Homework Assignment

Directions: Study the chart and read the following excerpt from this New York Times article and come to class on Tuesday prepared to discuss your answers to the questions at the bottom of the page.

A new study confirms that black men and women are treated differently in the hands of law enforcement. They are more likely to be touched, handcuffed, pushed to the ground or pepper-sprayed by a police officer, even after accounting for how, where and when they encounter the police.

But when it comes to the most lethal form of force — police shootings — the study finds no racial bias.

"It is the most surprising result of my career," said Roland G. Fryer Jr., the author of the study and a professor of economics at Harvard. The study examined more than 1,000 shootings in 10 major police departments in Texas, Florida and California.

The result contradicts the image of police shootings that many Americans hold after the killings (some captured on video) of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.; Tamir Rice in Cleveland; Walter Scott in South Carolina; Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, La.; and Philando Castile in Minnesota.

The study did not say whether the most egregious examples — those at the heart of the nation's debate on police shootings — are free of racial bias. Instead, it examined a large pool of shootings, including mainstream ones.

The counterintuitive result prevailed despite after the study was posted on Monday, mostly about the volume of police encounters and the scope of the data. Mr. Fryer emphasizes that the work is not the definitive analysis of police shootings, and that more data would be needed to understand the country as a whole. This work focused only on what happens once the police have stopped-citizens, not on the risk of being stopped at all. Other research has shown that blacks are more likely to be stopped by the police.

1.) Does this study strike you as believable? Why or why not?
2.) What's been your personal experience with the police in your hometown?
3.) How do you typically come across news stories involving police shootings?