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Criminality of Police Officers

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Criminality of Police Officers

Philip M. Stinson, Sr.
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

American Society of Criminology
Los Angeles, California
November 1, 2006
The Literature: What is known about police criminality?

• Independent Commission Reports:
  – Knapp Commission (1972)
  – Mollen Commission (1994)

• Newspaper Investigative Reporting:
  – New York Times (1970s)
  – Boston Globe (1980s)
  – Philadelphia Inquirer (1990s and 2006)

• Research in Criminology / Social Sciences:
  – Fallen Blue Knights: Controlling Police Corruption (Ivkovic, 2005)
  – Bad Cops: A Study of Career-Ending Misconduct Among New NYPD Officers (Fyfe and Kane, 2006)
Methodology

• Content analysis of newspaper articles about sworn law enforcement officers in the US arrested during the 18 month period from January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006.
• Convenience sampling primarily using Google News search engine automated daily searches of newspapers published on the Internet.
• Articles were cataloged, coded, and entered into SPSS.
• Coded variables included gender, age, years of service, duty status at time of offense, state, department type and size, victim demographic information, and 64 offense categories (mostly NIBRS categories).
• SPSS runs for frequencies and correlations.
Google News Search Engine
Automated Daily Search Terms

- “deputy was arrested”
- “deputy was charged”
- “deputy was convicted”
- “deputy was indicted”
- “detective was …”
- “detectives were …”
- “officer …”
- “officer was …”

- “police chief was …”
- “police officers were …”
- sheriff “was …”
- “trooper was …”
- police “caption was …”
- police “lieutenant was …”
- police “officer is …”
- police “officer was …”
- police “sergeant was”
Sample

- 695 arrests of 657 individual sworn law enforcement officers (38 of the cases represent officers who were arrested more than once).
- Each one of the 695 arrests is treated as a case.
- These officers were/are employed by 449 agencies (primary state, sheriff, county police, municipal police, special police, and tribal police agencies) in 49 states and DC. Wyoming is not represented in the sample.
- All of the officers were employed as sworn law enforcement officers at the time of commission of the offense for which they were arrested.
## Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>Min/Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>36.43</td>
<td>8.084</td>
<td>20-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs Service</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td>7.434</td>
<td>0-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>695</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>(95.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Frequency of Criminal Offenses for Sworn Officers Arrested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All other offenses (unclassified)</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving under the influence</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple assault</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible fondling</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible rape</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug / narcotic violation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons law violation</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other larceny</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor law violation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory rape</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False report / statement</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography / obscene material</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sex crime</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcible sodomy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
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</table>

N = 695
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Description</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>murder &amp; non-negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extortion / blackmail</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bribery</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kidnapping / abduction</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on-line solicitation of a child</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disorderly conduct</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indecent exposure</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil rights violation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence: destroying / tampering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>false pretenses/swindle/confidence game</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>robbery</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burglary / breaking and entering</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destruction / damage / vandalism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexual assault with an object</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gambling: operating / promoting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impersonation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theft from building</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restraining order violation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drunkenness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embezzlement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prostitution</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counterfeiting / forgery</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoplifting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stolen property offenses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trespass of real property</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug equipment violation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credit card / atm fraud</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family offense, non-violent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liquor low violation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pocket-picking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theft from motor vehicle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theft of motor vehicle parts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wire fraud</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wiretapping, illegal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years of Service at Arrest: Forcible Rape, Sodomy & Fondling

![Bar chart showing years of service at arrest for forcible rape, sodomy, and fondling.]
Years of Service at Arrest: DUI and Drug Offenses

- **DUI / DWI (n = 56)**
- **Drug / Narcotic Offenses (n = 28)**
Years of Service at Arrest: Disorderly Conduct, Vandalism & Weapons Law Violations

Years of Service at Arrest

- Disorderly Conduct (n = 8)
- Vandalism / Destruction of Property (n = 7)
- Weapons Law Violations (n = 21)
Age of Officer at Arrest: Extortion, Bribery & Embezzlement

- Extortion / Blackmail (n = 16)
- Bribery (n = 16)
- Embezzlement (n = 5)
Age of Officer at Arrest: False Reports, Obstructing Justice & Destroying/Tampering with Evidence

- False Report / Statement (n = 19)
- Obstructing Justice (n = 22)
- Destroying / Tampering Evidence (n = 9)
Gender: Officers charged with Aggravated Assault

Aggravated Assault (n = 61)

- 8% Female Officers
- 92% Male Officers
Gender: Officers charged with Burglary

Burglary / Breaking & Enter (n = 10)

- Female Officers: 80%
- Male Officers: 20%

- Female Officers
- Male Officers
Gender:
Officers charged with Shoplifting

Shoplifting (n = 4)

50%

Female Officers
Male Officers
On-Duty Crimes:
Gambling: Operating / Promoting

Gambling: Operating / Promotion (n = 8)

38% On-Duty
62% Off-Duty
On-Duty Crimes:
Drug / Narcotic Offenses

Drug / Narcotic Violations (n = 32)

- On-Duty: 44%
- Off-Duty: 56%
On-Duty Crimes:
Forcible Rape

Forcible Rape (n = 39)

- On-Duty: 44%
- Off-Duty: 56%
On-Duty Crimes:
Driving Under the Influence

DUI / DWI (n = 94)

9% On-Duty
91% Off-Duty
Agency Type: Driving Under the Influence

DUI / DWI (n = 95)

- Primary State Police Agencies: 76%
- Sheriff’s Departments: 16%
- County Police Departments: 3%
- Municipal Police Departments: 1%
- Special Police Departments: 1%
- Tribal Police Departments: 1%
Agency Type: Kidnapping / Abduction

Kidnapping / Abduction (n = 18)

- Primary State Police Agencies: 89%
- Sheriffs Departments: 11%
Agency Type: Arson

Arson (n = 5)

- 80% Primary State Police Agencies
- 20% Sheriff's Departments
- County Police Departments
- Municipal Police Departments
- Special Police Departments
- Tribal Police Departments
Agency Type: Extortion / Blackmail

Extortion / Blackmail (n = 21)

- Primary State Police Agencies: 61%
- Sheriff's Departments: 14%
- County Police Departments: 10%
- Municipal Police Departments: 10%
- Special Police Departments: 5%
- Tribal Police Departments: 10%
# of Sworn Personnel in Agency: Burglary & Robbery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Sworn Personnel in Agency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sworn</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 Sworn</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 Sworn</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24 Sworn</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49 Sworn</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99 Sworn</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-249 Sworn</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-499 Sworn</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-999 Sworn</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000+ Sworn</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**# of Sworn Personnel in Agency**

- **Burglary / Breaking & Entering (n = 10)**
- **Robbery (n = 11)**
# of Sworn Personnel in Agency: Federal Civil Rights Violations

- 0 Sworn
- 5 Sworn
- 10 Sworn
- 20 Sworn
- 30 Sworn
- 40 Sworn
- 50 Sworn
- 2 Sworn
- 4 Sworn
- 5-9 Sworn
- 10-24 Sworn
- 25-49 Sworn
- 50-99 Sworn
- 100-249 Sworn
- 250-499 Sworn
- 500-999 Sworn
- 1000+ Sworn

Percentage

Civil Rights Violations (n = 11)
Sworn Officers Arrested for Federal Civil Rights Violations

n = 11

45.5%

9.1%

9.1%

9.1%

18.2%

9.1%

9.1%

9.1%

9.1%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Driving Under the Influence

n = 95

5.3%

8.4%

6.3%

24.2%

21.1%

13.7%

6.3%

10.5%

4.2%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Drug / Narcotic Offenses

n = 38

18.4%
5.3%
13.2%
2.6%
23.7%
15.8%
15.8%
2.6%
2.6%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Forcible Fondling

n = 59

11.9%
32.2%
25.4%
15.3%
3.4%
5.1%
3.4%
11.9%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Statutory Rape

n = 33

15.2%

33.3%

30.3%

6.1%

15.2%

3.0%

3.0%

6.1%

3.0%

3.0%

6.1%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Extortion / Blackmail

n = 21

9.5%
4.8%
61.9%
14.3%
9.5%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Burglary / Breaking & Entering

n = 10

10%

10%

10%

10%

10%

10%

10%

10%

30%

10%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Kidnapping / Abduction

n = 18

50%

22.2%

11.1%

5.6%

5.6%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Robbery

n = 11

36.4% 9.1% 9.1%

9.1% 9.1%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Murder & Non-Negligent Manslaughter

n = 22

- 13.6%
- 4.5%
- 31.8%
- 22.7%
- 9.1%
- 9.1%
- 9.1%
- 13.6%
- 9.1%
- 9.1%

Map showing the distribution of sworn officers arrested for murder and non-negligent manslaughter across different regions of the United States.
Recommendations for Future Research

• Continue data collection for an additional 18 months
  – January, 2005 – December, 2007 (36 months total)
  – Will the patterns hold with more cases?
  – Analyze data on victims

• Gather available data for use as dependent variables in logistic regression analyses
  – CALEA accreditation status
  – Agencies’ hiring, minimum education, and training requirements

• Generate a random sample from the population of cases for in-depth research
  – Qualitative analysis?
  – Review of court case files to develop more data (especially interested in patterns in case dispositions (e.g., convictions, plea bargains, acquittals, dismissals)
  – Are officers keeping their jobs after being arrested?