

THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNHEARD: LEGAL SERVICES AND THE 1960S RACE RIOTS

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Abstract

This paper uses newly collected data on communities who received legal services grants between 1965 and 1975 to evaluate the effectiveness of the federal anti-rioting program. Results indicate a 4.8 percent reduction in the number of riots and a 4.7 percent reduction in the duration of riots due to legal services programs. Additional analysis identifies a positive relationship between riot propensity and legal services funding. Therefore, the estimates provide a lower bound for the possible causal relationship between the legal service program and riot propensities. Further analysis reveals communities implementing legal services programs earlier report better community-police relations in 1970. Together these results are consistent with the historical narrative that legal service lawyers' involvement in community empowerment and advocacy mitigated the damage of riots that occurred in the 1960s.

JEL Classification

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Keywords

War on Poverty, legal services, riots, poverty lawyers

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“And I feel that we must always work with an effective, powerful weapon and method that brings about tangible results. But it is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard.”

– Martin Luther King Jr., “The Other America” - March 14, 1968

1. Introduction

Violent demonstrations surrounding alleged police misconduct has a long-standing history in the United States. The first major race riot surrounding the excessive use of force by the police occurred in Harlem in 1935 (Flamm 2017).² Additional civil disorders occurred in Harlem and Detroit in 1943, and the frequency of violent demonstrations peaked in 1968.³ Still, years later, race riots have presented a major dilemma for policymakers concerned with maintaining law and order. Police strategies to deal with racialized civil disorders have largely been unsuccessful (Rahtz, 2016). For instance, the 1992 Los Angeles Riot intensified due to the lack of police presence, while a militarized police force may have escalated the violence during the 2014 Ferguson Uprising (Serrano & Pearce, 2015; Rahtz, 2016; Los Angeles Times Staff 2017).

A special commission issued by President Lyndon Johnson investigated the underlying causes of racialized civil disorders in the 1960s and provided a series of policy recommendations to prevent future riots. The Kerner Commission Report called for the expansion of the Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP), highlighting the program’s ability to serve as intermediaries between the black community and government institutions (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). Despite numerous studies on riots, the effectiveness of the NLSP as an anti-riot policy has never been explored.

² Race riot in this context refers to the destruction of property in response to a perceived injustice, typically involving the police. Many have included bodily harm and even loss of life to participants and members of targeted groups. However, riots in response to excessive policing are not the only race riots that have occurred in the United States. Lieberman and Silverman (1965) highlights the frequency of race riots - violent directed towards black Americans by whites as well as violent demonstrations initiated by black Americans between 1913 and 1963. Moreover, Bentley-Edwards *et. al.* (2018) expounds on the lack of research on white-violence towards blacks, highlighting Reconstruction era white riots and additional violence directed towards black Americans prior to the 1960s.

³ Disputes with the police was not the direct cause of the Detroit riot but was a contributing factor to the volatile environment (Taylor, 2016). The Detroit riot of 1943 was precipitated by white-on-black violence in contrast to the 1960s riots which were typically triggered by black Americans responding to excessive force by the police. Although there were many underlying factors that contributed to the riots of the 1960s, the police-community confrontations were often the triggering event.

The Neighborhood Legal Services Program was implemented under the umbrella of the War on Poverty (WOP) in 1965.⁴ The goal of the program was to equip the poor with additional resources to remediate grievances, especially those concerning local police, via the judicial system. Under the program, lawyers redressed grievances of the poor by bringing civil cases against local police departments and other government institutions (Bernstein, 1967; Greenwood, 1968; “6 Sue Police” 1969; “Neighborhood Legal Services to Monitor” 1970; “Legal Services: Challenging” 1971).⁵ Advocates of legal services credited the program with reducing the likelihood and the severity of riots (Loftus, 1966; “Legal Services for the Poor Hailed” 1967). The program was deemed influential in ending the 1967 Detroit riot and stopping additional riots in Cleveland (Gillette, 1996; U.S. Senate 1969). Legal services lawyers were also credited with reducing police brutality and illegal police behavior, as well as securing proper police investigations when victims requested the assistance of the police (Finman, 1971; U.S. Senate 1969). While several argued that the NLSP reduced race riots, there were others who believed the opposite. The NLSP was often viewed as an anti-establishment government program that created civil unrest and prompted more demonstrations and riots (Herbers, 1967; Pious, 1971; “Subsidizing Violence and Subversion” 1970).

More recently, economists have evaluated social programs from the Great Society, drawing new conclusions about the War on Poverty’s effectiveness in improving the quality of life for the poor (Hoynes and Schanzebach 2009; Ludwig and Miller 2007; Almond, Hoynes, and Schanzebach 2011; Baily 2012; Bailey and Goodman-Bacon 2015; Goodman-Bacon 2016). Specifically, Cunningham (2016) evaluated the NLSP and found that it increased the demand for law enforcement services and changed law enforcement behavior. Likewise, Johnson (2014) provided an in-depth historical analysis of the NLSP, citing the impact of the program in improving the quality of life for those living in poverty as well as highlighting NLSP lawyers’ ability to prevent riots on numerous occasions.

This paper is the first to quantitatively evaluate the impact of the Neighborhood Legal Services Program on the likelihood of race riots in the 1960s. Following previous literature (Spilerman, 1970; Carter, 1986; Collins and Margo, 2007), I examine newly collected data on communities that received legal services grants between 1965-1975. The analysis relies on the differential timing of NLSP’s implementation in cities across the United States as well as the variation in the location and intensity of treatment to identify a relationship between the NLSP and the number and severity of riots that occurred in a city in a given year. The results indicate a reduction in the number of riots and the severity of riots after NLSP grants were

⁴ A war against poverty was declared by President Lyndon B. Johnson on January 8th, 1964, during his State of the Union address. This declaration of war initiated a series of experimental antipoverty programs funded by the federal government such as Head Start, the VISTA program, and community health centers. Many social scientists have also included legislative acts such as Medicare and Medicaid (Goodman-Bacon, 2016), the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, and many others (Bailey and Danziger, 2013) as part of the War on Poverty. This era is also referred to as America’s Great Society.

⁵ Litigation and the threat of litigation coerced policy-makers within city governments and decision makers within police departments to meet with community leaders to resolve differences between the community and police.

received. The baseline results imply a 4.8 percent reduction in riot propensities due to legal services, a 4.7 percent reduction in the duration of riots, as well as a reduction in the severity of riots. In addition, heterogeneous treatment effects indicate the results are driven by large cities containing nearby law students, and greater populations of black Americans. The inverse relationship between NLSP funding and rioting remains throughout a variety of specification checks.

The majority of the literature on riots, riot outcomes, and anti-riot policies suffer from endogeneity problems, making it difficult to interpret results. Previous literature suggests that the War on Poverty (WOP) targeted funding to volatile communities, creating positive bias, making it less likely to find a negative effect. Gillezeau (2015) provides evidence that WOP funding may have been directed towards volatile communities. I identify this positive relationship with several empirical tests. Using an event-study design, I show that NLSP funding is positively correlated with riot propensities. Given this relationship, ordinary least squares (OLS) estimate understates the impact of legal services on riot-related outcomes. Therefore, in the absence of a credible instrument, OLS estimates should provide a lower bound for the true effect of NLSP funding on riot-related outcomes. Further, I present suggestive evidence that the NLSP improved the relationship between the police and the black community. According to OLS results, cities that received NLSP grants earlier are likely to have a relatively supportive relationship between the police and the minority community in 1970. Together, these findings are consistent with the historical narrative that the NLSP created access to social justice by providing additional channels for black Americans in urban communities to settle disputes.

2. Legal Services, the War on Poverty, and Riots

Incorporation of the Neighborhood Legal Services Program into the War on Poverty was motivated by Jean and Edgar Cahn in the *Yale Law Review* in 1964. The Cahns proposed the establishment of neighborhood law firms, affiliated with local university law schools, to serve as intermediaries between the poor community and anti-poverty bureaucracies. The university law schools would serve as a resource of expertise and human capital, as well as provide volunteers and cheap labor to neighborhood law firms. Legal representation would be available for cases involving divorce, eviction, welfare fraud, coerced confessions, arrests, police brutality, and installment buying. According to the Cahns' proposal, the advent of free legal representation would incorporate the civilian perspective into the War on Poverty and give voice to those who were previously unheard.

Following the proposal, the Neighborhood Legal Services Program was launched as part of the War on Poverty. Neighborhood law firms were financed by grants from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and operated under the Community Action Program. The community-based approach created wide

variation on how federal grants were not only used but received. The OEO grants avoided local and state authorities and went directly to community organizations and programs, allowing federal funds to be spent rapidly with wide variation in intended purpose (Johnson 1974; Gillette 1996). With no funding precedent, capitalizing on the political support of the American Bar Association (ABA) led to a hasty rollout of the program with vague guidelines for grant applications. According to Earl Johnson Jr., former director of the NLSP, “We were committed to building a national institution overnight and could not afford to screen grantees through a fine mesh” (Johnson, 2014 p.102). The hurried rollout, accompanied with political backlash from local bar associations, created variation in the timing and locations of the establishment of NLSP across the country.

Over the first year, the legal services program issued over 155 grants. By 1968, the program was funding 250 projects and providing legal assistance in 48 states. Figure 1 maps the geographical variation in NLSP establishments over time. The typical NLSP firm was staffed with five attorneys, one R.H. Smith Fellow, six clerical support personnel, and three law students.⁶ With a budget slightly above \$200 thousand, each law firm expected to serve over 1900 potential clients.⁷ Eligibility for legal services was determined by income and local cost of living—serving low-income individuals with annual income near or below the poverty threshold.

Criminal and juvenile issues represented nearly 20 percent of the typical legal services attorney caseloads (Levitan, 1969). At the core of many of these cases were complaints of illegal police behavior or the use of excessive force by the police. NLSP lawyers often handled these cases by filing lawsuits against local police departments on behalf of clients and community organizations to change police behavior and practices (Greenwood, 1968; Silver, 1969; “Legal Aid Assured of Federal Support,” 1970). Many of these cases were resolved out of court, with chiefs of police and other decision-makers negotiating new police strategies, implementing community review boards, hiring additional police officers, and providing more police training related to diverse communities.

Several individuals criticized the NLSP and felt the program incited riots (Hollingsworth, 1977). Police officers in Newark and Southern California accused NLSP lawyers of organizing violent demonstrations (Johnson 2014; Pious 1971). NLSPs in California were accused of “supporting anti-police militants” and organizing citizens into “revolutionary forces” (“Subsidizing Violence and Subversion” 1970). In Chicago, program attorneys petitioned for pardons for citizens involved in riots in 1968 (“Pardon for Rioters?” 1968; Katz 1982, 87). This led to attempts by public officials to dismantle the program. Members of Congress from Kentucky, Missouri, Florida, and California led a charge to strip the NLSP of

⁶ R.H. Smith Fellowship is a prestigious fellowship created to attract highly qualified attorneys to practice in legal aid for the poor.

⁷ Source: Legal Service Agency Survey which is publicly available at the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

its ability to represent alleged rioters and were almost successful at placing a ban on all litigation by NLSP firms against local, state, and federal agencies (Johnson 2014). According to opponents of the program, its lawyers were the cause of civil unrest and violent demonstrations (Herbers 1967).

Neither the discussion at the time nor more recent analyses have resolved the quantitative question: was the NLSP an effective anti-rioting program? This is primarily due to the lack of empirical research in the area of riot prevention.⁸ However, there is extensive literature on the underlying causes of violent protests.⁹ Studies have shown that the timing of violent protests is unpredictable (Spilerman 1970; Sears and McConahay 1973; Spilerman 1976; Carter 1986; Collins and Margo 2007). The United States has a long history of aggressive policing in black communities accompanied with accusations of police brutality; however, violent protests, as it relates to uprisings in black communities, were few and far between prior to the 1960s (Lieberson and Silverman 1965; Bentely-Edwards *et al.* 2018). Innumerable accusations of police misconduct combined with aggressive policing in black communities make it difficult to predict when an interaction between the police and a civilian will escalate into wide-spread protests. This is supported by the Kerner Commission report, which found the 1960 riots unpredictable, and the underlying causes were complex.

The literature on riots has reached a consensus on strong predictors of riots: the region of the city and the percentage of the population that is black in a particular city (Spilerman 1970; Carter 1986; DiPasquale and Glaeser 1998; and Collins and Margo 2007). The two predictors reflect (1) cultural and political norms that exist in the South, and (2) resources available to sustain an uprising. According to Spilerman (1970), the only variables correlated with riot propensities and severity are the percentage of the population that is non-white. This claim is supported by Collins and Margo (2007), which highlights that rain in April of 1968 is also an important factor, while other variables have little explanatory power, conditional on controlling for the share of black residents and the region in which the city resides. Additionally, research has shown that the aftermath of violent protests results in lower property values (Collins and Margo 2007) and suppressed labor market opportunities (Collins and Smith 2004) for black residents. King (2003) showed that uprisings occurred concurrently with black economic progress, but this was not sustained over the following decade. This is supported by evidence that the 1960s riots are associated with increased police killings of non-white civilians up to a decade after the first riot (Cunningham and Gillezeau 2019). Moreover, riots in black communities were followed by increased murder rates and greater police presence reflected in greater levels of police spending and higher

⁸ Carter (1987) investigates the role of policing in preventing riots and finds mixed evidence of police response on riot propensities.

⁹ See Lieberson and Silverman (1965), Berkowitz (1968), Downes (1968) for theoretical discussions of the causes of these events. Also see Myers (1997) for an empirical evaluation of the underlying causes.

incarceration rates. This is consistent with the “law and order” federal response to these events which resulted in aggressive policing in black communities (Hinton 2016; Derenoncourt 2019).

In addition, violent protests presented a major political challenge for President Johnson and the funding for War on poverty (WOP) programs. Through the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, President Johnson aligned his political agenda with black economic progress. Conversely, backlash led to southern whites leaving the democratic party in large numbers (Kuziemko and Washington 2018). Violent protests exacerbated the demographic shift in political affiliation, reducing the share of Democratic votes in the 1964, 1968, and 1972 elections (Wasow 2017). Many viewed the WOP as an anti-rioting policy. The Johnson Administration provided funding to riot prone communities through community action program (CAP) grants (Gillezeau 2015; Rahtz 2016). According to Gillezeau (2015), CAPs reduced the likelihood of racial uprisings as well as the severity of these events. Relatedly, Cunningham (2016) showed that a shift from NLSP to WOP increased the demand for police services. The increase in the demand for police services is reflected in increases in reported crime and increases in offenses cleared by arrests. Furthermore, Pedroza (2017) also showed access to legal services is associated with an increase in reporting of scams directed at immigrants, which in turn caused an increase in the demand for bureaucratic agencies designed to protect individuals from consumer fraud. Considering the role of NLSP in the community and their documented involvement with issues related to policing, it is plausible to assume the NLSP, by providing oversight and increasing the demand for proper policing, reduced the probability that a citizen experienced aggressive policing without an avenue to articulate their grievance. Therefore, by providing an additional channel for citizens to voice frustrations and to hold public officials accountable, the NLSP could decrease the number of riots and/or reduce the severity of riots in black communities.

3. Descriptive Analysis and Empirical Methodology

3.1 Data

Data on the recipients of federal legal services grants funded by the OEO was compiled from the National Archives Community Action Program (NACAP) files. NACAP provides information on the city, county, and state for which funds were received. Also provided is the date the grant was issued, the amount of the grant, and a brief description of the intended purpose of the grant.¹⁰ The NLSP was implemented in 1965, but initial funding of the program primarily began in the 1966 fiscal year. There was a significant

¹⁰ Appendix Figure 1A illustrates the city-level rollout of NLSP programs based on the month and year the grant was issued. The solid line indicates the number of newly funded cities while the dashed line provides a summary of all the cities funded to that date. Grants with no information on the month issued, were coded with January of the year issued.

buildup of the program over the first three years. By 1969 over 220 cities received NLSP grants, with many cities having multiple NLSP firms in different neighborhoods. Additionally, there was a steady increase in newly established NLSP firms in cities until 1974. Many of these were implemented in more rural areas. However, as political support for the War on Poverty and the NLSP waned in the 1970s, the rollout of NLSP projects slowed dramatically.¹¹

The typical NLSP firm established in the 1960s received subsequent support from the OEO, which is reflected in Figure 2. Figure 2 plots the estimated probability of receiving an NLSP grant for those cities that were treated relative to those that never received a legal services grant. As expected, the probability of receiving a grant is equal to 1, the year the first grant was issued, but there is a high probability (85 percent) of receiving additional NLSP grants after a law firm is established. According to the data, treated cities received larger grants over time. Subsequent funding was not just to bolster established NLSPs; it was also used to open new law firms in other communities, especially in larger cities. This is reflected in Figure 3, which reports the average NLSP funding for a city after treatment. The average size of the initial grant was \$106,713 (measured in 1960s dollars). The next grant is slightly smaller, but subsequent funding increases over time. Federal funds for legal services after five years is 63 percent larger than the initial allocation. It is important to note that in larger cities, additional funding typically supported more than one grantee.¹²

The riot data in this analysis was provided courtesy of Collins and Margo (2007) and was originally collected by Greg L. Carter (1986).¹³ Data includes the location and duration of race riots between 1964 and 1971. It also includes the number of people killed, injured, or arrested, as well as the number of arsons reported or discovered by police during a race riot.¹⁴ The data also records the number of days the riot occurred. Between 1964 and 1971, more than 700 riots were recorded across the lower 48 contiguous states.¹⁵ Similar to previous studies, I focus on the occurrence of violent demonstrations in a given year as well as the severity of riots in a year (Carter 1986; DiPasquale and Glaeser 1998; Gillezeau 2015).¹⁶ The riot severity measure is the total number of arrests, arsons, injuries, and the number of people killed due to

¹¹ This is also reflected in the total funding of Neighborhood Legal Services Programs between 1965 and 1975, where there was a steady increase of funding for the NLSP until 1971. Afterwards, spending slowly declined and most funding was used to sustain NLSP implementations that were already operating.

¹² For example, five grantees received NLSP funding in Chicago, between 1965 and 1971, while two grantees established NLSPs in Phoenix during this time period.

¹³ See Carter, Gregg Lee. 1986. "The 1960s Black Riots Revisited: City Level Explanations of Their Severity." *Sociological Inquiry* 56 (2).

¹⁴ A race riot is defined as a demonstration involving at least 30 participants (some have to be black) that result in some property damage or violence. Further, the event has to occur outside of a school setting or an organized civil rights demonstration.

¹⁵ Figure 2A maps the geographical variation in the location and the timing of when a city experienced its first riot.

¹⁶ Despite the wide variation in the geographical locations of these violent demonstrations, there exist evidence of riot contagion exhibited by the clustering of riots around large cities where major riots occurred. There were clusters of riots in Michigan, New Jersey, and the Los Angeles areas (Spilerman 1970). These clusters reflect the national attention that such riots garnered and comprise the most severe riots that occurred over the sample period. The inclusion of state-by-year fixed effects is motivated by clustering due to unobserved heterogeneity.

rioting in a city in a given year relative to the total share of arrests, arsons, injuries, and people killed due to rioting between 1964 and 1971.¹⁷ Both the frequency and severity of riots spike in July 1967 and April 1968.¹⁸ The first spike in riot propensity and severity reflects a cluster of riots that occurred surrounding the Detroit and Newark riots, both of which occurred in July 1967. The second was in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968. Notably, the Watts riot of 1965 resulted in a sizable increase in the riot severity measure, but the cluster of riots surrounding this event is smaller than that of the summer of 1967. Although the severity of riots decreases after April of 1968, the following three years display a wide-spread occurrence of riots across the United States that slowly decreases.¹⁹

As Collins and Margo (2007) highlighted, the severity measure is highly skewed, with a few cities having extremely deadly riots (Newark, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.) and many cities having less severe or minor riots. Similar to Collins and Margo, the analysis will measure severity by grouping riots based on their relative severity. The riot severity group separates the severity measure into four distinct categories; zero severity (no riots), low severity, medium severity, and high severity. The low severity group includes all riots below the 50th percentile, the medium severity group includes all riots between the 50th percentile and the 88th percentile, the high severity group includes all riots with riot severities above the 88th percentile, and the zero severity group includes all cities in which a riot did not occur in a given year. In addition, the analysis will use the relative duration of riots as a dependent variable of interest.²⁰ This measure deals with the fact that smaller cities can riot for many days without having nearly as many arrests, arsons, or injuries.

I use data provided by Collins and Margo to match NLSP grants to city-level observations on riot occurrences and severity. I use the size of the grant to measure the intensity of the treatment (having an NLSP firm).²¹ City characteristics in this analysis were taken from 1960, 1970, and 1980 Census City and County Data Books. The city-level demographic information was constructed by linearly interpolating between 1960, 1970, and 1980 data. The demographic variables are the proportion of the non-white population, the percentage of the population with more than 12 years of education, population per square mile, median age, and family median income.

¹⁷ Specifically, $severity_{it} = \left(\frac{arrests_{it}}{\sum_i \sum_t arrests_{it}} + \frac{arsons_{it}}{\sum_i \sum_t arsons_{it}} + \frac{injuries_{it}}{\sum_i \sum_t injuries_{it}} + \frac{deaths_{it}}{\sum_i \sum_t deaths_{it}} \right)$.

¹⁸ Figure 3A highlights riot occurrence and riot severity by month and year from 1964 to 1971.

¹⁹ Many of these cities were prone to rioting. Over 161 cities experienced more than one riot over the sample period. Many of the cities where riots occurred in 1967 and 1968 experienced riots prior to 1967. However, there was also an increase in the number of cities that experienced riots for the first time in 1967 and 1968.

²⁰ $duration_{i,t} = \frac{\# \text{ of days rioting}_{i,t}}{\text{total days of rioting between 1964 and 1971}} \times 1000$. Severe riots are typically longer in duration; however, many short duration riots may be relatively severe. In an attempt to account for this, the number of days of rioting is compared to the total days of rioting in the analysis. Therefore, duration is another measurement of severity.

²¹ NACAP files do not provide information for grants received in 1969. Data from Federal Outlays was used to supplement NACAP data to provide grants in 1969.

The analysis consists of city-level observations with riot and census demographic information from 1964 to 1971 for 616 cities. All cities in this sample had a population of over 25,000 residents in each census year. Table 1 reports summary statistics for these cities from the 1960 census. The average population in the sample is 119,893 residents, with a median income of \$6,192 (\$45,615 in 2010 dollars).²² The final sample contained 211 cities that received NLSP grants (treatment group) and 405 non-grant cities (comparison group). Cities that received legal services grants had a larger proportion of residents who were non-white and a smaller proportion of residents with more than 12 years of schooling and displayed lower median incomes. Treated cities were more prone to rioting between 1964 and 1971 than unfunded cities; this is also reflected in the measure of riot severity. The empirical strategy will account for these key cross-sectional differences. However, untreated cities may not provide a plausible control group; therefore, a specification without the control group is estimated as well.

3.2 The Treatment Variable

The baseline empirical strategy to analyze the effectiveness of the NLSP as an anti-rioting policy begins with a simple panel regression model. I account for key cross-sectional differences between funded and unfunded cities by controlling for observable demographic characteristics. I also control for cross-sectional differences due to unobserved heterogeneity by using city fixed effects to capture differences that are unobservable but constant over time. The analysis uses state-by-year fixed effects to account for riot contagion due to unobserved heterogeneity that varies across states or regions over time.²³ The untreated cities in this analysis help estimate how riot propensities *evolve* over time and provide a *control* group for how riot propensities are expected to *evolve* without treatment.

The treatment variable of interest is NLSP funding in millions of dollars measured in 1960 dollars, which captures the intensity of the treatment. The treatment captures the presence of the NLSP in which lawyers worked to articulate community grievances against local bureaucracies. Essentially, the circumstances that lead to violent protests are associated with local underlying conditions either in the form of absolute or relative deprivation (Carter 1986; Myers 1997; Chandra and Foster 2005). However, violent protests are typically precipitated by confrontational police-community interactions in which the black community expresses concerns related to aggressive or illegal police activity. The treatment, legal services lawyers, works to articulate grievances through community advocacy and the judicial system when applicable. The primary tool to achieve community goals is through litigation or the threat of litigation.

²² NLSP programs were located in larger cities; however, 103 of the 211 cities that received NLSP grants had a population of less than 100,000 residents in 1960, and 45 cities had a population of less than 50,000. Every city with a population greater than 500,000 residents in 1960 received a NLSP grant.

²³ Contagion is an important phenomenon in rioting literature. However, contagion is not just regional. The Los Angeles riots of 1992 sparked riots in Atlanta, New York, Oakland, Detroit and many other cities (DiPasquale and Glaeser 1998).

The majority of NLSP cases were resolved via conferences and meetings in which community leaders and public officials discussed proper policing.

NLSP is not only associated with changing police behavior but also with shifting the focus of community members from expressing frustrations with violent protests to resolving complaints through the judicial systems. In 1969, during a Senate Subcommittee Hearing, the Office of Economic Opportunity stated, “Legal services lawyers have won the confidence of angry young men and women and have channeled their grievances into the democratic procedures. This capability and achievement mark a major victory for those concerned with maintaining law and order.” Nonetheless, the treatment varied in observable ways, specifically funding and unobservable ways, but also the degree of community advocacy. For instance, in Chicago, NSLP established separate offices, one for legal representation and another for test cases. Some NLSPs immediately brought class-action lawsuits against the police while others built cases against the police by documenting complaints of illegal police behavior. In general, NLSP serves as external oversight of local policing. By providing oversight, NLSP worked to reduce the likelihood of violent protests by influencing police practices and redirecting community anger to organizing and the legal system.

3.3 Empirical Strategy

The empirical strategy treats the variation in the timing and location of the NLSP as exogenous. The key identifying assumption is that the establishment and the funding of the NLSP are uncorrelated with determinants of rioting.²⁴ This is a tenuous assumption since the legal services program was promoted as an anti-riot program. It is likely that OEO officials had information about local volatility at the time the grants were issued. If so, the availability of legal services is possibly positively correlated with unobserved characteristics that initiated riots. Under this scenario, least-squares estimates will be smaller in absolute terms when endogeneity is not properly addressed.

To isolate the relationship between NLSP and riot propensities and severity, I estimate the following regression:

$$(1) \quad Y_{i,t} = \gamma_i + \alpha_{s(t)} + \pi LSP_{Funding_{i,t}} + X'_{i,t} \beta + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

²⁴ Riots have been defined as spontaneous events, once the size of the black population and geographical region are accounted for (Spilerman 1970; Spilerman 1976; Carter 1986; Collins and Margo 2007).

where $Y_{i,t}$ is the number of riots, the riot severity group, or the days of rioting in city i in year t .²⁵ The parameter γ_i is city fixed effects and $\alpha_{s(t)}$ refers to state-by-year fixed effects. The row vector $X_{i,t}$ consists of the following demographic variables from the census: the percentage of the population non-white, the percentage of the population with more than 12 years of education, median age, median income, and the population per square mile. The independent variable of interest, $LSP_{Funding_{i,t}}$, measures the size of the federal grant that legal services received in the previous year.²⁶

4. Results

4.1 Main Results

Table 2 reports estimates of π from Equation 1 for the effects of NLSP funding on the number of riots, riot severity group, and days of rioting. Equation 1 estimates are produced from a WLS regression using the city population in 1960 as weights. The standard errors are constructed from heteroskedastic robust standard errors clustered by city. Columns 1 report estimates from the baseline specification and uses NLSP funding in millions of dollars as the treatment variable. With regards to the occurrences of riots in panel A, the treatment effect is negative and statistically significant. The average treatment effect on the treated implies a 24 percent reduction in riot propensity. Panel B reports estimates of NLSP influence on riot severity group. Similar to Panel A, the coefficient on NLSP funding is negative and statistically significant. According to the data, the high severity group typically had 852 arrests, 218 arsons, 152 injuries, and 3 deaths compared to the medium severity group, which typically had 70 arrests, 11 arsons, 11 injuries, and 1 death. The low severity group, on average, had 8 arrests, 1 arson, 1 injury, and no deaths. NLSP ability to abate the severity riots likely had huge influences on the cost of arresting and detaining individuals, and damages related to arson or physical injury. This is confirmed in panel C, which shows that NLSP funding reduced the duration or number of days of riots. The ATET implies an additional million dollars in NLSP funding reduced the duration of riots by 23.6 percent.

²⁵ The low severity group ($Y_{i,t} = 1$) includes all riots below the 50th percentile, the medium severity group ($Y_{i,t} = 2$) includes all riots between the 50th percentile and the 88th percentile, the high severity group ($Y_{i,t} = 3$) includes all riots with riot severities above the 88th percentile, and the zero severity group ($Y_{i,t} = 0$) includes all cities in which a riot did not occur in year t .

²⁶ A lag measure of NLSP funding is used for two reasons. First, the National Archives Community Action Program (NACAP) files provide the date the grant was issued, not received. Grants issued early in the year may not have been received until later in the year, and the effect of NLSP programs could have been attenuated. Therefore, variation in the timing of the grant within a year could have attenuated any contemporaneous effect that NLSP grants had on riot propensities. Secondly, Cunningham (2016) as well as Bailey and Goodman-Bacon (2015) highlighted that the utilization of services funded by War on Poverty grants increased over time. The increase in utilization is consistent with the buildup of legal services within a community. After a grant was received, the neighborhood legal services grantee would have had to find a location, hire staff, build community support, while also accumulating exposure.

Estimates in column 1 imply a reduction in the number of riots and provide evidence that NLSP successfully abated riots that did occur. However, the estimated relationship between NLSP funding and rioting outcomes are sensitive to the scaling of the treatment variable. Appendix Table 1A report results when scaling the treatment variable by population. The treatment effect is negative but is no longer statistically significant when scaled by population or per poor population. Although there is reason to be concerned that the results are driven by city size, cumulative funding, and cumulative funding per capita are negative and statistically significant.²⁷ The preferred treatment, relative funding instead of funding per capita, reflects the nimbleness of the grant-making process under the War on Poverty. Discretionary grants were used as political tools in which a grant could be announced to expand NLSP or Community Action Program to moderate tensions before a riot erupts (Gillette 1996). This process is much easier when a grantee exists and working with the community groups. In addition, many of the severe riots happened in relatively large cities where funding was directed to a subset of the population. Scaling by population will not capture the targeted intervention of WOP funding and the NLSP. This is especially true when there are multiple poor or black neighborhoods, and funds are devoted to a particular community.

4.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

The interactions between poor blacks and law enforcement in which black American citizens reported excessive force frequently occurred without riots. Once the size of the black population and geographical region are accounted for, researchers view riots as a spontaneous event. The main analysis includes both large urban cities and smaller cities as well as cities with a very small black population. The effects of the NLSP may be exacerbated by the lack of riots or small riots in smaller cities or communities with small black populations.

Columns 2 through 5 of Table 2 examines the heterogeneous treatment effects of the NLSP. Column 2 includes cities where the proportion of the residents that are non-white in 1964 is larger than the median proportion of residents that are non-white. The sample contains 310 cities, of which 144 received an NLSP grant. The marginal effects reported in column 2 are similar to marginal effects reported in column 1. The NLSP is negatively related to the number of riots, severity group, and days of rioting in cities with a larger share of black residents. Similarly, restricting the sample to 129 cities that have a population greater than 100,000 residents in 1960 produce similar marginal effects as columns 1 & 2.

²⁷ Using funding for one period does not highlight the increase in social and human capital from previous years of receiving legal service grants. It is plausible that years of funding or cumulative funding are more important than funding for one year. However, cumulative funding will not capture the year to year variation in NLSP funding and riot related outcomes.

The NLSP was designed to be affiliated with university law programs; so, *ex-ante*, one would predict that legal services would be established in cities that have nearby law schools.²⁸ Column 4 compare treated cities without a law school to non-treated cities, and column 5 compare treated cities with at least one nearby law school to non-treated cities. The non-treated cities are the 405 cities in the comparison groups and are included irrespective of proximity to a law school. The sample used in column 4 includes 135 treated cities without a law school and the 405 non-treated cities, while the sample used in column 5 includes the 59 treated cities with a law school and 405 non-treated cities. The estimates in column 4 are generally positive and not statistically significant, but the marginal effects in column 5 are negative and statistically significant. There may be several factors that explain the law school results. First, treated cities without a law school may lack sufficient support to deal with grievances that typically lead to riots. Secondly, law schools are generally in larger cities due to economies of scale; therefore, column 5 may be capturing the same effect as column 3 and not the presence of law schools. Lastly, it is possible that cities with law schools have trained enough lawyers to staff local offices, allowing NLSP to be implemented relatively smoothly and efficiently.

4.3 Robustness Checks

NLSP is negatively related to the number of riots, the severity of riots, and the duration of riots. This relationship is statistically significant in many cases despite the positive bias that may exist. In addition, the relationship between NLSP funding and riot behavior is robust to several modifications to the sample and equation 1. These specification checks are explored in Figure 4.

Estimates of Equation 1 are produced using demographic information interpolated between census years as covariates. This is problematic because both rioting and NLSP may influence local demographic characteristics. Previous research highlight how rioting influence neighborhood characteristic. Riots are associated with lower property values, deteriorating labor market opportunities, and white flight (Collin and Margo, 2004; Collin and Margo, 2007; Collin and Smith, 2007; Boustan, 2010). Rioting is also associated with more officer-involved shootings of civilians after the initial occurrence (Cunningham and Gillezeau 2018a). Additionally, the NLSP has been linked to higher property values for black-owned

²⁸ The program was not designed to complement law school clinics. Only a select few law schools provided legal assistance to the poor (Johnson 2014). According to Johnson, clinical legal education gained the attention and the requisite funding through the expansion of legal aid in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that law schools directly contributed to the legal climate through legal clinics until the introduction of the NLSP. However, older law schools (i.e., prestigious law schools) were vital to the introduction of the program as well as the expansion of the program for a variety of reasons. Older law schools were more likely to have trained enough lawyers to staff neighborhood law firms allowing the immediate creation of law firms or the expansion of services if these lawyers provided pro bono services. Additionally, law schools were also instrumental in lobbying and obtaining NLSP funds. The first NLSP backup center was at Columbia University Law School and assisted on many of the law reform cases that reached the Supreme Court. In fact, the OEO issued over \$2,000,000 in grants to law schools between 1965 and 1967 to establish curricula related to poverty law (Levitan 1969).

homes as well as changes in family structure and access to public assistance (Cunningham and Gillezeau, 2018b; Cunningham and Goodman-Bacon, 2019). Row 1 of Figure 4 reproduces the estimates of equation 1, reported in column 1 of Table 2. Row 2 of Figure 4 report estimates of Equation 1 when excluding $X_{i,t}$, the demographic characteristics from the analysis. According to row 2, removing covariates has little impact on the estimated effect of NLSP funding. In all three columns, the estimated marginal effects are quantitatively similar to the marginal effects reported in column 1 of Table 2, which is displayed in the first row. Similar to the preferred specification, the marginal effects are statistically significant in all three panels, providing evidence that the results are not driven by demographic characteristics or the interpolation of demographic factors between census years.

The marginal effect measured in the preferred specification used non-treated cities as the control group. Only 71 cities in the control group experienced at least one racialized uprising. A few of those cities experienced severe riots. A major concern is that the results are driven by city size and many of the cities in the control group are also small cities. Row 3 of Figure 4 plot marginal effects when the control group is removed from the sample. The treated only sample provides similar estimates to the full sample. Just under 40% of riots in the sample occurs in 1968 and accounts for 40% of the total riot severity measure.²⁹ It is reasonable to assume that the negative coefficients just capture a reduction in riot propensities after 1968 and is a result of the panel. However, removing 1968 from the sample results in larger marginal effects that are statistically significant. These estimates are driven by the removal of the riots associated with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. It is plausible NLSP lawyers were ineffective in preventing riots triggered by national events. Although not shown in Figure 4, this is substantiated by an estimated positive relationship between NLSP funding and rioting in 1968.³⁰

Rain has been shown to be a major deterrent of violent protest that typically occurs outdoors, especially those occurring in April of 1968 (Collins and Margo 2007). Adding a measure of annual precipitation, summer precipitation, or precipitation in April does not influence the results. Row 5 shows estimates of Equation 1 when April rainfall is included as an explanatory variable. These estimates are qualitatively similar to the estimates from the preferred specification. Therefore, accounting for rainfall does not drastically change the results. The region of the city is also a predictor of rioting in the 1960s. Derenoncourt (2019) finds more intense rioting in cities that experience significant changes in their racial composition. The influence of black migration patterns is also reflected in the regional heterogeneity of the marginal effects. Appendix 2A reports the impact of NLSP when treated cities in each region are dropped. Regardless of which region treated cities are dropped, the marginal effects are statistically

²⁹ Half of the riots that occurred in 1968 took place in April.

³⁰ This result is available upon request.

significant. However, the results are the largest when treated cities in the Northeast are removed and the smallest when cities in the south and west are removed.

The War on Poverty, in general, likely influenced riot behavior. It would be difficult to disentangle NLSP funding from the War on Poverty spending. As with the NLSP, funding and expansion of experimental programs occurred rapidly before 1969, with a slowdown in expansion and funding across the board afterward. Gillezeau (2015) links War on Poverty spending to riot behavior and shows that War on Poverty spending is negatively correlated with rioting. Row 6 shows that this relationship between NLSP and riot-related outcomes when funding for Community Action Agencies are accounted for. The Office of Economic Opportunity launched many of their experimental anti-poverty programs under Community Action Agencies, and Community Action Programs was one of the largest initiatives of the War on Poverty. Including this measurement of additional War on Poverty spending slightly reduces the point estimates but the marginal effects are still statistically significant.

Many cities experience multiple riots and past rioting could serve as an indicator for future riots. Although previous research has not found evidence of positive or negative feedback (Spilerman, 1970, Olzak et al., 1996), controlling for past riots may influence the magnitude of the estimates. To account for the possibility of feedback effects from previous riots, I incorporate indicator variables that capture past rioting.³¹ The indicator variables are $R_{i,t}^1$ and $R_{i,t}^2$ are equal to 1 if a riot occurred in the previous year ($t - 1$) or two years ago ($t - 2$); and zero otherwise. According to row 7, accounting for past riots produce marginal effects that are slightly smaller than the preferred specification but qualitatively similar. In all three columns, the marginal effect is negative and statistically significant.

Lastly, the estimates reported in the previous specification checks are produced by weighted least square regressions. Population weights are used to gain efficiency when the error term has heteroskedasticity related to city size. However, weighted least squares (WLS) often lead to estimates that are less efficient than ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates (Haider, Solon, and Wooldridge, 2013). Row 8 report estimates from an OLS regression. In this analysis, WLS regression produced more precise estimates than OLS without changing the sign of the coefficients. Nonetheless, OLS estimates are smaller and not statistically significant in all three columns.

5. Discussion

So far, results have shown that the Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) reduced riot propensities and severities. The estimates imply that an additional million dollars in legal services funding

³¹ Spilerman argues the possibility of positive and negative feedback but is unable to distinguish feedback from predictors of riots. Positive feedback refers to an increase in the probability of a future riot if a riot takes place, while negative feedback refers to a decrease in the probability of future riots once a riot occurs.

will result in a 24 percent reduction in riot propensity and days of rioting as well as reduce the likelihood of a severe riot. By 1970, the typical NLSP received a grant of \$200,000. According to the results, the typical grant reduced the number of riots and days of rioting by 4.8 percent; it also reduced the likelihood of a severe riot by 4 percent. Moreover, the initial NLSP grant of approximately \$100,000 reduced the number of riots and days of rioting by 2.4 percent the following year. Taking the estimates in column 1 of Table 2, we can estimate the number of riots the NLSP prevented and the reduction in the duration in riots. Figure 5 plots the days of rioting prevented due to NLSP funding by year. The number of days avoided increases every year until 1968 but decreases in 1969 and then increases again. According to this figure, NLSP reduced the number of days of rioting in 1967 by 8 and reducing the total duration of riots in 1968 by 11. In total, it estimated that NLSP avoided 65 days of rioting between 1965 and 1971. If 4 percent of these riots would have been severe, then NLSP prevented 2 days of severe rioting. Collins and Margo (2007) estimated that having at least one severe riot reduced black-owned property values by \$1,500 per home or \$11.5 million loss in black wealth per city.³² Back of the envelope calculations reveal that the devaluation of black-owned property associated with one severe riot is approximately \$1.1 million.³³ Using this estimate, NLSP prevented a \$2.2 million reduction in black wealth due to property devaluation. However, due to endogeneity concerns, the causal interpretation of the NLSP must be address cautiously.

It is important to note, the measurement of the number of riots takes on a limited number of non-negative values and using a semi-parametric estimation by least squares will produce estimates that are biased, inconsistent, and inefficient. Similarly, the riot severity group takes on non-negative values that rank the likely outcome, assuming that no riot is better than a severe riot. Appendix Table 3A estimates the influence of NLSP on rioting behavior using Poisson regression for riot frequency and an ordered logit for riot severity group. The Poisson estimator implies NLSP funding is negatively related to the frequency of riots. The ordered logit estimates indicate that NLSP increases the likelihood of zero riots occurring as well as reduces the likelihood of experience a medium or high severity riot.³⁴

The empirical strategy treats the variation in the timing and location of the NLSP as exogenous. The key identifying assumption is that the establishment and the funding of the NLSP are uncorrelated with

³² According to Collins and Margo (2007), severe riots are associated with a \$1,500 difference in property value for black-owned homes. For the 101 cities in their main analysis, the average number of black-owned homes in 1960 is 7,697. Therefore, the average loss in black wealth due to severe riots is \$11,545,500 per city.

³³ Applying Collins and Margo (2007) estimated loss to the 15 cities that experienced severe riots in their analysis result in a much larger estimated loss ($\$1,500 \times 24,356 = \$36,534,500$). This is the estimate based on having at least one severe riot. According to the measurement of severity described in the Data Section (Section 3.1), these 15 cities experienced 32 severe riots. Therefore, the estimated cost of one severe riot is approximately \$1.1 million.

³⁴ In addition, the non-linear models address the concern of incidental parameter problem associated with fixed effects models in a relatively short panel. Both the Poisson and the order-probit models produce much large marginal effects than the main specification. For the ordered-probit model, the marginal effect for the no riot group, low severity riot group, medium severity riot group, and high severity riot group is 0.132, -0.473, -0.0435, and -0.0414 respectively.

determinants of rioting.³⁵ This is a tenuous assumption since the legal services program was promoted as an anti-riot program. It is likely that OEO officials had information about local volatility at the time the grants were issued. If so, the availability of legal services is possibly positively correlated with unobserved characteristics that initiated riots. Under this scenario, least-squares estimates will be smaller in absolute terms when endogeneity is not properly addressed.

5.1 Threat to Internal Validity

Despite various model specifications and the scaling of a dependent variable, NLSP funding is negatively related to the number of riots and the severity of riots. This is important because the implementation and funding of the NLSP are likely positively correlated given riot determinants. It is plausible the OEO officials distributed funds to locations that were likely to erupt in violent protests. If funds are targeted to rioting communities, OLS estimates will understate the relationship between rioting and legal services as well as reduce the likelihood of uncovering a negative relationship. I attempt to highlight the correlation between the implementation of NLSP and NLSP funding with riot-related outcomes by exploiting the variation in timing and location within an event-study framework (Jacobson, LaLonde, and Sullivan 1993). The event-study uses the date of the “first riot” as the event and compare how NLSP funding evolves before and after the first riot. I estimate the following equation:

$$(2) \quad Y_{i,t} = \gamma_i + \alpha_{t,s(i)} + \sum_{\tau=1}^q \theta_{-\tau} D_i 1(t - T^* = -\tau) + \sum_{\tau=1}^p \delta_{\tau} D_i 1(t - T^* = \tau) + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

where $Y_{i,t}$ NLSP funding in millions of dollars in city i in year t . D_i is an indicator variable equal to one if the city ever experienced a riot. $1(t - T^* = -\tau)$ is an indicator variable equal to one if the observation year is $-\tau$ years before the first riot and $1(t - T^* = \tau)$ is equal to one if the observation year is τ years after the first riot in city i . $1(t - T^* = -1)$ is omitted due to collinearity where T^* is the year of the first riot; q refers to the number of lags or years before the first riot, and p is the lead or years after the first riot. To ensure the coefficients are well estimated, event time for $\tau > 3$ and $\tau < -3$ are grouped into endpoints, $q = 4$ and $p = 4$. The coefficients of interest are $\theta_{-\tau}$, which are pre-treatment effects, and post-treatment effects δ_{τ} . These estimates describe the dynamics of funding behavior in cities before and after the first riot. Figure 6 plot pre-treatment effects and post-treatment effects from Equation 2. Confidence intervals are constructed from heteroscedasticity robust standard errors clustered by city and are presented by dashed lines.

³⁵ Riots have been defined as spontaneous events, once the size of the black population and geographical region are accounted for (Spilerman 1970; Spilerman 1976; Carter 1986; Collins and Margo 2007).

Figure 6 highlights the relationship between NLSP funding and rioting. The empirical exercise is trying to identify the relationship between NLSP funding and rioting or how successful the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) bureaucrats are at predicting riots. If OEO officials are predicting successfully where future riots will occur, the pre-treatment effects would be positive, meaning NLSP funding is going to places that are more likely to riot, and OEO officials are using NLSP to prevent riots (or reduce the severity). However, this is not the case. The pre-treatment effects are negative and statistically indistinguishable from zero. Therefore, rioting and non-rioting cities were just as likely to receive NLSP funding before a riot occurs. Hence, the first riot signals to OEO officials that a community is relatively more volatile. Subsequently, these cities receive more funding relative to non-rioting cities. This is evident by the fact that the post-treatment effects are positive and statistically significant. This is supported by the literature. OEO officials would try to predict where riots were likely to occur and send funds to the communities (Gillette 1996). However, this created a scenario where community members would agitate and threaten riots to receive additional federal funds. This back and forth between community members and OEO officials made it difficult to predict riots. However, once a riot actually occurs, OEO officials were able to visit these communities and deal with the grievances directly. The change in funding behavior in response to a riot is also captured in Appendix Table 4A, which reports the marginal effects for regressing NLSP funding on indicator variables for past rioting. The marginal effects reported are positive and statistically significant.³⁶ Given these results, there is a clear positive relationship between NLSP and rioting. This provides evidence that NLSP funding was directed towards volatile communities.

The NLSP is one of many local treatments available to OEO bureaucrats in the 1960s. For instance, the OEO could provide grants for local policing. Additional policing may prevent riots in volatile communities, but a deterioration in police and community relations typically precipitate riots. The OEO did provide grants to local churches for summer programs and provided summer jobs for the youth. These programs and many other similar interventions should influence riot propensities. This is captured in row 6 in Figure 4, which reports smaller marginal effects for NLSP funding when accounting for community action programs (CAP) spending. However, the NLSP was a relatively small program; only 211 cities were treated in the sample, whereas 533 cities receive funds for various community action programs. When focusing on the 405 cities that receive CAP funding but not NLSP funding, the estimated effects of CAP on the number of riots, the duration of riots, and the severity of riots are statistically insignificant.³⁷ Additionally, when limiting the sample to the 533 cities that receive CAP funding, NLSP is negatively associated with the number of riots, the duration of riots, and the severity of riots. In contrast, CAP funding

³⁶ This regression is similar to Equation 1, but the dependent variable of interest is NLSP funding and the independent variables of interest are indicator variables for past rioting.

³⁷ See Appendix Table 5A.

is negatively associated with the number of riots and the duration of riots. When NLSP and CAP are accounted for, the marginal effect for CAP funding is much smaller than the marginal effect for NLSP funding. This provides suggestive evidence that CAP funding help reduced the number of riots, but the reduction in the severity and duration of riots was mostly driven by NLSPs and not other government initiatives. Nonetheless, the possibility of other confounding factors cannot be completely ruled out.

5.2 NLSP Impact on Policing

Despite the positive bias, NLSP's ability to abate riots should be reflected in other riot-related outcomes. Cunningham (2016) showed that the NLSP is associated with changes in police practices or usages. Proponents of the program argued that NLSP lawyers altered police behavior. According to advocates of the program, NLSP programs were successful at changing institutional behavior through two channels, direct consultation and anticipatory responses (Katz, 1978). Individual or group consultation informed clients of their legal rights and prevented conflicts from occurring. Likewise, legal challenges brought against local agencies by NLSP lawyers often resulted in changes in policies and practices that were more suitable to the poor. Regarding policing, access to legal services could have deterred illegal police behavior. This may have resulted in changes to policies, police practices, or disciplinary responses even without litigation or long after litigation was resolved. These changes could have also improved the relationship between the police and the black community by increasing the number of positive interactions.

To test whether NLSP programs influenced the relationship between the black community and local police departments, I used the Legal Service Agency Survey (LSAS), which is publicly available at the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) to evaluate the relationship between the poor and law enforcement. The Legal Service Agency Survey (LSAS) was conducted in 1970 and 1971 to evaluate the effectiveness of the legal services projects and to make recommendations on whether to expand, cut back, or eliminate certain agencies. The LSAS included roughly two-thirds of all the NLSP agencies operating at that time. The purposes of the evaluations were to: provide individual reports on legal services projects (which provided a history of the program), study the types of issues in which agencies were involved, evaluate the environment and climate in which the projects operated, evaluate the directors and attorneys in the agencies, and provide a systematic way to evaluate legal services project performances.

I estimated the following regression:

$$(3) \quad Y_{ic} = \gamma + \delta NLSP_{ic} + X'_{ic}\beta + \theta_s + \varepsilon_{ic}$$

I used variables that describe the perception of law enforcement as dependent variable Y . The law enforcement climate variables indicate if the police are perceived to have a hostile or supportive relationship

with the poor, minorities, or the NLSP. The variables that describe the climate are labeled 1 to 3, with 1 being not supportive or hostile, and 3 being cooperative or supportive. The survey questions are in response to the perceived legal climate by evaluators with regard to law enforcement. The dependent variables are created by the *average* scores from three to five evaluators of the local legal services project. The survey response for the Police Effect on NLSP was the following: (1) Law enforcement agencies tend to bring pressure on NLSP to curtail activities; (2) Neutral or no interaction; (3) Cooperative relationships. The survey responses for Police Relation to the Community were the following: (1) Law enforcement agencies are generally hostile to poverty community residents; (2) Agencies neutral; (3) Agencies support efforts for equal services. Lastly, the survey responses for Police Relation with the Minority Community were the following: (1) Law enforcement agency generally hostile to and abusive of minority group persons; (2) No significant minority population or neutral disposition to minorities; (3) Generally supportive of efforts to increase cooperation.

The independent variable of interest, *NLSP*, is either cumulative funding up to 1970 for grantee *i* in city *c* or the length of time the NLSP has been operating. For the length of time, a new program in 1970 will have the age of 0, a program that was started in 1965 would have the age of 5. The LSAS contains survey information of a grantee which are matched to grantee information in the NACAP files to obtain funding levels. Although the main treatment variable for this analysis is funding levels of NLSP, I supplement the analysis looking at exposure for a few reasons. First, LSAS provides information at the grantee level and many cities have more than one grant. In addition, Equation 1 takes advantage of year to year variation in funding levels. However, Equation 3 will not capture NLSPs that are introduced, operated, and no longer operational by 1970. Lastly, Cunningham (2016) highlighted a dynamic response to crime, policing, and NLSPs, which took several years for crime-related outcomes to change. Therefore, time or exposure may be more important than funding as it relates to community-police relations.

Table 3 displays the results from the LSAS regressions on the legal climate as it relates to law enforcement. For the most part, NLSP funding is negative but not statistically significant. Although funding is negatively related to rioting outcomes, cumulative funding did not improve the relationship between the police and the NLSP, the police, and the broader community, or the police and the minority community. As expected, rioting is associated with a deterioration in police-community relations. However, law enforcement agencies in places that received legal services earlier are correlated with having better relationships with poor communities as well as with minorities in 1970. The interaction between NLSP firms and law enforcement agencies are considered more supportive in locations where firms were established earlier. Although the estimates in Table 3 do not imply causality, they provide suggestive evidence that older NLSP implementations are associated with better relationships with the police. This is important because the primary motivation for endogeneity is that the timing, location, and intensity of the

treatment are related to local volatility—mainly due to the conflict between the black community and the police. From a policy perspective, funding of NLSPs is not a stand-alone remedy to urban unrest in response to community grievances against local policing. The amount of the expenditures devoted to local NLSP grantees had little impact on improving police-community relations but exposure to NSLP eased some of the tensions associated with past rioting.

6. Conclusion

The Neighborhood Legal Services Program was implemented to provide the poor a voice in court. Those who advocated for the existence of the NLSP believed that the poor were often victimized by the judicial system. From their viewpoint, the poor were not able to defend themselves against unfair treatment from public officials in welfare offices, landlords in their community, creditors and local businesses, and local police officers. The lack of access to justice created an explosive environment. However, the 1960s riots were not the first racial uprisings to have occurred in the United States. There were a series of riots in the 1940s as well as riots recorded pre-1940 in black American communities (Cook, 2011; Downes, 1968, Lieberman and Silverman 1965). The uniqueness of the 1960s events was the frequency of these community uprisings over a short time-span. Over 700 riots were recorded from 1964 to 1971. This period of widespread violent demonstrations is followed by a period with fewer major incidents. The most notable of these was the 1980 Miami Riot and the 1992 Los Angeles Riot.

As the number of riots declined in the 1970s, so did the support of the NLSP. By 1976, the NLSP had been supplanted by a new entity with more structure, less autonomy, and less federal funding. The newly created Legal Service Corporation (LSC) shifted focus away from community organizing, community advocacy, and law reform to focus more on individual representation that would result in more civil cases. Legal services lawyers' caseload changed from crime and divorce proceedings to housing and tenant-landlord disputes. Even as the LSC handled cases for the poor that were less controversial, the lack of federal funding for legal aid still restricts access to social justice.

In the 1960s, the NLSP was used as a vehicle for those without voices to express their grievances. Although the program did not prevent riots, it did work to redress the grievances that sparked them. According to the results, the typical legal services grant of \$200,000 decreased the number of riots by 4.8 percent and reduced the likelihood of severe rioting by 4 percent. The results are sensitive to rescaling the treatment variable of interest, but a negative relationship persists through various specifications. Event-study and OLS estimates provide evidence of a positive relationship between NLSP and rioting. Therefore, even in the absence of a credible instrument, estimated marginal effects provides a lower bound. Further, results indicate cities that received NLSP grants earlier have a better relationship with the police by 1970

compared to cities that received later NLSP grants. These findings are consistent with the historical narrative of legal services lawyers' involvement in community empowerment and advocacy, as well as the program's effectiveness in mitigating the damage of riots that occurred in the 1960s.

Access to lawyers as well as social justice advocacy has greatly decreased since the 1960s and 1970s. Meanwhile, the killings of unarmed Black Americans have sparked protests around the country under the moniker of #BlackLivesMatter (BLM). Prominent attorneys crisscross the country representing families of black citizens killed by the police, seeking restitution, and advocating for police reform. The original premise of the NLSP was to provide oversight over bureaucratic organizations with monopoly power that governed the daily lives of the indigent. The call for police reform often includes a request for external oversight to handle matters related to aggressive policing and police brutality. The NLSP, funded by federal grants to community-based organizations, used the judicial system to articulate the grievances of the poor. The protests movement of the 1960s differs from the BLM protest movement and the policies of the 1960s may not translate to current circumstances. Nonetheless, a reexamination of the Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP) provides policymakers an additional tool to ameliorate grievances that lead to violent demonstrations.

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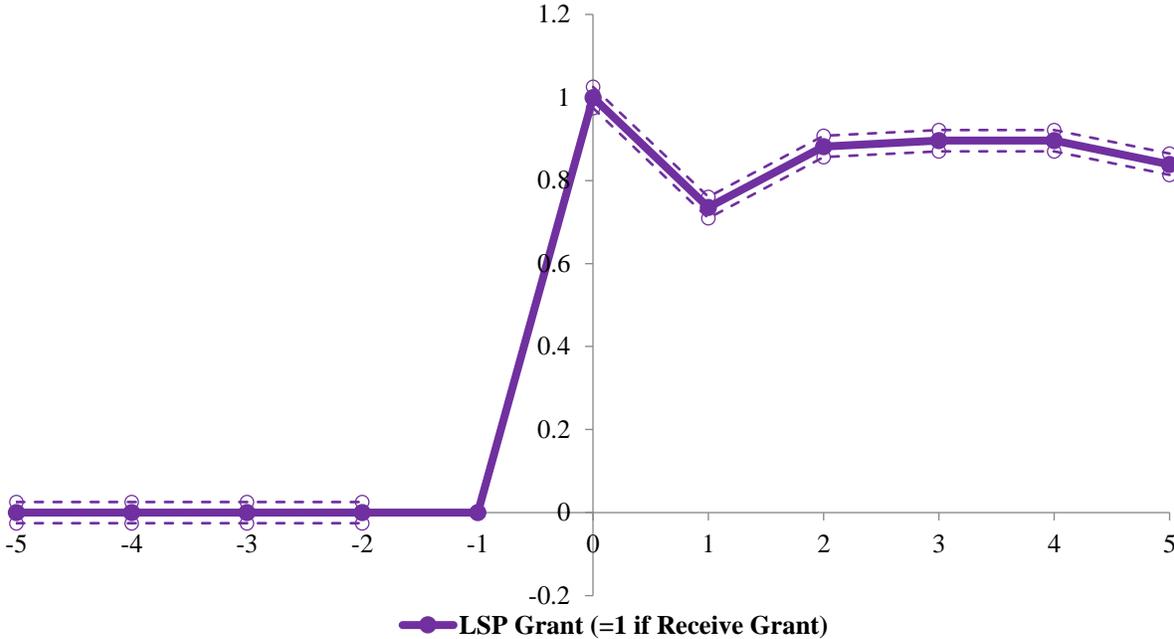
FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. The City Level Roll-Out of Federal Grants for Legal Services by Date, 1965-1975



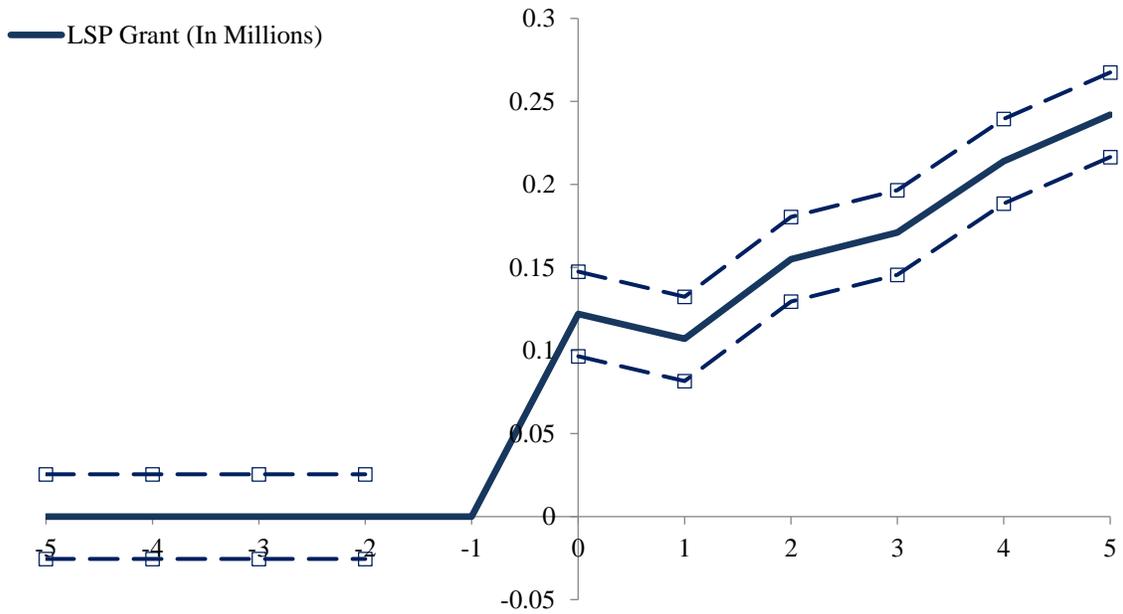
Source: The National Archives Community Action Program (NACAP) provided information on the recipients of legal service grants funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity from 1964 to 1975.

Figure 2. Estimated NLSP Funding Propensities



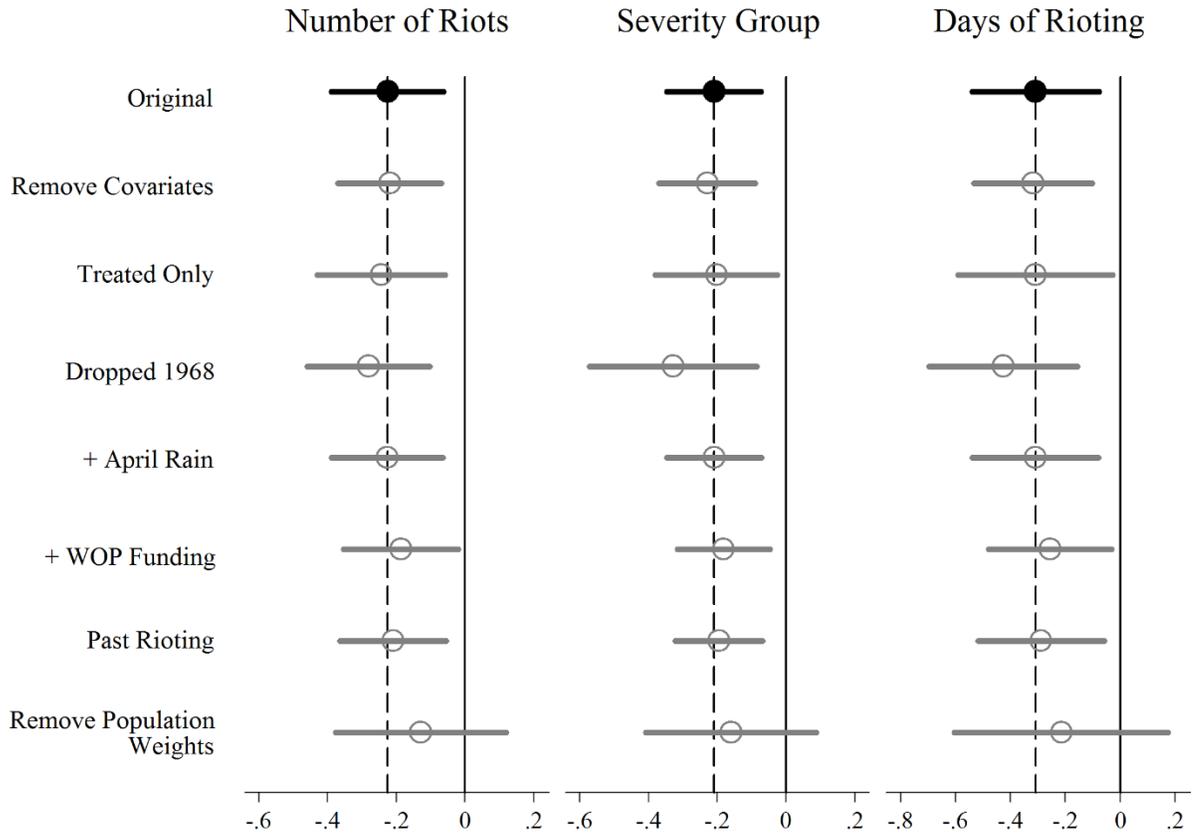
Notes: Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented. The dependent variable is an indicator equal to 1 if the city received an NLSP Grant. The horizontal axis corresponds to the years before and after the first NLSP grant is received. Zero is the year the grant is received.

Figure 3. Estimated Average NLSP Funding (In Millions)



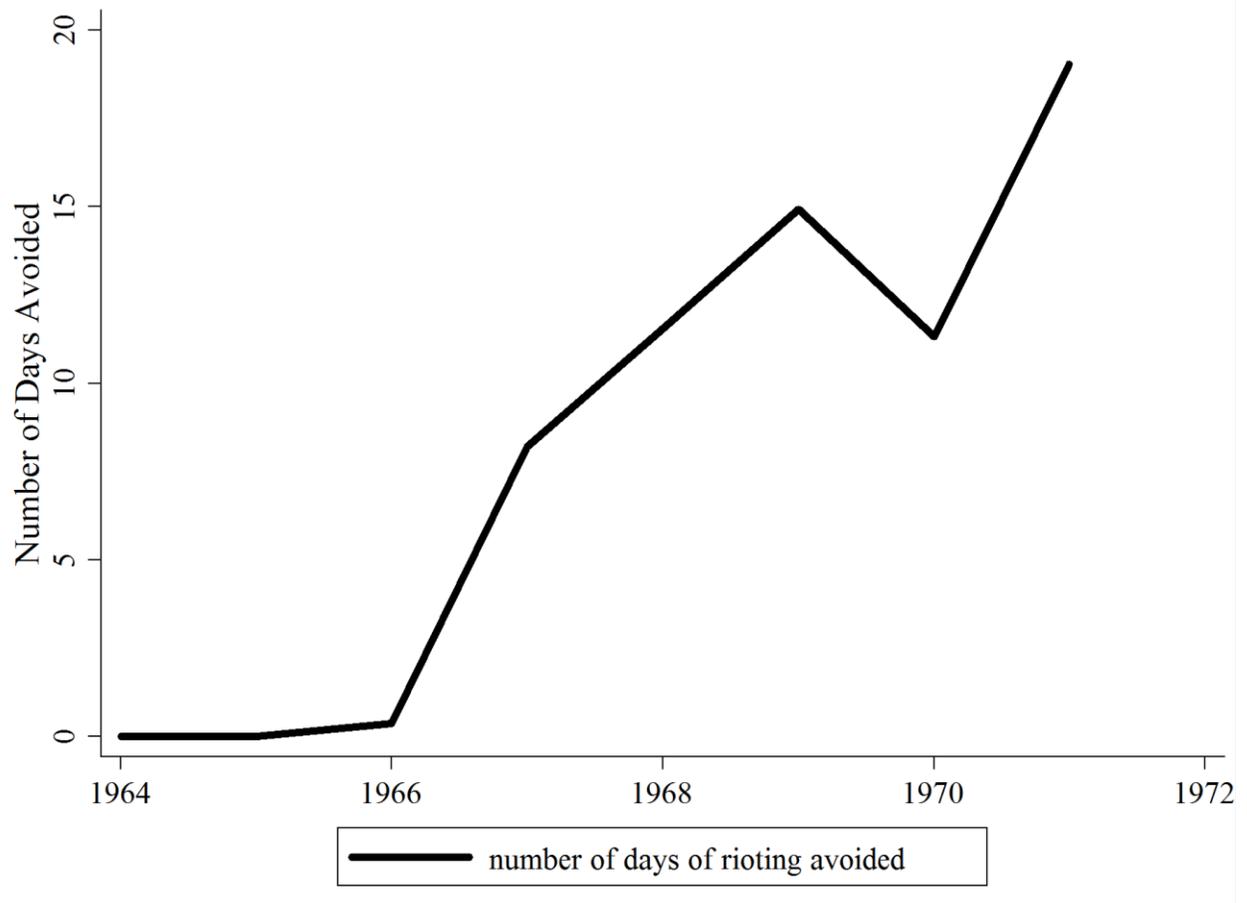
Note: Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented. The dependent variable is the size of an NLSP Grant in millions. The horizontal axis corresponds to the years before and after the first NLSP grant is received. Zero is the year the grant is received.

Figure 4. Robustness Checks



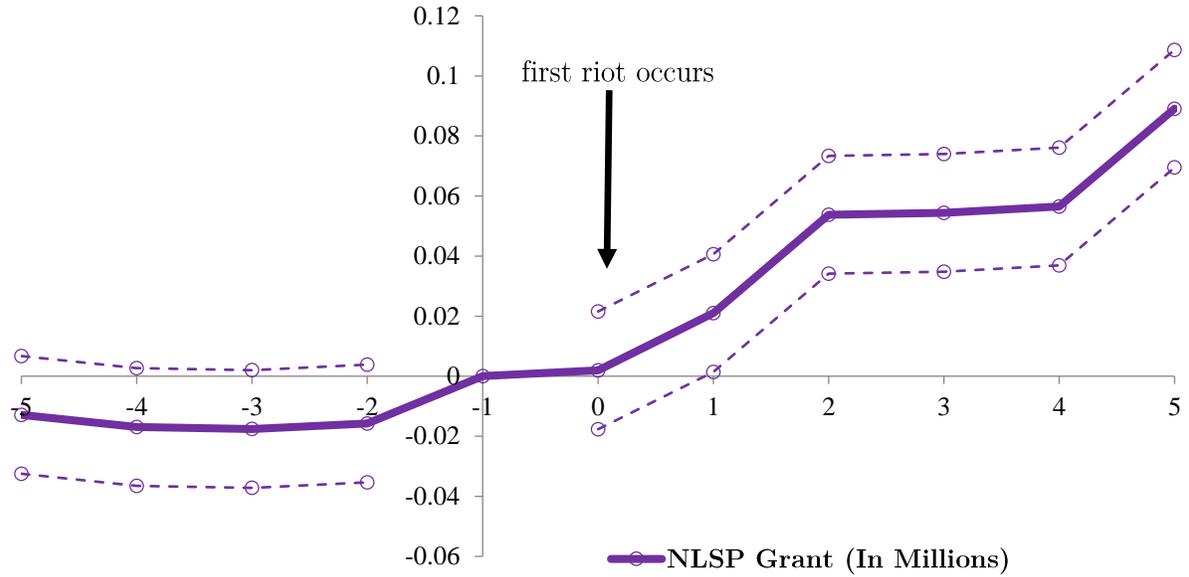
Notes: The figure displays weighted-least-squares estimates obtained estimating Equation 1. All regressions include city (C) and state-by-year (S-Y). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented by the bold line. Least-squares coefficients are presented by the circle marker.

Figure 5. Number of Riots and Days of Rioting Avoided



Source: Authors calculations based on Table 2, column 1.

Figure 6. Event-Study Estimates: Event (First Riot) – DV (NLSP Funding)



Note: Figure 6 plots coefficients from the following regression $Y_{i,t} = \gamma_i + \alpha_{t,s(i)} + \sum_{\tau=-1}^q \theta_{-\tau} D_i 1_{t-T^*=-\tau} + \sum_{\tau=1}^p \delta_{\tau} D_i 1_{t-T^*=\tau} + \tau + \varepsilon_{i,t}$ where $Y_{i,t}$ is the size of the legal services grant in millions in city i in year t ($t = 1960, 1961, \dots, 1980$); γ_i is a set of city effects which control for unobservable city characteristics that are time invariant; α_t is a set of state-by-year effects. D_i is an indicator variable equal to one if the city ever received federally funded legal services. $1_{t-T^*=-\tau}$ is an indicator variable equal to one if the observation year is $-\tau$ years from the year the first riot occurs in city i or $1_{t-T^*=\tau}$ is equal to one if the observation year is τ years after the first riot occurs. T^* is the year before the first riot; q refers to the number of lags or years before the first riot, and p is the lead or years after the first riot. The coefficients of interest are $\theta_{-\tau}$, which are pre-treatment effects, and post-treatment effects δ_{τ} .

Table 1. Characteristics of Cities from 1960

	All cities	NLSP cities	Non-NLSP cities	T-Test of difference
A. 1960 city characteristics	(N=616)	(N=211)	(N=405)	
Means				
Population	119,893	253,333	50,373	<0.01
Population per square mile	5,258	6,065	4,837	<0.01
Median income	6,192	5,907	6,340	<0.01
Median age	30.1	30.6	29.9	<0.05
Proportion of residents				
Nonwhite	9.7	13.2	7.9	<0.01
With 12 years of education	46.0	43.7	47.2	<0.01
Means from 1964 to 1971				
Number of riots	0.94	2.19	0.29	<0.01
Severity of riots	0.61	1.64	0.07	<0.01
Number of Days Rioting	1.31	3.01	0.42	<0.01

Source: Table displays averages from the 1960 Decennial Census. Census data from 1962 County and City Data Book publicly available at the ICPSR. Riot data comes courtesy of Carter and Margo (2007). Carter (1986) the original source of race riots data from 1964 to 1971.

Table 2. Ordinary-Least-Squares Estimates of NLSP on Riot Propensities

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
		Black Population Above Sample Median	Population Greater Than a 100,000	Nearby Law School No	Yes
A. DV: Number of Riots					
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.226*** [0.0836]	-0.223*** [0.0831]	-0.225** [0.101]	0.432 [0.472]	-0.225** [0.0912]
R-squared	0.544	0.650	0.732	0.276	0.590
B. DV: Severity Group					
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.209*** [0.0706]	-0.212** [0.0836]	-0.166* [0.0953]	0.601 [0.654]	-0.213*** [0.0767]
R-squared	0.449	0.560	0.629	0.309	0.496
C. DV: Days of Rioting					
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.309*** [0.118]	-0.311** [0.125]	-0.278* [0.155]	0.477 [0.543]	-0.303** [0.134]
R-squared	0.529	0.639	0.715	0.313	0.578
Number of Cities	616	310	129	540	481

Notes: The table displays weighted-least-squares estimates obtained estimating Equation 1. All columns include city (C) and state-by-year (S-Y) effects and covariates (X). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented beneath each estimate in brackets. All columns use 1960 population as weights. Column 2 limits the sample to cities with above sample median black population. Column 3 limits the sample to cities with a population greater than 100,000. Columns 4 include treated cities without a nearby law schools and all non-treated cities, while column 5 include treated cities with a nearby law school and all non-treated cities. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

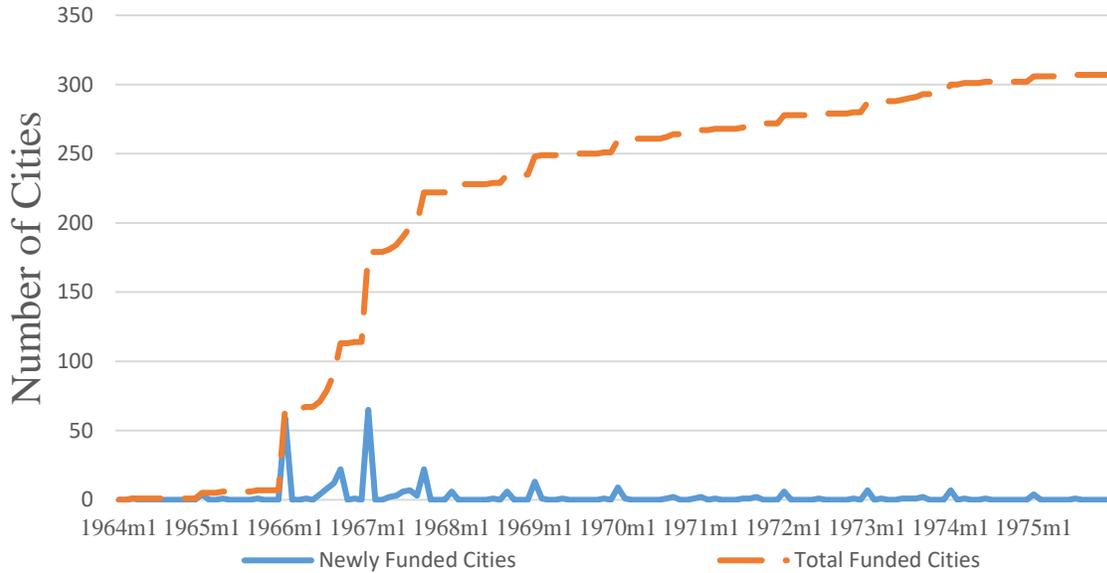
Table 3. Law Enforcement Legal Climate from the Legal Service Agency Survey

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
A. DV: Police Effect on NLSP					
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.0937 [0.0729]	-0.0851 [0.0717]			-0.124 [0.0815]
Riots (0/1)		-0.101 [0.0794]		-0.119 [0.0794]	-0.102 [0.0789]
Time since NLSP established			0.0335 [0.0213]	0.0346 [0.0212]	0.0478** [0.0220]
R-squared	0.367	0.376	0.366	0.379	0.402
B. DV: Police Relation to Community					
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.00622 [0.0538]	0.00643 [0.0564]			-0.0367 [0.0584]
Riots (0/1)		-0.148* [0.0867]		-0.154* [0.0831]	-0.149* [0.0853]
Time since NLSP established			0.0477** [0.0197]	0.0492** [0.0198]	0.0531** [0.0215]
R-squared	0.359	0.374	0.380	0.395	0.397
C. DV: Police Relation with Minorities					
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.0333 [0.0518]	-0.0174 [0.0532]			-0.0546 [0.0541]
Riots (0/1)		-0.293** [0.113]		-0.292*** [0.109]	-0.285** [0.112]
Time since NLSP established			0.0450* [0.0246]	0.0434* [0.0239]	0.0507** [0.0254]
R-squared	0.348	0.373	0.366	0.394	0.401
Observations	180	180	180	180	180

Note: The data in the 1970 Legal Service Agency Survey (LSAS) was collected from the Auerbach Corporation for an evaluation of NLSP projects in 1970 and 1971. All regressions use state fixed effects as well as covariates from equation 1 at their 1960 levels. Robust standard errors are presented in brackets. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

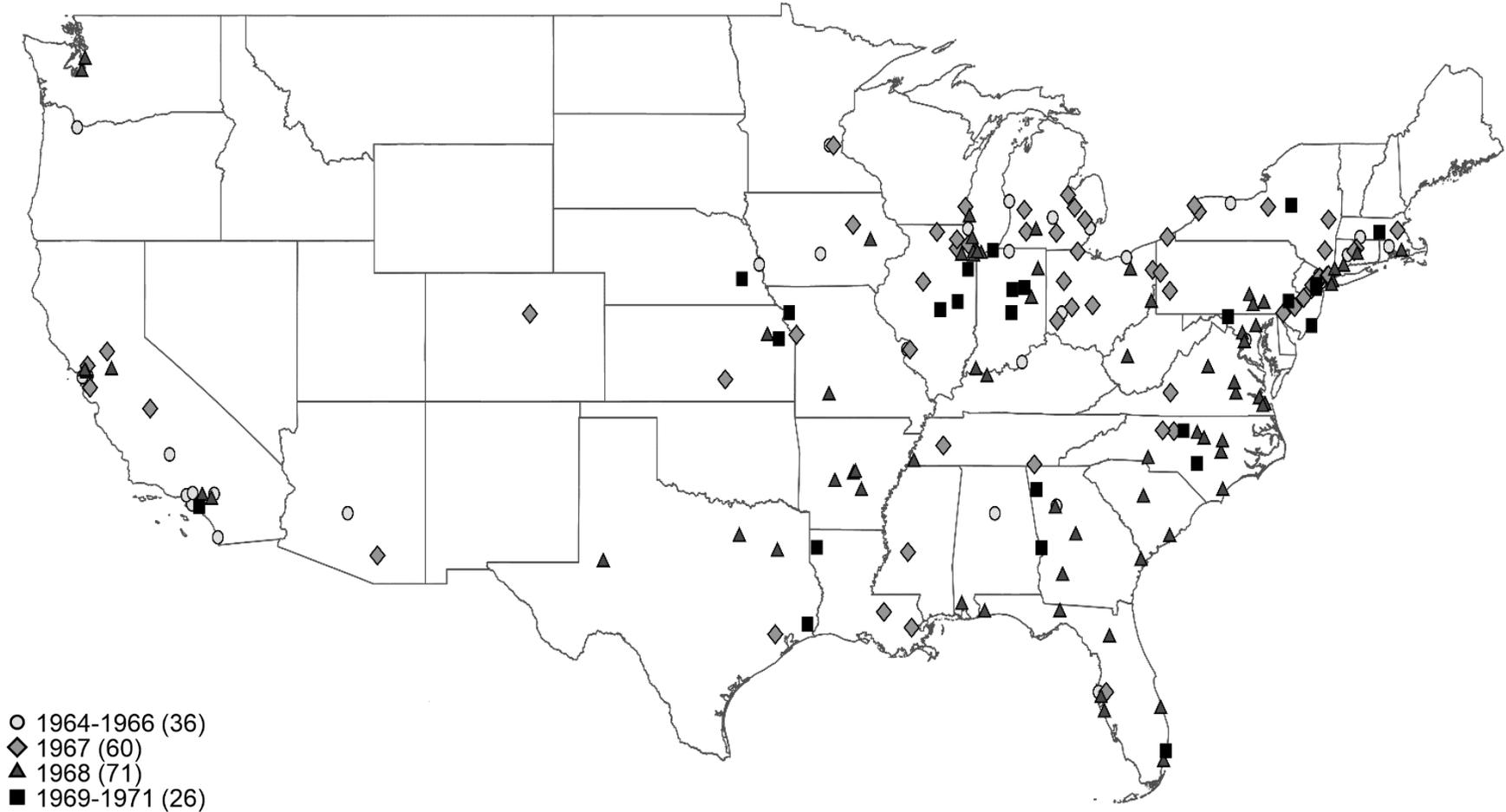
Appendix

Figure 1A. The City Level Roll-Out of Federal Grants for Legal Services by Date, 1965-1975



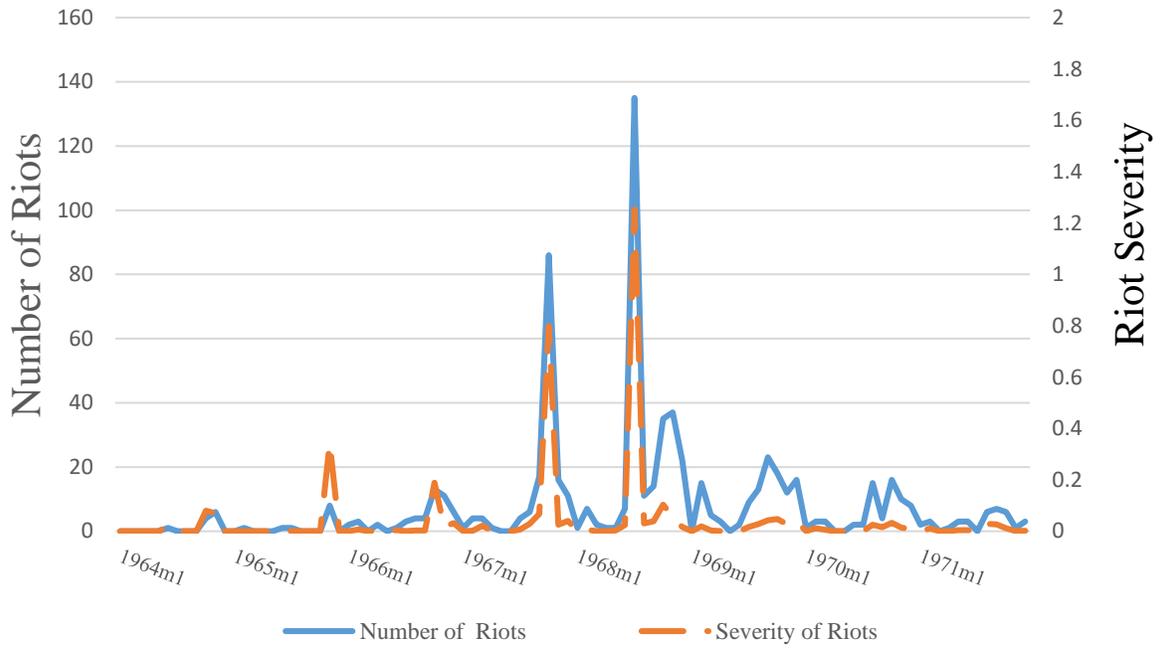
Source: The National Archives Community Action Program (NACAP) provided information on the recipients of legal service grants funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity from 1964 to 1975.

Figure2A. Cities Experiencing an Uprising by Date of first Uprising, 1964-1971



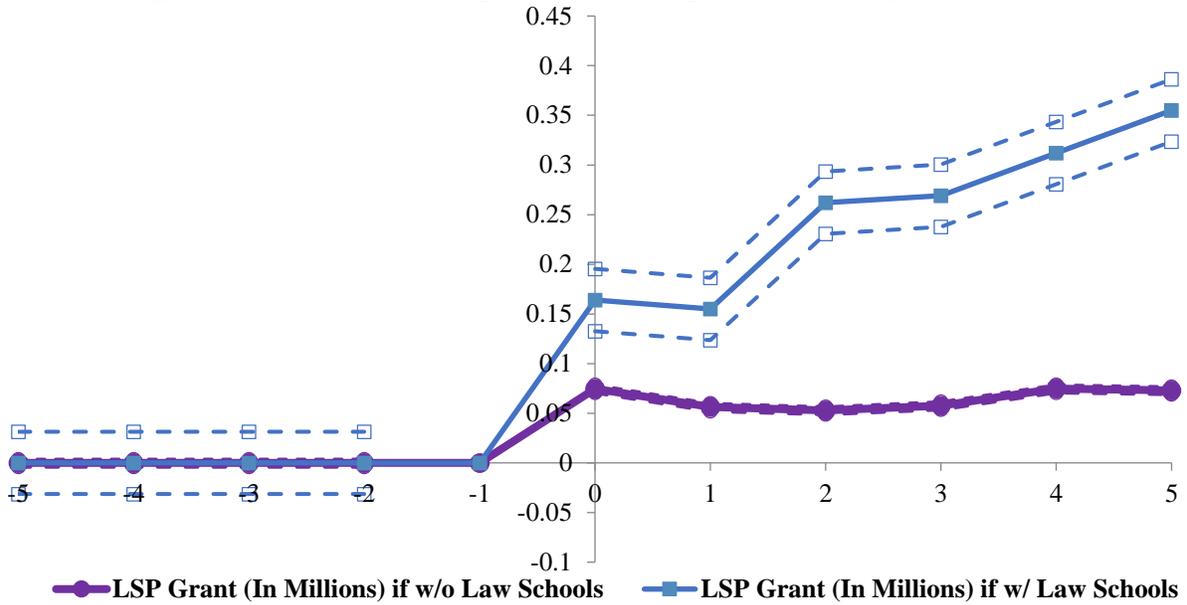
Source: Riot data comes courtesy of Carter and Margo (2007). Carter (1986) the original source of race riots from 1964 to 1971.

Figure 3A. City Level–Number of Riots and Riot Severity



Source: Riot data comes courtesy of Carter and Margo (2007). Carter (1986) the original source of race riots from 1964 to 1971.

Figure 4A. Estimated Average NLSP Funding (In Millions) by Law School



Note: Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented. The dependent variable is size of a NLSP Grant in millions. The horizontal axis corresponds to the years before and after the first NLSP grant is received. Zero is the year the grant is received.

Table 1A. The Impact of NLSP Funding by Scaling

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
		Per Capita	Per Poor Population	Cumulative	Cumulative Per Capita	Cumulative Per Poor Population
A. DV: Number of Riots						
Legal Service Funding	-0.226*** [0.0836]	-0.435 [0.365]	-0.00622 [0.00479]	-0.151*** [0.0433]	-0.0925*** [0.0213]	-0.0110*** [0.00344]
R-squared	0.544	0.538	0.538	0.558	0.543	0.541
B. DV: Severity Group						
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.209*** [0.0706]	-0.283 [0.595]	-0.00487 [0.00715]	-0.153*** [0.0496]	-0.0985*** [0.0260]	-0.0119*** [0.00394]
R-squared	0.449	0.444	0.445	0.465	0.450	0.449
C. DV: Days of Rioting						
Legal Service Funding	-0.309*** [0.118]	-0.953 [0.834]	-0.0156 [0.0109]	-0.207*** [0.0589]	-0.129*** [0.0284]	-0.0159*** [0.00489]
R-squared	0.529	0.524	0.525	0.540	0.528	0.527
Observations	4,928	4,928	4,928	4,928	4,928	4,928
Number of Cities	616	616	616	616	616	616

Notes: Table display weighted-least-squares estimates obtained estimating Equation 1. All columns include city (C) and state-by-year (S-Y) effects and covariates (X) from 1960, 1970, and 1980 Census City and County Data Books. The city-level demographic information was constructed by linearly interpolating between 1960, 1970, and 1980. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented beneath each estimate in brackets. All columns use 1960 population as weights. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2A. The Impact of NLSP Funding by Region

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		Drop Treated Cities in Region		
	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
A. DV: Number of Riots				
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.476*** [0.160]	-0.230*** [0.0887]	-0.241*** [0.0857]	-0.100** [0.0476]
R-squared	0.559	0.499	0.525	0.573
B. DV: Severity Group				
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.503*** [0.114]	-0.170** [0.0712]	-0.196*** [0.0678]	-0.156** [0.0761]
R-squared	0.480	0.378	0.447	0.470
C. DV: Days of Rioting				
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-0.792*** [0.167]	-0.279** [0.125]	-0.345*** [0.122]	-0.112* [0.0664]
R-squared	0.559	0.489	0.501	0.547
Observations	4,440	4,488	4,552	4,544
Number of Cities	555	561	569	568

Notes: Table display weighted-least-squares estimates obtained estimating Equation 1. All columns include city (C), state-by-year (S-Y), and covariates (X). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented beneath each estimate in brackets. All columns use 1960 population as weights. Column 1 through 4 drops treated cities in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West, respectively. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3A. The Impact of NLSP – Poisson and Ordered Logit

	(1)	(2)
DV:	Number of Riots	Severity Group
	<i>Poisson</i>	<i>Ordered Logit</i>
Legal Service Grant (In Millions)	-1.014*** [3.96e-07]	-1.450*** [0.000419]
Number of Cities	196	616

Notes: Table display estimates from Poisson and Ordered Logit Regressions. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4A. The Relationship between NLSP Funding and Previous Riots

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	NLSP Funding	Per Capita	Cumulative	Cumulative Per Capita
A. Riots				
Riot in the Previous (0/1)	0.0206*** [0.00730]	0.00505** [0.00216]	0.0119 [0.0264]	0.149** [0.0607]
Riot two years Ago (0/1)	0.0737*** [0.0251]	0.0156*** [0.00406]	0.268*** [0.0748]	0.582*** [0.109]
R-squared	0.108	0.194	0.133	0.294
B. Severity				
Severity Index in the Previous Year (0-2)	0.0105** [0.00438]	0.00344** [0.00139]	0.00323 [0.0183]	0.0917*** [0.0336]
Severity Index Two Years Ago (0-2)	0.0484*** [0.0168]	0.00819*** [0.00232]	0.163*** [0.0454]	0.313*** [0.0615]
R-squared	0.118	0.195	0.140	0.295
Observations	4,928	4,928	4,928	4,928
Number of Cities	616	616	616	616

Notes: Table display weighted-least-squares estimates obtained estimating $LSP_{Funding_{i,t}} = \gamma_i + \alpha_{s(t)} + \pi R_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$. All columns include city (C) and state-by-year (S-Y) effects and indicator variables (R) capturing past riots. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented beneath each estimate in brackets. All columns use 1960 population as weights. The dependent variables are highlighted in the column headings and are the following: NLSP Funding, Per Capita Funding, Cumulative Funding, and Cumulative Funding Per Capita, respectively. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5A. The Relationship between NLSP Funding and Previous Riots

	(1)	(2) Drop NLSP Cities	(3) Drop non- CAP Cities
A. DV: Number of Riots			
Legal Service Funding	-0.187** [0.0856]		-0.194** [0.0871]
CAP Admin Funding	-0.0185** [0.00924]	-0.0886 [0.0815]	-0.0179* [0.00920]
R-squared	0.545	0.240	0.565
B. DV: Severity Group			
Legal Service Funding	-0.182*** [0.0691]		-0.187*** [0.0717]
CAP Admin Funding	-0.0125 [0.0128]	-0.216 [0.174]	-0.0114 [0.0130]
R-squared	0.450	0.257	0.468
C. DV: Days of Rioting			
Legal Service Funding	-0.256** [0.115]		-0.265** [0.118]
CAP Admin Funding	-0.0251* [0.0141]	-0.229 [0.252]	-0.0239* [0.0141]
R-squared	0.530	0.249	0.551
Observations	4,928	4,928	4,920
Number of Cities	616	405	533

Notes: Table display weighted-least-squares estimates obtained estimating Equation 1. All columns include city (C), state-by-year (S-Y), and covariates (X). Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors clustered by city are presented beneath each estimate in brackets. All columns use 1960 population as weights. Column 1 reproduces estimates from Figure 4 row 6. Column 2 drops treated cities from the analysis. Column 3 restricts the sample to cities that receive at least one community action program. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6A. The Relationship between First Legal Services Grants and 1960 City Demographics

Dependent variable	(1) 0/1 Receive NLSP	(2)	(3) Year NLSP Established	(4)	(5) First NLSP Grant (in Millions)	(6)
Median age	0.00558 [0.00547]	0.00676 [0.00559]	-0.0215 [0.0455]	-0.0180 [0.0472]	-0.00686 [0.00688]	-0.00738 [0.00695]
Median income	-0.0650** [0.0265]	-0.0610** [0.0281]	0.0241 [0.259]	-0.0674 [0.278]	0.0602 [0.0550]	0.0740 [0.0563]
Population per square mile	-0.00248 [0.00376]	-0.00878* [0.00478]	0.00771 [0.0172]	0.0209 [0.0222]	0.0358*** [0.00712]	0.0327*** [0.00674]
Log of the proportion of residents w/ 12 or more years of schooling	-0.00252 [0.00293]	-0.00221 [0.00306]	0.0313 [0.0200]	0.0343* [0.0207]	0.00234 [0.00379]	0.00146 [0.00365]
Nonwhite	0.0115*** [0.00251]	0.0147*** [0.00244]	-0.0134 [0.0173]	-0.0166 [0.0163]	0.00494* [0.00267]	0.00465* [0.00268]
Riot in 1964	0.145 [0.109]	0.0390 [0.136]	0.266 [0.404]	0.455 [0.424]	0.0580 [0.121]	0.0439 [0.118]
Riot in 1965	0.0511 [0.0514]	0.0863 [0.0600]	-0.318 [0.406]	-0.340 [0.374]	0.0173 [0.0847]	0.00332 [0.0824]
Law school (0/1)	0.450*** [0.0444]		-0.683* [0.380]		0.0613 [0.0439]	
Age of law school		0.00453*** [0.000586]		-0.00729* [0.00372]		0.00105** [0.000462]
Observations	616	616	211	211	211	211
R-squared	0.547	0.509	0.495	0.487	0.857	0.860

Note: Each column reports estimates from separate weighted-least-squares regressions. The dependent variable in columns 1 and 2 is an indicator equal to 1 if a city receives an NLSP grant from 1965 to 1975. The dependent variable in columns 3 and 4 is the year a city first receives an NLSP grant. The dependent variable in columns 5 and 6 is the size of the first NLSP grant in millions of dollars. All columns include state fixed effects. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are corrected for clustering with state and presented in brackets. City demographic variables are from the 1960 Decennial Census. All columns use 1960 population as weights. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1