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The Interconnectedness of Criminal Offenses Committed by Law Enforcement Officers, 2005-2017

Jonathan R. Kutz
Bowling Green State University, jkutz@bgsu.edu

Chloe A. Wentzlof
Bowling Green State University, cawentz@bgsu.edu

Philip M. Stinson
Bowling Green State University, stinspm@bgsu.edu

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The Interconnectedness of Criminal Offenses Committed by Law Enforcement Officers, 2005-2017

Jonathan R. Kutz, Chloe A. Wentzlof & Philip M. Stinson
Bowling Green State University

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INTRODUCTION

Criminologists understand the knowledge of criminal behavior is limited to the elements known to the researchers. The National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) found importance in tracking all crimes that occurred within an incident rather than just documenting the first or most serious criminal action. In doing such, more elements of the criminal behavior are known and can be studied. This poster aims to advance these ideas into the study of police crime.

The research is important to try to attain an understanding of police officers that are charged with multiple crimes or offenses. Prior exploratory research found an abundance of weak yet significant correlations across different types of crime and specific offenses committed by law enforcement officers. This poster aims to expand on these findings and explore the interconnectedness of criminal offenses committed by sworn non-federal law enforcement officers – with a closer look at the officers’ rank and geographic region. Identifying such patterns could lead to policies that would improve policing. This poster is important as it denotes a starting point for further research in this area of police crime.

CURRENT STUDY

Data for this project are collected by the Police Integrity Research Group at Bowling Green State University and disseminated on the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database. Researchers use quantitative content analysis to systematically code each criminal arrest case on offenses charges and types of crime. Additional information are gathered on officer and agency demographics. Further methods can be found on the Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database website.

The unit of analysis for this poster is individual non-federal sworn law enforcement officers. Information about officers with multiple victims and/or arrest dates were collapsed into one unit of analysis. This methodological approach allows us to examine the entirety of an individual’s criminal actions. It is important to note our data are limited to police officers who were employed as a sworn non-federal law enforcement officer at the time of their arrest and/or at the commission of the crime(s).

This poster utilizes correlational analyses to examine the relationships of offenses, types of crime, geographic region, and officer’s rank.

Table 1. Police Crime Unit of Analysis

	n
Criminal Arrest Cases	15,200
Individual Non-Federal Sworn Law Enforcement Officers	12,465
Employment Agencies	4,499
Counties and Independent Cities	1,781
States and D.C.	51

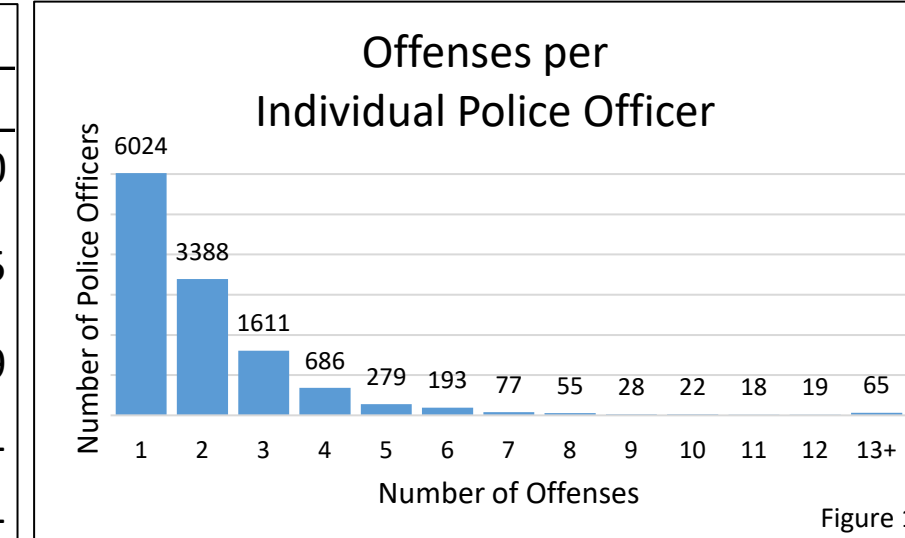
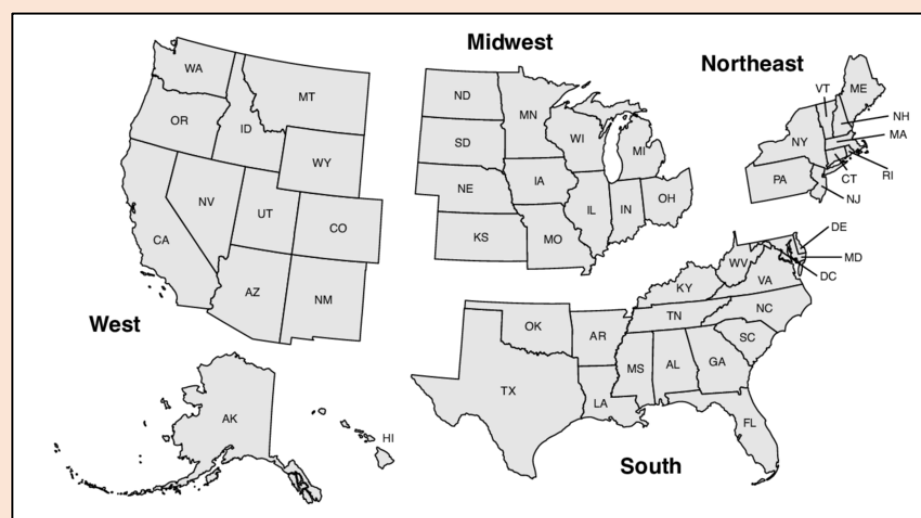


Table 2. Police Crime Unit of Analysis - Rates

	\bar{x}	S.D.	Min.	Max.	Median	Mode
Criminal Arrest Cases per Individual Officer	1.83	2.30	1.00	23.00	1.00	1.00
Offenses Charged per Criminal Arrest Case	1.72	1.00	1.00	10.00	1.00	1.00
Offenses Charged per Individual Officer	2.10	2.07	1.00	64.00	2.00	1.00

GEOGRAPHIC REGION



RESEARCH QUESTION: Does the geographic region where the officer was employed correlate with specific types of crime and offenses?

FINDINGS: Table 3 shows how types of crimes are correlated with geographic areas of the United States. Even though the correlations show significant differences, it is difficult to draw insightful conclusions from these statistics. Any meaningful interpretation of these statistically significant correlations can prove to be difficult to interpret as the associations are not consistent across an individual region or specific type of crime.

EXAMPLE: SOUTHERN STATES AND DRUG-RELATED

A Floyd County (GA) deputy was sentenced to 10 years in prison followed by 20 years of probation. He was charged with 53 total criminal counts, to include 12 counts of theft, 22 counts of violation of GA controlled substance act, three counts of first degree burglary, five counts of exploiting and elder and more. This deputy was going to different houses and finding different ways to coerce elderly members of the community to give him their pills. He would receive hydrocodone, oxycodone and more.

EXAMPLE: MIDWESTERN STATES AND ALCOHOL-RELATED

An Oak Lawn (IL) officer was arrested after he was pulled over for suspicion of DUI and allegedly pointed a gun at the two arresting officers. He was off-duty and driving a personal vehicle at the time of the arrest. He was charged with DUI and two counts of misdemeanor aggravated assault. The officer was placed on administrative leave but the criminal case disposition unknown. Several news articles report the officer as a military veteran who suffers from PTSD.

Table 3. Types of Crime and Geographic Region

	Drug-Related***		Alcohol-Related***		Sex-Related***		Violence-Related***		Profit-Motivated***	
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected
Northeastern States	274	276	626	557	353	486	1,252	1,221	613	584
Midwestern States	237	268	662	541	434	472	1,124	1,187	569	568
Southern States	702	638	1,118	1,288	1,223	1,124	2,793	2,825	1,402	1,351
Western States	174	205	395	416	435	363	977	912	354	436

Cramer's V Coefficient: *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01, ***p ≤ .001

RANK FUNCTION

Street and Patrol Level

- Officer/Deputy/Trooper
- Detective/Investigator

Field and Line Supervisor

- Corporal
- Sergeant
- Lieutenant

Management

- Captain
- Major
- Colonel
- Deputy Chief/Chief Deputy
- Chief/Superintendent/Sheriff

RESEARCH QUESTION: Does the officer’s rank correlate with specific types of crime and offenses?

FINDINGS: Table 4 shows how types of crimes are significantly correlated with the rank of the officer while accounting for the distribution of the respective populations. The only exception is drug-related crimes where the expected and observed are not statistically different across officer’s rank. All other crimes and rank have significant relationships that show certain ranked officers are more/less likely to commit certain crimes.

EXAMPLE: MANAGEMENT AND PROFIT-MOTIVATED

An Athens County (OH) sheriff was charged with 13 counts theft in office, 4 counts of theft, perjury, corrupt activity, and failure to keep a cashbook. The sheriff allegedly sold county property while forsaking procedure as well as keeping cash donations to his campaign. He was found guilty and sentenced to 7 years in prison.

EXAMPLE: STREET AND PATROL LEVEL AND SEX- AND VIOLENCE-RELATED

A Pocahontas County (WV) deputy was reputed to have committed sex crimes against 12 victims including first and second degree sexual assault and sexual abuse by a guardian. Many of these victims were from particularly vulnerable populations, such as four victims under the age of 16 and another victim was incarcerated at the time of the assault. The deputy plead guilty and was sentenced to 10 to 20 years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, and required registration as a sex offender.

Table 4. Types of Crime and Function

	Drug-Related		Alcohol-Related**		Sex-Related***		Violence-Related***		Profit-Motivated***	
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected
Street and Patrol	1,137	1,113	2,271	2,247	2,038	1,962	5,103	4,931	2,211	2,357
Field Supervisor	162	188	395	380	288	332	786	835	416	399
Management	88	86	135	173	119	151	257	380	311	182

Cramer's V Coefficient: *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01, ***p ≤ .001