**Black Lives Matter: Evidence that Police Caused Deaths Predict Protest Activity**

Author(s): Vanessa Williamson, Kris-Stella Trump, and Katherine Levine Einstein

Summary by: Austin Barber, University of Arkansas

**Summary**

While past studies have examined the political consequences of the American judicial system, there is relatively little research as to when and why such conditions create protest activity like Black Lives Matter. Therefore, the author’s purpose is to generate empirical research on the precursors that lead to social movements in major cities as well as the contexts in which they occur to predict future protests. The article contains two major goals, to *offer new descriptive evidence on the geographic spread of the politically significant protests* and to *explore the pattern of BLM protests*. The author focuses on recent scholarly discussions over how state security affects political activity in the United States. Drawing from resource mobilization theory and political opportunity theory, the article explores how political protests emerge from situations of racial discrimination in law enforcement and political turmoil.

**Methods**

To examine the contexts that promoted Black Lives Matter protests to occur, the author developed a novel dataset of 780 protests from August 2014 to August 2015, including their size and location within the United States. Each entry included the date of occurrence, geocoded location, and estimate of the number of protest participants. The authors then included the locality-level measurements of the population, population density, percentage Black, and Black poverty levels using the 2014 American Community Survey 5-year estimate. Drawing from this data, the study was set up to measure the political opportunity structure of the localities by including variables for mayoral race and mayoral party. Next, the study developed a measure to capture the history of Black political organizing in each area using a dataset of NAACP chapters from 1912-1977. Finally, to examine the key relationship of the association between deaths caused by police and BLM protest, the authors included data from nonprofit databases like “Killed by Police” and “Fatal Encounters”.

**Results**

The results of the study found that from August 2014 to August 2015, Black Lives Matter protests occurred in 14% of United States cities with a population of more than 30,000 residents. Additionally, BLM protests were significantly more common in cities with at least one police-related death. Specifically, a Black Lives Matter protest occurred at only 9% of cities without a police-related death and 24% of cities with at least one death. Additionally, using resource mobilization theory, the results indicated that there is a definite quadratic relationship between social mobilization and Black poverty. Further, protests are also more frequent in cities with a larger college-educated population because they have more resources in which to protest with. When referring to political opportunity theory, the results of the dataset indicate that social mobilization is more common in cities with a higher Democratic vote in Presidential election.

**Implications**

The results found from this study creates valuable insights into the individual-level analysis of community organizations and political networks that can be used assist scholars in better unpacking the psychological and institutional mechanisms at work in a political protest. Additionally, future research using the data provided by this study could be used to explore the consequences of political mobilization as well as compare the Black Lives Matter protests to other social movements against the judicial system. However, in the short term, the results can help create a broader understanding of when protest activity may emerge. Policymakers and scholars alike can use the data provided to contextualize and understand protest activity in the modern world.

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