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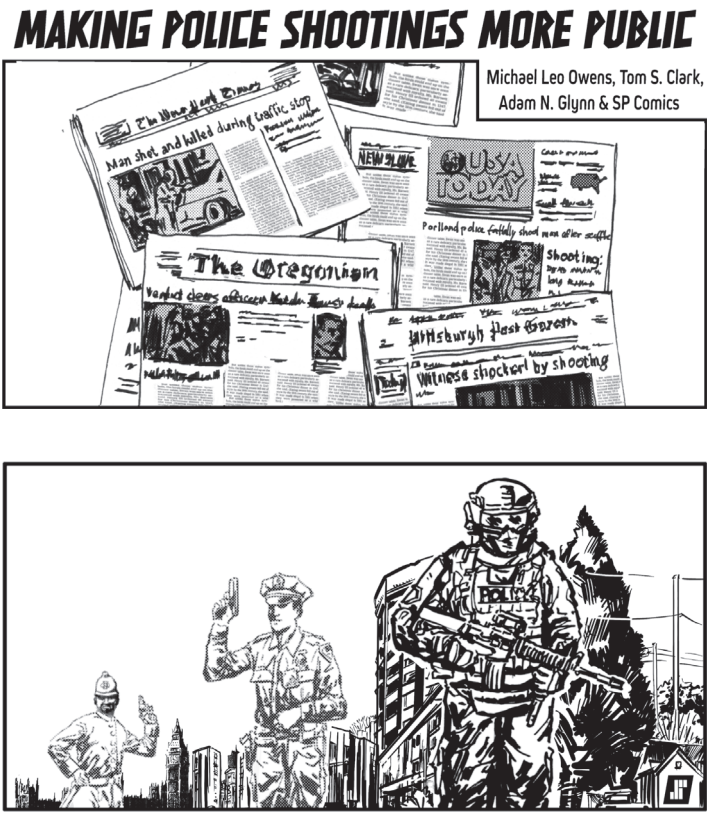
Introduction



On March 15, 2019, 49-year-old Michael Cohen robbed the poker cage of the Bellagio Las Vegas Hotel & Casino around 10 p.m. He fled with chips and cash. But, unlike the practiced thieves in an *Ocean's 11* film, Cohen bungled his escape. He misplaced the keys to his getaway car. He failed at his attempt to steal a car from two people by the casino entrance. And he was unaware Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) officers were in the valet area, after investigating a missing child report at the hotel and being alerted to the robbery.

The police quickly confronted Cohen. He did not comply with their commands and instead drew a .38 caliber semiautomatic handgun. Firing it, he struck Officer Devin McHale in the chest. McHale's bulletproof vest saved his life. Cohen, a twice-convicted bank thief, was not as lucky. A bullet from Officer Joaquin Escobar's gun fatally struck Cohen in the head.[1] The shooting was Las Vegas's fourth police shooting of 2019. It started a short streak of police shootings in the city.

About 24 hours later, LVMPD officers shot Steven Aguirre, 20. Aguirre was suspected of armed robbery of an Auto Zone. Officers encountered him on foot, roughly 40 minutes after getting a call about the robbery. Aguirre initially complied with their commands to get on the ground. But, according to police reports, he rose from his knees, grasping for his gun. Officer Darko Milanovic fired one shot. Aguirre was struck in the leg and survived his wound.[2]

Two days later, March 18, four LVMPD officers responded to an early morning call. It was a report of an armed man threatening to kill his father and sister. When the police arrived, 37-year-old Steve Garcia did not lower his gun, despite police repeatedly directing him to do it. Instead, Garcia aimed at the officers. All of the officers fired their weapons at him. Garcia died hours later from multiple gunshot wounds, after being transported to a nearby hospital. His father told police his son, recently released from jail, had a drug addiction. Officers learned, too, that Garcia's gun was unloaded.[3]

About a week later, LVMPD officer Phong Nguyen escorted Gregory Ganci, 52, from the Clark County Correctional Facility to a March 27 medical appointment. Ganci was scheduled for sentencing later that day for kidnapping and armed robbery convictions, among other charges. Faced with the possibility of five life sentences, Ganci escaped from Nguyen, who fired three shots, wounding Ganci's shoulder. Ganci, still shackled, kept going and stole a pickup truck. After a 13-mile chase through Las Vegas, the encounter ended safely for all—after the stolen truck ran out of gas. Ganci survived his bullet wound. The next day a judge sentenced him to five consecutive life sentences, adding to his 30-year record of arrests and convictions.[4]

Four police shootings in 12 days in one city is, without question, extraordinary, even for cities in the United States.[5] It is also unusual how much we know about those four police shootings. That we could reconstruct comprehensive accounts of them, both the fatal and non-fatal encounters, is surprising. Too often, those who want to know what happened when urban

police officers shoot someone are unable to obtain adequate information. It is hard to know the basics of who was shot, when, where, and by whom. Sure, some police shootings receive lots of public attention, resulting in the release of deep details about police shootings. Yet most police shootings, particularly nonfatal ones, get little to no attention.

Should not all police shootings in US cities (and other places) merit public attention? Shouldn't all aspects of police shootings, or as much as possible, be documented for and accessible by the public? We, as political scientists and scholars of policing, believe so. That is why we wrote this book. But, as we learned conducting multiyear research, municipal (and other governmental) records of police shootings, can be difficult to find. When you find them they may be inaccessible. When you can access them many are woefully incomplete. All of that is especially true for nonfatal police shootings.

The relative absence of information about police shootings in the United States significantly reduces our collective understanding of urban America and the policing of it. It also prevents better public deliberation about the extent, causes, and consequences of police shootings. Accordingly, in an age where the public is divided over many aspects of policing in the United States, facts about police shootings are necessary and invaluable. Consequently, this is a book about when, where, and who the police shoot, including how many of those shot survive or succumb to their wounds.

Our book does not cover all police shootings in the United States. That is impossible, for now, even in the era of big data. We explain why later. In the meantime, know that our focus is police shootings in the 302 largest cities in the United States. That includes every city with at least 100,000 residents and their own police department as of 2020. In this book, we report on novel data we attempted to collect individually from each of the city's police departments.

Focusing on cities of at least 100,000 residents allows us to study a wide swath of urban America, including large and midsize cities. It includes our nation's biggest cities such as New York City (8.33 million), Los Angeles (3.88 million), Chicago (2.66 million), and Houston (2.30 million). These are the nation's major cities; they anchor large and economically powerful metropolitan areas. Our set of cities also includes a great mix of satellite cities. They are midsize cities not large enough to be central cities of metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, they are significant parts of urban America. They includes fast-growing Sunbelt cities like Buckeye, Arizona (106,000) and Round Rock, Texas (127,000). Beyond varied

population sizes, our set of cities includes different regions, ages, and types of local government. Importantly, our cities differ in their numbers of police officers, spending on police, levels of crime, and more, including annual numbers of police shootings.[6]

Midsize and large cities, on the whole, are not representative of the nation. Focusing on cities of 100,000 or more as the primary contexts for better understanding police shootings in urban America, however, is not odd. Greater than 85 percent of Americans live in the metropolitan areas of those cities. Moreover, cities of at least 100,000 residents collectively contain approximately 97 million people. That is about 30 percent of the US population. Their average population is just over 300,000 residents, with an average population density of 4,151 inhabitants per square mile. Meanwhile, cities of at least 100,000 employ 50 percent of local police officers in the United States.[7] Such cities, therefore, can tell us a great deal about policing in the United States, especially urban police shootings.

Our book has four aims. Each aim is intended to shape public awareness of police shootings. Our ambition is to improve public discussion and policy debates about them.

Our first goal is to provide, as best we can, a comprehensive and systematic description of police shootings in urban America. As we explain, establishing even basic facts (e.g., how many people city police shoot) is unjustifiably daunting. We also demonstrate that information about police shootings is grossly inadequate. The exceptional degree of transparency about police shootings in Las Vegas by its police department is in many ways an ideal. Las Vegas comprehensively documents shootings by LVMPD officers and posts detailed records of police shootings. One reason is because, in its own words, "LVMPD is committed to being transparent and accountable in the use of deadly force by [its] officers."[8]

We believe that other cities should strive to equal or surpass Las Vegas's transparency—but many are not compelled to do so. Inexplicably, many police departments seemingly oppose it. For sure, we are not suggesting that the police and policing in Las Vegas are perfect. However, we applaud the intentions and actions of its police department to make police shootings more public. Its choices better educate its department, city government, and citizenry about police shootings.

Our second goal is to investigate intuitive patterns and reveal predictable ones in when, where, and who police in urban America shoot. Over the past few years, supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation and a team of undergraduate and graduate students, along with

a postdoctoral researcher, we used open records laws and other means to collect official records from police departments in cities around the country. Those records cover fatal and nonfatal shootings. Ours is the first of its kind academic source of *multicity*, *incident-level* information about police shootings. From these records, we find, for example, a consistent relationship between violent crime and police shootings.

We also demonstrate that other common explanations for differences among cities in their numbers of police shootings are not or are less related to police shootings. In particular, we debunk claims that political differences among cities account for much of the variation in police shootings. Specifically, we show that the partisan makeup of cities' electorates, the racial composition of municipal leaders (specifically, the presence of Black or women mayors), and the scale of city spending on police do not matter much when it comes to the prevalence of police shootings in urban America. Whether cities' voters are more Democratic or more Republican, for instance, does not explain the differences in police shootings. Though, as we will see in chapter 4, there is some evidence that cities led by non-White mayors have fewer shootings than cities led by White mayors.

Our third goal is to establish through strong evidence the existence of unjustifiable disparities in police shootings. Historically, racial groups have experienced different degrees of policing in urban America.[9] That has been true since the formation of our cities. While it is easy to identify disparities associated with policing, demonstrating the causes of the disparities is not as easy. This is particularly true for racial disparities in who police shoot, for reasons we explain in the following chapters.

But we also provide strong evidence by analysis that young, unarmed, Black men compared to their White counterparts are disproportionately shot by police. What is more, the racial disparities in police shootings are disproportionately concentrated where most Black and Hispanic residents live. As we show, those racial disparities exist even when accounting for, for instance, differences in violent crime rates.

In examining the disparities by people and places, we document the high potential of racial bias, among other causes, to shape when, where, and who the police shoot in urban America. Our findings should prove useful to improving our collective capacity not just to know about disparities in police shootings but to be able to credibly name what causes them (and possibly other police behaviors).

Our fourth goal is to make crystal clear why all of us in the United States need to focus as much on *nonfatal* police shootings as we do fatal

ones. Varied efforts by others document and describe, as well as demand attention to, police shootings. Amazing investigations by newspapers (e.g., the *Washington Post* and the *Guardian* UK) and activist-created, data-driven initiatives (e.g., Mapping Police Violence) began in earnest after the notorious police shootings of Michael Brown and others, as well as other deaths from police contact, in 2014. They justly continue to identify and publicize people who the police fatally shoot in the United States.

A significant example is the *Washington Post*'s online archive of police shootings. It estimates that police—across urban, suburban, and rural areas—fatally shot 9,952 people in the United States from January 1, 2015, through mid-August 2024. Furthermore, it reports that police fatally shot more people in 2023—1,153—than in any previous year since it started counting such deaths. Regardless of the justifications for the shootings, those are significant numbers of deaths by police bullets.

It is certainly possible that if you are shot by the police you can survive rather than succumb. It is also possible that some of us are more likely to survive police shootings than others. For example, a recent study suggests that injuries from shootings by officers of local police departments were less likely to be fatal than shootings from officers in sheriffs' offices and state police departments.[10] However, media-collected and crowdsourced police shootings data are not very helpful for examining incidents of people that police shot who did not die because such data tend to exclude nonfatalities. One reason for the exclusion, at least by commercial media, is that business interests shape the news we consume by what it identifies as the most significant current events.

Television news, newspapers, and other sources of information must ensure their consumers find their content not just valuable but also interesting and, to some degree, entertaining. The (in)famous trope "if it bleeds, it leads" captures one of the consequences of that incentive. The public is drawn to danger, tragedy, and unusual events. The incentive to report on unusual events or particularly salacious or dangerous events suggests that what we learn from the media about police, and police violence in particular, might not tell us the full story. As a result, the media will likely overrepresent one part of the story of police shootings—high-profile fatal shootings—and underrepresent other parts of the story (low-profile, nonfatal shootings).[11]

To be clear, our aim is not to undermine attention to, and concern about, fatal shootings. Such shootings merit public and academic attention. Still, attending to nonfatal shootings serves two important purposes. First, it

widens the scope for seeing police shootings as a public problem, including a public health crisis.[12] Second, studying survival allows one to consider mechanisms that produce police shootings.

Our data from police departments make it possible, at least for urban America, to begin to know a good deal about nonfatal police shootings, which is another important contribution our book makes. In our case, we leverage our data to explore how group-based differences by race in surviving police shootings may signal, among other things, bias in police shootings. That is, we use differences in nonfatalities by race to discern disparities in shootings and the degree to which racial bias could contribute to them.

1.1 Police Shootings

"[W]hat distinguishes [police] from other professional groups and even from other citizens," as Didier Fassin, the renowned ethnographer of policing, once put it, "is the possibility, if they judge it necessary, of using force to resolve [problems], and also the fact that everyone is aware of it, and behaves accordingly."[13] That means police sometimes intentionally, whether justly or unjustly (per use-of-force policies and/or public sentiment), shoot people during crime control or order-maintenance actions. Sometimes people die from police shootings.

Generally, according to online databases of the *Washington Post*, Fatal Encounters, and Mapping Police Violence, varieties of police, including county sheriffs and their deputies, across the United States *fatally* shoot at least 1,000 people annually. That suggests that nationally on any given day police can be expected to shoot about three people. The annual number of people struck by police bullets, whether they cause fatalities or not, and even if the number was lower by a few hundred, makes the United States an outlier among the most developed nations.[14]

Police shootings occur all over the United States. They happen in cities, suburbs, exurbs, and rural areas. And, they have long been a public concern to some degree for more than a century.

It is hard to know exactly when the first police shootings occurred in US cities. It is also hard to know who were among the first urbanites to be shot, who shot them, where in cities they were shot, and whether those shot died or survived. There are no comprehensive historical records of police shootings in American cities. Still, one of the best estimates, generated by criminologist Scott Phillips, is that the first police shooting, at least

the first one reported by an American newspaper, occurred as early as 1851. In that year the *New York Daily Tribune* reported that a daytime officer in Philadelphia shot and wounded a man amid a riot.[15]

Urban police shootings (and debates about them) began to be a more common occurrence after the creation and spread of full-time, uniformed, and armed police forces in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Those early police forces drew heavily on the early-19th Century innovation of the Metropolitan Police (the Met) in London.[16] In the United States, full-time municipal police departments modeled after the Met started with Boston (1838), New York City (1845), Albany and Chicago (1851), New Orleans and Cincinnati (1852), and Philadelphia (1854). Five other Northeast and Midwest cities followed between 1856 and 1866 (St. Louis, Newark, Baltimore, Detroit, and Buffalo). All replaced colonial and/or postcolonial, volunteer night watches, and/or part-time day police.[17]

Firearms for urban police in the United States followed a pattern the Met established, moving from unauthorized, private, and concealed sidearms to publicly provided sidearms and long guns.[18] Before the uniformed police and their predecessor policing agents bore firearms, they relied on a variety of hand-held weapons to overcome resistance and coerce compliance from subjects, including wooden batons (nightsticks and truncheons), blackjacks, spontoons (half-pikes), and "iron claws" (ratcheted-pincers that could break wrists when force was properly applied). By the early 1900s, however, urban police carrying pistols was a widespread, routine practice, with police carrying larger caliber guns only in extreme situations.[19]

Police shootings, then and now, remind us that the discretion to use lethal force is the power to freely choose within legal limits when and how to use violence. It is true whether police fire their guns or just draw and point them. It is true whether their bullets strike or miss people. It is true whether their gunfire kills or just wounds.

Violence—justified or unjustified—is a core element of policing, particularly municipal policing. This is partly because police work by its nature involves violence.[20] You cannot be a cop if you're unwilling to be violent when faced with violence (or the threat of it). Consequently, police academies educate and condition future patrol officers for violence, both the possible receipt of it from civilians and the potential application of it by officers during their shifts. According to ethnographer Samantha Simon, who conducted about 600 hours observing and participating alongside police cadets, cadet training is intended to socialize officers into a culture of violence. It ensures police officers are both capable and inclined to use

violence on the job, including intentionally firing their weapons at other human beings, as Ryan McMahon did on two separate occasions as a Vallejo Police Department officer a few years ago.[21]

The evening of February 13, 2018, McMahon, then a rookie, observed 33-year-old Ronell Foster biking the streets of Vallejo, California. Foster may not have had reflectors or lights—it is unclear—as he crisscrossed cars in traffic. McMahon pursued Foster with his lights flashing, with his siren ringing out, and with his searchlight trained on him. McMahon would later tell investigators he pursued Foster to "educate [him] on the dangers that [he] was creating for himself and the traffic on Sonoma Boulevard."[22]

Foster stopped. A brief back-and-forth happened. Foster, under community supervision for a recent car theft conviction, rode away from McMahon. The officer caught up with Foster, and detained him by knocking him down and pinning him to the ground. McMahon also tasered Foster. He beat him, too, with his metal flashlight, striking him multiple times. Foster, resisting the beating, grabbed the flashlight. McMahon drew his gun and fired seven shots that stopped their tussle.[23]

Foster died with two gunshot wounds in his back and one in the back of his skull. McMahon, according to the incident report, "feared he was in an immediate and imminent threat of death or great bodily injury." A Critical Incident Review Board of the Vallejo Police Department concluded McMahon's deadly response to Foster was "sound and within the accepted practices of the Vallejo Police Department." Moreover, it concluded that McMahon's actions were "consistent with department training guidelines throughout the incident."[24] Subsequently, the Solano County District Attorney's Office cleared McMahon of wrongdoing, after reviewing body camera footage of video without audio.[25] Later, almost a year to the day of Foster's death, McMahon shot and killed Willie "Bo" McCoy while responding to an emergency call.

The night of February 9, 2019, a Taco Bell employee called 911. They reported a man was unresponsive in his car in the restaurant's drive-thru. McMahon and five other Vallejo officers responded to the 911 dispatch. They surrounded McCoy's car. After several minutes observing McCoy and discussing what to do, all of the officers drew their guns. None announced their presence to McCoy. On approaching him, at least one officer saw a pistol on McCoy's lap. McCoy awoke, scratching his shoulder. The officers immediately fired 55 shots at him in 3.5 seconds. They would later state they assumed McCoy was going to shoot them. A Critical Incident Review Board cleared the officers of wrongdoing.[26]

Vallejo may not be a typical city, when it comes to urban policing. Solid journalism and mounds of evidence reveal that Vallejo police historically have engaged in excessive force at alarmingly high rates. Numerous improper acts by its officers underscore challenges in understanding why police, generally, use lethal force in so many situations that seemingly do not merit it. So, too, do their justified and reasonable actions that nevertheless remain questionable to the public. They also bring about debates about what, if anything, can be done to reduce lethal force, especially police shootings.[27]

But whether it is Vallejo, Las Vegas, or another city, police shootings present a basic American dilemma of policing. In the name of public safety and protecting the peace, police officers at times will use gunfire to deter disorder, arrest crime, protect human life. They also may use police gunfire to achieve other ends. They may include unjustified ones such as the imposition of social control, protection of social hierarchies, and keeping some groups "in their place" through violence.[28] Yet, whether legally justified or not, police shootings are tragic civic moments that merit public attention.

Encounters with the police are among the most common encounters Americans have with government agents.[29] The encounters can be public initiated (e.g., responses to 911 calls), traffic related (e.g., stops of motorists and pedestrians for traffic violations), and police initiated (e.g., police suspicion of criminal activity). Sometimes our encounters with the police include violence against us by police officers, and sometimes violence by us against police officers. Encounters with police that involve police violence against us are moments, as political scientists remind us, to ask why we endow police with great authority and wide choice to use harm during engagements with the public and how police authority and choice to use harm shape and sustain, among other things, intergroup differences in exposure to, and experiences with, policing.[30]

Police shootings, in particular, have negative consequences. As public health scholars document, those shot by police officers may face lifelong challenges, including severe physical impairments, pain, and mental health problems.[31] Additionally, there is emerging evidence police shootings produce a variety of social effects, ranging from lower academic performance and educational attainment of inner-city youth to the worsening physical health of communities.[32] There are also the financial costs for cities from civil litigation and financial damages associated with police shootings.[33] Lastly, police shootings may have profound psychological, as well as reputational, occupational, and other consequences, for police officers.

Fatal police shootings today can capture the public's attention. This is not new. History shows that some shootings captivate the public. They also can produce loud public outcries, mass protest, extensive media coverage, and rhetorical attention and reforms from policymakers. One example is the 1963 fatal shooting of Cynthia Scott by an officer of the Detroit Police Department.[34] It resulted in, among other things, approximately 2,500 Black Detroiters picketing the police headquarters. Another example is the 1973 killing of 12 year-old Santos Rodríguez by an officer of the Dallas Police Department. It caused marches, student walkouts, and rioting.[35]

From the 1960s and 1970s until now, many (not all) fatal police shootings moved masses of people to the streets to protest police violence and mobilized more for long campaigns to reform police practices, including appeals to diversify police departments by hiring more officers of color. Examples include the fatal police shootings of Amadou Diallo in New York City (1999), Oscar Grant in Oakland (2009), Tamir Rice in Cleveland (2014), and Breonna Taylor in Memphis (2020). Even when the focus of protests against police practices have not been about police shootings, police shootings have often contributed to the public outcry. We saw that, for instance, in the domestic and international protests against the 2015 lethal "rough ride" of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, the 2014 asphyxiation of Eric Garner in New York City, and certainly the 2020 suffocation of George Floyd in Minneapolis.[36]

Despite high public attention to police shootings, at least the fatal ones that go viral, we believe that public understanding of police shootings is low. For the public to really have an adequate understanding of police shootings, we all need to do more than focus on the most salient or egregious police shootings. We need to step back and first answer basic but important questions about police shootings. The questions include: How common *are* police shootings? Why are there more police shootings in some cities than other cities? Who *do* the police tend to shoot and where in cities do they tend to shoot? Are police shootings more likely to be fatal or nonfatal, and what influences the outcomes? How much can racial bias explain patterns in police shootings? Answering those and related questions will better shape how we discuss and debate the pros and cons of routinely armed police in contemporary America.

Nonetheless, as a group of criminologists recently observed, "one of the most consistently documented findings regarding police use of force is our lack of knowledge about it, as well as the considerable problems associated with data collection and analysis to learn more."[37] Put another way, despite the high stakes of understanding how, when, where, and against

whom police use lethal force, as well as why, we as a society—academics, policymakers, activists and advocates, journalists, and interested citizens—lack systematic data about basic descriptive features of police use of force. That returns us to our first and second goals—to construct a comprehensive and systematic description of police shootings in midsize and large cities from police records and show what police records can reveal about police shootings. This is vital. But the challenges to achieving those aims are great.

1.2 Systemic Challenges to Counting Shootings

All existing counts of police shootings are estimates. They're floors, not ceilings, of the number of people police shot over the last ten or more years. Put another way, what we do not know for sure, at least systematically, is how many, along with when, where, and who, the police shoot in the United States, nationally and annually. We also do not have comprehensive information to determine whether cities tend to have more police shootings than suburbs, towns, or rural places.

Criminologists Matthew Matusiak, Michael Cavanaugh, and Matthew Stephenson summarize well where we are as a country when it comes to cataloging and counting police shootings: "the state of publicly available [shootings] information is limited with a small proportion of law enforcement organizations providing any data related to [shooting] incidents. Importantly, data presented by law enforcement agencies lack continuity as well. There is great variation in the type, classification, and quality of data presented that limits utility for the purposes of research as well as policy creation and evaluation."[38]

How can it be that our wealthy, stable, more-democratic-than-most nation lacks reliable catalogs and independently replicable counts of the numbers of people municipal agents of "law and order" shoot to "protect and serve"?

There's a simple explanation: There's no centralized public recordkeeping of police shootings in the United States, even for its cities. Two systemic challenges, namely the fragmentation of police power and American federalism, strengthened by political realities of police as an interest group, prohibit a full public accounting of how many people, who, and where the police shoot, along with why, in the United States.[39]

The fragmentation of police power is the greatest challenge to a proper public accounting of police shootings. There are more than 14,000 general-purpose law enforcement agencies in the United States. As of 2020, 11,800

of them were local police departments. For these agencies, their sheer number makes it hard to act in concert when it comes to policymaking. That includes efforts to produce and release public records of police behavior. A "non-system" of police behavior is a result, one where there is an absence of consensus among policing agencies about whether and how much police should report to anyone about police shootings (or other forms of lethal and nonlethal force).

American federalism or intergovernmental relations is another big challenge. Principles of states' rights and home rule remain strong in America. On the one hand, federalism allows for experimentation and differentiation. On the other hand, federalism can make it hard to get agreement about good policies. As a result, federalism can undercut the authority of federal and state governments to mandate policy congruence among cities. That creates hurdles to moving all municipal police departments to report all incidents of police harm against civilians, both unjustified and justified harms.[40] Consequently, neither the federal government nor most state governments require city police departments to report encounters and incidents where local (or state) police drew their weapons and fired them, nor the types of injuries, lethal and nonlethal, that occurred. Thus, local police departments possess wide latitude in their documenting and reporting of police shootings.

Without question, there are police departments that deeply value transparency about police shootings. They do not need federal or state governments to tell them to document and share information with the public about police shootings. Departments in some cities, like Las Vegas, just do it. They understand transparency's public and departmental benefits. However, many police departments and officers fear looking bad when it comes to police shootings. As legal scholar Seth Stoughton and his colleagues note, "no police executive wants their agency [to] come in 'last' by reporting more uses of force than peer agencies, and officers can be loath to subject themselves to what they view as unfair criticisms by outsiders."[41] So, many police departments prefer to release very little information about police shootings. Few policymakers feel compelled to confront the police about it and mandate they provide more information.

At this point, you may be asking why police collectively have so much influence over the release of public records of police shootings. We, as political scientists, believe that is an important question. We have two related explanations.

First, police officers, generally, are privileged when it comes to policymaking about records of police behavior because police officers are

protected labor. Political elites believe police officers merit protection. And, while it might not always seem so, Americans view police *very* favorably on dimensions of respect and regard.[42] They tend to believe police have a positive effect and perform well on a number of dimensions, including protecting the public. Furthermore, most Americans have relatively high confidence and trust in their local police, both abstractly and concretely.[43]

Second, many police officers are politically organized, which influences transparency or lack thereof regarding police behavior.[44] Unionization of police as protective services permits officers to generate and distribute varied and strong political resources.[45] Their political resources, especially their electoral ones, include campaign contributions, political endorsements, and bipartisan elite support for police. Related, police tend to demonstrate dutiful civic behavior, especially at the ballot box—police tend to be consistent voters and turnout in high proportions relative to other groups of workers in the United States.[46] Those political resources can influence public policymaking through who gets elected. Electoral influence shapes and sustains political support in legislative and executive branches that help police, generally, resist calls for transparency, oversight, sanctions, and substantial reforms related to (and apart from) use-of-force policies. Their political resources also can influence the policy ideas policymakers—elected and appointed—consider and act upon (or against), including policies regarding making records of police behavior public.[47] Consequently, as Ron DeLord, perhaps the foremost police union strategist ever, and his colleagues have argued, "political action must be the lifeblood of any police union. . . . Political action cannot be achieved or maintained without two things—members and money."[48]

In short, the police in American politics are a powerful interest group, and an ever-growing one. Their power allows them to push lawmakers to keep mandates to publicize police shootings off governmental agendas. As a result, only a handful of states require municipalities or their police to identify and publicly report all incidents of shootings by their officers. And, even then, many departments do not share important information such as the name or demographic characteristics of subjects, bystanders, and officers involved. Sometimes, they even conceal what injuries were sustained by subjects during encounters with the police, including whether they were fatal. These efforts to hide police records from the public obscure the number of people police shoot. In a sweeping study, *When Police Kill*, Franklin Zimring documents how incomplete official records are for fatalities from deadly police force and how we can arrive at radically different numbers

when we try to count how many people have died as a result of police contact.[49] Additionally, departments are often able to hide from the public detailed information about the aftermath of a shooting, including the administrative consequences, if any, officers faced and the fiscal consequences for city governments.[50]

Some readers may wonder whether the failure to collect and distribute systematic records about shootings that police investigate is simply because such records are impossible to create and share. Notably, though, police departments devote significant attention to instances where officers are shot in the line of duty by civilians (and sometimes other officers). Such shootings are well documented and publicized.[51] Indeed, the federal government has reported insightful information about each officer killed or injured in the line of duty since 1937. Police unions and policymakers routinely use the data to advocate for policy changes to reduce harm to police officers.

The Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) Program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation annually collects data from policing agencies—federal, state, and local—about harms to law enforcement officers. It regularly produces reports and spreadsheets with a wealth of information for describing the general aspects of police officers harmed by civilians, both fatally and nonfatally. While access to all details of civilian shootings of police is restricted, publicly available LEOKA data make it easy to know a lot about civilian violence against police officers.

LEOKA includes extensive details about injurious interactions between civilians and officers.[52] Indeed, the amount of information about civilian injuries to police officers—fatal and nonfatal—is astounding. It stands out in relation to the challenges of knowing all harms against suspects, subjects, and bystanders by police officers during police–civilian encounters.

Most important, LEOKA data make it simple to know how many police officers were intentionally killed, including by shootings, and types of guns used, in a given year and over time. LEOKA records show that the number of officers killed by civilians is dramatically lower than the reported numbers of civilians police kill, especially by firearms. As of 2020, there were 708,000 full-time officers in policing agencies across the United States; 473 were feloniously killed on duty between 2010 and 2020. Furthermore, 57 percent of police officers killed were employed by city police departments. Cities with at least 100,000 people employed 45 percent of the officers who were killed, accounting for a minority (26%) of all law enforcement officers killed during the last decade.[53]

Logically, if the government can collect and share relatively comprehensive data about the counts, characteristics, and contexts of police officers killed (or injured) by civilian firearms, could and should it not do the same for people police kill (or wound) by firearms in the course of deterring crime and preserving the peace?[54] Unquestionably. Nonetheless, for more than five decades, social scientists have called for rigorous, comprehensive, national collection of fine-grain information about police shootings in the United States.[55] We all are still waiting for it. Until social scientists and others have better information, piecemeal collections will always foreshorten our systematic understanding of police shootings.

1.3 Inequalities of Police Shootings

Fulton is an affluent neighborhood in southwest Minneapolis. The online neighborhood evaluator Niche calls it "one of the best places to live in Minnesota."[56] That is in many ways unsurprising, given the neighborhood's demographics. Its median household income in 2021 was $153,542. About 70 percent of its residents earn incomes greater than $100,000. Just 3 percent of its residents earn incomes below the federal poverty level. Nearly all (97%) of its housing is owner occupied. And approximately 90 percent of its residents are White. It is truly an unlikely neighborhood for a police shooting.

On the night of July 15, 2017, 40-year-old Justine Ruszczyk Damond called 911 twice. She reported a possible sexual assault in the alley behind her home. Emergency services radioed the call to police—"unknown trouble: female screaming." Michael Harritty and Mohamed Noor, rookies of the Minneapolis Police Department, responded by patrol car to the call. They found no evidence of an assault or other suspicious activity.[57]

Before departing the scene, the officers heard a loud noise and saw another person appear, perhaps with a hand up or outstretched. Reportedly "spooked," Noor, seated in the front passenger seat of the patrol car, drew his gun and fired it through the open window of the driver's side. His bullet missed his partner, who stood outside the patrol car. But it hit Damond. She collapsed, unarmed and dead. Damond's death happened around the one-year anniversary of another jarring and tragic police shooting in metropolitan Minneapolis-St. Paul—the shooting of Philando Castille.

At dusk on July 6, 2016, Jeronimo Yanez, a Saint Anthony Police Department officer fatally shot Castille in the suburb of Falcon Heights. The killing

happened during the most common way people experience unwanted contact with police—after being pulled over in a car. The stop of Castille involved familiar circumstances—a non-Black police officer stopped a Black motorist for a broken brake light and claimed the driver fit the description for someone officers suspected of a crime. In the words of Yanez, uttered during his call for backup, Castille and his girlfriend "just look like people that were involved in a robbery."

Like most drivers police pull over, Castille cooperated. Castille's words were not hostile. His mannerisms and movements were not suspicious or confrontational. He displayed neither resistance nor aggression. He provided proof of insurance. He may or may not have reached for his driver's license. Most important, Castille alerted Yanez about something—"Sir, I have to tell you I do have a firearm on me." He was not declaring wrongdoing. It is legal in Minnesota to possess a gun in public. Nonetheless, within seconds of hearing about Castille's gun, and without any provocation, Yanez fired seven shots. Five struck Castille, who calmly stated, "I wasn't reaching [for the gun]." Officers on the scene did not provide him first aid. Castille later died at Hennepin County Medical Center.

The two police shootings in metropolitan Minneapolis-St. Paul highlight a common concern about police shootings in America—the ease with which police can shoot and kill innocent or nondangerous civilians.[58] Furthermore, the police shootings of Damon and Castille remind us that not all people the police shoot have criminal records or acted in ways that warranted their shootings. That contrasts with the police shootings in Las Vegas we described at the beginning of this chapter, which involved people who seemingly posed grave threats to the public or police during or after the commission of crimes. Additionally, most readers probably agree that the shootings of Damond and Castille were equally terrible. And, many may see how the two deaths speak to inequalities in policing and police shootings.

Damond's shooting and death were highly unexpected. Frankly, most would probably expect that it would never (or even should not) happen to someone like Damond—a White professional woman, early middle aged, walking near her home in an affluent neighborhood, while trusting the police to keep her safe. Such people from such places with such perspectives are rarely shot—fatally or nonfatally—by police. Meanwhile, Castille's shooting and death, which certainly did not *need* to happen, seems much more expected than not, despite his compliance with the cop's commands. In the moment Yanez pulled him over, Castille, unfortunately, was like "the guy" in Claudia Rankine's poem *Citizen: An American Lyric*: "And you are

not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description."[59]

Put another way, the shootings and deaths of Damond and Castille, coupled with differing degrees of expectation and surprise about who's less or more likely to be in a violent and fatal encounter with police, draw our attention to how demographic characteristics can be associated with how the police typically treat some people during encounters.

Scholars, using limited data about police shootings, have found a consistent connection between a subject's or suspect's gender and age and the likelihood of being shot by a police officer—officers are more likely to shoot men than women and younger people than older people.[60] The finding coheres with broader academic findings about police harm against some groups relative to other groups.

For instance, one of the most comprehensive and widely cited public health studies of fatal encounters with the police draws on five years of data for the period from 2013 to 2018. That study estimates that police will kill approximately 52 of every 100,000 men and boys, compared to three of every 100,000 women and girls. That makes police harm the sixth-leading cause of death among men between the ages of 25 and 29. According to the study, Black men are two to three times more likely to be killed by an officer at some point during their lifetime than are White men. Black women are about 50 percent more likely to be killed than are White women.[61]

Those estimates, along with the cases of Damond, Castille, and others, bring us back to our third goal for this book—to discern whether, where, and how much bias there is in the decision to shoot people from some groups as opposed to others. There are multiple questions police shootings can raise about the inequalities of policing. Two of them bear on race (and often its intersection with class). First, do the police use too much force, especially unjustified force, against some groups of Americans, particularly Black Americans and Hispanic Americans, than other groups of Americans? Second, do police use more force against subjects and suspects in racialized minority neighborhoods, especially majority-Black communities and majority-Hispanic ones, than they do in relatively comparable communities comprised mainly of other racial groups?

Given the challenges of collecting and using administrative data about police shootings, we must overcome some serious hurdles to drawing strong conclusions about racial disparities being a function of racial bias by police officers.[62] Just know for now that, in later chapters, we present sound evidence that Black men and, to some extent Hispanic men, in midsize to

large cities are disproportionately shot by police. We also will show that people living in neighborhoods where most Black Americans live are disproportionately exposed to police shootings. Of course, we make plain the limits of relying on police records about police shootings to discern police bias. Our evidence will neither end debates about racial bias in policing nor will our methods resolve all of the problems of observing biased policing. Nevertheless, our approach provides a brighter light for illuminating the presence and extent of the problem.

1.4 A Few Preliminaries

To reiterate, we have four goals for this book: (1) to document police shootings in early twenty-first-century American cities; (2) to observe patterns in where, when, and who the police shoot; (3) to evaluate the nature and estimate the degree of bias associated with inequities in police shootings; and (4) to draw more attention to nonfatal police shootings, especially as the likelihood of dying from a police shooting is lower than anecdotes and news coverage imply.

Many scholars before us have pursued similar goals. Some scholars concurrent with us are still pursuing them. We have learned from them. Their work influenced much of our thinking about policing and police shootings, as well as informed our approach to this book. From that work, we take away a few key points that readers should keep in mind as they read this book.

First, *the use of physical harm by violence is an inherent part of policing.* Policies of police departments and court rulings firmly establish that police officers may use coercive force, including deadly force, in conducting their official duties. Plus, a presumed "danger imperative"—"a cultural frame that emphasizes violence, potential death, and the sanctity of officer safety"—imparted by police academies and held by patrol officers and their supervisors shapes the willingness of police to engage in physical harm.[63] Sociologist Michael Sierra-Arévalo, who coined the term, argues it constitutes "the soul of contemporary policing." Accordingly, a large share of police training involves weapons, especially firearms, to one day confront and overcome danger, particularly deadly violence.[64]

Despite all their preparation to fire their weapons on duty, guns, the most fearsome and deadly weapons during police encounters with civilians, are the weapons police use the least.[65] Police shootings, then, are something of a paradox. Yes, police shootings can happen any day, at any time, and are events police are extensively trained for. But a police officer

shooting a subject they encounter would be an exceptional moment in their career. Indeed, just 27 percent of police officers in the United States report they have fired a pistol or rifle while on duty, excluding training.[66] An upshot of that reality is that there are far fewer police shootings than there *could* be in our cities (and elsewhere in the United States).

Second, *grazing or other nonlethal wounding is never the intention when a police officer shoots at a subject*. When a police officer fires a gun at another human, they are hoping to hit the largest part of a human body. The New York Police Department provides one of the clearest statements of the logic of police targeting the center mass instead of peripheral parts of a person's body:

> Police officers are trained to use deadly physical force to "stop the threat," which means ending the subject's ability to threaten imminent death or serious physical injury. Sometimes stopping a subject results in the subject's demise, but the purpose of using force is not to kill but to stop the threat. To accomplish this purpose in dynamic shooting situations, officers are trained to shoot at the center mass of the subject, the largest target available, and the one most likely to stop the threat. Arms and legs are smaller and less static and therefore less certain targets. Hitting a subject in these extremities is also far less likely to stop an assailant.[67]

Thus, a police shooting is intended to bring violent or potentially violent encounters to an end as quickly as possible, partly for the safety of police officers.

Intentional grazing also is improbable in most cases because many police officers are not that skilled at hitting human targets, especially those in motion, and without striking bystanders. Contemporary studies of the accuracy of police shootings during on-duty incidents (even on gun ranges) conclude that it remains not as high as one might expect.[68] Police in three cities—Dallas, Las Vegas, and New York City—make it plain. Almost one-half (46%) of reported police shootings while on duty by the Dallas Police Department (2003–2017) were shootings where an officer missed the subject entirely.[69] Accounting for the number of bullets fired, misses by LVMPD officers (2008–2015) likely range from 48 percent to 77 percent.[70] As for New York Police Department officers, the average miss rate between 1998 and 2006 was 82 percent during shootings of exchanges of gunfire between police and civilians and 70 percent when civilians did not return fire on the police.[71] Those facts strongly imply that police shootings,

while potentially lethal, often results in lower hit rates than most imagine.[72] Put simply, police shoot fewer people than they *intend* when discharging their weapons.

Third, *a principle of proportionality is supposed to guide an officer's decision to shoot a subject (or use any other means of force)*. Basically, any amount of force police officers use *should* be approximately equal to the amount of force civilians use against them.[73] Use-of-force policies of police departments establish a sliding scale of force officers may use. The scale guides the discretion of police officers to use guns (or other lethal or less-lethal forms of force) during encounters with subjects. Force should be calibrated to variation in the reactions of subjects to the commands of police officers. The reactions range from full compliance to the commands of officers to complete noncompliance with violence to the commands of officers.

A typical use-of-force policy explicitly reserves the use of lethal force for the most extreme situations (i.e., where a criminal subject poses the threat of violent or physical harm to others). This is backed by a prominent legal precedent that guides use of force policy today, namely the ruling by the US Supreme Court in *Graham v. Connor* (1989).[74] It establishes that use of lethal force should be objectively reasonable—from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, not an average member of the public or a municipal policymaker. Moreover, the seriousness of suspected criminal behavior, how much of a threat a subject may pose to an officer or the public, and whether the subject is actively resisting or evading arrest condition the objectively reasonable use of lethal force by police officers.[75] Interestingly, and maybe unsurprisingly, surveys suggest police officers and the general public tend to perceive police shootings, perhaps the majority of them, as justifiable or objectively reasonable.[76]

Fourth, *many things are associated with or even cause police to shoot*. Reams of research on use of force by police demonstrate as much. The behavior of a criminal subject or others during encounters with police officers is one of them. The choices subjects make when encountered by police explain some of the decisions by police to shoot them. The degree of resistance by subjects to the directives of officers, in particular, may account for much of the variance in police shootings. Additionally, whether subjects possess weapons and/or flee (or attempt to flee) from the police to avoid detention and arrest literally triggers many police to shoot. Police typically explain those decisions as protection of their lives. Whether a crime is being committed and the kind of crime may also bear on whether a police officer shoots a subject. Procedural mechanisms, too, may account for how

police respond to civilians during encounters, especially police-initiated encounters and traffic stops. Studies suggest that aspects of police departments such as the desire to maintain a particular culture may predict patterns in police shootings, as might administrative policies and procedures governing police behavior during encounters with civilians.[77]

Fifth, amid disparate gender, age, and even racial risks of death during encounters with police, *perceptions and attributions of police use of force, including shootings, vary among the public (and police officers)*. Public opinion research strongly suggests, for starters, that police violence is a problem. According to a 2020 Associated Press–NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll, nearly half of Americans believe police violence against the public is a very serious problem, up from 32 percent in 2015.[78] Likewise, a 2016 Pew Research Center poll found that a majority (60%) of Americans agreed that lethal encounters between police and Black citizens are "signs of a broader problem" of policing and police–community relations.

However, these general statistics hide a stark racial divide. Race, without question, creates one of the sharpest cleavages in public opinion about police behavior, particularly use of force. Specifically, while 83 percent of Black Americans see police violence such as shootings as a very serious problem, just 39 percent of White Americans do. When it comes to police killings of Black Americans, only 54 percent of White Americans perceive a broader problem, compared to a supermajority (79%) of Black Americans.

Furthermore, public opinion surveys find even starker racial divergences among police officers themselves. Just 31 percent of a national sample of police officers who responded to a 2016 Pew poll believed that lethal encounters between police and Black Americans are signs of a broader problem of policing and police–community relations.[79] But 57 percent of Black police officers believed it, compared to 27 percent and 26 percent of non-Hispanic White and Hispanic officers, respectively. At the same time, 67 percent of officers saw lethal encounters as isolated incidents, which hid a vast racial divide—72 percent of White officers but only 43 percent of Black officers held that opinion.

What explains the perceptual divide by race over lethal force by police, even among police officers? Differences in public perceptions of police shootings as problems certainly may stem from factors that commonly divide the public. This includes matters of law and order, as well as socioeconomic status, ideology, partisanship, victimization, and other lenses for seeing and interpreting social phenomena. The long-standing tradition of differential policing in the United States also is a key explanation.[80]

Ever since the formation of policing institutions and agencies, ranging from county sheriffs to slave patrols to municipal police, Black Americans and White Americans, for instance, generally, have had widely and distinctly different experiences with, and perspectives about, policing. Divergent experiences with policing in all its forms, including use of deadly force, and their consequences continue to influence how racial groups process information about the police generally and police shootings in particular.[81] Divergent experiences explain, too, why Black Americans typically express an *insecurity* from police harm, while White Americans generally express a *security* from police harm.[82] We return to these themes in later chapters.

To be clear, some Americans see police shootings (and other forms of police harm) as common encounters, suggestive of problematic patterns. They believe the patterns they perceive are products of race, class, police culture, and more. Other Americans see police shootings and other police harms as mere incidents. For them, police shootings symbolize nothing (or little) about problems of policing in the United States. For those Americans, police shootings do not imply the need to reform policing. Instead, they often attribute police shootings to poor choices by subjects (e.g., resistance to police commands) rather than bad choices by police officers. All of that, for them, invites little distrust on their part of police practices.

A consequence of the bifurcated perceptions about police and policing in the United States is that some Americans, especially White Americans, but also a good deal of Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans, are more likely to give police the benefit of the doubt when it comes to police shootings and other forms of harm by the police.[83] One result is that most non-Black adults and their children are more likely to believe the police will more often than not act justly and without error, at least in *their* lives. (Perhaps Justine Damond thought so when she summoned the police.)

Meanwhile, many Black parents and other guardians, and some Hispanic ones, feel the need to have a conversation—The Talk—with school-age children and older adolescents in their lives.[84] They inform youth of how bias has historically been a factor in determining where, when, and who the police stop, question, frisk, arrest, and harm. They prepare youth for the possibility of overzealous, discriminatory, and potentially violent episodes with police officers.[85] They socialize youth to behave in respectable, nonthreatening ways during encounters with police officers. Their goal is simple: decrease the likelihood that police will harm their youth, particularly out of bias.[86] (The Talk probably influenced Philando Castille's demeanor and behavior after he pulled his car to the side.)

To summarize, readers should retain the following five points while reading this book:

1. Police are always prepared to use lethal force, even if most officers do not use it often (or ever).
2. Despite extensive training, police are not trick-shot artists. They train to aim for a subject's center mass and shoot with the expectation the subject will likely die.
3. Police training usually teaches officers that the use of force should be proportional to the threats they encounter from subjects. They should reserve lethal force for the most extreme and dangerous encounters.
4. The risk of being subject to force from a police officer is not the same for everyone. How a person behaves, the broader context, and even a person's demographic characteristics seem to be associated with police shootings.
5. Public opinion about police shootings is not monolithic, just as it is not regarding the police and policing generally. Race, in particular, produces differences in opinions about police, policing, and police behaviors, including police shootings.

1.5 Organization of the Book

In the chapters that follow, we address a set of *seemingly* simple questions that are challenging to answer. But answering this set of questions is needed to better inform and improve public and scholarly discussions and debates about police shootings in urban America and beyond. We employ original administrative data on police shootings at the *incident level, not aggregate level*. We collected and compiled data from cities of 100,000 people or more in the United States. Our data are from the primary source—police departments. The data include fatal and nonfatal police shootings reported to us by police departments (or their city governments), where their police officers were the shooters.

We hope to improve public discussions of police shootings. That requires knowing more about when, where, and against whom the police use deadly force. It also requires access to official government records of police shootings. Such records, in our view, should be readily available to the public. In reality, many records are inaccessible or require more effort to access than necessary. We know so because we experienced it. To give

readers a feel for the effort it took to collect the data for this book, as well as to suggest the rigor of our effort, chapter 2 identifies the difficulties in learning basic facts about police shootings. It clarifies the systemic challenges to counting police shootings, which create supplemental challenges for determining and explaining patterns of police shootings. It also describes our methods of requesting and obtaining records of police shootings that occurred in our study cities for the period 2000 through 2020. We generalize how departments responded, both positively and negatively, to our requests. Plus, we provide insights into what responsive departments gave us in terms of information and data, as well as what many departments excluded from what they shared with us.

Records of police shootings are records of officers' perceptions and memories, often supplemented by information from witnesses. Records of police shootings also are self-compiled and self-reported by police departments. This raises a set of fundamental questions about the contents of what police report about police shootings. How would we know whether reported incidents are factual? Do the reports, for instance, match the actual number of police shootings? To answer those vital questions, chapter 3 reports our assessment of the quality of records we obtained from police departments. There, we interrogate the records we collected to determine their representativeness and accuracy. Supplemental sources of information about police shootings permitted us to evaluate the completeness of what police departments reported to us. As we detail, we found little evidence of inaccuracy in our police records. Moreover, our data are generally better (e.g., more complete) than other widely used sources of information about incidents of police shootings.

Chapter 4 begins our exposé of police shootings in urban America. It examines their prevalence across cities and addresses two common questions that interest the public and scholars: Generally, which kinds of cities have more police shootings? Have police shootings in cities increased over time? The chapter considers as well a set of core expectations for urban variation in police shootings. Specifically, it examines the degree to which crime, public investment in the police (e.g., the relative size of a police force), and local politics predict the prevalence of police shootings. We reveal that fewer police per capita and, to a lesser extent, higher rates of violent crime, are the best predictors of police shootings across urban America. Political dimensions of cities (e.g., partisan compositions of electorates and the presence of municipal institutions for police oversight) are weaker predictors of police shootings.

Chapter 5 steps down into cities. It draws readers' attention from simple comparisons across cities to more complex comparisons within them. This is important. *Where* police shoot is often related to who the police shoot. And, how often police shoot in some places relative to other places may imply inequalities in exposure to police shootings, along with other troubling inequalities. We give the issue its due by examining urban neighborhoods to identify aggregate patterns of police shootings in cities. One key finding is that police shootings are simultaneously dispersed throughout cities but disproportionately concentrated in particular parts of cities—especially the areas where more Black Americans and Hispanic Americans live.

Chapter 6 digs deeper into our data to discover who the police shoot in urban America. Public attention rightly focuses on the prevalence of police shootings. But the public is perhaps most interested in who the police shoot. In particular, the public often is curious about the race of people police shoot, particularly when the shootings are deadly and the subject was an unarmed and young Black American.[87] In chapter 6, we describe the demographic characteristics of the subjects police shoot. We make clear that Black Americans are overrepresented among those wounded and/or killed by police bullets in urban America. Furthermore, we share what we learned about the types of people most likely in the aggregate to be subject to deadly force by police shootings across and in cities. Specifically, we report that the youngest adults shot by police in urban America tend to be Black and Hispanic and they are more likely to be unarmed than adults from other racial groups. Additionally, chapter 6 reveals our best calculation of who among police officers is most likely to shoot. Our answer is that, for the incidents where we know the race of officers, White officers shoot more people than non-White officers. But, among all police officers, Black and Hispanic officers are overrepresented among those who shoot civilians.

Chapter 7 focuses on a critical public concern, namely the immediate consequences of police shootings regarding life and death. We ask two questions. What predicts fatality rates? What predicts who lives and who dies in a police shooting? Answering these questions allows us to return to our focus on overall trends in police shootings. It also allows us to consider which kinds of shootings are obscured by a focus on fatal shootings. Critically, we show that unarmed subjects are much more likely to survive being shot by police. Consequently, focusing on fatal shootings will minimize the number of unarmed subjects police shoot.

Additionally, the chapter deepens our empirical consideration of the potential role of race in police shootings. Specifically, chapter 7 explains how one would quantify racial bias in police shootings and how one could, in a novel way, detect racial bias by focusing on fatality rates. Most important, by focusing on fatality *and* survival for White and Black subjects, we provide evidence that a substantial degree of racial bias may exist in the decision to shoot a civilian. Under reasonable assumptions, we estimate at least 10 percent of armed Black subjects who were shot by police officers would not have been shot had they been White.[88] This number is likely higher for unarmed Black subjects who were shot. Additionally, if stronger assumptions hold, this number could be as high as 50 percent for unarmed Black subjects. We will be very clear now, however: future research should focus on questioning and investigating these assumptions.

Chapter 8, the conclusion, briefly recounts our goals and pairs them to a set of our five most substantial findings. We frame the findings as lessons; they are opportunities for learning. We reflect on what our evidence about police shootings in urban America suggest for broader debates about police reform. We do it with an eye toward reducing police harms against civilians. In addition, we draw on our experience collecting records of police shootings to make a plea for greater police transparency. We connect it to the need for all of us to think harder and more critically about police discretion, including the discretion of police departments when it comes to administrative records. We close the chapter by teasing out some implications we think police shootings in urban America have for the nation as a democracy.

In sum, we draw on a decade or more of incident-level records of police shootings we obtained from police departments in midsize and large US cities to provide, arguably, the most reasonable, reliable, and replicable answers regarding how many people police shoot, who they shoot, where they shoot them, and how many succumb to or survive police gunfire in urban America. With the data we collected and share publicly, we seek to make less opaque one important type of police harms against civilians and increase our collective numeracy about it. Our motivations are to inform public debates and perhaps influence policymaking about some of the most violent moments involving the police in public.

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