

Race, Observed Emotional States, and Police Use of Force: Police Interactions as Complex Social Interactions

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Description of the Problem

- Limitations of Previous Use of Force Research
 - Incident Reports: Concerns over data quality
 - Field Observations: Hawthorne Effect
- Klinger (1995)
 - We know very little about how and when police officers use force
 - Violence is best studied as a mixture of individual, contextual, and situational factors



Situating Use of Force at the Microsocial Level

- Use of Force as Microsocial Interactions
 - Better understand the situational and dynamic factors associated with use of force
 - Not merely if force occurred. Rather, how did that force occur, and arguably more importantly, why did force not occur in this incident.



Literature Review

- Holmes and Smith (2008)
 - Race matters because of a dynamic interplay of social and emotional group processes
 - Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939) – Updated by Berkowitz (1989)
 - Frustration (measured as aversive events) produces aggressive inclinations
- Frustration – Increased Arousal (E.g., Anger)
- Aggressive Cues (E.g., Provocation, Weapons)
 - Use of Force (Aggression Response)



Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** Police encounters involving minorities are more likely to result in police use of force, the faster application of force, higher levels of force, and a longer duration of force used.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Police encounters with higher levels of emotionality are more likely to result in police use of force, the faster application of force, higher levels of force, and a longer duration of force used.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Racial differences in use of force outcome variables are reduced controlling for observed emotional responses.



Methodology

- Unredacted police body-worn camera footage from a police agency in the Pacific Northwest.
- 288 incidents occurring between 2013 - 2016
 - 70 Use of Force incidents
 - Officers required to “tag” incidents in which used force
 - 218 criminal code violation incidents in which force was not used
 - 80 incidents initiated by officer
 - 138 incidents where officer dispatched to the scene



Methodology Continued

- Use of Force Inclusion Criteria
 - The incident must clearly contain use of force against a human
 - The totality of the incident can be ascertained
- Manual Coding of Incidents
 - 55 Incident Variables collected for all videos and 20 Variables collected per Use of Force event
 - Objective and Subjective Coding
 - Initial Coding – Team Coding (Individual)
 - Second Coding – Consensus Coding (New Team)



Variables Included in Study

Independent Variables

- **Suspect Characteristics**
 - Gender, Race, Ethnicity
- **Environment**
 - Day/Night, Bystanders Present, Arrest Made
- **Officer and Suspect Emotional State**

Dependent Variables

- **Time to First Force**
 - The M:S of the first applied force
- **Duration of Force**
 - The M:S when force occurs until the suspect is both restrained and under control
- **Level of Force**



Levels of Force

Level One: Minor Force

- Verbal Threats, Pat Downs, and Firm Grips

Level Two: Medium Force

- Pain Compliance, Holds, and Controlled Pushes

Level Three: High Force

- Uncontrolled Pushed, Strikes, or Impacts

Level Four: Instrument-Based Force

- CED, OC Spray, Use of Bean Bag Rounds, and the Drawing of Firearms



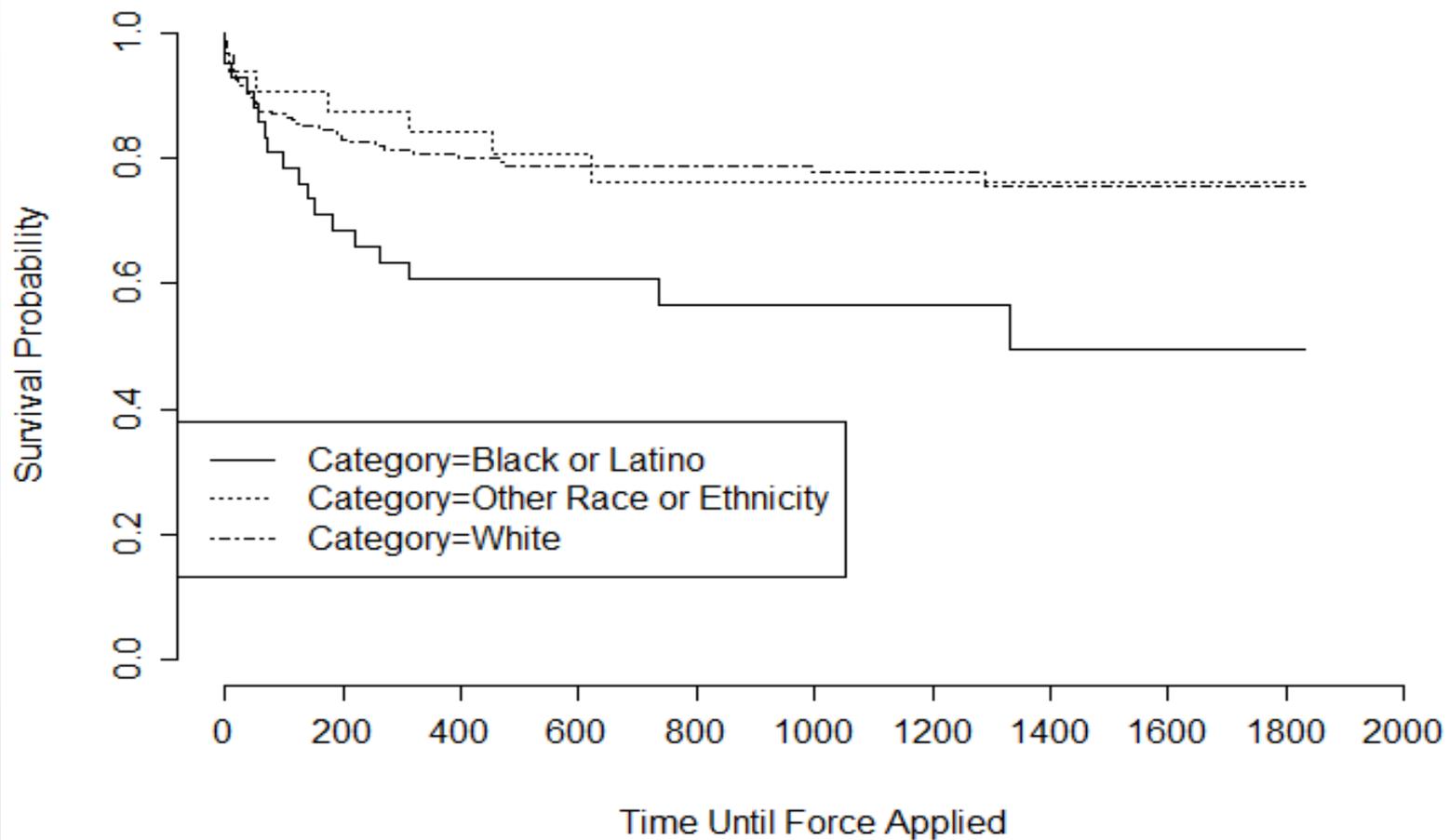
Measuring Emotionality (Anderson and Bushman, 2002)

Officer and Suspect Emotional State

- 0 = Emotionless (i.e. unexpressive)
- 1 = Low emotional State (i.e. calm)
- 2 = Medium Emotional State (i.e. sobbing, signs of agitation)
- 3 = High Emotional State (i.e. wailing, rage)



Results: Time to First Force





Regression Model Results

- **Hypothesis 1:** Police encounters involving minorities are more likely to experience force and at higher levels of force.
 - However, after adding additional control variables, race of the suspect is no longer associated with our measures of force.
- **Hypothesis 2:** The observed emotional state of the suspect and officer are associated with our measures of force.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Once we control for observed emotional states, interactions with minority suspects remain different and that difference is not easily explained by the emotions of the suspect.



Results: Other Findings

- **Gender:** Police more likely to use force, faster, and at higher levels against male suspects
- **Incident Occurring at Night:** Police more likely to use force, fast, and at higher levels for interactions occurring during the night than those occurring during the day
- **Arrest Decision:** Decision related to whether force is used, when force is used, and the duration of force used.



Limitations

Generalizability

- Data obtained from a single police agency

Combining Race Categories

- Unable to determine differences between different racial and ethnic groups

Manual Coding

- Inter-coder reliability

Omitted Variables

- Location of incident, repeat contacts, alcohol and drug use, officer characteristics



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