

James F. Albrecht
Garth den Heyer *Editors*

Police Use of Force

Global Perspectives and Policy
Implications



Springer

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This book is dedicated to police officers across the globe, who continue to make personal sacrifices to ensure that society remains safe and secure and particularly to those who have lost their lives while honorably serving their communities.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called the children
of God.”*

Matthew 5:9—King James Bible

*This book is dedicated to my two children,
Jimmy and Kristiana, who continue to
provide me with constant motivation through
their unlimited sense of curiosity and their
enthusiasm for life and learning.*

James F. Albrecht

*This book is dedicated to my two grandsons,
Liam and Joshua.*

Garth den Heyer

Foreword

When Ego Bittner posited that we need the Police when “something ought not to be happening about which something needs to be done RIGHT NOW,” he also implied that in order for that something to stop from happening, police officers who intervene to prevent this “something” from happening need to achieve compliance.

Following this argument, Rubinstein postulated that “use of force by the police is not a matter of if, but rather when and how much.”

Finally, this writer has stated, for decades now, that the more civilized we become as a society, and the more educated we are about our rights and privileges in the era of celebration of the importance of human rights, the more we resent the idea of being subject to a profession which carries the right to use coercive force and, ultimately, make the unfortunate call to take someone’s life.

Given the three, aforementioned, complex notions, one needs to engage in an academic discourse as to how police officers in the field can actually achieve the necessary compliance to stop the “something that ought not to be happening” from actually happening. How can they achieve this end result, using the minimal amount of force, and while engaging in this dangerous and often impossible to resolve situation, do it with the necessary precautions that will lead to a successful end and a minimal amount of criticism from the public they are charged to protect?

This book is an excellent, much overdue, and needed contribution to both the academe and the practitioners in the field. In the era of extreme assaults on the legitimacy of the police profession, it is a mandatory read for those who claim to understand the police profession, those who want to “reimagine” it, and those who actually put their lives on the line every day in an attempt to save the lives of others.

Policing is a profession predicated upon the explicit, but also implied notion that its members have the authority to use coercive force to achieve compliance. The first step to accept this fact is to try to understand it as a true profession, from a comparative angle, in order to clarify the notion that when people engage in what they are not supposed to engage in, there needs to be a swift and certain response on the part of police officers.

A recent participation in an international conference brought a relevant quote from one of the presenters, when a police officer from Iceland was asked by a

counterpart how he achieves compliance while not carrying a gun, as officers in Iceland are mostly unarmed. The officer, in response, pointed to his mouth. Yes, in the ideal world of policing a society that has less than a handful of shootings a year, his response sounded like the correct one. However, in the not so perfect world of hundreds of mass shootings a year, or even in environments where people are simply heavily armed and willing to point their guns at others, it may be hard, or simply impossible, to merely follow the tactical option described by this police officer from Iceland.

Focus on police use of force protocols, from a comparative angle, highlights the complexity of this profession and its fundamental tool, while at the same time provides much food for thought that can, and should, be translated into training modules and a transformational change in the way officers are prepared for their daily tasks.

At the same time, it also hints at another, much needed change, a thorough look at what competencies and skills police departments need to look for before they recruit individuals to discharge their duties, having the ability to use coercive force, when needed.

If we agree upon the notion that policing is indeed a profession predicated upon regular use of force, be it from the mere presence standpoint and up to the deadly use of coercive force, then maybe we should rethink, in a fundamental manner, who the ideal candidate for this profession would be.

I would be remiss if I had not concluded this preface with a simple notion: use of force never looks pretty, no matter how justified or restricted. This book, edited by Albrecht and den Heyer, is indeed a very important contribution to help us better understand more about the way we think about the police and the field of policing.

Furthermore, it will help us improve this most noble of professions.

Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
New York, NY, USA

Maria (Maki) Haberfeld

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Part I
Police Use of Force
in the United States and Canada

Chapter 1

Analyzing the Use of Deadly Force by Police in Canada and the United States



Rick Parent and Catherine Parent

Canada and the United States of America: Bordering Nations

Canada and the United States are bordering nations that share similar social and economic experiences. The population of Canada in 2021 is roughly 38 million within a nation comprised of 9985 million square kilometres. Canada is the second-largest country in the world, located in the upper half of North America. The nation is vast and rugged. To the south, Canada shares 8890 kilometres of land border with the United States, the longest international border in the world. Canada's largest cities and the bulk of the nation's population live within a few hundred kilometres of the US/Canadian border (Statistics Canada, 2021a, b). The nation is highly developed with an advanced economy and membership in several international institutions and groupings that include NATO, the G7, and the World Trade Organization. The nation is also a bilingual parliamentary democracy providing universal health care for all citizens.

The United States is the fourth largest country in the world within a nation comprised of 9834 million square kilometres. In 2021, the population of the United States is estimated to be roughly 332 million making it the third most populated nation in the world (World Factbook, 2021). It is considered a federal republic with three separate branches of government having one of the world's largest economies. Internationally, the United States is seen as a leader in areas that include human rights, education, economic freedom, and quality of life. It is a founding member of the United Nations with membership in several international institutions and groupings that also include NATO, the G7, and the World Trade Organization.

Both Canada and the United States reflect nations founded on democratic principles and high qualities of life, enjoying a GNP that is one of the highest in the

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world. Canada and the United States also administer national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) programs that are based on police reported data, thus allowing for limited comparisons of crime rates.

Policing in Canada

Policing is the largest component of the Canadian criminal justice system with a budget of over \$14 billion (Whitelaw & Parent, 2018: 21). There are approximately 200 police agencies and 69,000 police officers in the nation reflecting a rate of police strength of 183 officers per 100,000 population (Statistics Canada, 2019). Sixty percent of all police officers are employed within five Canadian police services—the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Toronto Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), the Sûreté du Québec (SQ), and the City of Montreal Police Service (Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, or SPVM). Stand-alone municipal police services in Canada represent the remaining 40% of the police personnel. In 2015, there were a total of 176 municipal police services of which 117 police services had fewer than 25 staff. In the far north, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon utilize the services of the federal RCMP for policing (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Police officers carry out their tasks within several legislative frameworks that define their roles, powers, and responsibilities. Policing in Canada is carried out at four levels: municipal, provincial, federal, and First Nations (Indigenous). Most police work is performed by services operating at the municipal level. Across Canada, municipal police services range in size from three officers to more than 5000 officers (the Toronto Police Service has 5366 plus an additional 2818 civilian personnel, and the Montreal Police Service has 4583 and an additional 1364 civilian personnel), and have jurisdiction within a city's boundaries (Statistics Canada, 2016).

A unique feature of the Canadian policing landscape is the evolution of “autonomous” Indigenous police forces occurring within the context of a broader movement leading towards Indigenous self-government. Under the First Nations Policing Policy (FNPP), Indigenous policing is implemented across Canada through tripartite agreements negotiated among the federal government, provincial or territorial governments, and First Nations. In 2015, there were 186 First Nations policing program agreements in place in Canada, providing policing services to roughly 65% of First Nation and Inuit communities nationwide. A total of 1299 police officer positions receive funding under the FNPP, serving a population of approximately 422,000 in 453 communities. Officers in Indigenous police forces generally have full powers to enforce the *Criminal Code* and federal and provincial statutes, as well as band bylaws on reserve lands (Whitelaw & Parent, 2018: 24).

In Canada, the police are responsible for the services they provide to the community as well as for their conduct within the community. There are both legislative and administrative frameworks for holding Canadian police officers accountable for their actions. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has had a significant

impact on police work. Since its enactment in the early 1980s, a number of major decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada (so-called Charter cases) have further defined the role and powers of the police. Police officers can be held accountable under the Criminal Code as well as under civil and administrative law for their actions. For example, the police have been held civilly liable for negligent investigations and both negligent supervision and negligent retention of employees. Furthermore, the various provincial police acts set out mechanisms and procedures for overseeing and reviewing the actions and decisions of police officers. One of the most significant recent developments is the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v. McNeil* (2009), as a result of which police services must now release a police officer's disciplinary records to defense counsel prior to a criminal prosecution. Police services and their employees are also held accountable by coroner's inquests or fatality inquiries and by human rights boards and commissions. Freedom of information legislation has also established a heightened level of accountability in relation to police records and their management.

Every Canadian province has established an office whose task is to receive and review general complaints against police officers. The role of each oversight body varies, ranging from reviewing complaint investigations and making recommendations to conducting the investigation itself. In addition, there has also been the establishment of policing oversight bodies to review specific issues related to the police use of force. For example, in Canada's most populated province of Ontario, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) provides external civilian review of police activities. The SIU specifically investigates cases involving serious injury, sexual assault, or death that may have been the result of criminal offenses committed by police officers. The SIU is independent of any police service and operates directly under the provincial attorney general. It has the authority to investigate municipal, regional, and provincial police officers. The director of the SIU has the authority to decide whether charges are warranted in a case, and he or she reports this decision directly to the attorney general. This model of external civilian review has also been established in other provinces. In the western province of Alberta, the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) has a similar but broader mandate in that it also investigates sensitive matters involving police conduct (Whitelaw & Parent, 2018: 28).

Policing in the United States of America

In the United States, there are approximately 18,000 separate police agencies and a wide variety of governmental agencies that have police powers (e.g., United States Postal Service). Together these various law enforcement agencies employ roughly 700,000 sworn law enforcement officers serving approximately 330 million people (USCB, 2021). These numbers reflect a rate of police strength of roughly 212 officers per 100,000 population. In contrast, Canada has fewer officers per capita at a rate of 183 per 100,000 population.

Policing in the United States is complex. Although the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution reserves police powers for the individual states, law enforcement agencies have evolved at the local, state, and federal levels, each having unique operational responsibilities. For example, the national government has police agencies such as the FBI and the Secret Service, but they are authorized to enforce only those laws prescribed under the powers granted to Congress. The FBI, part of the Department of Justice, is responsible for the investigation of all violations of federal laws. The FBI has jurisdiction over fewer than 200 criminal matters, including offenses such as kidnapping, extortion, interstate transportation of stolen motor vehicles, and treason (Cole, 1987). In addition, the FBI is responsible for the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system that collects national statistics on crime, criminals, and criminal justice agencies.

For the most part, law enforcement in the US is a function of state and local agencies. Within this setting, there are 52 separate criminal law jurisdictions in the United States. Of these 52 jurisdictions, one exists in each of the 50 states, one in the District of Columbia and one represents the Federal jurisdiction. Each of these jurisdictions has its own criminal law and procedure as well as its own law enforcement agencies. Although the systems of law enforcement among the 50 states are quite similar there are frequently substantial differences in the penalties for similar offenses. Furthermore, a given jurisdiction in the US may be policed by several law enforcement agencies: a city police department, a sheriff's department, a state police organization, and several federal agencies (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms).

Along with federal police agencies, each state operates their own law enforcement agency that may include a state police or a state highway patrol agency. Historically, state police agencies were created for a variety of reasons such as the need to provide law enforcement in rural or undeveloped areas, the need to investigate criminal activities occurring outside of city or county jurisdictions, and to provide assistance to local police agencies if needed (Gaines & Kappeler, 2015).

There are also local police agencies in the United States. These local police agencies include city, municipal, college, university, and county agencies. County police departments include sheriff's departments and county police agencies. In addition, Tribal governments operate over 200 local police departments. Combined, these local police agencies employ the largest number of police officers in the United States and account for the vast majority of police services provided (Gaines & Kappeler, 2015).

Policing and Violent Crime

While the societies of Canada and the United States of America are similar in many ways there are significant differences in the rates of extreme violence between the two nations. Crime rates between Canada and the United States, for the year 2020,

indicate that the US has much higher rates of violent crime per capita. Despite the differences in crime rates, previous research suggests that trends in crime between the two countries have been quite similar during the 1980s and 1990s. Both countries administer national Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) programs but use different offense definitions and techniques to record and count crimes (Statistics Canada, 2001). Canada and the United States also have very different regional variations in crime and varying economic and socio-demographic characteristics. Nonetheless, it is possible to examine selected acts of community violence that include the rates for homicide, justifiable homicide, the police use of deadly force, and the murder of police officers.

For example, in Canada, there were 743 homicides in 2020 resulting in a national rate of 1.95 homicides per 100,000 population. In comparison, there were 21,570 homicides in the United States in 2020, resulting in a national rate of 6.5 per 100,000 population—a figure that is more than three times higher than Canada's. It is interesting to note that, in the United States, private citizens (non-police) "justifiably" kill roughly 350 individuals each year. Certain willful killings are considered to be justifiable or excusable. In the United States, justifiable homicide is defined as, and limited to, the killing of a felon by a law enforcement officer in the line of duty, or the killing of a felon by a private citizen during the commission of a felony (UCR, 2021). Since these killings have been determined to be justifiable by way of a law enforcement investigation they are tabulated separately and apart from murder statistics.

The vast majority of these individuals are shot and killed with a handgun. In contrast, private citizens in Canada rarely, if ever, are involved in a "justifiable" shooting incident largely due to the unavailability of handguns as well as the restriction of firearms in general. In those extremely rare incidents where a member of the Canadian public has discharged a firearm to prevent a crime, the individual discharging the firearm is often charged with a firearm offense or, other Criminal Code offense, resulting in a judicial examination of the incident (Parent & Parent, 2018).

Noteworthy is that the homicide rate in general has been rising in the United States with recent UCR data indicating nearly a 30% increase in homicides from the year 2019 to 2020. This is the largest single-year increase since the 1960s. The increase in homicides is believed to be based on a recent spike in gun violence highlighting that 77% of reported murders were committed with a gun (UCR, 2021). Overall, violent crime in the United States was up 5.2% in 2020 with 1,277,696 incidents reported. The 2020 statistics reflect a rate of violent crime as 398.5 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants. The estimated rate of property crime was 1958.2 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants, reflecting a decline of 8.1% (UCR, 2021).

In contrast, Statistics Canada noted that the homicide rate in Canada increased 7%, from 1.83 homicides per 100,000 population in 2019 to 1.95 in 2020. Canadian police agencies reported higher rates of all three violent firearm violations: discharging a firearm with intent (+21%, 1850 incidents in 2020), pointing of a firearm (+14%, 1670 incidents), and using a firearm in the commission of an indictable offense (+3%, 617 incidents). However, robbery, and the act of violence or threat of violence during the commission of a theft, was down sharply.

Crimes that are more serious but not specifically related to firearms, such as homicide, robbery, assault, and sexual assault, may also involve the use or presence of a firearm. In 2020, there were 8344 victims of violent crime where a firearm was present during the commission of the offense, or a rate of 29 per 100,000 population. This rate was unchanged when compared with 2019. In sum, there were over 2 million police-reported *Criminal Code* incidents (excluding traffic) in 2020, about 195,000 fewer incidents than in 2019. At 5301 incidents per 100,000 population, the police-reported crime rate—which measures the volume of crime—decreased 10% in 2020 with a recorded 5301 incidents per 100,000 population (Statistics Canada, 2021a, b).

Police Use of Deadly Force

When police officers in western society use firearms against individuals, it may be assumed that they are using lethal force. Generally, officers who discharge a firearm or utilize other forms of potentially deadly force are attempting to immediately incapacitate a perceived lethal threat to themselves or another individual. This decision-making process will usually transpire at a time when the individual officer is under considerable stress and perceived danger, leaving him or her open to the influence of a variety of physiological and psychological factors.

In both Canada and the USA, police shootings and the use of deadly force tend to generate the most media attention, public interest, and controversy on police misconduct. However, in terms of volume, the police use of deadly force is more of an issue in the USA than in Canada. Proportionately, and in absolute numbers, far more people die by legal intervention in the USA. One possible explanation for this difference relates to the availability and use of handguns by the public in the USA as well as the American Constitutional provision to bear arms. Possession of a handgun is both highly regulated and restricted in Canada. Furthermore, Canada has no provision within the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* enshrining the right to possess firearms (Parent & Parent, 2018).

While policing within Canada and the United States of America is similar in many ways there are also differences between the two nations. For example, the Canadian province of Newfoundland remained the last bastion of “unarmed policing” on the continent of North America until as recently as 1998. This was because Canada’s most eastern province entered into a confederation with Canada in 1949, becoming the nations tenth province. Before 1949, Newfoundland was under the guidance of Great Britain and distinct from the rest of North America in many ways, including that of policing. The former British Colony created an independent police force using the Royal Irish Constabulary as a model, thus drawing upon the best features of Irish and British Policing. When joining with Canada, Newfoundland maintained their tradition of having an unarmed police force while the rest of North America had armed their police. For over 120 years, the “Royal Newfoundland Constabulary” (RNC) continued to be the only policing jurisdiction within Canada

and the United States where day-to-day street level policing was conducted without police having immediate access to firearms. This was a fact that was long considered to be a source of pride by the local population of Newfoundland. While the police had access to firearms that were kept either secured in the trunk of their vehicles or at their police station, members of the RNC rarely, if ever, utilized firearms. A review of police shootings revealed that RNC personnel had been involved in only one shooting incident during the 20-year period from 1978 to 1998. This single shooting incident was non-fatal (Parent, 2004).

However, owing to changes within society and the influx of visitors from the United States and the rest of Canada, members of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary lobbied to have immediate access to firearms like their Canadian and American counterparts. In June 1998, the RNC was granted its request and shortly after being equipped with firearms the RNC became involved in two shooting incidents underscoring the complexities associated with deploying an armed police service.

Other differences between the US and Canadian police exist. For example, Canadian police officers rarely, if ever, carry their issued police service firearm on their days off. Most Canadian police agencies require that police personnel secure their firearm at their place of employment when not working. In contrast, it is not uncommon for “off-duty” police personnel in the USA to be involved in a shooting incident. One study noted that, in some instances, off-duty police officers were the first to attend the scene of a crime in progress and could be the first to confront an assailant with their police issued firearm in hand (Parent, 2004: 290). Typically, these off-duty US officers were dressed in civilian attire and were somehow alerted to shots fired outside their personal residence, or at a commercial center. The attendance of off-duty and non-uniformed police personnel to the altercation further added to the dynamics of the shooting incident.

Research has revealed that overall, there are relatively few differences in relation to the dynamics and circumstances of police use of deadly force in the United States and Canada. The issues pertaining to police use of deadly force are for the most part very similar. The major differences between these two nations are reflected in the frequency of incidents rather than the individual characteristics of a police shooting (Parent, 2004: 281–219).

The Risks Inherent in Policing

It is within this setting that approximately 1000 individuals are shot and killed by American law enforcement personnel each year. In 2015, the *Washington Post* first estimated that police agencies in the United States fatally shot 987 individuals. Reporting a population of 320 million people, this number reflects a frequency rate of roughly three fatal police shootings per 1 million individuals. The *Washington Post* continues to monitor and document fatal police shootings within the United

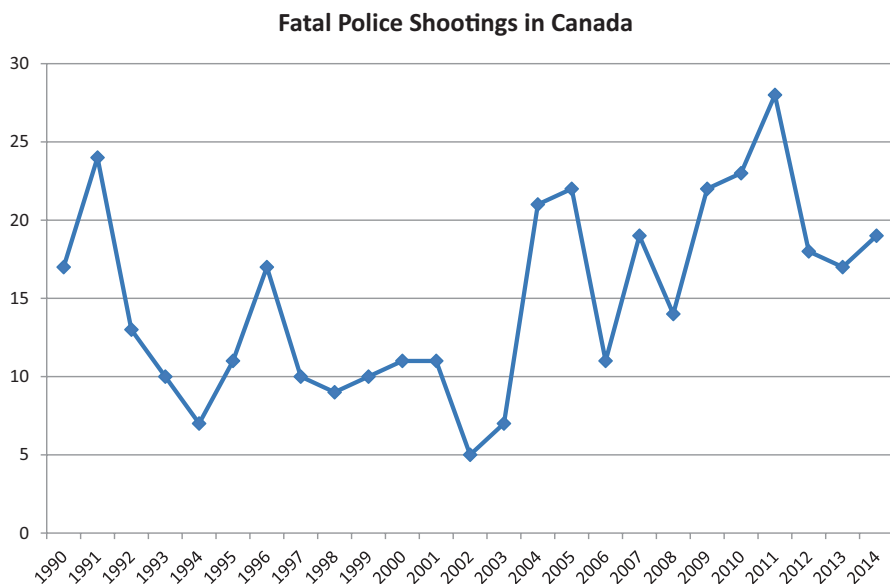


Fig. 1.1 Police use of deadly force in Canada: 1990–2014 ($n = 376$)

Frequency of Fatal Police Shootings in Relation to Relative Population in Canada

1990: 17 fatal/27,691,000 = Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 1.62 million people

2000: 11 fatal/30,685,000 = Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 2.8 million people

2005: 22 fatal/32,242,000 = Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 1.47 million people

2009: 22 fatal/33,628,000 = Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 1.53 million people

2011: 28 fatal/34,342,000 = Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 1.25 million people

2014: 19 fatal/35,543,000 = Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 1.85 million people

Note:

*The frequency of fatal police shootings per population in Canada has slightly increased over the past 25 years. Since 2004, there is a noticeable increase in fatal police shootings in Canada

From 2004 to 2014, a total of 214 fatal shootings occurred in Canada during the 11-year period of analysis reflecting a rate of roughly **19.5 fatal police shootings per year. ($n = 214/11 = 19.45$)

This high average is higher than the previous decade

***In contrast, police agencies in the United States of America fatally have shot an estimated 1000 individuals in 2015, within a nation of 320 million people. This reflects a frequency rate of roughly three fatal police shootings per one million citizens. (The Washington Post media source estimates that police agencies in the USA fatally shot 987 individuals in 2015.) The frequency rate of fatal police shootings in the USA is roughly **five times greater** than the frequency of fatal police shootings in Canada (per capita):

2014 – Canada: Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 1.85 million

2015 – United States of America: Roughly 1 fatal shooting per 320,000

Source: Parent and Parent (2018)

States, reporting that there were 999 fatal shootings in the year 2019 and 1021 in the year 2020 (Washington Post, 2021).

In stark contrast, there were 30 fatal police shootings in Canada in 2017 and 21 in 2019. Figure 1.1 indicates that that there have been 376 fatal police shootings in Canada during the 25-year period from January 01, 1990 and December 31, 2014

(Parent & Parent, 2018). This number equates to approximately 15 fatal police shootings per year during this period, reflecting a rate of one fatal shooting per 1.85 million individuals (Parent & Parent, 2018). Based on population figures, the number of deaths by legal intervention within the United States is roughly *five times greater* than the corresponding number of legal intervention deaths within neighboring Canada (per capita).

Researchers suggest that the police use of deadly force in Canada and the US typically occurs when police personnel, or a member of the public that they are protecting, are facing the immediate risk of being murdered or suffering grievous bodily harm at the hands of an assailant. The use of a police firearm is often the only means available that will immediately incapacitate the perceived lethal threat and prevent harm (Parent & Parent, 2018).

Added to the circumstances surrounding police shootings are numerous documented incidents where law enforcement personnel in Canada and the United States have faced a potentially lethal threat, but the death of a suspect *did not* occur. This category includes those incidents in which a police officer utilized potentially deadly force by discharging his or her firearm, but death did not result. In these instances, the suspect either survived his or her wounds or, in other instances, the police missed, so the suspect was not shot.

It must be emphasized that in both Canada and the United States there are also countless incidents of lethal threats to law enforcement personnel that are resolved each year without the discharge of a firearm. During these instances, the officers utilized alternate tactics or less-lethal compliance tools such as pepper spray or Taser guns to subdue the individual who was posing a lethal threat. Often, this method of resolution has occurred with an increased risk to the police officer. This increased risk to police officers has at times resulted in their deaths. Indeed, there is no other occupation in society like policing that places the risk of murder or grievous bodily harm during day-to-day duties as a condition of employment. Owing to the very nature of their day-to-day duties, operational police personnel routinely face the real possibility of being assaulted or murdered.

On average, approximately 50 police officers are murdered each year within the United States (B.J.S., 2021; O.D.M.P., 2021). In Canada, during the 11-year period from 2010 to 2020, an assailant has murdered a total of 13 police officers reflecting a rate of roughly 1 police murder per year (P.P.M.R.S., 2021). In both Canada and the United States, the police death typically occurs due to gun shot. *These figures illustrate that the risk of a police officer being murdered by an assailant is roughly four times greater in the United States than in Canada.*

Due to the precarious nature of their work police also face the risk of death due to accidental circumstances. Accidental on-duty police deaths are typically due to mishaps that include automobile and motorcycle crashes as well as being struck by a vehicle while directing traffic or standing on a highway. In this regard, it was noted that approximately 50 police officers are accidentally killed each year in the United States (B.J.S. 2021; O.D.M.P., 2021). In Canada, roughly 2 police officers will die each year, accidentally in the line of duty (P.P.M.R.S., 2021).

Theoretical Considerations: Police Use of Deadly Force

Most empirical research surrounding the police use of deadly force is grounded in theory that police behavior is influenced by the social dynamics of police-public encounters. This line of inquiry has directed an analytical focus on the structural characteristics of situations in which the police and public interact. These structural characteristics include age, race, social class, gender, attitude, sobriety, and demeanor of suspects; the seriousness of the offense; the number of police officers present; and the characteristics of the community in which the encounter takes place. It is within this theoretical framework that these “situational factors” serve as cues to influence and direct police officers to form judgements on how to react to a given situation (Alpert & Fridell, 1992; Geller & Scott, 1992).

Due to the nature of their duties, front-line police officers may react to violent encounters, often within moments of arriving at a situation. As such, research has often also focused on the related theories of violence and victimology in an attempt to understand the complex situational factors that confront police officers (Geller & Scott, 1992; MacDonald et al., 2001; White, 2001).

Research literature provides theories to explain the changing patterns of extreme violence (such as homicide) among community members, across time and geography. These theories adopt an integrated approach in that it is assumed that a combination of social and psychological factors cause persons to commit violent crimes (Geller & Scott, 1992; MacDonald et al., 2001; White, 2001; Best & Quigley, 2003). To help explain the varying levels of violence against police, it is necessary to explore possible variations in the nature of police shootings.

One of the most widely cited explanatory theories of violence is the “subculture of violence” concept pioneered by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967). They posit that, within different communities, there exist “subculture(s) with a cluster of values that support and encourage the overt use of force in interpersonal relations and group interactions.” The authors further argue that this subcultural system is normative and localized within the lower social class of society (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967: 11).

Wolfgang’s and Ferracuti’s hypothesis may offer some insight on police shooting frequencies. Within the subculture of violence theory, one may theorize that individuals predisposed to violent criminal activities will engage in contact with the police more frequently. Increased contact with police, combined with a disposition towards violence, may precipitate the actions of a police officer, resulting in greater frequencies of deadly force.

Geller and Scott (1992) add that the “structural theory” of violence asserts the influence of “broad-scale social forces such as lack of opportunity, institutional racism, persistent poverty, demographic transitions, and population density all combining to determine homicide rates. These forces operate independently of human cognition and do not require individual learning to explain their impact.”

Fyfe (1980) and other researchers have suggested that police personnel are more likely to shoot and kill individuals who are disproportionately involved in violent

crimes. The police use of deadly force is best explained by the exposure of police personnel to dangerous persons and places. Jacobs and O'Brien (1998) refer to this concept as the "reactive hypothesis" while MacDonald et al. (2001) refers to this concept as the "danger-perception" theory. This suggests that the number of criminal homicides and extreme violence in a community is correlated with the police use of deadly force. The ratio-threat represents police officers' defensive stance toward the danger of their work. Put simply, police officers are more likely to use deadly force during situations in which they encounter greater levels of violence, or when they perceive their situation to be dangerous. In this regard, Fyfe's (1986) examination of criminal homicide in New York City revealed that an area with a high rate of criminal homicide would also experience a high rate of police use of deadly force. Fyfe noted that there exists a high correlation between the police use of deadly force and threats to police and general public safety.

The Physiological Impact of Police Use of Deadly Force

Murray and Zentner (2001: 257) define *stress* as a physical and emotional state that is always present in people, but can be intensified when an environmental change or threat occurs to which an individual must respond. The individual's survival depends upon constant negotiation between environmental demands and their own adaptive capacities. Experimentation and observational examination of threat, stress, and anxiety suggest that extreme elevated stress levels negatively affect any performance and that physical and social settings can heighten anxiety. This stress is intensified in relation to dark or poorly lit places, high crime and violence areas, angry or upset people, and non-supportive social structures. While these factors affect all individuals, police officers are likely to experience even higher levels of anxiety as they often have few choices on entering into a dangerous situation.

Skolnick (1966) suggests that in reaction to the pressures they face, police officers develop a perceptual "shorthand" to identify certain kinds of people as "symbolic assailants." These symbolic assailants are individuals who use specific gestures and language and wear attire that the officer has come to recognize as a possible prelude to violence. In other words, the characteristics of a person's presentation (physical and behavioral) may be associated with individuals that engage in criminal actions. Their characteristics may be grounds for suspicion but are not necessarily conclusive of criminal activity or intent (Pate, 2012). This may also apply to symbolic settings and types of encounters, associated with communities, neighborhoods and locations that officers have come to recognize as having potential for danger. The responding officer's arousal level may be heightened upon confronting a perceived symbolic setting. This recognition and arousal pattern may serve to "trigger" the use of force, whether it is actually required or not. An officer's preconceived expectation may serve to alter facts, thereby creating an improper situational assessment and response. Symbolic situations may additionally provoke fear within an individual officer, including the fear of serious injury, disability, or death. These

noted levels of stress may serve as explanatory variables of why individual officers use force. An individual that perceives a serious threat will act on that perception. In sum, physiological and psychological changes that occur to officers under stress may also serve as important factors in an officer's decision to deploy their firearm.

Further influences of stress may also include the community environment. As a result of inadequate community resources for the mentally ill, homelessness, and increased availability/use of hallucinogenic drugs such as PCP (phencyclidine) and cocaine, there is greater potential for law enforcement officers to encounter and deal with disturbed, irrational, and perhaps violent individuals. Methamphetamine-type drugs, which are often used by this population, frequently cause the user to be aggressive and violent when confronted by law enforcement personnel.

In many instances, officers must be able to assess and interpret the cues of an individual (often within seconds) to ascertain the correct procedure in dealing with them. The behavior exhibited by a person with a mental illness can easily be misinterpreted as an aggressive act, indicating the need for the use of force. A mentally distressed individual waving a knife in the air while shouting and raging may be "talked down" by one officer using verbal communication techniques; however, another officer who encounters this individual may perceive that their life is in danger and decide that resolving the situation requires the use of a firearm. Police officers are at times placed in the precarious situation of being required to assess and instantaneously confront people in various community settings, including on the street and in residences or workplaces. Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) suggest that these factors create increased stress levels for police officers.

In sum, modern-day law enforcement agencies deal with both contemporary crime problems and a public that often expects immediate solutions to problems that are deeply rooted within society. These solutions need to be achieved within the parameters of legislation, constitutional guarantees, and the complexities of the criminal justice system. In addition, the public expects law enforcement personnel to maintain an exemplary level of service: professional and accountable to all individuals within society. The various theories and empirical studies surrounding the police use of deadly force and potentially deadly force provide some insight into why police shootings occur. Throughout these explanations, it is clear that no single theory serves to fully explain why the police use of deadly force occurs. In many instances, organizational, psychological, and sociological forces combine to influence and direct the individual police officer in the deployment of deadly force.

Analysis

The reason for the disparity in crimes and behavior associated with violence between the two neighboring nations of Canada and the United States is varied and complex. Unique to the United States is a culture of firearms and the widespread availability of handguns. This situation suggests that the perceived threat and calculated risk for police officers in the United States is substantially higher than for police officers in

Canada and in many other nations. This may partially explain why police officers in the United States utilize deadly force in greater frequency than in most western nations.

Due to the nature of their duties, police in both nations are often required to confront society's systemic failures that are manifested within community settings. On a daily basis, police may respond to domestic violence, mental illness, homelessness, drug addiction, and other complex social issues. As first responders, they are often criticized for failing to completely resolve complex situations that may be dynamic and violent. In the United States, law enforcement personnel may be quicker to respond to these issues with deadly force as a pre-emptive means in dealing with greater perceived threats of violence.

Also unique to the United States is a policing structure that creates additional challenges due in part to the vast array of police agencies and national differences. As stated, there are over 18,000 different police agencies in the United States, spread over 50 states, with few national guidelines or policies to ensure consistency in the police response. In contrast, Canada has far fewer police agencies per capita, operating within national frameworks that include one national Criminal Code and one national use of force model that regulates and directs the use of force by police personnel. Furthermore, Canada has only 10 police training centers scattered across the country, sharing information and techniques, thereby providing similar training to police personnel on a national basis. Added to these features are recruiting standards and pay/benefit scales that are comparable throughout the roughly 200 police agencies in Canada (Parent & Parent, 2018).

Furthermore, Canadian policing emphasizes community values incorporating problem-solving responses that involve community partnerships. High public expectations have also ensured that officers are held accountable for their actions. Canadian police agencies have responded to this demand by developing organizational policies and procedures that are reinforced by internal processes and mechanisms. Several external factors, including evolving case law and designated police oversight agencies provide checks to ensure police transparency and accountability in the use of force (Parent & Parent, 2018). In contrast, civilian oversight in the United States can vary greatly from county to county.

Conclusion

In summary, community attitudes towards firearms, violence and crime appear to be closely related to the rates of justifiable homicide by the police. Social, cultural, and historical forces of a geographic area may also influence and direct the associated levels of violence. Further research of extreme violence and the risk of violence perceived by police personnel in their policing jurisdiction may assist in understanding the patterns of police shootings from both a national and international perspective.