

Cracking the Cold Case:
The Anatomy and Deconstruction of Unsolved Crimes

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Abstract

Popularized by the media and trendy television programs, the topic of “cold case investigation” has become ubiquitous. By examining unsolved cases and investigating detective processes, a compilation of information is gathered to analyze, reexamine and recreate crimes in an effort to solve them. This research aims to examine the procedures and anatomy of unsolved cases while reviewing the current cold case management tactics used by local and national law enforcement officials. Through academic literature, eight law enforcement staff interviews, governmental publications and the author’s documented first-hand investigative experience, this thesis also suggests recommendations for all cold case investigative personnel in their future case investigations. Though the media has worked for and against creating an accurate depiction of cold case investigation, using determined volunteers or decks of playing cards could offer unique techniques to investigators that now may have more tools to use than they realized.

Disclaimer: All names of investigators and detectives who wish not to be named will be referenced by their department's name and detail. All open cold cases referenced are redacted at the public-request level and do not include case agent identification or departmental association. Information gathered from personal experience is limited to the restrictions placed upon the individual by legal standards and will not be available for additional research or analysis as it may be deemed graphic and/or classified.

Part I: Introduction and Definitions

For centuries, law enforcement agencies have used terms such as *rape*, *burglary*, *assault*, and *homicide* to define crimes committed by suspects. These crimes are threats to all societies. Though criminal behavior keeps most law enforcement personnel employed, it presents significant, sociological challenges. However, those offenses that remain unreported are far more concerning. New to criminological terminology is a phrase pertaining to those cases that are, in some instances, archived and never reviewed again. These cases, often without leads or implicating evidence, are known as “cold cases.”

A cold case is an unsolved case – one with seemingly no promise of solution. It becomes cold if it has no further investigative clues. These cases are considered closed if/when it has been determined that the witnesses have no additional, useful information, when time constraints of a caseload leave a detective unable to take on more intensive investigation than previously assigned, or when the evidence and technology available at the time of the event are limited. Solved cases are also by definition, closed. An example is genetic fingerprinting, introduced into the legal process in 1985. Prior to DNA mapping and fingerprinting identification, other less accurate means of identification were utilized for providing “absolute” and thus damning evidence in the courtroom. Though the explanatory reasoning for closing a case may be justified in that the decision to label a case closed is reflective of a lack of evidence or lead, the processes and tactics used to reach this outcome are complicated, and often kept confidential or unexplained (http://www.prophase-genetics.com/history_dna_paternity.html, 2006).

This thesis aims to examine the investigative processes and components of unsolved cases while reviewing the current cold case management tactics used by local

and national law enforcement officials. The combination of procedural developments, the progression of evidential combinations leading to promising results, and the strategies used in deciphering cases are reviewed in detail. By examining the collection of different documentation of both evidence and report supplements, investigation discrepancies will be better explained. The reader will have an array of sources from which to gain a better perspective of investigation while honing in on the cold case branch of the criminal justice system. Because clearance rates are only reflective of solved cases, cold case numbers of epic proportions are significant yet unquantifiable; no national cold case database exists. The failure to calculate cold case statistics works against all departments and crime analysts. During three citizen and eight official interviews, opinions shed light on many components that comprise these cases, and how media-driven perspectives can lead to misconception. This thesis further reviews the evolution of public misperception. These issues are brought to the forefront with the understanding that although advancement toward a more effective universal crime-solving strategy is slow-moving, cold case investigation as of 2010 has accelerated substantially and has become more refined.

Historical Relevance

Judging by the definition of cold case, one would be inclined to believe that there are unlimited crimes that remain unsolved. This assumption lies in the understanding that anything left unsolved is “cold” due to dead-end investigations or weak case leads. The Cold Case Unit or Squad, though not formally constructed until the mid-1900s, is now considered an asset to those departments which have adequate funding. Whether

designated detectives are assigned to cold cases or additional case workers and trusted civilian volunteers begin researching new leads, the review of unsolved cases has been a unique part of investigation since the first American police department was established in New York City in 1845 (<http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/new-york-city-police-department/history.html>, 2010).

In many police departments and in state and national law enforcement divisions, the Cold Case Unit is reserved for homicides that have been unsolved and placed on the “backburner.” However, it is important to realize that cold cases also may involve sex crimes or disappearances/missing persons. These investigations often have been the root of squad collaboration in many instances (e.g. the Cold Case Unit may work with the Missing Persons Squad to develop a more comprehensive analysis of possible explanations for certain occurrences that require training of both specialized units). This was exemplified in the disappearance of Natalee Holloway. Homicide, cold case, and sex crime units were involved in the search for the young high school senior who was celebrating graduation in Aruba before her disappearance.

It should be noted that many, but not all, police departments have cold case units. Cold case units are established at the discretion of the departmental chief (Phoenix Police Affiliate, Personal Interview, 2010). While the popularity of cold case investigation has been publicized through common media fora such as television drama programs and best selling novels, heightened awareness has caused the public to respond to the realities of and need for review of unsolved cases. Sadly, due to budget cuts and the economic downturn, law enforcement agencies are having to liquidate these units or reassign their members to the more demanding immediate needs of select squads such as standard

homicide units which receive “unlawful death” calls on a daily basis. This fact may explain how cases are superseded by new investigations, or even recalled.

Part II: Anatomy of Investigation

Tests, Products, Processes: Building a Case

The United States’ intricate network of investigative personnel and their procedures, is vastly complex. Practices can differ among detectives, departments, agencies, and states. Because evidence is needed to prove a crime occurred, one would assume that physical documentation of damages or harm would suffice. However, one variation in declaring that a crime has occurred is the “missing evidence component.” This pertains to cases where an object has been stolen from a home or an alleged victim has disappeared, information most often given by a victim or in a witness statement. In cold cases, specifically in homicides, the body of a victim or the disappearances of a victim both are considered key examples of evidence. To clarify, although the body is missing, the absence of the victim is considered a unique part of the case for obvious reasons. Telephone records evidence plays a significant role in finding a person, whereas a bloody knife near a different victim could provide an entirely different lead.

To deconstruct the first component of cold case investigation, characterized by information gathering, one must view the crime as if it has been committed recently. In the case involving a deceased victim, innumerable pieces of information are collected in order to gain a possible theory explaining how, why, and by whom the homicide occurred. There are procedural practices exercised when responding to a dead body call, as outlined by the New Mexico Survivors of Homicide Inc. website. Documentation of

the scene through photographs, statements and evidence collection is essential. These pieces of evidence (e.g. fingerprints, bloodstained clothes, shoe prints, weapons, fibers, etc.) may be stored in a forensics lab and later examined and documented for DNA testing. They may contain additional information that could be tested and substantiated by future technological advances in the event that the case becomes “cold” (<http://www.nmsoh.org>, n.d.).

While witness testimony might be questionable or suspect, by reviewing closed cold cases reported by the Phoenix Police Department’s Homicide Unit in Arizona, witnesses are some of the most valuable and promising components of an investigation. Obtaining statements and interviewing possible suspects and witnesses are crucial. Confessions and possible or prospective leads often result in providing evidence leading to possible capture and conviction of a criminal. Whether polygraph recordings or legally obtained confessions are acquired, the witness statement and personal information are important to investigators in both research, as well as in trial proceedings. Other contributions that facilitate the development of case construction are: previous records regarding criminal behavior, surveillance footage, cell phone or technological records (e.g. bank statements), analysis of the victims, their physical evidence, body positioning, autopsy and medical examiner conclusions, loose fibers or hairs, weapons, injuries sustained by victims, and injuries sustained by the suspects. These are umbrella examples of what might be identified as building blocks for case maturation and solution when proper warrants are acquired and used lawfully. Theoretically, all items and statements considered evidence should be preserved for further research (<http://www.nmsoh.org>, n.d.).

When approaching a cold case after years have passed, a different priority level becomes associated with evidence evaluation. Verifying that a the case is open provides the researcher with a departure point from which to begin a fresh investigation.

According to Volunteer #1 of the Phoenix Police Citizens Offering Police Support (COPS) program, “Reviewing the incarceration records and court records along with the case history are the most useful processes for determining the current status of a case.”

This statement alludes to the fact that cases that may be opened due to new leads may be deemed private to the agency and therefore will not be available at public request or for public examination. If the case is closed and the case history reflects this disposition by the unit supervisor or district attorney, redacted copies may be obtained by anyone, including prison inmates.

When attempting to shorten the research process, members of the Phoenix Police Cold Case Homicide Unit claim that there are safe shortcuts one can take in examining cold cases. Their paraphrased and unanimous judgments are:

Checking incarceration records first can shorten the overall process...If the case agent is still assigned to the case being reviewed it is often helpful to ask for his knowledge of vague recordings or misinterpreted information...There are many players in the cold case review. If the lab is involved, technicians may offer an opinion about where to begin. (Phoenix Police Volunteers 1, 2)

The comprehensive gathering and compilation of data serves as a platform for officers, detectives, and lawyers to build not only criminal cases but also legal and judicial cases against probable suspects. In the event that new information comes forward or a volunteer’s perspective of a cold case offers a fresh view that revealed previously overlooked material, detectives may and often do gain new, viable and conclusive results.

Collaborations Amongst Agencies

As seen in numerous problem-solving techniques, the collaboration of units and agencies has been a largely disputed topic in investigations. Both officers and lieutenants in Phoenix and Connecticut admit that the loyalty seen in the brotherhood of law enforcement personnel can and does work against the progression of case solvability. This relates to the protectiveness of information, territorial jurisdictions, the secrecy of certain information, and in some circumstances, the withholding of information from local or state agencies in order to ensure bragging rights once a case is solved. For example, prior to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agencies worked autonomously, seldom sharing data. In the 1960s high profile San Francisco/Bay Area Zodiac case, multiple murders of at least five young victims were attributed to a single suspect. It was later reported the multiple law enforcement agencies involved felt the case would have been solved expediently had information been shared. When asking professionals for their opinions on this topic many of these police department officers began with the intonation that “in a perfect world” the situation would play out in a more positive light had agencies collaborated.

Do you feel agencies should collaborate in solving cold cases?

Phoenix Police Department Volunteer 1: Agencies should definitely collaborate; for instance, the police department, the county attorney office, and the immigration office.

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Yes, they should. That doesn't mean that they will.

Which units within the department should spend more time working together?

Phoenix Police Department Volunteer 1: Within the department, the various

units already work closely together. The only limitation is availability of resources.

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Depending on the crime and without stepping on your coworker's toes all relevant units should work together.

Colorado Springs Police Cold Case Affiliate: We often work with our Sex Crimes Unit and Robbery Unit on our homicide cases. We also have a very good rapport with our local FBI and DEA agencies. They are always willing to help.

When civilians were asked their opinions, their answers were not limited to yes or no answers. In relation to units and agencies working together, most civilian interviewees sided with members of the Phoenix Police Department claiming that the local departments need to enhance their collaboration efforts. In response to "which units should focus on cold cases," two of three civilians felt only homicides and serial rape cases should be considered as cold cases. With reputation-based concerns rooted in the realities of forfeiting jurisdictional rights to state officials, officers and most force members claim to feel uneasy with relinquishing their cases to other/new detectives. "Pride, trust, and gratification are all jeopardized," stated Phoenix Police Volunteers.

A pivotal feature relating to sharing information is the concept of "value shop." This term describes an information-sharing business model that was adopted by Norwegian police. The six working aspects of a value-shop are: problem finding and acquisition, problem solving, choice of problem solution, execution of solution, control, and evaluation (Fjeldstad and Stabell, 1998). An empirical study conducted in 2006 by Dean et al. illuminates the traits of value shop, what it means, and how it is applied. Divided into four empirical aspects, the evaluation of knowledge sharing is reviewed through investigative approaches, investigative performance, value shop principle, and case analysis results. As sharing knowledge within a department is just as taxing and complicated as that between departmental agencies, Dean et al. express the main issues faced by supervisors and agency heads in Norway. They claim that knowledge imbedded

in the varying forms of data collection and interpretation needs to be examined and brought to the forefront early and often. Time-sensitive evidence and situational concerns, such as terminally ill witnesses, may take precedence and thus displace other cases. Bringing information forward earlier in an investigation may change the outcome of a case.

The communication of knowledge is successful in the event that one or more of the following styles are used: socialization, externalization, internalization, and combination. These are all defined within the article as ways to transmit the important knowledge within any agency or group setting. The issues outlined in this report revolve around the individual's capability and motivation to communicate information to others and thus, contribute to the concept of wholeness being greater than the sum of its parts.

In the value shop study more than twenty variables of investigative tasks and uses of teamwork were compared by Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs) through an administered questionnaire. Results manifested that the "the extent of knowledge sharing is significantly and positively related to all five primary activities in police investigation as well as overall performance of police investigation units as value shops." The results also depicted a tendency of individuals to fall back on psychological and physical shortcuts. These practices that allow for many to rely on past solutions and past personal experiences limit investigators to inadequate knowledge and the transmission of inconclusive results. The lack of encouragement to share information was expressed in the study's questionnaire as well, and does not go unnoticed by those conducting the survey. In closing, it is stressed that the positive relationship between an individual's

opinions and attitude in regards to sharing information and the amount of time spent on any given case should be investigated further (Dean et al., 2006).

Part III: Interviews and Additional Resources

In order to obtain a cross sample of interview responses, four different law enforcement agencies and local civilians were queried. They included a university police department and western and eastern regional departments. The following excerpts are taken from interviews conducted by the author between January 20 and August 20 of 2010. A set of twelve questions was developed and administered through email and telephone interviews, and results were recorded through written and/or voice documentation. These questions were reflective of cold case inquiry and concern. Select answers were included because they best represent and describe the opinions expressed by the majority of those interviewed. Answers that differed and are of unique significance are paraphrased to illustrate the limited and yet varying opinions shared by others.

Question 1: What is your part in deciding whether or not a case is cold and if it is considered solved?

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Today most large departments govern themselves in accordance with the standards set by the Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). CALEA sets standards for the conduct of every procedure within a department, including the management of cold case squads. In most cases the time that has elapsed in the investigation of a serious felony... determines whether or not the case goes to the Cold Case Squad.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 1: We work under a sergeant who is assigned the Cold Case Unit. The decision is based on evidence, convictions and the DA (*district attorney*).

Colorado Springs Police Cold Case Affiliate: A case is considered solved if the suspect has been charged with that particular crime. Many times we “know” who did it; unfortunately we cannot prove it, this type of case remains open.

Question 2: What level of urgency should be placed on different types of cold cases ranging in severity: from homicide and rape to commercial burglary and graffiti?

ASU Police Affiliate: Because it is a cold case, 'urgency' is somewhat subjective... however violent crime should hold more weight than non-violent crime.

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Urgency doesn't play a part in the examination of cold cases. Urgency is what turned most of these cases "cold" in the first place. A slow, methodical approach is necessary to allow for a comprehensive reexamination of all aspects of the case. Again, serious felonies still subject to the statute of limitations should have priority.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 1: All cases deserve review but homicides, sex crimes, and assaults should be addressed immediately.

Civilian 1: I would say that the immediate focus should always be on current crimes... The more violent the crime, the more urgent. There isn't a reason to allocate a lot of resources to cases that are fairly minor unless they are extremely easy to solve in terms of time.

Questions 3 and 4: Do you feel agencies should collaborate in solving cold cases? Which units within the department should spend more time working together?

ASU Police Affiliate: Yes, but it varies on the case. Any department might have new insight.

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Of course. The only way any cold case can be solved is through complete cooperation between all agencies within the law enforcement community. Access to state and federal resources and labs is critical as is access to national law enforcement databases. The patrol division is often one of your greatest resources in solving old cases. New evidence often comes to the attention of the day-to-day enforcers. An active intelligence reporting and analysis unit can often yield valuable information about older cases.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 2: In a perfect world all members of law enforcement would work together to solve any given case. In regards to departmental units, working together shouldn't even be in question. In other words, they better be.

Civilian 2: We always see departments fighting over cases. The rivalry between the CIA and FBI is a great example. Maybe we wouldn't have cold cases if everyone worked together.

Colorado Springs Police Cold Case Affiliate: Agencies should always collaborate with each other. Criminals have no boundaries.

Question 5: Do you feel there are different types of cases certain agencies should investigate separately?

ASU Police Affiliate: No, however it should not be mandatory to involve other agencies.

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Cases where serious police misconduct might be involved should be referred to the department's internal division. This might be further required by department policy.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 1: No, but there are many shades of gray.

Phoenix Police Department Volunteer 2: This is an age-old question similar to “should the FBI and the CIA work on similar tasks?” All agencies need to regularly review their jurisdictions and their investigative practices.

Civilian 2: I think it would be better to see a department, not a unit, for each type of crime.

Question 6: What is most frustrating about cold case investigation?

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Encountering cases now considered cold that could have been solved had the investigator had the time and help to develop and run down additional leads.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 1: It is frustrating to research information of older cases when technology was limited or the evidence originally saved has been thrown out or corroded.

Civilian 2: Because society puts pressure on bigger, publicized cases we forget about the menial situations or in some cases, forgetting about the average Joe who is murdered when someone else of a more public stance gets killed. For example, if the mayor is murdered everyone gets involved but if the homeless guy mysteriously dies no one investigates it.

Colorado Springs Police Cold Case Affiliate: There are many things that are frustrating about cold cases. Speaking to or reading letters from victim’s families is very difficult. Many of the family members of victims think about their loved ones and their cases on a daily bases. It is difficult to tell a family member that we have no leads in their case.

Question 7: Which cold cases need to be reexamined and why?

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Serious, high visibility felonies with a good probability of being run to conclusion should be reexamined. This is the best use of your resources and will ensure future support for the unit.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 1: Cases with possible DNA samples.

Civilian 1: Detectives should reexamine murder cases and other cases that have evidence that would typically be considered a lead. The cases that are the most violent and have the highest probability of being solved should be looked at first. An example would be a rape case that has a rape kit as evidence.

Colorado Springs Police Cold Case Affiliate: There are many cases that are still very well the public’s memory that I am constantly asked to solve. These cases do not necessarily get more or less of my attention.

Question 8: What type of evidence do you find to be most incriminating in a cold case crime report?

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 2: Depends on the event. Everything from fingernail scrapings to photographs can be used to build a case.

Civilian 1: The most incriminating evidence in my mind is DNA and fingerprints – evidence that can be directly traced to suspects. Any objects left behind by the suspect are extremely incriminating. Forensics can tell a lot about a potential criminal. It can tell you from what angle a gun was shot, and how the suspect in question shot the gun in that manner.

Colorado Springs Police Cold Case Affiliate: Physical evidence is usually the most incriminating... I do not want to forget the importance of witnesses, whether eyewitnesses or someone who may have learned something about the crime after the fact. Many of these cases, not just cold cases are solved by hard work and determination. Physical evidence is just the icing on the cake in many of these case.

General comments concerning cold case investigation:

About cold case units:

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: The concept of a sole entity within a department, at least on the state and local level, is relatively new. Dedicating investigators to work on a backlog of cases has always been driven by budgetary concerns. More significantly, the advent of highly sophisticated forensic tools has greatly enhanced the ability of investigators to cover material previously unavailable to them. AFIS and enhanced DNA testing have been responsible for countless cold cases being reopened and solved. The evidence was there, the tools to interpret were not... until now.

Civilian 2: Law enforcement is not limited to police officers when it comes to investigation. Atlanta and Bauder's Colleges both have cold case clubs. These clubs and volunteers are solving cases with evidence and interactive Internet forums.

When cases become cold:

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: In serious cases like armed robberies or homicides we went all out. The department would commit whatever resources were necessary for these cases. I don't recall any that we let go until we arrested someone. The key here is the resources were available to complete these cases. Today that is not always the case and economic budgetary woes often require manpower to be directed to more current needs.

Civilian 1: I would say that maybe 15% of the department should be focusing on cold cases. That is not to diminish the importance of cold cases, but a reflection on the number of cases that are probably coming in daily that need their due attention. It would be tough to focus a high number of resources on cold cases unless you wanted more and more cases to become cold cases, which would negate the whole point of having a cold case unit in the first place.

Phoenix Police Cold Case Volunteer 2: Something that should be noted is that there is a disheartening reality of cold case review. In many cases the squeaky wheel gets the grease. This means that the cases with high public interest will be addressed more often due to continual civilian inquiry.

Published Governmental Material and Other Training Materials

Due to the amount of material collected and published about investigation, crime analysis, and cold case research, many trained law enforcement personnel struggle with

the continually evolving body of information that is compiled for conferences aiming to mold them into prime investigators. However, there are many model platforms used to create crime analysis and cold case investigation training courses. The *Biannual Cold Case Training Conference* recommended by the Phoenix Police Department is a good example of the compilation of up-to-date policies and investigation techniques. The Crime Analysis and Research Unit (CARU) located within this department also does a thorough job of outlining the ideal stratagem for researchers' investigations.

According to CARU's current *Crime and Intelligence Analysis Training and Resource Guide*, the three types of analysis are administrative, strategic, and tactical. The functions of these units are to identify, analyze, and provide information to those investigating any case. Though CARU employees focus mostly on current crime rates and recent patterns, they also are called upon to gather data from previous decades and identify possibly overlooked patterns. Crime analysis enhances the investigative process by which many detectives, private investigators and chiefs work. Using problem solving techniques like the Scan-Analyze-Respond-Assess model (SARA) or the Collect-Collate-Analyze-Disseminate-Evaluate model (CCADE), the Crime Analysis and Research Unit elevates the community policing strategy with its innovative methods. These frameworks employ open-minded practices to increase productivity and solvability (Crime and Intelligence Analysis Training and Resource Guide, 2007).

Another concept used that aims to refresh one's investigative mindset and solidify concrete evidence, is review of the Intelligence Cycle. This sequencing of data analysis and evaluation follows a flexible regimen as drawn by CARU (Figure 1):

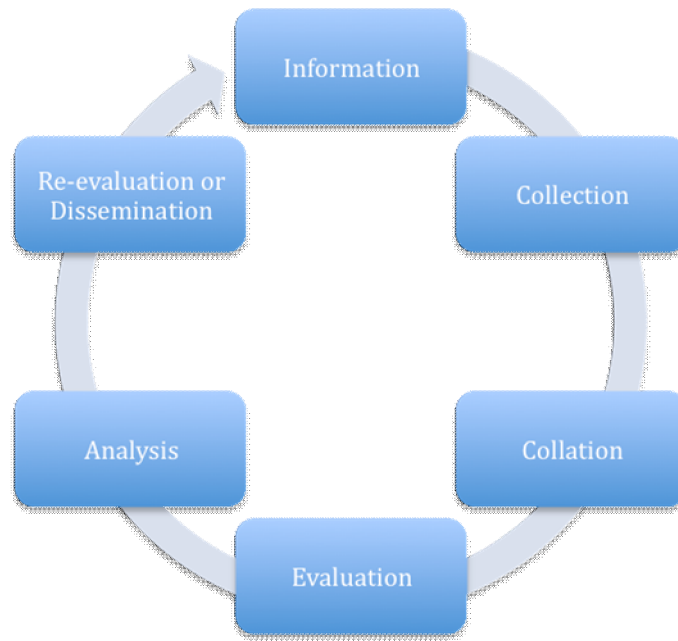


Figure 1 Intelligence Cycle
 Crime Analysis Research Unit, Phoenix Police Department

These steps are not unique to the standard inspection of information but rather are reliant on each other in that without evaluation of all pieces in the cycle, valuable information often is missed or disregarded. This cycle is proactive, and leads the entire department to better information and greater chances of criminological resolve. As a Maricopa County Public Defense Investigator stated in a brief interview, “Sometimes you just need to start over and begin again with the basics. You may have missed something important in the beginning.” Specific to cold case investigation is the President’s DNA Initiative, which was utilized during the Cold Case Regional Training Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona in 2007. To be considered useful the overview must include the scene description along with reports of all evidence, a victimology review, interview documentation, tips information, suspect analysis, and previous and current conclusive evidential information that could be enlightening to detectives.

To reopen and continue investigating a cold case, regional training suggestions require examining certain criteria. The following questions must be asked in order to consider opening a cold case:

- Does physical evidence exist and what is it?
- Is the physical evidence still in property control?
- Have witnesses been identified?
- Has the case been presented previously to the District Attorney or AUSA?
- Have all leads been exhausted?
- Was an arrest made previously?

President's DNA Initiative: Cold Case Regional Training, 2007

Following the responses to these questions are the three “T’s” of the investigation process for cold case review. Time, technology, and tenacity are outlined in the *DNA Initiative* in order to shed light on the positive aspect to what most would consider detrimental in a criminal case review. As stated in CARU’s *Regional Training Guide*, the most beneficial way to view time is to “turn the liability into an asset.” The most valuable duration of time is the first 48 hours after a crime is committed. In cold case investigation, time is not working against investigators; it often works in their favor, as there may be no urgency to pressure witnesses or catch fleeing perpetrators.

Technology has been revolutionized in the last century with the advent of DNA coding and digital enhancements of both crime scenes and facial composites.

Advancements such as these are unique, but not limited to hard science. Psychological tools and structure of investigations also have enhanced the ways detectives approach such cases (*Crime and Intelligence Analysis Training and Resource Guide, 2007*).

When tenacity is cited, the best investigators are characterized by their ability to remain open-minded and continually respond proactively with patience, persistence, and their use of strong research skills. They are deemed creative and non-traditional, while maintaining the ability to resist the urge to pass judgment on previous approaches to the

investigation. For instance, the use of modern technology such as GPS, satellite, video-surveillance devices, and Internet records, has advanced investigations. Investigators who can capitalize on these new innovations gain additional leads.

Because no single system exists for documenting investigative practices, local, regional, and national agencies collect and report data independent of each other. Some of the most important databases used in cold cases and their sometimes decades-old accumulated information, are listed in the regional handbooks as well. The most commonly referenced systems are: National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS), Unified Crime Report (UCR), Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS), and the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), which was created following the signing of the *DNA Identification Act* of 1994. This allowed the FBI to construct the National DNA Index System (NDIS). All of these systems are both independent and dependent in that they work separately from one another but when used together can add dimension to the black and white cold case crime scene.

Literature Review

Qualitative research journal articles from the last ten years have set the groundwork for reform and review of investigation through direct cold case research that has not been documented. However, additional topics that aid this discussion are clearance rates, political influence, and decision-making techniques. The following information will allow the reader to look deeper into these areas of focus and gain a better

perspective – a big picture view of how and why case investigations play out the way they do over time.

Predicting Clearance Rates

Roberts' 2007 publication outlining homicide clearance predictors is the first publication to analyze topic variables that may aid researchers in their quest for higher clearance rates. In reviewing the use of event history analysis, Roberts studied how situational and victim characteristics affect the clearance rates of homicides in 1,579 NIBRS logged incidents. Roberts clarifies early on that low clearance rates reflect badly on agencies and thus create negativity within any given society. Roberts's two theoretical perspectives that detail different influences on clearance outcomes are paraphrased in his evaluation of the conflict theory and pressures originating not only within the organization but in the woven political and normative behavior of society as well. Summarized, these perspectives are quite simple. The first states that police discretion creates differences in investigative practices, and this discretion is based on the biases of the officers themselves and/or the victims' characteristics (race, gender, age, etc.). The second perspective argues that police tend to take action when pressure from the organization intensifies. The attitude and behavior is of one hundred percent commitment regardless the characteristics of the victim(s).

Roberts seeks to evaluate timing of a crime's clearance with the event history approach. The findings were not surprising, according to the author, but still are worth mentioning. Incidents with female or child victims were cleared more often than those involving middle-aged persons or male victims. The cases involving close contact (i.e.

stabbing, beating, strangling, etc.) were solved more often when compared to shooting cases, as there tends to be more evidence available at these scenes.

Roberts believes that the second perspective is supported by these findings in that police discretion seems to be based more on the characteristics of a victim, as limited evidence and lack of information may lead one to be less determined and/or selective about what to do or where to take an investigation. The author closes with the comparison of Japan's homicide statistics to those in the United States. What Roberts brings to the reader's attention for future consideration is significant when considering the comparison of international clearance rates. Though Japan's clearance rate is 95%, and the United States' is 64%, fewer than 3% of the homicides reported and investigated in Japan involved firearms as the lethal weapon; a significantly smaller portion in contrast to the 67% in the USA.

Influences on Clearance Rates

In contrast to Roberts' analysis, Davies' article in *Homicide Studies* emphasizes the political environment, claiming that there is an unspoken influence that dictates murder clearance rates. Historically, governmental agencies operated independently or in isolation from each other. Davies claims that the accelerated increases in murder rates gain immediate attention through media coverage as in-migration of new residents and the infusion of economic contributors (corporations, schools, supportive infrastructures, businesses, etc.) impact social welfare. It is noted that both murder rate and clearance rate data have a broad impact on municipalities, and political priorities are prone to change.

Davies' 2007 study was undertaken to discern whether or not politics influence murder clearance rates, or if in fact these rates influence political environments. In

research utilizing multiple approaches drawn from FBI data in major metropolitan areas during a 29-year period, results were gathered and studied. It was determined that multiple influences affect clearance rates, and include politicians, the media, and prosecutors. Governmental strife, military commitments, national or civic hardships, economics, and unemployment also significantly influence investigation factors.

The study analyzes how sources pertaining to homicide investigations also are influenced by political environments. Examined results indicated a negative correlation between murder clearance rates and police expenditures. Davies concluded that administrative closures without arrests accelerated murder clearance rates (one in four homicides), and that while various pressures clearly influence the department's performance, no statistical data support significant results. No single significant factor, including monetary expenditure, seems to contribute to clearance rates. While media attention and internal, departmental pressures created added awareness, the resultant changes were not significantly measurable. However, these same pressures significantly impacted the reaction and examination by police and governmental infrastructure. Davies deduced, "A sharp increase in the conviction rate corresponded with a sharp decrease in the murder clearance rate."

Decision Making and Case Characteristics

In 1993, Brandl's article gave the reader a brief psychological background concerning detective behavior. Using characteristics of victims and offenses such as burglary and robbery, the author evaluated the time allotted by detectives to the investigation of certain theft-related cases. Brandl analyzed 292 robbery and 317 burglary reports and their follow-up investigations by each detective. The study aimed to address

the impact of these characteristics in relation to the amount of time these investigators spent evaluating the information and keeping the cases open. In his method section, Brandl discusses how he coded report characteristics and used observations and interviews to gain better insight into the investigative approaches taken by different detectives.

Brandl explains that the stolen property and its value dictated how much time detectives invested in these cases. Evidence also suggests that the amount of information pertaining to the suspect influenced the responsiveness of investigators and their willingness to maintain a high level of interest in the follow-up process of the investigation. The other significant factors of a burglary or robbery case are the victim type (e.g. small business versus a homeowner), strength of the suspect information, and the legitimacy of the story given to the officers by the victim. Interestingly, Brandl found that the demographic characteristics used in apprehending suspects or selectively handling certain victims did not play a role in the decision by the detective to investigate further. In this regard, it was concluded that the offense characteristics are weighted significantly more than victim characteristics while investigating open and closed cases.

Cold Case Internship Review: A Look Inside the Unit

With the first Cold Case Homicide internship recently established for the Phoenix Police Department, interns were faced with an interesting challenge: how could undergraduate honors students bring a fresh perspective to the well-versed and seasoned detectives of the Cold Case Unit? With a limited background in crime analysis and nearly completed degrees in criminology, they walked onto the team objectively and with an

open mind. As suggested by the sergeant on their first day in the department, they were directed to remain flexible and objective when receiving information. This caution would soon prove its worth when the first cold case project was assigned. As trusted members of the squad they were given the opportunity to review cases using the Police Automated Computer Entry system (PACE) to gather information to clarify whether cases had been closed/opened properly, were updated, and were reviewed by supervisors. This process allowed them to familiarize themselves with the computer systems and processes used for report writing and report follow-ups.

Interns used Microsoft Excel lists of homicide cases from multiple databases and departmental units in an attempt to filter out which cold cases listed as legitimate homicides were identified. The goal was to have the cases moved to the Cold Case Unit and assigned to the appropriate sergeant. This task was monumental in determining how homicide calculations may not be accurately reported. Disproportionate numbers then became the unstable backbone of both the FBI's *Unified Crime Report* and *Supplemental Homicide Report* publications and thus caused erroneous computations and misinterpretations of criminality nationwide.

Working with the CARU also subjected interns to the realities of criminological phraseology, including terms such as “dark figure of crime” – cases that are not reported to law enforcement agencies, thus leading to misrepresentation of actual criminal behavior in different societies. A list of “missing cases” that was mismatched by crime disposition in the case management systems was compiled, and Microsoft Excel sheets were produced to reflect where mislabeled cases originated within the department in order to combat distortion of facts. By obtaining victim information using the National

Crime Victims Survey (NCVS) and the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the government continually works to close the gaps of this calculating system.*

The most memorable intern experience interns received was the confidential use of the Combined DNA Index System, known nationally as CODIS. The CODIS system was designed to compile a comprehensive list of DNA hits for suspects in cases ranging from the earliest pieces of evidence still preserved, to the most recent evidence collected. Work with CODIS ranged from monthly contacts with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to time-urgent DNA hits for perpetrators who needed to be apprehended within twenty-four hours.*

The experience most often cited as being the most educational involved latent print compiling. Using latent print information was very similar to utilizing CODIS DNA hit data in that fingerprint information can be collected to reflect identifiable perpetrator hits recorded within the last few decades. This, along with CODIS analysis, played a role in working with fellow volunteers to review evidence in select cold cases that was to be forwarded for lab testing and then later followed up by detectives in efforts to solve and solidify investigations occurring in earlier decades.

Not to be overshadowed by the importance of CODIS case reviews were the often-valuable silent witness submissions. This research gave volunteers and interns the opportunity to investigate silent witness claims by using PACE and chronological, departmental homicide summaries. In addition to this priceless exposure and real world experience, volunteers and interns were allowed to compile case summaries for select decades, and use PACE to reference case numbers requested by civilians, legal personnel, government officials, and inmates. They provided redacted case reports and supplements,

and also promoted the COPS program at local colleges. Having done so much in seven months, interns found speaking at the Mesa Community Colleges' Criminal Justice Information Seminar extremely rewarding. Hands-on experience sparked much interest by many undergraduates considering criminology and forensics careers, research or experimental studies.

* = Experience is paraphrased to reflect select and non-classified information.

Part IV: Obstacles

Misrepresentations and the Media

Unique to the analysis of violent crime is the news media's "spinning" of stories in broadcasts seen or heard by millions on television, radio, in newspapers, online, and in magazines. As reported in the *Cold Case Advanced Regional Training Guide*, an anonymous reporter stated to government officials, "You need them, they need you... Treat the media like any other watchdog... Stay calm, let them smell your hand but never, NEVER turn your back on them." The relationship between detectives, officers and the media may dictate the public's opinion, or influence an entire city during governmental elections. If a report is spun to reflect a sergeant's inconsistencies or a detective's shortcomings, a department may suffer the consequences and ultimately lose funding, support, community trust, and/or national governmental support. This issue is so controversial that many schools, including Arizona State University, offer courses specifically analyzing criminal justice in the media. A shared opinion among government agencies, university classes, and dedicated volunteers is that media can be used to help solve a cold case.

When asked to record their first thoughts pertaining to the phrase “cold case” as portrayed in the public media, many civilian responses revolved around television series such as *Cold Case*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, *The First 48*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, *America’s Most Wanted*, and/or *Nancy Grace’s Cold Case Files*. These television programs vary in their ability to relay accurate information relating to police and law enforcement protocols. More disturbing is the generalization and expectation of quick results exhibited in fictional series like *CSI* and *Cold Case*. Sadly, the implication that these stories depict instant DNA processing and immediate criminal apprehension is problematic, overstated, and inaccurate. This is explored by White and Schroeder (2010), as they studied the use of DNA by New York Police Department officials and found that using such evidence is often a “tool of last resort.” Investigators hope to find quicker solutions than the DNA-matching process. However, just as disconcerting are one-hour segments of non-fictional homicidal reports portrayed in *The First 48*, *Unsolved Mysteries*, *America’s Most Wanted*, and *Nancy Grace’s Cold Case Files*. In these series viewers are provided limited information about a real case that may or may not be closed. Depending on the need for new leads, recognizable celebrity faces, such as that of John Walsh of *America’s Most Wanted*, promote select cases for public review and open up Silent Witness telephone lines for incoming tips. When asked about the portrayal of the investigative image of detective work by the media, Civilian 1 had this to say:

Civilian 1: No, I do not (feel the depiction is accurate). Detective work is shown as a glamorous lifestyle with nice offices and everything is state of the art with contemporary architecture. I think there are also other major differences. They solve cases in a matter of days, if not one or two. I feel this time-scale is far too short. Another difference is that the clues always line up in the cases. That is probably a rarity in real life. In any case, not every crime is solved.

The misrepresentation of cold case investigation remains questionable as entertainment becomes more marketable than the truth. Few, if any, want to watch a condensed version of litigation or report writing and review. Viewers demand action, drama, and success. Because many of these reports depict a violent offender and the increase in heinous crimes, the audience begins to believe or conclude that crime rates may be on the rise and murderers could be “lurking in disguise just down the street in one’s own neighborhood,” Phoenix Volunteer 1 noted. Rarely do television programs, accurate or inaccurate, fiction or non-fiction, shed light on the decline of statistically supported violent crime data, specifically murder. The support is evidenced in the *Preliminary Semiannual Uniform Crime Report* produced by the FBI in 2009 seen in Figure 2 (FBI, 2009).

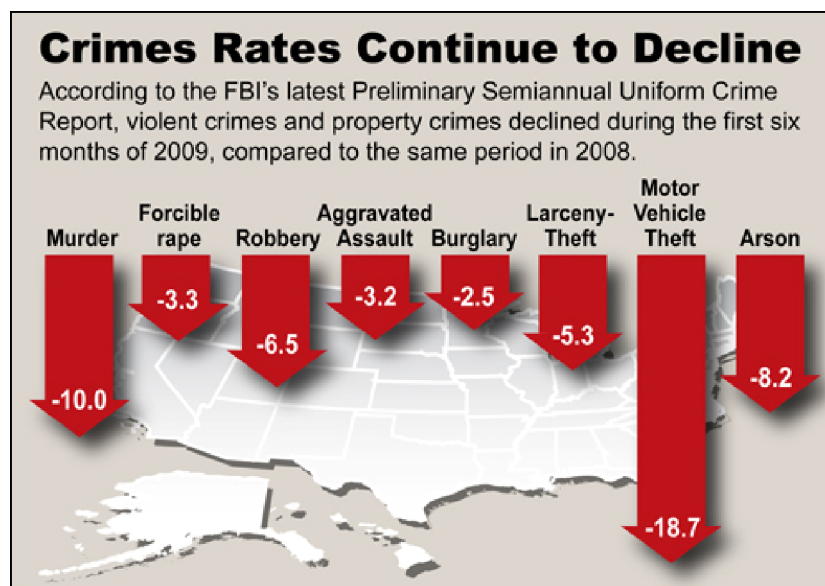


Figure 2 Preliminary Crime Statistics (%), 2008-2009
 Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI published the following statement on its website not long after the report was publicized: “For the third year in a row, our *Preliminary Semiannual Uniform Crime Report* shows that violent crime, property crime, and arson have decreased. The latest

report compares January-June 2009 figures with the same time period in 2008.” The above graphic, though absent of the actual numerical crime data for 2008 and 2009, makes a direct claim that the violent crime rate is declining. This is not to be ignored. Without this information, the inaccurate assumption of increased crime becomes an erroneous national epidemic. In addition to the FBI’s declaration is a similar finding exemplified by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics in the following graph. Its five-decade murder rate review published in 2005 illustrates the substantial use of collected material but lacks the dark figure of crime. Nevertheless, the trend is equally conclusive showing that violent crime is declining (Figure 3).

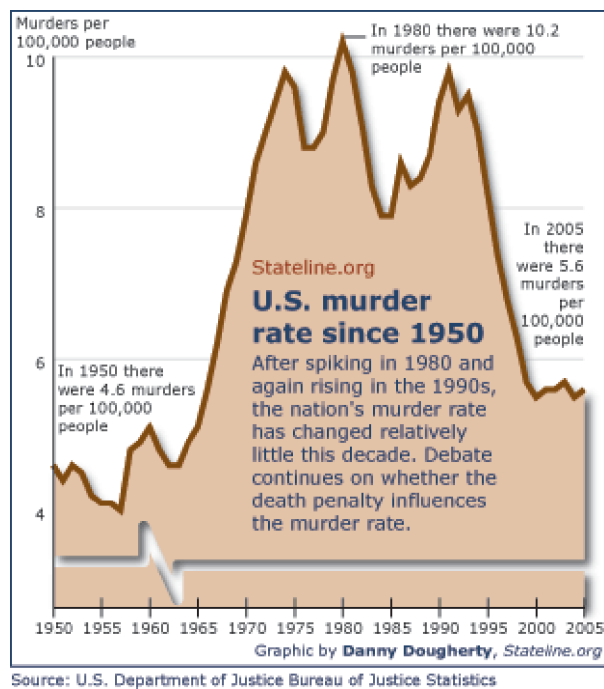


Figure 3 Murder Rate Review, 1950-2005
U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Studies

Benefits and Detriments

There are many aspects of investigation in cold case review that parallel academia. For instance, when students research a topic they employ new technology and

utilize unique search procedures. Detectives share these same experiences as they investigate clues and evidence in their assigned cases. When a case becomes stale and new evidence becomes a dated source of information, the wishful thinking that something more might surface is converted into a cold case reality; the case is dropped. When research tactics are restricted or technology has reached the limits of its potential, former research is rarely assessed. This perplexing and yet worrisome truth leads many to conclude erroneously that investigators give up or toss aside cases that have dead ends. The understanding that case reviews and reassignment are vital must be brought to the forefront when the backlog of unsolved cases is overflowing with hackneyed information.

The lack of monthly or annual cold case reviews is only one issue all departments and governmental investigative programs face, but the dilemma stems from a greater predicament. During this economic downturn, the liquidation of resources and downsizing are resulting in the increase of total cold case numbers by relegating them further behind more pressing requirements and investigations. The main debate here is budgetary limitation. This is a trend nationally, claims a retired Connecticut State Police affiliate:

Retired Connecticut State Police Affiliate: Cold case units only exist when resources and budgets allow. Needless to say the trend here is toward austerity. Police department budgets are coming under the axe throughout the country and the emphasis is on supplying much needed manpower for day-to-day operations. Many of these cold case task forces exist on the assets derived from state and federal grants that are also drying up. Pulling back manpower from specialized units to meet the need for basic police services is always the first consideration when budgets get tight. I feel this will be a trend for some time to come.

The budget crises of local and state governments are indeed a major conundrum that has affected all citizens in a domino-like fashion. What supervisors and chiefs of personnel often overlook are the ability of dedicated manpower and the commitment offered by

volunteers and interns. Thousands of well-educated college students as well as seasoned professional retired law enforcement officers are eager to have an opportunity to work alongside an investigator. Arizona State University Police Department capitalizes on the availability of enthusiastic students through the Volunteers In Police Services (VIPS) program that offers hands-on and professional experience. This also is exemplified by the proactive efforts of the Volunteer Coordinator of the COPS at the Phoenix Police Department. By surveying individual units and gaining the trust and enthusiasm of sergeants, the volunteer coordinator was able to employ more than 200 volunteers and students who not only passed extensive background investigations and polygraph examinations but were willing to freely give a collective 30,000 hours of their time. This saved the department more than \$625,000 in 2009 (Horton, personal interview, 2010).

Another overlooked asset still debated by law officials is employing criminals to help solve cases. Discussing criminal behavior and predicting possible outcomes with a prison inmate or interrogating an informant can be, and in fact, has proven useful. Florida's Polk County Jail introduced an innovative strategy that resembles criminal analysis. In 2005, the Cold Case Assessment Team of Polk County published a deck of cards emblazoned with unsolved crime data with which inmates in good standing could play. These cards soon proved particularly useful for local detectives. As the Team's website states, "The Cold Case Playing Cards is a standard deck of 52 playing cards with one important exception. Each card carries a photograph and factual information on one of the almost 100 unsolved murders in Polk County... The cards have gained national attention." Though many doubted the efficacy of this unique method, the first two years of the deck's use produced conclusive results in four dated, cold cases that now are

considered solved. As the website of the Effective Playing Cards company claims:

(We have) produced cards exclusively for state agencies, law enforcement and crime stopper units across the country... We have more than 30 individual decks in use at this time, including the first ever statewide deck for Florida which is currently being distributed to every prisoner in the State. New York, Texas, Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, California and Washington, along with agencies in Canada are all working toward implementing our cards into their area.

These cards have a lot of potential as they work as an indirect interview alternative for detectives looking for tips otherwise not easily attainable without informational leads.

Ideally the perfect solution to a cold case would be perpetrators surrendering to law enforcement and/or turning themselves in to the police. Human nature or fear of retribution allow criminal minds to either justify their actions, and thus they do not succumb to this practice, or to assume they can escape arrest then navigate the system and capitalize on slipping through its cracks. Unfortunately, the lack of a criminal confession is not the only issue the criminal justice system experiences.

There is a plethora of information outlining the possible threats to detective work documented in both the U.S. Department of Justice's *Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletin* (2003) and the *President's DNA Initiative: Advanced Cold Case Regional Training Guidebook* (2007). Listed under *Pros and Cons* of the bulletin are the explanations for utilizing a cold case squad. The benefits parallel the previous statements made in this report but the liabilities are quite unique. Staffing and funding are addressed as main departmental concerns. A close second to economic limitations and reservations is the anecdotal evidence showing the "uncooperative and reluctant parties" who refuse to become involved in past case histories, thus ceasing communication with potential leads.

Other issues that may hinder the progress of a cold case investigation are: tunnel vision by the detective or supervising officer, improper evidence protection by the lab,

limited or sloppy record keeping, and inconsistent numbers between units and departments. Legal issues also pose a threat to investigators in that the statutes of limitations as explained in the *National Institute of Justice Special Report: Using DNA to Solve Cold Cases* (2002) often can deter detectives away from certain cases where the limitation expired and cannot be countered due to exceptions such as jurisdictional flight. There also are prosecution obstacles where proper warrants, elimination of DNA samples, and lack of victim information could cause dismissal of a case on the basis of its being stale. In cold case sex crimes, obstacles are prevalent in both victim and suspect information gathering. The credibility and advocacy of the victim must be tested or supported by evidence, just as reprimanding a suspect must be documented fully and be up to date with current whereabouts data (i.e. if held in custody, or having a current DOC record).

When asking retired Connecticut State Police affiliates what they believe works against or in favor of successfully reopening a case, and the level of solvability of a cold case, the notion that multiple individuals take part in such an accomplishment was predominant: “A task force consisting of the unit supervisor, a senior investigator, an evidence technician, and a prosecutor or DA should work to review any major case to ensure that all of the necessary elements exist to warrant reopening the case.” In relation to what needs to be changed to help agencies solve more cases, the same affiliates believed more manpower, resources, and training would help in solving cases at a faster rate.

In regards to aiding cold case squads in Arizona, manpower, resources, and training are not the only assets units strive to secure. Exceeding local protocols and

expectations, the Arizona State Legislature proposed an amendment to the Arizona Revised Statutes under Section 1. Title 13, chapter 38 – article 32. This article requires law enforcement agencies to “establish and maintain a *Cold Case Register*.” This register is accessible to families and victims of felony sex crimes or murder. It contains specific information about the victim or familial ties and/or their legal representation for three years. The register provides the victims and families with updates on cold cases to which they are directly related; this includes suspect release date information, as well as victim’s assistance program information to support them as needed (Arizona Cold Case Register, § 38-32, 2009).

In a letter to Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, well-known lobbyist of the Arizona Secretary of State and the City of Phoenix, Mike Durham wrote, “The bill creates a concrete and constructive relationship for the investigating agency detectives and victims and victims’ families involved in cold case investigations.” These amendments serve as a tool and a reference for the public and detectives both locally and nationally. Durham’s advocacy spurred much attention and was headlined on local television station, KPHO Channel 5, where he also stated that the “Phoenix Police should spend more money on DNA-testing evidence and devote more investigators to homicides.” In famous cases such those of Jack the Ripper in London, UK, the Zodiac in the United States, and that of Natalee Holloway in Aruba, these implementations can bring closure to victims and their families while indirectly serving as a sounding board between those involved and the ever-determined detectives.

Part V: Conclusion

Cold case investigation was analyzed to its most basic elements in order to understand the anatomy of unsolved crimes. Through the evaluation of historical events and the in-depth dissection of investigative processes, multiple conclusions were recognized. First, there is the matter of the absence of academic literature pertaining to this subject. Though journals such as *Homicide Studies*, *Justice Quarterly*, and *Crime and Delinquency* express concern for psychological and political influences that may develop into sociological or even criminological issues, the benefits and detriments of cold case investigation have not been broached. Second, understanding the roots of media-based misrepresentation becomes an uncharted concern for those looking to promote and further cold case detective work. As cold case units focus on correcting the public's predisposed inclination that unsolved cases are much easier to solve with readily available technology and speedily, detectives must work against societal assumptions in order to bring justice to old crimes and to their victims. These are only a few of the issues hindering the successes of a cold case squad.

External factors are not the only investigative deterrents. Cold case investigators truly impair their own success by shifting attention to an area that may not need additional concentration. Although sometimes taxing, reexamining minutia may serve as a major asset in solving their cases. The previously discussed detriments are not limited to those listed, but rather are the greatest aspects of cold case investigation that can and should be changed. For instance, the political influence affecting murder clearance rates, the incorrect assumption that demographic information operates as a rationale for further investigative action, and the arguable level of determination based on the detective's

discretionary belief are all previously published law enforcement issues that affect investigation.

The limited amount of information sharing between detectives and agencies is just as disappointing. The realization that “in a perfect world departments would work together to solve crimes” should not be idealized, as many detectives voice, yet fail to undertake. Where the 1960’s term “value shop” should be employed, only skepticism and distrust exist. Cold cases would not remain unsolved if all agencies worked in harmony. More importantly is the understanding of the larger picture where cold cases never become “cold” due to higher solvability rates reflecting the collaboration of multiple agencies.

When reviewing what is obvious it becomes irrefutable that there is room for improvement in the realm of investigation. Selecting types of crimes to be investigated in a specific order, either by criticality or pieces of evidence, is an excellent point of departure for cold case units to begin their redevelopment. This type of review differs between agencies as was stated in the interview section. One suggestion would be to set a national standard for cold case investigation much like the UCR has indexes that reflect violent and property crimes in order of severity. This would allow cold case groups – comprised of volunteers or officials – to have some form of structural starting point, a framework that provides the very first step to those facing a department’s bank of unsolved crimes.

Encouraging investigators to approach cold cases with a different point of view is equally vital. Cold cases arguably are labeled cold because the former detective may have exhausted the then available resources but may not have investigated the then considered

menial, but possibly critical evidence. As CARU's Intelligence Cycle is a great proponent of this concept, it would be absurd to assume this approach is ignored, yet often detectives become so frustrated with the obvious they rarely return to the basic processes, as stated by an investigator for the Maricopa County Public Defender's Office. It becomes apparent that more questions need to be asked, such as those outlined in the regional training guidebook. Sometimes these questions may originate with a different trusted source – the valuable volunteer.

Interns and volunteers often are slighted as being of lesser value than coworkers and are seen as incapable or are distrusted. The Phoenix Police Department and the Arizona State University Police Department are unique in that they place exceptional value upon their volunteers as though they were members of the staff. Due to the security clearance level and private access granted to these individuals, these agencies instill pride in their employees whether salaried or volunteer, all toward the overarching goal of solving crimes. Utilizing unpaid assistants also is beneficial as the economic downturn only inhibits the capabilities of most organizations. The budgetary concerns expressed by officials could be stemmed if more well-screened, capable, and dedicated volunteers were employed. This has been proven within the COPS and VIPS programs.

Unfortunately, the employment of volunteers and interns does not aid in correcting the convoluted mishmash of information logged in more than twenty different computer systems. Again, in a perfect world, there would be one system containing all documentation from local, state and national departments. Though access would have to be controlled if all evidential and report information existed in a mega system, fewer technological issues would arise, and researchers would not have to redefine crime codes

and dispositions, update statuses, or double check their work with two or three agencies concurrently.

The last recommendation that might significantly aid not only cold case units but also their agencies is reassurance about something new, and that an innovative approach might render results. Working within a traditional system, many officials in positions of power balk at this approach imagining that this method may work against an already extant doctrine previously laid in stone. Change seldom is embraced even when history has proven that change is constant and inevitable. Cold case investigation needs to welcome change; the department leadership needs to welcome and support change. Change may be defined as a simple difference in point of view from the basic “old school” tactics, as suggested by members of the Arizona’s Public Defender’s Office. It is up to leadership to create a non-hostile environment, unthreatened by changes or fresh vision.

There are many benefits and detriments to investigative occupations but with all previous aspects considered, along with the web of resources, agency personnel should be encouraged to work collaboratively to resolve even the toughest cases. This trend is slow-moving but will become a reality if officials and volunteers take advantage of what each perspective has to offer. The beauty of cold case investigation is that once encouraged, at least one person is making a choice not to give up on a previously forgotten case, and that just might make a difference.

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