

EXAMPLE

Beckett, K., Nyrop, K., & Pflingst, L. (2006). Race, drugs, and policing: Understanding disparities in drug delivery arrests. *Criminology*, 44(1), 105-137.

- I. Background Information
 - a. Becket et. al (2005) relates to studying drug possession in Seattle
 - b. Macro level research
 - i. Stated there was an overrepresentation of black drug possession arrests than whites in Seattle
 - c. Key Words
 - i. Drug markets – in which people sell and buy drugs
 - ii. Drug arrests – those arrested for any crime in relation to drugs
 - d. Summary of existing macro level research – more racial disparities are found in Seattle and it is best to research several aspects of the drug problem
- II. Research Questions/Hypothesis
 - a. Drug arrests are not strictly a function of qualitative and quantitative differences in offense behavior but rather that race shapes the perceptions of drug problems and drug law enforcement practices.
- III. Analytic Plan/Data and Methods
 - a. Two forms of studies to compare results
 - i. Seattle Needle Exchange Surveys (April 2002) – surveyors present at 5 needle exchange sites for two weeks. Surveyed blacks, whites, Latinos and 589 surveys were completed
 - ii. Ethnographic Observations (2002) – done within the first three months of 2002 and at two locations. Experienced observers walked around and measure transactions and types of transactions. One location had two waves of 30 hours and the other had one wave of 30 and the other of 10.
 - b. Seattle Police Department Incident Reports (January 1999 to April 2001) – used to relate previous drug related police encounters.
- IV. Results
 - a. Out of the major cities in the United States tested in Table 1, demonstrated that Seattle shared the largest disparity between whites and blacks.
 - b. Overall, blacks (3.5%) only shared a high percentage in one type of drug (crack cocaine), while whites (59%) were relatively high in all the other types of the drugs researched.
 - c. Comparisons among types of drugs and arrests demonstrated a high disproportion between blacks and whites. Although whites may be more prone to utilize or deliver a certain type of drug, black showed statistically significant results that they were more likely to be arrested.
 - d. In indoor and outdoor transactions, results suggested there was a 46% difference in actual transaction and arrests for blacks, while the rest of the drugs dominated by whites did not surpass their transaction rates by the number of arrests.
- V. Major Conclusions/Policy Implications/Discussion
 - a. The study is not generalizable to a different or bigger population due to the detailed focus of specific data sources and researches done in Seattle.

- b. There seems to be a prior focus on crack offenders, which in turn, is what leads to the racial disparity.
- c. No matter the setting in which the drug market is taking place (indoor vs. outdoor), blacks are still being overrepresented.
- d. Predominately white outdoor drug markets do not receive the same attention as outdoor racially diverse markets do.

VI. Discussion Questions

- a. If mentioned in the article that it is believed most racial biases occur without us even being aware of it, is there a way to prevent such practices from happening in the future? If so, how?
- b. Race seems to be highly insignificant in more serious offenses. Based on the article, the authors suggest it is because officers are required to be more proactive rather than reactive in minor cases, and therefore, need to use their own judgement to help prevent a crime from happening. Do you think this is true? Do you think there might be other reasons as to why this might be the case?
- c. Although results for the Seattle Needle Exchange Survey state that the majority of respondents' who were exchanging heroin, methamphetamine, and powder cocaine were white, why do you think there is still a higher likelihood of arresting a black for the use of a single drug (crack)?

WHAT I WILL BE SAYING:

Hi my name is Erika, and I will be presenting “Race, Drugs, and Policing: Understanding Disparities in Drug Delivery”.

BACKGROUND:

We will start off with a little bit of background in regards to how numbers have changed in arrests, based on race.

Within the last 20 years the numbers have increased more than four times for blacks as compared to whites, whom shared only less than a two percent increase. Even after the initial arrest, later on in the criminal justice, racial disproportionality accounts for the demographic difference in incarceration.

Lincoln (2001) – As Lincoln Quillian and Devah Pager (2001) say in their study, the percent of young black males matter in the neighborhood despite other factors. This is here to demonstrate that there is a cultural bias towards blacks and the belief that they are dangerous people.

Robert (2004) – Robert Sampson and Stephen Raudenbush (2004) say that negative perceptions are affected by the neighborhood race, ethnicity, and class. But overall agree it is the neighborhood composition that determines whether someone likes the area or not.

Also previous experimental studies have concluded there is sufficient evidence to believe there is implicit biases in the criminal justice system. There’s a study on virtual perceptions, and most participants agree it is a black individual holding the gun, and blacks are the ones who commit the crime towards other blacks. Other studies indicate that 60% of viewers lied about seeing a perpetrator image on a news report that didn’t have one and 70% said they thought it was an African American. Some researchers say it is because of the crime news “script” that exists within America. This, sadly, also applies to drug users.

This social norm of great negativity even applies to the types of punishment people of color should receive. Get “tough” is usually the first thought that comes into mind when referring to the type of punishment they deserve. As was mentioned in the previous class, neighborhood factors became more important than individual. Although race, ethnicity, and SES still contribute to the negative perception, people are more inclined to look at someone differently based on the neighborhood they come from. So in this study, they utilize implicit bias as the term to describe racial perceptions towards others. It is seen that based on these perceptions, it is determined what the seriousness of the crime is and the dangerousness.

Becket (2005) – In their previous study of 2005, Becket et al. suggested that in Seattle blacks and Latinos overrepresented the number of people who were arrested for drug possession as compared to the population that used drugs in habitual manners and dangerous ways. This was caused for because of focusing on a drug that is more frequently used rather than its severity. In this case being crack cocaine.

HYPOTHESIS:

Based on several previous studies, researchers have suggested that biases do not have to be known by the individual, in order for them to take place. They also claim that that it doesn't just affect specific individuals, but rather affect an entire culture. Because law enforcement was only focusing specifically on crack users, this overrepresented the number of blacks and Latinos in Beckett et al. study of Seattle for 2005, the authors decided to enhance their study with this current one. Their new hypothesis now focuses on drug arrests not being mainly a function of qualitative and quantitative differences in offense behavior, but rather that race may shape the perceptions of drug problems and the law enforcement drug practices.

METHODS:

This current study focused in the city of Seattle. The unit of analysis is drug transactions and focuses specifically on 5 drugs (methamphetamine, powder cocaine, crack cocaine, ecstasy, heroin). The authors used two direct sources of information (needle exchange survey data and ethnographic observations of two outdoor drug markets). With the help of these surveys and observations, the authors did not have to account for racial composition and neighborhood disadvantage. Yet they are at a disadvantage in which they could underestimate the white involvement in drug distribution and therefore lead to inaccurate results of racial disparity.

The needle exchange survey was conducted with surveyors going to 5 needle exchange sites throughout the day, asked the participants if they had been surveyed, and if not, were asked to answer some questions. As an incentive they were offered chocolate even if they had completed the survey or not, resulting in the participant to only want to do one. Some questions asked in the survey were their race-ethnicity, the drugs in the needles, if the drugs were obtained in Seattle, and the race-ethnicity of who they got it from. There were three organizational practices that contributed. This study focused on both qualitative and quantitative results. Also, it was used to determine if the findings would overrepresent blacks in racial-neutral terms. There were 589 surveys completed by those who obtained at least 1 serious illicit drug. Overall recorded there were over 900 drug transactions made. These surveys completed provided information on both those who had obtained the substance and those who were selling them. There were 70% white respondents, 13% blacks, and 5.4% Latinos. As non-respondents there were 66.3% whites, 19.5% black, and 9.2% Latino.

The ethnographic observational data is obtained at two open-air drug markets. The study was conducted throughout the first three months of 2002 and were located at the downtown area and Capitol Hill. These specific locations were chosen in order to avoid suspicion of observation, and those observing had specialized skills in drugs. They had their knowledge and informants to rely on, in order to make accurate observations. This data set relied on two waves for each location. One location had two waves of 30 hours of observation, while the other location had one wave of 30 hours and another of 10 hours. In total, the experiment consisted of 100 observation hours.

This study specifically focuses on level 8 drugs which would be composed of more serious drugs like heroin, powder cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy (MDMA). In order to compare the difference between race in deliveries and delivery arrests, the authors used a Z-score. In order to better understand the foundation of how arrests are made in Seattle, the authors

utilized the Seattle Police Department Incident Reports. These reports helped make better judgements on how people are being categorized, once arrested. The data retrieved was from drug-related encounters from the January 1999 to April 2001. One thing I found interesting was that since whites and Latinos were not separated from the start on the reports, those studying this information had to look into last names of the offender, in order to determine who were Latinos.

It was asked why Seattle? Seattle was determined as one of the four cities with the most active drug problem in the United States. Seattle is also comprised of more whites than blacks and Latinos. This facilitates measuring the disproportionality of more black arrests.

RESULTS:

Minorities are more likely to do drugs AND sell them for socioeconomic reasons, as for whites it is mainly consumption. Therefore, those who sell drugs are more likely to be out in the open and get caught, leading to incarceration, released, then do the same crime again because of the money, and get caught again. It's like a cycle. Table 1 shows the disparity between cities. With Seattle containing the larger A/B Ratio (10.7), it can be determined that Seattle is an area of good research.

Table 2 demonstrates that white are most abundant in deliveries for four out the five crimes listed. These facts are rather interesting as surprising to see that despite whites being responsible for multiple drug deliveries, it seems as though law enforcement only focuses on the one crime blacks are most frequently used and delivered. Latinos and Asians had some drug deliveries involved with those 5 drugs (meth, heroin, cocaine, crack, and ecstasy) but were not comparable to the numbers for the other two races. These statistics also helped show that each drug is significantly appropriate to their racial perception. Because the drugs associated with whites are more expensive, that's why it was more likely to find them in mostly white areas. And equally for the blacks.

Throughout the time period they evaluated the Seattle Police Department Incident Reports, there were a total of 2,786 arrests made for the five noted drugs. What this data set in Table 3 represented was that the comparisons between arrests and deliveries showed statistically significant results. For each drug delivery, although blacks were just as likely to deliver drugs as whites, they are twice more likely to be arrested than whites. This implicated that Seattle Police Officers primarily focus on crack cocaine rather than any other drug, and therefore, result in an abundance of minority apprehension.

Figure 1 just helps visualizing the vast amount of disproportionality in the Seattle. With crack and heroin both at 33% transactions, it would be expected to see very close and similar results in arrests, but unfortunately crack is the drug that results in more arrests. The authors present other charts at a more magnified research but suggest similar results. It was determined that these practices were based on factors that are not race neutral, and that race is a primary in a community like that. Even if it is implicitly or explicitly expressed, the issue is there.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

One thing they considered was to conduct more research on implicit biases. Although it might be difficult to determine what one is really thinking in their head especially if one doesn't know that he or she is thinking about it, I think there are tests that could be one. Just like we did the implicit bias exam, I believe there are much better methods that could be invented for future use, that help us understand ourselves more, and helps us know what areas we could improve.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS:

Despite the several limitations of the study, the authors suggest much of the data collected is useful information. This information may be useful, but is also not generalizable outside of Seattle. It was interesting to see that the location of the drug deliveries did not really affect the idea that that no matter what blacks are still being overrepresented. Another conclusion is that if the officers focus primarily on crack cocaine, yes the results will become skewed and make it seem as though officers are specifically targeting blacks. Yet, it is also surprising to see that if there were two deliveries going on at the same time, and one was at a predominately white neighborhood and the other was in a racially diverse area, the type of response would vary. It seems as though being "black" is much more focal concern, not because of the nature of the offense but rather because someone is composed of "black" features, attitudes, and culture.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

I have a short video to quickly summarize some data based solely on marijuana use and the disproportionality within blacks and whites. I have another video that is highly likely I will not show, being that it is nine minutes long, but I'll briefly explain that it was a man discussing how in reality is just us who believe there is discrimination in this country, and not because there really is. If anyone would still like to look at it, I'll have it, but overall it would be interesting to see how others interpret this video.

1. If mentioned in the article that it is believed most racial biases occur without us not being aware of it, is there a way to prevent such practices from happening in the future? If so, how?
2. Race seems to be highly insignificant in more serious offenses. Based on the article, the authors suggest it is because officers are required to be more proactive rather than reactive in minor cases, and therefore, need to use their own judgement to help prevent a crime from happening. Do you think this is true? Do you think there might be other reasons as to why this might be the case?
3. Although results for the Seattle Needle Exchange Survey state that the majority of respondents' who were exchanging heroin, methamphetamine, and powder cocaine were white, why do you think there is still a higher likelihood of arresting a black for the use of a single drug (crack)? It is suggested that it could be that there is just more crack cocaine usage and delivery than the other crimes combined. I find it hard to understand still. Is it really the case?