

## **Book Review**

**By**

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Arthur S. Chancellor, Grant D. Graham. 2017. *Crime Scene Staging: Investigating Suspect Misdirection of the Crime Scene*. American Series in Law Enforcement Investigation. Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, IL.

*Crime Scene Staging: Investigating Suspect Misdirection of the Crime Scene* is a recent publication in the American Series in Law Enforcement Investigations. My primary concern in this review is the practical utility of the material offered to criminal investigations. While I ultimately find *Crime Scene Staging* to be indispensable as a practical guidebook to suspect misdirection, I first need to comment on the authors concerns over the inability to quantify staging, which raised some questions over the findings. This concern harkens directly to the practical utilization in the real world of investigating criminal activity. I agree that no statistics exist for staged crime scenes, but in the world of seasoned criminal investigators, as I am sure many will agree, staged crimes scenes are more common than first thought.

The early chapters, which focuses on the historical aspects of staged crime scene investigations and offender motivations, lay the foundation for staged crime scene investigation skills. This information, alone, is essential to all law enforcement to understand the motivations, which is used to further understand the offender's actions.

The book takes us through the general categories of staged crime scenes: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The general categories are further broken down into sub categories, which provides a much stronger analysis of the staged crime scenes. Through the use of examples, the authors provide points of reference, as well as demonstrating the practical application of these categories, for the readers.

Victimology—one of the single most important aspect of any criminal investigation—is the primary focus of chapter seven. Here, Chancellor and Graham do an excellent job not only defining victimology, but addressing the overall importance of victimology to the investigation. The authors explanation and examination of victimology make it quite clear that answering the simple question of why is this person the victim, will answer many questions, bringing you that much closer to identifying the offender. Roy Hazelwood's quote, "tell me about your victim and I'll tell you about the offender," rings true to this day.

Traditionally, when I speak with fellow law enforcement, I often find that they align crime scene staging with personal crimes rather than crimes in general. We have known for years that staged crime scenes can be found in all aspects of criminal activity, ranging from false statements given at an accident scene through property and personal crimes. Understanding this helps to ensure that evidence is not overlooked or misinterpreted during the investigation.

Chapters eight through fourteen are dedicated to the investigation process as well as the individual crime categories, ranging from property crimes through personal crimes. The authors, again, do an excellent job defining the various aspects of staging found during the specific investigation, and provide case studies for the reader's point of reference.

Prior to retiring from the Pennsylvania State Police, I served as the Supervisor of the Criminal Investigation Assessment Unit, as well as departmental representative as a subject matter expert in many areas, including Crime Scene Assessment and Crime Scene Staging.

Coming from this background, I found the "Working with Prosecutors" chapter quite intriguing. I have firsthand experience working with prosecutors, trying to explain evidence to them, and putting the evidence into an acceptable package for court. I echo the thought that an investigation is not over until the trial is complete and this is a point I emphasize during all of my trainings. With that being said, if an investigator can utilize what they have learned from the text, this will enable them to better understand the nuisances of explaining the evidence at trial. On this point, the authors quite clearly elucidate upon the differences between Criminal Profiling and Crime Assessment/Crime Analysis, which still confuse many to this day. We are once again provided with a series of excellent case examples that explain the issues raised by courts, which in turn can be used by prosecutors moving forward to better prepare their cases for court.

Overall, I found the *Crime Scene Staging* did an excellent job of explaining the various, and often complicated, aspects of crime scene staging, using the author's findings, case examples and photographs. The book follows the three stages of crime—pre-crime, peri-crime and post-crime—giving the reader a great understanding of where to look in the perpetration of the crime for certain aspects of crime scene staging.

When starting this review, I worked off one simple question: will this book help in the overall investigative process? The simple answer is yes. By analyzing the criminal investigation process, itself, we find that all aspects and dimensions of the investigative process need to tie into one another in order to paint a true picture of what had occurred, beginning, first and foremost, with the crime scene itself. I have found through my own experiences that if evidence is not identified properly it will lead the investigation afoul. Staged crime scenes do exist, and over the years I have seen crime scene staging account for many unsolved investigations. This book gives the investigator the ability to identify the areas of crime scene staging, understand the motivations, and utilize that information to further the investigation. More importantly, understanding that the scene has been staged can often lead to an admission of guilt from a perpetrator, greatly reducing the number of unsolved cases and time wasted following false leads, and greatly increasing the chances to discovering the truth behind a crime.

I feel that this is a must read for all law enforcement and prosecutors and have added this book to my recommended reading list in all of my future trainings.

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