



D21 An Analysis of the Effect of Time and Distance Relationships on Case Solvability in Murder Investigations of Abducted Children

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This presentation will provide results from a study which will help police investigators more timely and efficiently identify strategies and implement tactics which will lead to the capture of child abduction killers and the solution of child abduction murder cases.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the investigation processes of those murders. Time and distance have been examined as part of solvability research for murders in general; however, this study will examine the effect of time and distance relationships as solvability factors in murder investigations of abducted children.

Child abduction murders are incredibly difficult to solve and deeply impact society and law enforcement officials involved in the investigation. A considerable amount of scholarly material on murder exists; far less is available on the murder of abducted children. No researcher has addressed the influence of time and distance on case solvability in murder investigations of abducted children. The solvability factors which affect the clearance rates of these types of investigations have been largely disregarded by social scientists. Because the murder of an abducted child impacts society in such an overwhelming manner, the absence of literature in this area is disturbing.

The relationship of time and distance to solvability was explored by examining child abduction murders occurring from 1968 to 2002. Information from each case relating to time spans and intervals of distance between murder incident component pairs was analyzed to determine if the time and distance relationships are critical solvability factors in murder investigations of abducted children.

This study determined that while time and distance relationships contribute in some ways to case solvability for murders of abducted children, the effect of time and distance relationships on solvability is unique to child abduction murders. Results showed that when any information on the dates and locations of the four murder incident components was known, the probability of child abduction murder case solution increased. There is a strong positive correlation between knowing the dates of occurrences for the murder incident component locations and the ability to identify a perpetrator.

This research also showed that in child abduction murder cases, shorter time proximity between murder incident locations has no significant impact on case solvability. Previous solvability research has shown that the more investigators know about the distances between the pairs of the murder incident components, the more case solvability will increase; this study of murder investigations of abducted children showed similar findings. Relatively close time and distance proximity between murder incident component pairs did not contribute significantly to case solvability. In addition, when the time and distances proximity decreased among pairs of murder incident components, the relatively distant proximity in time and distance did not contribute to case solvability.

This study is a valuable investigative tool for use in murder investigations of abducted children. Given the effect that intense media coverage of murder investigations involving abducted children and the intense pressure from victim's advocacy groups it is surprising that no empirical research has been undertaken before now to determine the effect of time and distance on case solvability in the murder of abducted children. This research adds to the understanding of investigation of murders of abducted children and provides several critical findings on case solvability in these types of cases. Because time and distance do

not play the same role in case solvability in child abduction murder investigations as in general murder investigations, there may be other factors which can impact case solvability in murder of abducted children.

Child Abduction Murder, Solvability, Time and Distance