Impact of Race, Income, and Sex on the Frequency of Police Stops in a Public Area

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Recommended Citation

Buffington, Alyssa; Robertson, Joseph; and Evans, Taylor, "Impact of Race, Income, and Sex on the Frequency of Police Stops in a Public Area" (2019). Spring Showcase for Research and Creative Inquiry. 51.  
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Impact of Race, Income, & Sex on the Frequency of Police Stops in a Public Area

Alyssa Buffington, Joseph Robertson, Taylor Evans
Longwood University

Abstract
The object of this research is to analyze the frequency of being stopped by police in a public area. This project explores the potential relationship between being stopped by law enforcement and the demographics of race, sex, and income. Participants of the study were respondents to the 2015 Police-Public Contact Survey which asked varying questions regarding interactions with law enforcement within the past twelve (12) months. Variables were recoded into dummy variables and tested through descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate statistics. Results found that only sex was statistically significant in impacting likelihood of being stopped by police in a public area.

Introduction
“A public place is generally an indoor or outdoor area, whether privately or publicly owned, to which the public have access by right or by invitation, expressed or implied, whether by payment of money or not, but not a place when used exclusively by one or more individuals for a private gathering or other personal purpose.” (USLegal, 2016, para.1).

Research conducted on the impact of race on the frequency of police stops in a public area has found a relationship between race and an increased likelihood of contact with law enforcement officers (Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2017). Females are less frequently stopped in public by the police (Brunson & Miller, 2006).

Brunson and Weitzer (2002) concluded in their paper in that “suspects encountered in low-status areas will have a greater risk because they are in the territory associated with low-status persons.”

Methods and Materials
Data used in this research is from the Police-Public Contact Survey 2015.
The data was analyzed using SPSS and centered around a binary logistic regression.

Results

Bivariate
Males are stopped at a greater frequency than females.
Minorities are less likely to be stopped.
Low income individuals were more likely to be stopped.

Multivariate
African Americans are 97.8% less likely than White/Other identified individuals to be stopped in a public place.
Males are 35.3% more likely than females to be stopped in a public place.
Low income individuals are 9.9% more likely than individuals who identified with middle/high income to be stopped in a public place.

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Public Stops</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Stops</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.012**</td>
<td>0.033**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.104**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.118**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
Hypothesis 1 was that African Americans would be more likely to be stopped by police in a public area and not supported by the findings.
Hypothesis 2 was that males would be more likely to be stopped by police in a public area is supported by the findings.
Hypothesis 3 was that low income individuals would be more likely to be stopped by police in a public area and is supported by the findings.

Conclusions
A limitation with our model explains 0% of variation within the frequency of being stopped by police within a public area.

For future research, it is recommended that race be recoded to include more minorities rather than grouping all minorities into the “White/Caucasian” category. Age would need analysis due to known connections between younger individuals and a larger likelihood of being stopped. Location of the study should also be considered if the study were to be recreated in a rural area compared to urban areas. Income should be recoded to define three economic classes rather than separating into two groups.

Contact
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References
1. Brunson, R. K., & Miller, J. (2006). Gender, race, and urban policing: The potential relationship between being stopped by law enforcement and the demographics of race, sex, and income. Participants of the study were respondents to the 2015 Police-Public Contact Survey which asked varying questions regarding interactions with law enforcement within the past twelve (12) months. Variables were recoded into dummy variables and tested through descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate statistics. Results found that only sex was statistically significant in impacting likelihood of being stopped by police in a public area.

Table 2. Logistic Regressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>0.104**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>0.012**</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Bivariate Correlations

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