

BOOK DNA: VALIDATING HOW SUCCESSFUL MYSTERY LITERATURE IS  
CONSTRUCTED

by

STEPHEN PAUL MORGAN

(Under the Direction of Leara Rhodes)

ABSTRACT

This content analysis validates how writers construct commercially or critically successful literature in the mystery genre. The produced data and analysis seek to ground writers' creative intuitions by educating them on what has worked before, as well as helping delineate the upper limits of innovations on and deviations from genre conventions. Due to the high sales figures of the mystery genre, as well as a theoretical domain transfer when applying the methodology to other genres, this research will focus on the mystery genre. Though Uses and Gratifications theory would have provided ample foundation for the study, a more appropriate theoretical base came from the Narrative Paradigm, which condenses audience needs into two core concepts: Narrative Fidelity and Narrative Coherence.

INDEX WORDS: Thesis, Mystery, Thriller, Content Analysis, Creativity, Intuition,  
Publishing, Editing

BOOK DNA: VALIDATING HOW SUCCESSFUL MYSTERY LITERATURE IS  
CONSTRUCTED

by

STEPHEN PAUL MORGAN

B.A., Ashford University, 2011

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2013

© 2013

Stephen Paul Morgan

All Rights Reserved

BOOK DNA: VALIDATING HOW SUCCEFUL MYSTERY LITERATURE IS  
CONSTRUCTED

by

STEPHEN PAUL MORGAN

Major Professor:	Leara Rhodes
Committee:	Valerie Boyd
	Richard Menke

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2013

## DEDICATION

To Megan, my wife and my partner in everything.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special note of gratitude goes to Dr. Leara Rhodes. Her relentless enthusiasm, support, and expertise helped me feel as though I was always on firm ground. She is a true friend and mentor. I also wish to acknowledge Professor Valerie Boyd, whose generosity has more than once brought distant goals within my grasp. Special thanks to Dr. Richard Menke for working across department lines to offer his expertise.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
CHAPTER	
1 Introduction.....	1
Increasing Publishers’ Power Against Digital Competition .....	1
Thesis and Research Questions.....	7
2 Literature Review.....	8
Previous Research into the Mystery Genre.....	8
Previous Narrative Research.....	15
The Narrative Paradigm.....	18
3 Approach/Methods.....	21
Sample Selection.....	21
Methodology for Content Analysis.....	23
4 Results and Discussion .....	27
Perspectives.....	27
Characters .....	29
Initial Crime .....	49

Chapters .....	58
Story Arcs .....	65
Clues .....	67
5 Conclusions.....	71
Summary .....	71
Final Argument .....	80
6 Limitations .....	82
7 Future Research and Implications.....	84
Marketing to Readers.....	84
Validating Editors' Intuitions .....	85
Social Advocacy .....	85
Audience Research.....	87
Further Content Analysis .....	87
REFERENCES .....	88
APPENDICES	
A Full Collection of Tables and Figures.....	92
B Codebook Template .....	117



## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Variations Within the Mystery/Thriller Genre .....	9
Table 5.1: Distribution of Perspectives Throughout Total Sample .....	28
Table 5.2: Distribution of Perspectives Throughout Total Sample .....	29
Table 5.3: Distribution of Characters Throughout Total Sample .....	30
Table 5.4: Distribution of Character Roles Throughout Total Sample.....	31
Table 5.5: Character Role Distributions for Individual Samples.....	33
Table 5.6: When Character Descriptions Are Given for Total Sample .....	33
Table 5.7: When Character Descriptions Are Given for Each Book.....	34
Table 5.8: Which Character Delivers the Description for Total Sample.....	34
Table 5.9: Which Character Delivers the Description for Each Book.....	34
Table 5.10: Character Descriptions Given Through Dialogue or Exposition for Total Sample....	35
Table 5.11: Character Descriptions Given Through Dialogue or Exposition for Individual Samples .....	35
Table 5.12: Characters Who Have Connections to Other Characters for Total Sample.....	36
Table 5.13: Characters Who Have Connections to Other Characters for Individual Samples .....	37
Table 5.14: Description of Characters Given Through Physical or Personal Details for Total Sample .....	38
Table 5.15: Description of Characters Given Through Physical or Personal Details for Individual Samples .....	38

Table 5.16: Nature of Character's Connection to Another Character for Total Sample .....	39
Table 5.17: Nature of Character's Connection to Another Character for Individual Samples .....	39
Table 5.18: Distribution of Characters Who Broke the Law for Total Sample .....	40
Table 5.19: How Many Characters Broke the Law for Individual Samples .....	40
Table 5.20: Character Motivations for Total Sample .....	41
Table 5.21: Character Motivations for Individual Samples .....	42
Table 5.22: Whether or Not a Character Acted on Their Own for Total Sample .....	43
Table 5.23: Whether or Not a Character Acted on Their Own for Each Book .....	43
Table 5.24: If Working With Someone Else, What Was the Character's Role for Total Sample .....	43
Table 5.25: If Working With Someone Else, What Was the Character's Role for Individual Samples .....	43
Table 5.26: Character has a family for Total Sample .....	44
Table 5.27: Character has a family for Individual Samples .....	44
Table 5.28: Character is an Intellectual for Total Sample .....	45
Table 5.29: Character is an Intellectual for Individual Samples .....	45
Table 5.30: If Character is an Intellectual, Are They a Public or Private Intellectual for Total Sample .....	45
Table 5.31: If Character is an Intellectual, Are They a Public or Private Intellectual for Individual Samples .....	46
Table 5.32: Is Character a Drug User for Total Sample .....	46
Table 5.33: Is Character a Drug User for Individual Samples .....	46
Table 5.34: If Character Uses Drugs, Which Drug? for Total Sample .....	47
Table 5.35: Is Character a Witness to a Crime? for Total Sample .....	48

Table 5.36: Is Character a Witness to a Crime? for Individual Samples .....	48
Table 5.37: Hiding a secret? for Total Sample .....	48
Table 5.38: Hiding a secret? for Individual Samples.....	48
Table 5.39: Character arc? for Total Sample .....	49
Table 5.40: Character arc? for Individual Samples .....	49
Table 5.41: When does the crime occur? for Total Sample.....	50
Table 5.42: When does the crime occur? for Individual Samples .....	51
Table 5.43: Does the crime break the law? for Total Sample.....	51
Table 5.44: Does the crime break the law? for Individual Samples .....	51
Table 5.45: Type of Crime for Total Sample.....	52
Table 5.46: Type of Crime Committed for Individual Samples .....	53
Table 5.47: Is the crime a mystery? for Total Sample .....	53
Table 5.48: Is the crime a mystery? for Individual Samples .....	54
Table 5.49: If yes, the mystery consists of... for Total Sample .....	54
Table 5.50: If yes, the mystery consists of... for Individual Samples.....	55
Table 5.51: Location of Crime for Total Sample.....	56
Table 5.52: Location of Crime for Individual Samples .....	56
Table 5.53: Witnesses to crime? for Total Sample .....	56
Table 5.54: Witnesses to crime? for Individual Samples .....	57
Table 5.55: If yes, how many witnesses? for Total Sample .....	57
Table 5.56: If yes, how many witnesses? for Individual Samples.....	57
Table 5.57: Is the Crime a Single, Isolated, or Repeated Offense? for Total Sample .....	58
Table 5.58: Is the Crime a Single, Isolated, or Repeated Offense? for Individual Samples.....	58

Table 5.59: How many chapters are in each book? for Total Sample .....	59
Table 5.60: Chapter begins with which character? for Total Sample .....	60
Table 5.61: Chapter begins with which character? for Individual Samples .....	60
Table 5.62: Contains Break Midway Through Chapter? for Total Sample .....	61
Table 5.63: Contains Break Midway Through Chapter? for Individual Samples .....	61
Table 5.64: If a Chapter Begins With a Certain Character, How Likely is the Chapter to Have a Chapter Break? for Individual Samples .....	62
Table 5.65: If Yes, Does the Following Section Pick Up From the Same Character's POV? for Total Sample .....	62
Table 5.66: If Yes, Does the Following Section Pick Up From the Same Character's POV? for Individual Samples.....	63
Table 5.67: If Answer is No, What Character Does the Following Section Pick Up From? for Total Sample .....	63
Table 5.68: If No, What Character Does the Following Section Pick Up From? for Individual Samples .....	64
Table 5.69: Chapter Ends with Cliffhanger or Resolution for Total Sample .....	65
Table 5.70: Chapter Ends With Cliffhanger or Resolution for Individual Samples .....	65
Table 5.71: Number of Arcs Per Title for Total Sample .....	66
Table 5.72: Type of Arc for Total Sample.....	66
Table 5.73: Type of Arc for Individual Samples .....	66
Table 5.74: Number of Clues Per Book for Total Sample.....	68
Table 5.75: Is the Clue Legitimate or a Red Herring for Total Sample.....	69
Table 5.76: Is the Clue a Physical or Personal clue? for Total Sample .....	70

Table 5.77: Who discovers the clue? for Total Sample .....	70
--	----

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 5.1: Distribution of Perspectives Throughout Total Sample .....	29
Figure 5.2: Distribution of Character Roles Throughout Total Sample .....	31
Figure 5.3: Characters Who Have Connections to Other Characters for Total Sample .....	37
Figure 5.4: Character Motivations for Total Sample .....	41
Figure 5.5: When does the crime occur? for Total Sample .....	50
Figure 5.6: Type of Crime for Total Sample .....	52
Figure 5.7: If Yes, the Mystery Consists of... for Total Sample .....	55
Figure 5.8: Chapter begins with which character? for Total Sample .....	60
Figure 5.9: If Answer is No, What Character Does the Following Section Pick Up From? for Total Sample .....	64
Figure 5.10: Number of Clues Per Book for Total Sample .....	68
Figure 5.11: Is the Clue Legitimate or a Red Herring for Total Sample .....	69

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Increasing Publishers' Power Against Digital Competition

Before the digital age, publishers succeeded despite limiting their analysis of successful literature to following sales metrics. Publishers knew which books sold well, but they could not say why without appealing to unquantified intuitions. “[Reader] satisfaction [was] largely... gauged by sales data and reviews—metrics that offer a postmortem measure of success but can't shape or predict a hit” (Alter, 2012, paragraph 5). Similarly, writers had no quantified methodology to decipher what contributed to reader satisfaction beyond analyzing sales trends. Some genres sold better than others. Some writers sold more than anyone else. Some writers won critical acclaim. Unfortunately, when authors asked why certain books succeeded and how they could emulate that success, they had no choice but to rely on vague clichés like “read a lot” and “study successful authors.” Even authors less concerned with selling books than telling an effective story had no way to determine why one story engaged an audience more than another, or how the story might be tailored to more thoroughly engage and immerse readers. Sales metrics and expansive reading gave no clear indication what made successful books succeed, because there was no guarantee that the elements an author synthesized would prove relevant. The authors might too late realize that they had identified the wrong conclusions to enhance their story. Not even editors, the long-time quality control department, seemed to have the answers. Godine (2011), president of an independent publishing house and veteran of the industry for over thirty years, stated that historically editors have been “arbiters of taste, which generally [reflects]

their own predilections and passions” (p. 332-333), not the tastes of target audiences. Scott Turow, president of the Author’s Guild and author of numerous bestsellers, said that when he asked his publisher to at least tell him who buys his books, he received the response, “[Nobody] in publishing knows that” (Alter, 2012, paragraph 13).

In a firmly capitalistic system, money must be made, and the digital paradigm brings with it more competitors than ever, some of them with an understanding of how to take advantage of digital possibilities so far beyond major publishers’ understanding that the infamous Big Six—the largest global publishing houses—must “jump on the bandwagon or be left behind” (Carreiro, 2010, p. 220). The digital age now offers too many competitors vying for readers’ money and attention for publishers not to study what elements are essential to successful publications. Unfortunately, the publishing industry “has lagged far behind the rest of the entertainment industry when it comes to measuring consumers’ tastes and habits” (Alter, 2012, paragraph 5). This failure to integrate best digital practices has contributed to declining sales for publishers in general. The last Experian Simmons estimate stated that “over 100 million [American] adults did not buy a single solitary book in 2010” (RWA, 2012, Industry Statistics).

Even if literacy campaigns convince readers to read more, digital competition has led to shrinking retail space (RWA, 2012, Industry Statistics). More than ever, readers will find books through online venues, even if they choose to purchase the print version. That presents a dangerous situation for publishers:

Marketing studies consistently show that readers are far more adventurous in their choice of books when in a bookstore than when shopping online. In bookstores, readers are open to trying new genres and new authors: it’s by far the best way for new works to be discovered. (Turow, 2012, paragraph 9)



While Turow laments the shifting tide of readers to e-books rather than print books, warning that this will mean undiscovered publications will likely remain unknown and unread, publishers who have made a successful transition into independent and digital publishing criticize him for basing his conclusions on an attachment to outdated publishing strategies (Masnick, 2013). The digital domain not only offers new methods for discovery, it requires them. Research similar to this thesis would offer publishers methods to make the transition with readers' attention intact and more fully engaged than ever.

Though sales in e-books have risen while sales for print books have slowly declined, the answer does not lie in abandoning print books for e-books. "While the e-book segment has experienced large growth in the past few years, analysts claim that few new readers have been created—the segment's growth is due to 'siphoning' off print book readers, and gains on the digital side are not making up for losses on the print side" (RWA, 2012, Industry Statistics). This trend holds true in general, and for the mystery genre in particular. Sisters in Crime, an organization dedicated to disseminating information about the genre and its readers, conducted a study on book buying preferences. Their study yielded similar conclusions. "E-books as a percent of units purchased of mystery books grew to 7% in second quarter (Q2) while sales of hardcover books declined by approximately the same rate" (Kulo & Bowker, 2010, p. 40). Before, publishers had the luxury of being able to analyze and adapt to the publishing market over long periods. Now, Angela Bole, Executive Director of the Book Industry Study Group, noted that "the e-book market is developing very quickly, with consumer attitudes and behavior changing over the course of months, rather than years" (Dempsey, 2012). To increase sales, this thesis advocates utilizing the data-mining techniques afforded by content analysis of successful publications, with future research incorporating data yielded from tracking e-book reader habits.

Though most mystery readers are over fifty years old, purchase books in physical bookstores, and prefer not to read e-books, the number of people over fifty years old who are willing to purchase books online and read e-books is steadily shifting as resistance to technology and the capacity to purchase books in physical bookstores diminishes (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 6). The content analysis conducted in this study benefits publications in any media form, including print and digital, but can most directly benefit publications searched for in the digital realm. The primary benefit would best suit anyone writing mystery stories, and could create an indirect benefit, that of popularity, simply by helping authors produce better books.

Some hesitate to embrace a data-driven approach, worried that this “could hinder the kinds of creative risks that produce great literature” (Alter, 2012, paragraph 14). Jonathan Galassi, president and publisher of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, says content development “is something the reader shouldn't have anything to do with... We're not going to shorten 'War and Peace' because someone didn't finish it” (Alter, 2012, paragraph 14). Further, pressure may funnel from the top down for authors to violate their artistic integrity for the sake of selling more books. Indeed, numerous authors already write for the masses, churning out title after title. Writers concerned only with profit, not with art, will always exist, though, and the potential for them to abuse research such as this thesis should not dissuade authors from seeking to better ground their creative intuitions. Indeed, publishers and authors would do well to learn not only what has or has not worked for their predecessors, but to knowingly accept or reject what associated techniques might make their projects more competitive. Alter (2012), a journalist for *The Wall Street Journal* who regularly researches the publishing industry, says:

Many are skeptical that analytics can aid in the industry's ongoing battle to woo consumers who are increasingly distracted by games and social media. But at a time

when traditional publishers are losing ground to tech giants like Amazon and Apple, better analytics seem to offer tantalizing possibilities. (Alter, 2012, paragraph 15)

Competitors have already embraced these strategies and are delivering killing blows to publishers by more effectively competing for readers' attention. Publishers need to identify the elements that make up a successful book's execution if they want to create a value chain that provides readers with content solutions that do not waste readers' time (O'Leary, 2011, p. 215).

In that vein, this thesis suggests a radical approach similar to Clark's 2008 study of the mystery genre, which proposed that while authors are important, so are readers, and creating a book that serves both of their purposes is good for both (p. 22). This goes beyond commercial benefits, though it is hard to imagine an author not increasing sales if the proposed methodology proved effective. Readers pick up a book hoping for many things: entertainment, profound insights, a unique perspective; the list goes on. Above all, it seems to go without saying that readers hope for a good experience. The proposed research should offer writers not only a way to identify what elements contribute to successful fiction, but a way to incorporate those elements into their own stories.

Clark (2008) argued well for the scholarly study of genre fiction when she referred to early studies on the romance genre. Critics seem to relegate readers of genre fiction to a lower order, as though they are passive recipients, "unwitting cultural consumers who will be ideologically swayed by reading mysteries" (p. 23-24). It is as though these critics recognize the evolution of communications theory, which now views the audience as active participants in the communication network, but hold a special place for genre fiction readers as vestigial remnants of a passive system, even though that system has long since been demonstrated as an inaccurate picture of reality (McQuail, 2010, p. 67). Indeed, McQuail (2010) asserts popular culture in

general should not be “viewed as lacking originality, creativity or merit,” and celebrates it “for its meanings, cultural significance and expressive value” (p. 62). The very foundation of this thesis rests on the assumption that readers are active participants, and that an analysis of their preferred stories will help determine how to inspire high levels of reader participation.

The popularity of the mystery genre justifies focusing my thesis research on mystery fiction. The genre has consistently proven to be among the bestselling genres. Goldberg (2008), a successful writer in print and television, noted that *Publisher's Weekly* ranked mystery as the top selling genre, “accounting for 17% of all books sold” (Statistics Everywhere). Two years later, sales reports estimated the mystery genre earned almost \$700 million, beat only by religion/inspirational and romance genres (RWA, 2012, Industry Statistics). *Publisher's Weekly's* list of 2010 top fifteen bestselling books lists ten as mystery/thrillers (Maryles, 2011, p. 2). Clark's (2008) dissertation, focusing on a topic similar to the subject of this thesis, studied bestseller lists across the years and found that “more mysteries appear on the *New York Times* bestseller list than books from any other genre, including literary fiction” (p. 3-4). Though Kulo et al.'s (2011) study showed that over half of mystery readers are female and over age fifty-five, large segments of the readership span across gender and age ranges (p. 7). Further, Clark's (2008) study showed that while readership is low in general, “mystery fans read anywhere from one to fifteen mysteries a month, far surpassing the average American in books read” (p. 4). With high sales among so much of the population, research for the mystery genre would have wide applications, including domain transfer for isolated demographics when replicating the research for other genres.

Clark's (2008) and Sister's in Crime's (2011) studies pioneered research focused on understanding readers of the mystery genre, but both studies focused on buying behaviors and

general reading preferences rather than more concentrated research to isolate the textual and plot clusters inherent to successful genre fiction. The observed effects of distinct text and plot clusters on target audiences would support “the point that [literary appeal] is not an absolute quality” (Mahlberg, 2007, p. 27). Without an agreed upon reference point that can then be quantified with objective measurements, insisting that writing in one way rather than another lacks any rigorous justification. Different elements presented in different combinations make the difference between a good story no one wants to read and a book that becomes a classic (Morgan, 2011, p. 3). Refined textual and plot clusters, when in “the presence of an appropriate context” (Frisson & Pickering, 2007, p. 605), will enable writers to express provocative, even unfamiliar, concepts by framing them within audience specific preferences.

### Thesis and Research Questions

This thesis will validate how mystery literature is constructed within books that have achieved commercial or critical success. The primary research questions include:

Research question 1: What elements are most common in commercial and critical books?

Research question 2: What elements are distinct to commercial or critical books?

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To better formulate an efficient approach and methodology for a content analysis of the mystery genre, the researcher collected previous research into the mystery genre. Much of the found data described buying habits and self-reported consumer preferences, not an actual content analysis, but examining the previous research did inspire preliminary expectations for what data a content analysis might produce. To further refine the methodology for the content analysis, the researcher also examined the methodology used by previous researchers in narrative studies. Similar to the previous research into the mystery genre, the previous narrative research did not examine narratives through content analysis, but the research did offer several promising concepts on which to base a content analysis of mystery fiction narratives. Additional research was conducted into the Narrative Paradigm to ensure that the content analysis examined and interpreted data according to relevant theoretical concepts.

#### Previous Research into the Mystery Genre

The included table (Table 3.1) from Fister's study (2011) shows an exhaustive list of subgenres within the mystery genre (p. 8).

*Table 3.1. Variations Within the Mystery/Thriller Genre*

Amateur sleuth	Thriller	Legal thriller	Humorous
Culinary or craft	Police procedural	Private investigator	Psychological suspense
Romance suspense	Crime caper	Mystery with superpowers	Literary mystery
Noir	Historical mystery	Traditional mystery	Other

Many readers, particularly those under age fifty, do not distinguish between the subgenres (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 36). Primary analysis in this thesis will thus treat the subgenres as one genre, referred to throughout this proposal as “mystery.” Secondary analysis may demonstrate a convergence of popular constructions across the subgenres, or distinct differences for subgenre target audiences that self-reporting readers do not recognize.

While the proposed research might seem to threaten writers’ and editors’ confidence in traditional methodology, preliminary research demonstrates that conventional wisdom might hold true. Rather than overturn their decisions, the research may more than anything validate what successful professionals may feel they already know but cannot articulate. The research would not only offer the vocabulary to articulate their creative preferences, but would add persuasive power to their arguments for particular creative directions. For example, the *Sisters in Crime* study revealed that conventional wisdom often still applies.

Successful authors have become brand names that consumers recognize and seek. Covers attract and influence readers. Bestseller lists and reviews in traditional media create important author recognition. Prominent in-store placement results in sales. Familiarity with authors and their series characters encourages buyers to return to favorites. Blurbs by popular authors help create new authors. (Kulo et al., 2010, p. 42)

Many new promotional strategies for the digital domain, however, have proven to be lackluster at best. “Blogs, author mailings, and publisher websites” do not appear to bolster sales, while “word-of-mouth... targeted at specific demographics,” including “age, gender, and... regional sensibilities” shows promise (Kulo et al., 2010, p. 42). This research would be bolstered not only by identifying these target readers but also by offering them stories that take into consideration their sensibilities in ways previous constructions have never before been able to actively address. The study would isolate elements marketers can then utilize to create a campaign fully aligned with the book’s content. Many publishers dismiss quantified analysis when developing a book, but how much easier would it be to sell a book if the marketing department already knew what elements from the book to market, and to whom to market them? Answering this question could be a game changer (Morgan, 2011, p. 4).

Author branding is one area editors may need to reconsider when collaborating with authors and the marketing department. Conventional wisdom says that it is the story that matters, but readers state that they buy certain books for a reason other than the story, and that reason is most often the author. Many bestselling authors represent big name authors with established sales records. When correlated with Sisters in Crime’s study, the selling trends reveal that author recognition is a critical factor in book buyers’ purchase decisions. Indeed, readers stated that “the number one factor that determined how [they] became aware of books was found to be knowing [or] liking an author” (SinC, 2011). This is not bad news for new authors. “Mystery readers are markedly more open to new authors than most other readers, and they actively seek new books” (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 34). Even readers over 60, who showed more loyalty to authors they already liked, demonstrated a willingness to consider new authors if they received “some assurance from reviews or other sources that the author is worth trying” (Kulo et al., 2011, p.



34). Though male readers indicated a slight preference for male authors, “large majorities of men [said] that it doesn’t matter” (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 35). Other factors exerting heavy influence on reader preferences included whether or not a book was part of a series, if it received prominent display, and if it was recommended by a Book Club, Mystery Guild, or a friend or relative. In addition, matching up with conventional wisdom, readers selected a book’s cover as an important element influencing their purchase decision (Kalu et al., 2011, p. 29).

When it comes to preferences about the content itself, readers have reported clear preferences. Readers enjoy stories that are “relaxing, entertaining, puzzling, complex, tension filled, [and] scary” (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 34). In addition, readers want “absorbing plots, the attraction of solving a puzzle alongside a detective, and the triumph of justice” (Fister, 2011, p. 7). Those story elements vary in degree according to segments of the mystery reading audience. Though preferences tended to converge towards the middle, 36% of readers said they preferred stories in which “a certain amount of violence is to be expected, but the overall tone is positive” (Fister, 2011, p. 8). Sisters in Crime’s study showed that female readers under thirty enjoyed “romantic elements in their mystery,” and that men who read mystery show preferences for espionage and historical fiction. The majority of readers stated they enjoy reading mysteries to “solve puzzles and love surprises, thrills, and suspense” (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 37).

In a study researching narrative considerations for a cross-medial understanding of the mystery genre, Leiter (2009) defined the formal characteristics of mystery stories as those that involve a sleuth finding “clues left by a criminal and... [putting] them together to form the correct narrative of a crime” (p. 3). The author commands readers’ investment in a mystery plot by “withholding... the mystery-solution narrative until the end of the story (if indeed it is presented at all),” which “encourages at least parts of the audience to race the sleuth—and by

extension, the author—to put the narrative together more quickly” (Leiter, 2009, p. 3). In other words, the bulk of the narrative should contain a sense of uncertainty filled with ever-mounting clues that nevertheless defy logical configuration until the final piece falls into place. “As empirical studies of mystery have begun to illustrate, elements connected to this lack of a solution for much of the story are key to the enjoyment of mystery narratives” (Leiter, 2009, p. 7). The importance of an unresolved mystery is “such a key portion of mystery enjoyment” that authors who place too much emphasis on “successful resolution” will frustrate readers with premature satisfaction (Leiter, 2009, p. 8).

“Bormann’s symbolic convergence theory suggests” why certain constructions match an audience’s perception of a story’s narrative fidelity and coherence, and how that creates a sense of narrative validity. Constructions involve elements as broad as plot progressions and as specific as vocabulary, offering readers a “symbolic convergence” that guides them to “interpret the story in a similar way” (Leiter 2009, p. 11). It should be noted that while the research might reveal more distinctions among genres than similarities, the different narrative interpretations of similar stories may “overlap in parts with” target audiences for other genres (Leiter, 2009, p. 11), leading to subgenres, or the hybridization of genres. “These subgenres and hybridizations “are easily discovered by a broad review of the edges of the genre.” One prime example comes from “television’s House, MD, whose main character was consciously modeled on Sherlock Holmes,” and whose plots, though involving diseases rather than crimes, engage the audience through mystery conventions (Leiter, 2009, p. 12).

Another dominant strategy of successful mystery authors involves “eliciting performances from [readers]... The empathic processes involving a narrative’s audience member is ‘the way implied authors enable us to become implied readers out of unusual or even

downright alien viewpoints” (Leiter, 2009, p. 16). While empathic compulsions may not result in the reader integrating the alien identities or behaviors into their own lives—consider, for example, the eccentric but admirable sleuth, or the brilliant but despicable villain—stories with narrative validity do result in not only bypassing formal logic but in integrating preferred logic of the reader in such a way as to complement the emotional appeal. Through the “delay of the conclusion and the modeling of the detective work, readers of written mystery texts are encouraged to create their own narratives regarding the ultimate resolution of the mystery.” The story remains a story, but for the purposes of entertainment, feels real. And in the mystery genre, the “persuasive aspects of narrative are complicated,” because they go “beyond empathy with the characters” and engage “the audience in the narrative-creation process” (Leiter, 2009, p. 18).

A study by Hoffner (1996) made several relevant conclusions. Though the study focused on wishful identification and parasocial interactions with television characters, the isolated audience preferences distinct to self-identified gender-types might demonstrate a correlation with the results of my thesis. Hoffner’s study concluded that though women do not always favor female characters, allowing writers to make their lead male or female as they see fit, women do show a wishful identification preference with female characters. Women also showed an unusual wishful identification and parasocial interaction preference for female characters not with intelligence but humor and attractiveness. The latter may prove to be more influential when analyzing mystery stories with female lead and secondary characters, especially if secondary analysis revealed the book was primarily purchased by female consumers.

Other research analyzed how a narrative storytelling style affected how readers perceive a story. Though the research focused on utilizing a narrative style in a non-fiction context, research outside the mystery genre would allow a statistical analysis controlling for genre, and this might

reveal what constructions work best when stories are told in a narrative rather than expository form, what the referenced study referred to as a “hard news” style (Zerba, 2008, p. 98-99). Additional research on story structure concluded that stories following an inverted pyramid rather than a chronological structure require more cognitive resources from readers, but also lead to deeper willed immersion (Sternadonia & Wise, p. 21-22). While it makes sense that a non-chronological narrative requires more cognitive resources to follow, because readers must piece together non-linear narratives into an abstract chronological view, a content analysis of successful mystery genre stories needs to clarify whether successful mystery stories incorporate common occurrences of obtrusively or unobtrusively predictable progressions.

Preliminary research into readership for different genres shows that successful mystery stories should contain constructions whose integration in other genres would lead to similar success. For example, men who read history also tend to read science fiction and fantasy, and women under 30 who read mysteries also “tend to read romance, science fiction and fantasy,” and “[m]ystery readers in their 30’s also read literary fiction” (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 42). Converging constructions may occur because “[m]any readers are trying to solve a puzzle and relish the plot twists and turns that keep them guessing until the end” (Kulo et al., 2011, p. 43). Sue Grafton, in the 2002 mystery writing handbook by the MWA, says:

“The mystery is the one form in which the reader and the writer are pitted against each other. Your job... is to lay out a believable tale of intrigue and ingenuity... always with the proviso that you play fair with the reader, who in turn will be doing his best to catch you at your tricks. You would do well, incidentally, to assume your reader is at least as smart as you” (Leiter, 2009, p. 23).

This supports the conclusion that authors, at least when writing for anyone other than themselves, must consider more than whether or not a story pleases themselves. Unless the story takes into account what constructions have previously enabled books to thrive, the writer will have no clear sense of how to construct mysteries that cannot too easily be solved.

### Previous Narrative Research

Utilizing content analysis in book publishing will add the quantitative measure necessary to balance qualitative textual analysis. This combined analytical approach will produce isolated contextual elements that allow writers and editors to craft content tailored to audience preferences. Thus context would frame content, enabling writers to make informed creative decisions (Morgan, 2012, p. 3). Though practitioners in language studies assert “that at the level of characterizing the nature of a human language, intuitions are not reliable” (Kachru, 2008, p. 1), my thesis suggests that intuitions and conventional wisdom of successful writers and editors may prove to be valid. Validating what constructions are inherent to successful mystery stories will not somehow invalidate the good work already being done. The research will help successful professionals understand what components they may only intuitively understand contribute to their success, give them the vocabulary to articulate what their expertise demands, and course-correct any conclusions that book and reader studies do not support.

A recent study analyzing the narrative aspects of stories told by people with full brain function and impaired brain function presented a workable methodology for using content analysis to investigate the narrative validity of an author’s story. The study suggests two key coding elements: story grammar and story completeness. “Story grammar knowledge refers to the purported regularities in the internal structure of stories that guide an individual’s comprehension and production of the logical relationships—temporal and causal—between

people and events” (Lé, Coelho, Mozeiko, & Grafman, 2011, p. 118). Similar to Leiter’s (2009) distinction for elements that evoke incomplete narratives (p. 6), a story can contain many of the “grammar” elements found in complete stories without evoking a complete story. On the other hand, Lé et al.’s (2011) study suggests that complete stories are made up of episodes, and though a story may be “composed of complete episodes,” a story will not resonate as “good” unless it incorporates enough necessary story grammar elements (p. 119).

Lé et al. (2011) developed a coding procedure to isolate narrative elements that were “logical and not bound by specific content” (Lé et al., 2011, p. 118).

“The generation of a complete episode requires (a) the identification of an initiating event or goal, (b) an attempt at achieving the goal, and (c) a direct consequence marking attainment or nonattainment of the goal” (Lé et al., 2011, p. 119).

The researchers then segmented the stories into T-units, otherwise known as minimal terminal units, which is “a main clause and any attached or embedded dependent clauses” (Lé et al., 2011, p. 120). The proportion of T-units within each story was determined by calculating the number of complete episodes, with complete episodes defined as an episode that included “an initiating event that prompts a character to act, an attempt related to the initiating event, and a direct consequence of the attempt” (Lé et al., 2011, p. 120). An episode was coded as incomplete if it did not incorporate all three episode components, such as if a character initiated but did not resolve an event. The episode count allowed for determination of the story grammar measure of interest, which was the proportion of T-units within episode structure. Two dimensions, organization and completeness, guided the researchers’ identification of “logical relationships (temporal and causal) between people and events” (Lé et al., 2011, p. 120).

Lé et al.'s study (2011) compiled an inventory of similar events and characters distributed throughout each story to isolate "actions and events into distinct components... Components that were mentioned by 80% or more of the comparison group were considered to be critical to the story" (p. 120). In their study, the two groups consisted of subjects with and without brain trauma. Healthy subjects and unhealthy subjects were asked to narrate a previously heard story. Once an inventory was created, a secondary analysis would look at each story on an individual level to calculate completeness scores based on "the total number of critical components" present (Lé et al., 2011, p. 121). It bears repeating that using a similar grounding for a content analysis of the mystery genre will require an analysis of story grammar as well as story completeness, because the presence of completeness or story grammar alone can lead to misleading results. In Lé et al.'s (2011) study, had the participants' results been viewed without comparison and aggregated statistics from story completeness and grammar, the results would have misrepresented each story's narrative validity. In their study, over 70% of the examples included satisfactory grammar or completeness when each trait was analyzed in isolation, but fewer than 25% of the narratives from unhealthy subjects included satisfactory amounts of both traits.

A similar coding scheme as Lé et al.'s study (2011) proved useful for the research conducted in the present study. Their study coded story grammar with the following codes: "IE = initiating event, A= attempt, DC = direct consequence, NS = no score," with various elements not incorporated if they did not fit a clear definition of each elements (p. 126). For more information about how the research was conducted, please refer to the Approach and Methods section.

### The Narrative Paradigm

Often seen in politics and advertising messages, the Narrative Paradigm enables communicators to have more predictable influence over an audience by framing messages within the conventions that match a target audience's preferences. If a message attains narrative fidelity and narrative coherence, it produces narrative validity. Levels of fidelity and coherence directly correlate with how receptive an audience is to a message. Narrative coherence and narrative fidelity "[refer] to formal features of a story conceived as a sequence of thought and/or action in life or literature... [and] concerns the question of whether or not a story coheres or 'hangs together,' [and] whether or not the story is free of contradictions" (Fisher, 1985, p. 349). In other words, the audience asks whether or not the presented elements remain consistent, and how likely a story is to have happened based on relation to their own experiences.

When looking at what other theories the narrative paradigm informs, one sees how firmly the theory is based in cultural studies. The paradigm asks communicators to consider how every element, including "offstage" elements not meant for audience consumption, and how the mental models audiences bring with them, affect how an audience interprets communication. By keeping relative cultural models in mind, the narrative paradigm helps communicators to "overcome the twin twentieth-century problems of subjectivity and pluralism" (Mildorf, 2004, p. 220), enabling communicators to remain objective and advocate the significance of diverse mental models. Systems of analysis for narrative discourse become relativistic if the principles grounding the analysis are arbitrary rather than based on objective measurements of reality. By basing the analysis on empirical research that defines a representative group of readers and the books they read, the analysis can lead to a valid and reliable methodology to understand and innovate on how the identified readers perceive and prefer narratives to be told.



All communication is imbued with “myth and metaphor, and aesthetic discourse has cognitive capacity and import” (Fisher, 1985, p. 347). Even when communication expresses non-narrative information, audiences interpret the communication’s incorporated rhetoric by symbolically interpreting the data as “good and evil characters, scenes, and exemplary dialogue. Facts do not speak for themselves, nor do events” (Scott, 1984, p. 198). Even communicators who seek to present information in a non-narrative form, such as in descriptive rather than narrative historical texts, present the information in an unconscious narrative form. Similarly, the audience cannot help but interpret the data within a narrative structure (Scott, 1984, p. 198).

According to Fisher, the ability to test for narrative validity supersedes logical assessment. People learn how to test for narrative validity long before they learn argumentation, and this method of discerning credibility remains a powerful element in persuasive discourse by offering us a means to determine credibility when we have, and arguably do not need, any other available method of verification. Testing for narrative validity proves all the more credible in fiction publications. Logical arguments for why a story deserves acclaim do not cause audiences to prefer that story. A story resonates with an audience because it has a high level of narrative validity. The Narrative Paradigm therefore provides communicators with an alternative model “that transcends the rigidities of linear rational framework” (Hanan, 2008, p. 3).

The interpretative framework would enable the researcher to focus on what stories and their combinative elements mean to readers rather than attempting to understand why stories take on those meanings. Why readers attach those meanings might prove important for other studies, but the proposed research would only seek to validate what constructions contribute to well-received stories. Similarly to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch’s (1973) proposition that “patterns of media use are shaped by more or less definite expectations of what certain kinds of content have

to offer the audience member” (p. 510-511), my research suggests that different genres work under sometimes shared but often different rules, because readers come to stories with different expectations based on a book’s characteristic contents, typical attributes, and a reader’s typical exposure situations (Katz et al., 1973, p. 514).

Critics of narrative theory demand a narrower definition of what narrative is. Fisher said that every form of communication can be considered a narrative, or would be reconstituted by an audience into a narrative. Leiter (2009) suggests “a useful distinction between something that is structurally a narrative and an element that possesses narrativity—that is, possessing the ability to evoke a full narrative in the audience member’s mind” (p. 6). In other words, all communications possess the power to evoke “narratives in people’s mind, but only certain subsets within those forms are full narratives in a formal sense” (Leiter, 2009, p. 6). Distinguishing what elements possess narrative power and which combine to form a full narrative leads to the methodology of the conducted content analysis.

## CHAPTER 3

### APPROACH/METHODS

The approach and methods section provides an overview for what books the content analysis analyzed. This section also explains the concepts and processes that formed the basis for the content analysis.

#### Sample Selection

The primary sample came from the Mystery Guild's bestseller list. The sample was compiled at the beginning of November and compared against immediate Amazon sales and consumer rating metrics for books published in the Mystery genre. The Mystery Guild builds its bestseller list off units of sale from its members' purchases. The top four books on the Mystery Guild's bestseller list included:

- 1) *NYPD Red*, by James Patterson
- 2) *The Bone Bed*, by Patricia Cornwell
- 3) *Zoo*, by James Patterson
- 4) *The Racketeer*, by John Grisham.

To produce greater authorial diversity among the top three sellers, *Zoo* was removed from the sample so as to include John Grisham's *The Racketeer* in the studied sample (TMG, 2012, Bestsellers).

At the time the sample was drawn, *NYPD Red* (Kindle Edition) ranked in Amazon sales as #4 in Amazon's top 100 in the category for Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense, and had spent more than 106 days in that spot (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Kindle). For comparison, the book was

ranked as #125 in the general Books category. Amazon did not state how long the book had spent ranked at #125 because the site only reports how long a book has held its status if it is in the top 100 (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Print).

*The Bone Bed* (Kindle Edition) ranked #12 in Amazon's top 100 in the category for Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense, and had spent more than 33 days in that spot (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Kindle). For comparison, the book ranked #4 in the subcategory Medical among books in Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense, and #107 among total Books. Amazon did not state how long the book had spent ranked at #107 because Amazon only reports how long a book has held its status if it is in the top 100 (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Print).

*The Racketeer*, Kindle Edition, ranked in Amazon sales as #1 in Amazon's top 100 in the category for Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense, and had spent more than 151 days in that spot. It ranked as #9 in total Books, #2 among Legal mysteries, #11 in Suspense mysteries, #20 in Literary, and had spent 103 days in Amazon's Top 100 for total Books (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Kindle). For comparison, the Hardcover Edition ranked as #25 in Amazon's top 100 in the category for Mystery, Thriller, and Suspense, and had spent more than 102 days in that spot (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Print).

A second sample was drawn to study Mystery publications that appreciated critical acclaim but did not experience bestseller status. The sample consisted of Edgar Award winners for the last three years. The Edgar Award is considered one of the most prestigious honors awarded to writers in the Mystery genre (Omnimystery, 2012). Further research, referencing Amazon and each author's stated list of commercial and critical successes, guaranteed that the selected critical sample had not appreciated bestseller status.

The last three Edgar winners included:

2012) *Gone*, by Mo Hayder (best novel)

2011) *The Lock Artist*, by Steve Hamilton (best novel)

2010) *The Last Child*, by John Hart

As a comparative measure, the current sales rankings for these books were as follows:

*Gone*, Kindle Edition, ranked in Amazon sales as #14,953 in Amazon's paid Kindle store. For comparison, the Hardcover Edition ranked as #463,774 in Amazon's total Books (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Print).

*The Lock Artist*, Kindle Edition, ranked in Amazon sales as #17,143 in Amazon's paid Kindle store. For comparison, the Hardcover Edition ranked as #30,331 in Amazon's total Books (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Print).

*The Last Child*, Kindle Edition, ranked in Amazon sales as #10,373 in Amazon's paid Kindle store. For comparison, the Hardcover Edition ranked as #304,950 in Amazon's total Books (Amazon, 2012, Top 100 Print).

#### Methodology for Content Analysis

The next stage of the study involved creating a code sheet detailing the categories and variables to select when analyzing the sample. The final prepared code book utilized five separate categories: Perspectives, Initial Crime, Characters, Chapters, Story Arcs, and Clues. The Results and Discussion portion of this paper presents qualifications for each variable included in the code book.

The code book went through several drafts as analysis progressed, causing some categories to evolve or be discarded. For example, the initial code book included a section called Episodes, and called upon the researcher to note the chapter and page number of each distinct

scene throughout the book, as well as to include a subjective summary of what occurred in each episode. After coding for the first book in the sample, it became apparent that coding for Episodes would be so time consuming as to restrict the remaining time available to analyze other components of the narrative. The Episodes section developed into Story Arcs, which allowed the researcher to still isolate meaningful, though broader, relationships between scenes. The Story Arc data, noting what chapter each respective element of a Story Arc appeared in, will allow future analysis to return to the same sample and quickly resume analysis of Episodes.

The Clues category took special reference from the “Clues” section of Moretti’s (1983) book *Signs Taken for Wonders*. Moretti notes that the clue may be defined as a “symptom” or “trace,” not necessarily as a fact. A clue acts as a metonymic device, inspiring revelation through “contiguity (related to the past), for which the detective must furnish the missing term.” An effective clue serves as “the link between signifier and signified,” producing “*numerous* suspicions” (Moretti, 1983, p. 146). Not all suspicions may prove to be relevant, though, and this study’s code book distinguished red herrings from legitimate clues, potentially identifying clues that actively inspire suspicions dependent upon their place in the narrative and specific to the author’s intent.

The analysis stage required categories to be completed in a certain order. Some could not be included until a complete read-through of the book being coded. Chapters were coded on the first read-through of each book. Similarly, the Initial Crime could be coded almost always as soon as it was mentioned. For the Characters category, character names and any immediately available details were coded during the first read-through, but because the Characters code sheet asks for information that can only be identified after completing the book, most character information could only be coded on a second read-through. For example, though a character may

obviously be the hero, if the identity of the villain remains a mystery for the majority of the book, most secondary character roles cannot be finalized until an initial reading confirms whether or not any of those characters are the villain. The second read-through to identify character information was expedited by utilizing the search function available in e-reader applications. The code sheet also asks if the characters experienced some profound change by the end of the story, a variable that cannot be coded until one has read the ending for that character.

Similarly, Story Arcs could not be completely coded until at least one read-through. Some information had to be collected during each initial reading, however, by writing a summary of each chapter's plot points. The summaries were then used to separate primary and secondary plot points into distinct story arcs, as well as to code for chapter placement of the story arcs.

Most portions of the Clues code sheet could be coded on an initial read-through, but coding for whether or not a clue was legitimate or a red herring could not be determined until at least one complete read-through. The code sheet also asked for the coder to describe the identified clue, but this data was set aside for future analysis.

Finally, Perspectives could not be coded until one complete read-through. Waiting to code for the included perspectives proved to be wise. Though one might expect that a book told through the first-person perspective of its hero would be told exclusively through that perspective, one book utilizing first-person for the hero also used third-person for a number of secondary characters, including the villain.

Once code sheets were completed for each book, the code book was replicated in Qualtrics surveys for analysis. Due to the limited sample size, most analysis focused on frequency distributions, though some cross tabulations were conducted when relevant. Though

statistical significance could not be reliably calculated or generalized, meaningful relationships were found for the analyzed sample.

As mentioned previously, multiple components of the finalized code book or the coded data was set aside for future research and analysis. For more information on what was set aside and how it could be used in future research, please see the Future Research section.

The full code book template is included in Appendix B. Some components that were coded for but not included in the analysis remain in the code book template. Please refer to the Limitations sections of this study for discussion on why portions of data were put aside for analysis in future research.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section analyzes the data produced by the content analysis. The content analysis focused on specific categories: perspectives, characters, initial crime, chapters, story arcs, and clues. Where necessary, the data analysis includes definitions and qualifications for the isolated variables.

#### Perspectives

As shown in Table 5.1, *NYPD Red* and *The Racketeer* set a standard for the commercial sample by utilizing both limited third person as well as limited first person. The hero character in both novels delivered a limited first-person narrative, while a variety of secondary characters delivered limited third-person narratives. It would be useful to note in a larger sample whether or not this trend holds true for commercial books in general. Traditionally, first person narratives are seen as liberating but restricting in that while they offer a deeper perspective into the book's main character, choosing to tell the story through first person means the writer cannot relate any events from a secondary character's perspective. If the story is told through first person, it is only told through first person, or it is not told through first-person at all.

Table 5.1. Distribution of Perspectives Throughout Total Sample

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Perspective (select all used within story)	Omniscient	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Limited	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
	Single POV	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Multiple POV	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
	First person	1	1	1	0	1	0	4
	Second person	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Third person	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Total		1	1	1	1	1	1	6

In *NYPD Red*, the author used the hero, the villain, and secondary characters to narrate the story. When told from the hero's perspective, the narrative was told through first person. When events were narrated from any other perspective, the story was told from third person. Similarly, in *The Racketeer* the hero and a variety of secondary characters narrated the story from a mixture of first and third person perspectives. When narrating from the hero's perspective, the author wrote in first person. When narrating from any other character's perspective, the author wrote in third person. *The Bone Bed* did not switch between character perspectives. Though it incorporated a variety of characters in the story, the author told the story only from the first person perspective of the hero.

In the critical sample, only one book used Single POV, the first-person novel *The Lock Artist*. Compared to the commercial sample, which liberally mixed first-person and third-person perspectives within the same book, critical books held true to one standard. If a story was told through third person, the author told the story through multiple points of view. If the author began narration through a first person perspective, the author committed to telling the story only

through that character's perspective. All of the critical books utilized a limited perspective. Only one book, *The Lock Artist*, told the story through first person.

All books analyzed used limited perspectives (Table 5.2). None of the books sampled were told through an omniscient or second person perspective. Two thirds used a third person perspective, while one third used a first person perspective. Two thirds of the books used multiple character perspectives to tell the story. While it might be hypothesized that whether or not a book was part of a series could influence the author's decision to tell the story from first person or third person, only one book in the sample qualified as part of a series, *The Bone Bed*, part of Patricia Cornwell's *Kate Scarpetta* series.

Table 5.2. Distribution of Perspectives Throughout Total Sample

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Omniscient		0	0%
2	Limited		6	100%
3	Single POV		2	33%
4	Multiple POV		4	67%
5	First person		4	67%
6	Second person		0	0%
7	Third person		4	67%

### Characters

Table 5.3 displays how many characters were included in every book sampled. For the purposes of this study, analysis only considered major and secondary characters. Commercial books, perhaps lending themselves to easier accessibility and fewer details for the reader to track, contained fewer total characters. *The Racketeer* featured as few as 11 characters, and *NYPD Red* featured 12 characters. *The Bone Bed* included 16 characters, as much as 5% more than the other

commercial books. The disparity with the other commercial books perhaps comes from each author's target audiences, as well as each author's writing styles.

*Table 5.3. Distribution of Characters Throughout Total Sample*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	NYPD Red	12	11%
2	The Racketeer	11	10%
3	The Bone Bed	16	15%
4	Gone	24	22%
5	The Lock Artist	24	22%
6	The Last Child	22	20%
	Total	109	100%

When coding for the role of a character, the qualifications were narrow enough to allow for easy identification. The hero role was assigned to the main protagonist. While some of the books featured secondary characters in heroic roles, if the story was not told primarily through his or her perspective, they were coded as secondary. A character qualified as a villain if he or she was the primary antagonist responsible for the crime on which the plot focused. All other characters were coded as secondary. Characters that only appeared for brief moments, such as a few pages out of the entire book, were not considered. If they had been coded for, they would have been coded as tertiary characters. Future research should consider expanding the character code sheets to code for all characters, including tertiary characters.

For the total sample, primary and secondary characters totaled 109 characters (Table 5.4). Out of that sample, only 6% were heroes. The villains coded at over one quarter higher a percentage of total characters, coming in at 8%, or six heroes and nine villains. Victims composed an unusually high percentage of the total characters used, coming in at 26 characters, or 24%. An analysis of the individual books will reveal why the total composition number for

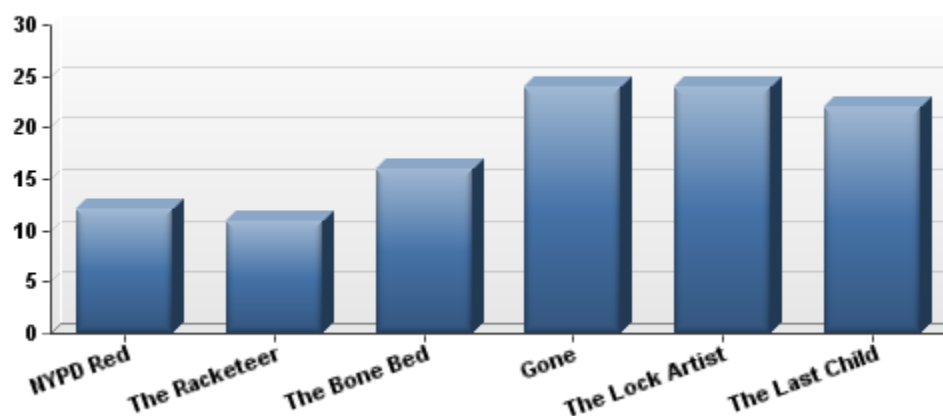
characters coded as victims might be misleading. For example, if one book presented an abnormally high number of victims, that total would skew results for the total composition.

Finally, secondary characters totaled 68 characters, or 62% of the total composition.

*Table 5.4.* Distribution of Character Roles Throughout Total Sample

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		6	6%
2	Villain		9	8%
3	Victim		26	24%
4	Secondary		68	62%
	Total		109	100%

*Figure 5.2.* Distribution of Character Roles Throughout Total Sample



For the commercial and critical sample, characters were coded as heroes with an equal distribution (Table 5.5). Each book coded as having one hero per book. For the commercial sample, *NYPD Red* coded as having two villains. It should be noted that one of those villains acts not as a primary villain but as the main villain's accomplice and might therefore be considered a

secondary character. However, her active role in the villain's crimes compels her distinction as a secondary villain. In addition, *The Racketeer* did not include a villain at all. The book presented a plot structure unique to the genre by not incorporating a villain proper. The main character serves as the hero, but he does not seek to solve a mystery. Instead, the mystery revolves around the hero's true goals and motives, both of which seem transparent from the beginning of the book, but are later revealed as red herrings. All of the commercial books included multiple victims. Whatever crime occurred, the commercial books never limited the number of people who suffered to only one person. Finally, secondary characters outnumbered all other characters by almost two to one. Their higher number comes as no surprise, since it would be unusual for the book to be populated with high numbers of heroes, villains, and victims.

For the critical sample, two books coded for one villain each, while the third book, *The Last Child*, coded for five villains. The higher number of villains stems from the revelation at the end of the book that multiple secondary characters were equally involved in the crime. *Gone* represented an unusual spike in number of victims, almost triple the number of the next highest book. While all of the books portrayed repeated crimes, such as multiple murders occurring within the story, *Gone* included a higher numbers of victims due to its focus on a villain kidnapping children. In this case, the children as well as the parents were coded as victims. Finally, in *The Lock Artist*, secondary characters spiked to almost double the number of the next highest book. The high number of secondary characters may come from the constantly changing locations and changing sets of characters throughout the book. The main character leaves one location for another multiple times throughout the book, and each time encounters a new set of secondary characters.

*Table 5.5. Character Role Distributions for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Role of character	Hero	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
	Villain	2	0	1	1	1	5	9
	Victim	3	2	4	11	2	4	26
	Secondary	7	8	10	11	20	12	68
Total		12	11	16	24	24	22	109

The next phase of character analysis focused on when, by whom, and what types of descriptions of characters were given. As shown in Tables 5.6 and 5.7, most of the character descriptions were delivered at the same time that the character appeared. In other words, a character was most often introduced and described at the same time. In 25% of the total sample, characters were introduced into the story before they appeared as active characters. In addition, correlating with the low number of heroes and villains from which the author might tell the story, most of the character descriptions were given by a character other than the one being described. The authors often included a large list of characters, but because the stories were told through a limited number of character perspectives, most character descriptions were almost always given by a different character than the one being described.

*Table 5.6. When Character Descriptions Are Given for Total Sample*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Before the character appears	26	25%
2	At the same time the character appears	79	75%
	Total	105	100%

Table 5.7. When Character Descriptions Are Given for Each Book

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Description of the character given:	Before the character appears	4	5	7	3	5	2	26
	At the same time the character appears	8	6	9	18	19	19	79
	Total	12	11	16	21	24	21	105

Table 5.8. Which Character Delivers the Description for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Another character	94	88%
2	Same character being described	13	12%
	Total	107	100%

Table 5.9. Which Character Delivers the Description for Each Book

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Description given by	Another character	9	10	15	19	23	18	94
	Same character being described	3	1	1	4	1	3	13
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	21	107

As shown in Table 5.10, additional analysis revealed that most of the descriptions across the total sample are given through exposition rather than dialogue. It was hypothesized that some descriptions might be delivered through dialogue, perhaps to disguise that they were communicating exposition, but out of the entire sample, seven descriptions were given through dialogue, with one hundred given through exposition. To compare the commercial and critical samples, out of the commercial books, only 2 characters out of 39 were described through dialogue. Out of the critical books, 5 out of 63 characters were described through dialogue.



Though the bigger numbers shown for the critical books might make it appear as though the disparity between the commercial and critical books is large, Table 5.11 shows that the ratio of characters described through dialogue calculates to just over 5% for the commercial books and almost 8% for the critical books.

*Table 5.10.* Character Descriptions Given Through Dialogue or Exposition for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Dialogue	7	7%
2	Exposition	100	93%
	Total	107	100%

*Table 5.11.* Character Descriptions Given Through Dialogue or Exposition for Individual Samples

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Description given through	Dialogue	0	0	2	1	3	1	7
	Exposition	12	11	14	22	21	20	100
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	21	107

The next stage of analysis examined whether or not a character had a direct connection with another character, and if so with whom. Characters qualified as having a direct connection if they shared a professional or personal connection that required them to regularly interact. As shown in Table 5.12, a high proportion of characters from the total sample had no connection to any other character. The character most often connected to other characters was the Hero. The second most often connected character was the victim, followed by the villain. The last figure makes sense when contextualized. Though villains might often share some sort of connection with the hero or victims, most often these connections are tenuous or non-existent.

For example, in the commercial sample, two villains in *NYPD Red* have direct connections to other characters, but the two villains are connected to each other, thus making this connection insignificant. No other book in the commercial sample presented a villain as having a connection with other characters. In the critical sample, one villain in *Gone* and one villain in *The Last Child* had a connection to another character. In both cases, the villain's connection was to the hero or a heroic secondary character. It should also be noted that one book out of the critical sample did not feature a villain with a connection to anyone. The lack of connection stems from the novel not featuring a proper villain. In *The Last Child*, the main character is an anti-hero, both a thief as well as the protagonist, causing the book to code as not having a villain.

*Table 5.12.* Characters Who Have Connections to Other Characters for Total Sample

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		31	29%
2	Villain		4	4%
3	Victim		13	12%
4	No connection		59	55%
	Total		107	100%

Figure 5.3. Characters Who Have Connections to Other Characters for Total Sample

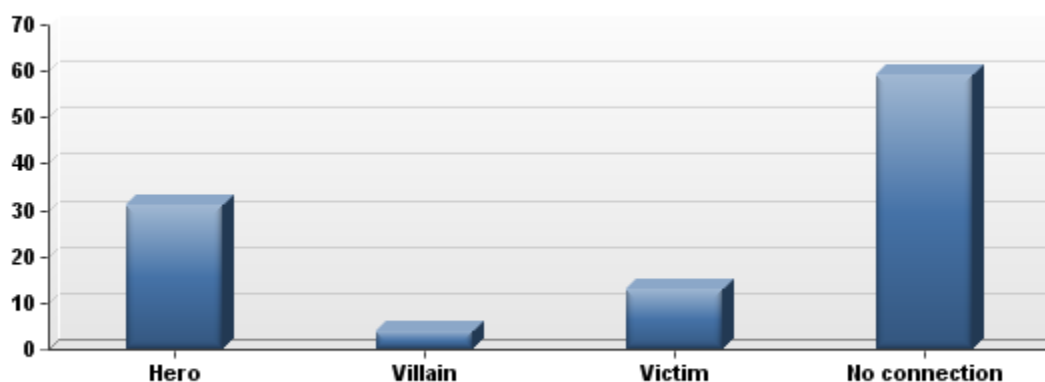


Table 5.13. Characters Who Have Connections to Other Characters for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Character has direct connection to:	Hero	4	4	5	5	5	8	31
	Villain	2	0	0	1	0	1	4
	Victim	1	0	2	9	0	1	13
	No connection	5	7	9	8	19	11	59
Total		12	11	16	23	24	21	107

In addition, descriptions in the total sample tended to give physical rather than personal details (Table 5.14). A detail qualified as physical if it related to a physical trait, such as hair color, clothing worn, or weight. A detail qualified as personal if it related to an intangible characteristic, such as the character's personality, their relationship with another character, or employment. A small number of characters were given no descriptive details other than their names. Looking only at the commercial sample, over three times as many characters were described through personal details rather than physical details. For example, in *NYPD Red*, characters are shown as sexually appealing not by describing characters as attractive but by

showing characters being attracted to them. In the critical sample, the numbers showed a more equitable ratio, only close to two times as many personal details as physical details, but the majority of characters were still described through personal details, not physical details (Table 5.15).

*Table 5.14.* Description of Characters Given Through Physical or Personal Details for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Physical details	40	38%
2	Personal details	83	78%
3	No details given	11	10%

*Table 5.15.* Description of Characters Given Through Physical or Personal Details for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Kind of details description communicates	Physical details	4	2	3	12	6	13	40
	Personal details	6	10	13	18	17	19	83
	No details given	2	0	3	1	5	0	11
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

In addition, further analysis examined whether or not the connections were public or private. As shown in Table 5.16, out of the total sample, the overwhelming majority of connections between characters were public. However, referring to Table 5.17 reveals some interesting exceptions. In the commercial sample, *The Racketeer* incorporated two-thirds more private connections than the other books. The disparity resulted from *The Racketeer* executing a

plot that kept many connections between characters hidden from others, including the reader. In the critical sample, *The Last Child* used no private connections, instead presenting a mystery that relied on characters having transparent and obvious connections with each other. Showing the characters as having transparent and obvious connections with each other caused the hero and the reader to experience greater difficulty when attempting to discern who might have secrets, and who might result in being the villain.

Table 5.16. Nature of Character's Connection to Another Character for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Public	34	76%
2	Private	11	24%
	Total	45	100%

Table 5.17. Nature of Character's Connection to Another Character for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If connected to another character, nature of connection	Public	6	1	6	11	2	8	34
	Private	1	3	1	3	3	0	11
	Total	7	4	7	14	5	8	45

As shown in Table 5.18, when looking at the total sample, around half of all characters broke the law. Future analysis would isolate how many of these characters who broke laws were categorized as heroes or heroic secondary characters. Isolating commercial and critical samples revealed that more characters in the commercial sample did not break the law than those who did. However, in the critical sample, the distribution of characters that broke the law compared to those who did not came up almost even, with 31 who broke the law and 36 who did not (Table 5.19). The more equal distribution in critical books suggests that critical books may deal in anti-

heroes more than straightforward heroes. In other words, characters in critical books may have more ambiguous natures and morals, such that they sometimes break the law to protect the people they care for.

*Table 5.18.* Distribution of Characters Who Broke the Law for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		45	42%
2	No		61	58%
	Total		106	100%

*Table 5.19.* How Many Characters Broke the Law for Individual Samples

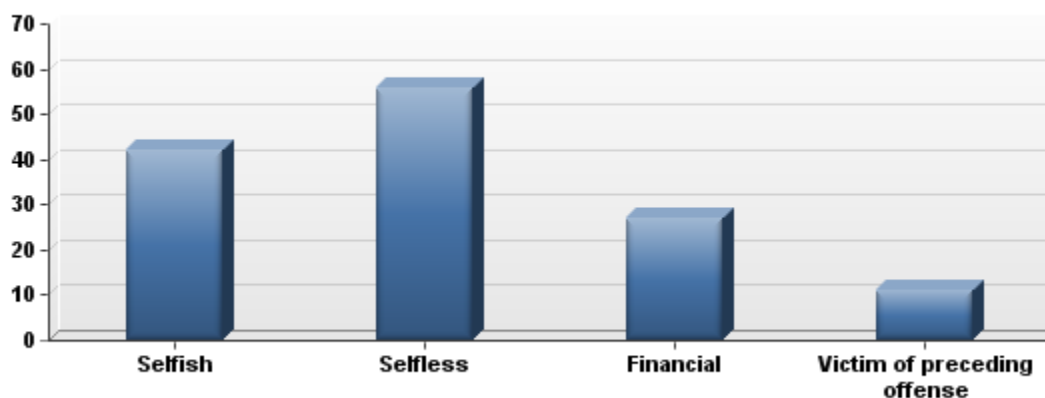
		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Character breaks the law	Yes	3	5	6	5	15	11	45
	No	9	6	10	18	9	9	61
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

Coding for motivations allowed for multiple motivations to be coded per character. For example, a character could exhibit selfish and selfless motivations, and so the coding permitted distinct or multiple motivations to be assigned to each character. Motivations for characters varied almost evenly between being selfless or selfish. The coding allowed for multiple motivations. Around 25% of characters acted for financial reasons. 11% of characters, usually the villains, were victims of a preceding offense, hence their motivation for committing what was, to them, a justified crime of retribution (Table 5.20 and Figure 5.4).

*Table 5.20. Character Motivations for Total Sample*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Selfish	42	40%
2	Selfless	56	54%
3	Financial	27	26%
4	Victim of preceding offense	11	11%

*Figure 5.4. Character Motivations for Total Sample*



Isolating for commercial books and comparing the total characters with the distribution of motivations, just under half of the number of characters exhibited selfish motivations. Over half of the characters exhibited selfless motivations. Less than a third exhibited financial motivations, and around 15% were victims of preceding offenses. Since the characters who tended to be victims of preceding offenses were categorized as villains, it comes as no surprise that such a small portion of characters would be motivated by a prior offense.

Isolating for critical books, the trend remained for selflessly motivated characters, with just under half exhibiting motivations categorized as selfless. The trend continued when examining characters who acted under selfish motivations. Less than 25% of characters were motivated by financial reasons. However, victims of preceding offenses took a steep drop to

under 8%, roughly half as many preceding offenses as the characters in the commercial novels (Table 5.21). This, again, might stem from a more ambiguous character nature in critical novels. The villains in the commercial novels tended to commit crimes with intent, often acting to resolve some perceived prior injustice. Villains in the critical novels, however, tended to commit their crimes either on accident or for reasons unconnected to previous offenses. For example, in *The Last Child*, the hero searches for his missing sister. It is later revealed that his sister was killed and her body hidden, but her death occurred by accident.

Table 5.21. Character Motivations for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Motivation (mark all that apply)	Selfish	4	6	6	7	10	9	42
	Selfless	8	5	7	15	9	12	56
	Financial	6	5	1	0	13	2	27
	Victim of preceding offense	0	1	5	5	0	0	11
Total		12	11	16	22	23	20	104

58% of characters in the total sample acted on their own (Table 5.22 and 5.23). A character was not qualified as acting on their own if they were the leader of a group, a patsy to some other leader, or part of a group. Of the characters working with someone else, most were part of a group. This relationship held true when looking at the commercial and critical samples separately, with 66% and 74% of respective characters acting as part of a group (Table 5.24 and 5.25).



Table 5.22. Whether or Not a Character Acted on Their Own for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	44	42%
2	No	62	58%
	Total	106	100%

Table 5.23. Whether or Not a Character Acted on Their Own for Individual Samples

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Acting on their own	Yes	5	2	5	15	8	9	44
	No	7	9	11	8	16	11	62
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

Table 5.24. If Working With Someone Else, What Was the Character's Role for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Leader	13	21%
2	Patsy	5	8%
3	Part of a group	44	71%
	Total	62	100%

Table 5.25. If Working With Someone Else, What Was the Character's Role for Each Book

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
If working with someone else, what was the character's role? (mark all that apply)	Leader	2	3	1	0	5	2	13
	Patsy	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
	Part of a group	4	5	9	8	10	8	44
	Total	7	9	11	8	16	11	62

Out of the entire sample, 60% of characters had families (Table 5.26). However, a shift occurred when comparing commercial to critical samples. Characters with families in

commercial samples calculated to 45%, whereas characters with families in the critical sample calculated to 67% (Table 5.27).

*Table 5.26. Character has a family for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		62	60%
2	No		42	40%
	Total		104	100%

*Table 5.27. Character Has a Family for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Character has a family	Yes	5	7	5	20	12	13	62
	No	7	3	11	2	12	7	42
	Total	12	10	16	22	24	20	104

For the total sample, characters divided almost evenly between those who qualified as intellectuals and those who did not qualify as intellectuals (Table 5.28). To qualify, a character needed to frequently engage in complex analysis of some sort. For example, among heroes, a detective qualified as an intellectual, while a security guard did not. Context within each book provided validation for whether or not immediate assumptions about a character's role as an intellectual could be trusted. As shown in Table 5.30, some characters acted as private intellectuals. For example, if a character led a public life as a simple person, that character might in reality be a mastermind villain. Interestingly, whether or not a character was an intellectual reversed when moving from the commercial to critical sample. As shown in Table 5.29, 67% of commercial characters qualified as intellectuals, whereas 66% of critical characters did not

qualify as intellectuals. While there was a small difference between how many characters were public or private intellectuals, both samples showed a high trend for characters being public intellectuals, with 96% and 78%, respectively (Table 5.31).

*Table 5.28. Character is an Intellectual for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		50	47%
2	No		56	53%
	Total		106	100%

*Table 5.29. Character is an Intellectual for Each Book*

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Intellectual	Yes	7	6	14	8	9	6	50
	No	5	5	2	15	15	14	56
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

*Table 5.30. If Character is an Intellectual, Are They a Public or Private Intellectual for Total Sample*

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Public intellectual		44	90%
2	Private intellectual		5	10%
	Total		49	100%

*Table 5.31. If Character is an Intellectual, Are They a Public or Private Intellectual for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If yes:	Public intellectual	6	6	14	7	5	6	44
	Private intellectual	1	0	0	0	4	0	5
	Total	7	6	14	7	9	6	49

Unsurprisingly, few characters in the total or individual samples coded as drug users. Slightly higher drug users appeared in commercial books rather than critical books, with drug users coming in at 16% and 3%, respectively (Table 5.32 and Table 5.33). While it should be noted that the qualification for whether or not a character used drugs was liberal enough to include caffeine, the overwhelming number of drugs used were illicit substances, such as cocaine and amphetamines (Table 5.34).

*Table 5.32. Is Character a Drug User for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		8	8%
2	No		98	92%
	Total		106	100%

*Table 5.33. Is Character a Drug User for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Drug user	Yes	2	3	1	0	0	2	8
	No	10	8	15	23	24	18	98
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

*Table 5.34. If Character Uses Drugs, Which Drug? for Total Sample*

Table Options
Text Response
Caffeine
Cocaine
Cocaine
Cocaine
Cocaine
Amphetamines
Alcohol, oxytocin, assorted pills
Alcohol, assorted pills

When coding for witnesses, the criminals who committed crimes did not qualify. A witness only qualified if they were a character who had nothing to do with the crime being committed. In the total sample, 75% of characters were not witnesses to a crime (Table 5.35). This statistic held true for the individual samples as well. In the commercial sample, 72% of characters were not witnesses. In the critical sample, 71% of characters were not witnesses (Table 5.36). Additionally, most characters were not hiding a secret. In the total sample, 71% of characters were not hiding a secret. In the commercial sample, 76% characters were not hiding a secret. In the critical sample, 67% characters were not hiding a secret. Given the similarity in statistics, future analysis should determine if a correlation exists between characters who were witnesses and characters who were keeping a secret. Perhaps a substantial portion of those characters are the same. In other words, characters who witnessed a crime might be keeping their witness of the crime a secret.

Table 5.35. Is Character a Witness to a Crime? for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	31	29%
2	No	75	71%
	Total	106	100%

Table 5.36. Is Character a Witness to a Crime? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Witness to a crime	Yes	5	6	0	13	2	5	31
	No	7	5	16	10	22	15	75
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

Table 5.37. Hiding a secret? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer	Response	%	
1	Yes	31	29%	
2	No	75	71%	
	Total	106	100%	

Table 5.38. Hiding a secret? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Hiding a secret	Yes	2	5	2	7	9	6	31
	No	10	6	14	16	15	14	75
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

Finally, the character analysis examined how often characters progressed through a character arc, and how often characters ended the book without changing. In the total sample, most characters did not experience a character arc (Table 5.39). They ended the book in the same state as they began the book. Traditionally, commercial books tend to produce a series of books

featuring the same protagonist, thus limiting the amount of change the character can experience without eliminating the character traits that compel audiences to continue returning. Critical books, however, by their nature and by their tendency to produce stand-alone books, might seem more likely to write about characters that experience explicit character arcs. This did not prove to be true. In fact, critical books scored as having fewer character arcs than commercial books (Table 5.40). Commercial books scored as having 73% of characters with no character arc, while critical books scored as having 87% of characters with no character arc.

*Table 5.39. Character arc? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Arc		12	11%
2	No change		93	89%
	Total		105	100%

*Table 5.40. Character arc? for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Character change at ending	Arc	3	0	0	5	1	3	12
	No change	9	11	15	18	23	17	93
	Total	12	11	15	23	24	20	105

### Initial Crime

In the total sample of books, most crimes occur before the narrative begins (Table 5.41 and Figure 5.5). No initial crimes occurred after the book began for any of the 6 books in the total sample. In context, both frequencies indicate that a book within the mystery genre does not take several chapters to introduce characters and plot elements before the crime occurs. Either

the crime occurs as the book opens, or the characters begin already suffering from a crime that occurred before the book began. The number of initial crimes that occurred before the book began or at the same time the book began remained the same when looking at individual samples (Table 5.42).

*Table 5.41. When does the crime occur? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Before the book begins		4	67%
2	At the same time the book begins		2	33%
3	After the book begins		0	0%
	Total		6	100%

*Figure 5.5. When does the crime occur? for Total Sample*

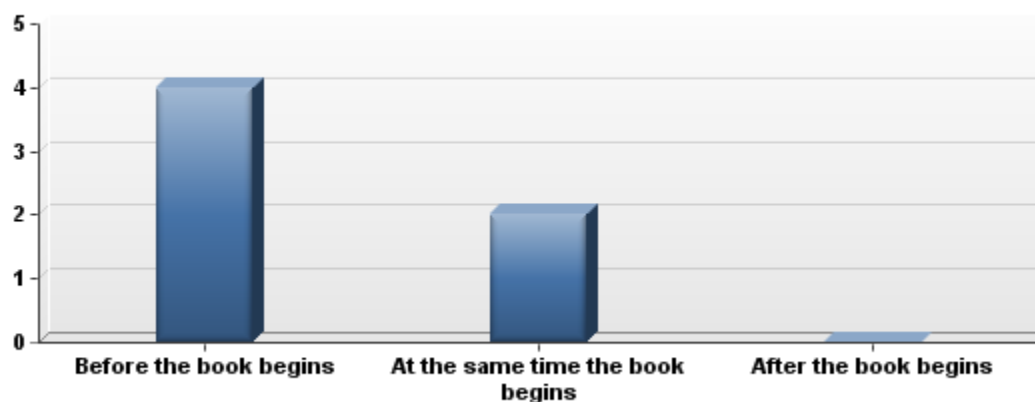




Table 5.42. When does the crime occur? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
When does the crime occur?	Before the book begins	0	1	1	0	1	1	4
	At the same time the book begins	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
	After the book begins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

It might seem redundant to ask whether or not the crime under investigation broke the law, but the coding process allowed for a more liberal interpretation of “crime,” such that a missing person might be revealed to simply have run away from home, or a murder case might turn out to be a suicide. Such allowances made no difference, however, and every crime in the entire sample broke the law (Table 5.43 and Table 5.44).

Table 5.43. Does the crime break the law? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		6	100%
2	No		0	0%
	Total		6	100%

Table 5.44. Does the crime break the law? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Does the crime break the law?	Yes	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

The coding for types of crimes committed allowed for multiple traits to be selected. In other words, a crime could contain multiple components, such as murder and theft. For the total sample, murder proved to be the most common type of crime (Table 5.45). Theft and kidnapping had lower and equal distributions to each other. Notice, however, that when looking at individual samples, the commercial books all involved murder, with one book also involving kidnapping, while the types of crimes committed in the critical books varied between all three identified types of crime, with one murder, one theft, and one kidnapping (Table 5.46).

*Table 5.45. Type of Crime for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Murder		4	67%
2	Theft		2	33%
3	Kidnapping		2	33%
4	Other		0	0%

*Figure 5.6. Type of Crime for Total Sample*

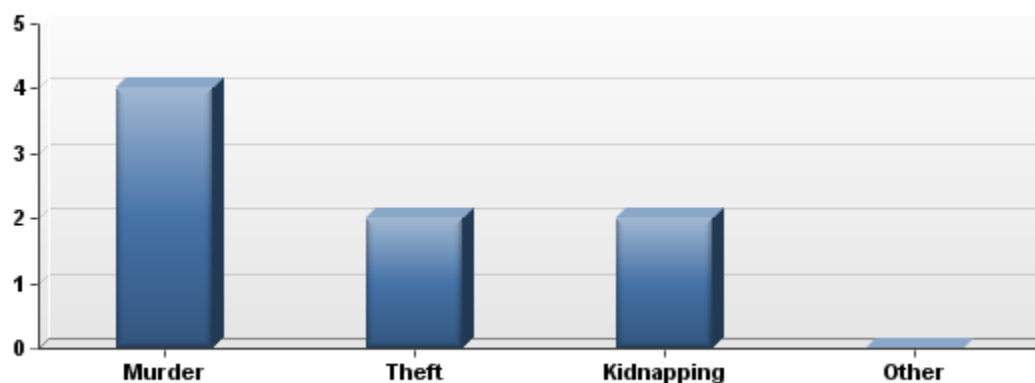


Table 5.46. Type of Crime Committed for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Type of crime	Murder	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
	Theft	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
	Kidnapping	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		1	1	1	1	1	1	6

It should come as no surprise that most crimes in the total sample coded as actual mysteries. The research, however, allowed for the possibility that the crime would not code as a mystery. Thrillers, the primary subgenre of the mystery genre, do not always include unsolved crimes. Anticipating distinctions between mystery and thriller books proved unnecessary. 83% of books in the total sample qualified as containing an unsolved crime (Table 5.47). The trend held true for critical books as well, with only one book, *The Lock Artist*, not containing an unsolved crime (Table 5.48). *The Lock Artist* did not focus on any character attempting to investigate the protagonist's crimes, so the book was coded as not containing a mystery.

Table 5.47. Is the Crime a Mystery? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		5	83%
2	No		1	17%
	Total		6	100%

Table 5.48. Is the Crime a Mystery? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Crime is a mystery	Yes	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
	No	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

When coding for what component of a crime was a mystery, the coding allowed for multiple variables. For example, as shown in Table 5.49, 60% of crimes in the total sample involved the unknown identities of the criminals, but books across the commercial and critical sample also involved the other two possible components of a mystery. To illustrate the distribution, refer to Table 5.50, which shows *Gone* containing a mystery that consists of both a missing person as well as the identity of the kidnapper.

Table 5.49. If Yes, the Mystery Consists of... for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Who committed the crime?		5	100%
2	How was the crime committed?		3	60%
3	Something is missing (an item or person)		4	80%
4	Other		0	

Figure 5.7. If Yes, the Mystery Consists of... for Total Sample

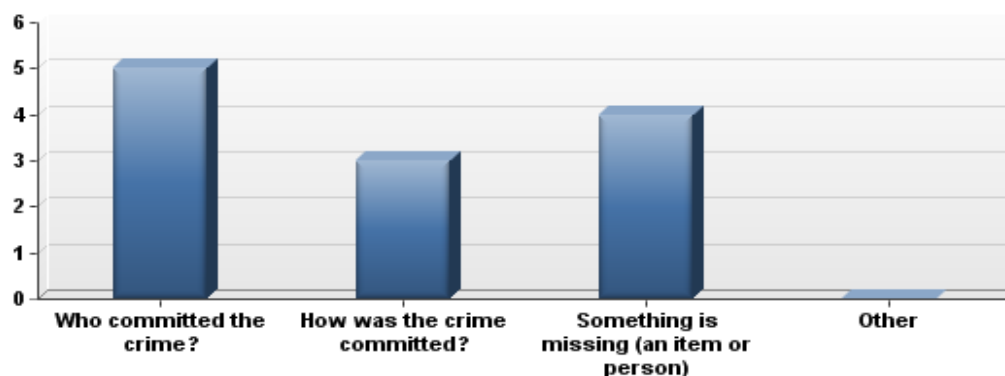


Table 5.50. If yes, the Mystery Consists of... for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If yes, mystery consists of: (mark all that apply)	Who committed the crime?	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
	How was the crime committed?	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
	Something is missing (an item or person)	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	0	1	5

One might expect unsolved crimes to have only occurred in private locations and without witnesses. The total sample, however, showed that 83% of crimes occurred in public locations (Table 5.51). One exception occurred in *The Bone Bed*, where a crime was committed within the privacy of someone's home (Table 5.52). Additionally, most crimes were seen by witnesses (Table 5.53). One exception occurred, again in *The Bone Bed*, because the crime occurred within someone's home (Table 5.54). If the existence of witnesses is taken as a consequence of the location of the crime, it seems intuitive that witnesses might become possible, but it is intriguing

to note that the criminals did not commit their crimes in such a way as to be hidden from witnesses. Further, 80% of the crimes were seen by two or more witnesses, with 40% seen by more than three witnesses (Table 5.55). The one exception was, again, *The Bone Bed*, because its crime was committed in privacy (Table 5.56).

*Table 5.51. Location of Crime for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Public		5	83%
2	Private		1	17%
	Total		6	100%

*Table 5.52. Location of Crime for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Location of crime	Public	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
	Private	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

*Table 5.53. Witnesses to crime? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		5	83%
2	No		1	17%
	Total		6	100%

Table 5.54. Witnesses to crime? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Witnesses	Yes	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
	No	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

Table 5.55. If yes, how many witnesses? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		1	20%
2	2		2	40%
3	3		0	0%
4	+3		2	40%
	Total		5	100%

Table 5.56. If yes, how many witnesses? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If yes, number of witnesses	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	+3	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
	Total	1	1	0	1	1	1	5

Finally, 67% of crimes were repeated crimes (Table 5.57). For example, in *Gone*, multiple children from multiple families are kidnapped, contrasted with *The Last Child*, where the main mystery consists of a single missing person. Only two books centered on single crimes, *The Racketeer* and *The Last Child* (Table 5.58).

*Table 5.57. Is the Crime a Single, Isolated, or Repeated Offense? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Single		2	33%
2	Repeated		4	67%
	Total		6	100%

*Table 5.58. Is the Crime a Single, Isolated, or Repeated Offense? for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Single or repeated crime	Single	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Repeated	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

## Chapters

To begin an analysis of the chapters, Table 5.59 shows the distribution of the number of chapters within each book. No distinct difference emerged for the number of chapters contained within commercial versus critical books. Chapters for all books within the commercial sample total 185, and chapters for all books within the critical sample totaled 175. Though Moretti (1983) conceived of mystery stories as novels “only in the number of pages [they take] up—that is, physically, not structurally,” it seems publishers may have determined a standardized length for books in the mystery genre.



Table 5.59. How Many Chapters Are in Each Book? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	NYPD Red		99	28%
2	The Racketeer		45	13%
3	The Bone Bed		41	11%
4	Gone		86	24%
5	The Lock Artist		24	7%
6	The Last Child		65	18%
	Total		360	100%

Unsurprisingly, most chapters began from the hero's perspective. The total sample included 361 chapters, of which 63% began from the hero's perspective. The least number of chapters began from the victim's perspective (Table 5.60 and Figure 5.8). That, too, was not a surprise, when an analysis of what the crime consisted of showed that most crimes involved murder (Table 5.46). Unless a writer concocts a creative exception, such as using flashbacks or writing from the perspective of a ghost, a chapter cannot begin from the perspective of a dead person. When looking at which character each chapter begins with in individual books, note that two books always began from the hero's perspective, *The Bone Bed* and *The Lock Artist*, both of which were written exclusively in first-person limited (Table 5.61). However, as previously indicated in an analysis of the perspectives chosen for each book, some authors selected first person limited for their hero and third person limited for additional characters. Seeing that the first chapter begins from the first person limited perspective of the hero does not in itself indicate that every other chapter will begin from the hero's perspective, or that the story will be told exclusively from the hero's perspective (Table 5.2).

Table 5.60. Chapter begins with which character? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		228	63%
2	Villain		39	11%
3	Victim		21	6%
4	Secondary		73	20%
	Total		361	100%

Figure 5.8. Chapter begins with which character? for Total Sample

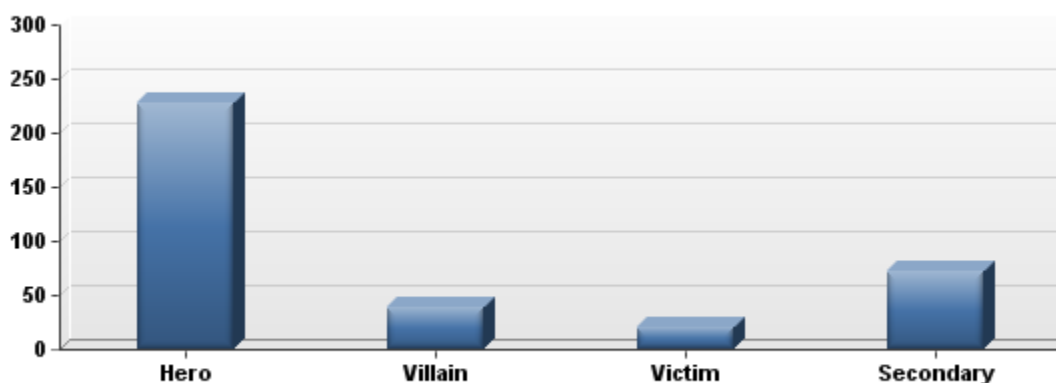


Table 5.61. Chapter begins with which character? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Chapter begins with which character?	Hero	59	32	41	45	24	26	227
	Villain	34	1	0	2	0	2	39
	Victim	0	1	0	20	0	0	21
	Secondary	6	11	0	19	0	37	73
	Total	99	45	41	86	24	65	360

When looking at the total sample, 68% of chapters did not contain a chapter break (Table 5.62 and Figure 5.9). The distribution remained consistent when dividing the total sample into

individual books. 73% of the commercial sample did not include a chapter break, and 63% of the critical books did not include a chapter break (Table 5.63). Further analysis, as shown in Table 5.64, revealed how likely a chapter was to contain a break depending on which character the chapter began with. Most characters did not earn a chapter break. For the total sample, if the chapter began with the hero, the chapter contained a break only 34% of the time. If the chapter began with the villain, the chapter would contain a break only 20% of the time. If the chapter began with the victim, the chapter would contain a break 5% of the time. Chapter breaks occurred for secondary characters much more often. If the chapter began with a secondary character, the chapter contained a break 43% of the time.

*Table 5.62. Contains Break Midway Through Chapter? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		116	32%
2	No		244	68%
	Total		360	100%

*Table 5.63. Contains Break Midway Through Chapter? for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Contains break midway through chapter	Yes	8	41	2	4	23	38	116
	No	91	4	39	81	1	27	243
	Total	99	45	41	85	24	65	359

*Table 5.64.* If a Chapter Begins With a Certain Character, How Likely is the Chapter to Have a Chapter Break? for Individual Samples

		Chapter begins with which character?				Total
		Hero	Villain	Victim	Secondary	
Contains break midway through chapter	Yes	76	8	1	31	116
	No	151	31	20	42	244
Total		227	39	21	73	360

Additional analysis examined whether or not a chapter that contained a break would pick up from the same character's perspective. For the purpose of this study, only the first break and pickup were coded. Additional breaks and pickups were ignored. For the total sample, 68% of chapter breaks picked up from the same character's perspective (Table 5.65). As shown in Table 5.66, this trend held true when looking at the commercial or the critical sample. Later analysis examined if a chapter ended with a cliffhanger or resolution. Future analysis should consider coding chapter breaks as their own sort of chapter ending to determine if they broke on a cliffhanger or a resolution, and would then correlate the results with genuine chapter endings to determine a correlation. For example, do chapters that contain chapter break cliffhangers tend to end the chapter proper on a moment of resolution?

*Table 5.65.* If Yes, Does the Following Section Pick Up From the Same Character's POV? for Total Sample

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	79	68%
2	No	38	32%
	Total	117	100%

*Table 5.66.* If Yes, Does the Following Section Pick Up From the Same Character's POV? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If yes, does the following section pick up from the same perspective?	Yes	8	24	2	4	23	18	79
	No	0	17	0	1	0	20	38
	Total	8	41	2	5	23	38	117

Though only 32% of total books did not pick up from the same character's perspective, additional analysis was performed to determine which alternate character the chapter picked up from. For the total sample as well as individual samples, if the chapter did not pick up from the same character's perspective, the chapter most often picked up from another secondary character's perspective (Table 5.67, Figure 5.10, and Table 5.68).

*Table 5.67.* If Answer is No, What Character Does the Following Section Pick Up From? for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		14	37%
2	Villain		0	0%
3	Victim		0	0%
4	Secondary		24	63%
	Total		38	100%

Figure 5.9. If Answer is No, What Character Does the Following Section Pick Up From? for Total Sample

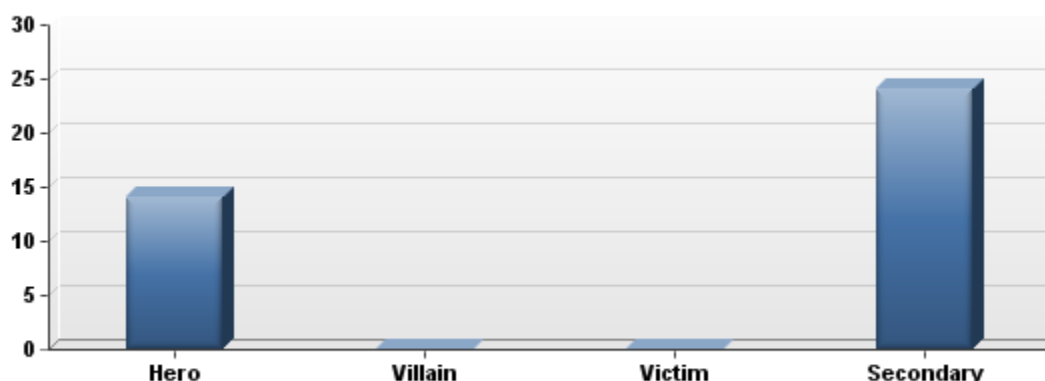


Table 5.68. If No, What Character Does the Following Section Pick Up From? for Individual Samples

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If no, what character does the following section pick up from?	Hero	0	5	0	1	0	8	14
	Villain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Victim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Secondary	0	12	0	0	0	12	24
	Total	0	17	0	1	0	20	38

Final analysis of chapter structures examined whether or not chapters ended on a cliffhanger or a resolved scene. To qualify as a cliffhanger, a scene required more than an event that caused escalating tension. A scene had to end on an unfinished or interrupted action, such as if a chapter showed a character being fired upon by the villain, but ended at the moment the villain pulled the trigger rather than describing the results of the gunshot. For the total sample, only 25% of chapters ended on a cliffhanger (Table 5.69). Though individual samples did retain

a low percentage of chapters that ended on a cliffhanger, the percentage was distinctly higher for the commercial sample. Commercial books ended on a cliffhanger 35% of the time, whereas critical books ended on a cliffhanger only 14% of the time (Table 5.70).

*Table 5.69. Chapter Ends with Cliffhanger or Resolution for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Cliffhanger		91	25%
2	Resolution		268	75%
	Total		359	100%

*Table 5.70. Chapter Ends With Cliffhanger or Resolution for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Chapter ending	Cliffhanger	37	9	20	9	1	15	91
	Resolution	62	36	21	75	23	50	267
	Total	99	45	41	84	24	65	358

### Story Arcs

Analysis of story arcs throughout each book distinguished primary and secondary story arcs. Though a primary story arc could be coded more than once if context defined a separate story arc as an integral yet distinct piece of the initial primary arc, this proved to be an unnecessary allowance. Table 5.71 shows how many distinct story arcs were contained within each book, and Table 5.72 shows how many of the story arcs across the total sample were primary or secondary. Though those statistics might seem at first redundant, if not unnecessary, when examining individual books, two exceptions appeared. While most books only incorporated one primary arc, *NYPD Red* and *The Last Child* incorporated two complementary

primary arcs. Further analysis of individual books revealed that critical and commercial samples incorporated almost exactly the same number of secondary arcs, with commercial books containing 8 secondary arcs, and critical books containing 9 secondary arcs (Table 5.73).

*Table 5.71. Number of Arcs Per Title for Total Sample*

#	Answer	Response	%
1	NYPD Red	3	12%
2	The Racketeer	3	12%
3	The Bone Bed	6	23%
4	Gone	6	23%
5	The Lock Artist	3	12%
6	The Last Child	5	19%
	Total	26	100%

*Table 5.72. Type of Arc for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer	Response	%	
1	Primary	8	31%	
2	Secondary	18	69%	
	Total	26	100%	

*Table 5.73. Type of Arc for Individual Samples*

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Type of Arc	Primary	2	1	1	1	1	2	8
	Secondary	1	2	5	4	2	3	17
	Total	3	3	6	5	3	5	25



### Clues

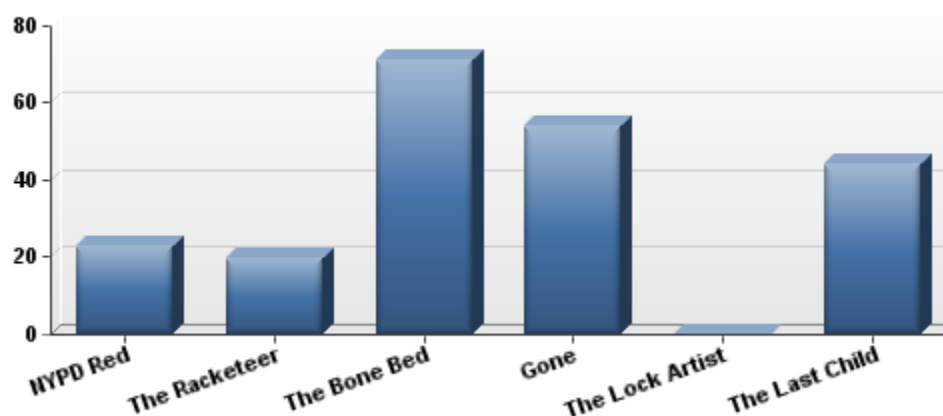
The final analysis examined the type, frequency, and placement of clues throughout each narrative. The placement and kind of clues plays an integral part in the reading process. Moretti (1983) notes: “Just as the detective ‘rewrites’ the story produced by the criminal, so the reader, furnished with all the necessary clues, can solve the mystery and thus ‘write’ the story that he is reading by himself.” This process requires clues that seem natural and defy their obvious artifice, and that the only clues included are those that the reader “would have found out anyway. To attempt to ‘guess’ is only to hide from oneself that the rules are loaded, and to accept a situation in which the individual’s brain might as well stop working” (p. 148). Thus the study sought to determine if clues incorporated into commercially or critically successful books would vary in type, frequency, and placement. Would commercial books tend to use more straightforward, legitimate clues? Would critical books use more red herrings, forcing the reader to turn back on the narrative and look deeper if he or she wished to solve the writer’s puzzles?

Table 5.74 shows a frequency distribution for how many clues were contained within each book. As mentioned previously, *The Lock Artist* was not coded as containing any clues because none of its characters were concerned with solving a mystery. Despite an absence of clues in one critical book, the samples contained a similar number of clues, with the commercial sample containing 114 clues, and the critical sample containing 98 clues. By far the book with the highest number of clues was *The Bone Bed*, containing 33% of the total number of clues (Table 5.74 and Figure 5.10).

Table 5.74. Number of Clues Per Book for Total Sample

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	NYPD Red		23	11%
2	The Racketeer		20	9%
3	The Bone Bed		71	33%
4	Gone		54	25%
5	The Lock Artist		0	0%
6	The Last Child		44	21%
	Total		212	100%

Figure 5.10. Number of Clues Per Book for Total Sample



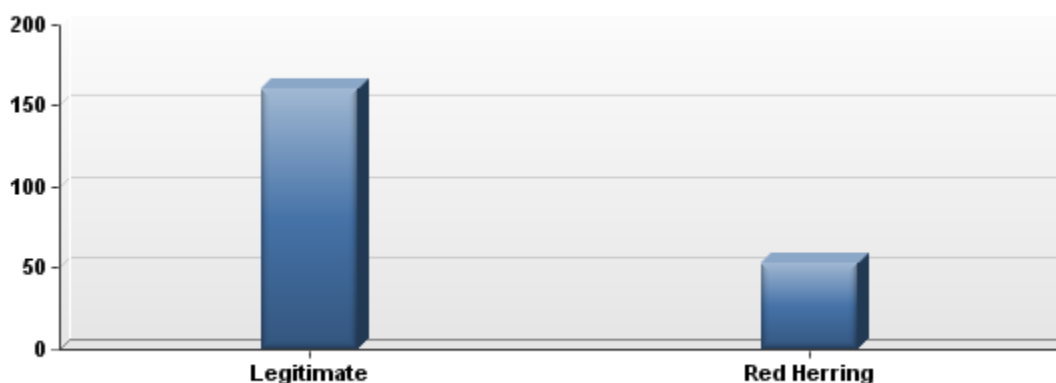
Additional analysis examined whether or not the provided clues were legitimate or red herrings. Some books, such as *The Last Child*, showed characters attempting to solve multiple mysteries in their pursuit of solving the primary mystery. If a clue was legitimate for the secondary mystery but irrelevant for the primary mystery, it was coded as a red herring. Identifying red herrings or legitimate clues required multiple readings of each book. Some clues read as legitimate on the first reading, but upon multiple readings were revealed to be

misdirection for the hero and the reader. In the total sample, 75% of the provided clues were legitimate (Table 5.75 and Figure 5.11).

*Table 5.75. Is the Clue Legitimate or a Red Herring for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Legitimate		160	75%
2	Red Herring		53	25%
	Total		213	100%

*Figure 5.11. Is the Clue Legitimate or a Red Herring for Total Sample*



In addition, clues were coded as personal or physical in nature. For example, if a clue related to a character's personality, such as a detective wondering if a person with a seemingly docile personality could be responsible for murdering someone, it was coded as personal. If a clue related to a tangible piece of evidence, such as a piece of clothing or a photograph, it was coded as physical. At 73%, most clues across the total sample were physical (Table 5.76). Further, as Table 5.77 shows, most clues were discovered by the hero. The next highest character type to find clues included secondary characters. It should be noted that secondary characters

often included other investigators. For example, the hero in *NYPD Red* was a detective with a secondary character as a partner.

*Table 5.76. Is the Clue a Physical or Personal clue? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Physical		155	73%
2	Personal		59	28%

*Table 5.77. Who discovers the clue? for Total Sample*

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		120	56%
2	Villain		3	1%
3	Victim		1	0%
4	Secondary		89	42%
	Total		213	100%

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

The Narrative Paradigm compresses the components of a narrative into two categories: *narrative fidelity* and *narrative coherence*. If a narrative contains adequate portions of both components relative to an audience's needs, the narrative achieves narrative validity. *Narrative fidelity* refers to whether a story contradicts the expectations audiences bring to their reading of a narrative; in other words, a narrative achieves narrative fidelity if enough of its elements match reader expectations. *Narrative coherence* refers to whether a narrative contains internal contradictions; in other words, when readers perceive a story as hanging together. If the story does not feel complete, it will seem to have too many random or inconsistent elements. Contradictions can include explicit contradictions as well as subtler inconsistencies or incomplete story elements. Both concepts rely on audience expectations to questions such as: What reality must the fictional universe work within? What elements can be combined without appearing to be self-contradictory, and what elements can be combined without violating audience expectations?

Though reviewing others researchers' studies on the mystery genre offered tentative projections for what audience expectations this study might reveal, this study focused on content analysis rather than audience research. Ultimately, an audience research component will partially rely on audiences self-reporting their preferences, but one can hardly begin to confirm or draw meaningful relationships among audience preferences without some inkling of what those

preferences might be. Beginning with content analysis allowed the researcher to produce foundational data designed to guide the questions and concepts that will enable future audience research.

To illustrate how the data yielded by this study fits into the Narrative Paradigm, this section will now examine significant conclusions derived from five categories: Characters, the Initial Crime, Clues, Story Arcs, and Perspectives. Where appropriate, an analysis of each category will refer to whether or not the analysis suggests how to achieve narrative fidelity or narrative coherence.

Data from the Characters category suggests that reader expectations might center on credible character traits or occupations. In previous research into the mystery genre, female readers self-reported that they tend to prefer female characters for their humor and attractiveness, not for their intelligence. Their self-reported preferences led to several questions for my content analysis. Do female heroes tend to be attractive, humorous, *and* intelligent? Or is intelligence an absent trait for female characters? If it is not, what other traits are incorporated? Assuming a writer wishes to push for a more diverse representation of female lead characters, which of these traits might need to be incorporated for narratives containing stronger female lead characters to be perceived as valid?

If intelligent female characters truly violated narrative fidelity, the analyzed books would have consistently showcased lead female characters exhibiting humor and attractiveness, but not intelligence. Though the research did not control for character gender, a brief review of the sampled books reveals that four out of six books featured at least one lead female character whose main occupation required her to exhibit high intelligence and competence, with one of those books, *The Bone Bed*, featuring a female detective as the protagonist. The analysis did not

control for humor and attractiveness. However, other general conclusions can be drawn regarding audience preferences for what character traits would violate narrative fidelity in mystery books.

Out of the entire sample, most characters were described through personal details, not physical details. The limitation on descriptions through physical details suggests striking conclusions. First, though mystery readers self-report attractiveness as an important character trait, writers need not outright describe characters as attractive. Second, readers care less that a character be described as attractive and more that a character be shown as likable or sexy. Rather than stating or describing a character's attractiveness, most books implied how attractive each character was by showing other characters reacting to their attractiveness. The prevalence of limited descriptions suggests that writers may have more leeway for writing about characters that do not conform to mainstream concepts of attractiveness.

Though any intentional push against mainstream concepts of attractiveness might require writers to insert details that explicitly distinguish a character's appearance from mainstream concepts of attractiveness, the sample suggests that if a character's appearance is mostly left to the reader's imagination, non-traditional concepts of attractiveness can be suggested without violating narrative fidelity. Readers may care more that characters are perceived as sexy than that character descriptions match expected traits. A more detailed analysis of the vocabulary used when an author does describe an attractive character through physical details would clarify deeper limitations on fidelity concerning character descriptions. Leaving character descriptions vague would allow a reader's imagination to restrict how a character is pictured to conditioned ideas of attractiveness, but if non-traditional physical aspects can form subtle suggestions for the

reader's imagination, they may condition readers to accepting non-traditional character traits into their schema of what makes people attractive.

Looking at character arcs provides insight into what elements contribute to narrative coherence. If a character experiences an impetus to change but ends the story without experiencing a character arc, the reader might perceive the story as lacking narrative coherence. In the conducted study, most characters did not experience character arcs. They ended their respective stories in the same position as they began. One might expect an absence of character arcs for the commercial sample. Readers return to books out of preference for the author and the main character, compelling writers who achieve commercial success to write a series of books rather than standalone titles. Though characters might experience minor changes, most characters, especially the leads, likely maintain a relatively unchanged status throughout the series of books. Meaningful character arcs require characters to undergo significant changes. Characters are unlikely to be able to experience significant character changes over several books. If the characters changed too much from book to book, consistent readers might find themselves with characters very different than the ones that engaged their initial interest. In addition, readers hooked by later books who then tried earlier books in the series might feel confused. Narrative cohesiveness in general would be more difficult to maintain. Book hoppers who pick up the books in a series that most interest them rather than reading each book would need a consistent main character to give the separate narratives a sense of cohesion.

Though the conducted study did not investigate multiple books within a single series, it would be revealing to apply this study's methodology to every book in a single long-running series, such as the books released before *The Bone Bed* in the Kate Scarpetta series. With only single title data available from the conducted study, it seems that characters in general do not



experience character arcs. Almost 75% of characters in the commercial sample did not experience a character arc, and 87% of characters in the critical sample did not experience a character arc. One should be careful not to interpret the data to mean that including a character arc would rob the story of narrative cohesion. Rather, it may simply be easier for writers to tell compelling stories that do not include character arcs, both for standalone titles and for series titles. Writers whose books earned critical but not commercial success may have written their books with the concerns of a series in mind. In other words, they may have written their books with limited character arcs so as to make it easier to turn the book into a series if the opportunity later arose.

Data from the Initial Crime category suggests that narrative fidelity might rely on a few key components. The initial crime acts as the essential mystery or catalyst event that puts the rest of the story in motion. In the commercial sample, more books featured murders as the initial crime than featured any other crime. Considering that commercial books are perceived as playing to a larger audience and thus must be more accessible, and perhaps more straightforward, it makes sense that commercially successful books would achieve narrative fidelity by featuring a crime, murder, that is almost universally seen as egregiously wrong. Theft and kidnapping, while qualifying as clear crimes, do not bring with them clear, irreversible consequences. The stolen goods or people may be returned unharmed, the criminal captured and punished, and the world returned close to normal. The same cannot be said for murders. Once a character is dead, the narrative is forever changed.

In addition, most initial crimes qualified as a mystery. Though such a conclusion might seem on its face obviously essential to narrative fidelity for books published in the mystery genre, the genre includes thrillers. A thriller narrative resembles that of a mystery narrative, but

with one key distinction: though the protagonist may not know the solution to the mystery, such as the criminal's identity, the reader begins the story already knowing the solution. The thrill, as it were, comes from seeing the protagonist race against increasingly difficult obstacles to find a solution to which the reader is already privy. A mystery may not be as important for the reader, but it seems essential for the protagonist to solve a mystery surrounding the initial crime.

Considering that the total sample ended up evenly divided between mysteries and thrillers, the data suggests that including an unsolved key component to the initial crime may be essential to attaining narrative fidelity both for mysteries and for the subgenre of thrillers. In addition, it should be noted that for the entire sample, every crime that included a mystery consisted at least of the hero attempting to uncover the criminal's identity. Writers telling stories meant for the mystery/thriller genre may be able to implement higher levels of innovation should they ensure they include at least these two established components: the hero must solve a mystery surrounding the crime, and that mystery must at least involve the criminal's identity.

For the Initial Crime category, narrative coherence seems to hinge on two key aspects: when the crime occurred, and whether the crime occurred more than once throughout the story. The data suggests narrative coherence from the initial crime relies on beginning the story after the crime has already been committed. One-third of the crimes occurred as the narratives began. The rest occurred before the narratives began. Beginning the story after the crime has already occurred matches conventional wisdom to begin stories *in media res*. A larger sample would reveal whether narrative coherence actually relies on the narrative beginning after the initial crime has occurred, or whether coherence could be maintained so long as the story began with the story already in motion, for instance, if the story began with the crime already in progress but incomplete.

In addition, the data suggests that narrative coherence relies on the crime being an event repeated throughout the story. For example, if the criminal murders someone, he or she will murder multiple people throughout the book. Whether a crime is repeated throughout the narrative, however, may prove to be correlated with the type of crime. If the initial crime is a murder, knowing that the criminal will kill again gives the hero, and the reader, impetus to uncover the criminal's identity as soon as possible. If the murder was an isolated event, though the hero would feel compelled to bring the criminal to justice, the narrative would not read with the same necessary pace. When lives are at stake, the hero must find the criminal. When justice alone is at stake, time itself may eventually reveal the criminal, and there is thus less impetus to find the criminal as soon as possible. The repeated crimes cause the narrative to maintain faster pacing. The initial crime imbues seemingly disparate elements with potential relevance, making them "cohere" into a single narrative. In this study, murder was the most often committed crime. When murder is not the initial crime, narratives may be able to achieve narrative coherence without needing to repeat a crime. For example, if the initial crime is a kidnapping, the hero would need to solve the mystery in order to prevent the kidnapping victim from suffering future harm. However, a larger sample would allow the analysis to control for higher instances of crimes other than murder.

Note that the analysis of the initial crime touches on how a repeating crime causes the audience to imbue otherwise unimportant elements with potential relevance. Once the mystery is solved, the reader can reflect on elements throughout the narrative that contributed to or impeded solving the mystery. Some clues turn out to be legitimate, while some turn out to be red herrings. A mystery achieves narrative fidelity through efficient placement of clues, and by determining how many, if any, of each will enhance the reader's appreciation of the mystery. Offer too many

red herrings, or give them inefficient placement, and the reader may feel unduly frustrated. On the other hand, offer too many legitimate clues and the reader may prematurely solve the mystery, robbing the rest of the narrative of its power.

For the total sample, the books presented legitimate clues 75% of the time, meaning clues had a one in four chance of being a red herring. Most clues were physical in nature. Future analysis would clarify a potential correlation between the dual nature of clues. For example, if clues that come from personal details tend to be red herrings, readers might learn to intuitively grasp the relevance of different clues depending on their nature. In addition, though most clues were found by the hero, a significant amount of clues were also found by secondary characters. Giving secondary characters the opportunity to find clues does not, however, guarantee that they understand the relevance of the clues. Secondary analysis would reveal if fidelity is achieved by maintaining a classic relationship between the hero, the sidekick, and an evaluation of the clues. In Sherlock Holmes tales, though Watson frequently found clues, he rarely understood their relevance or legitimacy. It fell to Holmes to give the clues a proper evaluation. Current mystery books may rely on the same dichotomy to achieve fidelity. Though a significant portion of secondary characters discover clues, the reader may intuitively grasp that only the protagonist has the ability to truly comprehend the implications of a clue.

Analyzing Story Arcs and Perspectives offered some final conclusions regarding narrative coherence. Similar to a three-act structure, the progression of a story arc is comprised of three distinct elements: the Initiating Event, the Attempt to Resolve, and the Consequence. If a writer rushes too quickly through any of those elements, or prolongs an element too long, the story may lose coherence, in a sense falling apart. A story can seem to fall apart because it feels rushed, giving the reader too little time to invest in and digest the unfolding narrative.

Alternatively, the narrative may fall apart because it takes too long to move forward, incorporating elements so inessential to moving the plot forward that the reader feels as though the story is wandering without aim. Additionally, the data suggests a high ratio of secondary story arcs to primary story arcs, around 2:1, to achieve narrative coherence. For the total sample, 31% of story arcs were primary, and 69% of story arcs were secondary. Hitting on the primary story arc close to one-third of the time helped the story maintain a focus on the main plot, while hitting on secondary story arcs almost two-thirds of the time gave the mysteries, the characters, and the fictional universes a sense of complexity and credibility.

Finally, a brief examination of Perspectives revealed that a unified point of view is not essential for achieving narrative coherence. These results seem counterintuitive. Writing within a point of view would seem to communicate an immediate roadmap. If the story begins from first-person limited, the reader could expect the rest of the narrative to be told from that single perspective. Similarly, if the writer began the story from a limited third-person perspective, the reader could expect the narrative to potentially be told from alternate perspectives, and that those alternate perspectives would be introduced soon and told from third-person limited. Such conventions may have little to do with narrative coherence, however, and more to do with an industry convention that is not only unnecessary, but steadily falling by the wayside. Two of the commercially successful books, *NYPD Red* and *The Racketeer*, were told from first-person and third-person limited. *NYPD Red* began from the third-person limited perspective of the villain. Under the initial assumptions, the rest of the story might be told from alternate characters' perspectives. If so, those perspectives would be told in a similar POV style, third-person limited. Instead, the next offered perspective was the first-person limited perspective of the protagonist. Other third-person limited perspectives from various secondary characters were introduced

seemingly whenever they were convenient to the plot. Alternately, *The Racketeer* began from the first-person limited perspective of the protagonist. Though most of the story was told from the protagonist's perspective, various chapters continued the story from other characters' third-person limited perspectives.

### Final Argument

Can science tell us how to tell better stories? At first, this might seem both undesirable and impossible. Writers do not always concern themselves with how readers respond to their work. Indeed, placing too much focus on an audience's potential reception may stifle a writer's creativity. Further, if publishers take the data as mandates for formula-driven narratives rather than inspiration for more effective innovations, writers may find themselves increasingly pressured to violate their artistic integrity for the sake of profits. Content analyses and audience studies in numerous areas outside of fiction publications, however, have shown that different narrative constructions have profoundly different impacts on audiences. To concede that content analysis of fiction publications can further help writers tell better stories, one needs only grant one philosophical assumption: that a story can be told in the worst possible manner, and a story can be told in the best possible manner.

Therein lies the dilemma, and the reason why the conducted study focused on appropriateness according to audience preferences. Quality is not an absolute term. The quality of a story depends upon how audiences perceive it. If writers want to know how to make their stories more effective, they will need to ask: More effective for whom? Their recognized audience may not need to include many people. It may only include themselves. Their creative decisions would benefit, however, from identifying an audience, and from understanding why some stories resonate more with that identified audience. Such a study could only seek perfect

information in principle. Researchers will likely never attain a perfect understanding of how to construct narratives that perfectly match an identified audience. That does not mean there are not answers, and that some answers will not be better than others. As narrative research matures, authors who wish to tell a story without considering readers will be increasingly in the position of willfully ignoring scientific facts about how to ensure that someone reading their story could receive a more engaging, richer, and meaningful experience.

## CHAPTER 6

### LIMITATIONS

Potential problems and limitations with the research center on generalizability. Ideally, the study would utilize a “sufficiently large sample” so as to be representative, but available time and man-hours to conduct the study restricted the size of the sample (Hempel & Degand, 2008, p. 685). Further, generalizability may be endangered if secondary researchers choose to “use varying definitions and category systems to measure” the identified elements used in the code book (Wimmer et al., p. 159). These disagreements would lead to “diverging interpretations of the linguistic phenomenon” (Hempel et al., 2008, p. 685). To limit these disagreements from occurring, broad but particular definitions were offered explanations for the code book so as to allow for ease of use without causing wildly different results for replication studies or secondary research. Future research should seek to further refine how each variable is operationalized, but with so much work left to be done to pioneer this field, some ambiguity was necessary and in some sense unavoidable for this initial study. The problem lies not in identifying rhetoric and progressions to measure, but in providing reliable qualifications for the rhetoric and progressions. Otherwise, the operational definitions will prove as vague as the theoretical constructs this research hopes to complement (Hempel et al., 2008, p. 685).

Time restrictions limited the data that could be coded and analyzed. Each character’s occupation was recorded in the Characters section, but more time would be necessary to refine the recorded occupations into limited categories. The occupations were recorded but set aside for future research. Additionally, several secondary characters would have qualified as a secondary



hero, such as the Holmesian sidekick Watson. The code sheet, however, did not allow for this distinction, and instead grouped sidekicks and non-primary heroes as secondary characters. Future research would distinguish the secondary character role of the sidekick, a character type that can serve as the access character for the reader, particularly if the hero is an investigator with abnormal powers of deduction. The sidekick, while acting as an access character, is also the figure that readers compete against, “and is in this gratified: although we will never be as clever as the detective, we could never be as stupid as Watson” (Moretti, 1983, p. 148).

The Clues section coded for a description of the clues so as to determine meaningful relationships between subjective data. However, dissecting subjective descriptions for reliability and meaning proved to be too time consuming, so the descriptions were stored but set aside for future research.

Similarly, the Story Arcs section required the coder to describe each distinct story arc, as well as each individual element, ie Initiating Event, Attempt to Resolve, and Consequence. Due to the amount of time necessary to discover meaningful relationships across the sample, these descriptions were stored but set aside for future research.

In addition, the Story Arcs code sheet initially existed as the category Episodes. However, recording data points and summaries of each distinct scene, no matter how large or small, proved to be too time consuming. The category was minimized to the over-arching Story Arcs category, which could still be used in future research to easily find the chapters in which episodes related to specific story arcs occurred.

## CHAPTER 7

### FUTURE RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS

Future research will need to take into account the evolving cultural framework through which target audiences perceive language and plot progressions (Kachru, 2008, p. 5). The study will need to be repeated to ensure the results remain as applicable to future readers as to current readers. This assumes that future research encompassing a larger history of literature would not reveal that little has changed in cultural and audience-specific definitions and expectations for text and plot clusters over time. It is possible that stories which seem new and fresh have not changed much, if at all, and only have the appearance of novelty, as well as that genres previously thought to be unique and distinct instead overlap to high degrees. Future studies should thus also consider the importance of novelty to target audiences, and what contributes to the audience's perception of novelty.

#### Marketing to Readers

Isolating and categorizing book DNA enables publishers to market to readers at every level, and perhaps to get readers to select content they would otherwise have never given a chance. A reader who purchases mysteries that tend to use more red herrings than legitimate clues could be given a list of recommendations of similar books. Indeed, if the data points were made public as a kind of cafeteria menu, marketers could in a sense give the power to the people, allowing them to select their preferred elements and receive a list of recommendations matching their preferences. Additionally, if the research were done across genres, marketers could find ways to advertise books that readers might otherwise have never considered. A reader who likes

epic war stories but presumes distaste for science fiction might then discover her new favorite book comes from official Star Wars fiction. Readers who like depth and poetic phrasing but would never read a book classified as “romance” would be given recommendations for romance books that transcend assumed genre restrictions.

### Validating Editors’ Intuitions

Future research would incorporate interviews and surveys with professional editors to compare their creative intuitions with measurements produced through further content analysis. Potential research questions include: Do editors perceive the same commonalities and distinctions in commercially and critically successful books? When editing a book, do their creative intuitions guide them in a direction that matches seeming audience preferences? When asked to justify their answers, are they aware of how their answers innovate on or violate elements and structures used in previously successful publications? Editors with track records of guiding acquired books into commercial or critical success may find that their intuitions match up well with the data, and editors who have consistently failed to guide books into success of either sort may then have the ability to redirect their efforts.

### Social Advocacy

Understanding the “rules” of the game may allow authors and editors to revolutionize what stories authors and editors can tell. In some cases, researchers question whether or not content developers should attempt to shift the preferences they have to work within. These researchers ask whether writers, like misguided journalists, “[sell or impose] a... system which is at the same time both desirable and repressive” (McQuail, 2010, p. 96). Some books, like those in the mystery genre, have come under heavy criticism for seeming to sell or impose a social hierarchy feminists have worked for decades to eradicate.

It would be hard to believe there has been any decrease in misogynistic depictions of violence against women in the genre since Sara Paretsky called attention to the issue in 1986. In 2009 British reviewer Jessica Mann declared that she was sick of being sent fiction that seemed to be competing to be more sensationally sadistic in its depiction of violence against women and would no longer review such books. She particularly scolded women who write violent crime fiction. (Fister, 2011, p. 11-12)

However, this seems to ignore that some successful publications depicting “violence against women can be interpreted as feminist” and may hope to criticize rather than enable gendered violence and patriarchal power structures. Indeed, one author responded to Mann’s complaint, saying women, because they grow up experiencing the violence they want to overturn, have internalized the experience, enabling them to write about it from the inside. “Men, on the other hand, write about it from the outside.” Consider the international bestselling *Millennium* Trilogy, the first of which, upon its original publication in Sweden, was titled *Men Who Hate Women*. The book’s American publisher, perhaps fearing the title would seem to condone rather than condemn violence against women, chose to change the title to *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fister, 2011, p. 11-12).

Writers attempting to subvert dominant social structures in and through their stories would do well to understand what arrangements will permit their message without sacrificing narrative validity. Messing with the formula might disrupt the reading experience if writers only rely on intuition, because intuition fails when used to navigate challenges that are unlike previously synthesized experiences. Manipulating reliably effective textual clusters, however, gives writers room to shift otherwise seemingly unalterable aspects by incorporating them into a system whose structures elicits enough familiar and attractive elements for readers to process

unfamiliar clusters (Burnett & Beto, 2000, p. 34). Giving books an attractive context makes impossible options suddenly possible.

#### Audience Research

My thesis limited its analysis to studying published mystery books. Future research should broaden the generalizability and specificity of the results by adding an audience research component. A reader survey would help determine whether readers self-report the same preferences this content analysis revealed, and preliminary focus groups would add precision and definition to the results when being used to formulate concentrated survey questions.

#### Further Content Analysis

A previous content analysis conducted by Badger, Royse, & Moore (2011) performed a deep textual analysis by using a “dictionary to count words in various categories” (p. 582). Their dictionary was predetermined by previous studies. Further content analysis to expand the research in my thesis will look to previous literature on the mystery genre to help determine what vocabulary should be included in a preliminary dictionary of mystery-genre specific terms. However, rather than beginning analysis with a predetermined dictionary, the content analysis would generate a new dictionary. While the dictionary would not be predetermined, for the sake of time, my proposed study would determine what to include in the dictionary by isolating vocabulary within predetermined contexts and uses. The dictionary would seek to be exhaustive without being redundant. To offer a few examples, the dictionary could isolate vocabulary used to describe the main character, to introduce secondary characters or villains, to begin chapters, to leave off chapters with cliffhanger transitions, and to communicate exposition. The dictionary would allow the coder to analyze mystery literature to evaluate the predicted audience reception of a book based on integrated vocabulary.

## REFERENCES

- Alter, A. (2012). Your e-book is reading you. *The Wall Street Journal on the Web*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304870304577490950051438304.html>
- Amazon. (2012). Amazon bestsellers in mystery, thriller, & suspense. Retrieved November 5, 2012 from [http://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books-Mystery-Thriller-Suspense/zgbs/books/18/ref=zg\\_bs\\_nav\\_b\\_1\\_b](http://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books-Mystery-Thriller-Suspense/zgbs/books/18/ref=zg_bs_nav_b_1_b)
- Burnett, A., & Beto, R. (2000). Reading romance novels: An application of parasocial relationship theory. *North Dakota Journal of Speech & Theatre*, 1328-39.
- Carreiro, E. (2010). Electronic books: How digital devices and supplementary new technologies are changing the face of the publishing industry. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 26(4), 219-235.
- Dempsey, B. (2012). E-book consumers drive more sales and more dollars through apps online retailers, says bisg study. *Bowker on the Web*. Retrieved from [http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press\\_room/2012/pr\\_02282012.shtml](http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press_room/2012/pr_02282012.shtml)
- Fisher, W. (1985). The narrative paradigm: An elaboration. *Communication Monographs*, 52(4), 347-367.
- Fister, B. (2011). Sister in crime at the quarter century: Advocacy, community, and change. Conference paper, International Popular Culture Association.

- Frisson, S., & Pickering, M.J. (2007). The processing of familiar and novel senses of a word: Why reading Dickens is easy but reading Needham can be hard. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 22(4), 595-613.
- Godine, D. (2011). The role and future of the traditional book publisher. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 27(4), 332-337.
- Hanan, J. (2008). The continued importance of walter fisher's narrative paradigm: An analysis of fisher's extant work. *Conference Papers—National Communication Association*, 1.
- Harris, S. (2010). *The moral landscape*. New York: Free Press.
- Hempel, S., & Degand, L. (2008). Sequencers in different text genres: Academic writing, journalese and fiction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(4), 676-693.
- Hoffner, C. (1996). Children's wishful identification and parasocial interaction with favorite television characters. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 40, 389-404.
- Kachru, Y. (2008). Language variation and corpus linguistics. *World Englishes*, 27(1), 1-8.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509.
- Kulo, C., & Bowker, R. R. (2010). The mystery book consumer in the digital age. Retrieved from <http://www.sistersincrime.org/associations/10614/files/ConsumerBuyingBookReport.pdf>
- Lé, K., Coelho, C., Mozeiko, J., & Grafman, J. (2011). Measuring goodness of story narratives. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research*, 54(1), 118-126.
- Leiter, D. (2009). Howdunit?: Some narrative considerations for a cross-medial understanding of the mystery genre. Conference paper, International Communication Association.

- Mahlberg, M. (2007). Clusters, key clusters and local textual functions in Dickens. *Corpora*, 2(1), 1-31.
- Maryles, D. (2011). The winning game: 2010 hardcovers: Facts and figures 2011. *Publisher's Weekly on the Web*. Retrieved from <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/46541-the-winning-game-2010-hardcovers-facts--figures-2011.html>
- Masnick, M. (2013). Authors guild's scott turow: the supreme court, google, ebooks, libraries & amazon are all destroying authors. *Techdirt*. Retrieved from <http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20130408/01345422620/authors-guilds-scott-turow-supreme-court-google-ebooks-libraries-amazon-are-all-destroying-authors.shtml>
- McQuail, D. (2010). McQuail's mass communication theory. (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Mildorf, J. (2004). New approaches in narrative theory/Narrative theory: Transgeneric, intermedial, interdisciplinary (Book). *Narrative Inquiry*, 14(1), 219-230.
- Moretti, F. (1983). *Signs Taken for Wonders*. Thetford: The Thetford Press Ltd.
- Morgan, S. (2011). Thesis proposal. Unpublished manuscript, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.
- O'Leary, B. (2011). Context first: A unified field theory of publishing. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 27(3), 211-219.
- Omnimystery. (2012). Omnimystery, a family of murder mystery websites. *The Edgar Awards*. Retrieved from <http://awards.omnimystery.com/mystery-awards-edgars.html#.UJgF-MWU3Io>
- RWA. (2011). About the romance genre. *Romance Writers of America on the Web*. Retrieved from [http://www.rwa.org/cs/readership\\_stats](http://www.rwa.org/cs/readership_stats)



- Scott, R.L. (1984). Narrative theory and communication research. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70(2), 197-204.
- SinC. (2011). SinC releases mystery book buyer study. *Sisters in Crime on the Web*. Retrieved from <http://sisters-in-crime-sinc.blogspot.com/2011/01/sinc-releases-mystery-book-buyer-study.html>
- Snee, B. J. (2009). Soft-boiled cinema: Joel and ethan coens' neo-classical neo-noirs. *Literature Film Quarterly*, 37 (3), 212-223.
- Sternadonia, M., & Wise, K. (2009). Laboring the written news: Effects of story structure on cognitive resources, comprehension, and memory. *Conference Papers—International Communication Association*.
- TMG. (2012). The mystery guild's bestseller list. Retrieved November 5, 2012, from [http://www.mysteryguild.com/bestselling-books.html?\\_dyncharset=UTF-8&\\_dynSessConf=4089304634357191744&numOfItems=100&term=&value=&title=&keyword=&pid=&isbn=&pubDate=&price\\_range=&format=&formatText=&scope=&filter=&refineId=&sort=&resultView=LIST&sAction=&filter=&pageName=](http://www.mysteryguild.com/bestselling-books.html?_dyncharset=UTF-8&_dynSessConf=4089304634357191744&numOfItems=100&term=&value=&title=&keyword=&pid=&isbn=&pubDate=&price_range=&format=&formatText=&scope=&filter=&refineId=&sort=&resultView=LIST&sAction=&filter=&pageName=)
- Turow, S. (2012). Letter from scott turow: Grim news. *The Authors Guild Blog*. Retrieved from <http://blog.authorsguild.org/2012/03/09/letter-from-scott-turow-grim-news/>
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2011). Mass media research: An introduction. (9<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Boston: Wadsworth
- Zerba, A. (2008). Narrative storytelling: Putting the story back in hard news to engage young audiences. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 29(3), 94-102.

## -APPENDIX A-

## FULL COLLECTION OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Perspectives

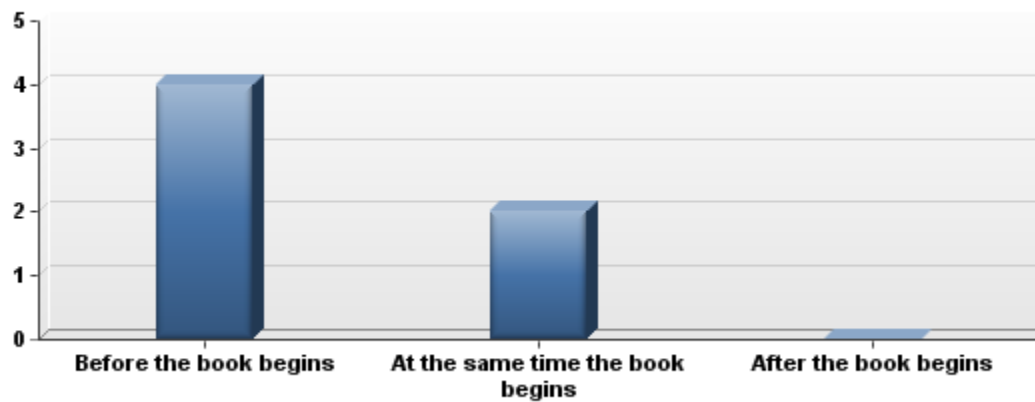
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Omniscient		0	0%
2	Limited		6	100%
3	Single POV		2	33%
4	Multiple POV		4	67%
5	First person		4	67%
6	Second person		0	0%
7	Third person		4	67%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Perspective (select all used within story)	Omniscient	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Limited	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
	Single POV	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
	Multiple POV	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
	First person	1	1	1	0	1	0	4
	Second person	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Third person	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Total		1	1	1	1	1	1	6

### Initial Crime

When does the crime occur?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Before the book begins		4	67%
2	At the same time the book begins		2	33%
3	After the book begins		0	0%
	Total		6	100%



		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
When does the crime occur?	Before the book begins	0	1	1	0	1	1	4
	At the same time the book begins	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
	After the book begins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

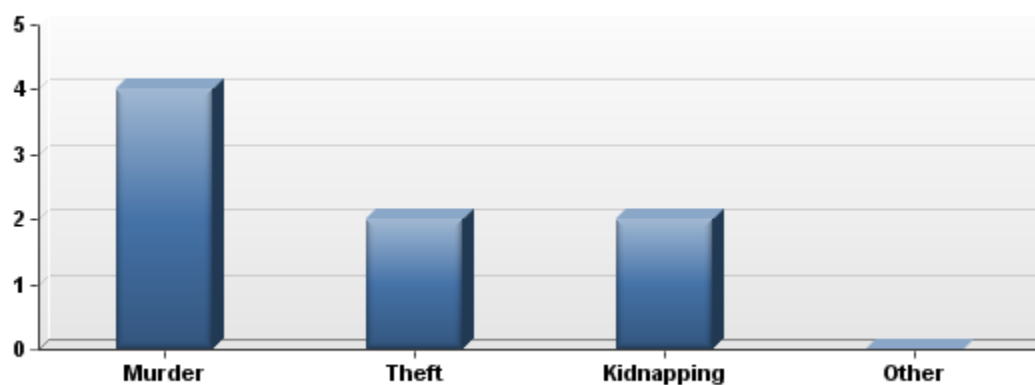
Does the crime break the law?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		6	100%
2	No		0	0%
	Total		6	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Does the crime break the law?	Yes	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

Type of Crime

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Murder		4	67%
2	Theft		2	33%
3	Kidnapping		2	33%
4	Other		0	0%



		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Type of crime	Murder	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
	Theft	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
	Kidnapping	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		1	1	1	1	1	1	6

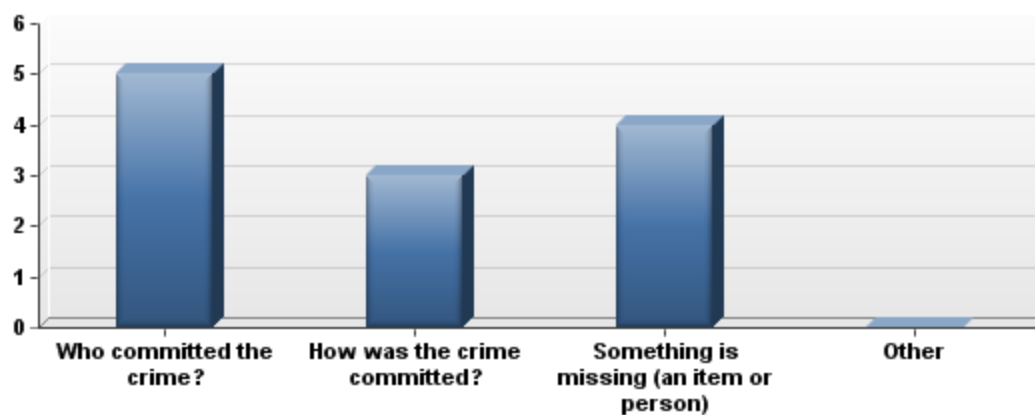
Is the crime a mystery?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		5	83%
2	No		1	17%
	Total		6	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Crime is a mystery	Yes	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
	No	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

If yes, the mystery consists of:

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Who committed the crime?		5	100%
2	How was the crime committed?		3	60%
3	Something is missing (an item or person)		4	80%
4	Other		0	



		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If yes, mystery consists of: (mark all that apply)	Who committed the crime?	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
	How was the crime committed?	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
	Something is missing (an item or person)	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	1	0	1	5

### Location of crime

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Public		5	83%
2	Private		1	17%
	Total		6	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Location of crime	Public	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
	Private	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

## Witnesses to crime?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		5	83%
2	No		1	17%
	Total		6	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Witnesses	Yes	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
	No	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

## If yes, how many witnesses?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		1	20%
2	2		2	40%
3	3		0	0%
4	+3		2	40%
	Total		5	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
If yes, number of witnesses	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	+3	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
	Total	1	1	0	1	1	1	5

Is the crime a single, isolated crime, or is it a repeated offense?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Single		2	33%
2	Repeated		4	67%
	Total		6	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Single or repeated crime	Single	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Repeated	1	0	1	1	1	0	4
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

### Characters

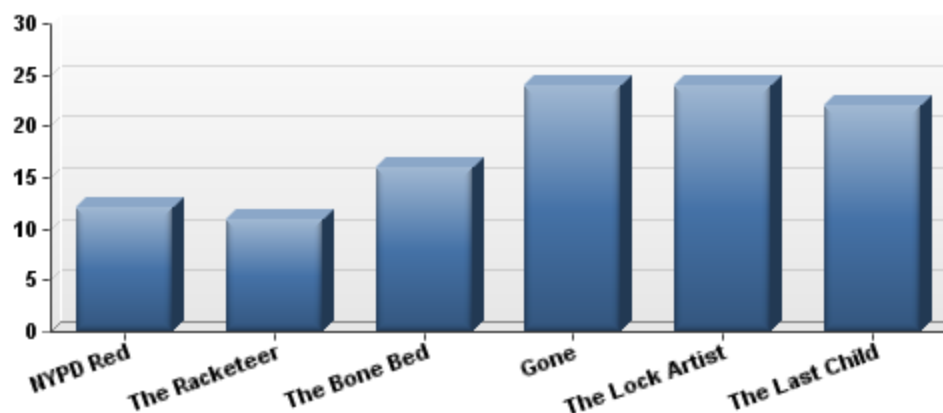
Number of primary and secondary characters per title

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	NYPD Red		12	11%
2	The Racketeer		11	10%
3	The Bone Bed		16	15%
4	Gone		24	22%
5	The Lock Artist		24	22%
6	The Last Child		22	20%
	Total		109	100%

Role of character

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		6	6%
2	Villain		9	8%
3	Victim		26	24%
4	Secondary		68	62%
	Total		109	100%





		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Role of character	Hero	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
	Villain	2	0	1	1	1	5	9
	Victim	3	2	4	11	2	4	26
	Secondary	7	8	10	11	20	12	68
	Total	12	11	16	24	24	22	109

When is a description of the character given?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Before the character appears		26	25%
2	At the same time the character appears		79	75%
	Total		105	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Description of the character given:	Before the character appears	4	5	7	3	5	2	26
	At the same time the character appears	8	6	9	18	19	19	79
	Total	12	11	16	21	24	21	105

Description given by (compare this statistic to how many characters are hero/secondary):

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Another character	94	88%
2	Same character being described	13	12%
	Total	107	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Description given by	Another character	9	10	15	19	23	18	94
	Same character being described	3	1	1	4	1	3	13
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	21	107

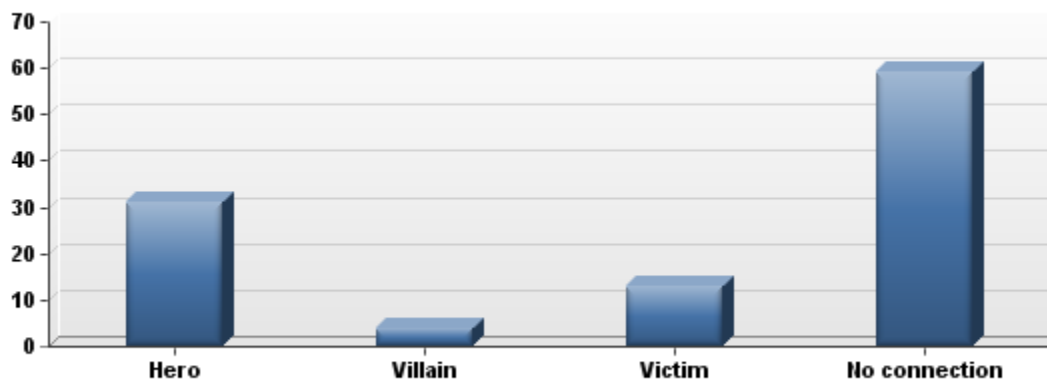
Description given through:

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Dialogue		7	7%
2	Exposition		100	93%
	Total		107	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Description given through	Dialogue	0	0	2	1	3	1	7
	Exposition	12	11	14	22	21	20	100
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	21	107

Character has direct connection to

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Hero	31	29%
2	Villain	4	4%
3	Victim	13	12%
4	No connection	59	55%
	Total	107	100%



		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Character has direct connection to:	Hero	4	4	5	5	5	8	31
	Villain	2	0	0	1	0	1	4
	Victim	1	0	2	9	0	1	13
	No connection	5	7	9	8	19	11	59
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	21	107

If connected to another character:

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Public		34	76%
2	Private		11	24%
	Total		45	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
If connected to another character, nature of connection	Public	6	1	6	11	2	8	34
	Private	1	3	1	3	3	0	11
	Total	7	4	7	14	5	8	45

Kind of details description communicates:

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Physical details		40	38%
2	Personal details		83	78%
3	No details given		11	10%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Kind of details description communicates	Physical details	4	2	3	12	6	13	40
	Personal details	6	10	13	18	17	19	83
	No details given	2	0	3	1	5	0	11
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

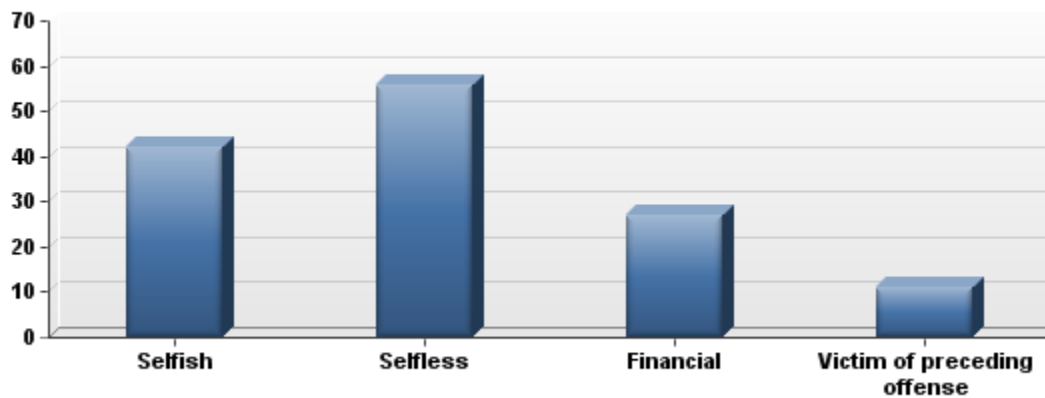
## Character breaks the law?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		45	42%
2	No		61	58%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Character breaks the law	Yes	3	5	6	5	15	11	45
	No	9	6	10	18	9	9	61
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

## Motivation

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Selfish		42	40%
2	Selfless		56	54%
3	Financial		27	26%
4	Victim of preceding offense		11	11%



		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Motivation (mark all that apply)	Selfish	4	6	6	7	10	9	42
	Selfless	8	5	7	15	9	12	56
	Financial	6	5	1	0	13	2	27
	Victim of preceding offense	0	1	5	5	0	0	11
Total		12	11	16	22	23	20	104

Desires to return to earlier state?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		25	24%
2	No		81	76%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Desires to return to earlier state	Yes	2	1	1	8	4	9	25
	No	10	10	15	15	20	11	81
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

Acting on their own?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		44	42%
2	No		62	58%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Acting on their own	Yes	5	2	5	15	8	9	44
	No	7	9	11	8	16	11	62
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

If not, who are they working with?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Leader		13	21%
2	Patsy		5	8%
3	Part of a group		44	71%
	Total		62	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
If no, who are they working with? (mark all that apply)	Leader	2	3	1	0	5	2	13
	Patsy	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
	Part of a group	4	5	9	8	10	8	44
	Total	7	9	11	8	16	11	62

Character has a family?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		62	60%
2	No		42	40%
	Total		104	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Character has a family	Yes	5	7	5	20	12	13	62
	No	7	3	11	2	12	7	42
	Total	12	10	16	22	24	20	104

Intellectual?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		50	47%
2	No		56	53%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Intellectual	Yes	7	6	14	8	9	6	50
	No	5	5	2	15	15	14	56
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

If yes:

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Public intellectual		44	90%
2	Private intellectual		5	10%
	Total		49	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
If yes:	Public intellectual	6	6	14	7	5	6	44
	Private intellectual	1	0	0	0	4	0	5
	Total	7	6	14	7	9	6	49



Is character a drug user?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		8	8%
2	No		98	92%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
Drug user	Yes	2	3	1	0	0	2	8
	No	10	8	15	23	24	18	98
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

If yes, which drug?

Table Options	
Text Response	
Caffeine	
Cocaine	
Cocaine	
Cocaine	
Cocaine	
Amphetamines	
Alcohol, oxytocin, assorted pills	
Alcohol, assorted pills	

Witness to a crime?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		31	29%
2	No		75	71%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Witness to a crime	Yes	5	6	0	13	2	5	31
	No	7	5	16	10	22	15	75
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

### Hiding a secret?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		31	29%
2	No		75	71%
	Total		106	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Hiding a secret	Yes	2	5	2	7	9	6	31
	No	10	6	14	16	15	14	75
	Total	12	11	16	23	24	20	106

### Character arc?

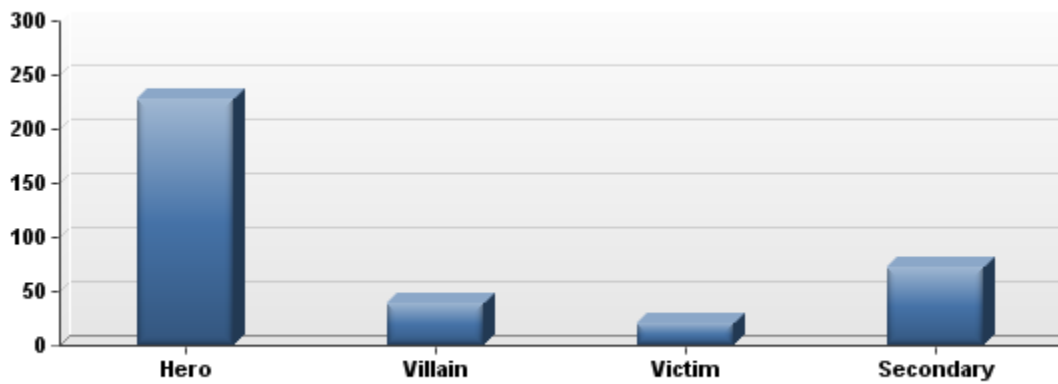
Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Arc		12	11%
2	No change		93	89%
	Total		105	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Character change at ending	Arc	3	0	0	5	1	3	12
	No change	9	11	15	18	23	17	93
	Total	12	11	15	23	24	20	105

## Chapters

Chapters begins with which character?

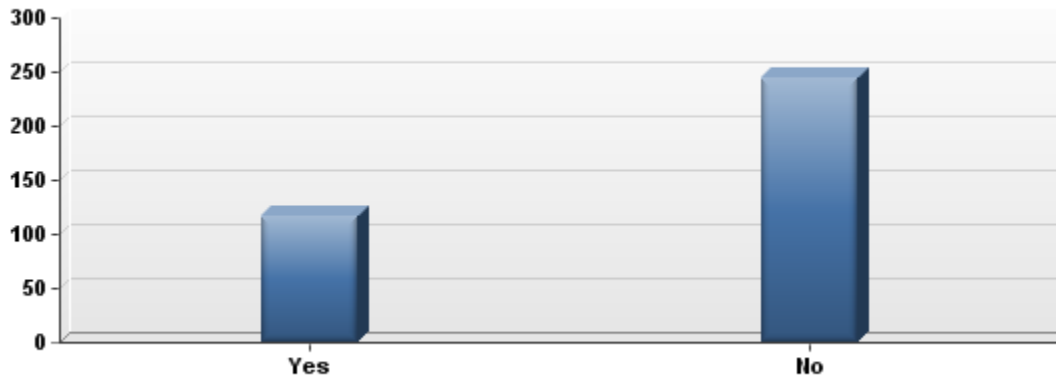
Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		228	63%
2	Villain		39	11%
3	Victim		21	6%
4	Secondary		73	20%
	Total		361	100%



		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Chapter begins with which character?	Hero	59	32	41	45	24	26	227
	Villain	34	1	0	2	0	2	39
	Victim	0	1	0	20	0	0	21
	Secondary	6	11	0	19	0	37	73
	Total	99	45	41	86	24	65	360

Contains break midway through chapter?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		116	32%
2	No		244	68%
	Total		360	100%



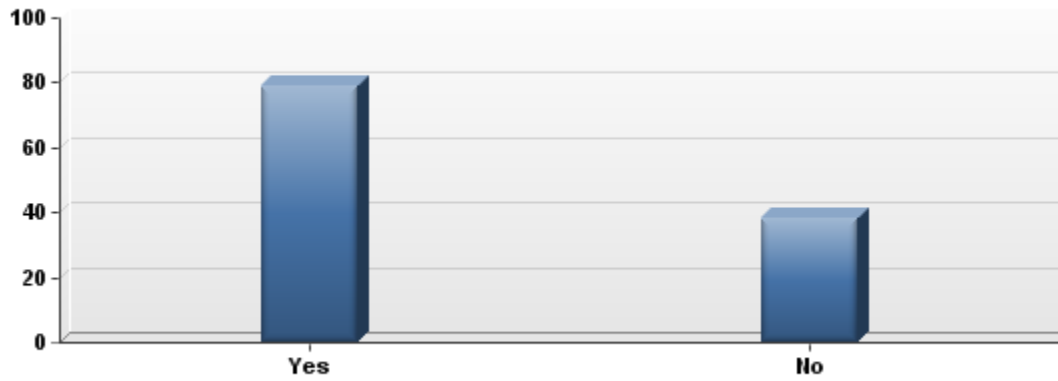
		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Contains break midway through chapter	Yes	8	41	2	4	23	38	116
	No	91	4	39	81	1	27	243
	Total	99	45	41	85	24	65	359

If a chapter begins with a certain character, how likely is the chapter to have a chapter break?

		Chapter begins with which character?				Total
		Hero	Villain	Victim	Secondary	
Contains break midway through chapter	Yes	76	8	1	31	116
	No	151	31	20	42	244
	Total	227	39	21	73	360

If yes, does the following section pick up from the same character's POV? (Explain that this did not code for multiple breaks, only for the first break that appeared in a chapter)

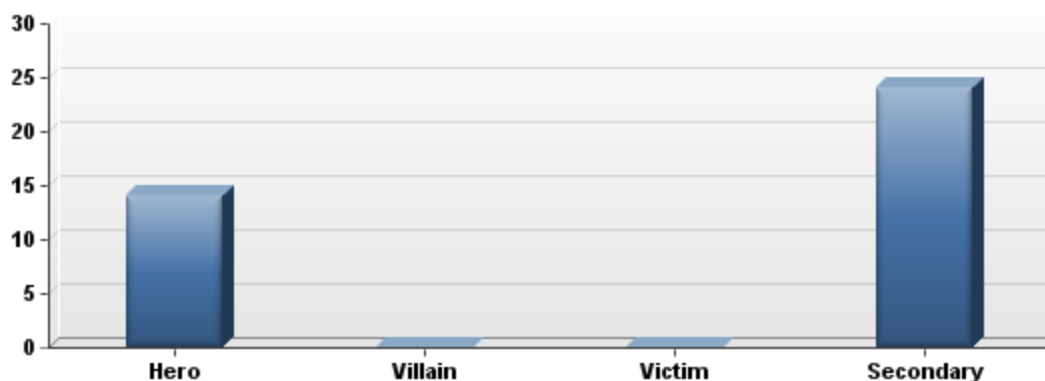
#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	79	68%
2	No	38	32%
	Total	117	100%



		Book Title						
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	Total
If yes, does the following section pick up from the same perspective?	Yes	8	24	2	4	23	18	79
	No	0	17	0	1	0	20	38
	Total	8	41	2	5	23	38	117

If no, what character does the following section pick up from?

Table Options		Response	%
#	Answer	Response	%
1	Hero	14	37%
2	Villain	0	0%
3	Victim	0	0%
4	Secondary	24	63%
	Total	38	100%



		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
If no, what character does the following section pick up from?	Hero	0	5	0	1	0	8	14
	Villain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Victim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Secondary	0	12	0	0	0	12	24
	Total	0	17	0	1	0	20	38

### Chapter ends with Cliffhanger or Resolution

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Cliffhanger		91	25%
2	Resolution		268	75%
	Total		359	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Chapter ending	Cliffhanger	37	9	20	9	1	15	91
	Resolution	62	36	21	75	23	50	267
	Total	99	45	41	84	24	65	358

### Story Arcs

Number of arcs per title:

#	Answer		Response	%
1	NYPD Red		3	12%
2	The Racketeer		3	12%
3	The Bone Bed		6	23%
4	Gone		6	23%
5	The Lock Artist		3	12%
6	The Last Child		5	19%
	Total		26	100%

Type of arc:

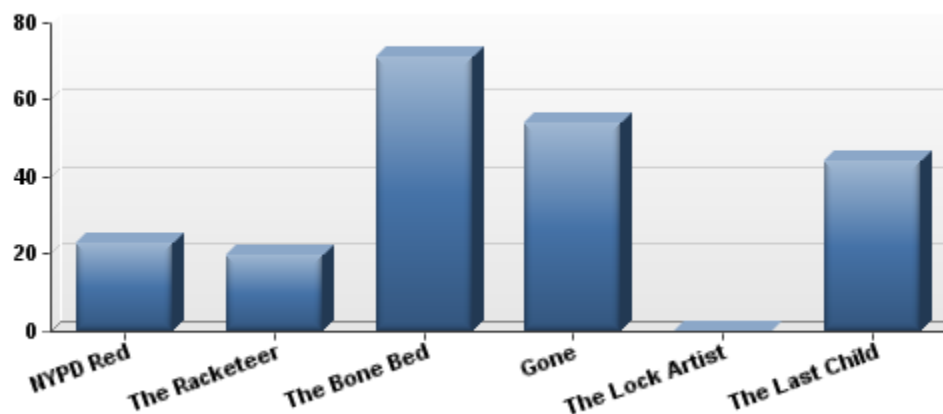
Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Primary		8	31%
2	Secondary		18	69%
	Total		26	100%

		Book Title						Total
		NYPD Red	The Racketeer	The Bone Bed	Gone	The Lock Artist	The Last Child	
Type of Arc	Primary	2	1	1	1	1	2	8
	Secondary	1	2	5	4	2	3	17
	Total	3	3	6	5	3	5	25

## Clues

Number of clues per book

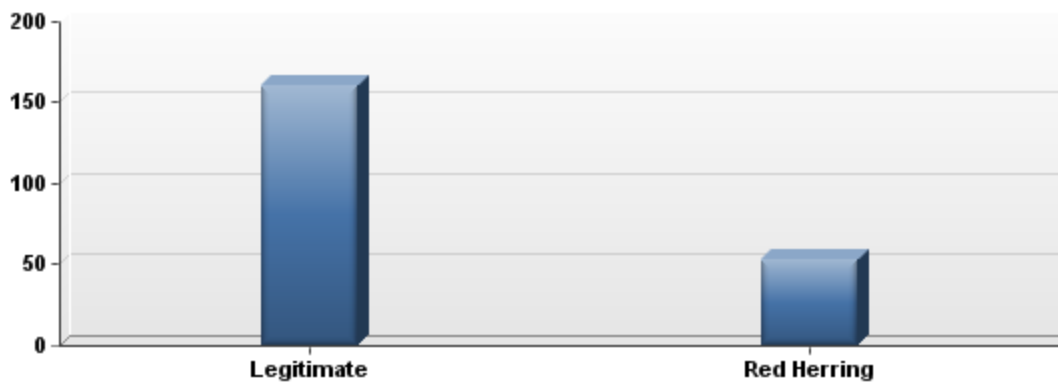
Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	NYPD Red		23	11%
2	The Racketeer		20	9%
3	The Bone Bed		71	33%
4	Gone		54	25%
5	The Lock Artist		0	0%
6	The Last Child		44	21%
	Total		212	100%



Is the clue legitimate or a red herring?

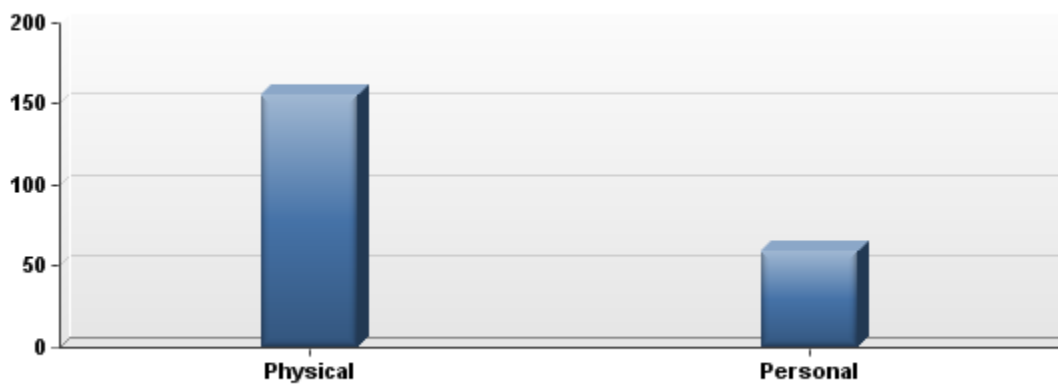
Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Legitimate		160	75%
2	Red Herring		53	25%
	Total		213	100%





Is the clue a physical or personal clue?

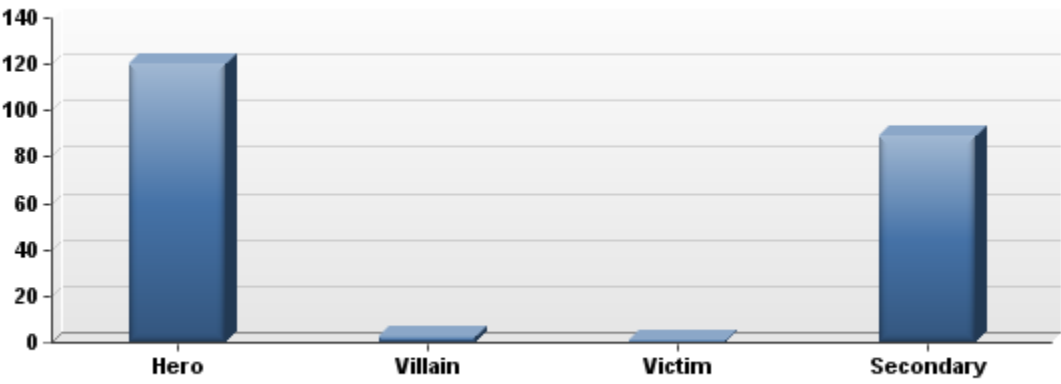
Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Physical		155	73%
2	Personal		59	28%



Who discovers the clue?

Table Options				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Hero		120	56%
2	Villain		3	1%
3	Victim		1	0%
4	Secondary		89	42%

Total		213	100%
-------	--	-----	------



-APPENDIX B-

CODEBOOK TEMPLATE

**PERSPECTIVE (select all used within story)**

- ☐ Omniscient
- ☐ Limited
- ☐ Single perspective
- ☐ Multiple perspectives
- ☐ First person
- ☐ Second person
- ☐ Third person

**CHARACTERS**

1. Name of character
2. Role of character
  - ☐ Hero
  - ☐ Villain
  - ☐ Victim
  - ☐ Secondary
3. Occupation (record description):
4. Describe scene introducing character (record description):
5. Description of the character given:

- ☐ Before the character appears
- ☐ At the same time the character appears
- ☐ After the character appears

5a. If before, number of chapters description given before the character appears (record number):

5b. If after, number of chapters description given after the character appears (record number):

6. Description given by:

- ☐ Same character being described
- ☐ Another character

6a. Description given through:

- ☐ Dialogue
- ☐ Exposition

7. Character has direct connection to (mark all that apply):

- ☐ Hero
- ☐ Villain
- ☐ Victim
- ☐ No connection

7a. If connected to another character, nature of connection:

- ☐ Public connection
- ☐ Private connection

8. Kind of details description communicates:

- ☐ Physical details
- ☐ Personal details
- ☐ No details given

9. Character breaks the law

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. Motivation (mark all that apply)

- ☐ Selfish
- ☐ Selfless
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ Victim of preceding offense

10a. If victim of preceding offense, record description of offense:

11. Desires to return to earlier state:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. Acting on their own:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12a. If no (mark all that apply):

- ☐ Leader
- ☐ Patsy
- ☐ Part of a group
- ☐ N/A

13. Character has a family:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. Intellectual:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14a. If yes:

- ☐ Public intellectual
- ☐ Private intellectual

15. Drug user:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15a. If yes, which drug:

16. Witness to a crime:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16a. If yes, witness connected to:

- ☐ Hero
- ☐ Criminal
- ☐ Victim
- ☐ N/A

17. Hiding a secret:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17a. If yes, what is the secret (record description):

17b. Secret connected to:

- ☐ Hero
- ☐ Criminal
- ☐ Victim

18. General characteristics (mark all that apply):

- ☐ Rich
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Noble
- ☐ No-nonsense
- ☐ Upstart
- ☐ Outsider
- ☐ Insider
- ☐ Loner
- ☐ Sociable

19. Character change at ending:

- ☐ Arc
- ☐ Revolution
- ☐ No change

19a. If arc, describe change:

## **INITIAL CRIME**

1. When does the crime occur (record chapter and page number):

2. Does the crime break a law?

- ☐ Yes

- ☐ No

3. Type of crime

- ☐ Murder
- ☐ Theft
- ☐ Kidnapping
- ☐ Other (record description):

4. Crime is a mystery:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4a. If yes, the mystery consists of (record all that apply):

- ☐ Who committed the crime?
- ☐ How was the crime committed?
- ☐ Something is missing (an item or person)
- ☐ Other (record description):

5. Location of crime:

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private

6. Witnesses:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6a. If yes, number of witnesses:

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2



- ☐ 3
- ☐ +3

7. Single or repeated crime?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Repeated

### **CHAPTER STRUCTURE (record for each chapter)**

Chapter number:

Beginning of chapter:

1. Chapter begins with which character (refer to character key):

- ☐ Hero
- ☐ Villain
- ☐ Victim
- ☐ Secondary

After beginning of chapter:

2. Contains break midway through chapter:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3a. If yes, does the following section pick up from the same perspective?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3ab. If no, what character does the following section pick up from?

- ☐ Record character (refer to character key):

### 3. Chapter ending

- ☐ Cliffhanger (from unresolved episode)
- ☐ Resolution (from resolved episode)

### **STORY ARCS (record for each DISTINCT ARC throughout the book)**

#### 1. Type of arc:

- ☐ Primary
- ☐ Secondary

#### 2. Description of arc (record description for each included element)

- ☐ Initiating event:

Chapters:

- ☐ Attempt to resolve:

Chapters:

- ☐ Consequence:

Chapters:

### **CLUES**

#### 1. When does the clue appear (record chapter):

#### 2. What is the clue? (record description):

#### 3. Characteristics of the clue (mark all that apply):

- ☐ Legitimate clue
- ☐ Red herring

#### 4. Source (mark all that apply):

- ☐ Physical

- ☐ Personal

5. Who discovers the clue (refer to character key):

- ☐ Hero

- ☐ Villain

- ☐ Victim

- ☐ Secondary