

STRUCTURAL RACISM, POLICE USE OF LETHAL FORCE, & QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

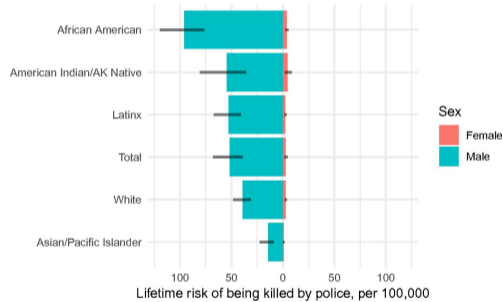
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Workshop on Structural Racism and Rigorous Models of Social Inequity

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- Last year 1,051 Americans were killed by law enforcement.



Edwards, Esposito, and Lee (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race-ethnicity, and sex

- Challenging institutional and systemic racism requires an understanding as to how we arrived in the situation.
- There is a long tradition in the economic history community of tackling just this kind of challenge:
 - slavery, emancipation, and reconstruction (Conrad and Meyer 1964; Fogel and Engerman 1974; Ransom and Sutch 1977).
 - lynchings (Cook 2014; Cook, Logan, and Parman 2018).
 - segregation (Logan and Parman 2017; Collins and Margo 2003).

- We will examine the emerging quasi-experimental and applied econometric literature regarding the use of lethal force in policing with the aim of understanding:
 - the evolution of the use of lethal force in policing over time.
 - the role of structural factors in determining the use of force.
 - the impact of policy interventions over time.

INTRODUCTION

PRE-1960s POLICING

POLICING IN THE 1960s & 1970s

POLICING AND LETHAL FORCE POST-1980

TAKEAWAYS

RACIALIZED ORIGINS OF AMERICAN POLICING

PERSISTENCE IN RACIALIZED POLICING

EARLY MUNICIPAL POLICING & THE GREAT MIGRATION

PRE-1960s POLICING

Early American policing is tied to America's complex story of race and discrimination.

- Slave patrols were one of the earliest and most formalized forms of American policing.
- Militias actively criminalize behavior of former slaves post-Civil War.
 - At minimum, 3,700 lynchings of Black civilians between 1880 and 1930.
 - At least, 72 race riots between 1913 and 1963.
- State-sanctioned violence either directly or indirectly involved police and majority of these incidents are related to some form of enforcement of criminal justice standards (Lieberson & Silverman, 1965).
 - Purposeful failure of law enforcement to provide protection against lynchings and other types of white mob violence (Chicago Commission on Race Relations 1922).

FIGURE A

Historical lynchings and officer-involved shootings involving blacks

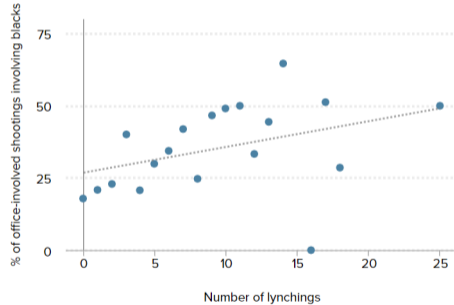
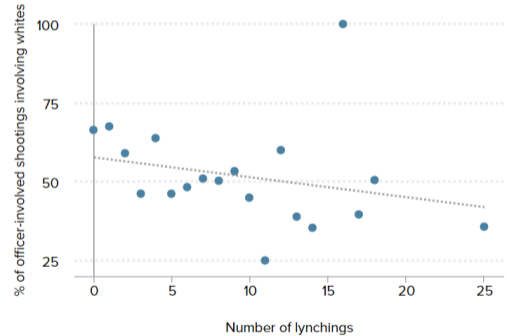


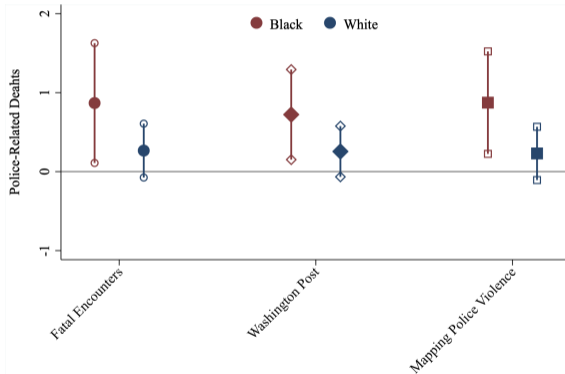
FIGURE B

Historical lynchings and officer-involved shootings involving whites

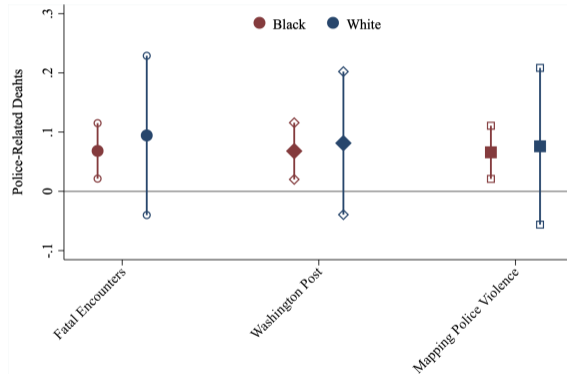


Williams and Romer (2020). Black deaths at the hands of law enforcement are linked to historical lynchings

A. 0/1 Historical Lynchings Ever-Reported

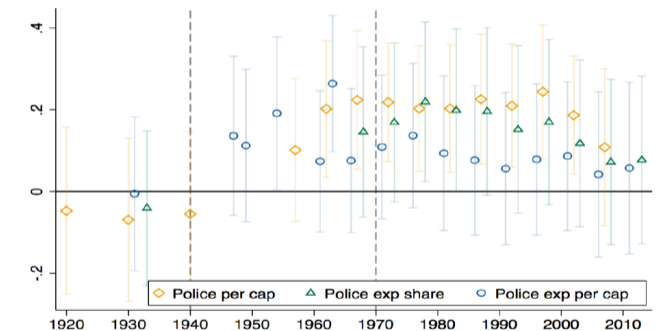


B. Number of Historical Lynchings



Bjuggren, Cook, Cox, Cunningham, Logan, and Williams (2022). The Legacy of Lynchings and State-Sanctioned Violence Against Black Americans.

- Tabellini (2019) finds no effect on police investments from the first wave of the Great Migration.

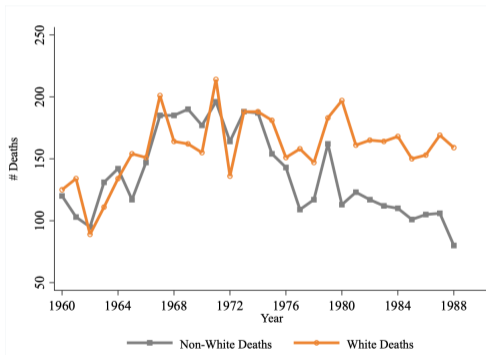


Derenoncourt (2022). Can You Move to Opportunity? Evidence from the Great Migration

- Derenoncourt (2022) captures the shift in the approach to policing in Northern cities triggered by the Great Migration using a shift share instrument.

POLICING IN THE 1960s & 1970s

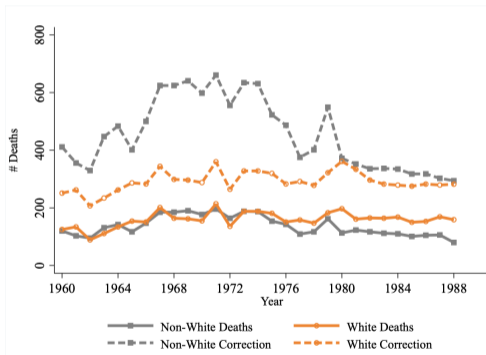
- Much richer data available by the 1950s and 1960s, although a severe undercount of overall deaths.



- What might be influencing these shifting patterns in the use of lethal force?
 - Structural factors
 - Legal factors
 - Departmental factors

Cunningham and Gillezeau (2021). Don't Shoot! The Impact of Historical African American Protest on Police Killings of Civilians

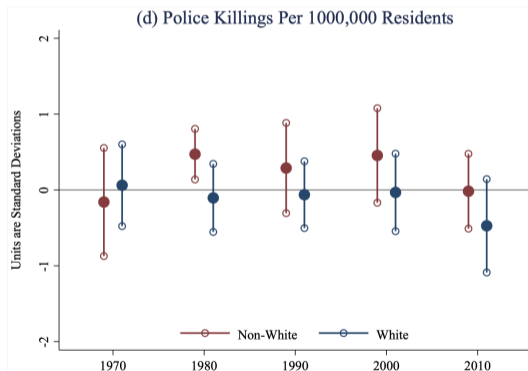
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- Segregation has long been presumed to have driven the increase in the use of lethal force in the 1960s.



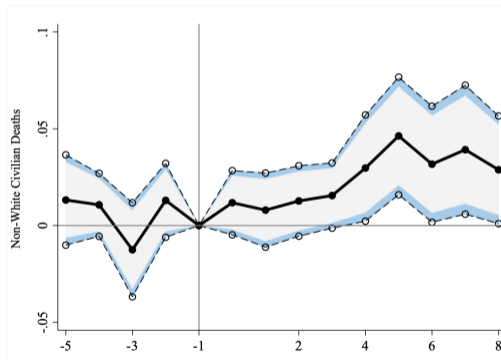
- Cox et al. (2022) test the causal impact of segregation on victimization.
 - Segregation \Rightarrow \uparrow in homicide rates.
 - Surprisingly, little impact on police killings civilians.

Cox, Cunningham, Ortega, and Whaley (2022). Black Lives: The High Cost of Segregation

- Cunningham et al. (2021) find that the introduction of bargaining rights for police increases the use of lethal force for non-white Americans by over 70%.

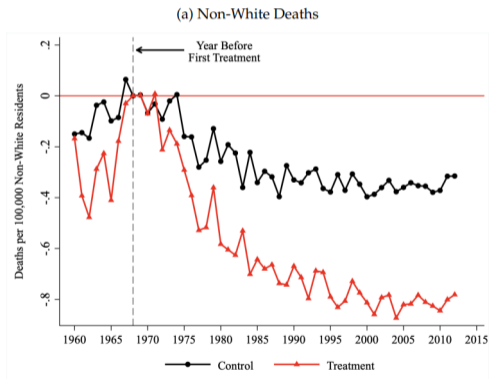
– In the event of a death, police unions will:

- pay for and facilitate legal representation.
- meet with their member in advance of making a report.
- potentially facilitate a “huddling” of officers.
- implement procedural protections during interrogations.



Cunningham, Feir, and Gillezeau (2021). Collective Bargaining Rights, Policing, and Civilian Deaths

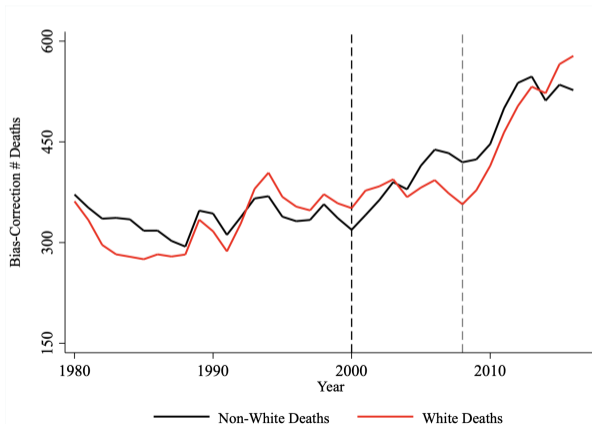
Figure 4: Police Killings - Normalized Difference



- The above effects are gradually offset by the shifting character of policing.
- Cox et al. (2021) find clear evidence that racial diversity matters in departments in the aftermath of the threat of affirmative action litigation.
- This is a large effect that substantially explains the relative decline in non-white deaths post-1970.

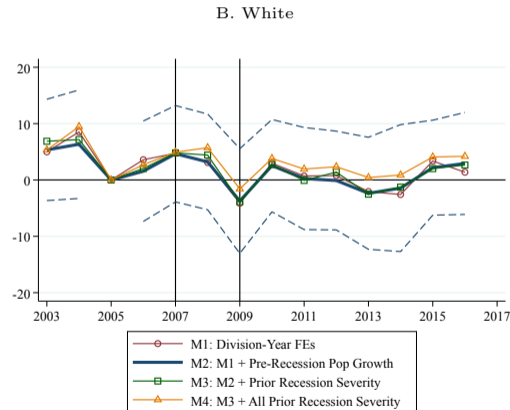
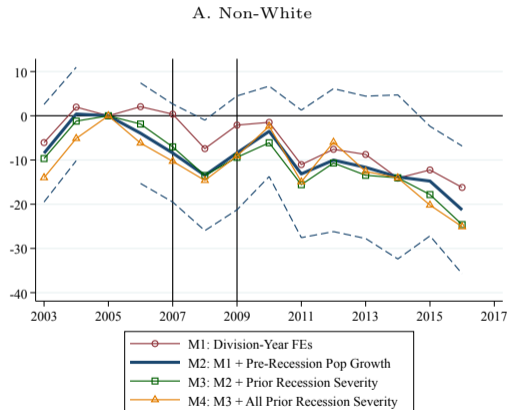
POLICING AND LETHAL FORCE POST-1980

- The use of lethal force enters a relatively stable period with an upward trend in 1980; surges across all measures post 2010.



- The post-2008 surge partially explained by:
 - militarization (Masera 2021)
 - force size and engagement (Goel Rao and Shroff 2016),
 - polarization and racial bias,
 - increased violence and the drug trade (Holz et al 2019).

- Post-2008 surge not explained by Great Recession.



Cunningham and Stuart (2022). Racial Difference in Labor Market Outcomes and Victimization: Evidence from the Great Recession

- While causes of this surge are elusive, there exists strong causal evidence on an array of mitigating factors.
 - Technology:
 - evidence pointing to the efficacy of body-worn cameras (Williams et al. 2021).
 - Oversight and HR:
 - procedural justice training (Owens et al 2018).
 - paper reporting and reporting of incidents through third parties shift behavior (Ba et al. 2021, Alpert and Macdonald 2001).
 - force diversity and peer effects (Ba et al 2021).
 - use of past allegations (Rozema and Schanzenach 2019).
 - Judicial:
 - greater DA independence from law enforcement (Stashko and Garro 2021).

TAKEAWAYS

- There has never been a moment, in the USA, that Black people have not been the primary target of state-sanctioned violence.
- The challenges are not solely intractable structural challenges. Rather, the use of lethal force today, is driven by governmental and departmental institutional decisions.
- However, there is reason for optimism. The public's perception has shifted and reform now appears to be *politically viable*.



Protesters in Washington, DC in 2020

- The strength of quasi-experimental approaches, is that it allows us to estimate a causal parameter that is directly interpretable for policymakers.
- Weakness: Many factors, outside of the researchers control, have to align.
 - Mostly pertains to data availability, data structure, and exogeneity or discontinuities.
- Additionally, sometimes researchers focus too much on new research designs and lose sight of the actual research question.
 - Focus on the best way to answer the research question instead of what can I apply this research design to. **Context matters!**
- Big data and machine learning provides new avenues to explore complex questions related to structural racism and well-being.

Thank You!