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On-Duty Fatal Police Shootings: Patterns of Officers Charged with Murder or Manslaughter, 2005-2020

Chloe Wentzlof

Philip M. Stinson

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**Chloe A. Wentzlof
Philip M. Stinson**

Bowling Green State University

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Background

- Policing has become a topic of public scrutiny after several violent police-citizen encounters.
 - These encounters have led to large scale protests and what commentators perceive as a “national reckoning” on the issue of racial injustice.
- Race and Policing
 - Race permeates all stages and processes of the criminal justice system, starting with police street encounters, interactions during police calls for service, and in the discretionary decision-making and powers of individual officers (Stinson, 2020).
 - *Terry v. Ohio* (1968) laid the foundation for the continued proliferation of racially biased policing. Blacks are almost three times more likely than Whites to be pulled over by the police in a traffic stop (Epp, et al., 2014).
 - Many police officers fear Black people (Stinson, 2020). Gabbidon (1994) coined the term “Blackaphobia” to describe fear of Blacks as criminals.
 - Many Black people are very distrustful of the police (Anderson, 2000).
- Police Militarization
 - Police typically invoke a warrior mentality and work in quasi-military organizations.

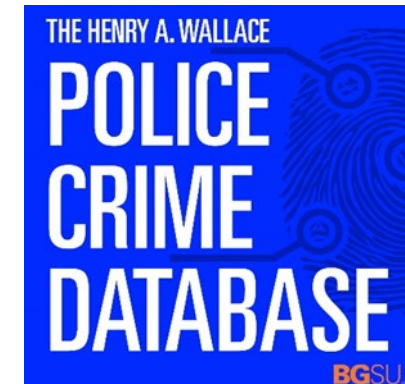
Methods

BGSU.

POLICE INTEGRITY
RESEARCH GROUP

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

- This study is part of a larger research project on police crime that examines cases of nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers arrested since January 1, 2005.
- Publically available data can be found on the **Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database** (<https://policecrime.bgsu.edu>)
- Google News search engine and Google Alerts are utilized to find and track cases and officers.
- Mixed Methods – Primarily Quantitative Content Analysis



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The Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database

Police Integrity Research for the Public Good

The Police Crime Database includes summary information on 13,214 criminal arrest cases from the years 2005-2016 involving 10,901 individual nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers, each of whom were charged with one or more crimes. The arrested officers were employed by 4,104 state, local, and special law enforcement agencies located in 1,648 counties and independent cities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Search by Location



Search by Crime



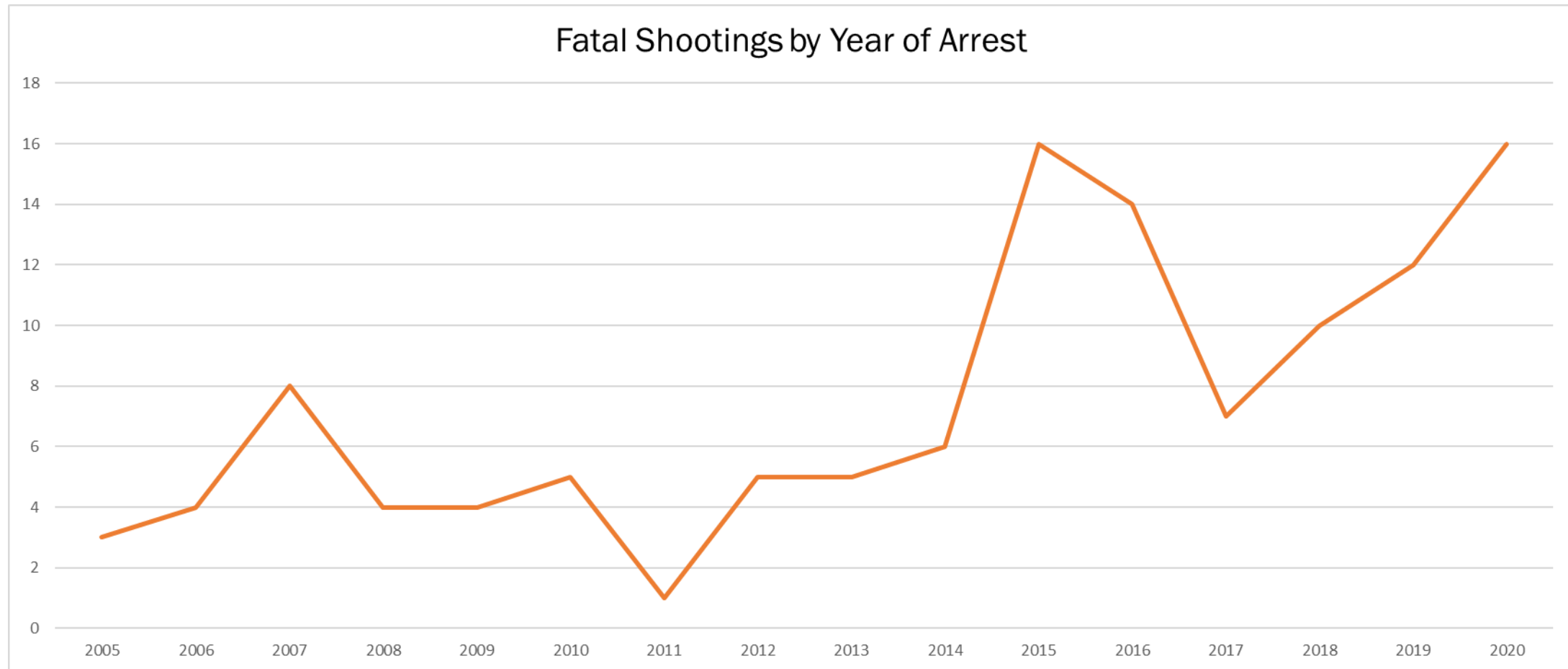
Search by Victim



Methods

- **Inclusion criteria for larger research project:**
 1. Individual was a sworn nonfederal law enforcement officer within the United States at the time of arrest and/or the commission of the crime
 2. Officer was arrested on or after January 1, 2005
 3. Officer was arrested and/or criminally charged
 4. Primary Unit of Analysis: Criminal Arrest Case
- **Inclusion criteria for this study:**
 1. Meets all the criteria for larger research project
 2. Officer was involved in a fatal on-duty *shooting*
 3. Officer was charged with a homicide offense resulting from the incident
 4. For the purpose of this presentation, data was limited to years 2005-2020.
 5. Primary Unit of Analysis: Officer

Methods



128 Officers, 123 Victims, and 120 Incidents

- 112 Incidents involved 1 Officer and 1 Victim
- 5 Incidents involved 2 Officers and 1 Victim
- 2 Incidents involved 1 Officers and 2 Victims
- 1 Incident involved 4 Officers and 2 Victims

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Officer and Agency Characteristics (N = 128)

	<i>n</i>	(%)	(Valid %)		<i>n</i>	(%)
Officer's Age				Officer's Ethnicity		
19-23	4	3.1	3.4	Non-Hispanic	121	94.5
24-27	19	14.8	16.0	Hispanic	7	5.5
28-31	22	17.2	18.5			
32-35	27	21.1	22.7	Officer's Race		
36-39	16	12.5	13.4	Non-Black	111	86.7
40-43	14	10.9	11.8	Black	17	13.3
44-47	5	3.9	4.2			
48-51	5	3.9	4.2	Officer's Sex		
52-55	4	3.1	3.4	Male	125	97.7
56 or older	3	2.3	2.5	Female	3	2.3
Missing	9	7.0				
				Region of United States		
Officer's Years of Service				Northeastern States	14	10.9
0-2	24	18.8	22.0	Midwestern States	22	17.2
3-5	21	16.4	19.3	Southern States	71	55.5
6-8	20	15.6	18.3	Western States	21	16.4
9-11	18	14.1	16.5			
12-14	10	7.8	9.2			
15-17	2	1.6	1.8			
18-20	7	5.5	6.4			
21-23	3	2.3	2.8			
24-26	1	0.8	0.9			
27 or more years	3	2.3	2.8			
Missing	19	14.8				

Descriptive Statistics

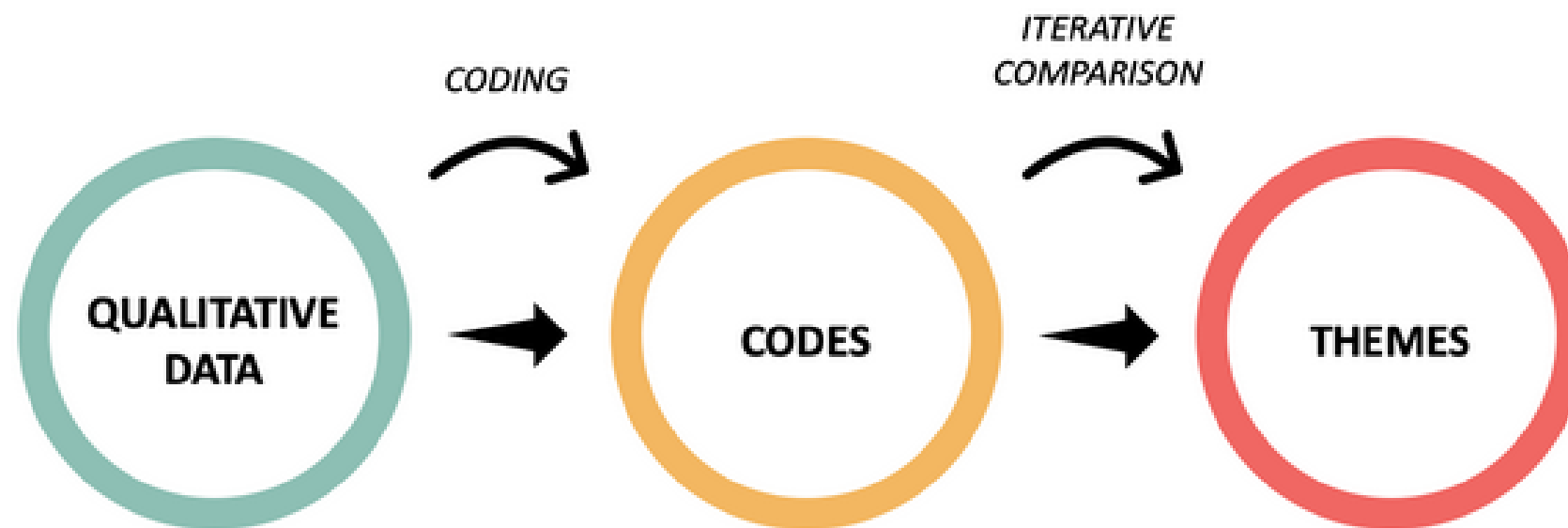
	<i>n</i>	(%)		<i>n</i>	(%)
Victim's Age			Victim's Sex		
0-10	3	2.4	Male	104	84.6
11-15	2	1.6	Female	19	15.4
16-18	10	8.1			
19-21	5	4.1	Victim was Armed wth Gun		
22-24	12	9.8	Yes	18	14.6
25-27	18	14.6	No	105	85.4
28-30	11	8.9			
31-33	9	7.3	Victim armed with dangerous weapon		
34-36	6	4.9	Yes	44	35.8
37-39	4	3.3	No	79	64.2
40-44	16	13.0			
45-49	12	9.8	Victim's Weapon Type (<i>n</i> = 44)		
50-54	6	4.9	Gun	16	36.4
55-59	4	3.3	Car	10	22.7
60+	5	4.1	Knife	5	11.4
			Baseball Bat	4	9.1
Victim's Ethnicity			Taser	2	4.5
Non-Hispanic	112	91.1	Air Rifle/Pellet Gun/Artifici	2	4.5
Hispanic	11	8.9	ATV	1	2.3
			Bicycle	1	2.3
Victim's Race			Lighter and Light Fluid	1	2.3
Non-Black	56	45.5	Metal Object	1	2.3
Black	67	54.5	Screwdriver	1	2.3

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Incident Characteristics (N = 120)		
	<i>n</i>	(%)
Incident involved Multiple Officers charged with Murder or Manslaughter		
Yes	6	5.0
No	114	95.0
Incident involved Multiple Fatal Victim		
Yes	3	2.5
No	117	97.5
Location of Incident		
Exited car	18	15.0
Friend/relative home	3	2.5
In car	33	27.5
Near friend/relative home	4	3.3
Near victim home	10	8.3
Victim home	19	15.8
Other	33	27.5
Type of Video		
Bodycam video	23	19.2
Bystander video	4	3.3
Dashcam video	13	10.8
Other video	12	10.0
No video	68	56.7

Themes

- Thematic Analysis used to develop these themes
 - Repetitive process of inductive code development
 - Full saturation has *not* been achieved – not all incidents can be explained by a reoccurring theme



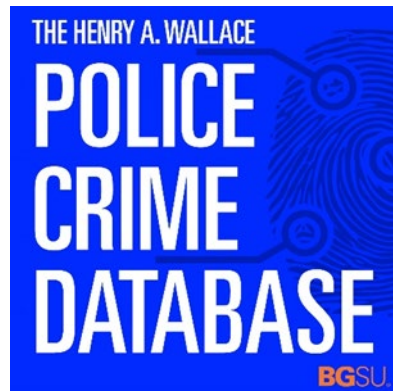
Themes

Pattern Identified	Number of Incidents with Identified Pattern
1. Officer initiated traffic stop (or attempted traffic stop)	25
2. Officer expressed fear of firearm - victim was unarmed	24
3. Officer expressed fear because victim was in car/vehicle	23
4. Officer claimed they did not intend to use deadly force against the victim	12
5. Officer claimed victim was reaching for the officer's weapon	12
6. Shooting of Black women within or at their own home	5

Conclusions

- Research and coding should continue until full saturation (or close to it) has been achieved
 - Next Possible Theme: Victim is experiencing a mental health crisis
- Preliminary policy recommendations should consider the warrior mentality of policing, “Blackaphobia,” alternative responses to mental health crises, and police accountability.
- Unit of analysis needs to be reconsidered (officer, arrests, incidents, victims).
- Future research should examine themes of arrest vs. non-arrest, conviction, video evidence, and non-shooting on-duty fatalities.

Thank you!



Henry A. Wallace Public Police Crime Database

<https://policecrime.bgsu.edu/>

Police Integrity Research Group

Twitter: @bgsuPoliceCrime

Instagram: @bgsuPoliceCrime

Philip Stinson

stinspm@bgsu.edu

Twitter: @philstinson

Chloe Wentzlof

cawentz@bgsu.edu