

9-22-2022

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Kutz, Jonathan R.; Wentzlof, Chloe A.; and Stinson, Philip M., "Police Crime Committed in Tandem: An Exploration of the Interconnectedness of Offenses Committed by Law Enforcement Officers, 2005-2017" (2022). *Criminal Justice Faculty Publications*. 131.
https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/crim_just_pub/131

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Police Crime Committed in Tandem: An Exploration of the Interconnectedness of Offenses Committed by Law Enforcement Officers, 2005-2017

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Support for this project was provided by the Wallace Action Fund of Tides Foundation. This research was also supported in part by the Center for Family and Demographic Research, Bowling Green State University, which has core funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (P2CHD050959).

ABSTRACT

In this study we investigated the combination of different officer committed crimes and how these offenses pair together. Data from the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database (2022) are used to explore criminal arrest cases from 2005-2017. This comparison is only the beginning of an exploration into the interconnectedness of crimes committed by law enforcement officers. As such only a few will be used in the present study, namely DUI, simple assault, and other common offenses. The following data describe how certain offenses appear to be committed in tandem.

METHODS

The data for this project were collected as part of a greater research study on police crime. The data were accumulated from news articles, videos and court documents. Google News™ search engine and the Google Alerts™ email update service, was the primary source of collecting the articles for the data. The sample for this project is limited to criminal cases of nonfederal sworn law enforcement officers who were arrested for one or more crimes from the years 2005-2017.

EXAMPLES

Aggravated Assault and Weapons Law Violations^a: A Lee County (FL) Deputy was arrested for domestic battery and discharging a firearm while intoxicated. He allegedly began to harass his wife and stepson before forcing them out of the house and barricading himself inside. He then took his AR-15 and fired approximately 8-12 shots while intoxicated, including at police officers. The officer plead guilty to a felony offense deeming him ineligible to continue employment as a law enforcement officer. He was sentenced to 32 days in jail followed by probation which he later violated.

Forcible Rape and Forcible Sodomy^b: In 2014 an Oklahoma City police officer was arrested for several on-duty sexual crimes involving 13 victims. The crimes included forcible rape, sodomy, stalking, sexual battery, and more. A jury found him guilty of 18 counts and he was sentenced to 238 years in prison.

DUI and Hit and Run^c: A St. Louis (MO) Police officer was arrested for crashing his vehicle while he was intoxicated. Driving his patrol vehicle, he struck a parked vehicle and promptly drove back to his house. Later a warrant was retrieved for a BAC test and he was arrested for a DUI and leaving the scene of an accident. After pleading guilty he was sentenced to 2 years of probation and attending substance abuse traffic offender program.

Table 1. Phi Correlation Coefficients of Types of Crime

	Violence-Related	Sex-Related	Alcohol-Related	Profit-Motivated	Drug-Related
Violence-Related	1.000	0.212	-0.187	-0.451	-0.245
Sex-Related		1.000	-0.202	-0.255	-0.133
Alcohol-Related			1.000	-0.257	-0.125
Profit-Motivated				1.000	0.262
Drug-Related					1.000

Table 2. Significant Phi Correlations Coefficients of Offense Variables (N=15,200)

	ϕ	ϕ
	Aggravated Assault	Forcible Rape
Weapon Law Violations	0.090 ^a	Forcible Sodomy 0.238 ^b
Kidnapping and Abduction	0.074	Forcible Fondling 0.159
Intimidation	0.047	Kidnapping and Abduction 0.128
Vandalism and Desctruction of Property	0.046	Incest 0.111
Simple Assault	0.034	Sexual Assault with an Object 0.095
Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	0.023	Other Sex Crime 0.079
	Simple Assault	Statutory Rape 0.046
Disorderly Conduct	0.095	Indecent Exposure 0.035
Intimidaton	0.086	Breaking and Entering 0.027
Kidnapping and Abduction	0.083 ^e	Pornography 0.021
Trespassing	0.041	Prostitution 0.019
Vandalism and Desctruction of Property	0.038	Wiretapping 0.018
Aggravated Assault	0.034	
Drunkenness	0.032	Prostitution
	Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	Assisting Prostitution 0.039
Negligent Manslaughter	0.054	Forcible Rape 0.019
Aggravated Assault	0.023	
Arson	0.022 ^d	Driving Under the Influence
	Weapons Law Violations	Hit and Run 0.189 ^c
Robbery	0.128	Liquor Law Violations 0.054
Drug and Narcotic Violations	0.124	Non-Violent Family Offenses 0.021
Aggravated Assault	0.090 ^a	
Civil Rights Violations	0.065	Drug and Narcotic Violations
Stolen Property Offenses	0.05	Drug Equipment Violations 0.229
Extortion	0.048	Weapons Law Violations 0.124
Liquor Law Violations	0.031	Extortion 0.103
Vandalism and Desctruction of Property	0.029	Robbery 0.099
		Theft from a Building 0.098
		Evidence Tampering 0.050
		Obstructing Justice 0.025
		Forgery or Counterfeiting 0.021
		Wiretapping 0.018

EXAMPLES CONTINUED

Murder and Arson^d: A Kansas law enforcement training officer was arrested and charged with first degree murder, aggravated arson, and aggravated child endangerment. The officer allegedly shot his wife and then attempted to burn down his residence. After a long trial, the officer was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.

Simple Assault and Kidnapping and Abduction^e: A Bedford Heights (OH) police officer was arrested on charges of kidnapping, abduction, and domestic violence. The officer showed up and his then-girlfriend's work and allegedly forced her into his car. He took her back to his apartment where he had choked her, slammed her on the floor, pulled her hair, and hit her head against the wall. After apparently realizing what he had just done, he asked the woman to shoot him but she refused. This incident occurred after the women told him she wanted to break up. The officer plead guilty to a felony abduction charge and a misdemeanor domestic violence charge. He was sentenced to two years of probation and resigned from his job at the department.

RESULTS

- Significant correlations suggest that violence-related and sex-related crimes tend to be committed in tandem. A similar significant correlation is present for profit-motivated and drug-related crimes (Table 1).
- Alcohol-related crimes tend to not be significantly correlated to any other type of crime (Table 1).
- Some of the strongest correlations among the offense variables are the associations of two inherently sexual crimes, such as forcible rape, sodomy, and fondling (Table 2).

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- The correlation between violence-related and sex-related crimes may be explained by the fact that most sex-related criminal behavior is inherently violent. The *weak* correlation may be explained because the opposite is not true; violence-related crimes are not inherently sex-related.
- At the offense level, significant correlations are abundant but the strength of these correlations are weak. This is likely to the high overall sample size coupled with the uniqueness of each criminal arrest case.
- Continued exploration of the interconnectedness of offenses committed by law enforcement officers is important to better understand the totality of their criminal behavior. Future research should explore how these patterns may influence the criminal case disposition and final adverse employment outcomes of these arrested officers.