

RACE AND POLICE USE OF FORCE: A REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF VARYING SITUATIONAL APPROVAL FROM 1972 TO 2012

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Recent events of police using force against citizens under arguably suspect circumstances have reinvigorated concern over racial disparities in the use of (excessive) force by police. The study presented here was designed to explore differences in African American and White citizens' acceptance of police use of force in varying situations. Data from the cumulative file of the General Social Survey (1972-2012) were used to determine if race could predict acceptance of police striking an adult male citizen: in some conceivable situation, using vulgar language, being questioned as a murder suspect, attempting to escape, and attacking the officer with his fists. Logistic regressions showed African Americans were less likely than Whites to accept police striking a citizen across time and in all situations except questioning murder suspects. Race was non-significant for acceptance of striking a murder suspect except during the 1990s when African Americans were slightly more accepting than Whites.

INTRODUCTION

Recent viral videos and images showing police beating and shooting people under suspect circumstances have spurred wide ranging discussions of police use of force. Arguably the most prominent feature of these discussions is the possible role that race plays in shaping the rates and severity of how police use force. Indeed, one of the major corollaries of these cases has been the emergence of the internet-driven Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Although BLM originated as a social media hashtag and protest slogan, over the last two years it has become a nationally recognized activist movement with a formal mission to spread awareness and promote discussions regarding apparent racial discrimination in police use of force (Luibrand, 2015). Other groups and slogans have emerged, such as Blue Lives Matter, as a counter-protest of sorts to defend police use of force and place responsibility for incidents of force on the behavior of the suspects.

To be sure, differences in the nature of White and non-White citizens' interactions with the police, and the likelihood and type of force used against them, are not new topics of social discourse in the United States. State sponsored, organized policing originated in Southern states during the pre-Civil War era for the purpose of monitoring and controlling the movements of slaves, which included administering whippings (Websdale, 2001).

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Following the abolition of slavery, police were known to participate in lynchings or tacitly support violence by remaining silent (Russell-Brown, 2004). As the widespread formation of race-based hate groups persisted throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries with seemingly minimal law enforcement intervention, it became clear that the mistreatment of African American citizens would likely go unpunished and ignored by government officials (Harris, 2006). Although the civil rights movement improved the inclusion and equality of opportunities available to African Americans, they were still rarely afforded adequate police protection from attacks on their persons and property, and instances of unnecessary and discriminatory use of force by police continued (Gabbidon & Greene, 2013). Major episodes throughout the 1990s included police beatings of Rodney King in 1991, Malice Green in 1992, and the fatal shooting of Amadou Diallo in 1999 (Henry, 2011).

Racial discrimination in police use of force can have negative consequences that reach far beyond the people directly affected. Media coverage of police using force can deteriorate the trust and sense of commitment to the law of people across the country who may have no direct experience with police force (Weitzer, 2002) or who may not readily identify with the suspects (Lasley, 1994). This article presents the results of a study of African-American and White citizens' approval of police use of force in five different contexts across the past 40 years.

LITERATURE

Whether police differently apply force based on the race of suspects is generally difficult to measure. Any official data ultimately rely on police reports, the accuracy of which are precarious. Police may not report important details about an encounter, may embellish certain aspects of the story to defend their use of force, or may not report using force at all. For instance, the FBI collects data on "justifiable homicides," but since the reporting of such information is voluntary the figures are only representative of a minority of law enforcement agencies across the country and thus cannot be generalized to the institution as a whole. Moreover, even when agencies do report this data to the FBI, they are not instructed to document the race of the deceased; therefore, such analysis would yield little assistance in responding to questions of racially disparate use of force (Policy Link Report, 2014). An additional challenge in studying race disparities in the actual use of force is that confounding effects abound. Basic rates of force across racial groups will reflect differences in offending rates, the criminal justice system's focus on street crime, as well as the overlap between race and class to name a few.

Although it is beyond the scope of the current paper to review all research on race and actual use of force by police, studies on the topic have generally yielded mixed results (Adams, 1996; Weisburd et al., 2001). Studies that do show racial disparities tend to show that African-American citizens are more likely to experience police use of force but that several moderating effects are significant. For instance, Weitzer (1999) conducted in-depth interviews with residents in three neighborhoods in Washington D.C. and found significant interaction effects between race and class. Both African-American and White middle class respondents reported similar experiences with police force but only within their own

communities. Race was independently significant in interactions with the police outside of respondents' neighborhoods, where African-American respondents reported more experiences with police use of force. Also taking into account neighborhood contexts, Liska and Yu (1992) gathered data on police use of force in 57 U.S. cities. Their findings showed that cities with higher proportions of non-White residents had significantly higher rates of police force. Other studies suggest that gender moderates the effects of race on police use of force. For instance, Schuck (2004) found that racial disparities in police use of force were significant only among male citizens not in custody.

Other studies suggest that race has no significant effect on the actual use of force by police. In one of the most notable such studies, Garner, Schade, Hepburn, and Mulcahy (1994) analyzed data collected as part of the Phoenix, Arizona Use of Force Project. This study sampled all adult arrests during a two-week period in June 1994. Surveys were completed by police officers and measured the type and amount of force used by the officer as well as the type and amount of force used by the arrestee. Findings showed that the race of "suspects played no role in predicting the police use of force" (p. 8). Other studies, including the Police Services Study (Worden, 1995) and the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (Terrill, 2000), support the tenet that citizen resistance best explains variation in police use of force (see also National Institute of Justice, 1999). Other variables that have been shown to better account for police use of force than race include citizen impairment, such as drugs or alcohol (Terrill, 2000; Worden, 1995), domestic disputes and officers feeling unsafe (Adams, 1999), and bystanders who were antagonistic (Worden, 1995).

Although it is unequivocally important to understand whether and how police disparately use force across racial groups, perception alone can have important consequences. A body of theoretical and empirical literature has developed under the rubric of procedural justice and legitimacy that suggests that harboring the belief that police discriminately apply force is sufficient to produce a host of negative effects (see Levesque, 2005). At its most basic level, the procedural justice framework posits that people accept the law and legal authorities because they feel an internal obligation to do so (Tyler, 2004). Procedural justice is comprised of two perspectives – quality of treatment and quality of decision making. Quality of treatment refers to whether, and to what degree, people perceive that the police treat citizens with dignity, respect, and fairness in the course of their interactions. Quality of decision making refers to whether, and to what degree, people perceive that the police objectively apply facts and reason in using their discretion (Gau, 2011).

People who perceive that the law is applied objectively and fairly have personal faith in the rectitude of the law and are more likely to cooperate with law enforcement. Conversely, perceptions that the law is applied unfairly lead to cynicism and a decreased likelihood that people feel a personal obligation to cooperate with law enforcement (Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Given that public trust is an essential prerequisite for effective policing, negative perceptions of police can diminish the voluntariness of support and cooperation as well as threaten the overall legitimacy of the institution (Tyler, 2004). Studies suggest that faith in the police vary considerably by race. For instance, a study out of the Pew Research Center found that Whites were 29% more likely than African Americans to express confi-

dence that their local police will fairly enforce the law; Whites were also 30% more likely to believe that police officers treat all races equally (Cohn, 2007). Differing perceptions of police use of force could have a singularly deleterious effect on trust and cooperation with law enforcement in African American communities (Terrill, Paoline, & Gau, 2016).

Studies that have explored the relationship between race and attitudes toward police use of force have yielded quite consistent results. These findings show that Whites are significantly more likely than African Americans to support police use of force (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Halim & Stiles, 2001; Thompson & Lee, 2004; Welch, Combs, Sigelman, & Bledsoe, 1996; Wilson & Dunham, 2001). Arthur and Case (1994) found that 70% of White respondents approved of police using force in general compared to 43% of African American respondents. Furthermore, African American subjects perceive that the police are more likely to use force against them and generally act less professional in their interactions with African American citizens (Britton, 2000; Cohn, 2007). This finding suggests that the race of the suspect may exert a significant effect on whether people approve of force applied in a particular situation. Indeed, African American respondents are even less likely to approve of force when suspects are also African American; the race of the suspect is non-significant in White respondents' approval of force (Johnson & Kuhns, 2009).

Given that these studies focus on perceptions regarding police use of force, it is unsurprising that media coverage of infamous cases can exacerbate racial disparities in attitudes toward the police (Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes, & Hanley, 1997). Tuch and Weitzer (1997) conducted a time series analysis of the effects of three widely publicized incidents of police using force against minorities on attitudes toward the police. Findings showed that media coverage resulted in even lower endorsement of police by minorities and that this effect was persistent. The decline in minorities' endorsement of police lasted for several months following media coverage of each event. Even still, race appears to exert a significant main effect on attitudes toward police use of force (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Moreover, much like the research on race and actual use of force, context matters in shaping respondents' perceptions of force. Cullen et al. (1996) showed that respondents' support for police use of force varies based on whether the suspect has committed nonviolent offenses or shows evidence of being dangerous in the past. Other contextual factors that have been shown to vary perceptions of force include specific features of the police-suspect interaction. Both African American and White respondents alike voice high levels of support for police use of force when they are being attacked by suspects (Halim & Stiles, 2001). Conversely, respondents across racial categories generally disapprove of force in interactions where the officer is not in any immediate physical danger (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Thompson & Lee, 2004).

The current study aims to contribute to this literature by analyzing the relationship between race and support for police use of force. Respondents were asked whether they approve of police striking citizens in five different contexts in which citizens' resistance was varied. Five binary logistic regression models were estimated for each of the five contexts. In each, respondents' support for police striking citizens was regressed on respondents' race and several control variables. Moreover, the data analyzed here derive from the composite file of the General Social Survey (GSS) iterations of the survey administered

episodically from 1972 to 2012. By including data gathered across different decades and in varying the characteristics of police-citizen interactions, we feel that the current study provides a more complete portrait of race and support for police use of force that is less dependent upon specific contexts or driven by historical effects.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study come from the 1972-2012 cumulative data file of the General Social Survey (GSS). This file is comprised of 29 independent surveys conducted annually or biennially during this 40-year timeframe. Surveys were administered to full-probability samples of English-speaking adults living in the continental United States (N=57,061).

Dependent Variables

Respondents were asked a series of five questions about whether they would approve of a police officer striking an adult male citizen under certain conditions. The first item asked respondents whether there was some situation they could imagine in which they would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen. Subjects who responded affirmatively or who were not sure were then asked four follow up questions about whether they would approve of a police officer striking an adult male citizen who (a) had said vulgar and obscene things to the officer, (b) was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case, (c) was attempting to escape from custody, and (d) was attacking the officer with his fists. Response options for each item were yes (0) and no (1). “Don’t know” responses were coded as missing.

Independent Variable

A dichotomous variable for race (White = 0, African American = 1) served as the independent variable. The GSS data include only one additional racial category – “other.” Only 4.9% of the GSS sample fell into this category, which is likely due to the GSS requirement that subjects speak English. Given the small size of this category and that it likely includes subjects from diverse racial groups, “other” was coded as missing.

Controls

Several demographic variables and attitudinal measures were included to control for potential confounding effects. Demographic controls include respondents’ sex (female = 0, male = 1), marital status (currently married = 0, other = 1), age measured in years, and a scale for education ranging from “no formal schooling” to “eight years of college”. Attitudinal controls include a measure of respondents’ general punitiveness and political ideology. Punitiveness reflects whether the respondents’ felt that courts deal with criminals “too harshly” (1), “about right” (2), or “not harshly enough” (3). Political ideology was measured using a seven-point scale from “extremely liberal” (1) to “extremely conservative” (7).

Analytical Strategy

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe differences in how Whites and African Americans approve of police use of force. First, descriptive statistics were used

to map African-American and White and subjects' responses to each of the five dependent variables from 1972 to 2012. Second, multivariate logistic regression models were estimated to determine whether race can predict approval of police use of force net of controls. Five logistic regression models were estimated, one for each of the dependent variables. Our goal was to understand the relationship between race and approval of police force across time. Thus, we first ran the regression model for each independent variable using data across the entire 40-year timeframe. We were somewhat concerned however that these findings might be driven by historical effects of some period of time within this 40-year timeframe. These regression models were first performed over the entire 40-year timeframe. Therefore, we subsequently performed the regression models separately for each decade. Data from the 2012 survey was included in the decade 2000-2010. Results within decades are discussed as measures of validity but the results reported below come from the regression models spanning the 40 years from 1972-2012.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the total number of subjects in each response category and the percent who approved of police striking citizens in each condition. These figures show that there was considerable agreement among respondents' attitudes toward the dependent variables in total. Overall, a clear majority approved of police striking citizens in some situation (72.5%), attempting to escape (76.1%), or attacking police (92.6%). A clear minority of respondents approved of striking citizens who are using vulgar language (11.4%) and being questioned as murder suspects (8.9%). Black and White respondents were conspicuously disparate in their approval of police striking citizens across the five conditions, however. Approval of police striking citizens attempting to escape and using vulgar language was generally low, and approval of striking citizens who are attacking police was generally high. Even within these restricted ranges, differences in African American and White respondents' approval ranged from 3.1% to 8% in these conditions. Differences in African American and White respondents' approval of striking citizens in some situation and those attempting to escape were 27% and 22%, respectively.

Table 2 presents the standardized logistic regression coefficients and odds ratios for each of the five models. Findings show significant and consistent effects of sex, political ideology, and punitiveness on attitudes toward striking citizens. Males and respondents who were more conservative and punitive were more likely to approve of police striking citizens across all five conditions with one exception. That is, the effect of respondents' sex on approval of police striking a citizen who was being questioned as a murder suspect was non-significant. Older respondents were more likely to approve of police striking citizens using vulgar language, being questioned as a murder suspect, and attempting to escape. Older respondents were less likely to approve of police striking citizen in some conceivable situation. The effect of age on approval of police striking a citizen who was attacking the police was non-significant. The effect of age across all five conditions was modest, however. Education and marital status had disparate effects on the dependent variables. More educated respondents were more likely to approve of police striking citizens in some

conceivable situation, when attempting to escape, and if they are attacking the police. More educated respondents were less likely to approve of police striking murder suspects and citizens using vulgar language. Married respondents were more likely to approve of police striking citizens in all conditions except murder suspects, where non-married respondents were more likely to approve, and vulgar language, where the effect was non-significant.

Table 1: Approval of use of force by covariates

	Some Situation		Vulgar Language		Murder Suspect		Attempting Escape		Attacking Police	
	Approve (%)	N	Approve (%)	N	Approve (%)	N	Approve (%)	N	Approve (%)	N
Total	72.5	32,171	11.4	32,903	8.9	32,846	76.1	32,088	92.6	33,170
Race										
Black	50.5	4,174	7.5	4,279	11.1	4,286	57.5	4,108	85.9	4,276
White	77.2	26,570	12.0	27,068	8.0	27,012	79.9	26,474	94.2	27,318
Age*										
< 30	72.5	7,025	8.9	7,073	7.7	7,065	75.2	6,885	92.5	7,085
30-44	74.6	10,293	8.0	10,503	7.2	10,496	75.2	10,212	92.7	10,548
45-60	74.2	7,745	11.8	7,959	8.4	7,961	76.9	7,782	92.9	8,031
> 60	67.3	7,010	18.2	7,264	13.2	7,222	77.7	7,112	92.1	7,404
Education*										
High School or Less	66.5	17,421	14.6	17,647	11.4	17,617	74.6	17,281	91.6	17,870
Post High School	79.6	14,680	7.6	15,181	6.0	15,157	77.9	14,735	93.7	15,225
Marital Status										
Currently Married	75.8	17,398	12.1	17,653	8.3	17,654	79.0	17,273	94.1	17,819
Other	68.5	14,768	10.4	15,244	9.6	15,186	72.8	14,809	90.8	15,345
Sex										
Male	78.6	14,210	12.8	14,449	9.1	14,453	80.6	14,240	94.3	14,597
Female	67.6	17,961	10.3	18,454	8.8	18,393	72.6	17,848	91.2	18,573
Political Ideology*										
Liberal	71.0	7,728	8.7	7,950	8.2	7,935	72.8	7,701	91.1	7,968
Moderate	69.9	10,981	10.9	11,447	8.7	11,408	75.3	11,124	92.8	11,514
Conservative	77.8	9,971	12.3	10,267	9.5	10,273	79.8	10,097	93.6	10,399
Punitiveness										
Too Harsh	54.1	1,806	7.6	1,827	10.4	1,837	60.5	1,787	84.6	1,846
About Right	73.1	3,804	7.6	3,989	6.6	3,983	73.6	3,844	92.8	4,017
Not Harsh Enough	73.9	24,513	12.7	24,959	9.5	24,913	78.2	24,472	93.2	25,170

* The response categories for these three covariates are collapsed in this table. Age was collapsed by calculating quartiles and rounding to the nearest multiple of five.

Table 2: Results of Logistic Regression Analyses of Race and Approval of Police Striking Citizens.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Some Situation		Vulgar Language		Murder Suspect		Attempting Escape		Attacking Police	
	Beta	Odds	Beta	Odds	Beta	Odds	Beta	Odds	Beta	Odds
Race	1.005**	2.731	.465**	1.592	-.331**	.719	.947**	2.578	.838**	2.313
Age	.005**	1.005	-.016**	.985	-.031**	.987	-.002*	.998	.002	1.002
Education	-.137**	.872	.102**	1.108	.108**	1.114	-.043**	.958	-.052**	.949
Marital Status	-.153**	.858	-.031	.970	.170**	1.186	-.120**	.887	-.287**	.751
Sex	-.594**	.552	-.037**	.735	-.070	.932	-.433**	.649	-.502**	.605
Political Ideology	-.093**	.911	-.076**	.927	-.049*	.952	-.081**	.922	-.075**	.927
Punitiveness	-.272**	.762	-.363**	.695	-.129*	.879	-.300**	.741	-.271**	.762
R^2	.128		.061		.044		.073		.053	
n	25,717		26,489		26,465		25,921		26,696	

** $p < .001$ * $p < .01$

Regarding the independent variable, race showed significant effects in each of the five models. Moreover, the direction of effects was generally consistent. White respondents were more likely to approve of police striking citizens in some situation, who are vulgar, attempting to escape, and attacking the police. White respondents were less likely to approve of police striking murder suspects compared to African American respondents, however. The magnitude of effects followed a similar pattern. White respondents were approximately 2.5 times more likely to approve of police striking escapees, attackers, and suspects in some situation; they were 60% more likely to approve of police striking vulgar citizens. The effect of race on approval of police striking murder suspects was comparatively small. Whites were 28% less likely than African American respondents to approve of force in this condition. The results of the regression models for each decade were generally consistent with these findings. The direction and magnitude of the race effects on approval of force were not markedly different for the generalized measure (i.e., “some situation”), striking vulgar citizens, escapees, or attackers. The only finding that varied across time were the differences in African American and White respondents’ approval of striking murder suspects. The race effect in this scenario was non-significant in the 1970s, 1980s, and from 2000-2012. Only in the 1990s were African American respondents more likely to approve of striking murder suspects. These findings and their implications are discussed below.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current study support and extend the findings of past research that show African Americans are less likely to approve of police use of force than Whites (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Halim & Stiles, 2001; Thompson & Lee, 2004; Welch, Combs, Sigelman, & Bledsoe, 1996; Wilson & Dunham, 2001). Our findings show African American respondents were significantly less likely to approve of police striking citizens in the generalized measure (i.e., “some situation”) and three of the four scenarios presented. These findings likely reflect differing experiences between African American and White citizens in general and with law enforcement in particular. Weitzer & Tuch (2004, p. 305) noted that African Americans are “more likely than whites to report having negative interactions with police, to be exposed to media reports of police misconduct, and to live in high-crime neighborhoods where policing may be contentious.” There are several other notable aspects of the results reported here that contribute the extant literature.

First, we measured race effects on approval of police force across 40 years (1972-2012) and, to ensure the results were not driven by a short period of time within the range, each decade represented. The findings show remarkable consistency across time in the differences between African-American and White respondents’ approval of police use of force. Except for model 3, which we discuss at the end of this section, the direction and magnitude of difference between African American and White respondents’ approval of police striking citizens did not vary markedly across decades. Past studies have highlighted how historical effects shape Black and White citizens’ views of the police. Specifically, highly publicized cases increase the cynicism of African Americans toward the police (Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes, & Hanley, 1997) and these effects can persist (Tuch and Weitzer, 1997). We have no doubt about the veracity of these findings. However, our results show another side of the issue – that race-based disparities in attitudes toward police force are also resistant to social and political events. That is, past research has shown that attitudes toward police within racial groups are subject to historical effects. Our findings illustrate that difference across racial groups, at least regarding approval of police use of force, are persistent.

Second, the findings of past research suggest that contextual factors shape people’s attitudes toward police use of force (Cullen et al., 1996). In particular, the behavior of suspects and whether police seem to be in immediate danger has been shown to have a significant impact in respondents’ assessments about the reasonableness of force (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Thompson & Lee, 2004). Moreover, past research has shown that race effects are non-significant in instances where the police are being attacked or otherwise put in danger (Halim & Stiles, 2001). The results of the current study suggest that suspect behavior and apparent danger for the police does influence overall approval of force, but even among such contextual factors race is still salient. Over 8 in 10 respondents, regardless of race, approved of police striking suspects who were attacking them. Although support for police striking suspects during an escape attempt was lower, support among African American respondents was still comfortably over 50 percent and nearly 80 percent among White respondents. There was a considerable gap in overall support between these contexts

and the other two scenarios. Only about 1 in 10 respondents, regardless of race, supported police striking citizens who were murder suspects or who used vulgar language. This gap in overall support between the scenarios in which citizens are attacking the police and trying to escape on the one hand and being questioned for murder and using vulgar language on the other suggest that danger posed to police indeed plays a role in shaping approval of force. This supports base research which shows respondents across racial categories generally disapprove of force in interactions where the officer is not in immediate physical danger (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996; Halim & Stiles, 2001; Thompson & Lee, 2004).

There are, however, significant racial disparities in support for police use of force within each scenario. Except for model 3 in which a police officer strikes a murder suspect during questioning, African American respondents were significantly less likely to support police use of force than Whites. Thus, the direction of the race effect on support for police use of force is generally quite consistent. However, the magnitude of the race effect differs somewhat across scenarios, and these differences further highlight the importance of contextual factors and danger posed to police. That is, the largest gaps in support were found among the scenarios that present danger to police. White respondents were more than twice as likely as Black respondents to approve of police striking suspects who were attacking the police or attempting to escape. The magnitude of race effects on approval of force were relatively small in the other two scenarios. White respondents were approximately 60 percent more likely to approve of striking citizens using vulgar language, and Blacks were approximately 28 percent more likely to approve of striking murder suspects.

These findings show that race cannot be overlooked in favor of generalized support for police use of force. To be sure, contextual factors do matter, but they matter differently for Black and White respondents. Among white respondents, support for police use of force ranged from 8 percent to over 94 percent across scenarios. Black respondents' support for police use of force ranged from 7.5 percent to nearly 86 percent. Further, the high end of the range for both racial groups was found in the scenario of police striking attackers. Beyond this scenario, support among Black respondents did not exceed 58 percent whereas White respondents' support of force exceeded 75 percent in the "attempting to escape" scenario and in the generalized measure of "some situation." These results suggest that Black support for police use of force may have a ceiling. That is, there appears to be a relatively large proportion of Black respondents who would not approve of police use of force other than in instances where the danger posed to officers is unequivocal and extreme.

There is one other implication in the findings for the notion that context matters differently for Black and White citizens' approval of police use of force. The generalized measure that asked respondents whether there was some situation in which they could approve of police striking a citizen essentially asked whether context matters. That is, the item measured whether context, or a "situation," could ever justify police striking a citizen. Just over half of Black respondents answered this question affirmatively compared to three-fourths of White respondents. Indeed, the results of the regression analysis showed that whites were 2.5 times more likely express that there is at least some situation in which police striking a citizen could be justified.

The one peculiar finding of this study was that Black respondents were more likely to approve of police striking murder suspects than White respondents. Some past research has yielded similar findings. Halim and Stiles (2001) found that race had a non-significant effect on approval of police force in different contexts, including striking murder suspects during interrogation. Arthur (1993) found that African American respondents were more likely to approve of police use of force across a variety of contexts. Arthur's findings have been called into question due to the fact that he used a summary composite scale to measure approval of police force which may have confounded its actual relationship with race of respondents. Nonetheless, in the context of questioning murder suspects, the relationship between race and approval of police use of force in the current study was directionally opposite that of every other race effect.

The results of Model 3, which measured approval of police striking murder suspects, was different in one other important respect from the other regression models. This was the only model in which the findings were based on a specific period of time within the 40-year range. The race effect found in the other four regression models were nearly identical in each decade to the entire 40-year sample. Model 3, when measured from 1972-2012, showed Black respondents were more likely to support police striking murder suspects. However, the relationship between race and support for striking murder suspects was non-significant throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and from 2000-2012. Only in the 1990s did Black respondents express more support for police striking murder suspects than Whites.

In attempting to explain similar findings, Arthur (1993) posited that African-American subcultural norms endorsing violence in general could account for higher levels of support for police force. We found no evidence in our results to support this supposition. If some underlying cultural value prescribing violence was driving attitudes toward police use of force, then we might expect to find a consistent relationship across each scenario. We did not, of course. Our findings showed that Black respondents were generally *less* accepting of police use of force. In short, we have not been able to develop an explanation for this aberrant finding without similarly conjuring stereotypes and unfounded speculations. We feel accounting for such aberrations can be best addressed in future research. Subsequent research should consider exploring intersections between race, age, and class, and their effects on attitudes toward police use of force in particular contexts. Future research might also employ mixed-methods approaches to understanding this and other issues surrounding race and policing in the United States. The qualitative portion of the approach could be used to tap into why people feel the police should or should not be striking citizens. This would of course allow us to explain aberrant findings in a way that can be empirically supported. Future research should also consider varying the type and level of force used by police beyond striking citizens.

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