

Example of issues of diversity in criminal justice research paper

[Law](#), [Evidence](#)



Blood Match

The case of Darryl Hunt is an example of negligence on the part of the prosecution as well as the entire criminal justice system. A man serves 19 years in prison for a crime that he did not commit. Of these 19 years, 10 years have been served even after DNA evidence proves that Hunt's DNA does not match that of the semen found on the body of Deborah Sykes. Today, such a match cannot be ignored. According to Connors et al (1996), a report by the Department of Justice revealed about 28 cases of males who had received conviction on charges of violent sex crimes but were later exonerated and freed after DNA tests showed otherwise. This is because the prosecution in Hunt's case was based on eyewitness testimony. But how reliable is eyewitness testimony? Zerwick (2004) observes that eyewitness identifications can be wrong. This is because of issues such as coercion, hatred for the accused or bribery. Therefore, accounts of eye witnesses cannot be reliable. This is quite evident in Hunt's case. The man that Johnny Gray had identified happened to be in prison at the time of the crime, and so he later identified Hunt.

At the same time, the testimony given by Hunt's girlfriend was as a result of her arrest and probably she had been offered a deal. She however recanted these statements. Also, the "two jailhouse snitches" did testify that Hunt had admitted to committing the crime (Innocent Project, 2012). When DNA evidence exonerated Hunt from the charge, then the sole indication was that all the eye witnesses were wrong. DNA testing is scientific, and as such has a higher degree of reliability (Connors et al., 1996). This is because DNA is capable of using features such as hair and blood to develop matches that

provide crucial evidence for investigators. Therefore, with many studies showing that the reliability of eye witnesses is quite low, the use of DNA cannot be ignored. Advances in technology have also ensured that the process of DNA testing becomes fast thus facilitating quick investigations.

Are Crimes Still Tied Together?

Today, crimes are still tied together. Lawrence (2011) observes that police departments use thumbtacks and city maps on bulletin boards to detect neighborhoods that are crime-ridden. This is because individual crimes can be tied together as part of a broader problem such as a serial killer on the loose or gang war. For example, during data mining, an investigator can query the database for robberies that have occurred in neighborhood by using aspects such as a suspect's appearance, age or weapon used. As a result, he or she is immediately capable of tying together all incidents when searching for the single perpetrator. Therefore, two crimes can be connected together. For example, the possession of an illegal firearm can be tied to a recent shooting in the neighborhood. However, the fact that crimes can be tied together does not warrant issues such as profiling, unauthorized searches and the fabrication of evidence to match the charges labeled against an accused individual.

A Matter of Bigotry

This was just a matter of bigotry or prejudice just because Darryl Hunt was African American. People in 1984 ought to have realized that most rapes or murders are not interracial, but intraracial. However, the 1980s witnessed the wrongful convictions of many people. Of the 28 cases identified by the

report by the Department of Justice, in 26 cases, the accused was convicted in the 1980s (Connors et al., 1996). Also, most of these cases involved African American males. This Darryl Hunt case therefore showcases the issues of racism and prejudice that rocked the criminal justice system at the time. According to Patton (2007), “one of the greatest myths about rape or murder is that it is primarily committed by Black men against White women”. These roots can be traced back to slavery and emancipation, whereby Black sexuality is stereotyped as being uncontrollable, wild, bestial and criminal. The truth is that majority of the reported assaults are intraracial, with the majority of rapes being intraracial and not interracial. According to the National Crime Survey conducted between 1973 and 1987, only about 31.5 percent stranger rapes and 12 percent non-stranger rapes were interracial (Patton, 2007). The handling of the case also reveals some form of bigotry. For example, the eyewitnesses were wrong. Also, Hunt’s second trial was before an all-white jury whereby jury deliberations lasted only two hours thus convicting Hunt. Therefore, it seems that Hunt was a target probably because of his race.

Scenarios

Scenario 1

It is Dean Mike’s 24th birthday and he has organized a party to celebrate this date. Dean, a Caucasian male is a real estate agent with a local real estate company. Dean invites a number of friends to his party, both male and female. During the night of the party, the friends share drinks and enjoy the fun. In the midst of this fun, it seems that some people lose their control. The

following morning, one female, Silvia Shirley reports to the local police department. She records a statement and samples from her body are taken for tests.

Scenario 2

In the Harlem neighborhood, a white female elementary school is found raped and murdered. This happens at a time when George Kitt, a black male has just been released from prison. George was convicted 15 years ago on an offense that resembles the rape and murder of the female elementary school teacher. Could George be the suspect and even the perpetrator?

Analysis

Unlike some decades ago, these cases would be handled quite differently. Probably in the 1980s, George could have gone straight back to prison based on his past offenses. However, in the male Caucasian's case, few considerations such as the possibility of the victim lying could be explored. However, today the trial is different. It is not based on prejudice or myths that regard a certain race, profession or ex-convict status. Thorough investigations have to be conducted with the use of every possible means such as eye witnesses, forensic evidence and DNA tests. It is only when the prosecution has a concrete case against the defendant that prosecution can take off. At the same time, the jury is representative of the cultural diversity in the United States, unlike in the 80s when Hunt was tried before an all-white jury.

Take an example of Sumo Dukulah, a 39-year old black Philadelphia accused of raping a child over an 8-year period. While Dukulah was arrested and

arraigned in court, abc Action News (2013) observes that the District Attorney said investigations were ongoing and that any person with information could contact the police department. This is an indication of the importance of obtaining proof or evidence before prosecuting. This is the same case for David Renz, a 29-year old Caucasian male accused of killing a woman and then raping the woman's child (Clay, 2013). Some of the legal and ethical issues that arise in these scenarios is the length of time that it might take for such investigations to be carried out so that sufficient evidence can be established to prepare a credible case. The victim tends to view this as justice delayed. However, in order to avoid wrongful convictions, there is a need for thorough investigations before trial.

References

Clay, N. Y. (2013) Woman Killed, Child Raped in New York Carjacking. Abc Action News, 2013. Retrieved from http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/national_world&id=9028722

Action News. (2013) Philadelphia Teacher Charged with Raping Child Relative. Abc Action News, 2013. Retrieved from <http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/local&id=9081091>

Connors, E., Lundregan, T., Miller, N. & McEwen, T. (1996) Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science: Case Studies in the Use of DNA Evidence to Establish Innocence After Trial. U. S. Department of Justice Research Report, June 1996, pp. 1-117.

Patton, T. O. & Snyder-Yuly, J. (2007) Any Four Black Men Will Do: Rape, Race, and the Ultimate Scapegoat. *Journal of Black Studies*, 2007; 37: 859.

Lawrence, N. (2011) Role of Computers in Crime Detection. eHow, 2011.

Retrieved from http://www.ehow.com/info_8413366_role-computers-crime-detection.html

Zerwick, P. (2004, February 07) Attacks were Similar-Rabil: Police Missed

Links, or Hid Them. Retrieved from <http://darrylhunt.journalnow.com/epilogue/20040208a.html>

Innocent Project. (2012) Know the Cases: Darryl Hunt. Retrieved from

http://www.innocenceproject.org/Content/Darryl_Hunt.php/