

# Us criminal justice system: case study



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## Introduction

The criminal justice system of the United States is made up of three key institutions that follow up a case from the arrest to punishment. These institutions include the law enforcement, the court system and the corrections system that work together to enable a smooth process from arrest to sentencing. A case normally begins with law enforcement agencies that investigate a crime and arrest an offender enhancing public safety and maintaining order. The case then continues with the court system that analyzes the evidence and decides on whether the accused is innocent or guilty. The corrections system then takes over the case by punishing and rehabilitating the offenders. The three components of the criminal justice system therefore play a critical role in the criminal justice process and without one component, the system would come to a halt (Sorensen, Snell and Rodriguez, 2006). This research paper discusses how the criminal justice works and the processes involved in solving the case study 1 that involves murder. This paper also discusses the weakest and the strongest links in the criminal justice process.

## A brief description of the crime

The murder occurred at 114 Front Street whereby police found two bodies of Lucy Lane laying dead at the 114 Front Street driveway and Rodney Hill on the dead in the rear of the house. The police discovered the two bodies in response to a 911 call by John Wolf of 115 Front Street. Ms. Lane had multiple stab wounds from the front and rear torso while Mr. Hill had multiple stab wounds to his chest and abdomen. According to Mr. Wolf, he had heard

a commotion at the house across the street from the front yard. This was later followed by yelling and shouting for several minutes which were ended by a terrible scream. From his window, Mr. Wolf saw Mr. James Lane, a former resident drive away in a Ford Bronco. He called the police when he saw a body lying still on the driveway across the street.

Police investigations confirmed that Ms. Lane did own the house at 114 Front Street and that she and Mr. Hill had been in an intimate relationship for months. Ms. Lane was recently divorced from Mr. Lane and on the day of the murder, Ms. Lane had obtained a restriction order against James Lane alleging prior physical and emotion abuse and threats against her and Rodney Hill. Mr. Lane denied killing his ex-wife and Mr. Hill following interrogations by the police and he could not explain his whereabouts during the incidences. A search warrant in Mr. Lane's house discovered a six-inch lock-blade knife in a dresser drawer and clothing in the basement that appeared to be soaked in blood. Following scientific tests, the blood on the clothing were found to match the blood type and DNA of both Lucy Lane and Rodney Hill. The knife also gave the same results for the blood samples. This evidence led to the arrest of Mr. Lane for the murder of Lucy Lane and Rodney Hill.

Processes in the adult American criminal justice system

This murder case involves the state against James Lane for the murder of Lucy Lane and Rodney Hill. The correct due process of the criminal justice system in this case starts by the lawful arrest of Mr. James Lane as the police officers have reasons to believe that he committed the offence. The witness

statement by Mr. Wolf, the relationship between the deceased and the suspect as well as the six-inch blade and the clothing with blood are the incriminating evidence against Mr. Lane. Once Mr. Lane has been arrested, the witness who is Mr. Wolf may identify him and make a statement with the law enforcers. the police officers will search Mr. Lane and the officers will have a warrant to seize any piece of evidence discovered in the search. the evidence to be collected will be the proceeds of the crime from Mr. Wolf's statement, the six-inch blade and the clothing with blood stains. Other items that will be collected that connect the defendant with the murder will be the scientific tests that match the blood stains on the clothing and blade with that of the murder victims. Once the defendant is arrested, the police will take his fingerprints, prepare the arrest report, as well as other police forms like the complaint report(Wolfgang, 1990).

Once the arrest has been made, the court system shall take over the murder case. The prosecutor decides to prosecute the case based on the amount and validity of the evidence. The prosecutor will be representing the state and the murder victims while the defense attorney will be representing Mr. Lane. The courts act as the guardian of the constitution and so accord the accused with rights under the US bill of rights. There are therefore several restrictions on the court's ability to prosecute the murder case against Mr. Lane. Other restrictions will be the right to a jury trial, right against self-incrimination and a right to counsel. A court judge will then decide the terms of the bail for this murder case of which it is likely to be \$ 2 million dollars based on the nature of the case.

The defendant has chosen to plead not guilty and hence he will have a counsel and a jury trial for the case. The defendant has the right to choose an attorney who will represent him if he can afford one and if he cannot, the court will appoint the counsel. Mr. Wolf will be convicted of two accounts of second degree because Ms. Lane was recently divorced from Mr. Lane, Mr. Lane had been physically and emotionally abusing Ms. Lane and even issue threats against Ms. Lane and Mr. Hill, and that Ms. Lane had obtained a restriction against Mr. Lane. After the jury finds Mr. Hill guilty of second-degree murder, the sentencing is passed. Based on the mitigating factors, the offender's history and the federal statute criminalizing second-degree murder, Mr. Lane will be sentenced to a minimum of 40 years institutionalized jail term. An alternative sentencing would be a life term with parole possibilities(Sorensen, Snell and Rodriguez, 2006).

After the sentencing, James Lane will move to third part of the criminal justice process that is correctional agencies. The correctional agencies include the system of probation including prisons, parole or jails. From the courts, Mr. Lane will be sent to a reception center from where he will be transferred to a correction institution. The classification score will be processed at the reception center based on the length of the sentence, Mr. Lane's occupation and stability. Mr. Lane will serve his sentence at a state prison, but the classification score might change over time based on the Mr. lane's behavior and other case factors. In the corrections department, Mr. Lane will undergo educational and vocational programs that will earn him work time credits and if he is in best behavior, he will continue to participate in the programs. Once Mr. Lane completes his sentence, he will be released

under the state supervision. The state parole will require Mr. Lane to follow parole conditions like not contacting the victims' family or the witness(Wolfgang, 1990).

The weakest and strongest links in the criminal justice process

All the three components of the criminal justice system play a critical role in the process. The correctional agencies are definitely the weakest link in the criminal justice system. The correctional system in the US is afflicted by overcrowding and failure to rehabilitate criminals. The prison population explosion in the American correctional facilities is mainly due to tougher criminal laws that have seen more people being sentenced to prison. Despite this growing population , the correctional facilities have failed to keep up with services and rehabilitation programs for the inmates. Research shows that it is difficult to fully rehabilitate offenders in the correctional facilities. This has been witnessed by increasing number of offenses after institutionalization of an offender. The correctional system will therefore need to adopt rehabilitation techniques that work best to rehabilitate offenders.

The strongest link in the criminal justice system is the law enforcement agencies. The principle roles of the law enforcement agencies are criminal investigations, patrols, emergency response and crime prevention. The law enforcement agencies enforce all laws set by the federal government in the United States. This component of the justice system is the strongest link as it introduces the offenders to the process ensuring that there is law and order in the society. The US has more than 17, 000 law enforcement agencies that

employ close to a million officers. These agencies include sheriff's departments, police departments, state police, and 50 agencies that enforce federal law.

The diversity of the law enforcement agencies makes it efficient for the law enforcers to ensure law and order. Other than ensuring security for citizens and using all means to prevent crimes, the law enforcement agencies have been able to investigate criminal activities as well as arrest the offenders. For the murder case of Lucy Lane and Rodney Hill, the law enforcement agencies responded to the emergency call by Mr. Wolf, and they efficiently carried out investigations, collected evidence and arrested the accused. The law enforcement agencies bring offenders to justice by introducing them to the criminal justice system(Sorensen, Snell and Rodriguez, 2006).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, all three components of the criminal justice system are equally important for the process. A case has to follow the whole process from arrest to sentencing that involves the three components. America would not need the law enforcement agencies if there were no courts to punish the offenders or place them in correctional facilities. Likewise, the society would not need the court system if there are no correctional facilities from where offenders can serve jail term and punishment. In order to ensure a smooth criminal justice system, all the three agencies involved need to work together so as to ensure the common role of maintaining law and order(Wolfgang, 1990). Throughout the criminal justice process, there are constitutional protections that ensure the respect of the rights of the accused and offenders. These

protections will enable the criminal justice system to arrest, punish and rehabilitate James Lane based on the fundamental rights. This research paper discusses the parts and processes of the criminal justice system together with the strongest and weakest links and how a murder case is solved.

## References

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