

# Militarization, Community Policing, and Use of Force

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## Background

- Photos depicting militarized law enforcement officers in places like Ferguson have stunned the public and brought the issue of militarization to light
- Community policing initiatives have been introduced as a way to decrease tensions and build rapport between citizens and police

## Current Study

- Aims to empirically test minority threat theory using data reported from law enforcement agencies (LEAs)
- **RQ1:** Does militarization of LEAs relate to use of force?
  - Minority threat theory says LEAs serve to protect the dominant powers in society from racial/ethnic minorities
  - Militarization allows for better control of threatening citizens, which can come in the form of use of force
- **RQ2:** Does participation in community policing initiatives relate to use of force?
  - Minority threat theory says structural conditions are the ultimate cause of use of force, therefore organizational policies will not affect it

## Hypotheses

- **H1:** Militarization is positive and significantly related to use of force
- **H2:** Participation in community policing initiatives is positive and significantly related to use of force

## Data and Measures

- LEMAS 2013: nationally representative sample of state and local LEAs in the U.S. N= 2,822. Response rate 86%
- Census 2009 population data
- Uniform Crime Reporting 2013 data
- Dependent variable: reported incidences of use of force over the past year
- Independent variables: community policing, militarization, and demographics of the agency and communities

## Analytic Strategy

- Negative binomial regression with robust standard errors
- Standardized the coefficients using z- scores

Table 1. Negative binomial regression regressing use of force onto predictors; n= 848.

Variables	b <sub>z</sub>	RSE
<b>Community Policing</b>		
SARA problem solving	.041	.075
Community partnership	.080	.060
Assignment to same beat	.269	.079***
Community survey info	.167	.056**
Mission statement	.174	.064**
<b>Militarization</b>		
Rifle	.138	.062*
Drone	.057	.029*
Soft projectile	.343	.088***
Shotgun	-.099	.091
Chemical spray	.106	.045*
Baton	.175	.055***
Taser	.201	.067**
Body armor at all times	-.075	.099
Airplane	.004	.028
Helicopter	.157	.040***
Swat	.127	.050*
Video camera on patrol car	-.180	.056***
<b>Demographics</b>		
Black officers	.197	.061***
% Hispanic population	.138	.072
% Black population	.148	.068*
Crime rate	5.076	.779***
Income	-.069	.057
Officers/population	-.352	.064***
Intercept	3.413	.079***
<b>Model Statistics</b>		
Wald chi <sup>2</sup>	941.84***	

\* p ≤ .05 \*\* p ≤ .01 \*\*\* p ≤ .001

## Discussion

- Most militarization and community policing variables are associated with higher reported incidences of use of force
- % Black population is associated with higher reported incidences of use of force
- Indicates support for minority threat theory and demonstrates community policing initiatives are not successful in fulfilling goals

## Limitations

- Self-reported data can be unreliable
- A lot of missing data in LEMAS
- Study is cross-sectional, therefore cannot determine causality

## Future Directions

- Need for longitudinal studies
- Test more aspects of militarization: current study mainly captures the material indicators

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