11-1-2006

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:
  - Driving while Female (Walker, 2002, 2003)
  - 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>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs Service</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td>7.434</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>663 (95.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Frequency of Criminal Offenses for Sworn Officers Arrested

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</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>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 695
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Type</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>.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: Intimidation, Assault & Murder

![Years of Service at Arrest: Intimidation, Assault & Murder](chart.png)
Years of Service at Arrest: Forcible Rape, Sodomy & Fondling

Forcible Rape (n = 27)
Forcible Sodomy (n = 19)
Forcible Fondling (n = 48)
Years of Service at Arrest: DUI and Drug Offenses

Years of Service at Arrest

Percentage

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

- 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at Arrest</th>
<th>False Report / Statement (n = 19)</th>
<th>Obstructing Justice (n = 22)</th>
<th>Destroying / Tampering Evidence (n = 9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ages 20-23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 24-27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 28-31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 32-35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 36-39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 40-43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 44-47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 48-51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 52-55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ages 56+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender:
Officers charged with Aggravated Assault

Figure: Gender Distribution of Officers Charged with Aggravated Assault (n = 61)

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

Burglary / Breaking & Enter (n = 10)

- 80% Male Officers
- 20% Female Officers
Gender: Officers charged with Shoplifting

Shoplifting (n = 4)
On-Duty Crimes:
Gambling: Operating / Promoting

Gambling: Operating / Promotion (n = 8)

- On-Duty: 62%
- Off-Duty: 38%
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)

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

DUI / DWI (n = 94)

91%

9%
Agency Type: Driving Under the Influence

DUI / DWI (n = 95)

- 76% Primary State Police Agencies
- 16% Sheriff's Departments
- 3% County Police Departments
- 3% Municipal Police Departments
- 1% Special Police Departments
- 1% Tribal Police Departments

[Diagram]
Agency Type: Kidnapping / Abduction

Kidnapping / Abduction (n = 18)

- 89%
- 11%

Primary State Police Agencies
Sheriff's Departments
County Police Departments
Municipal Police Departments
Special Police Departments
Tribal Police Departments
Agency Type: Arson

- Primary State Police Agencies: 80%
- Sheriff's Departments: 20%
- County Police Departments
- Municipal Police Departments
- Special Police Departments
- Tribal Police Departments

Arson (n = 5)
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

![Bar chart showing the number of sworn personnel in various agencies for Burglary / Breaking & Entering (n = 10) and Robbery (n = 11).](image-url)
# of Sworn Personnel in Agency: Intimidation & Assault

[Bar chart showing the percentage of sworn personnel in agencies with different numbers of sworn personnel and the occurrence of Intimidation (n = 30), Simple Assault (n = 73), and Aggravated Assault (n = 58).]
# of Sworn Personnel in Agency: Federal Civil Rights Violations

![Bar chart showing the number of sworn personnel in agencies and the percentage of federal civil rights violations. The chart includes categories for 1 sworn, 2-4 sworn, 5-9 sworn, 10-24 sworn, 25-49 sworn, 50-99 sworn, 100-249 sworn, 250-499 sworn, 500-999 sworn, and 1000+ sworn personnel. The x-axis represents the number of sworn personnel, and the y-axis represents the percentage of federal civil rights violations. The chart indicates that agencies with 500-999 sworn personnel have the highest percentage of federal civil rights violations.]

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

n = 11

45.5%

9.1%

18.2%

9.1%

9.1%

9.1%

9.1%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Driving Under the Influence

n = 95

- West: 8.4%
- Midwest: 6.3%
- East: 24.2%
- West South Central: 21.1%
- South: 13.7%
- Mountain: 5.3%
- Pacific: 10.5%
- New England: 4.2%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Drug / Narcotic Offenses

n = 38
Sworn Officers Arrested for Forcible Fondling

n = 59

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

n = 33

- 6.1%
- 30.3%
- 33.3%
- 33.3%
- 15.2%
- 3%
- 3%
- 3%
- 3%
- 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

30%

- 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10%

- 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10% - 10%

- 30% - 10%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Kidnapping / Abduction

n = 18

50%
5.6%
5.6%
5.6%
11.1%
22.2%
Sworn Officers Arrested for Murder & Non-Negligent Manslaughter

n = 22

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