

Hungry Hornets: Checkpoint 3

1) Does assignment toward a particular neighborhood yield higher drug/alcohol abuse and medical allegations among officers? This could represent a function of heightened stress. Alternatively, are officers with drug/alcohol abuse allegations more likely to work in certain areas? What are the social characteristics of these regions?

2) How is the frequency of each type of drug/alcohol and medical abuse allegation varying over time?

Some interesting trends are notable from our interactive word cloud, exhibiting the frequency of each kind of drug & alcohol abuse and medical allegation over time, from 1980 through 2018. Perhaps most notable is the increase in number of allegation types reported over time. While early allegations pertained to “intoxication” and “impairment,” these began to diversify, especially beginning in the late 1980s. Perhaps this reflects an increased awareness or focus on the various kinds of substance abuse and medical violations among CPD officers over time, or an evolution in the recording and documentation practices of the CPD.

In terms of specific allegation types, “positive drug screen – physical exam” appears to become increasingly elevated, particularly in the 1990s. As evidenced by our word cloud in checkpoint 2, both civilian and officer complaints of this allegation type were prevalent, suggesting that in this era, the attitude towards substance abuse among officers was focused on identifying who may have been “on drugs” based on a visual assessment, again a very subjective category. Furthermore, in the 2000s, there was an increased prevalence of off duty violations, including intoxication, driving under the influence (DUI) and substance abuse allegations. This suggests a heightened focus among complainants on officer activity outside of work, which could indicate a trend towards higher surveillance of officer activity in general.

In terms of overall number of allegations, an intriguing pattern emerges between 2016-2018. Though there are multiple allegation types, the words/phrases are homogeneously smaller in size during this time interval, suggesting that the overall volume of drug & alcohol abuse and medical allegations was reduced from previous years. This is surprising, given the heightened attention on police practices driven by multiple controversial cases in this period. It is however possible that the CPD and society were more focused on other types of allegations (i.e. pertaining to minorities and use of force), resulting in less of an emphasis on substance abuse and medical allegations.