

Cj210 criminal investigation



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RUNNING HEADER: CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION1 Criminal Investigation Tracy Kelly Kaplan University CJ210-05 November 24, 2011 Professor Ron Reinhardt CRIMINIAL INVESTIGATION2 Criminal Investigation Criminal investigation as defined by Encyclopedia Britannica (2011) is an “ ensemble of methods by which crimes are studied and criminals apprehended. ” The methods used determine the success or failure of solving a case. Any method of inquiry should be able to answer who, what, when, where, why, and how.

In a criminal investigation, answering these questions can be done using a combination of different forms of inquiry. Some of the forms are induction, deduction, classification, analysis, and at times hypothesis. Using any method, a criminal investigator begins reconstructing the criminal activity in an attempt to capture the perpetrator(s). The induction method allows the investigator to rely on observation and experiences to draw a conclusion. Using the deduction method, the investigator is able to eliminate suspects; this can be done by validating alibis, line-ups, and the use of DNA evidence.

Other times classification is used by arrangement based on characteristics and traits. Many times an investigation is stated with an analysis and is broken down into separate parts to help solve the case. In conjunction with analysis, a hypothesis is introduced. This also assists by assumptions based on knowledge, experience, and observations to successfully close the investigation (Osterburg & Ward, 2010). To be a successful investigator, one needs to have an optimal mindset. This is the manner in which the investigator processes the investigation.

Some attributes are natural, others need to be learned. Regardless of how one possesses them, they are vital for success. The attributes needed are intelligence, reasonability, curiousness, and imagination. One also must be CRIMINIAL INVESTIGATION3 observant, have a good memory, be knowledgeable in life and street smarts as well as have a technical know-how. In addition, the investigator should be sensitive, honest, and able to recognize and control his or her biases, and be able to persevere (Swanson, Chamelin, & Territo, Chapter 2, Chapter Overview, 2011).

If an investigator does not possess all of the qualities listed and is not able to learn them, he or she may not be able to succeed. Biases may hinder their judgment in arresting the wrong individual; fatalities may occur without street-smarts, intelligence may lead to unfound evidence. According to Swanson, Chamelin, and Territo (2011), of the concepts listed enable the investigator to act accordingly and uphold the law. One way to ensure a successful investigation is to use the scientific method.

It is the responsibility of the investigator to determine if a crime has been committed. At times the crime may already be known such as in the case of murder. The investigator must verify in what jurisdiction the crime was committed. He or she must also discover all facts, collect all evidence, and follow-up on any leads or information provided. It is also his or her responsibility to recover any stolen property. This is the most basic method to follow; state the problem, form a hypothesis, test the hypothesis, and continue until there is a correct solution.

Any modification needed should be done as soon as it is known (Swanson, Chamelin, & Territo, Chapter 2, Chapter Overview, 2011). The scientific method is the most basic method to follow; state the problem, form a hypothesis, test the hypothesis, and continue until there is a correct solution. Any modification needed should be done as soon as it is known. In criminal investigation, using a standard system CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION⁴ the investigators can easily compare notes, provide sufficient information and evidence, and determine how accurate the results are.

The scientific method also helps to reduce biases by examining hypothesis and theories in four simple steps - observation, formation of hypotheses, prediction of hypothesis results, and the performance of the prediction (Craven, 1933). Criminal investigators use three primary sources of information to help solve a crime; physical evidence, reports and records, and people (Osterburg, 1981). All three sources are key in solving a case and prosecuting the right individual. Physical evidence can be fingerprints, blood, firearms, documents, glass, and other trace evidence.

Any of these can link a person to a crime as well as eliminate a person as a suspect. Record and reports if accurately kept can do the same. These documentations can provide a modus operandi (MO), provide a description of the suspected individual, act as a cross reference for cases, and link additional individuals to another. The most important source in solving a crime is people. People can be the suspect, witness, investigator, associative, and the victim. Each person is able to provide a link in solving the case.

A victim or witness may provide detailed information on the perpetrator; information not already known or in the database system. Associates of the suspect may provide information if willing, many times in lieu of some form of benefit (Osterburg & Ward, 2010). The suspect can also provide key information with a valid alibi or can validate committing the crime with proven evidence. The investigator holds the key to solving the case with his or her possession and utilization of the attributes of a good investigator. Criminal investigation can be simple at times and complex at others.

Knowing who holds what responsibility, what attributes are needed, and working together with others can CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION increase the likelihood of successfully prosecuting the right individual. (Boba & Crank, 2008). Physical evidence, criminalist discipline, identification versus identity is a few of the steps involved. The most important step in any case, however, is properly following the chain of custody (Osterburg & Ward, 2010). Without this step, the criminal investigation process can be inadmissible, and a criminal may go free.

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