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### **E85 Missing Persons: A Comparative Statistical Framework of the Phenomenon in Italy and the United States — To Identify Particular Characteristics and to Propose Improvements in Investigative Techniques**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be informed about the main differences in the statistical framework of missing persons in Italy and the United States.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by proposing ideas for improving the investigative techniques involved in searching for missing persons on the part of the forensic science community by multidisciplinary teams (sociologists, forensic anthropologists, victimologists, criminological, criminal profilers, suicide experts, police officers, and detectives).

In this field, it is very difficult to compare the actual state of knowledge between the United States and Italy. The two have very different cultural heritages, legislation, populations (United States: 328,900,000 in 2014; Italy: 60,795,612 in 2014), numbers of homicides (United States: 4.7:100,000; Italy: 0.9:100,000), and suicides (United States: 38,000/year; more than 3,000 in Italy). The numbers of missing persons also differ, being 84,924 between 1975 and 2014 in the United States and 29,234 since 1974 in Italy.

In spite of these differences, some findings are interesting. Data from the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics and the Missing Persons Commissario Straordinario Reports highlight the fact that the main difference is that missing persons are classified according to age: the United States has only two groups — up to and including 18 years of age and those over 18 years of age — while Italy has three groups — up to and including 18 years of age, those aged 18 years to 65 years, and those over 65 years of age.<sup>1</sup>

There are basically five categories of missing persons: undetermined cause, voluntary absence, homicide, suicide, and accident. Searching for common characteristics among these categories is the basis for improving missing person investigations. But are these age-based subdivisions still valid? Are they affected by varying welfare policies? Are two or three groups useful or should there be more? Does reducing the number of groups make it simpler to seek or identify common factors? Why not categorize missing persons into age groups of 0-6 years, 6-18 years, 18-65 years, and 65+ years? Are man-tracking canines to be used only in cases of those aged 18 years or less and/or in those aged 65+ years; if so, why?

In Italy, approximately one-third of missing persons are foreigners. This is due to the mass immigrations into Italy during the past 20-30 years. In the United States, this differentiation does not appear to exist.

Within the concept of globalization, one relatively recent detail of the problem of missing persons, not reported in the analyses of the corresponding phenomenon in the United States, is the case of minors taken away from a non-Italian parent. In this case, the approach to the problem is not only investigative, but enters the field of international diplomacy regulating political relations between the countries involved.

In both the United States and Italy, the number of missing persons has remained substantially stable over the past few years. This indicates that a Missing Persons Task Force must be established to manage the thousands of still unresolved cases, primarily the older cases; otherwise these numbers will never significantly decrease.

With the goal of improving investigative work, this study suggests the need for an in-depth multidisciplinary study of the phenomenon involving suicide experts, criminal profilers, and victimologists, among others.



## General Section - 2016

### Reference(s):

1. Federal Bureau of Investigation. NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics for 2014, Pursuant to Public Law 101-647, 104 Statute 4967, Crime Control Act of 1990 Requirements. Accessed July 22, 2015. <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ncic/ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics-for-2014>.
  2. Ministero Dell'Interno. Relazioni e Registro dei cadaveri non identificati del Commissario straordinario del Governo per le persone scomparse. Accessed July 22, 2015. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/dati-e-statistiche/relazioni-e-registro-dei-cadaveri-non-identificati-commissario-straordinario-governo-persone-scomparse>.
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### Suicide, Missing Persons, Missing Person Investigation