ANNOTATION

Schneider, Jospeh R. "Does Racial Bias Exist in Traffic Stops Made by Saint Paul Police?" DBA dissertation, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2020. 119 pp.

The study utilized an experimental research design in order to investigate whether racial bias exists in the Saint Paul, Minnesota, police department as it pertains to traffic stops. Particularly, the research aimed to determine whether the police department engaged in racial profiling when deciding to stop motorists. In order to address the research hypotheses, the study utilized a logistic regression module, coupled with the veil-of-darkness approach (19, 52). The data underpinning the study ranges from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018. The three racial groups examined in the study are Black, Latino and White. It must be noted that the racial classifications are predicated on the interpretation of the officer; thus, it may or may not match that of how the driver self-identifies.

Over the past few years, graphic images of interactions between law enforcement and Black/ Latino individuals have festered old wounds, causing renewed focus on policing policies. In order to assuage some irritation, this research was focused on the first phase of the traffic stop in order to identify whether racial bias exists (16). According to the author, bias is comingled with the concept of discrimination which asserts the disparate treatment of someone due to their race (13). On a related theme, the research defined prejudice as a "hostile attitude or feeling toward a person solely because he or she belongs to a group to which one has assigned objectionable qualities" (16). As such, the underpinnings of the research examined whether Black/ Latino drivers were disproportionately involved in traffic stops in the city of Saint Paul between 2017 and 2018. To better address this question, two overarching hypotheses were examined (18-19). First, whether the share of Black and/ or Latino motorists stopped in daylight hours was equal to the share stopped during the night-time hours? Second, after controlling for the time of day, was there a statistically significant difference in the odds ratio of traffic stops of Black, Latino and White drivers (52)? If bias was identified, the author proposed: a) modified police policies, b) additional training, and c) departmental monitoring.

The literature review opened with a panoptic review of the evolution of policing in the USA in order to provide the reader with context. The author espoused that the genesis of policing has its roots with the nefarious development of the slave patrols starting around the year 1740 (27). The literature review posited the reason for law enforcement was to ensure and buttress racist ideology (27). Chapter two of the dissertation also purported that the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling fortified police departments with additional fodder to justify racial segregation. Given the backdrop of policing, the literature review pivoted into an examination of the difference between stop rates and post-stop outcomes. The author stressed that both are critical elements in order to detect racial bias; however, this study was mostly concerned with stop rates. Hence, the study deployed the veil-of-darkness approach. This methodology argued that police were less likely to

know the race of the motorist after dark due to a lack of visibility (45). The main benefit of this approach was that it established a natural experiment leveraging the presence of daylight. As such, the veil-of-darkness approach eliminated the need for benchmarking.

A quantitative study, using data made available by the police department, was analyzed in order to determine whether there was a statistically significant presence of racial bias in traffic stops for the city of Saint Paul. First, the ratio of traffic stops was computed for Black, Latino and White divers and compartmentalized by stops occurring during the day and the night (52). For each group, the ratio of stops that occurred during the day and night was compared to determine whether there was a difference. Next, a logistic regression was used to test for the presence of racial bias associated with traffic stops. The methodology was predicated on the auspice that if racial bias existed, police were more likely to pull over more Black and Latino drivers during the day as the officer was better able to identify the race of the driver (53). The veil-of-darkness approach was deployed because it eliminated the need for external benchmarking, which resulted in a more robust analysis. In addition to removing the need for benchmarking, the methodology was further enhanced as the dependent variable of race was determined by the officer and not the researcher (58).

Chapter 4 summarized the data obtained from the Saint Paul police department ranging from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018 (78-102). In addition, in adroitly presenting the findings from the hypotheses testing, the summary data connoted that Whites accounted for 42%, Blacks comprised 34% and Latino constituted 6% of all traffic stops. It should be noted that the rates of traffic stops based on race remained relatively consistent between 2017 and 2018. However, as we broach the research question of whether evidence of racial bias exists, the percent of traffic stops during the day and night remained steady for Black and Latino drivers. Interestingly, the rate for White motorists was less during the day as comparted to at night. These findings proded the investigator to deploy a more rigorous statistical analysis and, hence, the introduction of a logistic regression model.

The initial regression analysis failed to reject the null hypothesis, which suggested there was no evidence of racial bias in traffic stops during the two-year period. In order to ensure the veracity of the results, the researcher implemented a sensitivity component into the regression analysis. In short, the sensitivity element fortified the regression model to account for daylight saving time. Given that the officer's ability to view the diver's race was an essential assumption of the study, the researcher correctly modified the regression model to account for visibility. After imbuing the sensitivity components, the findings resulted in a rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis for Black drivers, but not for Latino motorists. Thus, once daylight savings time was accounted for, the regression model contended that racial bias was evident in traffic stops as it pertains to Black, but not Latino drivers.

The final section of the dissertation provided the reader with a sagacious interpretation of the findings. Specifically, racial bias may be a result of individual prejudice and or anachronistic departmental policies (105). Regardless of its source, the author avowed that racial bias was deleterious to the police department, the city of Saint Paul, and the communities on the receiving end of wanton injustice. In order to address evidence of racial bias associated with traffic stops, the researcher recommended that the city continue to record and collect departmental interactions

with the community. Also, the data should be analyzed in order to glean wisdom for the purpose of improved policing policies. The study reminded the reader that the purpose of policing is to protect and serve (109). As such, data affiliated with departmental contact with the community should be used in order to sate those objectives.