited as sources. However, to fully understand the intricate nature of the news coverage, the findings of the framing analysis must also be considered.

Chapter IV: Framing Missing Children

This chapter analyzes how the local and national newspapers constructed and framed Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra as missing children. I also expand on some of the patterns that emerged from the quantitative content analysis concerning the prevalence and prominence of certain news foci and sources. The sample used for the framing analysis includes all news items that focused on the missing child's appearance, her personality, family, mother, father, house, and neighbourhood, in addition to community support, racism, and (Canadian and Chinese) cultural differences. For the framing analysis, numerous readings were conducted paying close attention to context, metaphors, syntax, sources' position, and the descriptors identifying sources and subjects.

Three Missing Children

Holly Jones: An Angel

In both the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*, Holly Jones was described as a beautiful, charming, and innocent little girl. In the *Toronto Star*, she was described as an “angel with wings” by her mother, Maria Jones (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). This metaphor of Holly as an angel was repeated throughout both the local and national coverage. For example, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino is quoted saying, “It’s an unimaginable, tragic loss of a wonderful, uplifting little girl” (Galloway, 2003, A5). Although he never personally knew Holly, there seems to be no doubt in his mind that Holly was the perfect child. Furthermore, this quotation refers to Holly as ‘little,’ which frames her as especially innocent and defenseless. In addition to referring to her as a *little* girl and mentioning how little her body was, a column about the funeral in the

Toronto Star focused on the ‘smallness’ of her casket (Coyle, 2003, A1). A news article in the *Star* also described children in general as “the most innocent among us” (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6), which reified the image of Holly as the ‘good’ victim of an ‘evil’ predator and branded the event a tragedy. One letter to the editor in the *Star* openly referred to her murderer as a “[kind] of devil” (“Girl’s Murderer, 2003, A29). As noted in the quantitative analysis of the news foci, several news items explicitly labeled Holly’s case a tragedy or nightmare. By framing Holly as the symbol of innocence, the notion that Holly’s death was a ‘tragedy’ was reinforced.

Specific factual details about Holly’s physical traits were less common than vivid descriptors that actually reinforced her exuberant personality. For example, “her trademark smile, in all the pictures, beams vitality” is how two *Toronto Star* journalists described Holly in some recently taken photos (Cotroneo & Calleja, 2003, A1). Like JonBenet Ramsey, Holly’s beautiful, smiling face became proof of her goodness. The coverage was loaded with affectionate descriptions of her personality, such as: “their effervescent daughter Holly, a child with a beautiful smile and a sunny, outgoing personality, quickly met the local kids with whom she played tic-tac-toe and collaborated on artwork” (Galloway, 2003a, A1). Only a couple of news items included specific details about what she was wearing when she disappeared, and these were presented so the public would be able to recognize her clothing if they came across it (Millar, 2003, B1; “‘Items of interest’”, 2003, A1). However, these details were lost amongst the illuminating descriptions of Holly as the perfect, sweet, innocent victim.

By including descriptions from numerous people who knew Holly, she was framed as the ideal child in the eyes of all – a clearly undeserving victim. “Kids talked

about a popular child, a favourite with everyone” (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6); Holly was the “pet of everybody” (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). Even the local convenience store owner was cited saying, “she was one of the good kids” (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). Research suggests that the news media’s idealization and humanization encourages audience identification with the victim. By constructing Holly as embodying moral ‘goodness,’ she was without a doubt framed as an unfortunate victim. Moreover, Holly was framed as a blameless victim; she was smart and independent, and definitely not to blame. Holly’s uncle described her as ““a very bright, very articulate little girl Not the kind of person to get into anybody’s car”” (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). A commentary piece in *The Globe* assures readers that, “She was mature, trustworthy, responsible. Old enough to walk home by herself on a busy early evening” (Wente, 2003, A23). These examples typify how the press promoted that interpretation of Holly as blameless, even though she was traveling home from her friend’s house alone. Through humanizing descriptions, Holly was constructed as a perfectly innocent little girl, and was therefore framed as an undeserving victim. Indisputably, this was depicted as a terrible, senseless tragedy.

Cecilia Zhang: A ‘Lovely’ Girl

Descriptions of Cecilia constructed her as a kind, smart, and adventurous young girl. These adjectives are much like the ones used to describe Holly, but Cecilia’s intelligence was an additional attribute the press focused on. The following quotation appeared in the *Toronto Star*:

A lovely, sweet young thing, Asian, just 9 years old, with shoulder-length shiny black hair, set off with blonde streaks because even at this young age, little girls are experimenting with their looks. And Cecilia is, by all reports, a clever and creative child – plays the piano, has just started her first year in a special class for

gifted children. Four-foot-11, 70 pounds, good healthy teeth, possibly still wearing her jammies. (“Gone”, 2003, A7)

Meticulous, personal details are incorporated into the description, and instead of being just another child, she is Cecilia, a girl the readers can envision. By describing her in painstaking detail, Cecilia is made tangible to the readers, her characteristics are identifiable, and emotional attachment between the child and audience is facilitated.

The title of the news article, “Gone from her family’s bosom,” brings forth a powerful metaphor of a suckling child removed from her mother’s bosom; it is an image that emphasizes Cecilia’s youth and vulnerability (2003, A7). Thus, in addition to being constructed as precious and fragile young child, Cecilia was framed as a completely innocent victim. A *Globe and Mail* columnist says, “The only way a child this age could be more vulnerable, easier pickings, is if she were asleep in her bed in the dark of night in the bosom of her parents’ home” – which is exactly what happened” (Blatchford, 2003a, A1). Cecilia was ‘stolen’ from the protective ‘bosom’ of her parents’ home, which is a place that is often assumed to be safe from predators.

The same column in *The Globe and Mail* framed Cecilia in a very romantic, idealistic way. For example, her age, nine, is described as a “magical age” (Blatchford, 2003a, A1). Consistent with the idyllic social construction of childhood defined in the literature review, children of this age are expected to have the opportunity to play without worries or fears. The reporter also fondly describes Cecilia’s appearance: “She is a bit of a girl, an inch shy of five feet, 70 pounds soaking wet. She has that wonderful lustrous black hair that the Chinese have, and since that picture now adorning the Toronto Police Web site ... she has had blond highlights put in” (Blatchford, 2003a, A1). One letter-writer thought the above description about Cecilia was insensitive; she said, “It is

inappropriate to describe the victim as having ‘that wonderful lustrous black hair that the Chinese have’” (Granda, 2003, A18). Although the letter does not clarify why this is inappropriate, I would speculate that the reader’s criticism emerges from the stereotypical imagery that the reporter relies upon. Another stereotype that is perpetuated in the news coverage is that Asians are intelligent, and was sustained by repeated emphasis upon Cecilia’s scholastic achievements.

Like descriptions of Holly, specific details about Cecilia’s small size accentuate her vulnerability as a child. The *Globe and Mail* columnist not only described her as “70 pounds soaking wet,” but continued on to say that, “It is their very size, their shocking smallness, that renders any crimes against them so cruel and so fundamentally bewildering” (Blatchford, 2003a, A1). By stating that crimes against children are ‘fundamentally bewildering,’ the abduction of Cecilia is framed as an act so horrific that it is incomprehensible. From this, the rhetorical question surfaces: ‘What kind of person could hurt a child?’ Certainly, the perpetrator is evil, inhumane, perhaps even a monster. And like with the coverage of Holly, a simplistic dichotomy of good versus evil is established.

More so than her appearance, the newspapers focused on Cecilia’s personality. A news article, “Neighbours view missing girl fondly,” in the *Toronto Star* focused exclusively on the personality of the missing girl. The fact that an entire news article was dedicated to Cecilia’s character is indicative of the human interest angle that the local newspaper adopted. In a different news article, Cecilia was constructed as “the 9-year-old with lustrous black hair and dancing eyes” (“Mommy’s heart”, 2003, A1). She was framed as a happy child with musical and scholastic potential, the girl who was “‘always

bubbling and smiling,”” was “an accomplished pianist,” and had been chosen to move into the gifted program at her school (Keung, 2003, A6). A family friend who became the spokesperson for Cecilia’s parents said, “She loves piano and fishing. And she reads a lot. She is so friendly that every time she sees me, she always says to me, ‘Hello, Uncle Jackie’” (Keung, 2003, A6). All of the descriptions focused on the positive traits and qualities of Cecilia; she appeared as nothing less than perfect. Research indicates that the newsworthiness of a human interest story increases if the victim is a child, and because Cecilia was framed as the perfect child – pretty, kind, happy, and smart – she was perceived to be even more valuable, and thus more newsworthy.

At the press conference where Cecilia’s parents made their appeal to the kidnapper, three pre-approved questions (from journalists) were asked of the parents. The following excerpt is Raymond’s response to a question about the kind of girl Cecilia was.

Cecilia is a very lovely girl, my sweetheart. She loves animals. She has two lovely pets, two lovely cats. One is called Happy. Another one is called Lucky. She loves to read. She loves to do science research. Her favourite game is Game of Mythology and she loves fishing, tennis, and she loves to play the piano. (“A plea”, 2003, A4)

By including Cecilia’s father’s response about his daughter’s personality, readers are given the opportunity to identify with Cecilia and her parents. By supplying countless affectionate details about Cecilia’s personality, the news media unequivocally framed her as the perfect child and an innocent victim.

Tamra Keepness: ‘Aboriginal, short ...’

The news media framed Tamra quite differently from Holly and Cecilia. First, very few details were included about Tamra’s personality in comparison to the coverage of Holly and Cecilia; and second, Tamra was framed with less humanizing and emotional descriptors. Instead of focusing on what kind of girl Tamra was, the newspapers concentrated on her appearance. The majority of news items in the *Leader Post*, and some in *The Globe and Mail*, included a very brief description of what Tamra looked like and what she was wearing when she disappeared. Presumably, these details were included so that readers would be able to recognize her and/or contact the police with information they might have regarding her whereabouts. Every news item contained a generic description that was similar to this: “She is aboriginal, short, with bobbed brown hair, brown eyes, and a thin build at 3-foot-5 and weighing about 40 pounds. When last seen, she was wearing a light blue, striped halter top with pink accents, light blue jeans, and pink and white shoes” (“Missing child sought”, 2004, A2). In comparison to the warm descriptions about Holly and Cecilia, this image is very factual and dry – nothing is revealed about her personality.

One of the headlines in *The Globe* describes Tamra as ‘little,’ which like the news coverage of Holly and Cecilia, emphasizes her smallness and vulnerability (Brethour, 2004, A1). The theme of vulnerability is one of the few similarities between the coverage of all three missing child cases; however, it is considerably weaker in the coverage of Tamra. One may have expected that Tamra’s young age (approximately half that of Holly and Cecilia) would elicit more emotionally charged descriptions about her vulnerability, but they were noticeably absent from the coverage.

Neither the *Leader Post* nor *The Globe and Mail* paid a significant amount of attention to Tamra's personality. In the sample, only two news items included small insights into the kind of child she was; both of these were news articles printed in the *Leader Post*. In one, her father was quoted describing her as "a fun little girl" and "a happy little girl" (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). Tamra's stepfather, Dean McArthur, is the other source who was cited talking about Tamra's personality. He said, "She is the most adventurous of the children: 'If they're all curious, she'd be the one leading them,' he said, but quickly pointed out that she knows about strangers" (Brean, 2004, A1). The newspaper recognizes that 'adventurous' could be mistaken as 'liable to wander away with strangers' and clarifies that her stepfather also considered Tamra to be street smart. In direct contrast to the coverage of Holly and Cecilia, journalists covering Tamra's disappearance included noticeably fewer sources commenting on Tamra's personality. Both brief depictions are given by parents, whereas with Holly and Cecilia, neighbours, playmates, family friends, and teachers were cited providing warm depictions of these two girls. By not expanding on Tamra's personality, the human element of the story is severely lessened; readers are given very few opportunities to identify with Tamra. While Tamra is not framed as blameworthy, the coverage constructs her less sympathetically than the other two children, precisely because so little detail is provided about her. Entman (2004) observed that less worthy victims were constructed in less emotional and humanizing terms, which would imply that Tamra is a less worthy victim than Holly or Cecilia.²⁰

On the third day of coverage, a *Leader Post* news report was titled, "Tamra, where did you go?" (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). This title is a question directed at

Tamra that asks *her* where she went. In this headline, the missing child is framed as active – as opposed to passive (e.g., What happened to you?), which implies that potentially, Tamra is not even a victim. The *Leader Post*'s interpretation of Tamra's disappearance parallels the police perspective that Tamra was merely missing, as opposed to her parents' more serious contention that she was abducted. Moreover, by using the police interpretation in the headline, it suggests that police are the more credible sources and their interpretations become adopted as the official interpretations.

By comparing and contrasting the coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra, it is apparent that news coverage was far from uniform. The news media framed Holly as an exuberant, friendly, angelic little girl, and the undeserving victim of a brutal murder. Cecilia was also framed as friendly, intelligent, and gifted. The coverage of Holly and Cecilia relied on numerous sources to vividly construct detailed, loving portraits of these girls. Both missing children were constructed as innocent victims in animated human interest stories. In contrast, the news coverage revealed little about Tamra; for the most part, the details constituted the generic, factual descriptions about her appearance at the time she was last seen. Both Holly and Cecilia were framed as undeserving victims whose personalities became identifiable to readers; Tamra on the other hand, was a victim only by virtue of the fact that she was a child.

The Parents

Holly's Hysterical Mother and Silent Father

Holly was framed as an undeserving victim who eluded any sort of blame, and her competency ensured that potential questions about the responsibility of her parents (i.e.,

letting their ten-year-old daughter walk home alone) were never asked. Holly's parents were framed as good parents and like their daughter, equally undeserving victims. These views were constructed through neighbours' beliefs and comments about the abduction. In *The Globe and Mail*, a journalist says that parents "know the monster is still out there. He's hiding, or he's running, or maybe he's getting ready to strike again. And they know that, sometimes, everything you can do to keep your children safe is not enough" (Wente, 2003, A23). This implies that Holly's parents were not at fault; they had done everything 'correctly' and still Holly had been abducted. In addition, the *Toronto Star* includes this uncontested quotation from a parent: "to be honest, the parents didn't do anything right or wrong. There are bad people in this world, and that's it" (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). Statements such as this advanced an uncritical discourse that eliminated doubts that Holly's parents could be to blame for allowing their daughter to travel alone in their neighbourhood. The *Toronto Star* also says, "there may have been a miscommunication between the mothers" ("The search," 2003, B1). Instead of being framed as active subjects who were irresponsible (to some degree), Holly's mother and Holly's friend's mother (Teresa) are portrayed as the passive recipients of a 'miscommunication.' By portraying the mothers as passive, they are portrayed as helpless and the choice of the word 'miscommunication' minimizes the weight of the 'error.'

In the local and national coverage, the pain and suffering of Holly's parents was a prominent aspect of the coverage. A front page column in the *Toronto Star* about the funeral described Holly's parents as "shattered" (Coyle, 2003, A1). This metaphor frames them as devastated, completely 'broken' by the loss of their only child together. Even before Holly's body was retrieved, the local press described Maria as sobbing, and

‘begging’ whoever abducted Holly to bring her home safe (“The search”, 2003, B01).

The national press adopted a similar angle: Maria’s “voice was ragged with exhaustion” and she appeared “overwhelmed” (Wente, 2003, A23). These samples from the coverage substantiate Fass’s (1997) claim that mothers of kidnapped children are routinely depicted as emotional and even hysterical.

Maria Jones became a fascinating subject for reporters, and descriptions of her behaviour were often included in articles. A *Toronto Star* news article constructs her as a sort of spectacle: an anguished mother visibly destroyed by her child’s tragic murder. The journalist says that friends and others who visit Holly’s home and memorial “always hope to see Maria Jones on the occasional trips she makes outside to tend the flowers and greet well-wishers” (“Items of interest”, 2003, A1). The local press described Maria’s behaviour as erratic and shifting - “flitting in and out of the house to tend Holly’s Garden” (“The search”, 2003, B01). The *Toronto Star* (more so than *The Globe*) goes to great depths to capture Maria’s unpredictable behaviour; the following excerpt exemplifies how Maria’s actions were meticulously detailed by the *Star*.

Maria Jones, 42, could barely hold herself together. Hers is an inconsolable grief. She lives with unimaginable horror. Several times yesterday, she knelt by the makeshift tribute, arranging and rearranging flowers, sobbing into Holly’s photo and thanking friends and neighbours. She lifted some of the teddy bears left in Holly’s memory and placed them gently in the boughs of a spruce tree. She folded a baby’s quilt and laid it among the bouquets. ‘From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of you for all the love and support you have been giving Holly and my family,’ she said, for a moment seeming almost ethereally calm. But, clearly, she was in shock. ‘That’s it! I want all of you in the house before I freak. This is my alone time,’ she said at one point, as family members urged her to come into the house. ‘I’m in my own world here. Not a soul can bother me.’ (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6)

Her behaviour appears irrational, but the *Star* dissuades this interpretation by including a statement from Holly’s uncle: “‘Maria has a penchant to come out here and talk to the

flowers,’ Grant said. ‘We don’t want everyone thinking she’s a nut case’” (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). Though Maria could have been framed as a mother on the verge of insanity, she is not. A column in the *Toronto Star* suggests that “perhaps she intuitively knew that pain can’t be walked around, only walked through, and that the journey is easier in company” (Coyle, 2003, A1). Thus, instead of framing her as entirely unhinged, her public grieving is framed as a form of subconscious wisdom.

An alternate portrayal of Maria constructs her behaviour as childlike: “Wrapped in a fuzzy blanket and carrying a plush toy lamb, Jones paced the memorial of flowers that now extends up the sidewalk. Her daughters Natasha, 17, and Shauna, 18, later coaxed her back inside” (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). This passage constructs Maria as fragile and lost; with a blanket and stuffed toy and her daughters caring for her, she is framed a helpless child. However, this frame occurred alongside the construction of Maria as a strong and compassionate mother. For example, Maria was constructed in a more parental role when she led an assembly of students at Holly’s school in song (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). In a separate *Toronto Star* news article, Maria is described as consoling a friend who said, ““She told me to have courage when I told her how sad I am about Holly”” (“Items of interest”, 2003, A1). It appears that Maria’s strength is made visible when she consoles others in their grief. Nevertheless, the majority of descriptions framed Maria as the hysterical mother who is vividly grieving the loss of her daughter. Either as a grieving mother or nurturing friend, Maria’s actions are consistently framed as justifiable due to her loss.

Holly’s father, George Stonehouse, was constructed as a much more silent parent, often keeping a watchful eye over Maria (e.g, Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). In a *Globe*

and Mail news article about the funeral, he appeared stoic; his “eyes rarely left the front of the church” (Galloway, 2003c, A1). In contrast, “Ms. Jones clung to a weeping daughter for support” (Galloway, 2003c, A1). Stereotypically, Maria is framed as the emotional mother and George as the composed father.

A commentary piece printed in *The Globe and Mail* about the parent’s original appeal constructs George from a slightly different standpoint: “Holly’s father, George Stonehouse, was trying to stay strong. But he sounded infinitely vulnerable. ‘I can offer a reward for her return,’ he said. ‘I don’t know how much, but I think I can come up with about \$10,000 dollars. Please.’” (Wente, 2003, A23). Here, Holly’s father is framed as fragile and desperate; his and Maria’s grief is described as intolerable: “To hear her parents bargain for their daughter’s life on Tuesday was almost beyond bearing” (Wente, 2003, A23). In the news coverage, George and Maria were both framed as grieving parents, but they also appeared as distinct individuals who dealt with Holly’s abduction and murder in different ways.

From the first day of coverage onward, Maria received significantly more attention than George. As suggested in the quantitative analysis, this can be explained in part by her public presence. A news report in the *Toronto Star* noted that, “Of the family members, she [Maria] remains the most visible Holly’s father – George Stonehouse is rarely seen” (“The search”, 2003, B01). In news items in which both parents are acknowledged, Maria appears much more prominently. The following citation even defines George, not as Holly’s father, but as the husband of Maria: “Holly’s mother, Maria Jones, and her husband, George Stonehouse, are understandably distraught and still very much still in shock” (Zlomislic, 2003, A1). Though both parents are framed as

worthy victims, the national and local news coverage constructed Maria as the more traumatized and more significant parent.

Cecilia's Grieving Parents

In the first days following Cecilia's disappearance, Raymond Zhang and Sherry Xu avoided the public and media spotlight. On the second day of coverage, a police officer made a brief appeal on behalf of both parents, and said that they were "“obviously, extremely distraught”" (Powell, 2003, A6). The quotation implies that the police source considers their pain to be 'obvious,' and no oppositional interpretations are presented in the article. Apparently, any parent whose child was missing should be or would be 'extremely distraught.' This statement also demonstrates the social and behavioural norms expected of parents in such a position.

In a different column, Jack Jia, their neighbour and friend says, "“They're very calm, but they cannot sleep or eat. They hold one another”" (Wong, 2003, A1). In this quotation and those following, the parents are constructed as weak and fragile – descriptions that evoke sympathy and summon identification from readers. A column in *The Globe* vividly describes them as "emotionally battered" (Blatchford, 2003c, A1), and at the press conference, "Sgt. Muscat told reporters he would permit no questions at all, citing the emotional fragility of the parents" (Wong & Freeze, 2003a, A1). Throughout the two weeks of coverage, Cecilia's parents were repeatedly framed as united, grief-stricken victims of their daughter's abduction.

Jack Jia became a spokesperson for the family and was the first to provide some insight about Cecilia's family, especially her father. Like the idealistic descriptions of Cecilia, the *Toronto Star* framed Raymond and Jack's friendship positively:

They are fishing and tennis buddies. They celebrate birthdays and Chinese festivals together. Now the two immigrant families in this closely knit community in North York are crying on each other's shoulders Jia is one of the few best friends in the life of the quiet family. The two fathers share similar backgrounds: Both came from the same Jiangsu province of China, have education in engineering, and dream of a better life for their children. (Keung, 2003a, A10).

In this news article Raymond Zhang is constructed as the archetype of a good father. He is educated, supports his family, wants the best for his child, and the symbolic crying on his friend's shoulder shows that he cares deeply about them. Likewise, a columnist from *The Globe and Mail* suggested that Cecilia was her parents' first priority; they even chose their North York neighbourhood so that Cecilia "could attend Seneca Hill Public School, one of the best in the city" (Blatchford, 2003b, A1). Without citing any sources, this comment appears as merely a speculative assumption, but enforces the image of Raymond and Sherry as responsible, caring parents.

A public plea to Cecilia's kidnapper brought Raymond and Sherry into the media spotlight and allowed for first hand descriptions of both parents. A news article in the *Toronto Star* about the parents' joint appeal to the kidnappers was titled, "A plea for their missing girl; Mother sends comforting words to her daughter; Father begs kidnappers to let her come home" ("A plea", 2003, A4). The title of the news article portrays the parents in stereotypical gender roles: the mother is more concerned about nurturing her child and the father is more practical in his appeal to the kidnappers. Sherry is given further attention in the *Star* in a column titled, "'Mommy's heart has never separated

from you ... not a moment, not a second'" ("Mommy's heart", 2003, A1). The piece focuses on Sherry's grief and articulates her actions and appearance in great detail; she is constructed as physically overwhelmed by her agony and distress.

Wobbling to her feet, seeming to sway in her misery so that her husband had to rise and provide physical support, an arm wrapped around her waist, Sherry Xu gulped for breath, could barely form the spoken words of the written message she struggled to read. The prolonged moment of silence hung heavy in the air before this ravaged mother, her round face so like that of her daughter – precious only child of her womb – began to speak softly, raggedly, every word a raw effort torn from her chest, a sob just beneath the surface. ("Mommy's heart", 2003, A1)

Not only is she constructed as a mother in utter distress, she also has to rely on her husband for support. Though Sherry is more prominent in this passage and news item, Raymond is still present, even if it is only to offer his support. Later in the column, Sherry is described in further depth:

Like a pieta come to life, the ultimate representation of maternal grief, Sherry Xu pleaded for kindness from whoever is holding Cecilia. Treat her well, send her back. She can feel her daughter in her heart, in her bones. She speaks to the child's soul with the faith of a mother who believes her daughter is still alive, can feel her in kind. ("Mommy's heart", 2003, A1)

Sherry is framed by the image of a pieta and is said to represent the epitome of 'maternal grief.' The column conceptualizes a sort of maternal bond between the mother and daughter (by saying that Sherry speaks to her Cecilia's soul) and emphasizes the intimate connection between a mother and her child. Though the column focuses on Cecilia's mother, both parents' pain is recognized:

Cecilia's parents are holding on to each other for dear life, for their sweet daughter's dear life. They are shattered. Their pain is almost beyond bearing, beyond watching. But they must bear it. It is all they can do now for their vanished child. Theirs is the inner circle of hell. No parent should ever be condemned to this. ("Mommy's heart", 2003, A1)

The word condemn elicits the notion of someone being ‘condemned to hell’ and strengthens the idea that Raymond and Sherry’s life has become hell since Cecilia disappeared. This metaphor is not only dramatic, but it promotes audience identification by stating that the no parents should ever have to experience this.

Cecilia’s father’s appearance is described in the *Toronto Star*: “Exhaustion and anxiety have carved lines into his face” (“Mommy’s heart, 2003, A1). “Stoic, brave and gracious, this poor father” told the press that both parents were ‘anxious’ and ‘exhausted’ and reassured the public that contrary to a rumour, Sherry was Cecilia’s biological mother (“Mommy’s heart, 2003, A1). *The Globe and Mail* also constructed the parents as the victims of this abduction: “Cecilia Zhang’s distraught parents emerged from seclusion yesterday to plead tearfully for the return of their nine-year-old daughter” (Wong & Freeze, 2003a, A1). Again, Cecilia’s parents appear together in the news coverage, and are even constructed as ‘identical’ in their attire and actions. They are framed as parents who despite their loss, are united in their grief.

Mr. Zhang and his wife, Sherry Xu, appeared at Toronto police headquarters five days after their only child was abducted from her bed. Protected by half a dozen police officers, they faced an auditorium filled with reporters and clicking cameras. The couple, who held hands, looked as though they had been crying, their faces pale, their eyes unfocused. They wore almost identical outfits – black leather jackets, black slacks and white shirts – the bleak colours of Chinese mourning. (Wong & Freeze, 2003a, A1)

The recurring image of the united parents reinforces that Cecilia came from an idyllic, middle class, suburban family.

The news article continues and says that after reading the letter she wrote to her daughter, “Mrs. Xu broke down completely. Mr. Zhang helped his wife back to the table. ‘Sorry,’ she whispered, as if she had somehow failed” (Wong & Freeze, 2003a, A1). In

their public appeal, amidst her tears, *Globe and Mail* journalists say Sherry Xu “soldiered on” to finish her letter (Wong & Freeze, 2003a, A1). A neighbour spoke about Raymond Zhang’s appeal: ““He was basically begging the abductor to release his daughter. You don’t often see a Chinese man shed tears like that. He was really speaking from his heart”” (Keung & Powell, 2003, A4).

A number of rumours circulated in the press, about Cecilia’s abduction, the legitimacy of the family’s businesses, and the potential role of their businesses in Cecilia’s abduction.

Media reports have said Cecilia’s mother owns a day-care and language school operating out of a commercial building on Finch Ave. E. But a Web site belonging to Canada Holonet Inc., a company run by Sherry Zhang, outlines a menu of immigration consulting services for Chinese families and students wanting to come to Canada and the U.S. to live or study. (Keung & Powell, 2003, A21)

The reporters of the above news article added: “A spokesperson for the federal immigration department couldn’t say if Holonet works on behalf of Chinese immigrants or other newcomers to Canada” (Keung & Powell, 2003, A21). Reporters apparently could not find definitive answers about the companies, and instead raised suspicions about the conduct of the family’s businesses. The same news article cited a police source who said “the abduction ... may be linked to the parents’ dealings with people through the couple’s after-school day-care/adult learning centre” (Keung & Powell, 2003, A21). He said he could not elaborate on this claim which furthered suspicions about the nature of the businesses. Furthermore, a news article in the second day of coverage in the *Star* (erroneously) reported that the couple had paid cash for their home – perpetuating the stereotype that they were wealthy Asian immigrants and likely victims of extortion.

Records obtained by the Star show the couple paid cash, nearly \$350,000, when they bought their home in 1999. There was no mortgage attached to the original purchase. But some 30 months later, the Zhangs took out a mortgage worth 80 per cent of the house's original sale price. (DiManno, 2003b, A1)

Their seemingly mysterious financial movements inevitably raise questions about the family's motives and legitimacy. Yet another rumour that was carried in the press was that Cecilia's abduction was a result of Asian gang activity – “a documented phenomenon in Toronto” (DiManno, 2003a, A1). Within a few days, these rumours were dismissed: the Zhangs did not pay cash for their house, and there was no evidence suggesting the involvement of the Asian gangs. But even though her parents received no requests for money, the rumour that Cecilia was abducted for ransom persisted.

On the morning that Cecilia was reported missing, Sherry Xu (Cecilia's mother) went to the school to look for her daughter before she called the police. Her actions are described in the following excerpt from *The Globe and Mail*:

Mrs. Zhang rushed to the school around 8:15 hoping against hope that her daughter had gone to school on her own – without her coat. ‘Her face was white,’ said someone who saw Mrs. Zhang arrive Looking lost, Mrs. Zhang returned home. She did not call the police, a common enough reaction among mainland Chinese who have learned to steer clear of authority. (Wong, 2003, A1)

The news article continues to explain that Sherry called the police, but only after the principal called her and insisted she do so. Her ‘white’ face constructs her as being in a state of fear and shock; that she didn't call the police was rationalized by cultural differences. The following statement, from the same news item, is similarly critical of the couple's initial actions when they realized Cecilia missing: “She did not call the police, a common enough reaction among mainland Chinese who have learned to steer clear of authority” (Wong, 2003, A1). This follows a discussion of the family's

adaptation to Canadian culture which was constructed as remarkable transition; however, this statement suggests they are inherently different, not quite Canadian.

A front page column in *The Globe* engages the possibility that cultural differences could affect the progression of the case. “The cultural differences may come into play, Mr Jia said, in how the parents manage this most monstrous of traumas” – but specifically what differences these are is not clarified (Blatchford, 2003b, A1). In a different news article in *The Globe*, the reporter includes a quote from their neighbour, Jia who says of Raymond Zhang, ““He’s a typical Canadian family man”” (Wong, 2003, A1). The column focuses on Cecilia’s parents’ ability to adapt to the ‘Canadian’ ways of life. Even though the news article emphasizes the family’s smooth transition to becoming Canadian, there is the suggestion that they are still Chinese, which is framed by evidence of their reaction to not immediately call police when Cecilia was abducted (Wong, 2003, A1). Thus, even though Sherry and Raymond are constructed as embracing the Canadian way of life, they are still portrayed as abiding by slightly different cultural norms. This finding is consistent with past news media research that suggests minorities are often portrayed as the Other.

The same news article also said that the “Zhangs were living the Canadian dream, which is to say, they were also living the Chinese dream” (Wong, 2003, A1). This generalization is made casually, and is ethnocentric in its suggestion that all Chinese want to live in Canada. Although what constitutes the Canadian dream is not clarified, the following description from the same articles seems to epitomize the dream: “After arriving a few years ago from mainland China, Raymond and Sherry Zhang managed to buy a \$350,000 house on a quiet Toronto crescent. Their only child made it into the

gifted program at the elementary school a five-minute walk away” (Wong, 2003, A1). These intimate details of Cecilia and her parents’ life personalize their story and frame them as likeable, undeserving victims. A *Toronto Star* news article says, “They never hurt anyone, the Zhangs,” a statement which invokes the question of why anyone would choose to victimize such kind, hardworking parents (“Mommy’s heart”, 2003, A1).

Their modest success is constructed as a result of their hard work and determination. A column in *The Globe* cites Jack Jia as saying that they are “ordinary, working-class immigrants” (Blatchford, 2003b, A1). Jia is cited again in a different article: “‘The couple is not rich or wealthy,’ he said. ‘Who knows? Maybe just because they own a school, people think that they are rich and want money from them’” (Keung & Powell, 2003, A21). Although Jia describes them as a working class family, Cecilia’s parents are more dominantly framed as middle class because of their comfortable suburban home. As noted in the first chapter, location is a common determinant of class in Canada, and this excerpt from the *Star* illustrates how they merge: “They live in a solidly middle class enclave in the Don-Mills/Finch area” (DiManno, 2003b, A1). (Their neighbourhood is discussed in more detail in the next section.) Despite the discrepancy about whether they were actually middle or working class, Cecilia’s parents are consistently framed as hardworking and determined. Nonetheless, the details of their finances resonate as a point of interest for journalists – even how much rent their tenants paid. A column in *The Globe* explains, “Cecilia’s family is not so affluent that her parents don’t rent out rooms for extra income – about \$240 a month each – in the basement of their pleasant but unimposing house” (Blatchford, 2003b, A1).

Throughout the two weeks of coverage, a number of competing frames were constructed in the news discourse about Cecilia's parents. Initially, suspicions were raised about the companies they owned and whether they had paid cash for their suburban home; these suspicions were largely based on cultural stereotypes about Asian and Chinese people. However, the prevailing frame was that of Raymond and Sherry as loving parents, united in their grief. The ethnicity/race of Cecilia's family persisted throughout the coverage and they were often framed as different because they were Chinese, but their middle class status also constructed them as Canadian.

Tamra's Frustrated Parents

A few days following Tamra's disappearance, Tamra's aunt reported that Lorena (Tamra's mother) "hasn't slept at all ... she's been hanging in there though" (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). The same news article also provided sympathizing details about the family with quotations from Tamra's father, Troy Keepness. He said, "We all miss her and want her back She has a twin sister that's worried about her and she's missing her. We're all missing her" (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). This *Leader Post* news article frames Lorena and Troy Keepness as worried and concerned parents. However, when compared to the coverage of Holly and Cecilia's parents, Tamra's parents' suffering was constructed as considerably less extreme and described with fewer humanizing details. Furthermore, descriptions about Tamra's parents' emotional states were usually attributed to sources, while the descriptions about Holly and Cecilia's parents' suffering were often unattributed. Thus, these descriptions about Holly and Cecilia's parents' pain emerged as universalized expectations of a parent's reaction to

having their child abducted, whereas the press appeared less sympathetic towards Tamra's parents' loss.

As time passed, more emphasis was placed on the family's frustrations with the police and how they managed the search and investigation. A news article in the *Leader Post* said: "Tamra's frustrated mother lashed out at police" and "the family was lashing out at the media" (Pacholik, 2004b, A1). The word 'lash' brings forth both violent and aggressive images. These phrases also suggest that the conflict was instigated by Tamra's family. An earlier news article in the *Leader Post* titled, "'Wasting time': Police tactics upset Tamra's mother," reads:

Lorena Keepness says police are focusing on her family too much and not spending enough time looking for Tamra. 'I'm fed up. They are wasting time,' said Keepness. 'This is my little girl we're talking about. They should be searching for her.' Keepness contends her 10-year-old daughter Summer Favel was taken downtown to the police station and questioned without an adult family member present. (Rhodes, 2004a, A1)

This excerpt reflects Lorena's beliefs that the police should spend more time searching for her daughter and less time investigating her family and treating them as suspects. The verb 'contend' emphasizes the different perspectives held by Tamra's family and the police. Moreover, 'contend' introduces doubt about Lorena's belief that Summer was taken and questioned, and weakens Lorena's statement. 'Contend' was used repeatedly in the *Leader Post*, but was only associated with sources who were family members of Tamra. The repetition of this word evokes questions about the credibility of Tamra's parents, especially when her family and the (more authoritative) police are framed as having conflicting viewpoints. It also parallels Miller and Ross's (2004) finding that words like 'claim' were often used as devices to attack the credibility of American Indian sources in the press.

Following Lorena's comments (in the above passage), a police spokesperson said that the police could not comment on Lorena's 'contention' and that "it's not unusual for investigators to question people more than once to ensure they have the facts straight" (Rhodes, 2004a, A1). This source counters what Lorena has said about the investigation and suggests that police conduct is 'normal' and the family's frustrations are unjustified. To the same effect, the title of a *Globe and Mail* news article is careful to clarify that the inadequacy of the search is attributed to Lorena: "Leads ignored in search, mother says; Regina police accused of not following up on information about missing daughter" (Cook, 2004, A6). This implies that the conflict has been initiated by Lorena, and corresponds to van Dijk's (1991) assertion that minorities tend to be portrayed as agents when they are associated with negative actions.

A different news article ("Tamra's stepfather says police have it wrong") also in the *Leader Post*, portrays Tamra's stepfather as equally dissatisfied with the police work (Brean, 2004, A1). The news article says "her stepfather alleged police are so suspicious of him and Tamra's mother they have pressured their 11-year old daughter to implicate them" (Brean, 2004, A1). Similar to the previous article about Lorena's frustrations, Dean McArthur's (Tamra's stepfather) statement is followed by: "To protect the investigation, Regina police would not confirm any interrogation" (Brean, 2004, A1). By always presenting two conflicting positions, the police and family become situated as opposites, with very little common ground. The news article also says that Lorena and Dean "have given police 'about five names' of people whom they suspect of kidnapping" Tamra (Brean, 2004, A1). These comments are followed by the police chief explaining that while they are focusing on 'subjects', there are no suspects. Instead of conceding to

or opposing the specific arguments that Tamra's parents present, the newspapers framed the police sources as changing the news focus, which effectively silenced Tamra's parents' views. The same strategy is applied again later in the same news article. First, the parents are quoted expressing their discontent with police for not communicating with the family. "Lorena Keepness maintains she has been cut out of the investigation Troy Keepness, Lorena's ex-husband, said he was similarly in the dark" when police announced their decision to suspend the search (Brean, 2004, A1). Firstly, the verb choice, 'maintain,' is significant because (like 'contends') it weakens the impact of Lorena's statement. Secondly, instead of including a police source to respond to Tamra's parents' complaints about the lack of communication, the focus is reverted back to the family who is framed as unreliable and suspicious. Police Chief Cal Johnston,

seemed to confirm widespread suspicions of a gathering at the ramshackle family home on the night in question, when he spoke of several 'unexplained comings and going' He also expressed sympathy for the family's 'frustration and impatience. In an interview amid the shattered windows of the family's porch, McArthur gave voice to those feelings, and to his anger at being treated as a suspect" (Brean, 2004, A1).

The police chief appears concerned and compassionate in this passage, expressing his sympathy for the family. Dean, on the other hand, is framed as angry and his concerns are marginalized by the broken windows of his 'ramshackle' home. The press repeatedly concentrated on the frustration, impatience, and anger of Tamra's parents through uncompassionate descriptions. The emotional states of Holly's and Cecilia's parents were also a prominent concern of the press, but their grief and suffering were framed as legitimate emotions with which reporters openly empathized. In the coverage of Tamra's parents, empathy regarding their frustrations with the police is rarely included in the news items, and when it is, it is explicitly attributed to a source.

Tamra's stepfather is granted little credibility in the press; in the *Leader Post*, Dean McArthur is framed as a likely suspect in the investigation for Tamra. One news article says,

police were looking at 'people who have access, opportunity, past behaviour (No doubt that 'past behaviour' would have included McArthur's appearance in a Regina courtroom April 28 when he was sentenced to three months in jail for assaulting his wife four months earlier.) (Pacholik, 2004b, A1)

Clearly, this reporter is suggesting that Dean's past behaviour could be indicative of his present behaviour and potential involvement in Tamra's disappearance. However, the news coverage is not uniform in its construction of Dean. Earlier in the coverage, the *Leader Post* shows that Dean recognizes he "is in a difficult spot" as the stepfather of Lorena's children from her marriage with Troy; he is quoted saying: "'I just had this feeling that they're taking me like their dad,' he said. Tamra has even started to call him 'dad,' but he discourages it. 'I just don't want them getting mixed up'" (Brean, 2004, A1). This description depicts Dean as caring about the children, but also as a stepfather who has chosen to distance himself from the children. The *Leader Post* says, "McArthur does not ask too many questions of the kids, or pry into their thoughts: 'I don't want to bring out any emotions,' he said" (Brean, 2004, A1). Not only is Dean McArthur shown as a somewhat detached stepfather, he is also framed as a suspect in the police investigation into Tamra's disappearance.

News items that describe how Tamra's parents coped with Tamra's disappearance rarely made generalized assumptions about their pain, as was common in the news coverage of Holly and Cecilia. A news article in the *Leader Post* relies on a quotation from Lorena's husband who says, "The past week has been extraordinarily difficult for 'Lorrie'" (Brean, 2004, A1). In comparison to the vivid descriptions of Holly's and

Cecilia's mothers' intense suffering, 'extraordinarily difficult' stands alone in the article as a rather flat description of Tamra's mother's grief. The *Leader Post* also relies on Tamra's aunt, Hanya Peigan, to discuss the well-being of the family.

This is a family that is hurting, they can't sleep, can't eat, can't relax. They are crying off and on. They are breaking and falling apart. I don't blame them, my heart is with this family,' said Peigan. (Rhodes, 2004b, A1)

Peigan clarifies that she does not blame the family, and prior to this quotation, criticized the police for judging Tamra's family. This emotional description is one of the few accounts provided about Tamra's family. The few sympathizing portrayals were primarily constructed through descriptive images of Lorena. An article in *The Globe and Mail* titled "Pace of search frustrates weary mother," begins with a sympathetic image of Lorena (Hume, 2004, A6). "'I sent her to bed ... and the next morning she was gone.' With those few words, spoken softly through an open window on her front porch, Lorena Keepness summed up the worst nightmare of any parent" (Hume, 2004, A6). Lorena is framed as frustrated in the title, but *The Globe* also constructed her as more peaceful (e.g., 'weary' and 'spoken softly') and her frustrations are justified by the assumption that she is living any parent's 'worst nightmare.'

An editorial in the *Leader Post* echoes this statement in its final sentence: "And there is still no ending to the nightmare of Lorena Keepness, to the worst nightmare of any parent" (Hughes, 2004, A1). The editorial universalizes the pain that Lorena, as a parent, must be experiencing and frames her as suffering more than Tamra's father or stepfather. Despite the universalizing title of the editorial, "Living every parent's nightmare," the neighbourhood is framed as a place filled with risks – a place where child

abductions might be expected, and thus by virtue of her neighbourhood, Lorena is framed as a less worthy victim.

As noted in the quantitative content analysis, Lorena was a much more prominent figure, in comparison to Tamra's father or stepfather. Though she was framed as frustrated and angry, she was also constructed as a devastated mother. In news items about the vigil held for Tamra or those in which she talks about her faith, Lorena is framed as compassionate and forgiving; she "offered a prayer for the person who may have her" (Rhodes, 2004a, A1). At the vigil in their home, "crying as she held one of her other children, Lorena said she was thinking about the person, 'who has Tamra.' She prayed for him too" (Pacholik, 2004b, A1).

A news article in *The Globe and Mail* vividly described Lorena in her living room the night of the vigil:

when the prayers start, she wraps her arms around one of her children, bows and weeps upon his head. As a friend hugs her, she sobs and whispers: 'It's so hard.' For a moment, she seems to gasp for breath. About 20 people have crowded into the small living room. As friends take turns reading from the Bible, or offer spontaneous prayers, Ms. Keepness sits on a coffee table. Her children come and go for hugs. She looks straight ahead, her face frozen. But tears keep leaking out, running down her angular cheeks and falling onto her chest. Ms. Keepness has a unicorn tattooed above her right breast and a heart with an arrow through it tattooed on her left bicep. She has scars on her arms and she lives in poverty so abject it would shock most Canadians. But her children are cleanly dressed and appear healthy and happy as they weave their way in and out of the crowd that has gathered for the evening prayer session. (Hume, 2004, A6).

Lorena appears weak and fragile as she 'gasps' for breath and sobs during the prayers; the tears reflect her pain and anguish. Her scarred arms and 'abject' living conditions suggest she has suffered a great deal during her life – but despite this (and her tattoo), her children are 'healthy and happy'. Thus, though Lorena is framed as impoverished, she is

also constructed as a good, capable mother and a worthy victim – deserving of readers’ sympathy.

The reporter in this article also detailed Lorena’s physical appearance (i.e., “an attractive young woman with long dark hair and a tattoo just peeking above her tank top on her right breast”) (Hume, 2004, A6). The meticulous details of Lorena’s appearance construct her as a sexual woman, very much in contrast to the cultural norms of what a mother should be like: nurturing, maternal, and family-orientated. A letter to the editor, titled “Inappropriate,” was published in response to this description (Gallop, 2004, A14). The letter-writer says, “I was shocked by Mr. Hume’s reference to Lorena Keepness’s physical appearance I fail to see what that statement has to do with a story about a woman who is missing her young daughter” (Gallop, 2004, A14). The letter first suggests that this description was irrelevant to the loss of her daughter and secondly, inappropriately suggests that Lorena was not very ‘motherly.’ Tattoos are rarely associated with mothers, and by presenting an image of Lorena as a tattooed and ‘scarred’ mother living in poverty, the description appears radically different from the maternal portrayals of Maria and Sherry. Thus, as mentioned above, her healthy and happy children are necessarily presented to validate her competency as a mother.

In the same *Globe and Mail* news article, Troy Keepness is constructed as more stoic; “his face looks frozen and it won’t change throughout the evening, even when he quietly weeps. He wipes away tears with the heel of his hand. Later, he says it helped to hear people praying for Tamra, but he seems so caught up by grief he can barely talk” (Hume, 2004, A6). Although Lorena is framed as enduring the most pain, Troy is also constructed as overcome with grief. The *Leader Post* presents Troy as a grieving father,

but the descriptions are notably unemotional; a news article says “Troy said he still has hope and holds onto his faith that Tamra is OK” (Switzer & Kyle, 2004, A1). *The Globe and Mail*’s account humanizes Tamra’s father and presents him as a victim for readers to identify with, whereas the *Leader Post* presents a much more impersonal report that focused on their house.

A pattern that emerged from the news coverage of Tamra’s parents was a tendency to focus on Lorena, Troy, and Dean as separate individuals. When they were referred to together, as ‘parents,’ it was usually a general reference by police sources. By continually portraying the parents as separate entities, the perception that Tamra came from not only a physically distressed home, but also a ‘broken’ family, was perpetuated.

Towards the end of the first two weeks of coverage, Tamra’s family chose to not speak with the media. A July 19 news article in the *Leader Post* about the volunteers searching for Tamra concluded with the statement: “Tamra’s family has requested privacy from the media,” but gave no explanation of why (Hall, 2004, A1). In contrast, a news article in *The Globe* printed the same day, said Lorena “attended a meeting with volunteers, shaking hands and handing out posters of her daughter. She declined to talk to the news media. Earlier in the day, she told *The Globe and Mail* that the ordeal has left her feeling exhausted” (Hume, 2004a, A7). The difference between the two news articles is that the second reporter frames Lorena as tired but persistent in the search for her daughter, despite her choice to not speak with reporters. More importantly, *The Globe* reporter goes on to explain Lorena’s frustration over a recent media report in the *Leader Post* that said she was not home the night Tamra disappeared, which Lorena said was untrue. With this contextualization, Lorena’s frustrations are not only explained but

appear justified, and contrast the coverage by the *Leader Post* which chose not to explain the situation to readers.

In comparison to the other mothers, Lorena was framed as the least worthy victim. She was Aboriginal, poor, lived in an undesirable neighbourhood, and did not conform to the white, middle class, suburban ideal. In addition, her anger and frustration seemed to contradict the image of a grieving mother. Even though Maria was framed as a public spectacle, she was described sympathetically and her erratic behaviour appeared justified by her tremendous loss. In fact, her behaviour corresponded with the stereotype of the hysterical, grieving mother, while Cecilia's mother was aligned with the stereotype of a weak, grieving mother who often relied on her husband for support. More so than the other parents, Sherry and Raymond often appeared together in the news coverage, and emerged as a united couple who provided a loving home for their daughter.

Overall, the fathers of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra were framed in a more secondary role to the mothers, who were constructed more sympathetically and as enduring more pain. This corresponds with Satka's (2003) observation that fathers are expected to be less emotionally committed and fulfill more of a provider role. George and Raymond were constructed as relatively quiet, but their pain was made apparent through humanizing descriptions. On the other hand, very few depictions of Troy were provided, and Dean was overwhelmingly framed as a suspicious, angry stepfather. Chermak (1995) suggests that emotional victims are more newsworthy because their pain constructs them as more identifiable. However, I would clarify that emotional victims are preferential, but more so when their emotions are aligned with stereotypical expressions of their grief (e.g., the weak but not angry grieving mother). This is

substantiated by William's (2004) finding that Nadia Hama's 'inappropriate' display of emotion led to her negative, anti-maternal image.

The Homes and Neighbourhoods

A Respectable Home and 'Worldly' Neighbourhood

An article in *The Globe and Mail* says Holly's parents are "not wealthy people," but hardworking parents who care for their children (Galloway, 2003a, A1). The news discourse constructed Maria Jones and George Stonehouse as caring and hard-working citizens. Even though they were not constructed as wealthy or even middle class, they were respectable on account of their hard work. The *Globe* reported that "a year and a half ago they scraped together the money to buy a narrow, three-storey house" (Galloway, 2003a, A1).

Holly's family lived in the west-end, Parkdale, Junction-area neighbourhood. Described as a working class neighbourhood, their house was described as a decent place that Holly's parents had worked hard to buy.

The house isn't much to look at. The paint is peeling off the bricks, and there's a roofing company right next door. The west-end neighbourhood is working class and largely immigrant. But for Holly's family, it was a step ahead. Her parents saved for years to buy this place. (Wente, 2003, A23)

Instead of focusing on the house, which from this description seems less than perfect, emphasis was placed upon the neighbourhood and the quality of people that lived in the area. When describing the people who visited the memorial for Holly in front of their house, a journalist from the *Toronto Star* used the word 'real' repeatedly, for example: "the real faces of Toronto" (Johnston, 2003, J04). Instead of flatly labeling the residents as working class citizens, they are constructed more positively, as the 'real' people of the

city. A different *Toronto Star* news article describes the neighbourhood as a busy combination of

residential, commercial and industrial uses. Older semi-detached homes on tree-lined streets are never too far from busy arterial roads like Dundas St. W. and Bloor St. W. There are rows of strip plazas, and a constant flow of people and cars. The communities are criss-crossed by laneways, alleys that separate vacant lots, untidy industrial storage yards and hundreds of hidden nooks and crannies. (Stancu, 2003, A6)

Nothing in this description is negative. Busy arterial roads could have been constructed as dangerous because of their close proximity to residential areas, and the less abrasive adjective ‘untidy’ is chosen over ‘rundown’ or ‘messy’ to describe the storage lots. The lexical and descriptive choices in the above passage frame the neighbourhood as busy – but not inherently dangerous. This news article continues on to describe the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood and quotes one resident who describes the neighbourhood as a wonderful, “world community” (Stancu, 2003, A6). This inviting image resonated throughout the two weeks of coverage.

Even though several letters to the editor voiced community members’ concerns about the number of pedophiles living in the vicinity of where Holly lived and disappeared, pedophiles or other criminals were not included in the descriptions of Holly’s neighbourhood. The residents were a diverse mix of ‘good’ people. The following quotation from a *Toronto Star* column suggests that only adults and outsiders would perceive the neighbourhood as less than perfect, and anything it may lack is overshadowed by the overwhelming sense of community.

Holly’s west-end neighbourhood is the kind that most kids don’t even notice is a little gritty and down-at-the-heels until they grow up and some outsider tells them so; the kind of neighbourhood usually looked back on as providing everything one really needs, even if it lacks a few of the things some might want. Hours before the funeral began, people from the neighbourhood began arriving at the church,

young and old, black and white, hockey jackets and denim suits, a community of mourners with no generation gap, no racial divide, no class war. (Coyle, 2003, A1)

Holly's neighbourhood may not have been extravagant, but it is framed as a decent, respectable place for children to grow up. Moreover, it is never suggested that Holly's neighbourhood was unsafe or a place where children were at risk. In fact, the neighbours are so united they are described as a family. The diversity of its occupants is positively constructed as an integrated community that is free of social divisions. The Toronto city councilor representing the Parkdale-High Park area is quoted as saying, "We're a family here in the west end of the city, and when somebody hurts we all hurt" (Pron, 2003, B7). A different news article in the *Globe* that presents a similar perspective says: "Everyone's little sister is our little sister" (Galloway, 2003b, A1).

One letter-writer published in the *Toronto Star* states that Holly's abduction could have happened to any child in any neighbourhood (Kaushik, 2003, A29). This reinforces an impression of Holly's neighbourhood as an ordinary place that did not pose inherent risks to the children residing there. Even more explicitly, a news column in the *Toronto Star* is titled "Nightmare on an ordinary street" (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). The journalists describe the flowers in bloom, the birds singing, the garbage truck en route, the traffic sign warning motorists to watch for children, and Holly's family's veranda where "two deck chairs sat empty, waiting for carefree golden days of summer that will never be" (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). These mundane details are constructed as a contrast to the "wicked thing" that has recently transformed Holly's neighbourhood (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). Holly's abduction and murder was framed as devastating not only her family, but the whole neighbourhood. The *Toronto Star*

describes the neighbourhood as “[descending] into a long, dark nightmare” (“The search”, 2003, B01). As the search for Holly’s killer progressed, Holly’s neighbours waited in fear. *The Globe* depicts all children in the neighbourhood as afraid and deprived of their carefree days of play. A reporter writes that “the fear is filtering down to the youngest members of the community” (Galloway, 2003b, A1). However, a piece in *The Globe* the following day takes a slightly different perspective. It says the girls from Holly’s neighbourhood are “horrificed, of course – but not really for themselves. Like all kids, they secretly believe they are immortal” (Wente, 2003, A23). This statement appears as reassurance that children from the neighbourhood still have the opportunity to live the sort of carefree childhood that they are entitled to. Throughout the news discourse, the social construction of childhood, which Jackson and Scott (1999) say is a ‘cherished experience,’ is reaffirmed. A psychologist at Holly’s school who provided counseling said, “‘Kids will put this aside much more quickly than adults will be able to’” (Wilkes, 2003, A7). Holly’s murder appeared to frighten the neighbourhood children, but the effects were clearly framed as temporary and the idealized expectations about childhood remained intact.

Parents, on the other hand, were consistently framed as afraid, and even terrified. A *Toronto Star* news article described parents as ‘fearful and angry’ and the school staff as ‘devastated’ (Wilkes, 2003, A7). Part of the explanation why adults were so severely affected is the expectation that their children’s safety is their responsibility. “Parents who once let their youngsters stroll unsupervised, now hold onto the hands of the children over familiar routes and watch strangers with distrust” (Galloway, 2003b, A1).

Holly's community was framed as being dually victimized: "The community must not only deal with the loss of a child but the fear of no longer being safe" (Wilkes, 2003, A7). The community was overcome by Holly's abduction and perhaps even bonded by this tragedy: "Everywhere, people talked about how they want the 'monster' who killed Holly punished" (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). Though the entire neighbourhood was framed as victims, local residents exhibited a range of opinions, from outrage (e.g., "I just wish the son of bitch, excuse my language, will be caught"), to fear (e.g., "I feel terrified for my own children"), and disbelief ("You never expect something like this to happen") (Stancu, 2003, A6). Although these views reflect a plurality of perspectives, they are all united by the conviction that Holly's murder was an unexpected tragedy that shocked the diverse Parkdale community.

In the Suburbs

Information about Cecilia's house was limited to brief descriptions. For example, a *Globe and Mail* column said their house was an "ordinary, brick-and-siding home" (Blatchford, 2003a, A1). A different *Globe* news article noted it was a "spacious red-brick home on Whitehorn Crescent" (Wong & Freeze, 2003b, A1). Both references reinforce the normalcy of Cecilia's home and neighbourhood.

However, there were some perceived 'abnormalities' that were exploited in the coverage, like the speculation and rumours about whether Raymond and Sherry had paid cash for their \$350,000 home, and several news items emphasized that "a grandfather and several tenants live in the house" (Irish, 2003, A7). The press concentrated on the

cultural differences of Cecilia's family, as well as the large number of Chinese immigrants living in their North York neighbourhood.

It's no coincidence that Mr. Jia, a civil engineer who immigrated from China in 1989, is a neighbour to the Zhangs. The residential area, north of Highway 401 and west of the Don Valley Expressway, is a magnet for Chinese seeking a middle class home with a green lawn, a private driveway and a good public school. Almost 80 per cent of the students at Seneca Hill Public School are ethnic Chinese, according to one teacher. A nearby mall offers five Chinese restaurants. The local Loblaws sells Chinese newspapers, in addition to ginger root, bok choy and snow peas. (Wong, 2003, A1)

The small details of this passage serve to illustrate the idyllic middle class, Chinese neighbourhood that Cecilia was abducted from. The coverage accentuates the number of Chinese people living in this area, while at the same time framing it as a safe, quiet place to raise a family. This is similar to the coverage of Holly's neighbourhood; although it is not entirely white or middle class, it is still positively framed as a safe place.

One news report in the *Toronto Star* describes Whitehorn Crescent as "a quiet tree-lined street of neat, well-tended single-family houses" ("Gone", 2003, A7). From this description, the neighbourhood is idealized; a point which is substantiated by the following quotation: "It's a safe neighbourhood, just ask anybody, lots of kids, four schools bunched together, a few high-rise apartment buildings clustered across from the school; many parents can look out the window and follow their children's movements curb to curb" ("Gone", 2003, A7). The theme of disbelief about Cecilia's abduction underscores the descriptions of their neighbourhood as a safe and pleasant place. For example, one neighbour is cited saying, "it's hard to imagine something awful happening in the 'safe and quiet' North York neighbourhood;" he is so fearful that he says he wants to move (Irish, 2003, A7).

Cecilia's unexpected abduction in the quiet Toronto suburb appeared to transform the neighbourhood, much like Holly's abduction. "The maple-lined street where Cecilia lives with her parents, grandfather and some tenants is quiet ... 'Folks usually open their front blinds first thing in the morning, but today every curtain and every blind is drawn'" (Powell, 2003, A6). This quotation emphasizes that Cecilia's neighbourhood and environment were assumed to be a risk-free place, and neighbours were so shocked and fearful that they began to question their own safety. The North York neighbourhood was ultimately framed as Chinese, safe, suburban, and middle class.

Another Ramshackle Home in Regina's Inner-city

Tamra lived with her family in their "inner-city home" at 1834 Ottawa Street (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). A *Globe and Mail* news article frames the family home as a very bleak place:

There's not much in the home of Lorena Keepness except children, poverty and faith. Ms. Keepness ... lives in a small, dilapidated, two-storey house on Ottawa Street, just a few blocks from Regina police headquarters. The neighbourhood is near the centre of this prosperous, neatly kept prairie town. But it is a poor area, with worn residences and bumpy streets. The furniture is threadbare in the Keepness home, where Tamra lived with her mother and four siblings until last week, when she disappeared from her room in the middle of the night The carpets in the living room are grey and worn. The paint is peeling. Cracks creep through the plaster. The thermostat hangs off the wall by a single wire. In the tiny kitchen, which can barely hold four people at once, the electric stove has an element missing. (Hume, 2004, A6)

The description begins with the observation that 'children, poverty, and faith' reside in Lorena's home, but instead of discussing Lorena's children or faith, the reporter chooses to focus on the 'dilapidated' features of the house. The poor neighbourhood and 'ramshackle' house are framed as the direct opposite of the positive image of Regina as a

‘prosperous, neatly kept prairie town.’ A *Leader Post* journalist who joined the vigil that was held in Tamra’s family’s home constructs a similarly desolate picture. “The sparsely furnished, run-down, two-storey home in the inner city speaks of the family’s obvious struggles with poverty, but the pictures hung neatly on the wall are also testament to their resolve to go on in spite of it” (Pacholik, 2004b, A1). In this news article, the neatly hung pictures are symbolic of the family’s perseverance and perhaps even their attempt to have a ‘normal’ life. Both renditions offer brief glimpses of hope, but they are overpowered by dramatic descriptions of the ‘ramshackle’ home. Likewise, the collection of gifts and letters left in the front yard for Tamra from friends and neighbours was described as a “makeshift memorial” (Pacholik, 2004, B3). This image not only reinforces the notion of impoverishment, but stands in stark contrast to the description of a ‘vast floral memorial’ that was chosen to describe the gifts left for Holly (“Items”, 2003, A1).

The descriptions of the neighbourhood tended to revolve around the area’s negative attributes. For example, the following quotation from a *Leader Post* news article asserts that both the physical landscape and people contribute to the ‘unpleasant’ nature of the neighbourhood:

Nowhere around here is pleasant to search. Some houses are abandoned, others are rotting. There are trees but hardly any grass. Down the street, freight trains pass just out of hearing range. The hotel on the corner has boards on its windows, and a broken sign. Around the corner and down the street is the Ehrle Hotel, which advertises ‘cold beer’ but cab drivers know it as a popular destination for prostitutes and drug dealers. (Brean, 2004, A1)

An editorial titled “Living every parent’s nightmare” in the *Leader Post* goes into extensive detail about the neighbourhood from which Tamra disappeared (Hughes, 2004, A1). It begins with the idea that Tamra’s disappearance is a terrible ‘nightmare’ that any

parent could quickly find themselves amidst, and for the first two sentences of the description, the neighbourhood is framed as a pleasant place, a neighbourhood like any other:

The 1800 block of Ottawa Street had come alive with people, lots of them media, camped outside the two-storey house, interviewing each other mostly. The street is located just south of 11th Avenue, and it is well treed, with the branches forming an arch over the top of it, blocking the sun, and leaving it dim in the July light. (Hughes, 2004, A1)

At this point, the tone changes and the neighbourhood is framed significantly less favourably. It becomes a place where people do not choose to live, but are forced to – alongside the prostitutes, drunks, and abused:

Next door is an empty house. There is a burned-out garage in the back alley. A dumpster has had its garbage spilled. Right there, down the street, is 12th Avenue, which is a place the prostitutes stroll. This is the core area of the city, not always a nice place to live. It is only a few blocks away from the police station. An older man, who will not give me his name, is walking down 12th Avenue and he says to me, in a thick accent, "I have lived in this area for years and years and it used to be a nice area of the city and people worked hard. It's not like that any more. Some places, it is not safe to be near." The morning paints a picture. At eight in the morning yesterday, the day bathed in real summer warmth, a young prostitute stood leaning against a street light pole, smiling at the cars that went by. She was gone within the hour. Two hours later, in an empty lot beside a building that housed Comfort Mechanical Ltd., at the corner of Ottawa and 11th, a man came across the lot, unsteady on his feet. He wore a black muscle shirt, black jeans, the blonde in his hair turning grey, his face and shoulders slicked in sweat, his eyes glassy. There was in this lot an old rusty brown couch and the man fell upon it, laid down, and he was still there, sleeping, two hours later. In the early hours of the afternoon, both the man and the couch were gone. Down the way, on 11th Avenue, a woman in a black dress came across the street. Her right eye was blackened. Her teeth clenched a cigarette. Life in this area can be weary. The area is hardened by some of the unpleasant realities of life in our city. But it does not mean there are not loving, caring families amidst all of this. (Hughes, 2004, A1)

By focusing on the 'unpleasant realities', the reporter constructs a very negative depiction of the people who live in Tamra's neighbourhood. In the final sentence, he suggests that – amidst the prostitutes, drunks, and abused – there are loving, caring families. However,

by framing the area with such negativity and desperation, the last sentence leaves little hope that goodness can truly exist in such destitution.

A *Leader Post* news article considers the possibility that Tamra was abducted (as opposed to the theory that she wandered off). The journalist says,

It's a neighbourhood where it's easy to have those suspicions. Just a block from Tamra's street -- and walking distance from the local park -- is a halfway house that pedophiles and other criminals call home. On those same streets where legitimate businesses ply their wares, working girls solicit passers-by, drug addicts cut deals and alcoholics stumble into a bar with a street-tough reputation. (Pacholik, 2004b, A1).

Again, the focus rests upon the prostitutes, criminals, and pedophiles and frames the neighbourhood as a place filled with danger, a place where the potential for child abductions is high. Bleak descriptions of the family home and neighbourhood were incorporated into the news coverage in substantial detail (as shown above), but also in passing. For example, a news article in *The Globe and Mail* included a quotation from Lorena that explicitly framed her within the context of poverty: "... Ms. Keepness said through a broken-out window of a sun room at the family's ramshackle home in east-central Regina" (Cook, 2004, A6). This description draws attention to the family's lack of material wealth and exemplifies how Tamra's family came to be defined by their poverty in the press.

The abundant images of poverty provide only superficial descriptions of the landscape and people who are affected by it instead of more nuanced structural analyses of the community and the problems it is plagued by. As in the earlier *Globe and Mail* excerpt, a news column in *The Globe* polarizes the 'troubled inner-city' from the 'hard-working decent Prairie city'. It begins:

The disappearance on July 5 of a five-year-old girl here has not only shocked this hard-working, decent Prairie city, it has brought to the surface racial undercurrents many would prefer to ignore. Tamra Keepness was being raised in a ramshackle home in a predominantly aboriginal, exhaustingly poor neighbourhood, just a few blocks from the city's prosperous downtown. Regina, which local radio station CJME routinely refers to as "Canada's greatest city," has broad boulevards, fine historical buildings and lovely, serpentine parks that highlight the natural beauty of Saskatchewan. But it also has troubled inner-city neighbourhoods, where front yards are beaten dirt, windows are cracked and houses are abandoned. This is, for the most part, where Regina's expanding aboriginal community lives. One of those neighbourhoods is unofficially called Moccasin Flats, although people do not overtly use that racially charged name. Although there is a strong sense of isolation of one group from the other, it is not something easily talked about. When a caller to CJME raised the issue of racism last week in relation to a police decision to halt the ground search for Tamra, the talk-show host snapped at her for daring 'to play the race card.' The Regina Leader-Post took a similar view under the headline: 'To talk of racism tainting the search for Tamra is sheer nonsense.' Although the Regina Police Service, which threw everything it had at the case, may be above reproach, it is clear that race relations is a sensitive topic. (Hume, 2004b, A7)

Like other news items, this column also constructs Tamra's neighbourhood negatively, and positions it in sharp contrast to the rest of the city that conveys the province's 'natural beauty.'

As noted in the literature review, race and class are intricately connected in Canadian news and race is rarely cited as a source of conflict. In this column, racism is not offered as an explanation for the economic differences between the neighbourhoods, but the reporter acknowledges that there are 'racial undercurrents' in this city that some residents prefer to ignore. However, by addressing the tension between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, the national press offers a perspective that is more critical of the treatment of Aboriginals. This *Globe and Mail* column continues on to report the findings of interviews with several Regina residents (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) who were asked about their opinions of race relations in the city. However, the *Globe* also says the police 'may be above reproach' but fails to explain why they should not be

accountable if they are guilty of discrimination. The *Leader Post* news article referred to in the above excerpt by *The Globe and Mail* clearly denounces any possibility of racism – by virtue of its title (“To talk of racism tainting the search for Tamra is sheer nonsense”, Hughes, 2004, A2). The executive editor of the newspaper and author of this piece said, “people have to put their faith into the police, who know what they are doing (Hughes, 2004, A2). Instead, he shifts the focus to the family and raises suspicion about friends and acquaintances of Tamra’s family, posing a number of speculative questions:

I have been told that there was a party of some kind in that house the night Tamra vanished, that people were coming and going. This is the focus of the police investigation. Who was there? When were they there? When they did leave? Were any of them seen with Tamra? (Hughes, 2004, A2)

The editor persistently argues that accusations of racism are completely illegitimate:

What does anger is that those outside of the family circles, some of whom were sitting on their idle butts while the search was going on, have tried to play the racism card. I had one native man phone me and suggest that if this was some white kid missing from a wealthy white neighbourhood, the search would never have been called off. I told him, ‘That’s pure nonsense and you do not have a single shred of evidence to support such an accusation.’ He hung up on me, before I could hang up on him. Such nonsense. I am not sure I have ever seen this city come together in the face of such a sad story as it has over the last week. If anybody went out and watched the volunteer searchers prowling the back alleys, the streets, digging through smelly garbage bins, enduring long days and endless disappointments, they also would have noticed that most of them were white. They did not go out there and give all of their time up because they were looking for a white child, a black child, a native child, an Asian child. They went out there because there was a lost child and they wanted to help. Children who are five years old know nothing about racism. They don’t even know what racism means. It’s only when they grow up that they become racists. The volunteers, white and native and whatever, were out because they cared so profoundly about one of our own gone missing that they felt compelled to do something. It is the same reason Cal Johnston [Regina city police chief] wants this thing cleaned up. He cares about this child. He cares about this community, and it is his job to take care of everybody who lives here. And if there has been a crime committed against a child, then he wants the criminal jailed more than anybody could imagine. That is all. (Hughes, 2004, A2)

The executive editor assumes that those who are suggesting racism influenced how the search for Tamra was conducted were ‘sitting on their idle butts,’ but does not specify why this suggestion could not have come from someone who was out searching for the missing child. He also completely discredited the caller’s claim about racism affecting the search for Tamra, and by doing so, denied the potential for dialogue about larger social problems of racism, discrimination, and justice. The editor insists that the display of community support in the form of volunteers and police dedication proves that a missing child case is unfettered by racism. He clearly sides with police (and argues that the police chief cares about the missing girl), which substantiates past research that says journalists and elite sources are often closely connected. Moreover, he argues that children are not racist – they can only become racist when they grow up. However, the caller had suggested that the adults involved in the search could be racist, not Tamra or other children. The executive editor of the *Leader Post* concludes the editorial with his claim that “racism tainting the search for Tamra is sheer nonsense” (Hughes, 2004, A2).

Letters in the *Leader Post* both agreed and disagreed with the views of the editorial. One letter-writer says, “I, too, feel that this is not a case of what race this precious little girl was” and even suggests that Tamra’s aunt was racist in her “comment that ‘we [Aboriginals] will look’” (Gurash, 2004, B8). This refers back to one of the strategies of denial explained by van Dijk (1992) in the earlier literature review; he said that by claiming reverse-racism, claimants are attempting to represent their own group more positively.

In contrast, in a letter titled, “Tamra deserved higher priority,” the letter-writer suggests the news coverage was lacking when compared to the coverage of Cecilia

Zhang. The reader concludes, “But then again, Cecilia Zhang wasn’t aboriginal” (Fleischhaker, 2004, B8). Although he does not explicitly say that the less frequent media coverage was racially motivated, he does suggest that Tamra was given less priority because she was Aboriginal and Aboriginal people are often given less priority than others in Canadian society.

The neighbourhoods where Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra lived were very distinct. Holly and Cecilia both lived in the Toronto area, but Holly’s family lived in the more urban Parkdale neighbourhood, while Cecilia’s family lived in the North York suburb. Both areas were constructed as safe places, but the press still focused on ways in which the neighbourhoods differed from white, middle class neighbourhoods. In Holly’s case, the press emphasized the socio-economic and cultural diversity, and in Cecilia’s case, they emphasized that the neighbourhood was home to a large Chinese population. In both cases, the homes and neighbourhoods were said to be ordinary, but the press tended to focus on the ways in which the areas deviated from the status quo.

Tamra’s inner-city Regina neighbourhood also strayed from the white, middle class standard. It was constructed as an impoverished area inhabited by deviants and criminals, and was said to be home to many Aboriginal people. Unlike the coverage of Holly and Cecilia’s neighbourhoods, Tamra’s house and neighbourhood were framed as unpleasant and poverty-stricken through numerous lengthy and animated descriptions. In addition, Tamra’s disappearance was constructed as less of a shock than the abductions of Holly and Cecilia. From this, it is evident that how the neighbourhoods were constructed affected how the missing children were framed as victims. This is similar to Dowler’s (2004) finding that crimes that took place in the suburbs were perceived to be more rare

and the victims were ‘glorified.’ The framing analysis shows that though race was apparent in the descriptions of the neighbourhoods, the socio-economic status of the neighbourhoods received more attention – especially when the neighbourhood deviated from the middle class standard.

Community Support

‘Divine’ Support

The news discourse framed Holly Jones’ neighbours as a diverse, but united group of people whose support for the family was exceptionally strong. The newspapers mentioned a variety of different situations that were representative of both the community’s and city’s support. For example, “Concert for the Angels,” was a benefit that was organized to remember Holly and garner support for her family. As well, a number of friends and neighbours were quoted, all expressing their sorrow and support for Holly’s family. The only interpretation presented is that Holly’s murder was a tragedy and the community support was both beneficial and appreciated.

Many people visited Holly’s house, so many in fact that a news article in the *Toronto Star* described the street as “a rabbit’s warren of activity” (Stancu, 2003, A6). The support came from more than just friends and neighbours, “people came from around the area and even from out of town to pay their respects, leaving flowers, cards and candles at a growing shrine on the family’s front lawn” (Stancu, 2003, A6). A front page news report in the *Toronto Star* said many people “make a daily pilgrimage to add their contribution to the vast floral memorial” in front of Holly’s house (“‘Items of interest’”, 2003, A1). Notably, the word ‘pilgrimage’ was also used in a news article in the *Star*

(“The search,” 2003, B01) and in the title of another *Star* opinion piece: “Hundreds join an extraordinary pilgrimage to an ordinary home” (Johnston, 2003, J04). The religious metaphor of a pilgrimage frames Holly and her family as holy, which is reinforced by the description of the memorial on their front lawn as a ‘shrine’ (“The search”, 2003, B01). Furthermore, a column about the funeral says “it seemed the heavens wept too, spilling soft and gentle raindrops on Roncesvalles Ave.’s sea of broken hearts” (Coyle, 2003, A1). The religious symbolism frames Holly as not only innocent and beautiful, but also a sacred angel for whom her parents, neighbours, city residents, and even the heavens grieved.

Ultimately, Holly Jones was constructed not only as the innocent child of Maria Jones and George Stonehouse, but as a child of the entire city of Toronto. “This is their tragedy. But it is ours too. Holly’s slaying is any city’s worst nightmare. It freezes us in our tracks, punches us with the horror of it and brings us together in collective grief” (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). This passage from *The Globe* concentrates on how such an expansive community was united by their mourning and support for Holly and her family. For example, local news coverage of Holly’s public funeral service describes the scene as follows: “It was a day for ordinary people and simple gestures - perhaps the most profound of all the huge ring of mourners circling from the church doors across Roncesvalles and back, standing in silence so still you could hear a throat cleared across the road” (Coyle, 2003, A1).

The community appeared to bond over Holly’s disappearance, and the ardent spirit of the community was framed as a contrast to Holly’s murder at the hand of “some devil” (Kaushik, 2003, A29). The *Toronto Star* quotes Staff Inspector Gary Ellis as

saying: “This is Toronto the Good” (Millar, 2003, A1). A neighbourhood meeting framed the local residents as sincere and generous in their support for Holly’s family, but also emotional and angry (Mudhar, 2003, A7). A news article in *The Globe* says, “There have been rants of outrage – some directed at the killer and some at the revelation that there are 200 known sex-offenders living nearby” (Galloway, 2003, A5). The anger of local residents is constructed as justifiable by the clarification that it is directed at Holly’s predator and the numerous sex offenders who reside in the area. Instead of focusing on the systemic ailments that residents have gathered to discuss, the news article concentrates on the emotions of the sources and substantiates Fine and White’s (2000) point that analysis is often exchanged for emotion in human interest stories.

Toronto police chief Constable Bill Fletcher is quoted as saying, “It’s a shame that we (as a society) can’t do a better job of looking after our children” (Diebel & Zlomislic, 2003, A6). This view is important because it conceptualizes responsibility abstractly; child care and protection was determined to be the responsibility of the society – the neighbourhood was not to blame, nor were the parents. Similarly, a letter published in the *Toronto Star* argues that it is the responsibility of the whole society to “watch over our children” (Savoie, 2003, A27). This comment illustrates the inclusive nature of the community in the news coverage of Holly. Repeated descriptions of how friends, neighbours, and strangers from Toronto and beyond demonstrated their support for Holly and her family framed the community as positive contrast to the evil murderer, and emphasized that *everyone* was united by their grief.

Fundraising for Cecilia

The title of a *Toronto Star* article, “Missing girl pulls Chinese community together” suggests that this ethnic community was strengthened by Cecilia’s abduction (Keung, 2003b, A10). However, there were some suspicions about the reasons behind the support that were clearly based on cultural stereotypes. The article says, “Some may interpret it as a sign of the community’s mistrust of and lack of faith in the police, but a Chinese leader dismissed that view” (Keung, 2003b, A10). Even the second part of the title (“Support is helpful, police chief says”) uses a well-known and credible source to refute skepticism that the Chinese community is generally uncooperative with the police (Keung, 2003b, A10). The *Star* also cites Olivia Chow, a city councilor, who confirms that the Chinese community is working with police (Nersessian & Rush, 2003).

The solidarity of the Chinese community was a dominant focus in the press; the following excerpt from a *Globe* column describes in detail how the community came together:

There, in the same small room, pleading in three languages for the same happy ending to Cecilia’s abduction, were long-time political opponents and representatives of all three factions – from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China – which make up the city’s large and diverse Chinese community (Blatchford, 2003d, A1).

The central component of the support of the Chinese community was the money they raised, to be used as a reward, or for ransom. This following excerpt appeared in the local press: “Chinese community members announced ... that \$15,000 had already been donated to a Help Return Cecilia Bank Account” (Nersessian & Rush, 2003, A14; also in Wong & Freeze, 2003b, A1). In a different article, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino

spoke about those who donated large sums of money, and specifically clarified that they were not Chinese.

He said the would-be donors, whom he identified as non-Chinese members of the city's business sector The revelation was but the latest poignant evidence of the universal sense of loss that accompanies the abduction of a vulnerable child and how it has permeated public consciousness in Canada's most ethnically diverse city. (Blatchford, 2003d, A1)

As this excerpt from a *Globe and Mail* column reveals, the tremendous financial support by people of different races was constructed as proof that the abduction of Cecilia was felt by people of *all* races. ““There is no ethnic boundary. It doesn't matter if you are Chinese or not, as long as you are a human being, you can't help but feel for them”” (Keung & Powell, 2003, A4). As with the coverage of Holly, Cecilia was framed as child of the entire community, not just Raymond and Cecilia. One article notes the “bare-bones dreadful news ... cuts to the heart of every mom and dad: A child is missing” (“Gone”, 2003, A7). Here, the abduction of a child is framed as the most painful experience a parent could be subjected to. The experience of parenthood and their pain is framed as universal, irrespective of class or culture.

In fact, many people, who were often identified as mothers and fathers, were cited saying they empathized with Raymond and Sherry (Keung & Powell, 2003, A4). Despite the fact that Cecilia's abduction was framed as devastating for everyone in the city of Toronto, the support of the Chinese community was constructed as being particularly generous. Despite the above comments that suggested Cecilia's ethnicity was irrelevant, one member of the Chinese community expressed different thoughts. He “said the Chinese community was just as concerned about the Holly Jones case earlier this

summer, ‘but the fact that Cecilia is one of our own just brings it that much closer to home’” (Keung, 2003b, A10).

It is also important to mention that extensive attention was given other forms of support (in addition to fundraising). The *Toronto Star* noted that police officers worked on their days off, volunteers searched on foot for Cecilia, and neighbours were also said to have provided “tremendous co-operation” with police (Powell, 2003, A6). In addition, “police said a special hotline number had received scores of calls” from people hoping to provide information about Cecilia’s disappearance (Irish, 2003, A6).

As in the coverage of Holly and Tamra, spiritual gatherings and prayer services were important elements of community support. A news article said ‘hundreds’ joined the parents for the prayer service (“Gone”, 2003, A7). At the press conference and parents’ public appeal, Raymond Zhang acknowledged and thanked the community for their support (“Mommy’s heart”, 2003, A1).

Throughout the local and national news coverage of Cecilia, the ‘community’ was primarily conceptualized as Toronto’s Chinese community. Contrary to the coverage of Holly, which framed her as a child of Toronto, Cecilia was first and foremost a child of the Chinese community. Based on stereotypes that the Chinese community preferred not to cooperate with police, the active involvement of the Chinese community was initially questioned. In spite of this and through the inclusion of official sources, the Chinese community was ultimately framed as cooperating with the police and working together to fundraise a substantial amount of money. Cecilia’s abduction was also said to have evoked sympathy from people of all races.

The Aboriginal Community's Search for Tamra

Although Tamra's neighbourhood was constructed as a bleak and dreary place, the support of the community framed it as slightly more positive. In fact, one news article says, "About the only thing that's clear is the outpouring of support and sympathy from the community for a lost or abducted child" (Pacholik, 2004b, A1). This quotation follows a summary of the search for Tamra and mentions the circulating rumours. Thus, even amidst the poverty and disagreements about Tamra's disappearance, the community was constructed as caring about the family of a missing child. The following passage presents Tamra's neighbourhood as a place filled with compassion and support:

Trees lining the streets near the family home now sport pink ribbons while concern is evident among residents of the area with conversations consisting only of the latest news. Many neighbours handed out flyers while local businesses posted pictures in their windows. (Switzer & Kyle, 2004, A1)

Some people left gifts and cards for Tamra and her family on their front lawn, much like people did for Holly. As noted earlier, the collection in front of Holly's home was referred to as a 'shrine' (Stancu, 2003, A6) and a "vast floral memorial" ("Items of interest", 2003, A1). In comparison, a *Leader Post* article refers to the collection for Tamra as "what resembles a shrine" and a "makeshift memorial" (Pacholik, 2004, B3). These descriptions make the gifts seem less impressive and lessen the significance of the community support. In contrast to the numerous testimonials from friends, neighbours, and strangers that characterized the coverage of the support for Holly and Cecilia, the *Leader Post* merely notes "a steady flow of onlookers arrived in front of the house throughout the day" (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). Moreover, the journalists do not clarify whether the people were friends and neighbours there to show their support or merely curious 'onlookers' (Switzer & Pruden, 2004, A1). The lack of personal accounts

and emotional testimonies are noticeably absent when compared to the news coverage of Holly and Cecilia.

While the community support was usually directed towards Tamra's family in general, in some instances the support was specifically directed towards Tamra's mother. For example, at the prayer session, a *Globe and Mail* news article says that "as people leave the small house they take turns hugging Ms. Keepness. The young mother can't stop crying" (Hume, 2004, A6). As previously commented upon, Lorena was the most prominent parent in the news coverage. Likewise, she was also the most recognized recipient of the community's support.

Most news items about the community support focused on the volunteers who were out searching for the missing child, many of whom were Aboriginal. One example is a *Globe and Mail* news article, which says that "volunteers have flooded in from all over Saskatchewan. So have tips on her whereabouts, with native elders providing police with details of visions about Tamra" (Brethour, 2004, A1). The apparent dedication of the volunteers is exemplified by one volunteer who is quoted saying, "'When you have a little one missing like that, I think it's everybody in the community's responsibility to help look for her'" (Kyle, 2004, B1). Similar to the coverage of Holly and Cecilia, this statement suggests that children are the responsibility of the entire community.

The news coverage also focused on the commitment of the police, and the extra support given by individual members of the force. In one article, police spokesperson "Popowich said local members have continued working long past the end of their shift" (Rhodes, 2004a, A1). Though the local newspaper never questioned the police work, Tamra's family said the search was too focused on investigating their family. Tamra's

aunt, Hanya Peigan, said, ““The police have been wasting time. What they’re doing is judging the family”” (Brean, 2004, A1). After the police search was suspended,

Peigan called on the aboriginal community to continue to search for her missing niece ‘This is a little girl, we are talking about Tamra Jewel Keepness. She is alive, a human just as we are. I would also ask if we can’t get them to look, let all our own people get together and look for Tamra Jewel Keepness. It is very important we find her,’ Peigan said. (Rhodes, 2004b, A1)

Peigan appealed to the Aboriginal community (‘our own people’) in her request for help.

The example shows that the fact that Tamra and her family were Aboriginal was continually present in the news coverage. In fact, Tamra’s aunt is compelled to stress the importance of the search for Tamra by explicitly emphasizing that Tamra is ‘a human just as we are.’

Guy Lonechild, vice-chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, called on all people to join the search for Tamra.

‘We are appealing to everyone. This community of Regina is all of ours, to live together, to stand side by side, to fight for one another. ... This is not a race issue. This is an issue that we want to bring this community together, and say that we want this child returned back to the family,’ said Lonechild. (Rhodes, 2004c, A1)

Following Lonechild’s plea is a quotation from a volunteer who traveled from the Montreal Lake Cree Nation. He said, ““Seeing that one of our own has gone missing, we felt it was our responsibility to come out and assist with the family, show our support and help search for Tamra”” (Rhodes, 2004c, A1). Thus, although Lonechild appealed to the entire community, the above quotation indicates that the Aboriginal community was the most immediate support network. Compared to the coverage of Cecilia in which non-Chinese sources were cited saying that Cecilia’s abduction crossed all societal divisions, Aboriginal sources were asking non-Aboriginals for support in the search for Tamra.

“Despite the plan to end the large-scale search, it did indeed continue. Led by First Nations organizers and assisted by a half-dozen police service members, the search has taken volunteers into Regina and surrounding areas” (Pacholik, 2004b, A1). As the title of one *Leader Post* news article says, when the police suspended the search, “Volunteers [picked] up the hunt for Tamra” (Rhodes, 2004c, A1). “Lonechild said it was clear First Nations leaders wanted to keep the search going and assistance from the police service was offered Regina Search and Rescue is also volunteering services” (Rhodes, 2004c, A1). The Aboriginal community was constructed as united in their support for the family and a clear presence in the search for Tamra. In the same news article, in an interview with an Aboriginal woman whose mother was missing last year, the interviewee said that Aboriginal families “stick together” and form a network of support for each other (Rhodes, 2004b, A1).

Community support for Tamra’s family was framed differently, depending on the newspaper. For instance, the strength of the Aboriginal community is affirmed in this quotation from the *Leader Post*: “Most of the approximately 40 volunteers came from First Nations around the province, a community that has banded together” (Hall, 2004, A1). In *The Globe and Mail*, the reporter offers a slightly different perspective: “At the Gathering Place, almost all of the volunteers who signed up to search were aboriginal, but Mr. Lonechild said many non-natives have been calling, offering support. He issued a public invitation for non-natives to join the search” (Hume, 2004, A7). *The Globe and Mail*’s interpretation of the search suggested it was inclusive to all people, while the *Leader Post* article focused only on Aboriginal searchers. However, both of these passages contradict the *Leader Post* editorial previously discussed, in which the executive

editor said, “If anybody went out and watched the volunteer searchers ... they also would have noticed that most of them were white” (Hughes, 2004, A2). The coverage of how the search for Tamra was conducted was a source of controversy between different sources, and as I have shown, was framed using varying interpretations.

An editorial in the *Leader Post* says, “The city watched and the city cared and the city wanted her found because anybody who has had a child, a five-year-old child, has some idea of what a family would be going through, and the city’s heart went out to the family” (Hughes, 2004, A1). The title of the editorial, “Living every parent’s worst nightmare,” typifies the sentiment and tone of the beginning of the piece. The word ‘city’ is repeated over and over, insisting that everyone cares and that this could happen to any parent. As a representative of the citizens of Regina, mayor Pat Fiacco, “who was visibly upset, said the prayers of the city go out to the family during this difficult time” (Rhodes, 2004b, A1). Also, a reader sent a letter into the *Leader Post* to emphasize that “ALL of us in Regina are concerned for the little girl. It breaks my heart to think that people think that race is an issue in deciding how to continue this investigation” (Gurash, 2004, B8). The reader also states she felt that she

was excluded in the request for help. If she [the aunt of Lorena] had said ‘Anyone who is willing please help us search’, I believe everyone in the city who is able to, would want to help in any ways they can. Don’t exclude people because they are not aboriginal. (Gurash, 2004, B8)

The reader stresses the entire community was willing to support the search for Tamra and blames Lorena’s aunt for creating racial barriers. This comment is an attempt at reverse-racism and highlights the fact that in the news coverage of Tamra, the most predominant support community was the Aboriginal community.

In addition, it is important to point out that the voices to question racism on behalf of the police force and larger community in the local press were Aboriginal sources, such as Tamra's family, while non-Aboriginal people denied the existence of racism or suggested that the Aboriginal community was in fact excluding them. On the other hand, the national press explicitly questioned how racism may have affected the search for Tamra and examined the presence of racism in Regina. Due to conflicting perspectives of the Regina police and Tamra's family an 'us versus them' dichotomy was established. Also, the Aboriginal community took up the search for Tamra after the police suspended their search, which constructed the two groups as separate entities (although they publicly declared their support for each other). As noted in previous research (e.g., Omi, 1989, van Dijk, 1991), the 'us versus them' dichotomy positions minorities in contrast to the status quo, which in this case was the perspective of the police.

Thus, while the community offering support in Tamra's case was primarily framed as the Aboriginal community, it was framed less positively than the Chinese community in the news coverage of Cecilia's abduction. Across all three cases, there was community support for the missing child and her family. However, 'community' was defined and framed differently in each case. In the news coverage of Holly, the community support was described using religious symbolism; it was 'divine.' Furthermore, the whole-hearted support was framed as seemingly endless, coming from residents of the neighbourhood, the city, and beyond. The local neighbourhood community was framed positively as a racially and economically diverse group of people that bonded through their support for the family.

The support for Cecilia and her family was constructed as slightly more restrained, as questions were initially raised about the fundraising and search efforts of the Chinese community. However, assurance from official sources that the Chinese community was working in cooperation with the Toronto police was followed by news coverage of more widespread community support. The concern for Cecilia, a missing child, was constructed as bypassing all social barriers. Even though how the Chinese community was framed shifted, the emphasis on Cecilia's family's close ties with their ethnic community was maintained throughout the two weeks of coverage.

Likewise, that Tamra's family was Aboriginal ran as a thread throughout the two weeks of coverage. The Aboriginal community was also the prevailing support community that initiated search efforts for Tamra when the police decided to suspend the search. However, unlike the Chinese community, the Aboriginal community was framed as separate and distinct from the city of Regina. *The Globe and Mail* and Aboriginal sources (in both papers) suggested that tensions between the police and Tamra's family stemmed from racial tensions in the city, while the *Leader Post* discredited claims of racism and instead, insisted that the entire city cared about Tamra. Comparing the coverage of the three missing girls demonstrates that a definition of community can only be understood within the context in which it exists, and illustrates the different ways in which race/ethnicity can inflect how community support is framed.

The framing analysis has illustrated that gender, race, and class intersected in complex ways to shape the news coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra. It has shown that even within the categories of gender, race, and class, competing factors influenced how the missing children, their families, neighbourhoods, and communities were framed.

To conclude this chapter, I will revisit the frames that emerged as most prominent in the news coverage of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness.

The news coverage of Holly was dominated by animated descriptions of Holly as smiling, jubilant, angelic, little girl. She embodied the innocence and virtue of the perfect child. The depictions of Holly were both personal and humanizing – qualities that also characterized the coverage of her mother, Maria Jones. Maria was stereotyped as the hysterical, grieving mother and her sense of loss was constructed as immense. In fact, all Torontonians were framed as sharing in the grief of Holly's tragic murder.

As in the coverage of Holly, rich details typified the portrayals of Cecilia as a friendly, 'lovely,' smart, little girl. Her parents, Raymond and Sherry, were framed as an immigrant couple who had worked hard to provide a safe and loving home for their family, and together they grieved the loss of their daughter. Through depictions of the family embracing Canadian values, Cecilia and her family were empathetically constructed as worthy victims.

Tamra and her family were ultimately framed by their poverty. Colourful descriptions constructed their 'ramshackle' home and inner-city neighbourhood as an unpleasant and dangerous place to live. Furthermore, Tamra's parents' sense of grief was belittled through depictions of them as frustrated and angry. Tamra's mother, Lorena, was most prominent in the coverage and un-maternal descriptions challenged her adequacy as a good mother. The conflicting views of the police and parents ultimately established a polarization between the police and Aboriginal community, and brought forth questions of how racism influenced the police investigation into Tamra's disappearance.

Conclusion

The intent of this conclusion is not to present grand, overarching generalizations about the coverage of missing children; rather, I will highlight the patterns and trends that emerged from analyzing a two-week period of news coverage following the disappearance of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness, speak to the limitations of this study, and raise some suggestions for future research. First, all three missing children received substantial amounts of news coverage, but their stories, not surprisingly, were more prevalent in the local press. Among the three cases, Holly received the most amount of coverage in both the national and local newspapers, possibly because her body was found soon after her disappearance. This elevated a search for an abductor to a search for a killer, and made her case more dramatic. It also supports the findings of the Scripps study, which found that white missing children received more news coverage than non-white children.

However, Cecilia appeared approximately twice as often as the other girls on the front page of *The Globe and Mail* and Tamra received the most local front page coverage. Instead of oversimplifying these findings and attributing front page coverage solely to the importance of the child, competing news stories, and their ability to influence the missing children stories' placement within a newspaper must be considered. In addition, the *Leader Post* covers a much smaller metropolitan area than the *Toronto Star* – meaning there would have been fewer competing news stories and greater likelihood that Tamra's abduction would be more prominent in the newspaper.

Regardless, the significant amount of coverage afforded three missing girls of different races and classes (an average of thirty-five local news items per missing child

over two weeks) indicates that it is insufficient to look only at the quantity of news coverage. The quantitative content analysis provided a starting point from which to discern similarities and differences between the cases and local versus national press, as well as to identify the foci and sources of the news coverage. However, it was with framing analysis that I was able to examine the multi-faceted use of latent and manifest metaphors, imagery, and stereotypes that both underscored specific frames of the missing children, their parents, neighbourhoods, and community support.

In examining the content of the coverage, it was found that both local and national news items incorporated a broad range of topics and themes relating to these cases. The most prominent news focus was the search, which appeared in over half of all news items, followed by the disappearance and community support. In the local press, community support was the second most common focus, whereas in the national press, details regarding the disappearance were more common. This demonstrates that in the coverage of Holly, Cecilia, and Tamra, the local press attempted to situate the disappearance within the support networks and communities that united to support the families of the missing children. In the news coverage of Holly, despite local outrage about the number of sex-offenders living in the area, the community was favourably constructed as a diverse convergence of friends, neighbours, and concerned Torontonians. In the coverage of Cecilia, the Chinese community was framed as offering the greatest support to Raymond and Sherry, which framed Cecilia and her family as Chinese first and Torontonians second. Once official sources in the press guaranteed the Chinese community was acting in full cooperation with the police, community support gradually became framed as more inclusive of non-Chinese residents. Tension between

the police and Tamra's family was a complicating factor in how the Aboriginal community was framed in the news coverage of Tamra. This parallels Grenier's (1994) finding that the theme of conflict prevailed in news stories about Aboriginals (before and after the Oka standoff). In the news coverage of Tamra, the Aboriginal community was commended for taking up the search for a missing child, but also criticized by some as being exclusive to non-Aboriginals – a case of reverse racism. While *The Globe and Mail* openly considered criticisms that the search for Tamra received less attention because she was Aboriginal, the *Leader Post* explicitly denied them. In a previous study, Barnett (2005) similarly found that the national press tended to be more analytical than the local press. The quantitative content analysis showed the presence and discussion of cultural differences and racism in the news coverage, but the framing analysis contextualized these foci and revealed differences between the cases and between newspapers.

While Tamra's racial background was never suggested to be a factor in her disappearance or abduction, the family's poverty was emphasized by constructing their neighbourhood as a hopeless, dangerous place that was filled with risks. Repeated accentuation of the poor, inner-city, and largely Aboriginal neighbourhood constructed Tamra's family as lower class. In contrast, the everyday normalcy of both Holly's working class and Cecilia's middle class neighbourhoods was emphasized. Thus, both race and class ran as threads throughout the coverage of Cecilia and Tamra, and the socio-economic class of the neighbourhood contributed to how the three neighbourhoods were framed. Cecilia's middle class, Asian neighbourhood was framed positively, whereas Tamra's poor, Aboriginal neighbourhood was framed as a dangerous, destitute

place. This substantiates Gilens (1996) study that found race and class to be closely associated in the news media, and indicates that all minorities are indeed not considered equal.

Across the news coverage of all three missing children, the mothers were constructed more sympathetically and more prominently than the fathers. The fathers were all shown in moments of pain and grief, but in general they were stereotypically constructed as pillars of support for their grieving wives. Compared to the other parents, Sherry and Raymond were framed as a strongly united couple whose aspirations for their daughter had brought them to Canada. So, even though they were cast as members of an immigrant minority group, their values were portrayed as middle class and Canadian.

Holly's neighbourhood was portrayed as ethnically diverse and working class and her parents, George and Maria, were framed as respectable people who worked hard to provide for their children. Like Cecilia's parents, they were constructed as victims of their daughter's abduction. George was often absent in the news coverage – especially compared to Maria, who became a spectacle for visitors and reporters. She was most prominently framed as the stereotypical, hysterical mother in grief. Sherry was framed as less hysterical and more fragile than Maria, but she was also extremely emotional. Tamra's mother, Lorena, was emotional – but in a different, less sympathizing way. Instead of appearing in tears and overwhelmed by her grief, Lorena was most often framed as angry and frustrated by how the police were conducting their search for Tamra. A complex characterization emerged of Lorena in the news coverage: she was constructed as a spiritual mother who was suffering, but also a sexual woman whose maternal adequacy was questioned. Suspicions were also raised about Dean's (Tamra's

stepfather) credibility, and as with Lorena, the press coverage emphasized his frustrations with the police. One of the most salient contrasts was the lesser extent to which pain and suffering were unequivocally attributed to Tamra's parents, in comparison to Holly's and Cecilia's parents. As a result, the news coverage of Tamra's family was less humanizing and sympathetic.

Meticulous character portrayals animated the coverage of Holly and Cecilia; they were constructed as virtuous and undeserving victims of atrocious crimes. They were framed as charming, friendly, and smart little girls. On the other hand, very few personal details and humanizing depictions were included about Tamra, which limited the potential for reader identification. Details about her appearance were included, but only for the purpose of identifying the missing child, not identifying *with* her. In sum, Tamra (a poor, Aboriginal girl) was portrayed as a less worthy victim and less sympathetically than Holly (a working class, Caucasian girl) and Cecilia (a middle class, Chinese girl). Though the coverage of all three children could be characterized as both crime news and human interest stories, the fully rounded, humanizing depictions of Holly and Cecilia and sympathetic descriptions of their parents emphasized the human interest angle. On the other hand, sparse descriptions of Tamra and unsympathetic constructions of her parents downplayed the human interest angle.

Regarding source use in the news coverage, the most common primary definers were the police. This finding is consistent with past studies which found well-known people in authoritative positions to be the most prominent and common news sources. Police, as the most common primary definer, reflect the criminal element of missing child cases; they are accessed because of their perceived knowledge about the disappearance,

the abduction, the search, and investigation. On the other hand, the second most common source category, ‘unknowns,’ indicates that missing children are also human interest stories; these sources provide insightful details about a child and family who were previously unknown to the public. While numerous sources provided warm and vivid descriptions of Holly and Cecilia, they were noticeably absent in the coverage of Tamra.

Contrary to what Hall et al. (1978) suggested, sources who spoke about a topic different from that of the primary definer, were *not* framed as irrelevant. News articles are not comprised entirely by sources; instead, journalists and editors structure the news article and they shift the coverage from one topic to another. Thus, the sources that tended to be constructed as less pertinent were those whose perspective addressed the same focus but stood in opposition to the primary definer. This pattern was most prevalent in the coverage of Tamra, as the police and her family were in conflict, first, about the nature of her disappearance, and second, about how the search for Tamra should proceed. In the *Leader Post*, statements made by Tamra’s family were repeatedly undermined through the use of weak verbs (e.g., maintained instead of said), which constructed the sources as less credible.

The case study format of this thesis was beneficial in that it allowed me to probe the coverage of three specific missing children cases in depth. As a result, my findings are specific to these cases and though they cannot be generalized to the news coverage of all missing children, they lay the groundwork for future research about missing children. In addition, my study was limited in that it only analyzed news items that appeared in the two week period following each child’s disappearance. While undoubtedly the coverage was most prominent during this period, it does not consider how the news discourses may

have changed as the case progressed. Do certain foci prevail in the beginning of the coverage while others gain momentum as the case progresses?

Furthermore, the sole medium I chose to use in my study was the daily press, to the neglect of news magazines, alternative press, online, and broadcast news. I chose newspapers for this project because their accessibility and format were best suited to the time-frame of this study, but this does not mean that other media should be ignored in future studies. Since media attention immediately following abductions has been deemed critical for the safe return of a child, these other media formats are necessarily the focus of families, police, and missing children organizations.

Despite these limitations, I feel that this thesis has laid the groundwork for future media research about missing children. My findings about the most prominent news foci and sources can serve as a starting point for future, more encompassing studies of missing children. Is the news coverage of Holly Jones, Cecilia Zhang, and Tamra Keepness representative of missing children in general? How are other missing children of various races and classes constructed? All of the children in my study were girls, but it would be intriguing and beneficial to explore how missing boys are constructed. I examined how parents of stranger abductions were constructed in the press; in what ways does the coverage of parents who abduct their children differ? Furthermore, how does the coverage of missing children compare to the news coverage of missing adults?

To further expand upon the findings of this thesis, it would be beneficial to study the photos that accompany the news stories about missing children. Does the focus of photos correspond with the most prominent focus of the article? In addition, how are the emotions of victims depicted?

In conclusion, this thesis has opened the door to a range of research questions that have the potential to provide a more nuanced understanding of how missing children are constructed in the media. In recent years, the news media have attracted criticism for biased coverage of missing children, not only from journalism watchdogs, but missing children organizations and the families of missing children. It is the responsibility of media scholars to bring clarity to the news coverage of a social problem that continues to captivate news audiences.

Endnotes

¹ Hereafter, she will be referred to as Cecilia, as was most common in the news coverage.

² The other recent, high-profile missing children cases in Canada have been parental abductions (e.g., Alexis Currie).

³ In 1981, Adam Walsh was abducted from a department store in Florida; his remains were found nearby two weeks later but nobody was ever charged for his murder. Most notable about this case is the significant amount of media attention it attracted, and that his parents became advocates for missing children.

⁴ The National Missing Children Services of Canada reported that in 2004 there were thirty-one reported kidnappings/stranger abductions, which is one tenth of the 332 parental abductions reported in the same period.

⁵ In December 1996, the six-year-old was reported kidnapped and seven hours later found dead in her parents' Colorado home. The murder remains unsolved.

⁶ See also Bell, 1991; Johnson-Cartee, 2004; van Dijk, 1988.

⁷ Floyd Collins was trapped in a Kentucky mine for seventeen days in 1925, and the story attracted media attention from around the nation.

⁸ A KAL flight was accidentally shot down by the Soviet Air Force in 1983 and an Iran Air flight was accidentally shot down by the U.S. Navy in 1988.

⁹ Nadia Hama's daughter survived a forty-foot fall from a suspension bridge, and Nadia was charged with attempted murder on the basis that she did not want to care for a child with Down's Syndrome. The charges were dropped because of the lack of evidence but her husband was granted custody shortly after the incident.

¹⁰ Although the term Aboriginal does not recognize distinctions between Inuit, First Nations, and Métis, it is how Tamra, her family, and community were labeled in the news media. In addition, most media scholarship focuses on Aboriginal peoples, as opposed to specific First Nation tribes.

¹¹ In 1990, a land claim dispute between the Mohawk reserve of Kanasetake and the town of Oka in Quebec grabbed the attention of the nation. The standoff lasted from March to September, involved the police and army, and resulted in three deaths.

¹² Charley Ross was kidnapped in 1874 for ransom; this was the United States' first kidnapping for ransom that received extensive media coverage.

¹³ *The Globe and Mail* prints three editions: the Toronto Metro edition, the Vancouver edition, and the Ottawa edition. The difference between the Metro and other editions is

an additional one to four pages identified by a “Toronto” banner, which includes Toronto based news, editorials, and advertising. All full text databases of *The Globe and Mail* available in Ottawa (microfilm at Carleton University, University of Ottawa, Ottawa Public Library, and National Library and Archives, as well as Factiva, and *The Globe and Mail* Canada’s Heritage from 1844) are archives of the Toronto Metro edition. The purpose of using *The Globe and Mail* was to examine the coverage of the three missing children by a national newspaper. Factiva was used to retrieve the news items, and although the page number of the article is provided, it does not specify whether the page is part of the “Toronto” section. To solve this dilemma, I used microfilm to determine which pages comprised the Toronto section and removed news items that originated on these pages. However, on May 14 and May 15, an additional two page section appeared with a banner that read: “Holly Jones Investigation” was included in addition to the “Toronto” section. On May 16, 17, and 21, one page was dedicated solely to the “Holly Jones Investigation.” Unsure of whether this section was only carried in the Metro edition, I contacted Celia Donnelly (the chief librarian at *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto) who accessed the Ottawa edition of *The Globe and Mail* on microfilm and informed me that the May 16, 17, and 21 Holly Jones Investigation pages were carried, but the May 14 and May 15 pages were not (personal communication, February 20, 2006). Thus, news items originating on May 14 and May 15 were removed from the sample.

¹⁴ These numbers are based upon the search result from Factiva which includes the Metro edition of *The Globe and Mail*, as mentioned above. New items appearing in the “Toronto” section were removed after all items were retrieved.

¹⁵ Articles that were considered irrelevant were those in which the mention of the missing children was only incidental to the article. For example, several articles about a teacher strike amongst Toronto schools mentioned the abduction and murder of Holly Jones, but only in passing. In the articles retrieved about Cecilia Zhang, she was mentioned as an aside when discussing the Toronto police force. Finally, an example of an irrelevant article in the news items about Tamra Keepness was one which discussed the possibility of creating a DNA databank to help solve missing person cases, and mentioned Tamra’s case in passing.

¹⁶ News items that focused on the disappearance of the child included specific details about the time and place from which the child disappeared. Information about the search varied case to case. In the Holly Jones case, it focused on the search for her body and her killer; in the Cecilia Zhang case, the search was focused on finding her and her abductor; in the Tamra Keepness case, the search originated as a search for Tamra but evolved into a search for her and her abductor. The next categories: the missing child’s personality, missing child’s appearance, her family, mother, father/stepfather, and neighbourhood are self-evident. Community support describes the neighbours, friends, and family members who expressed their support for the families by leaving gifts and cards, gathering at vigils, searching for Cecilia and Tamra, and raising money for Cecilia. News items with a focus on past cases of missing children made comparisons between the present and past cases; those focussing on missing children provided statistics and research about missing children in general. The ‘justice’ category includes information about adequately

punishing the missing child's abductor. News items that focused on prevention included details about how to keep children safe and reduce chances of abduction. Those that focused on racism were in the sample of news items about Tamra's case, and cultural differences refers to differences between Canadian and Chinese culture (in Cecilia's case).

¹⁷ Hereafter, any mention of the word frame will connote media frame.

¹⁸ Since many opinion-based pieces did not cite sources, only the news articles were included in the sample for source analysis.

¹⁹ Gans (1979) defines unknown sources as those who are not known to the public.

²⁰ How the worthiness of the victims was constructed will be revisited later in the thesis.

Appendix A

Preliminary Search Results of News Items in National and Local Newspapers

Holly Jones (First news item appeared: 05/14/2003)				
	1st Day	1st week	1st 2 weeks	1st month
<i>Globe and Mail</i> ¹³	3	23	32	47
<i>Toronto Star</i>	6	41	61	86
Totals	9	64	93	133

Cecilia Zhang (First news item appeared: 10/21/2003)				
	1st Day	1st week	1st 2 weeks	1st month
<i>Globe and Mail</i> ¹³	3	19	30	38
<i>Toronto Star</i>	6	28	39	52
Totals	9	47	69	90

Tamra Keepness (First news item appeared: 07/07/2004)				
	1st Day	1st week	1st 2 weeks	1st month
<i>Globe and Mail</i> ¹³	1 [*]	6	14	23
<i>Leader Post</i>	1	8	25	54
Totals	2	14	39	77

* This article was deemed irrelevant.

Appendix B

Coding Sheet: News Foci

Case #: _____ - _____ (A- Holly Jones; B – Cecilia Zhang; C – Tamra Keepness)

Headline: _____

Newspaper: _____

Article Type: _____

Byline: _____

Date: _____ Page #: _____ Word Count: _____

News Focus:

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Additional
The disappearance				
The search				
Missing Child's Personality				
Missing Child's Appearance				
Family				
Mother				
Father				
Neighbourhood				
Community Support				
Past Cases				
Justice				
Prevention				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				

Appendix C

Updated Coding Sheet: News Foci

News Focus:

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Additional
The disappearance				
The search				
Missing Child's Personality				
Missing Child's Appearance				
Family				
Mother				
Father				
Neighborhood				
Community Support				
Past Cases				
Justice				
Prevention				
Tragedy or Nightmare				
Funeral				
Sexual-Offender Registry				
House				
Amber Alert				
Missing Children				
Appeal				
Rumours				
Ransom Plot				
Fear & Safety				
Racism				
Cultural differences				
"America's Most Wanted"				
Media Coverage				
School				
Charged Assault				

Appendix D

Coding Sheet: Source Analysis

Case #: _____ - _____ (A- Holly Jones; B – Cecilia Zhang; C – Tamra Keepness)

Headline: _____

Newspaper: _____

Sources:

	Name	Position*	Descriptors	Quoted	Paraphrased
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

* Consensual, Negotiated, Oppositional, Other

Appendix E

Characteristics of Primary Sample: News Item Type, Placement, and Size

Holly Jones

Sample Period: May 14 – May 27, 2003

<i>Toronto Star</i>			
	News Articles	Opinion Pieces	Total News Items
Total	28	20	48
<i>Page Numbers:</i>			
A1	7	1	8
A Section	11	16	27
Other	10	3	13
<i>Word Count:</i>			
1-500	6	17	23
500-1000	12	3	15
1000-1500	8	0	8
1500+	2	0	2

<i>Globe and Mail</i>			
	News Articles	Opinion Pieces	Total News Items
Total	14	5	19
<i>Page Numbers:</i>			
A1	5	0	5
A Section	8	5	13
Other	1	0	1
<i>Word Count:</i>			
1-500	4	3	7
500-1000	9	2	11
1000-1500	1	0	1
1500+	0	0	0

Cecilia Zhang

Sample Period: October 21 – November 3, 2003

<i>Toronto Star</i>			
	News Articles	Opinion Pieces	Total News Items
Total	31	4	35
<i>Page Numbers:</i>			
A1	5	0	5
A Section	25	2	27
Other	1	2	3
<i>Word Count:</i>			
1-500	6	2	8
500-1000	14	2	16
1000-1500	10	0	10
1500+	1	0	1

<i>Globe and Mail</i>			
	News Articles	Opinion Pieces	Total News Items
Total	13	1	14
<i>Page Numbers:</i>			
A1	11	0	11
A Section	1	1	2
Other	1	0	1
<i>Word Count:</i>			
1-500	0	1	1
500-1000	2	0	2
1000-1500	11	0	11
1500+	0	0	0

Tamra Keepness

Sample Period: July 7 – July 20, 2004

<i>Leader Post</i>			
	News Articles	Opinion Pieces	Total News Items
Total	19	4	23
<i>Page Numbers:</i>			
A1	13	1	14
A Section	1	1	2
Other	5	2	7
<i>Word Count:</i>			
1-500	4	2	6
500-1000	13	1	14
1000-1500	2	1	3
1500+	0	0	0

<i>Globe and Mail</i>			
	News Articles	Opinion Pieces	Total News Items
Total	11	1	12
<i>Page Numbers:</i>			
A1	2	0	2
A Section	9	1	10
Other	0	0	0
<i>Word Count:</i>			
1-500	4	0	4
500-1000	6	0	6
1000-1500	1	1	2
1500+	0	0	0

Appendix F

News Foci of Primary Sample

Toronto Star Coverage of Holly Jones

Sample Period: May 14 – May 27 2003

	News Articles				Opinion Pieces			
	Primary (n=28)	Secondary (n=26)	Tertiary (n=21)	Additional (n=38)	Primary (n=20)	Secondary (n=14)	Tertiary (n=2)	Additional (n=1)
The disappearance		3	5	2		1		1
The search	15	2		2	1			
Missing Child's Personality	1	2		2				
Missing Child's Appearance			3	2				
Family		1		5				
Mother		5	3	2				
Father				2				
Neighbourhood	1	4	1	1				
Community Support	4		6	3	3	1		
Past Cases	1	1	1	2			1	
Justice		2	1	2	9	2	1	
Prevention		2	1		1			
Tragedy or Nightmare		2		5	1	7		
Funeral	2			1	1			
Sexual-Offender (Registry)	1	2		1	1	3		
House								
Amber Alert	1			2				
Missing Children								
Appeal				1				
Rumours								
Ransom Plot								
Fear & Safety	1			3	2			
Media Coverage					1			
School	1							
Charged Assault								
"America's Most Wanted"			1					
Racism								
Cultural Differences								

The Globe and Mail Coverage of Holly Jones

Sample Period: May 14 – May 27 2003

	News Articles				Opinion Pieces			
	Primary (n=14)	Secondary (n=12)	Tertiary (n=8)	Additional (n=14)	Primary (n=5)	Secondary (n=2)	Tertiary (n=2)	Additional (n=4)
The disappearance	1	4	1	1				1
The search	5	3			1	1		
Missing Child's Personality		1						
Missing Child's Appearance								
Family	1	2						
Mother			2	1		1		
Father			1	1				1
Neighbourhood	1		1	2			1	
Community Support	1	2		1				1
Past Cases			2	1				
Justice					1			
Prevention								1
Tragedy or Nightmare			1	4			1	1
Funeral	1							
Sexual-Offender (Registry)	3			2	2			
House								
Amber Alert				1				
Missing Children					1			
Appeal								
Rumours								
Ransom Plot								
Fear & Safety								
Media Coverage					1			
School								
Charged Assault								
"America's Most Wanted"	1							
Racism								
Cultural Differences								

Toronto Star Coverage of Cecilia Zhang

Sample Period: October 21 – November 3, 2003

	News Articles				Opinion Pieces			
	Primary (n=31)	Secondary (n=28)	Tertiary (n=23)	Additional (n=51)	Primary (n=4)	Secondary (n=3)	Tertiary (n=2)	Additional (n=3)
The disappearance		1	4	11				
The search	8	7	2	4	1			
Missing Child's Personality	1		2	2				1
Missing Child's Appearance	1			3				
Family	1	5	6	3				
Mother		2		3				
Father			2	2				
Neighbourhood	1		3	3	1			
Community Support	4	4		4	1		1	
Past Cases	4	1	2	2			1	
Justice				1				1
Prevention	1					1		
Tragedy or Nightmare				3				
Funeral								
Sexual-Offender (Registry)								
House								1
Amber Alert	1			2				
Missing Children	1	3		2				
Appeal	6	3						
Rumours		2						
Ransom Plot	1		1	2				
Fear & Safety			1		1	1		
Media Coverage								
School	1	1		1				
Charged Assault								
"America's Most Wanted"	1			2		1		
Racism								
Cultural Differences				1				

The Globe and Mail Coverage of Cecilia Zhang

Sample Period: October 21 – November 3, 2003

	News Articles				Opinion Pieces			
	Primary (n=13)	Secondary (n=13)	Tertiary (n=11)	Additional (n=34)	Primary (n=1)	Secondary (n=1)	Tertiary (n=1)	Additional (n=0)
The disappearance		6	2	3				
The search	5			4				
Missing Child's Personality			2					
Missing Child's Appearance				2		1		
Family	1	1		5			1	
Mother		2		1				
Father	1		1					
Neighbourhood			1	2				
Community Support	1			2				
Past Cases			2	2				
Justice			1	1				
Prevention								
Tragedy or Nightmare				3				
Funeral								
Sexual-Offender (Registry)				1				
House								
Amber Alert				1				
Missing Children	1			1				
Appeal	2	3	1	1				
Rumours								
Ransom Plot	2	1						
Fear & Safety				1				
Media Coverage					1			
School				1				
Charged Assault								
"America's Most Wanted"				2				
Racism								
Cultural Differences			1	1				

Leader Post Coverage of Tamra Keepness

Sample Period: July 7 – July 20 2004

	News Articles				Opinion Pieces			
	Primary (n=19)	Secondary (n=19)	Tertiary (n=15)	Additional (n=31)	Primary (n=4)	Secondary (n=4)	Tertiary (n=3)	Additional (n=5)
The disappearance	1	1	4	7			1	1
The search	11	4	1		1	1		
Missing Child's Personality				2				
Missing Child's Appearance		1	2	6				1
Family	2	2		3			1	
Mother		1		2				
Father		1		2				
Neighbourhood	1		1	1	1			
Community Support	1	6	5	4		1		2
Past Cases	1		1					1
Justice				2				
Prevention								
Tragedy or Nightmare				2				
Funeral								
Sexual-Offender (Registry)								
House		1					1	
Amber Alert	1							
Missing Children								
Appeal								
Rumours			1					
Ransom Plot								
Fear & Safety		1			1			
Media Coverage					1			
School								
Charged Assault		1						
"America's Most Wanted"	1							
Racism						2		
Cultural Differences								

The Globe and Mail Coverage of Tamra Keepness

Sample Period: July 7 – July 20, 2004

	News Articles				Opinion Pieces			
	Primary (n=11)	Secondary (n=10)	Tertiary (n=10)	Additional (n=17)	Primary (n=1)	Secondary (n=1)	Tertiary (n=0)	Additional (n=0)
The disappearance		4	3					
The search	7	1						
Missing Child's Personality								
Missing Child's Appearance				4				
Family			2	2				
Mother	1	2		3		1		
Father			1	1				
Neighbourhood		1		3				
Community Support		1	2	2				
Past Cases			1					
Justice				1				
Prevention								
Tragedy or Nightmare				1				
Funeral								
Sexual-Offender (Registry)								
House		1	1					
Amber Alert								
Missing Children								
Appeal								
Rumours								
Ransom Plot								
Fear & Safety								
Media Coverage					1			
School								
Charged Assault	1							
"America's Most Wanted"	1							
Racism	1							
Cultural Differences								

Most Common Local and National News Foci

n = # articles	Holly Jones		Cecilia Zhang		Tamra Keepness	
	Local n=48	National n=19	Local n=35	National n=14	Local n=23	National n=12
The disappearance	11	8	16	11	15	7
The search	20	10	22	9	18	8
Missing Child's Personality	5	1	6	2	2	0
Missing Child's Appearance	5	0	4	3	10	4
Family	6	3	15	8	8	4
Mother	10	4	5	3	3	7
Father	2	3	4	2	3	2
Neighbourhood	7	5	8	3	4	4
Community Support	17	5	14	3	19	5
Past Cases	6	3	10	4	3	1
Justice	17	1	2	2	2	1
Prevention	4	1	2	0	0	0
Tragedy or Nightmare	15	7	3	3	2	1
Funeral	4	1	0	0	0	0
Sexual-Offender (Registry)	8	7	0	1	0	0
House	0	0	1	0	2	2
Amber Alert	3	1	3	1	1	0
Missing Children	0	1	6	2	0	0
Appeal	1	0	9	7	0	0
Rumours	0	0	2	0	1	0
Ransom Plot	0	0	4	3	0	0
Fear & Safety	6	0	3	1	2	0
Media Coverage	1	1	0	1	1	1
School	1	0	3	1	0	0
Charged Assault	0	0	0	0	1	1
"America's Most Wanted"	1	1	4	2	1	1
Racism	0	0	0	0	2	1
Cultural Differences	0	0	1	2	0	0

Most Common News Foci

	Holly n=67	Cecilia n=49	Tamra n=35	Total n=151
The disappearance	19	27	22	68
The search	30	31	26	87
Missing Child's Personality	6	8	2	16
Missing Child's Appearance	5	7	14	26
Family	9	23	12	44
Mother	14	8	10	32
Father	5	6	5	16
Neighbourhood	12	11	8	31
Community Support	22	17	24	63
Past Cases	9	14	4	27
Justice	18	4	3	25
Prevention	5	2	0	7
Tragedy or Nightmare	22	6	3	31
Funeral	5	0	0	5
Sexual-Offender (Registry)	15	1	0	16
House	0	1	4	5
Amber Alert	4	4	1	9
Missing Children	1	8	0	9
Appeal	1	16	0	17
Rumours	0	2	1	3
Ransom Plot	0	7	0	7
Fear & Safety	6	4	2	12
Media Coverage	2	1	2	5
School	1	4	0	5
Charged Assault	0	0	2	2
"America's Most Wanted"	2	6	2	10
Racism	0	0	3	3
Cultural Differences	0	3	0	3

Appendix G

News Samples

Primary Sample			
	Local	National	Totals
Holly	48	19	67
Cecilia	35	14	49
Tamra	23	12	35
Total			151

Secondary Sample			
	Local	National	Totals
Holly	22	8	30
Cecilia	27	11	38
Tamra	21	11	32
Total			100

Sample for Source Analysis			
	Local	National	Totals
Holly	18	7	25
Cecilia	22	10	33
Tamra	16	10	26
Total			84

Appendix H

Source Analysis Results

Primary Definers

	n=	Police	Mother	(Step) Father	Unknown*	Spokes- person**	Expert/ Official		Quoted	Paraphrased
Holly										
Local	18	9	1	0	6	1	1		17	1
National	7	4	0	0	3	0	0		5	2
Total	25	13	1	0	9	1	1		22	3
Cecilia										
Local	22	7	3	1	5	3	3		22	0
National	10	5	0	2	0	3	0		10	0
Total	32	12	3	3	5	6	3		32	0
Tamra										
Local	16	6	2	3	1	0	4		15	1
National	10	6	3	0	1	0	0		9	1
Total	26	12	5	3	2	0	4		24	2
All										
Local	56	22	6	4	12	4	8		54	2
National	27	15	3	2	4	3	0		24	3
Total	83	37	9	6	16	7	8		78	5

Additional Sources

	n=	Police	Mother	(Step) Father	Unknown*	Spokes- person**	Expert/ Official		Quoted	Paraphrased
Holly										
Local	92	32	8	1	51	0	0		77	15
National	21	7	2	0	12	0	0		13	8
Total	113	39	10	1	63	0	0		90	23
Cecilia										
Local	76	24	0	3	30	5	14		63	13
National	33	18	3	0	8	1	3		27	6
Total	109	42	3	3	38	6	17		90	19
Tamra										
Local	46	17	1	2	17	3	6		43	3
National	34	7	4	3	18	1	2		27	8
Total	80	24	5	5	35	4	8		70	11
All										
Local	214	73	9	6	98	8	20		183	31
National	88	32	9	3	38	2	5		67	22
Total	302	105	18	9	136	10	25		250	53

* Unknown sources include: neighbours, friends, relatives, volunteers, teachers, ministers

** Family spokesperson

Positions of Additional Sources

	n=	Consensual	Negotiated	Oppositional	Different
Holly					
Local	92	61	4	0	27
National	21	17	1	0	3
Total	113	78	5	0	30
Cecilia					
Local	76	41	5	1	29
National	33	17	2	0	14
Total	109	58	7	1	43
Tamra					
Local	46	27	8	5	6
National	34	13	6	8	8
Total	80	40	13	13	15
All					
Local	214	129	17	6	62
National	88	47	8	8	26
Total	302	176	25	14	88

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