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Case Clearance and Custodial Interrogation

Introduction

Although many studies have examined police patrol practices, research regarding investigative effectiveness is relatively sparse. The community policing model has required detectives to be more efficient since resources in the last ten years have been disproportionately directed to enhancing community interaction.

This *TELEMASP Bulletin* reports results of a survey regarding factors that influence case resolution as measured by the respondent's estimation of clearance probability. For the sake of simplicity, crime types were separated into two broad categories: violent and property crimes. Violent crime includes murder, aggravated assault, rape and robbery, and property crimes include burglary, theft and auto theft.

Thirty-six agencies responded to a survey designed to measure three primary influences pertaining to investigative caseloads. First, information was obtained regarding the significance of victim and offense characteristics on the probability of case clearance. Second, respondents were asked about the time detectives spent on various investigative activities, such as crime scene search and victim/witness contact. Third, the amount of evidence required from a custodial interrogation that would justify a case to be exceptionally cleared was sought.

Relevant Research

Clearance rates are defined as the ratio between the number of solved cases to the number of cases reported to the police within a given time period (Borg & Parker, 2001). Reported clearance rates vary dramatically. For example, in a study conducted in New York, Greenwood (1970) indicated that the average number of clearances per burglary arrest varied from one to 20 across the city's precincts, depending on how frequently clearances were credited on the basis of modus operandi only. Similarly, wide variations in clearance rates were found because of differences among departments in the strictness with which FBI "exceptional clearance" guidelines were followed (Chaiken, Greenwood & Petersilia, 1996).

The success of detective investigations is inevitably tied to the existence of evidence that links a suspect to a crime and to the investigator's assessment of that evidence. Previous studies have produced conflicting findings regarding the impact of victim and offense characteristics on the probability of case clearance for both violent and property crimes. For example, Regoeczi, Kennedy and Silverman (2000) reported that the use of a weapon, circumstances surrounding the offense, age, and the victim's gender were significant predictors of homicide clearance rates in New York State. Conversely, Puckett and Lundman (2003) indicated that similar characteristics had insignificant effects on the manageability of homicide caseloads. Puckett and Lundman also revealed that the visibility and emphasis placed on homicide clearance rates caused investigators to pursue these cases more vigorously, regardless of the amount of evidence present or the type of victim/offender relationship. In regard to property offenses, Cooney (1997) argued that clearance rates were affected more significantly by the willingness of victims, witnesses and area residents to provide information about a given case, particularly the offender's identity. Therefore, the question arises as to what types of evidence are viewed by detectives as more or less critical in relation to the type of crime being investigated and

the various investigative tactics that are most commonly employed in these situations.

In one of the first studies conducted on clearance rates and detective effort, Greenwood (1970) found that when a suspect could be named by the victim, the chances of an arrest were significantly greater compared to when only a description was provided, or even other evidence was available. His analysis showed that 9 percent of reported robberies resulted in an on-scene arrest while the remaining 91 percent were initially unsolved (Brandl & Frank, 1994). In situations where the offender was not apprehended, the victim was more likely to provide a description (67%) than the person's name (2%) (Brandl & Frank, 1994). Therefore, the relationship between the offender and the victim and the specificity of the victim about the offender's characteristics were seen as the most important factors related to case clearance.

In research conducted by the RAND Corporation in 1977, Chaiken, et al. (1996) found that many cases assigned to detectives received minimal or no investigative attention because caseloads had become unmanageable. During their analysis of the data, they found that some investigations involve a lot of detective effort but are never solved. Others result in clearance after a minimal amount of effort, but involve substantial post-investigation activities, such as pretrial conferences with prosecutors. Ultimately, their research sparked a debate among administrators and policymakers regarding the effectiveness of investigative units. The study cited the usefulness of case screening as an alternative, whereby investigators focused solely on cases where the offender's identity was known at the time of the initial investigation. Accordingly, they recommended that all other cases should be assigned to routine clerical processing. Subsequent studies have reaffirmed the findings drawn from the RAND study. For example, Hayes (1987) indicated that investigative effectiveness would not be unduly lessened if approximately one-half of the investigative effort were eliminated or shifted to more productive cases.

As more research developed on detective caseloads, more data began to surface that reaffirmed the conclusions drawn from the RAND study and earlier studies. Brandl and Frank (1994) observed data on cleared crimes including homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, theft, auto theft, and forgery/fraud from five police departments (Berkeley, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Miami, and Washington D.C.). This analysis provided insight as to the investigative method in which crimes were resolved. The authors found that about 22 percent of the cleared crimes resulted from an arrest made by a patrol officer at the crime scene (Brandl & Frank, 1994). Additionally, 44 percent of the crimes involved a situation where the offender was "known" at the time when the crime report was obtained, and the main job of the investigator was to locate the offender (Brandl & Frank, 1994). Basic routine procedures, which included showing photographic line-ups and obtaining informant tips, accounted for 34 percent of the cleared crimes (Brandl & Frank, 1994). On the other hand, only 3 percent of cleared crimes were due to unique investigative actions by detectives, such as preparation of investigative bulletins or matching latent prints to inked file prints.

Research has also addressed the variables that influence detective decision-making. In one study, Brandl (1993) examined offense and victim characteristics in burglary and robbery cases. Although property loss, victims' preferences and suspect information showed reliable effects in the statistical analysis, the effect of victim characteristics showed minimal effects. Brandl concluded that victim characteristics such as gender, race and employment status did not affect detectives' decisions, but that victims' income was influential (Brandl, 1993). Brandl concluded that detectives' decision processes were more a result of the factors surrounding the offense rather than victim characteristics. He cited factors such as the use of a weapon, degree of victim's injury and the value of stolen property as the most significant case characteristics influencing detectives. Interestingly, he noted that the value of the stolen property was the most important characteristic in determining the amount of time spent by detectives. Brandl also noted that it was not the seriousness of the incident but the certainty of case resolution, such as clearance by apprehension, which determined detective effort. This confirms, in part, the conclusions drawn by Eck (1979) in his study on detective effort and burglary and robbery investigations.

In many situations, however, the offender is not apprehended but the offense is cleared through other means. One investigative method that has not received an abundance of attention through research is the art of interviewing suspects regarding previously committed crimes.

Leo (1996) conducted research on the relationship between various tactics employed by detectives to elicit confessions during custodial interrogation. Specifically, this study indicated that detectives employed various psychological strategies in order to predispose the suspect to waive his or her *Miranda* warnings. Although Leo's study did not specifically concern the relationship between case clearance and custodial interrogations, it did reveal some interesting findings regarding the likelihood that a suspect would "talk" and whether formal charges were filed. For example, 69 percent (95 out of 137) of the suspects who waived their *Miranda* warnings were formally charged by the prosecutor.

Some research has been directed toward explaining the relationship between interviewer effectiveness and clearance

rates. For example, Brandl (1993) and Brandl and Frank (1994) found that 32 out of 317 (10%) active burglary cases were cleared during questioning about another crime.

More information is needed, however, regarding the amount of knowledge that an investigator must collect to successfully classify a case as cleared through exception according to departmental guidelines. Questions arise as to the type of evidence detectives need in order to clear a case, such as corroborating physical evidence, recollection of specific characteristics about the location of the offense or a simple admission to the crime.

Survey Results

Table 1 presents data on how respondents rate the importance of certain variables in relationship to the probability of case clearance for each of the two broad categories of offenses—property and violent. Each variable was rated as being a critical factor, very important, moderately important or having little importance.

Violent offenses. For violent offenses, the most significant factor affecting case clearance as perceived by respondents is whether the suspect's name and description was provided during the initial investigation (53% of respondents rating it as 'critical'). This finding confirms the results produced in previous research (Greenwood, 1970) regarding the relationship between case clearance and the victim's knowledge about the perpetrator's identity. The second most critical factor reported was the possibility of DNA extraction or the collection of fingerprint evidence (50% critical). Whether the victim and offender had a previous relationship and the presence of a witness providing information beyond the suspect's name or vehicle description were equally as important (36%). Interestingly, only eight respondents (22%) stated that injury to the victim was a critical factor, which supports the findings of Brandl (1993) in his study of detective caseloads and the correlation between victim injury and detective effort. Similarly, only 25 percent of respondents viewed the presence of a weapon discovered at the crime scene as being a critical factor to case clearance. However, most respondents viewed these variables as being either moderate or very important factors that determine case clearance probability. Finally, most respondents (67%) said that a vehicle's license plate number obtained at the crime scene was at least 'very important' in terms of case clearance.

The value of property loss was considered to be the least important factor affecting the probability of case clearance for violent offenses. Bynum, Cordner and Greene (1982) drew similar conclusions regarding the relationship between this variable and its significance in terms of clearance probability, but Brandl (1993) concluded that such information was of particular importance to detectives during burglary investigations. Next to property value, distinct modus operandi was considered to be the next "least important factor" determining clearance probability for violent offenses. In terms of violent crimes, most respondents viewed injury as being either critical or very important (58%).

Property offenses. In terms of property crime, most respondents (50%) felt that the suspect's name and description obtained during the initial investigation was of critical importance in determining case clearance probability. The second most significant factor was whether a distinct modus operandi could be determined during the follow-up investigation. This contrasts with the relatively low rating given modus operandi for violent crimes. Two other variables accounted for a significant percentage of responses rated "critical"—the victim's desire for investigative follow-up (30%) and whether a victim could provide information beyond the suspect's name or vehicle description (30%) (i.e., local hangouts or known accomplices). Interestingly, most respondents perceived the value of property loss to be either very important (39%) or moderately important (30%). Whether a vehicle license plate number was obtained during the initial investigation was considered to be at least very important (86%) in clearing property crime cases. Ironically, this variable was of equal importance in both types of cases which tends to support the fact that detectives perceive this information to be valuable in clearing cases, despite the proportion of invalid plate numbers that are obtained during initial investigations.

The survey results did not confirm any one single variable as having an "insignificant" effect on property crime investigations. However, a significant portion of respondents (42%) perceived that a physical description of the suspect with no name provided during the initial investigation was of moderate importance. Overall, the results indicate that most respondents view these variables as being either moderately or very important to clearance probability.

Table 2 presents the mean rating for each variable in terms of the respondent's perception of importance for clearance probability (critical=5). Several factors should be noted regarding these data in terms of violent offenses. First, the variable, "name and description of a suspect obtained during the initial investigation" had a mean of 4.47 out of 5.0. Second, "extractability of DNA evidence" had a mean of 4.44, and third, the variable, "victim/offender relationship" had a mean of 4.19. Interestingly, seven out of 12 variables had means over 4.0, which indicated that respondents perceived them as being at least "very important." Similarly, the remaining five variables all had means exceeding 3.0, or "moderately important."

Table 1

Importance Level of Clearing Case by Arrest or Exception
Rank Ordered by Percent Rating Factor 'Critical'

		Critical	Very Important	Moderate	Little	NA
1.	**Name and description of suspect obtained during initial investigation**					
	Violent	19	16	-	1	-
	Property	18	14	3	1	-
2.	**Extractability of DNA or fingerprint evidence**					
	Violent	18	16	2	-	-
	Property	9	18	6	3	-
3.	**Victim's desire for investigative follow-up**					
	Violent	14	12	7	3	-
	Property	11	13	10	2	-
4.	**Presence of a witness providing information beyond the suspect's name or vehicle description**					
	Violent	13	22	1	-	-
	Property	11	20	4	-	1
5.	**Victim/offender relationship**					
	Violent	13	18	4	1	-
	Property	7	11	14	4	-
6.	**Weapon used/present at crime scene**					
	Violent	9	14	13	-	-
	Property	4	13	14	3	2
7.	**Victim injured as a result of crime**					
	Violent	8	13	10	5	-
	Property	6	8	12	4	6
8.	**Presence of other significant physical evidence**					
	Violent	8	20	8	-	-
	Property	4	22	8	2	-
9.	**Vehicle license plate number obtained**					
	Violent	7	24	4	1	-
	Property	7	24	-	5	-
10.	**Physical description of suspect obtained during initial investigation by patrol officer, but no name provided**					
	Violent	3	20	11	2	-
	Property	3	15	15	3	-
11.	**Distinct modus operandi**					
	Violent	2	16	16	2	-
	Property	13	18	2	2	2
12.	**Value of property loss**					
	Violent	-	1	12	14	9
	Property	3	14	11	5	3

Table 2

Mean Clearance Relevance Ratings by Victim/Offense Variables

		Mean	
		Violent	**Property**
1.	Name and description of suspect obtained during initial investigation	4.47	4.36
2.	Extractability of DNA or fingerprint evidence	4.44	3.91
3.	Presence of a witness providing information beyond the suspect's name or vehicle description	4.33	4.63
4.	Victim/offender relationship	4.19	2.58
5.	Vehicle license plate number obtained	4.02	4.05
6.	Victim's desire for investigative follow-up	4.02	3.92
7.	Presence of other significant physical evidence	4.00	3.72
8.	Weapon used/present at crime scene	3.89	3.46
9.	Physical description of suspect obtained during initial investigation by patrol officer, but no name provided	3.67	3.50
10.	Victim was injured as a result of crime	3.67	3.31
11.	Value of property loss	3.31	2.17
12.	Distinct modus operandi	3.50	3.19

The means for each of the variables in relation to property crimes vary more dramatically. Interestingly, the value of property loss had the lowest mean (2.17) of the 12 variables. Having the highest mean was whether a witness was present and provided information beyond the suspect's name or vehicle description, a variable indicating that a strong degree of evidence was present. This finding supports the conclusions drawn by Eck (1979) in his study of detective effort and strength of evidence. Furthermore, when these variables are analyzed simultaneously, it appears that detectives are primarily concerned with case solvability regardless of the monetary value associated with the stolen property.

Table 3 displays the range, mean and standard deviation regarding the amount of time detectives spend during follow-up investigations. This information was collected for four case types—in cases with strong and weak evidence present for either property or violent crime investigations. Respondents were asked to rate the amount of time they would spend in 15-minute intervals for eight investigative tactics. They included victim/witness contact, crime scene search, prosecutorial conferences, the use of photo-lineups, show-ups and mug books, inquiry within agency, AFIS check, records search, and inquiry to another agency.

Violent crimes/strong evidence. When strong evidence is present in violent crime cases, respondents reported a high mean value of 5.5 hours conducting victim and witness contacts. They engaged from one to 40 hours in these activities with an associated standard deviation of 8.67. The next most time-consuming activity was crime scene searches, in which the mean value was 4.82 hours spent per case. This variable had a range from two to 12 hours and a standard deviation of 3.15 hours. Furthermore, while detectives spent more time investigating serious violent offenses, the distribution of reported time spent was greater for crimes with weak as opposed to strong evidence. Prosecutorial conferences were the third most frequently employed investigative tactic with a reported mean of 2.56 hours. This variable had a range from zero to 12 hours and a standard deviation of 3.00 hours. That respondents reported that victim and witness contacts, crime scene searches and prosecutorial conferences were of comparable importance in both weak and strong cases, suggests the importance of physical evidence and eyewitness testimony in clearing violent crimes.

The same two variables that were of little importance to respondents in violent cases with weak evidence were also found to be of little value in cases with strong evidence. The variables, inquiry to another agency had a mean value of 1.29 hours per case, while inquiry within agency had a mean value of 1.33 hours. When viewed in conjunction with strong evidence crimes, this suggests at least two possibilities concerning these investigative measures. First, respondents may feel that only a small amount of time is needed to gain information about ongoing cases from their own and surrounding agencies. Second, it is possible that respondents perceive this information as being relatively unimportant in relation to the other seven types of tactics included in the survey.

Violent crimes/weak evidence. For violent crimes with weak evidence present, on average, respondents reported spending 5.29 hours performing victim/witness contacts in order to clear cases. Willman and Snortum (1984) also found that this was a tactic frequently employed by detectives in cases with little or no initial suspect information. The current survey reported a range from one-half to 72 hours of investigative follow-up in typical cases with "weak" evidence present. Accordingly, this variable showed the highest standard deviation (12.14). For the variable "crime scene search," respondents reported a mean average of 4.16 hours spent per case. Although they might spend a substantial amount of time conducting a crime scene search, it is unlikely that this activity alone results in a case being cleared. However, it is important to note that respondents emphasized the importance of a thorough crime scene search as a decisive factor for which the other variables are directly related. The third most time-consuming measure according to mean value employed by detectives was the use of photo-lineups, show-ups and mug books as a means to identify criminals (2.16 hours). This variable had a range from zero to 12 hours and a standard deviation of 1.94 hours. Because this variable is associated with victim and witness contacts, it demonstrates the utility of such resources and the relative weight placed on eye-witness statements in determining potential suspects. Conversely, respondents reported that, on average, they spent the fewest hours conducting inquiries within their own agency (1.24) and among other agencies (1.31) when investigating violent crimes with weak evidence.

Property crime/strong evidence. Respondents reported similar results in property crime cases with strong evidence present. The mean value for victim/witness contacts was reported as 1.45 hours with a related range from .25 to 8 hours and a standard deviation of 1.26 hours. The second most time-consuming activity was for "crime scene search," which had a reported mean of 1.31 hours of time allocated by detectives. For this variable, the range was .5 to 5 hours, while the standard deviation was calculated at .85 hours. The next highest mean value (1.09 hours per case) was reported for "prosecutorial conference."

Two investigative activities, "records search," and "inquiry to another agency," had respective mean values of .78 and .82 hours per case and were reported by respondents as occupying the least amount of time in property investigations with strong evidence present. Respective ranges and standard deviations for these variables are, for all intents and purposes, functionally equivalent.

Table 3

Time Spent During Follow-up Investigations with Strong Versus Weak Evidence

Investigative Tactic	Range		Mean		Standard Deviation	
	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Victim/witness contact						
Violent	1 to 40	.5 to 72	5.50	5.29	8.67	12.14
Property	25 to 8	.25 to 4	1.45	1.15	1.26	.94
Crime scene search						
Violent	2 to 12	0 to 21	4.82	4.16	3.15	4.52
Property	.5 to 5	0 to 6	1.31	1.10	.85	1.09
Prosecutorial conferences						
Violent	0 to 12	0 to 12	2.56	1.88	3.00	2.48
Property	0 to 5	0 to 2.5	1.09	.80	.96	.66
Photo line-ups, show-ups and mug books						
Violent	0 to 10	0 to 12	2.05	2.16	1.94	2.66
Property	0 to 2.5	0 to 3	1.18	.95	.61	.71
Inquiry within agency						
Violent	0 to 8	.25 to 4	1.33	1.24	1.34	1.00
Property	0 to 2	0 to 2	.68	.72	.45	.50
AFIS check						
Violent	0 to 4	0 to 4	1.43	1.33	1.10	1.13
Property	.25 to 24	0 to 4	1.88	.92	3.92	.87
Records search						
Violent	.25 to 10	.25 to 8	1.79	1.83	1.88	1.92
Property	.25 to 2	0 to 3.5	.78	.86	.43	.69
Inquiry to another agency						
Violent	.25 to 2.25	0 to 8	1.29	1.31	1.03	1.42
Property	0 to 8	0 to 3	.82	.80	.54	.67

In terms of total time spent for all types of cases, the mean values were summed so that differences among each of the four categories of offenses could be compared. Not surprisingly, detectives spent the most time on violent offenses with strong evidence present, with a total of 20.77 average hours devoted to a typical case. In cases with weak evidence, however, respondents reported a total of 19.20 hours of investigative effort per offense. Therefore, while violent offenses with strong evidence receive more investigative attention, those with weak evidence receive only about an hour and a half less time per case. Additionally, in property crime cases with strong evidence present, respondents reported an average mean value of 8.55 hours of time per investigation. The average amount of time spent for cases with weak evidence present was reported as 7.3 hours, which is a relatively small difference between the two types of cases.

Property crime/weak evidence. Survey results indicated that in property crime cases with both weak and strong evidence present, there were few dissimilarities in the time spent for the various investigative measures. In cases with weak evidence present, the highest mean value as reported by respondents was for the variable "victim/witness contact," with an average of 1.15 hours spent for this activity. This variable had a range of .25 to four hours and a standard deviation of 1.26 hours. The second most time-consuming tactic employed in property crimes with weak evidence was crime scene searches. Respondents reported a mean value of 1.10 hours devoted to this investigative measure, while the associated range was anywhere from zero to six hours with a standard deviation of .85 hours per case. For the third highest mean value, respondents reported an average of .95 hours of time allocated to "photo-line ups, show-ups and mug books." The least time-consuming activity reported in property crime cases with weak evidence present was for the variable, "inquiry within agency." Respondents reported a mean of .72 hours of investigative time per case, while the associated range was zero to two hours and the standard deviation equal to .45 hours.

Next, this survey accumulated data regarding the importance of certain information gathered through custodial interrogation to clear violent and property crimes according to clearance-by-exception departmental guidelines. Respondents were asked to rate five categories of crime scene information: physical evidence of offender present at scene such as stolen property or fingerprints, offender's knowledge of property stolen and/or victim characteristics, offender's knowledge of offense location, his or her simple acknowledgment of the commission of the offense, and offender's description of offense premises. These categories of evidence were rated according to their effect upon exceptional clearance and ranked on a 1-5 scale: must exist always or most of the time, usually must exist, fairly important to exist, must exist sometimes, and never has to exist in order to clear the case by exception.

Table 4 lists the data generated by the surveyed respondents. Surprisingly, the mean values for each category of evidence were ranked similarly for both property and violent offenses. Repondents reported a high mean of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 1.02 in violent cases where physical evidence is present at the scene linking the offender to the crime. Twelve respondents said that it was fairly important for such information to exist before they could clear the case. The offender's knowledge of the property stolen and/or victim characteristics had a mean value of 3.37 and a standard deviation of .97, which was ranked as the second most critical category of evidence needed to be present during an admission. Sixteen of 36 respondents reported that before considering the case cleared, it was fairly important for the offender to reveal knowledge during a custodial interrogation of the property stolen and/or victim characteristics. With a mean of 3.33, most respondents (12) reported that an offender's knowledge of the offense location usually must exist in order to clear a case based on an offender's admission to the crime. Of similar importance was the simple acknowledgment of the commission of the offense. Moreover, 13 respondents said that it was fairly important for this to exist before categorizing a case as cleared by exception. The mean value for this category was 3.25 and its associated standard deviation was .97. The least critical category of evidence was reported to be the offender's description of the premises where the crime transpired. Seventeen respondents said that it was fairly important for this information to exist in the offender's admission before clearing the crime. Accordingly, the mean for this category of evidence was 2.92, while the standard deviation was 1.02, a significant drop in the level of significance from the previous three categories of evidence discussed.

Similarly, 16 respondents said that physical evidence of the offender left at the crime scene, such as stolen property, fingerprints or any other form of tangible proof that links a suspect to a crime usually must exist before clearing the crime by exception. Accordingly, this category had a high mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of .95, which indicates the weight this information carries as a product of custodial interrogations. Thirteen respondents reported that usually an offender's knowledge of the offense location must exist before it can be classified as cleared through exception. The relative mean for this category was 3.3 and its standard deviation was 1.09. A total of 18 respondents reported that an existence of the offender's knowledge of the property stolen and/or victim characteristics was fairly important to clearing the crime based on interrogation. Also, it should be noted that the mean for this category was 3.25 with a standard deviation of 1.02. Having a mean of 3.08 and a standard deviation of 1.05, 13 indicated that the offender's

Table 4

Importance of Offender Admission to Evidence Existence

	Mean	SD*	Always	Usually	Fairly Important	Sometimes	Never
Physical evidence present at scene							
Violent	3.75	1.02	10	11	12	2	1
Property	3.51	.95	4	16	10	4	1
Knowledge of property stolen and/or victim characteristics							
Violent	3.37	.97	5	9	16	4	1
Property	3.25	1.02	6	5	18	6	1
Knowledge of offense location							
Violent	3.33	1.10	5	12	11	6	2
Property	3.30	1.09	4	13	12	4	3
Acknowledgement of commission of the offense							
Violent	3.25	.97	3	12	13	7	1
Property	3.08	1.05	2	13	9	10	2
Description of premises							
Violent	2.92	1.02	3	5	17	8	3
Property	2.94	1.10	3	7	14	7	4

*SD=Standard Deviation

simple acknowledgment of the offense must exist during the custodial interrogation before departmental standards regarding exceptional clearance would be satisfied. And finally, 14 respondents reported that the least important category of evidence to case clearance was the offender's description of the offense premises; hence, the mean value for this type of evidence was 2.94 with a standard deviation of 1.10.

Conclusion

The results of this survey provide useful knowledge regarding the relationship between detective productivity, custodial interrogation, and clearance rates. In terms of victim and offense characteristics, these data confirm results from previous studies as well as provide new insight to practitioners in the field.

First, this study confirmed that offense characteristics receive more investigative attention than victim characteristics in terms of clearing cases (Brandl, 1993). For violent offenses, the victim's knowledge about the offender's identity as well as the potential for DNA and fingerprint collection were perceived to be the most influential factors leading to case clearance. The value of property loss was the least important variable affecting clearance probability in violent cases. For property offenses, respondents viewed that a name and description provided during the initial investigation was the most essential factor in resolving a case through exception. Also, "distinct modus operandi" was perceived to be of critical importance in clearing cases. The fact that eyewitness information and the presence of a distinct modus operandi receive the most investigative resources suggests that detectives are focused more on offense characteristics rather than details surrounding the victim.

In addition, detective effort has been called into question in terms of being impractical. Although previous research (Chaiken, Greenwood & Petersilia, 1996) has cited the patrol officer's crime scene investigation as the most important factor to case clearance, it is important to consider that they are also the first to be exposed to the crime scene itself. A few studies (Brandl & Frank, 1994; Simms & Petersen, 1989) have indicated that follow-up investigations are more useful in some crimes than others. For example, Regoeczi (1994) concluded that witnesses were more likely to come forward in family dispute homicides as opposed to predatory crimes or residential property crimes. Therefore, strategies that focus on interviewing witnesses and victims are likely to be the most useful to clearing such cases. The results of this study agree—on average, detectives spend most of their time conducting interviews with victims and witnesses.

In terms of investigative time spent in cases with both strong and weak evidence present, there is a noticeable trend. Activities directed toward victim and witness contacts and crime scene searches receive more investigative resources in both property and violent crimes. Respondents reported that records searches, AFIS checks and, most of all, inquiries about the crime within and outside their agency were not as useful as activities centering on witness interviewing and crime scene searches. Simms and Petersen (1989) produced a similar finding in their examination of detective effort and the probability of case clearance. They concluded that learning activities, such as crime scene searches, were more important than sensing practices, defined as routine records checks or "profiling" tactics designed to identify details about organized crime or people routinely involved in crime.

Another important idea should be noted concerning the comparison between the amount of time devoted by detectives to cases with different amounts of evidence present. After summing the mean values for each investigative tactic for the four types of cases, there was a relatively small difference between the amount of time spent in weak and strong cases. Only about an hour and a half of investigative manpower separated these cases. Detectives spent more time, however, investigating strong as opposed to weak cases. This finding confirms, to some extent, the conclusions drawn by Eck (1979) regarding the curvilinear relationship between evidence strength and investigative effort. Eck stated that crimes with moderately strong evidence received more attention than cases with weak or strong evidence. Although no data were collected in the present survey regarding cases with moderate evidence present, the results show that detectives pursue weak and strong cases to a similar extent.

Finally, data regarding the relationship between the existence of certain types of information and the department's standard for clearing cases offers insight into the relative weight these factors have in clearing crimes through exception. Respondents reported that corroborating physical evidence accompanying an offender's admission to a crime was most likely to result in satisfying departmental standard exceptional clearance guidelines. Conversely, when the offender's admission is limited only to a description of the premises, exceptional clearance guidelines were least likely to be satisfied. According to respondents, when offenders are able to produce knowledge regarding stolen property and the location of offense and/or victim characteristics, in addition to their admission, the case is more likely to be cleared. Previous research regarding the relationship between custodial interrogation and case clearance has reported that as much as 37% of "no-identification" cases were cleared through interviews with offenders arrested on unrelated crimes or were only suspects to crimes (Willman & Snortum, 1984). Although existing research regarding the relationship between the specific contribution of custodial interrogation and case clearance is relatively scant, it is reasonable to assume that this investigative measure contributes significantly to clearance probability.

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This is the second of a three-part series on the investigative function. Part III will examine caseloads.

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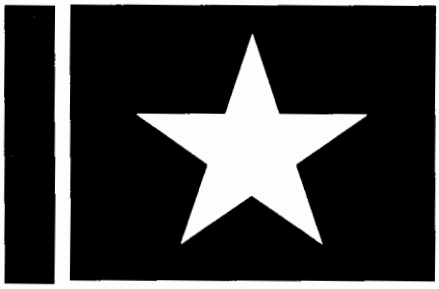

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