

Analysis of Field Stop Data January 1 to December 31, 2006

Data

As a part of standard procedure, each Department of Public Safety (DPS) officer is required to record basic information about persons stopped in the field. These records include, among other things, the type of offense, race, gender, the relationship of the person being stopped to Brown (affiliation), and the disposition of the case. Field reports are subsequently coded and entered into a data base.

Analyses

From January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006 there were 202 field stops recorded. Males are disproportionately represented among those stopped at 84% (n=169). Whites represented 71% (n=143) of those stopped. Thirty-two of the individuals stopped (16%) were Black. Only six individuals stopped were recorded as either Hispanic or Asian representing 3% of the overall stops. Twenty-one individuals (10%) were recorded as unknown race. The majority of individuals stopped were not affiliated with Brown (n=137 or 68%). Fifty-eight of the individuals stopped (29%) were students. Faculty and staff represented only 4% of those stopped (n=7).

Most of the individuals stopped were recorded as temporarily detained (n=62 or 31%). Those who were field interviewed because of behaviors that were perceived by the officer to be out of order was the next most frequent offense recorded (n=50 or 25%) followed by individuals who received a trespass/warning (n=48 or 24%). Thirty (15%) of the stops were recorded as assisting Providence Police with arrest and twelve (6%) were recorded as suspicious persons offenses.

Several analyses were conducted on the student data to determine whether the proportion of stops by race/gender differed relative to the base-rate or what would be expected given their proportions of the community. Below is a summary table of these analyses (student for the purpose of the base-rate percentage is defined as undergraduate, graduate or medical student):

Groups	Percentage of Stops	Base-Rate Percentage
Asian		
Male	4% (n=2)	11%
Female	0% (n=0)	13%
Black		
Male	7% (n=4)	5%
Female	7% (n=4)	7%
Hispanic		
Male	2% (n=1)	5%
Female	2% (n=1)	7%
White		
Male	54% (n=31)	54%
Female	17% (n=10)	49%
Unknown		
Male	7% (n=5)	
Female	0% (n=0)	

A similar set of analyses were conducted to assess group differences relative to the base-rate for individuals who were recorded as not affiliated with Brown at the time of the field stop. In this instance, the base-rate employed is the 2004 census data for the City of Providence broken down by race only (no race/gender breakdowns available).

Groups	Percentage of Stops	Base-Rate Percentage
Asian	0% (n=0)	6.0%
Black	17% (n=23)	14.2%
Hispanic	2% (n=2)	30.0%
White	69% (n=95)	54.5%
Unknown	13% (n=18)	

General Impressions and Recommendation

Over a twelve month period, there were 202 field interviews recorded, averaging about 17 interviews per month or about one stop every two days or so. This evidence is somewhat in contradiction to recent claims of excessive field stops. Several factors may account for the difference between the data and perception. For one, the data analyzed is for a fixed period of time (the last 12 months which is the only period for which we currently have data). Yet recent testimonies by Brown University students and others from the community have not been restricted to a specific time period. Therefore, it may be that the general call for stories about encounters with the police spans several years rather than several months resulting in far more interactions than the present data can account for. Also, community testimonies have made little distinction between

encounters with DPS and encounters with officers from the Providence Police Department. The data analyzed for this report is restricted to field stops by Brown's DPS. So again the disparity between the data and perception may reflect testimonies about data to which we do not have access. Another possible explanation for the disparity between recent claims and the present results is the category of data analyzed. DPS officers are required to record every instance in which an individual is stopped on or around campus. Stops recorded are those initiated by DPS officers and those that are dispatched, but are limited to individuals stopped out in the field. Not included in these data are instances where officers are dispatched for noise and other complaints in the residences or other social gathering facilities. So it may be that the numbers reported in this analysis are relatively small in comparison to students' recollections because the data only encompasses one aspect of the possible interactions between students and DPS officers. And still, there is the possibility that the stops over the past 10 months have been under-recorded. While there is little reason to question the integrity of the data, current community tensions suggest that we should think about ways to perform checks on the data collection process.

Consistent with national trends, males are stopped more than females and given the racial composition of Brown University and the surrounding vicinity; whites represent a greater proportion of those stopped. Black people are the second highest group stopped. The data shows more individuals coded as race unknown than Asian and Hispanic combined. There is the possibility that some darker complexion Hispanics are perceived as Black. At any rate, the unknown number represents an undercount of some group or groups. Since perceived race is important in assessing the concept of profiling, it may be useful to require the officers to record what they think the race of the individual maybe, even if they have to make a guess.

Individuals not affiliated with the University account for the majority of those interviewed in the field. About two thirds of the people stopped had no affiliation with Brown. An attempt to compare the proportion of stops for each race group by the base-rate proves challenging. For these analyses, proportions of stops by race are compared to proportions of various racial groups in the Providence population. The city census data does not allow us to look at race-gender groups, nor does it breakout those of Hispanic ethnicity who may also be Black. In addition, question remains as to whether the Providence City data is the most appropriate. Should we employ the state statistics or some combination of regional statistics or should we just find a method for computing a base-rate that really reflects the traffic on and around campus. For these reasons, it would be premature to draw conclusions about any of the comparisons found in this data. Rather, emphasis should be placed upon establishing an appropriate base-rate from which the university may draw meaningful conclusions.

Of the 58 students stopped, only eight were coded as Black (four males and four females). The numbers associated with these comparisons are really too small to suggest anything meaningful. However, it is important that DPS continues to track and monitor this data over time to insure that a trend does not emerge as the data set increases.