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Between the Scenes: Forensic Encounters

Kenzi Martin
Anthropology
The University of North Carolina Asheville
One University Heights
Asheville, North Carolina 28804 USA

Faculty Advisor: Dr. John Wood

Abstract

From fingerprints to eye witness accounts the Asheville Forensic Service Technicians use each piece of evidence they find to recreate the story of a crime scene. In the process of piecing together a crime where an unknown suspect has disturbed the lives of innocents, testimonies become a vital resource. The relationships and constructed performances between forensic technicians, sworn officers, and victims or witnesses interplay with one another and create a balance of trust and truth against the uncertainty of suspicion and lies. These relationships can be fragile but they work together to create a foundation for successfully processing a scene. This research analyzes the importance of witness testimony and police cooperation with forensic technicians. Each entity has a specific role, and since no two crime scenes are the same each entity must constantly adapt and navigate new relationships. The interactions that are constructed between the authority figures and civilians who come into contact with each other help to establish direction for forensic technicians. Questions arise about the reliability of witness and victim testimony as well as the phenomenon of lying. How then do investigators manage the information that is given to them when they are not the first presence to arrive at a scene? What would compel a witness or victim to lie about or exaggerate the facts of a crime? These are questions that have been examined from the ethnographic perspective of participant observation, interview sessions, and a thorough study of forensic methods.

1. Introduction

Over the course of six months from September 2016 to March 2017 I was able to participate in the Ride-a-Long program facilitated by the Asheville Police Department Forensic Service Technicians. The Forensic Service Technicians work as a subdivision within the Asheville Police Department and their primary job is to gather and process evidence from local crime scenes in Buncombe County. My time was split between two technicians, and I was able to learn about the skills and techniques that they used. I completed my ride-a-long appointments individually with either FST Newman or FST Carroll during their night shifts between the hours of 6pm and midnight. Throughout this work each individual and crime scene location that is mentioned will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity and whereabouts. In the course of my participant observation I was subject to strict guidelines that prohibited me from taking pictures or using real names within this paper. Despite the minimal amount of crime that occurred during these months I had permission to accompany the FST that I was assigned to for the evening as they walked through and processed a crime scene whenever it occurred. The job produces its own type of ethnography, in the sense that the very act of gathering evidence and putting together a story about a crime is its own form of ethnographic work. Even deeper than that my research has grown to include how the relationships, encounters, and constructed performances between technicians, sworn officers, and victims or witnesses interplay with one another and produce information that is vital to solving crimes. The collection of DNA, trace evidence, and fingerprints are just one aspect of the duties of a Forensic Service Technician, and by listening to police and witness testimony forensic technicians are able to bring multiple perspectives to present to detectives. These relationships that are built between forensic technicians, police officers, and witnesses or victims can be fragile and filled with uncertainty, but at the same time they serve as an

integral part of the crime scene. In forensics, no two scenes are alike just as no two witnesses or police officers react to a crime in the same way.

These interactions served to inform and direct the forensic technicians when they arrive on a scene because as I soon learned forensics is usually the last presence to arrive. It will also be crucial to my research to include substantiating information on human encounter, interaction, and role theory, because this theory has inspired me to be more aware of the interactions that are constructed between the authority figures and civilians who come into contact with each other. It is important as well for me to emphasize the differences between titles within the Asheville Police Department. Quite frequently I found myself reverting back and forth between calling the Forensic Service Technicians (FSTs) "investigators" when in fact that title is reserved for the detectives that use the information gathered by FSTs. FST Newman and FST Carroll were adamant that "the job of technicians was not to prove guilt or attempt to solve the crime, but to gather evidence and use it to interpret how a criminal would act or what they would touch to break into someone's home". One statement in particular about witness and victim testimony stood out to me when FST Carroll noted that it was important to "take what the victim says but recognize that there are a lot of factors attached such as adrenaline and the reality that people lie or mess with things and don't want to own up to it". In my nights spent at the station I was full of questions about the reliability of witness and victim testimony as well as the problem of lying. How do investigators manage the information that is given to them when they are not the first presence to arrive at a scene? What compels a witness to lie about or exaggerate the facts of a crime? These are all questions that have driven my search for an understanding of witness and technician interaction.

Working with the police department requires a level of trust and every situation and crime scene is has the potential to be dangerous. I've come to rely on the safety of the presence of gun wielding police officers who escort us through crime scenes. In the Asheville Police Department the phrase that I continue to hear is "safety first, safety always" and it is a symbol of the ethics that the forensic department lives by. Ethics and respect are also vital to understanding how and why scenes are processed in specific ways. In this field, technicians often find themselves face to face with death, but bodies are more than sources of information. They were once living breathing individuals and in death they deserve to be treated with dignity. Every scene must be meticulously processed and each technician must follow ethical guidelines and use standardized techniques for collecting evidence. The importance of technique goes all the way back to the founding of Forensic Anthropology in the 1800s. The advancement in forensic technology has changed the game of catching killers and with the help of forensic technicians, investigators no longer have to rely on finding breadcrumbs.

2. The Bones and the Blood

Over the last two centuries Forensic Anthropology has made significant strides with the advancement of technology and procedures. Solving crimes today comes with one impediment: time. The processing of DNA, fingerprints, and trace evidence in cities like Asheville that are forced to ship their evidence to labs can take anywhere from three months to three years according to FST Newman. In the city of Asheville this is the case for many of the ongoing investigations. Technicians and Investigators are in a constant state of waiting and gathering. They must wait for official data to be returned to them, but crime waits for no man and they are always on call to investigate a new scene. Inside the department there sits years of backlogged evidence reports waiting in limbo for confirmations to be returned. In many cases results are generated, but the individual belonging to a fingerprint or DNA swab may have yet to be entered into the suspect database. Cue the wait for a subsequent slip up and admittance into the criminal records tracker. How then, do the forensic technicians of the city of Asheville navigate through this never ending cycle of gather and wait? Add on zero access to necessary databases such as the Automated Fingerprint Identification System and solving crimes in mid-size America becomes nearly impossible. On the surface they seem to be in limbo, but at the scene of a crime they employ a variety of resourceful tactics, methods, and procedures that help them piece together the story that hides from the untrained eye.

Forensic Anthropology did not start out on solid ground. It was originally considered a mix of several different disciplines. In the book *Forensic Science: Modern Methods of Solving Crime*, Max Houck describes this "mixed science" as only being used to answer questions regarding crime within a court[1]. Investigation was not well used, nor did people think to use it to identify human remains. It wasn't until Johann Friedrich Blumenbach came onto the scene and put a name and purpose to the science. Blumenbach was a pioneer of anatomical studies and his classification of race was well read even before Darwin became popular[2]. Another man named Paul Broca gave name and popularity to the science of physical anthropology internationally. Broca, born in France in 1824, was a renowned physician and anatomist who in 1859 founded the Anthropological Society of Paris[3]. The importance of physical anthropology did

not arrive in America until 1849 when it was used by Harvard professors Jeffries Wyman and Oliver Wendell Holmes to identify the burned remains of a man named George Packman[4]. It wasn't until the 1800s began to draw to a close that a handbook on criminal investigation was published. In 1893, the English version of Hans Gross's book *Handbook for Examining Magistrates* was printed and later renamed in the US as the *Handbook for Criminal Investigations*[5]. It was used mainly for its extensive details on microscope use for identifying trace evidence, forensic medicine, toxicology, and ballistic examination [6]. In this sense forensic anthropology can be traced through the most well-known crimes in history and the case studies that preceded their use. Case studies are the flesh and bone of forensics, because the sheer volume of evidence that is collected creates a strong database for comparison in similar cases. Forensic technicians use a variety of knowledge to sort out evidence and identify persons. A forensic technician may for instance need to know every inch of the human skeleton and how to determine age at the time of death, sex, and ethnicity through the study of human osteology.

It is important to highlight the human body and the skeletal system. In cases of murder, a body may be left open to the elements exposing the flesh to the effects of deterioration and disintegration. Without flesh and blood to guide an investigation to the cause of death one must look deeper to the bone for answers. Bones can piece together an elaborate story of life and death if an investigator knows what to look for. Human identification is a dance between accuracy and precision that has been shaped and perfected over more than two centuries of evidence gathering. Forensic anthropologists seek to transition a deceased person from the unknown to the known even as their voice has been silenced. The teeth to the toes tell tales about who a person was and what stage of life they were in.

Estimating age through the science of human osteology has contributed to forensics in Asheville as well as across the world. In a previous murder investigation, Asheville's forensic technicians were able to make a mold of the victim's teeth which was later used to determine age and identity. In the book, *Human Osteology*, Tim D. White explains procedures for using teeth to determine age which ranges from the time a person is five months in utero up to age thirty-five[7]. Human teeth have multiple stages of development that are standard from person to person. This along with the use of the skull and other bones that have stages of fusion throughout a person's lifespan are used to make accurate observations on identity. If forensic technicians are by chance left with a whole body to work with the accuracy of positive identification of identity, time of death, and movement of a body go up ten folds. Forensics tells us that these kinds of in-depth investigation into the bones of a human body happen in the hands of a medical examiner. Asheville's forensic service technicians hold an arsenal of knowledge to help them navigate a crime scene effectively and provide preserved specimens to medical examiners and state investigation labs.

3. Technology and Techniques

Technique is synonymous with routine in the forensic world, because one mistake can mean the difference between losing a murder case and catching a killer. During my ride-a-long appointments I worked with FST Newman and she was my key informant throughout the process. Officer Newman studied Forensic Anthropology at the University of Boston, and after graduating she was hired as a forensic service technician at the Asheville Police department where she has worked for the past year. In this past year, she was a part of several homicide investigations, all of which were able to capture the suspected killer. Newman stands at a slight 5'3'' and her small frame was usually absorbed by the black police uniform and work boots she wore while on the job. In the office she was seldom seen with makeup and kept her dark brown hair pulled back into a loose bun and looked ready for whatever events could take place in the night. On her person she carried a variety of equipment on a black duty belt such as her nightstick and a two-way radio. Her radio is the most important piece of equipment, because when forensic services are needed a dispatcher will loudly announce "1222" over the radio. 1222 is the call number for forensics, and every department has a unique identifier to make quick and accurate connections over the radio.

All investigators are responsible for monitoring and listening for incidents and crime scenes to investigate. This was done by routinely watching for updates on the Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD) to know when and where a crime occurred. The CAD system could be opened up and monitored on a computer screen, and it resembled a spreadsheet layout. The CAD system displayed what type or category of crime had taken place and at what time the incident was logged with a timer that kept track of how long the scene had been in progress. If the incident was double clicked it gave a brief report of what the on-scene officer was doing. The forensic technicians were normally on the lookout for codes such as Breaking and Entering (BE), Larceny (LC), Homicide (HM), Suicide (SC), or Sexual Assault (SA). Newman was able to tell immediately if forensic services were needed to assist at a crime scene simply by looking at how many minutes had passed at scenes that were displayed by the CAD system. She noted that usually a Breaking and Entering (BE) or Vandalism (VD) crime scene needed fingerprint collection after about twelve minutes

had passed. If the officer on-scene did not call after fifteen minutes had passed she said, that usually it meant the officer had a camera from the lab on hand and no fingerprints were thought to be present. It often happened that scenes were simple enough that sworn officers did not call the forensic investigators to collect evidence and did it themselves. This type of exclusion seemed to be a common occurrence within the department where officers feel that they alone can handle a crime scene without forensic services. The forensic technicians have their own routines, but they are also observant of the routines of criminal activity around the city. For example, when asked what kind of crime was seasonal Newman said that, "usually in the summertime crime tends to pick up and we see a lot more activity and domestic violence… people need places to stay in the winter so they hit their girlfriends a lot less." In reality, they see more murders in the winter months, but according to Newman there was no real reason for the fluctuation.

In the APD forensic department it was important to have a mastery over the basic techniques to be able to gather the best evidence to contribute to finding a criminal. FST Newman was very knowledgeable in forensics techniques. However, she still received the majority of her knowledge from on the job training with her supervisor, Tracy Colburn. She shadowed Colburn to every crime scene and was in an observation status for the first three months of her employment. Newman spent those three months not being able to take DNA swabs or even dust for fingerprints as she watched and learned from her supervisor. In the end the purpose for this exclusion from duties had a purpose. Evidence that could potentially be collected at a crime scene was normally minimal, delicate, and of extreme importance. Technicians are sometimes called to court to identify and explain the importance of a piece of evidence. If something were to go wrong, say a fingerprint lifted incorrectly, that would be evidence lost and a potentially ruined criminal investigation.

Newman described procedures and tools used for collecting fingerprints. Dusting for fingerprints is a delicate process that requires the forensic investigator to know what dusting medium to use for different surfaces. There are four types of powder in various colors that can be used depending on the likelihood of a fingerprint being present. Investigators have a choice between conventional powders, magnetic-based powders, fluorescent powders, and spray powders. In the past all powders came in standard black or aluminum, but now the colors include white, black, aluminum, and bi-chromatic. The different color varieties offer a more visible option for objects that are black, clear, or multicolored. White powder is mainly used for surfaces like glass, metals, and black or dark colored surfaces. Bi-chromatic powders were developed for colored surfaces where gray or white powder might blend in too well, and fluorescent powders are used on surfaces where a print is not discernable from its background such as a speckled floor in an industrial setting.

The first night of my ride-a-long sessions was on September 28th, 2016 and after I arrived at 6pm Newman decided to demonstrate how to properly lift fingerprints off of an object. So, together we dug through trash cans around the police department to take sample prints off of aluminum cans, plastic plates, and pieces of paper. In a real crime scene these objects would each require a different powder to lift a fingerprint. Aluminum cans need black powder and a large fluffy brush to make the fingerprints visible. The best way to do this was by lightly dipping the fluffy brush in the black powder jar and tapping the excess powder off gently. She was adamant that the brush had to be gently flicked or twirled across the surface while barely touching the can. The quick flicking motion worked to distribute dust on the oil patterns left by fingerprints without causing a smudge or smear. For objects like paper it was best to use the magnetic-based powder, because the oil tends to lay too smoothly for regular powder to adhere too. Regular paper barely shows fingerprints with the naked eye. The magnetic brush was interesting because it looked like a stylus pen with a depressor on one end. When the button is pushed it opens up the magnetic pen tip, which is dipped into the powder and to release the collected powder press and hold the button. The powder collects on the tip in a spiky clump and it should be rubbed lightly across the paper barely touching to avoid smearing the print. The plate was the easiest object to use, because it easily showed where the fingerprints were. Black powder worked very well on the plastic plate, and I watched as Newman used a simple piece of clear scotch tape to remove the prints from the objects. A second way to lift fingerprints if powder is not effective is to place the object inside of a glass box with an airtight lid and flash burn super glue inside to produce a sticky gas that adheres to the print almost perfectly.

Throughout the course of my observations Newman continued to fill up our time with teaching sessions in the absence of a real crime scene. We sat down together and analyzed fingerprint patterns on the samples we had previously collected. We spent hours analyzing the fingerprint teaching board that was stored in the closet. The department engages in teaching quite often and these kinds of presentation boards are stored in that closet. As we looked at the different pictures on the board I noted that there are seven different types of fingerprint patterns: ulnar loop, whorl, radial loop, arch, double loop, peacock's eye, and tented arch. The most common type of pattern is the ulnar loop which starts from the right side of the finger pad and loops up. Other common patterns include the whorl that has a spiral pattern and the radial loop that comes from the thumb side of the hand. Very rarely does a technician see the peacock's eye since it commonly develops on the ring finger. A peacock's eye is the combination of a tiny whorl nestled inside of a loop. According to Newman, when lifting fingerprints the key is to try and get a whole print

as opposed to a partial one. Partial prints are virtually useless since so many people carry near identical patterns. She said to also avoid lifting patterns that are too wide since they are probably from a suspect's palm and that has no identifiable pattern.

Collecting fingerprints is a vital job that the technicians are tasked to do. Beyond collecting the fingerprints and other evidence sending them to the state investigation lab is as close to the actual investigation that technicians participate in. The restrictions and lack of involvement that technicians have distances them from the crimes and the work that they could be involved in. Asheville Police Department does not have the equipment or funds to analyze the fingerprints and DNA that they collect. This is due in part to the small size of Asheville and the accreditation status of the department. Without accreditation funds cannot be allocated by the state, so all of their evidence has to be sent to an accredited lab. FST Newman said to have a set of fingerprints analyzed they must be run through a system called the Automated Fingerprint Identification System or AFIS, which is a compilation of every set of fingerprints that have been collected and submitted into the system since the early 1970s. It is a system that Newman and the other investigators do not have access too even though it would make their job easier. In our first meeting Newman revealed that in a criminal investigation for a homicide it could take up to three months to get results back and it could take years for results on a routine breaking and entering. Her frustration stemmed from the fact that most forensic service teams are forced to send their evidence into the state lab. This process holds up investigations for years and due to extreme backlog it keeps cases open for just as long. Fortunately, the department has been in the process of gaining an accredited status to bring these much needed systems to Asheville. In the months after these sessions I was able to follow her along to the scene of multiple crimes in Asheville's residential neighborhoods. Within these scenes I witnessed Newman employ several forensic techniques to gather evidence and help victims gain some semblance of closure. At the same time I was able to observe the interactions between Newman, other police officers, and victims. At every step of the investigation FST Newman was inclusive of the input of the victims she dealt with and each role was clearly defined.

4. The Burglary (October 28th, 2016)

It was 7:30 when we left the police station and pitch black in the residential neighborhood as we drove into it. We were looking for 6 H Street and it was difficult because neighborhood did not have street lights to help us see. The driveway itself was a gravel semi-circle blocked by a wall of trees along the edge of the street, which offered a privacy wall to the home and left only the entrance and exit of the driveway visible. FST Newman parked the truck and she took a moment to look at the house. It was illuminated by a bright yellow porch light. It was a simple ranch style home with three windows in front, none of which had curtains, therefore exposing every room to the outside. Newman grabbed her clipboard and we got out to get additional equipment from the back of the truck. It was filled to bursting with boxes of evidence collection materials and equipment. At her disposal were DNA swabs, dusting kits, blood spill kits, luminal spray, tripods for cameras, biohazard bags, boxes upon boxes of blue latex gloves, face shields, and disposable body suits and booties just to name what I could see in the path of the flashlight. Out of the truck Newman grabbed what resembled a large black tackle-box which she checked for fingerprint powders and brushes. Over her shoulder she carried a large Nikon camera tucked safely in a black carrying case and in her hands she juggled the clipboard, the dusting kit, and a heavy duty flashlight.

As we walked up a stone path to the front of the house a young male officer with a severe high and tight haircut came out of the front door to greet us:

> **Officer Lane**: *"The victim is inside still looking at all the stuff that's torn up. I got the case numbers for you."*
> **FST Newman**: *"There's more than one?"*
> **Officer Lane**: *"Yep, this is house 6 and house number 4 next door (points to the right) got his jacked as well. Looks like he broke into the garage, stole a drill and used it to get in over here… but it doesn't seem like he knew what he was doing because he decided to smash the window instead. Had himself a meal in 4 before he came over here too."*
> **FST Newman**: *"huh.. weird, ok. I'm going to get pictures out here first before I make my way inside."*
>
> Officer Lane gave Newman two sets of six digit numbers that corresponded with each house. He went back inside and Newman took a few steps back to get a good shot of the front of the house.

FST Newman: *"I like to work my way from the outside in so we'll get pictures in the front first and then go to the back door where the damage is."*

We walked around the left side of the house and came around to the back. The house was nestled right up against a hill that was encased in a calf high perimeter wall made of brick. She took a moment to look for any footprints in the dirt going up the hill, but the ground appeared undisturbed. The back door, however, looked absolutely mangled. Its window had been smashed in at the bottom left panel, and we could clearly see where the person had used a tool of some kind to pick at the lock. The lock's flat bronze surface was covered in scratches and the surrounding paint on the door had deep cuts where they had let the tool slip off the metal. Newman flashed a few pictures and once satisfied we went back around to the front door where we were met by the homeowner. Her name was Janet Wayne, and she was so shaken she didn't stop hugging herself the entire time we were there. Janet was a graphic designer in her early 60s (date of birth was given). She had long silver hair with neatly cut bangs that framed her thin heart shaped face, and she wore perfectly round glasses. Janet invited us inside and directed us to the kitchen where the back door was located. According to her there was nothing out of place in the kitchen, but the thief had gone through the rest of the house without hesitation. The back door was photographed from this angle and then Newman asked Janet to walk us through every room that had been disturbed and to point out what she felt was out of place. The first bedroom was spacious and the intruder had opened every drawer of a wardrobe and threw its contents across the bed as well as on the floor. It looked like they had rummaged through every jewelry box and gift box that they found as well. Surprisingly, they did not take any of the trinkets that were inside. Janet was perplexed that they were left behind because the items were made of ivory and in her eyes they were valuable. She was also adamant that she wanted every baggie touched dusted for fingerprints.

This bedroom also had an on suite bathroom that the intruder ransacked. Janet wanted to know if Newman was going to dust the medicine cabinet for fingerprints, but after inspecting the white paint with her flashlight Newman determined that there was nothing there worth dusting. Janet took us to the other side of the house where her office and a second bedroom had been touched. Her office was dimly lit, and on the floor sat a safe that was pried open along with more jewelry boxes emptied out on top of her desk. Curiously, her desk held a massive Mac computer screen, a second equally large HP computer screen, and a digital sketch pad all worth thousands of dollars. The intruder had not touched a single electronic item in the house. Instead, Janet informed us that the only things missing were jewelry and $140 of cash from the busted safe.

Black case in hand Newman forged ahead into the room and bent down to examine the safe. The room was lit with a small table lamp that had replaced the overhead light, and it made it difficult to see anything in the room. Newman had a large flashlight, so the lack of light wasn't an impediment. After inspecting the safe she opened up her black case and removed a jar of conventional black powder along with a fluffy white brush. She unscrewed the top and lightly dipped the brush in tapping off the excess powder. As she passed the brush over every side of the safe she twirled it just barely skimming the surface. Another inspection with the flashlight revealed no usable fingerprints. Janet insisted that everything that had been removed and thrown around needed to be dusted as well. However, after attempting to dust Ziploc baggies and cardboard jewelry boxes with magnetic powder nothing turned up. Janet took us into the next room, but Newman didn't see anything worth dusting in this area except a large metal cookie tin that had its contents removed. She dusted it carefully and a huge black smudge appeared on the top of the box. Unfortunately, it was so large Newman concluded it was an unusable portion possibly from the palm of the intruder's hand. Newman then had to explain to Ms. Wayne, who became disgruntled, that only prints from the pads of a person's fingers could be used.

This type of interaction between victim and investigator was normal in the middle of a crime scene. Victims had expectations about how their personal belongings should be handled in a crime scene, but also how techniques should be performed. In our meetings, we discussed the misleading representation of crime scene investigation through popular media, and how people grow to expect the most drastic measures to be applied to their situation. While explaining what she knew I observed Officer Lane doing his best to stay as far away from us as possible. He leaned up against a wall in the living room and was uninterested in the work that FST Newman was performing. As Janet showed us through the house Officer Lane would duck around us and go stand on the opposite end of the house again staying as far apart from us while at all times remaining in our eyesight. He was not a part of the evidence collection process and nor did he take part in consulting with the victim.

Before we even arrived to the scene FST Newman talked about the singular role of police officers as a protective presence while forensic technicians were conducting their evidence collection.

FST Newman: *"When I go to a crime scene at night and even in the day there is a sworn officer there to provide protection and cover just in case things get rowdy or violent I take a lot of pictures in this line of work and it's most often of people who have been involved in a domestic violence issue or a dispute of some kind… people get cuts and bruises and I have to take their pictures emotions run high all the time… hopefully this [guy] will be here because I don't carry a gun and who knows where the perp is?"*

Combinations of different entities come together at crime scenes and each brings their own unique presence as well as valuable information. The main characters at the scene of a crime start with the arrival of police officers, such as Officer Lane, who interact immediately with witnesses and victims. Next to be called, but only if needed, are the emergency response teams who provide access to blocked spaces and medical help. The last to be called are usually the forensic technicians who must navigate through a potentially compromised scene and the different testimonies provided by each of the other entities who are present at the scene. Forensic Service Technicians have the job of gathering the evidence and creating a story from the materials left behind that provide detectives with ammunition to win cases. These differing encounters can be analyzed through the work of sociologist, Erving Goffman. In his book *Encounters,* Goffman discusses the idea of Role Theory, Role Performance, and Role Sectors. The relationships between the forensic team, police officers, and witnesses develop naturally within a crime scene. Goffman explains Role Theory as the classic formulation of role concepts that lead to the development of a conceptual framework[8]. In my research, I have watched the construction of these frameworks between these entities before and after they come into contact with one another. Officer Lane's performance in our presence was relaxed and ambivalent. However, in the presence of the witness his entire demeanor became closed off in comparison to Newman who became more open and warm. Forensic technicians use the testimony from witnesses to their benefit and they take the time to talk to them about what they want done before they begin their work. In the process of this interaction FST Newman receives input from them on where they want her to focus her investigation and this creates a role sector where they interact as a subset apart from the other officiating individuals[9]. Role performance, which is more easily observed, is the actual conduct of specific individuals while they are in the act of their positions[10]. For forensic service technicians their scripted performance is the act of collecting evidence and processing the crime scene.

FST Newman had two modes for interacting with the victim of this crime and they manifested themselves before and after she met with the victim. While in route to the scene we discussed the procedure for going through a person's home, however Newman was clear that not all of it was important. In our isolation away from the victim she revealed that she would do whatever the victim wanted done, but that most of the evidence collected would not be viable. Newman was unknowingly putting the idea of "make-work" into practice in her attempt to please or satisfy the victim of the burglary[11]. In this case she was dusting objects such as plastic baggies that had no chance of holding a fingerprint. What benefit could come from a deliberate waste of time, manpower, and dusting powder? She was delivering a performance that she felt was expected of her by the victim. I saw that despite knowing that these fingerprints were going to be of little or no value the intended purpose was to bring ease to the victim. According to other technicians in the department this method of interaction brings a human component to these types of situations. FST Miranda Carroll, who is also a night shift technician, explained that by listening to people and respecting their requests to dust certain objects or to even not take their photograph reduces the chances of making them feel victimized all over again.

In contrast to this encounter FST Newman described other cases where witnesses or victims resort to bending the truth, exaggerating the truth, protecting perpetrators, or omitting facts to elicit different responses from the investigating crews. For example, in a previous domestic violence case Newman was called out to a residence to document facial lacerations that a woman received due to physical violence from an intimate partner. In this instance the woman did not call the police but a neighbor who heard the disturbance did. Much to the surprise of Newman, and the police officers who summoned her to the scene, the woman had no intention of cooperating with authorities, she wouldn't admit that her partner caused the cut on her face, and nor did she ask the police to remove her partner from the home.

This phenomena of protecting one's attacker and lying led me to the theory of "impression management" that was explained by Erving Goffman as the acts that are performed by an individual in the visual or aural range of the audience[12]. This doesn't always have to mean that they are speaking to one another, but even then what are witnesses doing in the presence of investigators? Some pace back and forth or fiddle with objects that are near to them. Others like to direct technicians to the path that they want them to take or block them from searching certain areas. The testimonies happen early on in the investigations and these are the first moments that technicians and witnesses have interaction with one another. FST Carroll, a night technician at Asheville Police Department, was aware that people who have experienced a trauma can be overrun with adrenaline or even in a position where they want to protect a

criminal. In this instance, witnesses with ulterior motives work to control their impressions. Goffman explains that "when one's activity occurs in the presence of other person's, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression are suppressed"[13]. So, lying or controlling one's facial expressions to give off the impression of truthfulness is something that technicians must be aware of when taking statements. FST Carroll was aware of this issue and made the comment that "every statement is taken with a grain of salt and we let the scene do the talking for us."

As the night continued we made our way to the next door neighbor's home, which had also been burglarized. This was a large crime scene since two houses were involved that had most likely been hit by the same person. House number 4 was the original house that the perpetrator stole a drill from. We left house number 6 after it was concluded that there were no viable fingerprints on any of the victim's belongings or the drill that was left behind. It was a short walk to house number 4 through a small hedgerow of bushes. It opened up to a flat concrete driveway and a two story garage. Officer Lane was standing beside his police car, which was parked in front of the garage. As it turned out the Carlton's, who owned the home, had arrived after the crime had taken place. It was their vacation home and not a place that they visited often. Together we all went into the garage and climbed the stairs to the second floor where a short rectangular window was halfway open. Again Newman pulled out her flashlight and put the beam onto the dirty white wood surrounding the window. Before anyone had a chance to ask if there were fingerprints Newman ducked underneath the window and stepped outside onto the hill that the garage was built right up against. I held her black case while she attempted to dust for fingerprints, but unfortunately there was so much old dust and cobwebs nothing came up.

At this point Officer Lane was talking to the homeowner Mr. Tom Carlton about procedures and where the investigation would go from this point. We went back downstairs and entered into the main house. There was no damage to the back door of this house, and it seemed like the door had been easily popped open. This door led into the kitchen, and immediately I noticed that the suspect had left out or used several items: a glass soup bowl, a drinking glass, and a dirty frying pan with a half-eaten steak still lying in it. Along with these dishes there was also the empty can of soup, an empty steak package, an empty soda can, and an empty bag of popcorn. Newman began walking through the home tracking each item to see if there was a pattern of movement and any fingerprints. Throughout this process I stayed right behind Newman and followed her through the kitchen and into the living room. After Newman looked at every space that had been disturbed she concluded that whoever had broken into the Carlton's home had went directly into the garage first to grab their drill. Then with ease they opened the back door, and as coincidental as it may sound, the person went straight to the supply closet and opened one drawer removing the single drill bit that was found next door.

Newman was not able to conclude if the perpetrator ate food or went to Ms. Wayne's house first, but in that chain of events the person made a bowl of soup, cooked a steak, drank a glass of soda, and popped and ate popcorn. All while they put their feet up on the coffee table and watched television in the living room. I looked for myself and saw dirt from muddy shoes on the coffee table, and on the couch it looked as if the person had thrown popcorn in the air since it had settled in a U pattern around where they sat. In the end the perpetrator had opened the dishwasher in the kitchen and placed the soup bowl inside. However, instead of starting the washer it was almost as if the person stopped and reminded themselves that they were in the middle of a burglary. With that thought in mind they left the dishwasher open with the single soup bowl lying on its side.

The owners of this home were not as involved or concerned as Janet Wayne was next door. They stayed to the side of us and asked Officer Lane questions like, *what kind of person makes food? How long will it take to find the person?* Officer Lane was patient when answering their questions, but didn't seem at all interested in the situation. At this point Newman was dusting for fingerprints on the drinking glass and was preparing to swab for a DNA sample along its rim. Once these procedures were done she assured the Carlton's that the evidence would be submitted for processing, but the likelihood of catching anyone was "zero to none". They just shook their heads as if the news did not surprise them in the slightest. Mr. Carlton also made a curious statement that perked up Officer Lane;

Tom Carlton: *What if it was kids?*

Officer Lane: *What do you mean? Do you have any other information on who might have broken into your home?*

Tom Carlton: *Well I don't know but it just seems like something that kids would do. They drank coke instead of the beer we keep in the fridge and there's no way an adult… or a homeless person wouldn't overlook that stuff.*

Officer Lane: *I mean could be but we may not ever know. But if you think of anything else you want to share with us you have my name and badge number as well as the case number to follow up with.*

Later Newman rehashed this conversation and thought that it was possible that the family knew who had broken into their home due to the familiarity the perpetrator displayed with their possessions. Possibly it was a grandchild or a family member because of their initial jump to it being a "kid" that came into their home. Newman had witnessed this type of protective behavior before and was well aware that when a possible family member is involved people tend to clam up. Though Mr. Carlton may not have lied or even withheld vital information it was clear that he had an idea of what happened and his stiff body language was apparent as Officer Lane asked him if he had more information. In crime scene investigation it is common for a person being held for questioning to lie or protect someone close to them. However, once a lie or a fabrication has been produced it becomes hard to keep up with and therefore it becomes transformed. It is an implication for both the deceiver and the deceived because there will always be consequences for such deceptions. Technicians and officers are well aware that deception may be at hand when they are in the presence of a witness in a high-stakes crime scene. In fact even in the scenes that I was witness to I was aware of the body language of the Carlton's. In an article discussing the subtleties of body language and deception authors Samantha Man and Aldert Vrij outline key signals that officials dealing with crime investigation look out for:

> *When asked what behaviors to look for in a liar, most people, often including professional lie detectors such as the police and customs officers, will reply "avoiding eye contact with the target and an increase in nervous fidgety movements" (Akehurst, K ¨ohnken, Vrij, & Bull, 1996; Vrij & Mann, 2001; Vrij & Semin, 1996). Behaviors such as gaze aversion and fidgeting are signs of nervousness (Vrij, 2000). Apparently, observers expect liars to behave nervously. However, previous research into deception has repeatedly demonstrated that rather than increase in fidgety behavior, most people decrease in nonfunctional movements and become unnaturally still (DePaulo, 1988; Ekman, 1989; Vrij, 1995). Previous studies have also shown that liars do not decrease eye contact. In fact, there is no relationship between eye contact and deception (DePaulo, Stone, & Lassiter, 1985a; Vrij, 2000). See Vrij (2000) for a review of more than 40 studies about how liars behave*[14]

Mr. Carlton, the victim of the H street burglary, was exceptionally calm in his observation that a child may have broken into their home, stolen a drill bit, and proceeded to break into the house next door. Although he did not give any definite answers there was enough there to make Officer Lane and FST Newman suspicious that this victim was aware of the identity of the perpetrator. This is not to say that Mr. Carlton was being malicious, on the contrary, in the book *A Pack of Lies*, James A. Barnes discusses the distinctions that have to be made between deception, truth, and intention. If in fact the perpetrator was a family member of Mr. Carlton it is in his best interest to protect that person. Protection of a family member can lead people to resort to a fight or flight mode and on occasion this means that "the recipient of a message may be misled, even though it may have been truthfully transmitted."[15]

Despite the fact that no viable fingerprints were found FST Newman was still able to perform her duties and also brought an atmosphere of respect and care to the victims of this burglary. Her performance allowed Ms. Wayne to be a part of the process and minimized her re-victimization.

5. Conclusion

Witness testimonies have played an important role in revealing and concealing the truth. We must ask ourselves what is truth? How does truth make its way into the heart of what forensics is? Is truth empirically a part of it or is it hard to find and elusive? In the case of the witness who might in the state of an adrenaline rush omit key information. Not all omissions of truth are out of malice or deliberate withholding. Sometimes emotions run high and people who are not trained to control themselves are unable to force their minds past a trauma or damaging event. People usually just want their property found and a criminal brought to justice or a murder solved so that some semblance of a normal life can return. Being upfront with these individuals about the realities of Forensic capabilities in a city such as Asheville is part of the consultation that Forensic Service Technicians provide to victims. These technicians do include these victims in their work and make it a priority to minimize victimizing them again since their job is to touch and invade a victim's personal property or their bodies. In cases of witness testimonies Forensic Service Technicians are responsible for recording their initial statements, but they must do so with the knowledge that the scene may have more to tell.

One must remember that police officers are required to give a written testimony and that they are inherently held to a standard of truth. James Barnes talks about the role of police and what is expected of them in the context of truth and honor. One cannot expect a witness or victim who may or may not have conflicting interests in the face of a crime

to uphold the ideas of truth and honor[16]. Barnes describes police and authority figures such as police officers as being "classified as a professional witness" and this is always true. Forensic technicians rely heavily on accurate testimonies and reports from officers who are participatory figures at the scene of a crime. In the case of the H Street burglary FST Newman expected to receive a full detailed report from Officer Lane that outlined the moment of his arrival to the scene and his questioning of both Janet Wayne and the Carltons. Barnes says that officers are "expected to present facts correctly, impartially, and respectfully"[17]. In his book he describes the judicial process and how it entails the discovery, construction, or determination of the truth[18]. FST Carroll and FST Newman both believe in the goal that their job is not to pass judgement but to find the truth. The truth is revealed in testimonies from witnesses, the reports from police officers, and the objects and patterns left behind at a crime scene as explained by FST Carroll;

> *"My job as a technician is to collect evidence that will aid in the identification of a suspect. It's the investigator's job to use the evidence I've collected to nab the bad guy. When I come onto a scene I treat every case as a major case and I don't make assumptions or let my emotions take control of me. I'm here to get the facts and I continue to analyze the scene as if I knew nothing. The scene will tell you something different sometimes compared to what a victim might say. They might be too worked up to remember right away as well. And I go into a scene with the comfort that I have notes from the CAD system so I'm not ever walking into a scene blind."* [19]

Forensic service technicians must always be aware that witnesses with ulterior motives present information differently than a person who is experiencing an adrenaline rush or is in shock. According to FST Newman often in the case of homicides bystanders that become witnesses are in a state of shock and disbelief as to what they have seen, however most are forthcoming with information. In a November ride-a-long appointment Newman discussed the help that witness testimony provided during a homicide investigation which helped technicians determine a small seemingly unimportant detail such as where the killer stood when they fired their gun. On the first look the technicians could not locate the bullet casings because the wound looked self-inflicted, but there was no gun to corroborate that claim. After a witness pointed out where the suspect stood technicians were able to locate the bullet casings that helped to locate the killer. It is during a follow up questioning of these witnesses that facts become blurred, misremembered, or forgotten. In a study done on the effect that witnessing a violent act has upon memory it is argued that "traumatic memories will be unreliable over time" due in part to the idea that "trauma actively impairs memories, leading to 'fractured' recollections that lack a coherent verbal narrative and are resistant to retrieval."[20] This is an issue that forensic service technicians must navigate through, but witness testimony is a reliable source of accurate information when gathered immediately. After it's all said and done forensic service technicians must use every piece of physical evidence and verbal testimony from those who witness a crime and the police officers that assist them in controlling a crime scene. Even the smallest of trace evidence can be used to piece together the truth, and though witness testimony has its pro's and con's it is an invaluable resource to solving crimes. Forensic technicians use the eyes of a witness and the evidence left behind to bring closure and justice to every crime scene they encounter.

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