

Guest editorial

David Keatley and Susan Cormier

Cold case investigation the doctor and the detective: bridging the gap between police and academics to solve cold cases

This special issue of the *Journal of Criminal Psychology* that is presented here by Detective Susan Cormier of the Rhode Island Cold Case Task Force and Pawtucket Police and Dr David Keatley of Researchers in Behaviour Sequence Analysis and Cold Case Review@, presents research from academics with specialist knowledge, training, and experience in cold case police investigations. The title of the collection: *Cold Case Investigation* was kept purposefully broad so as to attract input from a wider variety of experts in the field. The aim of this special issue was not only to showcase more academic talent in an applied and important area; but, to help bridge the gap between police working cold cases and academics researching means of assisting in investigations. Across several publications, various bridges between the practical world of policing and the applied work of academics is showcased.

The research by Keatley and Clarke, in the current special issue, provides an insight into their applied work with cold case task forces around the world. Keatley and Clarke have typically published research in Behaviour Sequence Analysis (Keatley, 2018; Keatley and Clarke, 2020), which uses chains of behaviours and events across multiple crimes to show which transitions occur above the level of chance. However, often in cold case investigations, not all of the behaviours or events are known. Therefore, the matrix forecasting method outlined here provides a way of using the expertise of investigators in cold case task forces to forecast what might have happened (based on everything from intuition to experience to proposed forensic findings). We can then integrate the forecasting method into a BSA model. This combined approach also uses other methods, such as Behaviour Tracking (Keatley *et al.*, 2019).

Epskamp-Dudink and Winters also provide an insightful piece on the value of scene reconstruction in cold cases in Netherlands – thought the theory and methods apply worldwide. The combination of practical experience with academic knowledge offers scientific and intelligence-driven criminal investigations. This approach complements a number of current developments in cold case review and investigations (Keatley and Clarke, 2020), and highlights an important link between applied practitioners and academics.

In keeping with this combined approach of academics working within police departments, Chapman and colleagues provide a review of the importance of forensic expertise within police cold case reviews. Recent cases in Western Australia show the importance of having experts on-hand, who are at the cutting-edge of research and innovation and can offer advice and assistance on which methods are best practice and suitable based on the state of the investigation. This approach is superbly echoed and extended by Bryanna Fox, an expert in police investigations, and colleagues who outline their experiences in building bridges between academics and cold case investigations. The collaborative efforts of academics (including students) in cold cases is a “force multiplier” that is gaining momentum in a number of initiatives, such as “Cold Case Review @” – a cold case investigative group based at Murdoch University, led by Brendan Chapman and Dr David Keatley (authors in the current special issue).

David Keatley is based at the Researchers in Behaviour Sequence Analysis (ReBSA), Nottingham, UK and School of Law, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia. Susan Cormier is based at the Pawtucket Police Department, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, USA.

Claire Ferguson, an expert in detection avoidance, provides an excellent insight into how academics can provide assistance in police investigations and help to reduce the potential for misclassified homicide cases. If investigators miss the opportunity to correctly identify a death as a homicide (instead classifying it as a suicide) then vital evidence may be lost, which in turn makes re-opening of the case much more limited.

Finally, the relationship between media/investigative journalism and academics and police is highlighted in two papers, by Yaksic and Bennett respectively. Yaksic provides an outline of how multi-expert groups for offender profiling can help with cold case investigations. Bennett, based on her excellent research and observations with a two-force collaborative cold case team in England, showed positive use and interaction with media. This is an experience largely echoed by Detective Cormier with the WPRI-12 news station in Rhode Island, and Steve Nielsen in particular. Bennett provides clear guidance on how best to use the media for increase success for cold case investigation.

Many academics in Forensic Psychology, Criminology and Forensic Science courses are eager to work as consultants to police cases; however, restraints in academia are often a source of friction. For example, the norm for police consultancies is to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDAs), which is an understandable necessity to protect the integrity of the case. The difficulty becomes how academics still meet their annual appraisal requirements, with the specter of *publish or perish* lurking ever closer with every consultancy starting and ending with an NDA. This special issue, therefore, is also offered as a way for academics to see how consultation work can be turned into publishable articles, fulfilling the best of both worlds. Of course, a dream would be for more universities to reward consultations with police departments.

Police, too, are under an enormous pressure both internally (within their respective departments) and externally (from families of victims and media pressures). Detective Cormier has successfully organized and developed the Rhode Island Cold Case Task Force, a cutting-edge group that meets every two weeks to discuss cold cases and provide new leads or perspectives for investigations. The task force actively seeks and involves experts in the field who may be able to help, having them present and consult with investigators on their cases. It is largely through that Task Force that Dr Keatley became involved in so many cases around Rhode Island. A secondary aim and hope of this special issue is to raise awareness with other police departments that such task forces are an opportunity to consider and support.

References

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