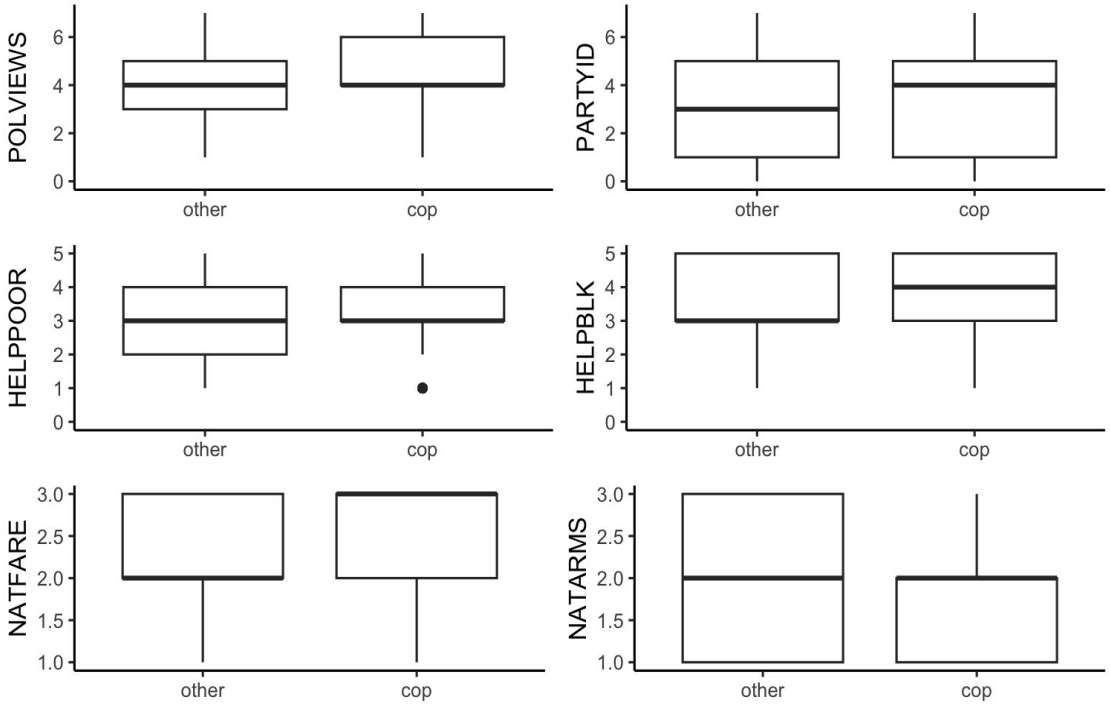
THE POLITICAL LEANINGS OF POLICE

STAT 3105 – Final Project

Marlon Kegel

THE QUESTION

(American) police officers political views differ from those of people in other professions.



"[67%] of all police officers say the deaths of blacks at the hands of police are isolated incidents" vs. "only about four-in-ten members of the public (39%) share this view".

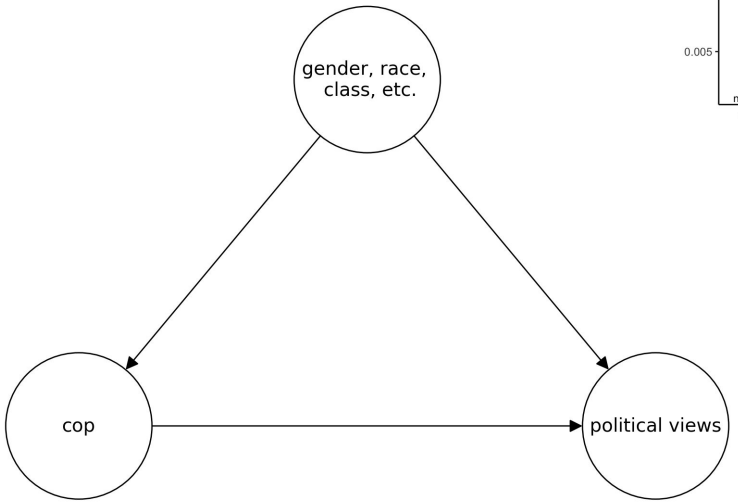
"a majority of Americans (64%) favor a ban on assault-style weapons" vs. "a similar share of police officers (67%) say they would oppose [it]"

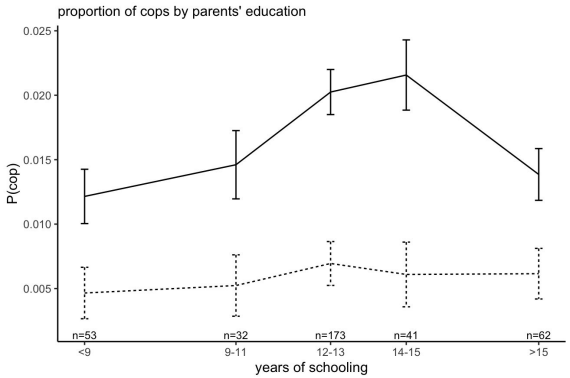
- Mercer et al. (2017)

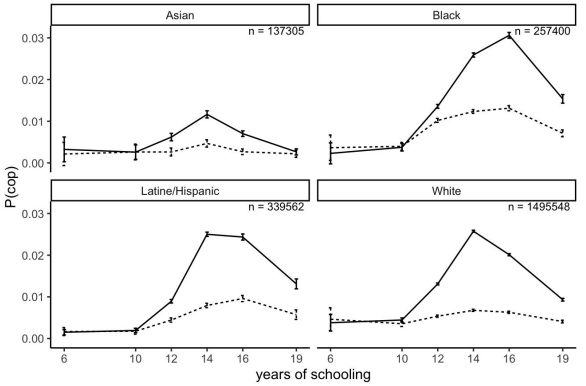
What causes this difference?

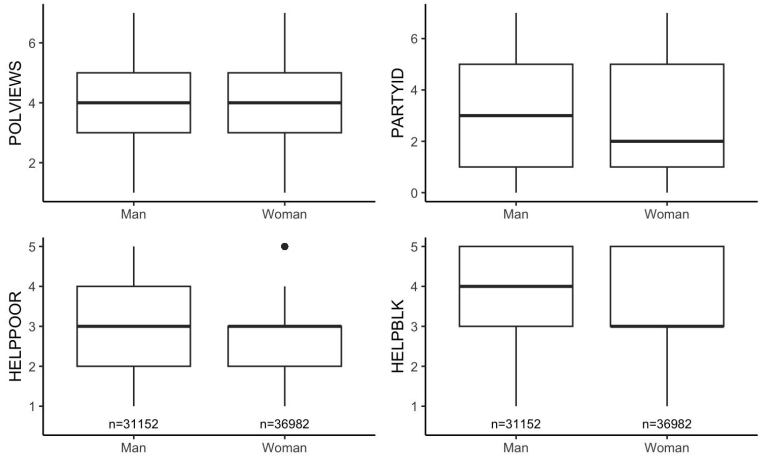
THE PROBLEM

Not just anyone joins the police…









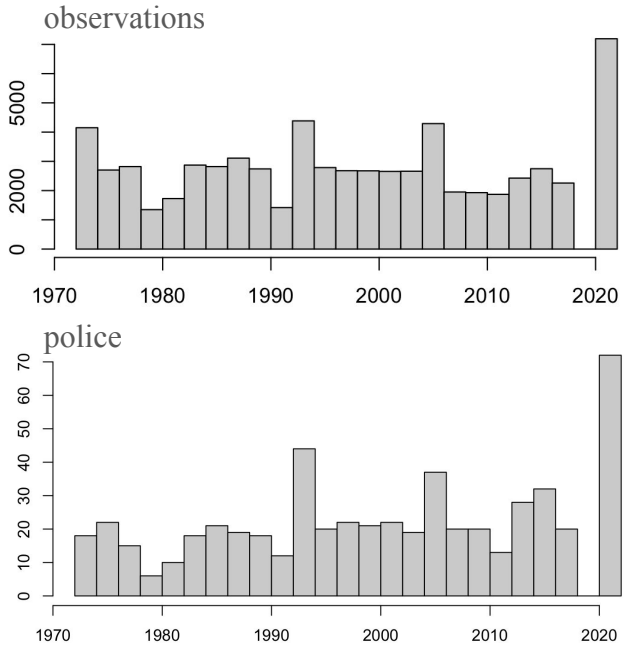
THE DATA

- Ideal Data:
  - individual-level data
  - demographic variables, including detailed information on occupation
  - questions about political opinion
  - large n, because only a small subset of the population are police officers
  - panel data over many years, to get variation in the “treatment”

→ my data: General Social Survey (GSS)

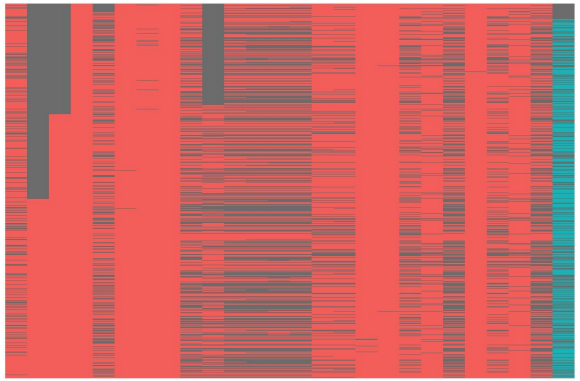
- NORC at UChicago
- 68,200 individuals, 1972 - 2022
- occupation codes, demographic, and opinion questions
- 549 police officers
  - incl. correctional officers

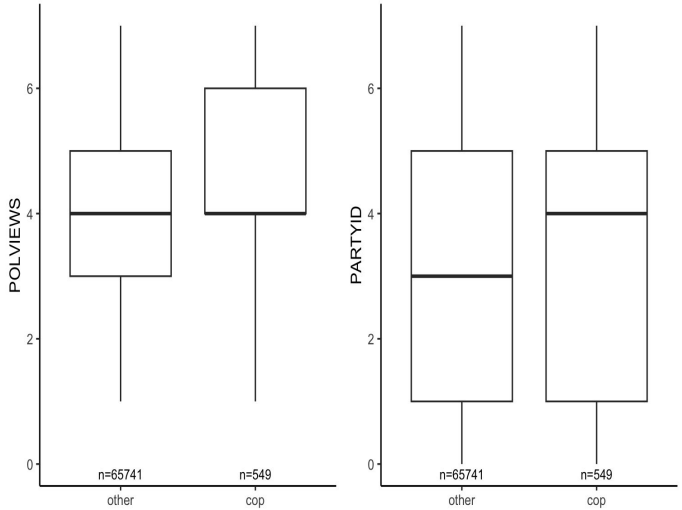
… over many years, but not a panel



GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY (GSS)

- 24 demographic controls
  - age, sex, race, household income, occupational prestige, father's occupational prestige, highest degree, mother's highest degree, father's highest degree, work status, employed/ self-employed, father's work status (when young), marital status, year-, and region of interview (proxy for residence), region of origin (at 16 yrs), which religion, practicing religion, rural/urban (9 levels), lived w/ family at 16, born in the US, parents born in the US, general happiness, and satisfaction w/ financial situation.
- opinion questions: Where would you place yourself on a scale--
  - POLVIEWS: … from extremely liberal – point 1 – to extremely conservative – point 7?
  - PARTYID: … from strong Democrat – point 0 – to strong Republican – point 6?





THE METHOD

- The perfect comparison group: people who are exactly the same on all measurable characteristics
  - categorical controls : adding all main effects and all possible interactions
  - but for 24 variables, most of which are categorical à 2-9 categories… **too many dimensions!**

- <u>Post-Double Selection (PDS)</u> – Belloni et al. (2014); Angrist & Frandsen (2022)
  1. LASSO all controls on treatment – d ~ Z
  2. LASSO all controls on outcome – y ~ Z
  3. Keep controls selected in either step for final model – Y ~ D + Z

  cv.glmnet() 10-fold CV to select λ
  α = 1

- binned continuous variables, then dummy encoding
  - year of interview, HH income, age, father's - / occupational prestige score (0-100) – 14 - 30 equal-size bins

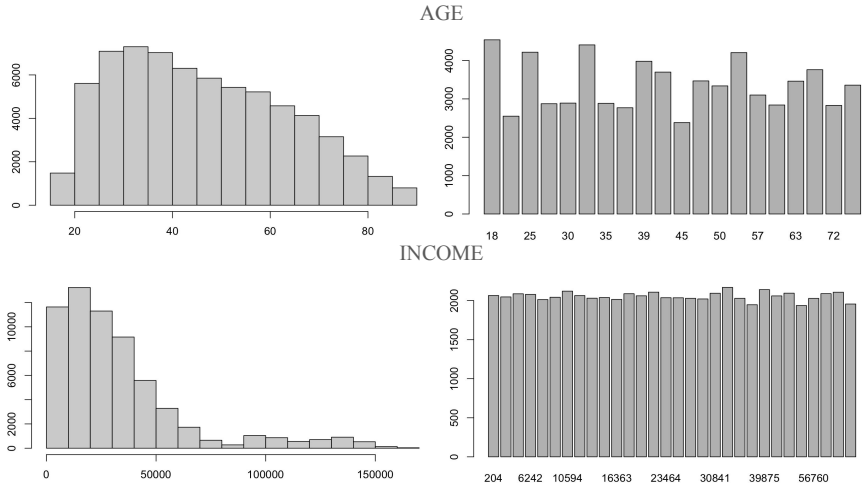
    → 170 main effects

- all possible interactions, removing empty columns

  → 13,291 variables

- removing near-zero variance *interactions*
  - freqCut = 200, uniqueCut = 0.01

    → 5,458 variables.



RESULTS

POLVIEWS/ PARTYID ~ cop + income + age + prestg + prestg_pop + Z_i

- Z_i included 901 controls for POLVIEWS and xxx for PARTYID

OLM

NULL

	POLVIEWS				PARTYID			
Predictors	*Estimates*	*std. Error*	*CI*	*p*	*Estimates*	*std. Error*	*CI*	*p*
cop	0.30	0.06	0.18 – 0.42	**<0.001**	0.39	0.08	0.23 – 0.56	**<0.001**
Observations	59470				67815			
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.000 / 0.000				0.000 / 0.000			

PDS

	POLVIEWS				PARTYID			
Predictors	*Estimates*	*std. Error*	*CI*	*p*	*Estimates*	*std. Error*	*CI*	*p*
cop	0.36	0.08	0.21 – 0.52	**<0.001**	0.39	0.11	0.17 – 0.61	**0.001**
Observations	34160				35417			
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.193 / 0.161				0.244 / 0.214			

cumulative logit model

$\text{logit}[P(Y \leq k)] = \beta_k + \text{cop} + \ldots Z_i$,
where k are the levels of the outcome.

	POLVIEWS				PARTYID			
Predictors	*Estimates*	*std. Error*	*CI*	*p*	*Estimates*	*std. Error*	*CI*	*p*
cop	-0.53	0.11	-0.75 – -0.32	**<0.001**	-0.38	0.11	-0.59 – -0.16	**0.001**
Observations	34160				35417			

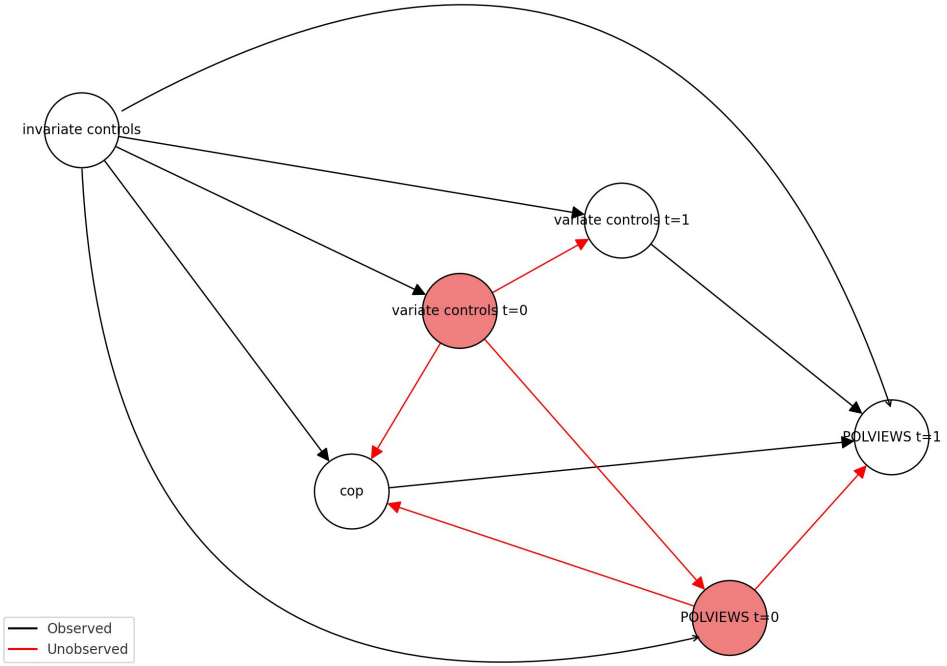
The odds of being one step more liberal are 1 - $e^{-0.53}$ = 0.41, i.e. 41% smaller for police than for non-police.

The odds of being one step more Democrat are 1 - $e^{-0.38}$ = 0.32, i.e. 32% smaller for police than for non-police.

CONCLUSION

- Police are more conservative and more republican than non-police.
- The differences are not driven by *any* measurable confounding variables.

- Any remaining difference is only explainable by either, or both, of:
  1. ideological selection into police
  2. socialization effect upon joining the police.



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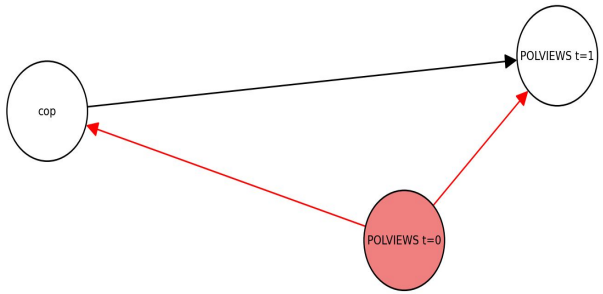
- to understand the relative importance of causality here, we would actually need panel data…



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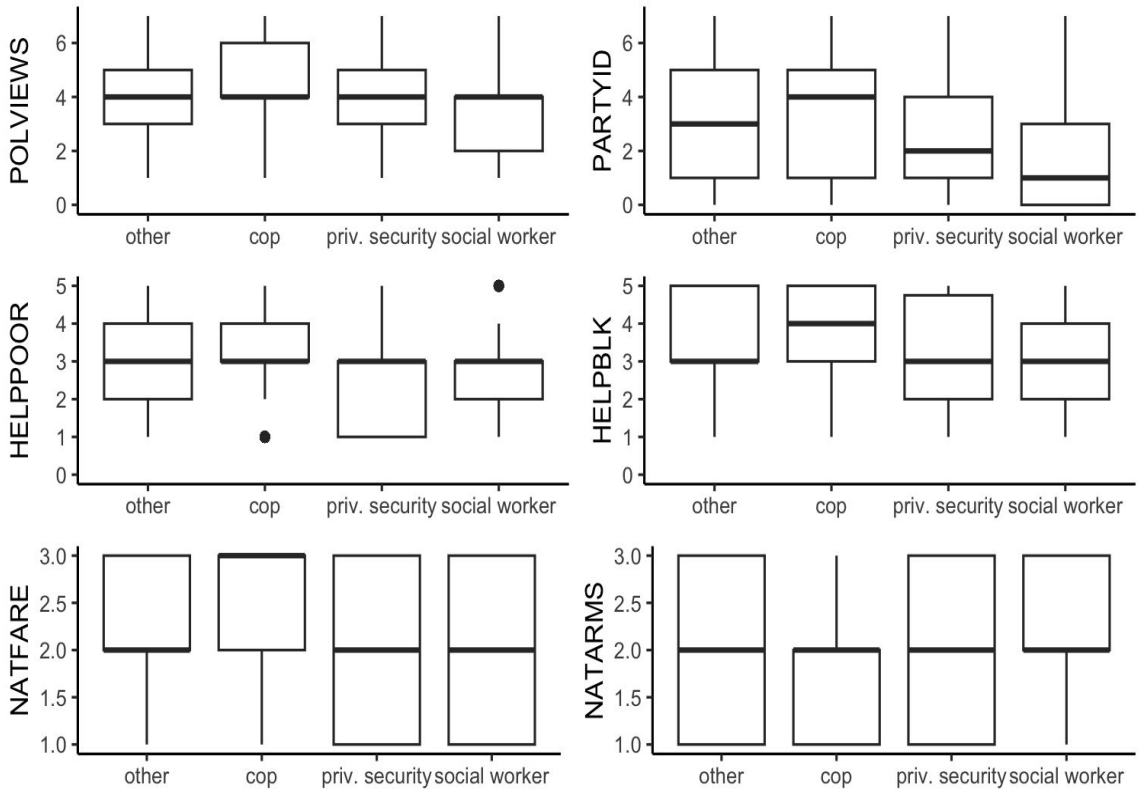
POLVIEWS
PARTYID
HELPPOOR
HELPBLK
NATFARE
NATARMS
other
cop
priv. security
social worker