

Improving Police-Community Relations: The Role of Civilian Oversight Agencies in Florida

James E. Wright II, PhD

Assistant Professor

Askew School of Public Administration and Policy

Executive Summary

Several high-profile police-civilian encounters have resulted in the death of civilians over the last several years, triggering a wave of protest and unrest across the United States. These protests call for more accountability from both police departments and civilians. Individuals and groups seeking police department reform suggest that Civilian Oversight Agencies (COAs) may help enhance accountability and approval of police outcomes. Moreover, as governmental administrative agencies, COAs can serve as a source of external oversight over police agencies. As COAs continue to be created across the country, it is important to understand the effects they have on police department outcomes.

This report explores the adoption of COAs and their impact on Black and White arrest rates in Florida. The data stems from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) for all major Florida cities (114 cities), looking at the years 2000 through 2017. Using a regression analysis, this study finds that cities with COAs have seen a reduction in total Black arrest rates per 100,000 compared to cities that do not have COAs. Moreover, the results indicate that cities adopting a COA experience about a 15% reduction in the total Black arrest rates compared to cities not adopting a COA.

Given these results, four key implications are worth noting. First, a COA reduces intense workloads for law enforcement officers because it reduces the number of interactions they have when making an arrest. Furthermore, a COA can begin to work as an avenue to increase citizen legitimacy of the police force because it shows a willingness by officers to have an external body act as an oversight entity. A COA can also be paired with other policy instruments to decrease any racial disparities that may exist, while also improving both officer and civilian behavior. Lastly, when cities adopt a COA, it can be the first step in improving communication between the police and the community, because police departments will be the first to initiate accountability to the community.

This leads to a conclusion that more cities in Florida should adopt COAs. The research shows the stark decrease in Black arrest rates in cities with COAs while presenting a net positive for both officers and civilians. As there is an increased push for transparency in police departments and the public, COAs can be a step in improving both officer and civilian behavior.

Introduction

Recent high-profile police incidents against members of the Black community across the United States have garnered national attention, including several police actions in 2020 that resulted in serious injury or death of Black individuals. According to Edwards, Lee, and Esposito (2019), Black men have a higher risk of being killed by police, with about a 1-in-1,000 chance over their lifespan compared to a 1 in 10,000 chance for White men. Perceived police brutality against members of the Black community has been a recurring issue since it gained attention during the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1960s. According to the Hoover Institute, building trust between minority communities (Black communities) and the police is one of the pressing issues that must be addressed for America to continue to thrive.¹

Many solutions have been proposed to alleviate tensions between communities of color and police officers and to improve community-police relations. Some strategies include hiring more officers of color and increasing diversity (i.e. women, LGBTQ, etc.) in departments, which has been deemed as a policy solution to reduce adverse policing outcomes against people of color. Requests for increased diversity and representation in policing rely on the belief that hiring officers of color will result in less violent police-civilian encounters, greater police legitimacy, and increased trust between officers and civilians. Aligning with this belief, some research shows that increased diversity within a police department may reduce use of force against Black and Latino/a Americans (Headley & Wright, 2020; Wright & Headley, 2020). Despite these findings, the authors caution that increasing representation is conditional and marginal because most police forces do not have a sufficiently large percentage of officers of color. Furthermore, a growing body of literature finds potential detrimental impacts on the public of racial representation in police departments because officers of color are often strictest on civilians of color (see Brown & Frank, 2006; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017; Sun & Payne, 2004; Wilkins & Williams, 2008, 2009).

Ultimately, an array of policy solutions has advanced to reform police departments, but they have been unable to initiate long-term changes in the policing profession related to police use of force. One of the most promising policy solutions to allow for a lasting impact is the use of Civilian Oversight Agencies (COAs), as current research reveals that COAs reduce racial disparities in policing. Ali and Pirog (2020) find that the degree to which a COA reduces racial disparity in policing outcomes depends on its scope of authority and the degree of discretion afforded to police officers by existing institutions. Moreover, Ali and Nicholson-Crotty (2020) note that having a COA decreases the rates of violent crime and homicide by police officers. While both studies used an online survey instrument, only 10 agencies in Florida were examined, making it difficult to ascertain what effects COAs have on policing outcomes in Florida. Given that Florida is the third largest state in the United States, it is important to understand, descriptively, which cities have COAs as well as what impacts COAs have on reducing racial disparities related to disorderly conduct arrests and police-involved homicides. This research focuses on the effect COAs have on Black arrest rates in Florida.

¹ <https://www.hoover.org/news/decision-2020-report-securing-just-and-peaceful-society>

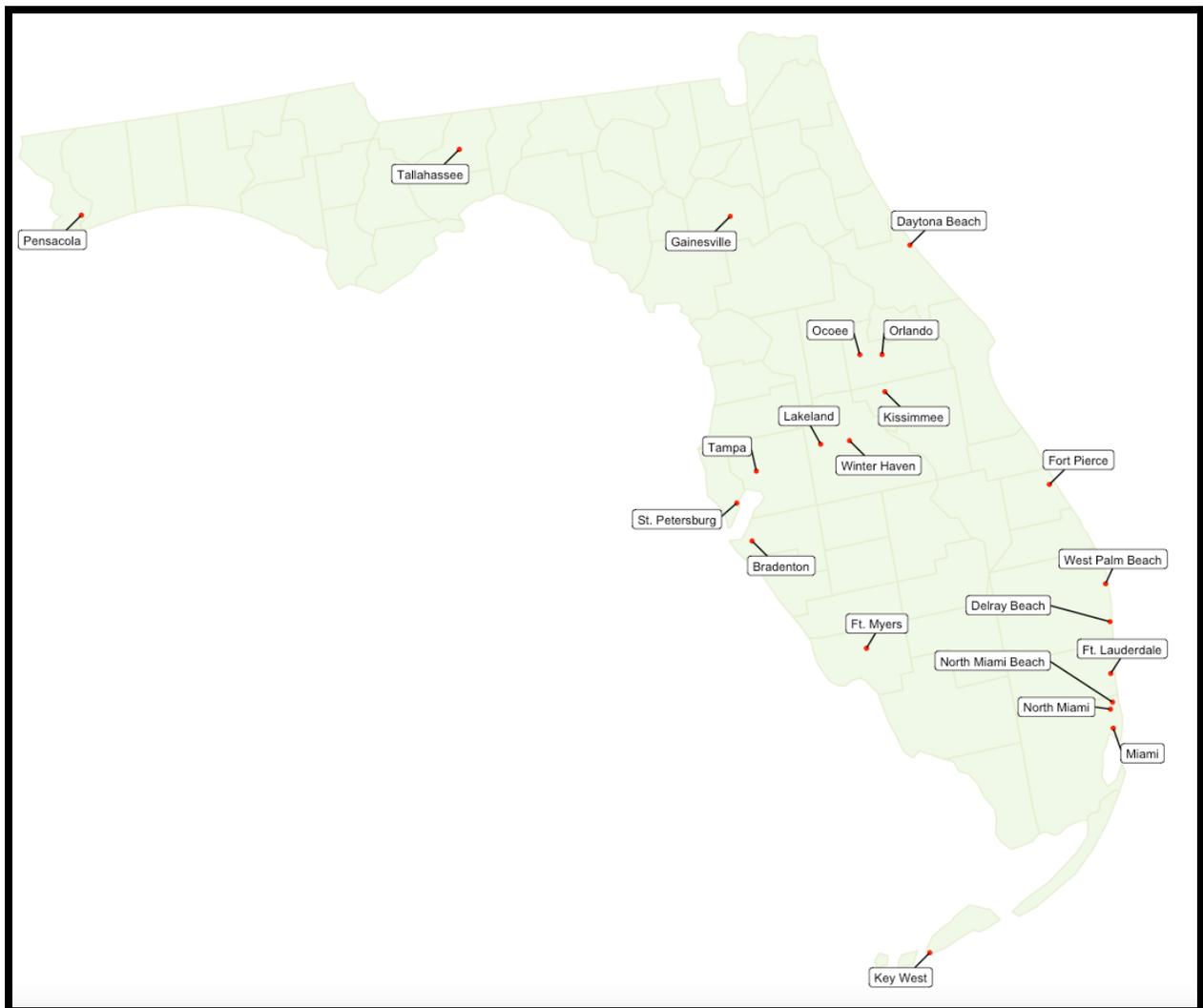
Civilian Oversight Agencies (COAs)

COAs are governmental agencies, predominantly at the local level, that serve as a source of external oversight of police agencies. Since the first (and still active) COA was created in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1959 (Hudson, 1968), the number of COAs in the United States has gradually grown to approximately 145 as of 2020 (for a discussion of the history of citizen oversight in the United States, see Walker 2001, 2006). COAs in the United States operate in a variety of political and socioeconomic environments, exhibiting considerable variation in terms of their formal authority, level of professionalization, staffing, budgetary authority, and style of oversight. They often are created through a local government ordinance or an amendment to the local government charter (De Angelis, Rosenthal, & Buchner, 2016).

The simplest COA structure consists of a board of citizens, serving as volunteers, who review the findings of investigations conducted by the police agency's internal affairs division. They often have little or no budgetary authority. COAs that are more organizationally complex may include a paid, full-time staff of lawyers, investigators, and policy analysts who report to the citizen board. These complex COAs often have substantial budgetary authority, access to police evidence records and electronic databases, and the ability to conduct independent investigations into citizen complaints. In Florida, board members of most COAs are appointed by the mayor or city council/commission, with the methodology for appointment of board members (i.e., by municipal district or at-large) often varying across jurisdictions (De Angelis, Rosenthal, & Buchner, 2016). Prior research has postulated that COAs are most likely to be created after an officer-involved shooting or incidents involving racially disparate policing (De Angelis, Rosenthal, & Buchner, 2016).

Figure 1 identifies the 21 cities in Florida that had COAs as of December 2021. As of this writing, other Florida cities were conducting public debate about whether to adopt a COA.

Figure 1: Florida Cities with COAs



Research on COAs currently focuses less on their structure and more on their efficacy, although these may be related. Most research indicates that the nature of accountability mechanisms available to a given COA substantially impacts its efficacy. Generalist conclusions regarding government accountability emphasize the significance of contextual factors. COAs are only as productive as citizens are willing to engage with local police departments (Brinkerhoff & Wetterberg, 2016). Understanding the structures inherent in execution of policing accountability mechanisms is difficult because of the vast differences among COAs, so the most common outcome variables are unable to account fully for the role of varying structures or processes in COAs' effectiveness.

Additionally, few works exist that illuminate the experiences of citizens engaged in the administration of police accountability mechanisms. Many of the conclusions described in

current literature examining COAs exclude a critical perspective that sheds light on their organizational efficacy from within the department. To supplement empirical and theoretical work, as the discussion progresses towards the impact of COAs on policing outcomes, This report refers throughout the remainder of this literature review to Merrick Bobb's (2003) account of his extensive experience working with COAs.

Legitimacy

Historical insularity and corruption of policing institutions, given their treatment of Black and other racially marginalized citizens, has prompted some COAs to focus on enhancing police legitimacy (Bobb, 2003). Some scholarship on COAs is concerned with the effect of these agencies on police legitimacy. While *police legitimacy* can hold a variety of operationalized definitions, it abstractly refers to a sense of trust between citizens and police officers, sometimes described as a metric of whether citizens willingly trust and obey police officers (Tyler, 1990). COAs can reinforce police legitimacy by demonstrating that enforcement is objective and functioning with the aim of holding police accountable (Leventhal, 1976). Additionally, they can in theory boost legitimacy through enhancing either procedural justice – by amplifying the voices and concerns of citizens in confusing procedural settings – or distributive justice – by enhancing equitable distribution of police services.

Because COAs in the United States were developed to respond to the needs of Black and other racially marginalized citizens, a critical element of building police legitimacy is resolving racial disparities in treatment by police (Ali & Nicholson-Crotty, 2021). COAs, even those only able to receive and investigate complaints, can serve a role in increasing procedural justice by amplifying the concerns of racially marginalized individuals within communities. These agencies may provide a critical way to engage community members who have traditionally been underrepresented or marginalized by policing, bringing them into the process of improving police accountability and building legitimacy by strengthening connections between police and community members. However, the limitations COAs face in achieving distributive policing justice narrow the scope of this mechanism of enhancing police legitimacy (Hobson et al., 2021).

Bobb (2003) indicates that COAs may also strengthen legitimacy by providing external pressure to ensure valid investigations of officer-involved shootings, thereby reducing the public's fear that officers' corruption may go unchecked. Modern technological innovations like body cameras may further expand the ability of COAs to solidify police legitimacy. Legitimacy is also impacted by the role of police in responses to citizen complaints; COAs may aid police legitimacy by providing an external review of police behavior that reduces citizens' suspicions of corruption compared to settings in which police review their own behavior (Bobb, 2003). Thus, scholars advocate that COAs for police departments wishing to enhance police legitimacy should prioritize and allow citizen control of the review process while also providing alternative routes by which officers may participate in conflict resolution processes (Prenzler & Ronken, 2001). COAs lacking control of the review process may be unable to accomplish their aims.

Finally, the bolstering effect of COAs on police accountability may be eroded by police perceptions about the legitimacy of *COAs themselves*: When officers perceive COAs as illegitimate, attempts to employ accountability mechanisms may erode perceptions of policing legitimacy among police officers themselves and thus reduce incentives for moral policing (De

Angelis & Kupchik, 2007). Overall, COAs may increase perceptions of police legitimacy, but their ability to do so is highly contingent upon the scope of their authority, the contextual effectiveness of external social pressure, the role of police in review investigations, and officers' perception of the legitimacy of oversight agencies.

Increasing Police Efficacy

Initially, COAs were developed in response to police violence; however, they have expanded their purview to investigate the efficacy of crime reduction efforts by police departments. While police legitimacy involves public trust in law enforcement, police efficacy involves the prowess and efficiency with which officers perform the work of preventing crime. Depending on the needs of a particular community, it may also extend to police misconduct reform (Chanin, 2015). The mechanism by which these agencies can decrease crime, COA proponents argue, is through encouraging effective crime prevention work by police officers. As interactions with police become easier to document through video, the existence of accountability mechanisms is thought to be capable of encouraging police to avoid conflict when it is not necessary (Bobb, 2003).

COAs may also reduce crime via an alternative mechanism of allowing citizen recommendations to gradually improve policing, but this mechanism is contingent upon police departments incorporating recommendations given by COAs *and* COAs having the authority to make these recommendations at all (Alpert et al., 2016). Police efficacy tends to be measured by reductions in crime – with those reductions indicating enhanced police efficacy – but alternative measures exist. Common alternative estimators include frequency of violent crime (Ali & Nicholson-Crotty, 2021) and police-involved homicides (Brereton, 2000, Walker & Luna, 2000). These alternative measures are seen as some of the most visible measures of police-civilian engagement. Further, they also represent other measures of police productivity (as in the case of police-involved homicides).

Given this context, several possible mechanisms link COAs and police efficacy. Though proponents of these arguments question their legitimacy, existing scholarship cautions that COAs are highly limited in their ability to realistically use the described linkages to affect meaningful change (Worden, 2008; Clarke, 2009). First, COAs may increase policing efficacy by incentivizing officers to assess crime scenes more carefully prior to engaging with individuals, ultimately resulting in fewer killings of individuals (Ali & Nicholson-Crotty, 2021). This incentivization of cautious assessment by police may take one of several forms: officers may be disincentivized from initiating interactions likely to escalate to conflict (Campeau, 2015); they may refrain from assaults on citizens given the looming possibility of oversight (Brereton, 2000); or change may result from conscious organizational efforts to reduce discriminatory policies.

The first argument for creating a COA is that a COA can help increase police efficacy. However, two alternative mechanisms link COAs to *reductions* in police efficacy: scholarship specifically examining police advocacy and issues within policing culture that may limit the efficacy of police officers. COAs may decrease police advocacy by incentivizing de-policing, which is a form of police officers going on strike that results in a reduction of effective crime prevention behavior in response to outside criticism or other job avoidance (Chanin & Sheats, 2018). Scholarship on police responses to COAs and a series of interviews with police officers indicate

that COAs may contribute to officers perceiving their jobs as being undermined or as undermining overall police culture (Campeau, 2015).

Decreasing Police Bias

Research seeking to examine reductions in police bias after the adoption of COAs warrants caution. Depending on the situation, certain factors may not be applicable. In theory, COAs should effectively reduce anti-Black violence through the various mechanisms identified previously and through providing an explicit check on police bias in the collection of and response to citizen complainants (Ali & Pirog, 2017).

However, there is little evidence that supports the success of COAs in reducing police bias, given the role of citizen complaints and citizen-led investigations – which are most effective as early warning signs of problems (Luna, 2003) – and the COAs' limited ability to respond to long-standing, deeply rooted cultural problems ingrained in policing institutions. Alternatively, COAs may be capable of reducing police bias by presenting continued opportunities for marginalized members of the public to report grievances, providing the possibility of procedural justice even when distributive justice is outside the agency's scope (Dunn, 2010). The outcome achieved by a given COA and its associated police department depends on the community, the COA, the police department, and the resources endowed to all three groups. Traditional scholarship has continued to show that citizen oversight of police is highly dependent upon the actions that can be taken by the COA. For instance, if a COA has the ability to see all police misconduct cases and recommend discipline, it has the ability to influence police actions. Further, reductions in police misconduct also occur with legislative change, judicial injunction, or federal investigation, in addition to efforts of the COA (Ali & Nicholson-Crotty, 2021). Bobb (2003) provides municipal evidence of reductions in anti-Black bias among police following COA oversight maneuvers, but indicates that laws, injunctions, and federal investigations are substantially more effective at achieving similar goals due to their binding nature.

Remaining Questions Within This Area of Study

Scholarship that finds positive effects of COAs emphasizes the importance of fitting the structure of the COA to the community and enhancing citizen control of the review process. Additional factors like budget and political support for a given COA may also contribute to the effectiveness of a particular COA. Even in settings where they are unable to create binding recommendations, COAs may enhance justice by amplifying the voices of marginalized individuals and encouraging continued focus on bias reduction. However, these positive findings are to be considered with caution: Scholarship on COAs indicates that they are likely to be ineffective when they are not structured in a manner appropriate to the community in which they are situated. Overall, this indicates that COAs have the capacity to be effective in improving policing. Low awareness of COAs by the public may hinder their long-term impact (Ali & Nicholson-Crotty, 2021), but in total the literature has shown that COAs do lead to positive outcomes for police behavior.

One under examined perspective of COA effectiveness is citizens leading efforts for police accountability. Prior scholarship on COAs investigates primarily their structure, theoretical benefits, and outcomes with a variety of operationalized measures and incorporation of some stakeholder perspectives. Understanding the roles of individuals involved on the COA side of

police accountability efforts may help to shed light on additional similarities that exist across COAs and clarify the types of accountability mechanisms that tend to be most and least effective. While the organizational structure, budget, and professionalism level of COAs differ on a case-by-case basis, the accountability mechanisms described across the range of models above have similar functions, incorporating investigation of complaints against police to various levels. Moreover, understanding the behavior of individuals within COAs may clarify additional similarities and differences among COAs with varying models, identify ineffective COA practices, and uncover solutions to improve police accountability.

Finally, understanding how COAs can impact traditional police accountability mechanisms has been underexplored. Consideration of COAs' impact on crime rates, police use of force, arrest rates, and citizen complaints has yet to be parsed out in the literature. Further, the vast amount of literature does not speak to the effects in Florida because the data has not captured a large enough sample in Florida. Given this framework, this paper seeks to explore the relationship between COAs and Black arrest rates in Florida.

Research Design

While the above discussion offers many avenues for COA research, this report focuses on the effect of COAs in reducing Black and White arrest rates.

Data

I created a panel data set using two sets of data to understand the role of COAs in Florida. First, I collected data from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), tracking the subset of Florida-only agencies from 2000 to 2017. The UCR provides the most accurate and largest dataset of crime statistics in the United States and dates to 1930 in its data collection. Given our focus on the time from 2000 to 2017, approximately 114 Florida agencies have reported data to the federal government. The data that appears in the UCR is the total arrest data broken down by race (i.e. Black and White).

Additionally, we combined the UCR data with American Community Survey (ACS) data. From the ACS, we obtained yearly demographic data from each police agency that appears in the UCR. The data includes total population, total male population, educational attainment, unemployment rate, and median household income.

Dependent Variable

Two key dependent variables are used in this study: the total number of Black arrests per 10,000 individuals in each city, and the total number of White arrests per 10,000 individuals in each city. Given that civilian oversight agencies monitor both officer and civilian behavior, we are interested in the impact they will have on traditional police outcomes. Two such outcomes are Black and White population arrest rates. Literature has documented that an arrest encounter provides an opportunity for both the officer and the civilian to interact negatively. If COAs are intended to increase transparency and accountability, both the officer's and the civilian's

behaviors may change as they are monitored during the arrest. Table 1 indicates the mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum of Black and White arrest rates in the Florida cities in the sample. The table shows that, on average, there are 30 Black arrests per 10,000 people in Florida compared to 20 White arrests per 10,000 people in Florida

Table 1: Black Arrest Rates from 2000-2017 in Florida Cities

VARIABLE	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Black Arrest	1,938	30.87	47	26	125
White Arrest	1,938	20.66	36	12	97

Independent Variable

The key independent variable is whether a city has a COA, indicated as a 0 if the city has not implemented a COA and a 1 if the city has implemented a COA. While some cities are in the process of discussing the adoption of a COA, they still receive a 0 in the data. Additionally, if a city implemented a COA after 2017, it is also marked as a 0 in this analysis because it falls outside the range of the data analysis.

In the absence of a central location to identify which cities have a COA, the author took multiple steps to identify those cities that have adopted COAs. First, I examined newspaper articles written since 2000 to determine whether a city discussed adopting a COA or actually adopted a COA. If a newspaper article was found, the next step was a search on the city website or the city clerk’s office to see if the COA had met in the last five years. If the COA had met within the last five years, then the city still had an active COA. Additionally, the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement was contacted to triangulate the data found through newspaper articles and city websites. The Association has a strong record of agencies that have adopted COA, but it does not include every agency. Between these two methods, this paper was able to identify with a high degree of certainty which cities in Florida have adopted COAs.²

Control Variables

While seeking to understand what relationship exists between COA adoption and Black arrest rates, it is necessary to control for several variables that have been identified in the literature as influencing arrest rates. Using the ACS data, this paper controls for six variables that impact Black arrest rates. The first (#1) is the total population; on average, cities with higher total populations also tend to have higher arrest rates and crime rates (Camiha et al., 2017). Second

² See Appendix 1 for the list of Florida cities that have COAs

(#2) is the percentage of the city population that is male; according to Rowe, D. C., Vazsonyi, & Flannery (1995), men commit more crimes and are arrested at higher rates, so it is important to control for this variable. Third (#3) is socioeconomic conditions that have a strong correlation to arrest rates, including (#4) median household income in 2018, (#5) percent of population holding at least a bachelor’s degree, and the (#6) unemployment rate. Finally, literature has consistently shown that higher median income and higher educational attainment are associated with lower arrest rates (Patterson, 1991), while higher unemployment rates are associated with increased arrest rates (Britt, 1994). Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for those control variables.

Table 2: Control Variables

VARIABLES	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Total Population	1,938	292,384	463,150	8,230	2,716, 016
Total Male Population	1,938	142,936	224,643	4,575	1,319,206
Percent Black Population	1,938	15.12	7.12	6.12	61.19
Percent with a bachelor’s degree	1,938	4.933	3.451	9.15	26.30
Unemployment Rate %	1,938	9.826	2.978	2.900	22.80
Median Household Income	1,938	45,488	8,446	19,806	77,323

Methods

The baseline sample for this study contains detailed information from 200 to 2017, gathered from 114 Florida cities. Accordingly, the preferred model of Black arrest rates is a two-way fixed effects equation. It is modeled as the following:

$$1) Y_{mt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 COA_{mt} + \beta X_{mt} + \vartheta_m + \varphi_t + \epsilon_{mt}$$

This equation compares cities that have adopted a COA and those that have not. It does this over the time period for which the data exists. Additionally, the model attempts to control for all other factors that can influence arrest rates (the control variables). Finally, the model controls for the fact that criminal activity happens in patterns and each city is different (size, policing practices, geography, etc.).³

³ The technical explanation of the model is: Y_{mt} represents the dependent variable. $1COA_{mt}$ indicates a dichotomous (0 or 1) for whether a city has implemented a COA. X is a vector of observed city characteristics, including: the percent male, total population, percent Black, percent with a bachelor’s

Results

Table 3 presents the results from a t-test comparing cities with a COA to cities without a COA. The results are statistically significant and indicate that there are differences between cities with a COA and those without one. Overall, cities that do not have a COA report on average 369 Black arrests per 10,000 people, while cities that do have a COA report on average 264 Black arrests per 10,000 people – 28.5% fewer.

Table 3: Two-Tailed T-Test for Black and White arrests

	Blacks	Whites
No COA	369.99	304.77
COA	264.43	257.91
Difference	-105.55**	46.86
T-Value	-2.7822	-1.529
Degrees of Freedom	668	668

**= Statistically significant at $p < .05$

Table 4 shows the OLS regression analysis to understand the effects of a COA on Black arrest rates and White arrest rates. These effects show the result of a COA's adoption and its subsequent impact on a salient policing outcome. Moreover, the results reveal that cities with a COA have about a 15% reduction in the total Black arrest rate compared to cities without a COA. The results indicate about a 7% reduction in White arrest rates, but the results are not significant at the 95% threshold.

Table 4 Dependent Variable: Arrest Rate per 10,000K

VARIABLES	OLS w/Fixed Effects	
	Black	White
<i>COA Present</i>	-15.36	-7.11
	(7.49)**	(5.13)
Total Population	0.0187	0.0101*
	(0.00456)***	(0.00577)
Total Male Population	0.0459	0.0112

degree in the city age 25 to 64, unemployment rate, and median household income. θ is a city-specific fixed effect. The city fixed effect controls for time-invariant city factors during the period of study, such as: quality, geography, or policing practices of the city. φ is a year fixed effect because criminal activity and reporting from year-to-year may have an unobserved pattern that exists without picking up the underlying year trend.

	(0.00964)***	(0.00664)*
Percent with a Bachelor's Degree	-1.611	-16.645
	(0.842)**	(4.678)**
Unemployment Rate	4.562	-2.495
	(3.215)	(1.930)
Percent Black	5.26	4.11
	(2.67)*	(3.65)
Median Household Income	-0.00294*	-0.006529
	(0.00162)	(0.005624)
Constant	1,155***	1,155***
	(83.50)	(83.50)
Observations	1938	1938

Note: Standard errors appear in the parenthesis. The results include city fixed effects (which controls for the different construction of cities).

*p < .1. **p < .05. ***p < .01

Several of the control variables were statistically significant as well. First, the larger the population size of the Florida city, the more likely it was that Black arrests went up – at approximately .01%, strongly statistically significant. Moreover, a higher total male population in the city led to a statistically significant increase in total arrests, at approximately .04%. As the percentage of the total population of Black residents in a city went up, so did the likelihood that Black arrest rates would rise, by approximately 5%. Lastly, as the median household income went up, the probability of Black arrest rates decreased.

As for White arrest rates, the larger the population of the Florida city, the more likely it was that White arrests went up, at approximately .01%. Additionally, a higher total male population led to a statistically significant increase in total arrests, at approximately .01%.

Conclusion and Implications

COAs represent the next innovation for police and community accountability. Evidence from this analysis shows that COAs are one way to reduce Black arrest rates in Florida. This paper carries some implications for cities considering adopting a COA, both in Florida and across the country.

Implication #1: Decreased intense workload for officers

The results indicate that cities that adopt a COA see a reduction in arrests. Since arrests can lead to more violence and stressful encounters (Smith and Visser, 1981), the presence of a COA may also help to reduce stressful encounters. Stressful interaction for officers creates an environment

in which officer morale is lowered and officer turnover increases. Therefore, fewer arrests may have other beneficial effects.

Implication #2: Community increases legitimacy of the police force

COAs present an opportunity for the community to restore the legitimacy of its police force. Literature has shown that cities with a COA believe their police force is trying to improve its behavior as a result of the COA (Ofer, 2015). In this study, cities with COAs saw a reduction in the percentage of Blacks who were arrested, which presents a positive outcome for the community. In communities where many residents feel that the police presence is unlawful and officers act at their own discretion, the COA serves as a third-party tool. When citizens learn that the COA reduces Black arrest rates, they may begin to see the police as more legitimate in their actions. From a citizen's perspective, the police are seen as attempting to make sure they operate "by the book" and only make arrests when they must. Further, if citizens view police as acting by the book, then it signals to the community that the police are more legitimate in their actions and the institution is also legitimate, at least in part thanks to the third-party oversight agency. Long-term, a COA may be able to restore full community legitimacy to the police force as well.

Implication #3: A COA can be paired with other tools

COAs represent one tool that may be used to improve police-community relations, holding both the police and the community accountable. Unlike previous policy tools, this study shows that COAs lead to a clear reduction in police outcomes (arrest rates) for an important population (Black civilians). However, cities should not think of a COA as the panacea to solve all problems, but simply as one tool that needs to be combined with other tools. While cities should adopt COAs, they can also adopt body-worn cameras and implicit bias trainings. Cities need to be more proactive in adopting these tools and trainings if they want to see increased positive relationships between the police and the community. One tool alone will not be able to solve decades worth of mistrust that may exist between a community toward the police. However, adopting multiple tools would enable the community to see that its city and its police department care about improving this relationship.

Implication #4: Can help improve communication long-term between the police and the community

The adoption of a COA may lead to increased communication between the police and the community. As evidenced by who is involved with COAs, they serve as an opportunity for more dialogue between the community and the police. Further, a COA that strategically includes citizens as part of its founding members opens additional avenues for the police to directly engage with the community. The adoption of the COA sets up a unique opportunity for the police not only to meet with the COA, but also to have monthly or quarterly meetings with the COA open to the public. At these meetings, there can be an exchange of ideas, concerns, comments, and critiques – all geared at improving the relationship between the police and the community. It would be advantageous for the police to work with the COA and the community in identifying the statistics to be reported at these meetings.

Appendix 1: List of Cities with a COA

City	Year Established	COA Name
Miami	2012	Miami Citizen Investigative Panel (CIP)
Tampa	2016	Tampa Police Oversight Board
Orlando	1992	Orlando Citizens Police Review Board
St. Petersburg	1991	St. Petersburg Civilian Police Review Committee
Tallahassee	2020	Tallahassee Citizen Advisory Board
Ft. Lauderdale	1994	Ft. Lauderdale Citizens' Police Review Board
Gainesville	2010	Gainesville Police Advisory Council
Lakeland	2020	Lakeland PD Citizen Advisory Board
West Palm Beach	2020	West Palm Beach Use-of-Force Review Board
Ft. Myers	2009	Fort Myers Citizens Police Review Board
Kissimmee	2021	Kissimmee Citizens Review Board
Delray Beach	2007	Delray Beach Police Advisory Board
Daytona Beach	2021	Daytona Beach Citizens' Police Review Board
North Miami	2020	North Miami Citizens Investigative Board
Bradenton	2020	Bradenton Citizen Advisory Committee
Pensacola	2021	Pensacola Citizens Police Advisory Committee
Ocoee	2012	Ocoee Citizens Advisory Council
Fort Pierce	2018	Fort Pierce Police Community Advisory Committee
Winter Haven	2021	Winter Haven Public Safety Citizens Advisory Committee
North Miami Beach	2020	North Miami Beach Citizen Investigative Board
Key West	2020	Key West Citizen Review Board

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