Introduction

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to give a general guideline of understanding systemic racism using Peoria as the central case study; specifically traffic stops by the Peoria police department.

Hypothesis: This study predicts that racial and gender profiling is present in the traffic stops and search rates by the Peoria Police Department. It also tests major counter arguments presented by critics of systemic racism studies such as geographical factors and predictability of criminal activity lacking from previous research

Literature Review

- Intersectionality Theory: the understanding that one discriminatory factor alone does not cause an outcome alone, but rather in conjunction with other factors such as age, race, gender, etc.

- Critical Race Theory: the understanding the relationship between race, racism and power.
  1. Racism is a part of everyday life
  2. Our current system gives preference to white citizens
  3. Racism is a product of social relations

Background

- Prejudice: personally held beliefs of race and ethnicity that are unconscious or consciously acted upon when interacting with other people.

- Racism: a situation in which a member of a minority group is disadvantaged due in part to their race or ethnicity.

- Systemic Racism: a “domino affect” of these many situations of racism.

- Racial Profiling: occurs when racial stereotypes are used as reason (solely or among other factors) to investigate an individual.

Methodology

The data was collected through the Freedom of Information Act via the Illinois Department of Transportation. The data was originally collected by the Peoria Police Department under the Illinois Traffic Stop Data Collection Act passed in 2004.

Findings

The data collected showed that traffic stop rates have throughout time had consistencies in regards to percent blacks being stopped compared to the population. These consistencies are not explained by the zip code data, which shows that these inconsistencies remained true across all zip codes making up the city of Peoria. In addition, black people were more likely to be searched but less likely to have contraband on their person. And if they were found with drugs, it was less amount than typically found on white citizens. This disparity hits black males the most between 20 to 40 years of age.

Recommendations

Police Departments

- Implement a Robust System of True Community Policing
- Focus the Purpose of Traffic Stops on Public Safety
- Continuously Collect and Analyze Police Data
- Reevaluate the Don’t Shoot Programs (Strict-on-Crime Programs)
- Initial and Regularly Reoccurring Training
- Develop Mechanisms to More Effectively Respond to Allegations of Officer Misconduct
- Compressive Hiring Practices that Test for Strong Implicit Bias

The Public

- Support data collection laws
- Support changes in the police department
- Learn how systemic racism takes place in your everyday life whilst appreciating the work done by our local officers

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Full Paper

http://brittajohnson.org/

Thank you for your time