

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**Productivity: Methods of Measurement
for a Criminal Investigation Division**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**

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October 2006**

ABSTRACT

The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) has a unique challenge in trying to measure detective productivity. The issue with measuring detective productivity stems from the fact that much of what a detective accomplishes on a daily basis results from many hours of work that is difficult to measure for statistical purposes. Examples of this would include making phone calls, drive time, evidence processing, waiting on subpoenas and doing surveillance. The researcher evaluated the basic approach using case clearance rates to measure detective productivity. Case clearance rates were compared against police agencies that are using other measurement processes like monthly activity reports. Various research indicates that case clearance rates are a poor indicator of productivity. Additionally, case clearance rates focus too narrowly on getting a disposition to an investigation. More attention should be given to accounting for the time spent on the case, the quality of the investigation, or the use of available resources to solve a case, which provides for the justification for productivity. Although monthly activity reports reflect a better sense of capturing productivity, these reports fall short of being an all-inclusive measure of output. It is recommended that a police department wanting to measure detective productivity should implement a process, which captures as many of the facets of the investigative process as possible. This process should include what the actual case file presents regarding the quality and thoroughness of the work that has been conducted.

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INTRODUCTION

Measuring productivity for a Criminal Investigation Division (CID) is not an easy task. For those unfamiliar with criminal investigations, it can be difficult to understand why it takes so long to complete a thorough investigative inquiry. There are many factors that play into this situation. A detective can spend days, weeks and sometimes months working a case with very little or nothing to show for the work conducted.

Detective work difficult to measure includes: surveillance, drive-time, playing “phone tag” with victims/complainants, waiting for evidence to be processed externally for the department, and the processing of subpoenas, just to list a few. This can present a false perception that nothing is being done during the course of the investigation and the intangible productivity is difficult to capture for statistical or measurement purposes.

An appropriate response to those who want measurable proof of productivity is the suggestion that work cannot always be completely represented in numeric terms. Most people fail to recognize that certain procedures and/or requirements must be satisfied successfully in order for the case file to be considered thorough and complete. Few individuals have access to the case file, but it provides a wealth of information to the immediate supervisors and reveals the productivity (or lack thereof) of the detective during the investigation. The case file is the documentation of everything that has occurred during the investigation and will be the deciding factor in determining whether enough facts and evidence has been gathered in order to meet the elements for any offense of the law. Additionally, if criminal charges are accepted, the case file will ultimately be the instrument used in determining whether justice prevails and the defendant is successfully prosecuted through a trial or plea agreement.

The purpose of this project is to conduct research in an attempt to answer the questions regarding the problems associated with measuring the productivity of a detective and the misperceptions that often occur. The intended method of inquiry includes the review of books and journals associated with measuring productivity in criminal investigations. Additionally, the development and distribution of a survey instrument will be sent to law enforcement agencies. The outcome is anticipated to illustrate that most agencies use (as their sole means of measuring productivity) the case clearance rate. This rate is normally determined by taking cases that have been cleared by means of unfounded, exceptional, or most preferably arrest and then dividing that against the total number of assigned cases. Case clearance rates alone are a deficient instrument to measure investigative productivity. Only when all measurable aspects are captured can a police agency truly convey a more accurate accounting to their constituents. When all aspects of productivity are measured, it benefits any agency by providing a means of accountability within the department's administration, as well as the citizens for which they serve.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been research devoted to many of the aspects of a criminal investigation, including the varied responsibilities that a detective has. In reviewing this information, it is interesting to see how the varied aspects of a criminal investigation affect productivity. Research and Development (RAND)(1987), which is a non-profit research and analysis institution, did a study on police performance and case attrition. They found that the use of arrest rates as an indicator of productivity have a higher tendency of charges being dropped before going to trial.

RAND (1987) also contends:

Supervisors, like detectives, believe that a detective's performance must be evaluated on the basis of the kinds of cases he works. In this view, any effort to evaluate performance statistically is unwise, because the statistics do not distinguish between cases with cooperative and uncooperative victims, between cases that are easy to convict and those that are hard, between crimes committed by professionals and crimes committed by amateurs, or between thefts in stores that have skilled, cooperative security guards and thefts in stores that do not. (p. 41)

Years earlier, RAND (1973) did a study with the focus on the Los Angeles district. Most police agencies have combined other clearances (like exceptional and unfounded) to that of the arrest rate in order to form a term called 'clearance rate', which means that the case was cleared instead of remaining pending or inactive. In a 2003 TELEMASP Bulletin titled, *Measuring Investigative Productivity*, the parameters of clearance rates and the difficulties involved with these measurements are discussed. It is believed that a detective who works a simple case should get credit for his performance. The problem arises when another detective works a more difficult case that may involve multiple suspects/offenses and also clears the case. For statistical purposes both detectives cleared one case, but the productivity in the form of the total work that was accomplished was not equal from one case to the other. The above-mentioned TELEMASP (2003) Bulletin notes, "Our inability to effectively measure outcome or even to establish reasonable workload parameters results in a focus upon process rather than result" (p. 5).

There is also the consideration of the caseload and the time spent on individual cases. The number of cases assigned to a detective will play a part in how much attention is given to each individual case. There should be some balance between the caseload and the time spent on each individual case or there will be too little time spread across too many cases. Arguably, caseload versus time allocated to a case should factor into the formula for determining the detective to patrol officer ratio for a department. This ratio was explored in the TELEMASP Bulletin (2003), where it was reported that between .25 – 72 hours are spent working on investigations with the mean range of time spent on follow up investigations being between 1 – 5.5 hours. These times are dependant on a lot of variables in the case, which include the type of investigation and the available or obtainable evidence. Additionally, there is also the crime scene search and case preparation for the prosecutor that should also be accounted for in the detective's productivity if they are indeed responsible for these. Pindur and Livingstone (1981) suggested in their research, the *Productivity in the Management of Criminal Investigations*, that there was not a measurement device at that time that could capture and accurately portray a detective's productivity. Their research concluded that clearance rates were not a true indicator of the detective's performance. Pindur and Livingstone (1981) developed a monthly report that extracted pertinent indicators of productivity for which they felt accounted for the detective's performance. This, in turn, could be tallied across the division to account for the performance of the entire unit.

In Glick and Lucius' (1979) study, *Productivity of Detectives*, a case file review form for investigations was developed. They concluded that new, repeat and verified

information was a measure of how productive a detective was. Glick and Lucius (1979) were trying to validate whether or not the detective was getting repeat information that the reporting officer had already done, was verifying information that the reporting officer had taken, or was finding new information in order to solve a case. This could then be monitored by supervision, as the detective would be filling out the form while the investigation progressed. The form listed 39 possible bits of information that would be beneficial in an investigation and allowed the investigator to mark each one as new, repeat, or verified as he accomplished these throughout the investigation. This also brought to light how thorough the patrol officer was when taking the initial report.

In *Productivity Measures in the Criminal Investigation Function*, (MCI), Williams and Sumrall (1982) reasoned that case clearances were an acceptable measure of performance, but were not sure of conviction rates as they felt these rates were the prosecutor's responsibility. Williams and Sumrall (1982) believe that by using a case screening process that used solvability measures, the detective would be able to spend more time working cases that had good leads. This would reduce the caseload and keep the detective from using quality time working cases that had no possibility of being solved. In addition to providing for the solvability in cases, the aforementioned program called MCI was established to allow police managers to monitor the progress of the investigation itself.

In comparison, all but one of these studies emphasize that detective productivity cannot be accurately reflected by the use of clearance rates alone. For a more thorough measure of productivity, there is some support from varying police agencies that suggests that the clearance rate should be combined with additional supporting

documentation in the form of a monthly or informational verification report. In addition, there are programs such as MCI that allow for the monitoring of productivity throughout the program process.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project is to conduct research in an attempt to answer the questions regarding the problems associated with measuring the productivity of a detective and the misperceptions that often occur during a criminal investigation. It is proposed that most agencies use an inadequate process for measuring detective productivity. Inadequacy will be measured by agencies that use only clearance rates as a statistical indicator for performance. Clearance rates cannot accurately reflect all that a detective does and doesn't give a clear picture as to whether or not a detective is working thoroughly and completing investigations in a timely manner. Since most investigative units are trying to accomplish the same job regardless of the investigative focus, surveys will be sent out to police agencies of varying populations and sizes. An analysis will be done to compare the amount of agencies that use only basic approaches like clearance rates. These basic approaches will be evaluated against the amount of agencies that are using multiple measurement procedures like monthly reports to measure detective productivity. In addition, any new trends regarding productivity measurement will be optimistically noted. It is hoped that this research will yield a more all-inclusive measurement instrument or possibly provide several options that will allow for the tailoring of a productivity measurement system depending on an agencies needs.

FINDINGS

A questionnaire survey was sent out to 45 police agencies with a 56% survey rate of return. Of these surveys, approximately 18 were completed by fellow classmates in Module I. The remaining surveys were sent out via U.S. mail and all surveys were completed by Texas police departments. Only seven surveys were returned through these mailings, making a total of 25 returns all together. The focus of this research was on the use of clearance rates and monthly reports in trying to determine what police agencies are using the most to measure detective productivity. There was some hope of finding something new or innovative that would be more thorough than what has been used in years past. A reference was made in the TELEMASP Bulletin (2003), *Measuring Investigative Productivity*, which suggests that community policing has brought so much attention to the patrol function that investigations have flown under the radar without much consideration for improvement or further development. What was discovered throughout the research for this paper was that clearance rates are often mentioned through much of the reading material, written prior to the 1980's. The information found suggests that clearance rates as a measure of productivity narrowly focuses on getting a disposition to an investigation rather than accounting for the time spent on the case, quality of the investigation, or the use of available resources. Very rarely does the clearance rate even provide any feedback as to whether the investigation was successful or not. The only thing a clearance rate takes into account is that at the end of an investigation it was cleared by a justifiable means. Without a supervisory review of the investigation, this might not even be the case.

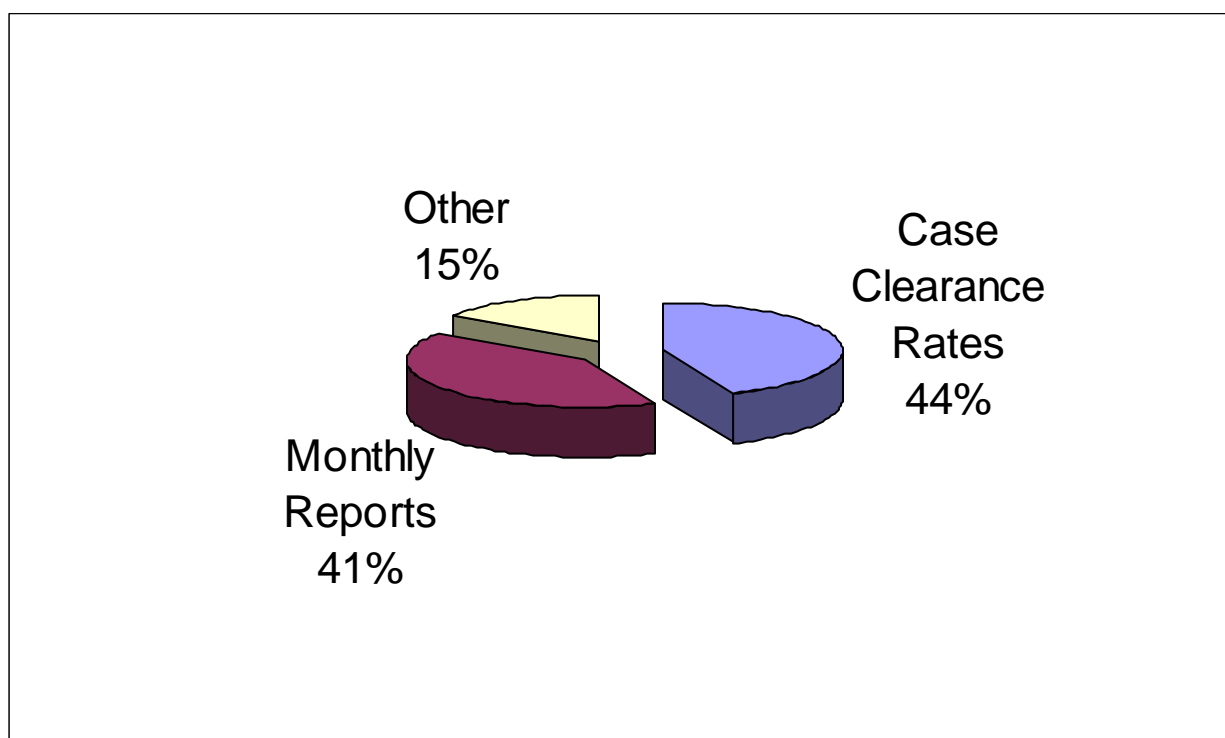
Subsequently, there seems to be a shift in belief and productivity procedures have evolved too many different report-type instruments. No single report reviewed throughout this research stood out over the other. It seems that there is a great variation for the type of instrument that an agency chooses and the outcome of what an agency considers to be important. If an agency is overburdened with too many cases and not enough detectives, they may choose to focus on an outcome that only produces numbers to achieve productivity. This may be the only way an agency can justify keeping up with the numbers in correlation with the lack of financial resources and manpower that may not be available. An agency that has the opportunity for a better distribution of cases per detective may implement a measurement of performance that will focus primarily on the thoroughness of the investigation in order to provide the opportunity for a more successful conclusion for the victim. This suggests that a detective should have a clear idea as to what the mission of their agency is.

One reoccurring note worth mentioning that was pervasive throughout the reference material was that preliminary investigations completed by the responding officer were of great importance. An officer who took a complete initial report allowed the detective to immediately progress to the next stages of working the case without the need to re-interview the complainant for basic information. This also prevented a case from being unnecessarily screened out due to the lack of investigative leads. When the report is first initiated provides the best opportunity to gather information and evidence. Understandably, this allows for more effective time management and greater productivity of the detective when the case then gets assigned to them. The

relationship between patrol and investigations are without a doubt interdependent on one another.

The results of the survey used during this research show that of the 25 agencies that responded, virtually all use both monthly activity reports and case clearance rates for productivity measures. These findings are shown in Figure 1, and the complete survey questions are included as an appendix. There were six agencies that listed additional forms of measurement, which included: attitude, yearly audits, subjective evaluations, contact of victim, and weekly meetings. One particular agency remarked that clearance rates will fluctuate, but if the officer (chosen through the selection process for detective) demonstrates a good attitude and work ethic, the rest was just a matter of teaching them the skills needed for becoming a good investigator. Another agency stipulated that in measuring individual productivity, the detective must maintain an average that is greater than the national average (21%). Yet another agency stated that they had used daily work logs to monitor productivity, but they stopped due to the large amount of time it took to continually document the work being done. Others stated that the differences in clearance rates depended on the nature of the cases. For instance property crimes versus crimes against persons are two varying cases, resulting in different clearance rates. When asked in the survey if the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) participated in any proactive measures with the community, the author received a 50/50 answer stating yes/no.

Figure 1 – Surveyed Agencies' Productivity Measurement



CONCLUSIONS

The problem with measuring detective productivity is that there are so many things to measure that are difficult to capture. Also, because productivity is not always apparent, it proposes the perception that detectives do not do anything. For this reason, the objective of this research was to find what has been used in the past, and present to quantify output, and discover any new trends that have been developed in order to find a more complete method that provides a better indication of productivity. The purpose of this project was to conduct research in an attempt to answer the questions regarding the problems associated with measuring the productivity of a detective and the misperceptions that often occur during the investigative process. It

was proposed that by using only clearance rates, most agencies use an inadequate course of action for measuring detective productivity.

There are few methods being used today to measurement a detective's productivity. It is concluded that none of the methods found through this research provide for an all-inclusive measurement. Past research has suggested that using clearance rates is a poor reflection of productivity. Instead, it is surmised that by using additional instruments (such as a case audit or monthly report) may provide for a more comprehensive measurement. There are also mechanisms built into some of the reporting software programs that may allow for some visibility into a detective's productivity. The survey used in this research demonstrates that a vast majority of the Texas agencies use both clearance rates and a monthly report of some type to measure a detective's output, which does not support the author's hypothesis. Obviously, agencies have recognized and adapted to better methods of measurement, but the methods still seem to be lacking. There may also be some conflicts with agencies who want to account for a detective's productivity, but not to the point of having the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) spend all their time trying to do so in lieu of focusing on investigations.

There was some difficulty in finding reference material for the subject of this research. All of the information found was pre 1990's with the exception of some fairly recent journals. The ultimate justice to the citizen for whom law enforcement serves should result in investigations that are brought to a thorough, factual, successful conclusion. Statistical driven dispositions only accomplishes a means of closing cases and do not represent the mission for which officers gave their oath to do. A thorough

analysis of productivity is entirely relevant to a police department who wants to be accountable. Additionally, the police department should implement a process, which captures statistics, maintains a thorough initial report writing process, and captures as many of the other tangibles and intangibles as completed by the investigative division as possible. This enables the detective to direct all of his/her time and resources toward the investigation of a crime and provide the proper mechanisms to measure the investigative process.

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APPENDIX/APPENDICES

LEMIT Survey CID Productivity Questionnaire

In order to fulfill the requirements of my Administrative Research Paper I need information to help me prove or disprove my research. I would appreciate your thoughts as it pertains to the Criminal Investigation Division for your agency. If you are interested in the results of my survey, please indicate such at the bottom of my survey and I will send you a copy.

Thanks for your assistance!

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**LEMIT Survey
CID Productivity Questionnaire**

Agency: _____

Number of Officers: _____

Contact Information: _____
Name Phone #

1. By what means does your agency measure individual Detective productivity?
(circle all that apply)

Case Clearance Rate Monthly Activity Reports Other (please explain below)

2. Is the Division or Unit as a whole measured by the same standard(s)? Yes or No
3. If your agency uses case clearance rates, what data is used to compute the percentage?

4. Has your agency tried other methods of measurement? Yes or No
5. If yes, what method(s) were used?

6. Who reviews the detective's case file?

7. Does the Criminal Investigation Division participate in any proactive measures with your community? (i.e.: training for businesses, speak to Home Owner Associations, etc...)
Yes or No

I appreciate your time and effort spent in completing my questionnaire. Please feel free to list any other information you feel may be pertinent to my research:
