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The Effect of Race in Juvenile Sentencing

Sarah Plassenthal

Advisor: Dr. Art Jipson, PhD

Research Question

Does the race of a juvenile affect the sentence they receive from the juvenile court system in Southwest Ohio?

Abstract

This study seeks to explore the effects a juvenile's race will have on adjudication and dispositional sentencing. This study will be comprised of content analyses comparing case level data from southwestern Ohio. This study will investigate and interrogate how European American (white) juveniles and African American (black) juveniles are sentenced when they come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Data Collection

This study contacted nine juvenile county courts in Ohio for statistical data. These counties included: Clark, Clinton, Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, and Warren.

Results

The necessary data to answer the research question was unable to be collected within the time frame of the study due to court processing. As such, the data collected was analyzed but can not be generalized to southwestern Ohio.

The available data did not show racial disparity until compared with population estimates of the juvenile population from the corresponding county.

Count	Race	Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
	White	1112	507	1619
	Black	351	187	538
	Multi-Racial	87	76	163
	Hispanic	93	53	146
	Asian	4	2	6
	Other	29	10	39
	Total	1676	835	2511

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.049 ^a	5	.003
Likelihood Ratio	17.452	5	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.279	1	.039
N of Valid Cases	2511		

a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.00.

Ages 0-17	Raw Number	Percentage of Total Population	Percentage of Juvenile Delinquency Cases
Total Juvenile Population	98328	100.00%	2.55%
White	74122	75.38%	2.18%
Black	8564	8.71%	6.28%
Asian	2254	2.29%	0.27%
Multi-Racial	4525	4.60%	3.60%
Hispanic	5852	5.95%	2.49%
Other	3011	3.06%	1.30%
Male	50179	51.03%	3.34%
Female	48149	48.97%	1.73%

*The figure above is based on population estimates.

Count	Race	Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
	White	290	120	410
	Black	36	11	47
	Asian	3	0	3
	Bi-Racial	10	3	13
	Hispanic	3	0	3
	Other	5	0	5
	Unknown	12	4	16
	Total	359	138	497

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.339 ^a	6	.501
Likelihood Ratio	8.284	6	.218
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.063	1	.151
N of Valid Cases	497		

a. 8 cells (57.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .83.

Ages 0-17	Raw Number	Percentage of Total Population	Percentage of Juvenile Delinquency Cases
Total Juvenile Population	63828	100.00%	0.78%
White	54985	86.15%	0.75%
Black	1395	2.19%	3.37%
Asian	2877	4.51%	0.10%
Multi-Racial	1868	2.93%	0.70%
Hispanic	2023	3.17%	0.15%
Other	680	1.07%	0.74%
Male	30944	48.48%	1.16%
Female	32884	51.52%	0.42%

*The figure above is based on population estimates.

References

- Bishop, D.M. and Frazier, C.E. (1996). Race effects in juvenile justice decision-making: Findings of a statewide analysis. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 86(2), 392-414.
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- Thomas, T.A., Moak, S.C., & Walker, J.T. (2013). The contingent effect of race in juvenile court detention decisions: The role of racial and symbolic threat. *Race and Justice*, 239-265.

Method

This study used content analysis of statistical data in annual reports released by juvenile courts. Data gathered from the annual reports from each county and analyzed using SPSS.

Crosstabulations and Chi Square values were run for the variables of sex and race. Percentages of population were also calculated.

Issues

- No standardized form of data publication across counties
- Not all counties provide data
- Research question unanswered

Future Research

- Proposal to standardize juvenile justice annual reports across the counties within the state
- Continue to follow up with juvenile courts in the nine counties studied
- Continue work in juvenile justice statistics research