Explaining Law Enforcement Officer-Involved Vehicle Collisions and Other Police Behaviors

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The threat posed by officer-involved motor vehicle collisions to the safety of police and the public has received increased attention from practitioners and researchers in the past decade or so. Whether or not officers in collisions are also disproportionately involved in other negative on-duty events remains unknown. This study examines the relationship between officer involvement in vehicle collisions and deadly force, citizen complaints for excessive force and other reasons, and vehicle pursuits. Results are based on a survey of patrol officers and their supervisors in a large police department. The findings demonstrate a significant relationship between collisions and citizen complaints for reasons other than excessive force but none of the other negative officer outcomes. In addition, off-duty collisions and secondary employment consistently increase the likelihood of on-duty crashes. The policy implications of these findings for reducing officer collisions will be discussed.