International Review of Law and Economics 56 (2018) 1–13

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Review of Law and Economics

Interracial face-to-face crimes and the socioeconomics of neighborhoods: Evidence from policing records

Gregory DeAngelo [a,*], R Kaj Gittings [b], Anita Alves Pena [c]

[a] Department of Economics, Claremont Graduate University, 150 E 10th St, Claremont, CA 91711, United States
[b] Department of Economics, Texas Tech University, 254 Holden Hall, Lubbock, TX 79409, United States
[c] Department of Economics, Colorado State University, 1771 Campus Delivery, Fort Collins, CO 80523, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 4 May 2018
Accepted 8 May 2018

JEL classification:
K4
J1
R3
I3

Keywords:
Victimization
Inequality
Race
Ethnicity and social distance

ABSTRACT

Using a novel data set comprising the universe of reported crimes to the Los Angeles Police Department from 2000 to 2007, we examine race victimization patterns among face-to-face crimes at the neighborhood level. While some of our findings support previous work, others challenge previous research and general expectations about race and crime. Contrary to victimization patterns observed in the aggregate data, our panel data models identify consistent patterns of reported violence committed by White individuals against Blacks and Hispanics across neighborhoods. Specifically, in the presence of controls for neighborhood and time effects, Whites are more likely to assault and use weapons against Blacks and Hispanics than Blacks and Hispanics are to assault or use weapons against Whites. On the other hand, Blacks and Hispanics are typically more likely to commit robbery (crimes which we characterize as being often related to economic motives) against Whites than the reverse. We estimate these effects across the racial composition and earnings distribution of neighborhoods in Los Angeles County and find significant heterogeneity in the propensity for certain types of crimes to occur as a function of the race/ethnic match of suspect and victim.

© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Race-based violence has generated substantial media attention, is a key political issue, and topic of public discourse.[1] The economics of crime research has actively sought to explain variation in crime, including research on crime in urban and rural areas (Glaeser et al., 1996; Cullen and Levitt, 1999), within cities (Freeman et al., 1996; Glaeser and Sacerdote, 1999; Zenou, 2003; Kirk, 2008), across races (Sampson and Lauritsen, 1994; Verdier and Zenou, 2004), socioeconomic backgrounds (Case and Katz, 1991; O'Flaherty and Sethi, 2010a,b), migration (Foote, 2015), age (Levitt, 1998; Lee and McCrary, 2010; Bushway et al., 2012), and gender (Freeman, 1996; Kling et al., 2005; South et al., 2014). In addition, DeAngelo (2012) and Freeman et al. (1996) find that law enforcement can lead certain types (e.g. race) of criminals to clump together if they are similar, "low efficiency" offenders, while others note that the choice of where to commit a crime is often determined by market forces, such as a gang's turf (Tita and Ridgeway, 2007; Tita et al., 2005; Ratcliffe and Taniguchi, 2011).

Research examining the details of homicide incidents in particular locations has documented that victims and offenders often have much in common (Lederman et al., 2002; O'Flaherty and Sethi, 2010a,b). In Boston homicides of young people in the early 1990s, for example, 75% of victims and known killers had criminal histories, while 22% of victims and 33% of killers were on probation at the time of the homicide (Kennedy et al., 1996). This finding of extensive participation in the criminal justice system among those involved in homicide has been replicated in Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and other locations (Kennedy, 2011). The literature notes that victims and offenders are frequently of the same social milieu (e.g., age, race, sex, neighborhood), while homicide incidents often involve repeated interactions among people in close social relationships, many of which are reasonably characterized as vendettas (Kennedy et al., 1996). This line of research called into question

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: gregory.deangelo@gmail.com (G. DeAngelo).

[1] For example, news articles often focus on social media posts by Donald Trump, which take aim at crime rates, specifically homicide rates between races and by police against certain ethnicities (http://qz.com/556988/here-are-four-charts-on-race-and-murder-in-america-to-tweet-back-at-donald-trump/). The relationship between Black on Black crime and the Black Lives Matter movement has also been highlighted in press (http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/07/27/why-doesnt-black-lives-matter-doesnt-focus-talk-about-black-black-crime/87609692/).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irle.2018.05.001
0144-8188/© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

previous notions of high, and increasing, prevalence of "random" violence (Braga et al., 1999).

Since information on homicides has been historically subject to more meticulous reporting standards than some other crimes rendering it more complete in police databases, previous research has focused on the relationship between victims and perpetrators of homicides despite these encounters only accounting for 1.2% of all violent crimes in 2012.[2] As data quality has improved, so has the ability to examine more common offenses, such as assault and robbery, which account for 91.8% of all violent crimes. By focusing on these criminal activities, it is possible to garner a greater understanding of the dynamics of criminal behavior, especially the victims of crime. Using a large and unique data set from Los Angeles, we examine whether social distance – defined here as the relationship between the races of the victim and alleged perpetrator – is similar across a larger subset of criminal activity.

Federally collected data sets contain demographic characteristics of suspects and victims, but geographic identifiers in the public use data are coarse and fail to account for substantial detail regarding locational heterogeneity.[3] A novel aspect of our paper is that we are able to evaluate characteristics of victims and their alleged offenders at the neighborhood level (measured by census tracts in Los Angeles).[4] Through a research agreement with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), we obtained all reported crime incidents at the census tract level, which provides us the ability to account for neighborhood demographic and economic attributes. Given the nature of the data, we can examine the social distance for the more common crimes of robbery and assault.[5] Disaggregating by crime type has the advantage of allowing us to separate violent crimes that likely have economic motives (robbery) from those that are less likely to have this characteristic (assaults). Important for our purposes, since these crimes are personal in nature and face-to-face, the suspect and victim have the ability to identify each other's race. Moreover, by matching crimes to census tracts, we are able to examine the role of neighborhood-level measures in discerning the likelihood of a criminal incident occurring by/against a particular race, a framework consistent with Becker's (1968) description of "activity to activity" variation in crime.

Our paper not only extends the previous research regarding homicide to the more frequent, yet lesser studied, crimes of robbery and assault, but the geographic detail of the data allows us to make several additional, innovative contributions to the literature.[6] First, by linking Decennial Census data and the American Community Survey to the data, we are able to determine whether a census tract's population is predominately White or minority and determine how this impacts the likelihood of a crime being committed and, conditional on a crime being committed, the likelihood that particular crime types are between two individuals of the same race. Second, by characteristics of the income distribution for each census tract, we are able to conduct the same analysis using variation in income to explain racial matching of crime. Finally, we interact both the income and racial composition of census tracts in order to determine how the intersection of these aspects of a census tract explain the social distance of criminal activities.

2. Literature review

Empirical, observational and theoretical explanations for the variation in criminal behavior have been present in the literature for quite some time. In 1939 Edwin Sutherland offered one of the earliest accounts to explain variation in crime through differential association. Becker's (1968) framing predicts that crime affects "persons in very different pursuits and of diverse social backgrounds, education levels, ages, races, etc. Moreover, the likelihood that an offender will be discovered and convicted and the nature and extent of punishments differ greatly from person to person and activity to activity." In addition to the variation in crime across the margins discussed in Becker (1968), the externalities from crime are not borne equally, as crime rates vary substantially across geography and demography, with higher crime rates within city boundaries, for poorer individuals, ethnic minorities, males, and youth offenders.

Logan and Messner (1987) document racial segregation as a predictor of crime rates. More recent explanations for the spatial variance in criminal activity have been presented by Glaeser et al. (1996) and O'Flaherty and Sethi (2007). These papers find that social interactions and segregation play a fundamental role in determining the location of criminal activity such as robbery and homicide. Glaeser et al. (1996) predicts that the severity of crime will vary with the extent of social interactions experienced by criminals, such that the least severe types of crime will be most common when indices of social interaction are high and the most severe types of crime will be most common when the extent of social interaction is low. O'Flaherty and Sethi (2007) theoretically argue that "robbers prey disproportionately on Whites, believing them to be more compliant, and Whites protect themselves by moving disproportionately to safer neighborhoods."[7] O'Flaherty and Sethi (2010a,b) extend their previous work to homicide by providing a theoretical justification for the presence of higher murder rates in largely Black communities in comparison to White communities, noting that "disputes can escalate dramatically in environments (endogenously) perceived to be dangerous, resulting in self-fulfilling expectations of violence for particular dyadic interactions, and significant racial disparities in rates of murder and victimization."[8]

[2] See http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2012/crime-in-the-u.s.-2012/violent-crime/violent-crime.

[3] The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), and Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) also fail to identify respondents as Hispanic or Latino until relatively recently. The data used in our analysis identifies whether both the victim and alleged perpetrator are Hispanic or Latino as well as other racial and ethnic classifications during the entire sample period. NIBRS gathers information about criminal activity at the incident level, but participation in the program is quite low – especially amongst larger agencies/jurisdictions – making it difficult to obtain full coverage of reported criminal activity in a geographic region. While NIBRS is capable of identifying suspect/victim specific information, these accounts are linked to the agency to which the incident was reported, making it difficult if not impossible to attach disaggregated information regarding income, racial composition, and any other census-tract specific information. For a well-documented detail of the benefits and shortcomings of the many crime databases, see Tabarrok et al. (2010) and MacDonald (2002).

[4] For the purposes of this paper, we use the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably despite distinctions between these terms in some federal datasets.

[5] Crimes that fall into more than one category are based on the primary classification by the responding officer.

[6] Zimring and Zuehl (1986), for example, examine victim race and personal relationships between victim and offender for a case study of robbery in Chicago. The authors find that robbery is more likely than assault to be experienced by victims of large social distance from their alleged offenders. Measures in their paper include whether or not pairings are strangers, are of the same race, are within 10 years of age, and are both males.

[7] This point is further addressed in Zenou (2003), who notes that in addition to being involved in a network of individuals who commit crime, spatial segregation will result in poorer populations having to travel further to find work, thereby reducing their opportunity cost of crime.

[8] Feldmeyer (2010) finds that racial segregation (especially segregation away from White populations) contributes to Black and Hispanic homicide rates, which are largely similar. Peterson and Krivo (2009) find significant racial-spatial differences across 36 U.S. cities, noting that proximity to either disadvantaged or racially privileged (White) areas accounts for the large and visible difference in violence across races.

Download English Version:

https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7355836

Download Persian Version:

https://daneshyari.com/article/7355836

Daneshyari.com