

Pain, Injury, Mortality: Police Confront Critical Incidents

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Abstract: Previous research has shown that the law enforcement occupation is a dangerous profession that has the highest violent victimization rate in the United States (Fridell, Faggiani, Taylor, Brito, & Kubu, 2009). This descriptive study aims to add to the growing body of literature on victimization of police officers by answering the central research question: What are the characteristics of victimization incidents of on-duty law enforcement officers? Specific demographics of interest include; sex of the officer, method of harm used against the officer, incident location, and responding call type. A content analysis was performed on news articles reporting incidents of on-duty law enforcement fatalities and injuries (n=50), in which characters gathered from the articles were recoded to numbers for quantitative analysis. Analysis of data suggests that male officers are more likely to be victimized while on-duty. Gunfire is the method of harm most likely used to victimize officers. A roadway is the location where an incident of victimization will most likely occur, during other types of calls beyond warrant services, traffic stops, domestic disturbances, and suspicious persons. This research can lead to future more detailed research and causal analysis.

Keywords: Law enforcement, officer, fatality, injury, incident location.

INTRODUCTION

“Officer down”, arguably the two most terrifying words that law enforcement officials never want to hear. It is often agreed upon that law enforcement is a dangerous profession that encompasses great risk and sacrifice. In addressing all violent victimizations in the workplace, including non-fatal assaults and homicides, Duhart (2001) and Warchol (1998) agree that research indicates that the law enforcement occupation has the highest violent victimization rate (Fridell, Faggiani, Taylor, Brito & Kubu, 2009). Law enforcement officers deal with situations every day ranging from patrol, traffic stops, domestic disturbances, vehicle pursuits, and calls for service; all of which could potentially be dangerous. They deal with citizens from various backgrounds, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. Law enforcement officers respond to assist and protect the citizens of their community, however in some situations, police officers are met with disrespect, violence, and hatred.

Law enforcement is a dangerous profession because much of the violence experienced is directed violence, meaning violence is intentionally directed at law enforcement officers (Bierie, Detar & Craun, 2016). Directed violence can include incidents of an individual trying to leave a traffic stop and in doing so, shoots an officer or uses their vehicle to hit an officer. It can also include an officer being shot in their patrol vehicle for no apparent reason other than they are a police officer. For some, the uniform, the badge, and the patrol

vehicle are symbols of authority, honor, and respect. Conversely, to some, those same symbols are met with resistance, hatred, and ultimately are viewed as an enemy.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI’s) Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) studies (UCR; FBI, 2012-2016), an average of 94 officers are killed in the line of duty each year, including both felonious and accidental deaths. Law enforcement officials across jurisdictions are being shot, hit by vehicles, stabbed, and more recently have become victims of ambush style attacks; being targets of planned acts of directed violence which have left unsuspecting officers injured or dead simply because of the uniform and badge that they wear (Schouten & Brennan, 2016).

In studying incidents of police victimization, it is important to distinguish between felonious and accidental deaths and injuries. With regards to officer fatalities; “A felonious death is a death that resulted from the act of an offending assailant using any combination or weaponry— gun, knife, fist, car, etc. [whereas] accidental deaths typically include such events as motor vehicle deaths, falls, and accidental shootings (or possibly self-inflicted)” (Kachurik, Ruiz & Staub, 2013, pp. 115-116).

Police victimization includes non-fatal assaults in the line of duty. Roughly 51,700 officers were assaulted each year on average between 2012 and 2016, according to LEOKA (UCR; FBI, 2012-2016) reports. These numbers include officers who were treated for serious and non-serious injuries which resulted from assaults. Assaults on officers can be spontaneous and

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in the moment of the incident or planned, with a clear end goal. Schouten and Brennan (2016), describe spontaneous assaults that occur “in an effort to resist arrest, although they may also be opportunistic expressions of hostility during an encounter between law enforcement officers (LEO) and someone who rejects police authority and presence” (p. 608). Conversely, planned assaults on LEOs can not only be acts of retaliation but can also occur in attempts to advance criminal enterprises, during extremist ideology missions, and efforts to provoke a police-involved shooting with the goal of suicide-by-cop as the end result (Schouten & Brennan, 2016). Whether spontaneous or planned, law enforcement officers are being assaulted and injured in the process of doing their jobs.

Research Questions (RQ)

This research will study multiple characteristics for line of duty officer victimizations during the 2012-2016-time period using news articles to gather data. This descriptive study is guided by the central research question: What are the characteristics of victimization incidents of on-duty law enforcement? A number of sub-questions will also be answered: (1) Is there a greater number of males in law enforcement killed or injured in the line of duty than females in law enforcement killed or injured in the line of duty? (2) What method of harm has the greatest number used to kill or injure a law enforcement officer in the line of duty? (3) What location has the greatest number of incidents of on-duty law enforcement officer fatalities and injuries? (4) What is the type of call that has the greatest number of law enforcement officer fatalities or injuries?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Incidents of victimization of law enforcement officers have impacts across various levels. When an officer is injured or killed in the line of duty, the individual officer is affected, but so too are their families, their colleagues, the law enforcement department, and the law enforcement profession as a whole (Fridell, *et al.*, 2009). Communities are also affected, often times coming together to support law enforcement when a slain officer is brought through the community during a funeral procession; lining roadways, holding American flags and handmade signs of support. The number of law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty has steadily decreased since a peak in 1973, however, members of the law enforcement profession remain

among the most victimized workers in the country (Fridell, *et al.*, 2009).

Sex of the Victim

Law enforcement is noticeably a male-dominated profession. The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s UCR report (2016), states out of the 652,936 total officers in the United States, 73.5% are male, and 26.5% are female. The variation between the number of male and female law enforcement officers is also seen in gender differences of law enforcement officers killed and injured in the line of duty.

Blair, Fowler, Betz and Baumgardner (2016) studied law enforcement officers feloniously killed in the line of duty with the aim to educate and train law enforcement officers to promote on-duty safety and prevent or reduce homicides of officers. A total of 128 homicides with police officers as victims were studied. Findings showed that the majority (93.7%) of the officers that were killed were male, and 8 out of the total cases studied (6.3%) were female officers killed in the line of duty. Further research is needed to determine why male law enforcement officers are killed in the line of duty at a greater total number than female law enforcement officers, however the sheer difference in the number of males compared to females on the job could be a possible explanation.

Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) reports from 2012-2016 further shows this sex difference in law enforcement killed in the line of duty. Results are as follows: (2012) 88 males, 7 females; (2013) 74 males, 2 females; (2014) 93 males, 3 females; (2015) 79 males, 7 females; and (2016) 114 males, 4 females. This data further supports the findings of Blair and colleagues (2016), showing the higher total number of males versus females in law enforcement being killed in the line of duty.

Method of Harm

Law enforcement officers are killed and injured using various methods ranging from firearms, knives, vehicles, and physical contact. Research has shown that both homicides and assaults of police officers are more likely to occur in situations where an arrest is either made or attempted (Brandl, 1996). Firearms are used in the vast majority of homicides of police officers (Swedler, Simmons, Dominci, and Hemenway, 2015; Blair, *et al.*, 2016), however, research has found that not all firearms pose an equal threat for use in a violent

crime (Wintemate, 1994). Gun violence can range from various actions including: pointing a gun at officers, discharging a gun at officers, hitting officers with gunfire (nonlethal), or lethal shooting of police officers (Bierie, *et al.*, 2016). Weapons used against law enforcement officers do not just include firearms, vehicles, knives, etc. L.A. Wilson and Meyer (1990) found that personal weapons (hands, fists, teeth, etc.) were also used in assaults against police (Wilson and Zhao, 2008).

The relationship between state firearm ownership and occupational homicide rates was studied by Swedler and colleagues (2015), by using an FBI database for law enforcement officers killed in addition to the average household firearm ownership for each state from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Findings showed homicides of law enforcement officers were three times higher in states with high firearm ownership compared to states with low firearm ownership (Swedler *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, officers are more at risk of injury or fatality from a firearm in states with high gun ownership.

Wintemate (1994), tested the "Crime Gun Hypothesis", which generally states that all firearms are not at equal risk for use in a violent crime. The study focused on handguns used in homicides of law enforcement officers and found that subclasses of handguns differ substantially in their risk for use in fatal shootings of law enforcement officers. Findings showed that revolvers were at a greater risk of being used for a violent crime than semi-automatic pistols, and specified variations among caliber. The lowest risk was with .22-caliber handguns, and the greatest risk for use in a violent crime was with .32-caliber pistols and .38-caliber revolvers.

In addition to firearm use, Chenpanas and Bir (2017) investigated the most common sites of injury in knife assaults resulting in the death of law enforcement officers among other subjects, using autopsy reports and demographics of assault incidents from 1995-2013, where ultimately 12 cases were analyzed. Findings showed an 11:1 male to female ratio. Out of the 12 cases studied, 4 had law enforcement officers as victims of a knife-related assault. The first case is a police officer who was on a service call and was stabbed in the neck area with a steak knife. The second and third cases studied were sheriff's deputies, both on disturbance calls and were stabbed in the shoulder, neck, and chest with a serrated kitchen knife. The last law enforcement officer-related case studied

was a police officer who was investigating auto break-ins and was stabbed in the buttocks and neck area with a knife. Thus, demonstrating the dangerousness of knives to the safety of law enforcement officers.

Vehicle pursuits also pose a safety risk for law enforcement officers, with numerous risk factors, such as high rates of speed, and actions or inactions of uninvolved citizens on the road. Johnson (2013) performed a longitudinal examination of police officer deaths due to vehicle pursuits from 1960 to 2011. Findings show that overall death rate for pursuits declined during the 52-year time period, however death rates for officers involved in blocking tactics or travelling to assist in pursuits increased during this same time period, and both were still increasing at the time of the study. Alpert, *et al.* (2006) found that almost half of pursuit crashes also resulted in physical injuries to not only police officers, but to the occupants of the fleeing vehicle and/or uninvolved third parties (Johnson, 2013).

Incident Location

Location is a significant factor to address when looking at incidents of victimization of law enforcement. Bierie, *et al.* (2016) examined situational and offender characteristics of firearm assaults against law enforcement officers. Incidents in which police were victims of gun violence were compared to a random sample of arrests that did not result in firearm violence directed at police. Location was categorized as Outdoors (field/woods, waterway, construction area), Buildings (school, diner, gas station, office), Residence (home), Roads (road, alley, or highway and parking lots), and Other; as identified by the National Incident-Based Reporting System (Bierie, *et al.*, 2016). Findings show that outdoors appears to be substantially riskier for law enforcement than other locations. In addition, parking lots and roadways posed most risk, and homes posed more risk than buildings.

Type of Call

Law enforcement officers respond to various calls that can range from traffic stops, domestic violence incidents, incidents involving traffic pursuits, to incidents involving ambush style attacks. Edwards (1995) found that most state police officers that were killed were at a traffic stop, whereas most non-state police officers who were killed, were making an arrest (Kachurik, *et al.*, 2013; Ellis, Choi & Blaus, 1993). Various factors are considered predictors of line-of-duty

injuries for law enforcement officers, including decisions to arrest, type of dwelling, injury to victim, hostile principals, and allegations of assault by victims (Ellis, et al., 1993). In their 2016 study, Blair and colleagues studied felonious killings of law enforcement officers and found that approximately 21.9% occurred during an ambush, and 19.5% were killed during traffic stops and pursuits.

Ambush style attacks on law enforcement is a type of violence called predatory violence that is purposeful and planned, however planning does not need to be involved (Schouten & Brennan, 2016). Borowitz (2005) describes goals of an ambush from purely psychological in nature exacting revenge, expressing anger and frustration over an unsatisfied grievance, or fulfilling a desire for notoriety (Schouten & Brennan, 2016). Ambushes are planned offenses and directed at an individual(s). Two types of ambushes are entrapment and spontaneous ambushes. Schouten & Brennan (2016) further describe an entrapment ambush as the victim being purposely lured into a trap where the assailant carries out the assault. Whereas a spontaneous ambush is described as crimes of opportunity with the decision to attack made at the time of the encounter; the attack happens in the moment.

Domestic violence calls can also pose a threat to the safety of law enforcement officers. In 2007, the Federal Bureau of Investigation found 8% or 5 of the 57 officers killed in 2007, were on domestic violence calls (Tucker-Gail, Selman, Kobolt, & Hill, 2009). Authors of the 2001 LEOKA study argue that the major contributors to felonious killings of law enforcement officers are; over-confidence, carelessness or complacency, poor search techniques, disregarding danger signs, poor positioning, poor use of cover, relaxing too soon, "rushing-in" without a plan, and carrying law enforcement credentials off-duty without a weapon. (Tucker-Gail, et al., 2009.). One, or a combination of these factors, can increase the risk of fatality or injury of law enforcement officers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

To discover additional information on characteristics of on-duty fatalities and injuries of law enforcement officers, a content analysis was performed on news articles reporting incidents law enforcement fatalities and injuries. Content analysis is a research method for studying text, and systematically analyzing and making inferences (Bachman & Schutt, 2014) with a purpose to

provide knowledge, new insights, and a representation of "facts" (Krippendorff, 1980). This type of analysis can be thought of as a "survey" of documents, a survey that is designed with fixed-choice responses to produce quantitative data that can be analyzed statistically (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). For this study, characters taken from news articles were recoded to numbers for quantitative analysis.

Content analysis is an unobtrusive technique that accepts unstructured material and is context sensitive, thus able to process symbolic forms with large amounts of data (Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis was the best method for this study since news articles were the desired sampling unit from which to gather data. As seen in multiple studies, (Feltham-King, & Macleod, 2016; Patterson, Hilton, & Weishaar, 2016; Chandelier, et al., 2018; Miller, Livingstone, & Ronneberg, 2017) content analysis is an effective method when collecting data from newspaper articles. There is a disadvantage, namely unreported information in articles, however, steps have been taken to minimize this disadvantage, consequently, missing data was considered when running the statistical analysis.

Data on sex of the victim, method of harm, incident location, and the call type in which the victimization occurred, were then recorded from the news articles and coded quantitatively. Data were entered into a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel before imputing data into the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to perform inferential statistical analysis.

Data Collection

The data collection process began by choosing 10 states; Illinois, Hawaii, Texas, California, New York, Oregon, Florida, Alaska, Colorado, and Michigan. These states were purposely chosen because they are geographically spaced out over the United States.

The most circulated newspaper in each of the 10 states were then used because large newspaper outlets tend to report current incidents due to the wide circulation of the paper. The periodicals used for data collection include; Chicago Tribune, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, Houston Chronicle, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, The Oregonian, Tampa Bay Times, The Anchorage Dispatch News, The Denver Post, and The Detroit Free Press. The online websites of each periodical were used to gather relevant articles, using key terms: *law enforcement, officer, killed, injured, on-duty*.

The time frame for the search of articles was 2012-2016. This time frame was chosen because 2014 was the year of the highly publicized police-related shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. This incident was reported nationally, and resulted in riots, protests, and directed violence towards law enforcement across the country (Dolan, Shallwani, & Kesling, 2014; Richman, DeBolt, & Nelson, 2014). Therefore, the two years prior and the two years following this police-related incident were thought to be interesting to study in relation to law enforcement victimization incidents.

Sampling

The news articles were gathered using the purposive sampling technique. This nonrandom sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The articles were deliberately chosen in that only those reporting incidents of on-duty law enforcement fatalities and injuries were chosen. There are no duplicates; all incidents chosen are separate events of on-duty law enforcement fatalities and injuries.

In collecting from the first periodical, the article collection was stopped at five articles due to subscription requirement to further view articles. Monetary expenditures were not going to be made for this thesis, therefore to maintain conformity with the remaining periodicals, five relevant articles were chosen from each periodical resulting in a sample size of $n=50$ incidents of police fatality or injury (22 fatalities and 28 injuries).

Operationalization of Concepts

The descriptive demographics that are focused on in this study are sex of the victim, method of harm, incident location, and type of call the police officer was on when injury or fatality occurred. Fatality or injury conceptualized as the felonious death or injury of a law enforcement officer resulting from an on-duty incident and is measured by whether the article reported the officer to have been injured or killed during the incident.

Sex of the victim is conceptualized as recording the officer involved as male or female and is measured by how the officer is identified in the news articles gathered. Method of harm is conceptualized as the method used to kill or injure a law enforcement officer and is measured as stabbing, shooting, hit by vehicle,

physical assault, vehicle pursuit/collision, or other. Incident location is conceptualized as the area that the incident of a law enforcement fatality or injury occurs and is measured as residence, road, business, or other.

Type of call is conceptualized as the call that the officer was on or was responding to at the time of the incident and is measured as warrant services, traffic stop, domestic disturbance, suspicious person, or other, as reported in the news articles gathered. Proactive policing is officer-initiated, while calls for service are citizen reported incidents, which are relayed to officers by dispatch officials. Calls in the categories of study can either be done through proactive policing or be citizen reported (call for service), consequently, for the purposes of this study, calls that fall under the above-mentioned categories will be coded as such regardless if it is police-initiated or citizen reported.

Data Analysis Plan

Information was extracted from the 50 news articles to descriptively study victimization of police officers using inferential statistical analysis. Sex of the victim, method of harm, location, call type and injury or fatality; all discrete variables, are qualitative, sometimes referred to as categorical variables and do not imply a numerical ordering (Lane, Hebl, Guerra, Osherson, & Zimmer, 2007). Data were then quantitatively coded converting data to numerical form for statistical analysis.

Initially, data were entered into Microsoft Excel, in which graphic representations of data were created. Data were then imputed into SPSS to run statistical analysis and additional graphic representations. Contingency tables, also known as CrossTabs, were used to display the relationship between two categorical variables to descriptively study victimization of law enforcement.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study include confidentiality and respect for human subjects since many articles used reported the names, departments, and other identifying information of officers who were killed or injured while on duty. Despite this information being publicly available, respect nevertheless needed to be shown to the victims to ensure no further harm will be done.

Research confidentiality is when some identifying information on subjects is known, but only the researcher can link participants with data, and the researcher promises not to do so publicly (Blackstone, 2012). In regards to confidentiality for this study, data were coded numerically and analyzed quantitatively. Names of victims were not extracted and/or recorded for data purposes.

Relevant characteristic information within the news articles, specifically information on: sex of the victim, method of harm towards the victim, responding call type, and incident location were extracted. Data collected were then coded numerically, therefore results could not be linked to any particular individual. The study utilized secondary data, thus not including human participants. Additionally, during the analysis and reporting phase, the study adhered to the ethical obligations to colleagues in the scientific community by reporting all results, both positive and negative, as well as reporting all limitations of the research (Blackstone, 2012).

Although this study does not require the researcher to physically enter the field, parameters were nevertheless established prior to beginning research. Firstly, research would be done in a safe manner and done in such a way as to promote confidentiality with respect to any identifying information of law enforcement officers killed or injured in the line of duty, as information was kept on a password protected PC. Secondly, names of officers were not recorded for data purposes. Lastly, emotional safeguards were also established to eliminate emotional distress in viewing various articles reporting violent incidents of police officers being injured or killed while on-duty.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to add to the growing body of research on victimization of law enforcement by studying news articles of incidents of fatalities and injuries of law enforcement officers from 2012 to 2016, specifically examining sex of the victim, method of

harm, incident location, and type of call of the reported incidents.

Results are shown using contingency tables (cross tabulations), in addition, to graphic representations to illustrate fatality and injury comparisons according to each demographic, including representations by year.

Sex of the Victim

Table 1 illustrates that male officers had a greater number of fatalities (21), and greater number of injuries (19) compared to the total number of female officers with one fatality and two injuries. Additionally, Table 1 shows that male officers were killed on-duty at a greater amount than injured on-duty, whereas females were injured on-duty at a greater amount than killed on-duty.

Results of Figure 1 show a larger total number of male officers victimized than female officers within each year of study (n=50). In 2012 there were four male law enforcement officers killed or injured in the line of duty reported in the sample collected, compared to zero female law enforcement officers. In 2013, male officers were reported in three articles compared to one article reporting a death or injury of a female officer. 11 male law enforcement officers were killed or injured, compared to zero female officers reported in 2014 articles. Both 2015 and 2016 reported one incident of a female officer killed or injured in the line of duty. Additionally, 2015 had six articles of male officers killed or injured in the line of duty, while 2016 was exceedingly higher with 16 incidents of male officers killed or injured in the line of duty.

Method of Harm

Table 2 shows that while shootings were the leading method of harm for both fatalities and injuries of law enforcement officers, injuries by shootings occurred slightly more than shootings resulting in a fatality. Being hit by a vehicle was equally reported for both fatalities and injuries of law enforcement officers. Furthermore, physical assaults accounted for only

Table 1: Fatality or Injury* Sex of the Victim

		Fatality or injury		Total
		Fatality	Injury	
Sex of the victim	Male	21	19	40
	Female	1	2	3
Total		22	21	43

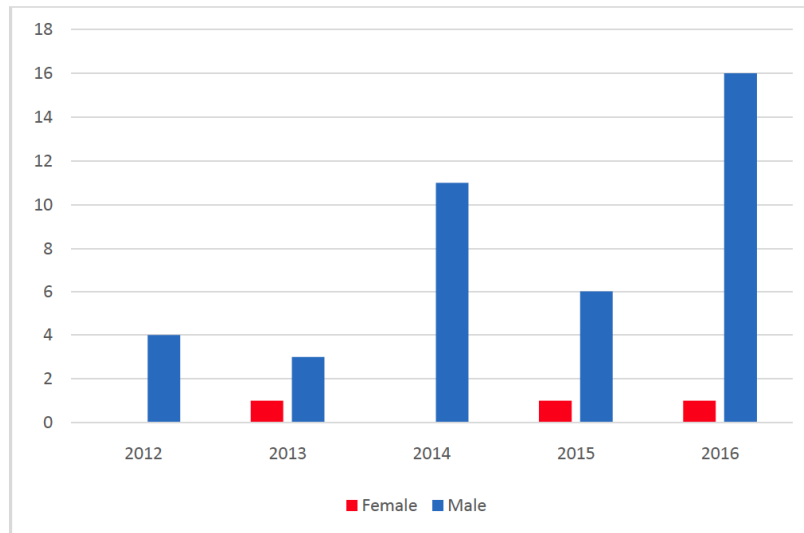


Figure 1: Fatality and injury comparison by year – sex of the victim.

Table 2: Fatality or Injury * Method of Harm

		Method of harm				Total
		Shooting	Hit by vehicle	Physical assault	Vehicle pursuit/collision	
Fatality or injury	Fatality	16	5	0	1	22
	Injury	19	5	4	0	28
Total		35	10	4	1	50

injuries, while vehicle pursuit/collision accounted for only fatalities. The results can be used to conclude that law enforcement officers are killed or injured on-duty with the greatest number of incidents occurring from shootings compared to the other methods of harm.

Figure 2 illustrates a comparison by year of fatalities and injuries based on method of harm. Results show that a larger total amount of law enforcement officers were killed or injured in the line of duty from shootings more frequently than other methods of harm with 35

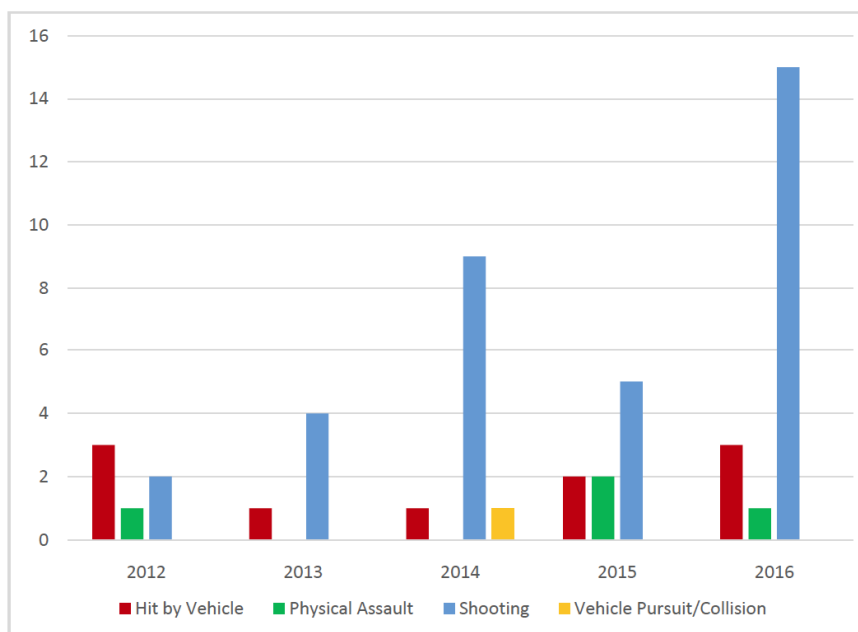


Figure 2: Fatality and injury comparison by year – method of harm.

Table 3: Fatality or Injury * Incident Location

		Incident location			Total
		Residence	Road	Other	
Fatality or injury	Fatality	7	14	1	22
	Injury	5	19	4	28
Total		12	33	5	50

incidents collectively reported, accounting for 70% of the sample (n=50). Incidents of shootings of law enforcement officers were more frequent in 2016 compared to any other year of study. 2014 was the only year of study in the sample that produced an incident of an officer being killed or injured by a vehicle pursuit/collision. In addition, the sample did not report any incidents of physical assaults in 2013 and 2014.

Incident Location

Table 3 shows that roadways account for the greatest total amount of both on-duty fatalities and injuries with 33 incidents; with injuries (19) accounting for slightly more incidents compared to fatalities (14). Conversely, results show more incidents of fatalities at residences (7) compared to incidents resulting in injuries (5). The results can be used to conclude that law enforcement officers are killed or injured on-duty with the greatest number of incidents occurring on roadways compared to other location types.

Figure 3 illustrates a comparison by year of fatalities and injuries based on incident location. As previously stated, results show a greater number of occurrences of law enforcement officers killed or injured in the line

of duty on a roadway than other locations with 33 incidents collectively reported, accounting for 66% of the sample (n=50). Incidents of fatalities and injuries on roadways increased each year of study and were most frequent in 2016, accounting for the highest incident location rate in each of the five years of study. Furthermore, incidents occurring at residences accounted for the next highest location, however 2012 was the only year that other locations had a greater rate of incidents compared to residences and had the same rate as other locations in 2015.

Type of Call

Table 4 illustrates that incidents involving other types of calls accounted for the majority of on-duty fatalities and injuries with 24 collective incidents, reporting more incidents resulting in injuries than fatalities. Incidents occurring during calls of a suspicious person and traffic stops had more injuries than fatalities, whereas incidents arising at a call of a domestic disturbance and during warrant services had more fatalities than injuries. The results can be used to conclude that law enforcement officers are killed or injured with a greater number of incidents occurring during other types of calls.

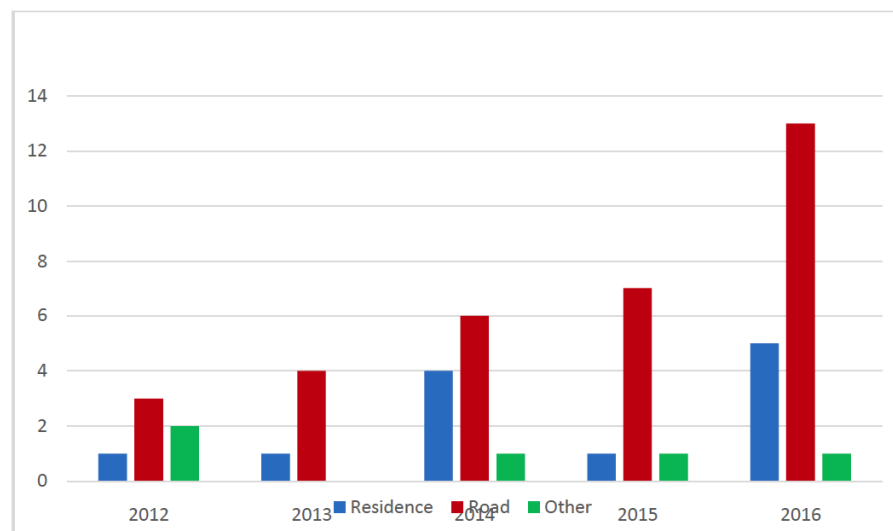
**Figure 3: Fatality and injury comparison by year—incident location.**

Table 4: Fatality or Injury * Type of Call

		Type of call					Total
		Warrant Service	Traffic stop	Domestic disturbance	Suspicious person	Other	
Fatality or injury	Fatality	2	3	4	4	9	22
	Injury	1	4	3	5	15	28
Total		3	7	7	9	24	50

Summary of Results

The findings show a larger total number of male law enforcement officers victimized on-duty compared to female law enforcement officers. It was also found that a larger number of law enforcement officers were killed and injured on duty from gunfire (shooting) than other methods of harm. Additionally, a larger number of law enforcement officers were killed or injured on a roadway than other locations. Furthermore, it was found that other types of calls had the largest number of incidents of on-duty fatalities and injuries. Although findings did not produce a clear characteristic for every area of focus, useful information on police victimization was still produced. However, a future study using a larger sample size may produce clearer findings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the above data analysis, it may be concluded that male law enforcement officers are killed or injured on-duty at a greater amount than female law enforcement officers, therefore, RQ 1 – The total number of male law enforcement officers killed or injured on-duty is greater than the total number of female law enforcement officers killed or injured on-duty – was supported. The general predominance of male law enforcement officers across agencies and jurisdictions may be a reason for this finding. The large number of male officers in a department puts more male officers on duty at any given time, thus increasing the likelihood that if there is an incident of a victimization of a police officer, it will likely involve a male officer.

It may be concluded that law enforcement officers are killed or injured in a greater number of incidents occurring from shootings (gunfire) while on duty, consequently, RQ 2 – The total number of law enforcement officers killed or injured from gunfire is greater than other methods of harm – was supported. Collective incidents of fatalities and injuries of law enforcement officers from shootings were exceedingly

higher than incidents involving other methods of harm – hit by vehicle, physical assault, and vehicle pursuit. A reason for this finding may be that firearms are readily available and seem to be widely owned, whether legally or illegally. Firearms have the capability of causing the maximum harm in a relatively short period of time and can be used at various distances from the target, specifically a police officer; whereas knives, personal weapons (hands, teeth, feet etc.), and vehicles all require the perpetrator to be near the officer to inflict harm. Although ‘stabbing’ is included in the method of harm categories, the sample did not produce any incidents of officers being hurt or killed from a knife, therefore was not included in the data analysis. These theories do not provide a causal explanation; however, they do provide possible reasoning for the research findings.

Furthermore, it may be concluded that law enforcement officers are killed or injured on roadways with a greater number of incidents compared to other locations. Although residences did have a high number of incidents of fatalities and injuries, roadways were exceedingly higher in incidents involving law enforcement officers. Consequently, RQ 3 – The total number of law enforcement officers killed or injured on a roadway is greater than other locations – was supported. Officers spend a great deal of their shift while on-duty in their department issued vehicles and are readily seen patrolling streets and highways. Officers can be viewed as more vulnerable while on patrol, out of the vehicle performing a traffic stop, responding to a traffic collision, or simply being parked to complete necessary paperwork. If the objective is to hurt or kill a police officer, roadways allow for quick and relatively easy getaway for perpetrators; often seen in incidents of officers shot during a traffic stop, or ambushed while sitting in their vehicle with the perpetrator quickly fleeing the scene. These may be various reasons for this finding.

Based on the data analysis, law enforcement officers are killed or injured during other types of calls, therefore, RQ 4 – The total number of law enforcement

officers killed or injured during a traffic stop is greater than various other types of responding calls – was not supported. Type of calls could have been expanded to include more specific calls, however for this study, it was decided to keep the categories narrowed down to a small number of common call types. Furthermore, most of the sample consisted of reported incidents other than the listed categories. Despite the initial hypothesis that officers were killed or injured during traffic stops more than the various other types of calls, it was found that although traffic stops do account for many on-duty deaths and injuries of officers, incidents of police victimization occur at a greater rate during arrest attempts, assisting motorists (stranded and vehicle collisions), unprovoked ambush/premediated attacks (both when arriving to a residence and while parked in a marked patrol vehicle), suicidal parties, and calls reporting shots fired; all of which were categorized in the 'other' category.

Although this research has yielded results that have further shed light on victimization of police officers, more extensive research may lead to a more causal understanding of victimization of law enforcement. The results must take into consideration that all data was gathered from news articles. Findings may not reflect actual numbers of victimization incidents, but rather reflects the media's perspective of the representation of data. For example, the greatest total number of victimization incidents involving firearms could be due to the media's perspective of public controversy surrounding firearms.

Policy Implications

Implications of this thesis could aid in potential recommendations to law enforcement agencies for policy and training practices of law enforcement officers by identifying patterns of sex of the victim, specific methods of harm used against police officers, the most common location of these incidents, and the type of call that is related to high frequencies of fatalities and injuries. Although descriptive, these findings can potentially lead to increased officer safety and decreased numbers of fatalities and injuries of our nation's law enforcement officers. This study can also lead to future and more detailed causal analysis and research.

LIMITATIONS

As with any research study, there are limitations and shortcomings of the current study. A major

limitation of this thesis is that only one source from each state was used, including only five articles from each source, resulting in a small sample size, making data non-representative. It is recommended to expand the sample size in future research to not only gain a more accurate picture of victimization of law enforcement officers, but also to determine the reliability of this study.

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