

Criminal Investigations Division Research Portfolio

Haven L. Habhab

Old Dominion University

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UIN: 01237724

Dr. Katie Slauson-Blevins

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Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Killeen Police Department would benefit tremendously from the addition of a crime scene unit. Upon the start of my internship, I have only heard of some small city police departments not having a crime scene unit. The Killeen Police Department is one of those departments however Killeen, Texas is not a small city. Killeen, Texas is estimated to have a population of over 160,000 and it is a growing city. Not only is Killeen, Texas a midsize city it also is a city with a high crime rate. As of 2024, Killeen has a violent crime rate of “3.59 per 1,000 residents,” placing it as the ‘10th most dangerous city in the state of Texas’ (Most Dangerous Cities, 2024). One of the biggest reasons the department has not implemented a crime scene unit is the additional costs associated with it and concerns with the budget. However, a cost-benefit analysis can argue a crime scene unit would be a great addition to the department. Commander Anthony Lourence of the Criminal Investigation Division provided me with the expected annual salaries for a two-person crime scene unit. A Crime Scene Unit Supervisor is predicted to have a full-time salary of \$54,924 with the addition of benefits, a calculated annual estimate of \$73,474 which is a pay grade of 27. A Crime Scene Technician is predicted to have a full-time salary of \$45,186 with the addition of benefits, a calculated annual estimate of \$61,532 which is a pay grade of 23. Detective Daniel Hertzog is a part of the Robbery/Homicide Unit at the Killeen Police Department. I asked him the following question, “Do you believe the department or you would benefit from having a crime scene unit? If so, why?” He stated, “The average overtime rate for a sworn Detective at the Killeen Police Department is \$55/hour. Non-sworn positions for Crime Scene Investigators average overtime rate is \$33/hour. That’s a savings of \$22/hour, which

would save the salary of a full-time Crime Scene Technician” (D. Hertzog, Personal Communication, July 11, 2024). If one detective did not work overtime it would substitute for the salary of someone in the crime scene unit. Detectives at the Killeen Police Department work 7:00 am- 5:00 pm 4 days a week. They work either Monday through Thursday or Tuesday through Friday. Crimes don’t follow the work schedule and are committed 24 hours a week Monday- Sunday. Detectives are constantly having to come in and work overtime. The amount of hours they work overtime would be reduced if they didn’t have to spend a large amount of time on forensics at a crime scene.

During my internship, I was able to respond to active crime scenes and death investigations. I quickly realized how time-consuming it was for a detective to also do the crime scene forensics on top of the crime scene investigation. I was a little confused at first when I responded to a shooting and the first thing the detectives did was gather the forensics. I was always taught how important the first couple hours are for an investigation of a crime scene. Prolonging the investigation to gather forensics can make the investigation more tedious for the detectives. It can give the suspects or witnesses the advantage of time. Detective Alan Smith is a part of the Robbery/Homicide unit at the Killeen Police Department. I asked him the following question, “Do you believe the department or you would benefit from having a crime scene unit? If so, why?” He stated, “Most of the time that we spend on a scene varies from a few hours up to 18 hrs. plus. That is critical time lost in the first 48 hrs that is detrimental to an investigation. If we have the time to get away from the crime scene, we can focus on interviews, investigative leads, and then going right after the suspect (s)” (A. Smith, Personal Communication, July 8, 2024). Additionally, I asked Detective Smith, “Could you share a personal example of a situation where the department required a crime scene unit.” He mentioned one of his cases, “We had a Murder a

few months back at a local nightclub. While on the scene, a fight broke out between two women, and an innocent bystander was shot and killed. We were able to gather video of the incident and who we determined to be involved. While on scene, we had to interview several witnesses, take digital photos, collect, and mark every piece of evidence, and then conduct interviews while the suspect was free. We lost time in using our social media skills, writing warrants that could have sped up the process to get the suspect in custody.” (A. Smith, Personal Communication, July 8, 2024)

While being in a time crunch it is important the Killeen Detectives do a thorough and precise job, “Documentation of the scene is one of the most important actions of the investigative group, which performs the examination of the scene” (Arifi, (2015). The detectives are extremely intelligent and are very good at their job but they are human and taking on two of the most important parts of the crime scene (forensics, and investigations) can increase error. Especially in a city with a large population and high crime rate, the detectives are constantly at work. It is not like the detectives are only doing this once in a month, it is consistently. When talking about a crime scene unit in the examination of Knoxville's Police Department, “these units became responsible for the documentation, collection, and preservation of evidence that would later make or break a criminal case in the courtroom” (Rausch, 2018).

In addition to Detective Hertzog’s response to the question, “Do you believe the department or you would benefit from having a crime scene unit? If so, why?” He also talks about the importance of crime scene training, “While we do attend training and have knowledge on how to properly process crime scenes, we have to divide our training with other topics such as search warrants, technological advancements, interview techniques, court presentation, etc. Having a dedicated crime scene unit would allow them to focus solely on evidence collection techniques

and procedures and would improve the quality of crime scene processing” (D. Hertzog, Personal Communication, July 11, 2024).

The Detectives training at the Killeen Police Department is very diverse but it is important to solely designate forensics to a crime scene unit so the training is more intensive on forensics.

The *International Journal of Science and Research* concludes, “Due to lack of scientific knowledge of the investigator regarding the proper collection, preservation, storage, and transportation of crime scene evidence, failure to obtain appropriate analysis results and diminish its value before the court of law” (Singh, 2021). Having a crime scene unit will not only help the detectives but it will also help the department increase their solved case ratio and limit the chances of a case not having enough evidence for the case to be taken on and prosecuted. Some of the duties a crime scene unit would be fully trained in are, “photographs of places in which crimes had occurred.. plaster casts of footwear impressions left in soil or other soft surfaces; ‘lifts’ made from fingerprints left on surfaces which had been first powdered to develop the features of the mark before being transferred to an adhesive acetate and then backed by another acetate; footwear ‘lifts’ made by powdering hard surfaces on which the impressions of footwear marks are already faintly visible to the naked eye, and then collecting such enhanced marks through the use of acetate adhesive or Electrostatic Lifting Devices; fibers from clothing or other textiles thought to be relevant to actions or persons at the scene” (Williams, 2012). These are just some of the duties a crime scene unit would conduct. They are also the duties detectives at the Killeen Police Department are expected to conduct at some crime scenes. A lot of these duties are long and tedious, taking valuable time away from starting the crime scene investigations. This is time and skill (if not done precisely) that can diminish the value of the case.

The cost-benefit analysis recommends the implementation of a crime scene unit as the benefits outweigh the costs. Around \$22 would be saved every hour if someone from the crime scene unit was reporting over time compared to a detective. With a crime scene unit, the first critical hour(s) would not be lost in the investigation. The crime scene unit can help prevent any diminishing value in the case. A crime scene unit will also have more specific in-depth training in crime scene forensics. This will improve the collection of forensics and decrease the possibility of a case not being taken due to lack of evidence.

References

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