

## Crime and Racial Profiling by U.S. Police: Is There an Empirical Basis?<sup>1</sup>

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The disparity between public sensibilities and empirical data in the United States has become so extreme that certain topics can no longer be investigated without bringing down cries of "racism". The U.S. police have been accused of discrimination because they investigate a higher percentage of black and hispanic minority suspects than white or Asians. The facts are that black U.S. citizens commit violent crimes at four to eight times the white rate. Hispanics commit violent crimes at about three times the white rate, and Asians only one half to three quarters the white rate. Blacks are as much more criminally violent than whites, as men are more violent than women. Of the approximately 1,700,000 interracial crimes of violence involving blacks and whites, 90 percent are committed by blacks against whites. Blacks are 50 times more likely than whites to commit individual acts of interracial violence. They are up to 250 times more likely than whites to engage in multiple-offender or group interracial violence. Fifty-six percent of violent crimes committed by blacks have white victims. Only two to three percent of violent crimes committed by whites have black victims.

**Key Words:** Racial profiling, police, law enforcement, crime, rape

### Introduction

One of the strangest phenomena in contemporary criminology in the United States is the treatment of race and ethnicity. On the one hand there is a long history of academic attention to differences

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among racial and ethnic groups in involvement in various sorts of criminality (Hooton, 1939; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). On the other hand there today appears to be media and political pressure to avoid acknowledgement of the differences and possible consequences of the differences. Recently the New Jersey State Police Superintendent Col. Carl Williams was fired by Gov. Christie Whitman after he said in an interview that some minority groups were more likely to be involved in certain crimes (AP, 1999). The Governor is quoted as having said that Williams' comments were "inconsistent with our efforts to enhance public confidence in the State Police." The same article reports that Williams said he did not condone racial profiling, and has never condoned racial profiling, but at the same time he said "it is naïve to think race is not an issue" in some sorts of crime (AP, 1999). While Col. Williams claims not to condone racial profiling, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reported in June, 1999, that it was a widespread practice: "Citing police statistics, case studies from 23 states and media reports, the organization asserts that law-enforcement agencies have systematically targeted minority travelers for search... based on the belief that they are more likely than whites to commit crimes." (Drummond, 1999).

Although reports such as that of the ACLU which criticize the practice of racial profiling and criticize the "belief" that there may be race differences in criminality get wide media coverage, even being featured in national news magazines such as *Time*, (Drummond, 1999), other reports that deal with the actual incidence of crimes as related to race get short shrift. The nationally syndicated columnist Samuel Francis recently wrote:

Black Americans commit 90 percent of the 1.7 million interracial crimes that occur in the United States every year and are more than 50 times more likely to commit violent crimes against whites than whites are against blacks. These facts were the main findings of a study released earlier this month by the New Century Foundation, but they're not the really big news.

The big news is that the report, despite having been made available to virtually all newspapers and news outlets in the United States as well as to most major columnists and opinion writers, has been almost totally ignored by the national news media. The study was released on June 2 of this year. To date, all of one single news

story about it has appeared.” (Francis, 1999).

It does indeed seem strange for there to be a great disparity between media reports and the subsequent public apperception, and the actual data concerning one of the more important issues in criminology today.

The inconsistency between media reports and criminological data concerning race is not a new phenomenon. About a decade ago we reviewed the literature dealing with race differences in criminal behavior. Taylor (1992) largely reviewed media reports, while Whitney (1990) reviewed the scientific literature. A main finding of the review of media accounts of race and crime was the existence of a double standard with regard to reports of crime that mentioned race of perpetrator or race of victim, with white victimization of blacks receiving considerably more prominent coverage than black victimization of whites. (Taylor, 1992). The review of scientific literature was remarkable for both the quantity and consistency of prior literature (Whitney, 1990). Furthermore, the racial differences were accentuated when one considered more serious offenses and offenses that were variously described as victimful or predatory crimes. In a major review Ellis (1988) had reported that for serious victimful crimes, whenever comparisons had been made, blacks had *always* had higher rates than whites. Whenever blacks or whites had been compared with Orientals in roughly the same geographical areas, Orientals had always had the lowest serious victimful crime rates. The results were much less consistent for minor and/or victimless offenses. Overall, an order of blacks > whites > Orientals prevailed, with racial differences being larger the more serious and clearly victimful the offenses (Whitney, 1990).

In their classic *Crime and Human Nature*, Wilson and Herrnstein (1985:461) reviewed some literature on race and crime. They mentioned that blacks then constituted about one-eighth of the population of the United States and about one-half of arrestees for murder, rape, and robbery, and from one-fourth to one-third of arrestees for burglary, larceny, auto theft, and aggravated assault. Even with adjustments for other demographic variables, such as age and urban residence, in comparison to whites, blacks were overrepresented about four to one with regard to violent crimes and about three to one with regard to property crimes. Rushton (1985) pointed out

that experience in England was consistent with that in the United States: blacks then constituted about 13 percent of the population of London and accounted for 50 percent of the crime. Indeed, violent crime by blacks had been mentioned as a factor contributing to the rearming of London's Metropolitan Police (Gould & Waldren, 1986). Blacks were similarly overrepresented with regard to white-collar crimes such as fraud and embezzlement. Blacks were underrepresented only with regard to offenses, such as securities violations, that usually required access to high-status occupations in which they were at that time underrepresented (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985:462).

Whitney (1990) analyzed the race-specific arrest rates for various offenses that had been compiled for the years 1965 to 1986 (UCRP, 1988). For 19 categories listed in each of 22 years (418 comparisons), the rate for nonwhites *always* exceeded the rate for whites in the same year, typically by a factor of four to ten. For example, averaged across years, the nonwhite murder rate was nine times the white rate. Considerations of rate of crime combine prevalence (individuals who participate in crime) and incidence (recidivism, number of crimes by individuals who participate). Prevalence has been estimated through accumulation of first arrests across age (Blumstein & Graddy, 1981-1982; Blumstein & Cohen, 1987). Blumstein's results suggest that incidence is not strongly different among participants of different races. Rather, the race differences in crime rates are largely attributable to differences in the proportion of individuals of various races that participate in crime (Blumstein & Cohen, 1987). Among urban males the probability that by age 55 a black had been arrested for an FBI index crime was about 0.51; for whites it was 0.14 (Blumstein & Graddy, 1981-1982). Comparable age accumulated participation rates are not available for Orientals due primarily to their very low overall participation rates. Conversion of percentages to areas under a normal curve can be useful for comparing populations. These individual participation rates suggest about a one-standard deviation difference between male urban blacks and whites for criminal liability (Whitney, 1990). The apologist argument that arrest data are inappropriate for documentation of race differences in crime rates due to bias in arrests was thoroughly considered, and essentially debunked in Wilbank's 1987 book *The Myth of a Racist Criminal Justice System*. More recently Dilulio (1996) has also presented data concerning crime disparities among races, and the suggestion that the

disparities are real in that they do not reflect differential law enforcement.

For regions within the United States, Whitney (1995) pointed out that the best predictor of local murder rate was simply the percent of the population that was black. Across all of the 170 cities in the United States that had a 1980 population of at least 100,000, the correlation between murder rate and percent of the population that was black was  $r = +0.69$ . With data from 1980 aggregated for the 50 states of the United States, the simple correlation between murder rate and percent of the population that was black was  $r = +0.77$ . More recently Hama (1999) used data from 1995 to calculate the correlation across the 50 states between percent of the population that is black and violent crime rate, where violent crime rate was an aggregate of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Hama (1999) reported the correlation to be  $r = +0.76$ .

Clearly the existing data briefly reviewed above are quite consistent. They are also somewhat limited in scope. There are two areas of criminality related to race that are not considered above, but which have become of interest in recent years. One is the question of hate crime categorization, and the other is that of interracial crime. In crimes where the perpetrator and the victim are of different races, are there any patterns in incidence, and what amount of interracial crime gets included in hate crime statistics? The analyses reported in the present paper were conducted to obtain information concerning the questions of interracial crime and hate crimes, as well as to update the investigation of incidence of crime as related to race in the United States.

### Sources and Methods

The primary sources of data for consideration were governmental compilations of statistical information having to do with crime. The major sources are described here. One of the most important sources is the *National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCVS). Every year since 1972, the U.S. Department of Justice has carried out what is called the NCVS to ascertain the frequency of certain kinds of crimes. The NCVS sample is large, upwards of 80,000 people from about 50,000 households, and carefully stratified on the basis of census data to be representative of the nation as a whole. The NCVS

is unique as a record of criminal victimization as reported directly by Americans, not filtered through police reports. It is the only significant nationwide measure of interracial crime. The NCVS is carried out annually, but the Department of Justice does not issue full reports every year; 1994 is the most recent year for complete data.

Ever since passage of the Hate Crime Statistics act of 1990, The FBI has been charged with collecting national statistics on criminal acts "motivated, in whole or in part, by bias." The law does not compel local law enforcement agencies to supply the FBI with this information, but many do. In 1997, the most recent year for which data are available, the FBI received hate crime information from 11,211 local agencies serving more than 83 percent of the United States population.

*Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)*, published annually by the FBI, is the standard reference work for crime and crime rates in the United States. The UCR is a nationwide compilation of criminal offenses and arrest data, reported voluntarily by local law enforcement agencies. In the most recent UCR, which covers 1997, the FBI included reports from 17,000 law enforcement agencies, covering 95 percent of the country's population. The UCR is unquestionably the most comprehensive and authoritative report on crimes brought to the attention of the police. News stories about rising or falling crime rates are almost always based on the UCR.

Our primary methodology throughout this study is to calculate rates of various offenses as a function of victim and offender characteristics. Such calculations are straightforward, but can appear arcane to investigators experienced with other analytical approaches. Therefore we here provide a detailed example.

The most recent complete NCVS data are for the year 1994 (USDJ, 1997). In that report Table 42 lists categories of single offender interracial violent crimes. The various numbers at the top of the table represent totals calculated for single-offender violent crimes reported for that year. They are extrapolated from the actual crimes reported by the survey sample. We find that in 1994 6,830,360 whites were victims of violent crimes, and that 16.7 percent (1,140,670) reported that the perpetrator was black. Blacks were victims of 1,100,490 violent crimes, of which 12.3 percent (135,360) were committed by whites. Summing these figures for interracial crime (1,140,670 plus 135,360) we get a total of 1,276,030 interracial crimes,

Figure 1  
Single Offender Black-on-White Crime

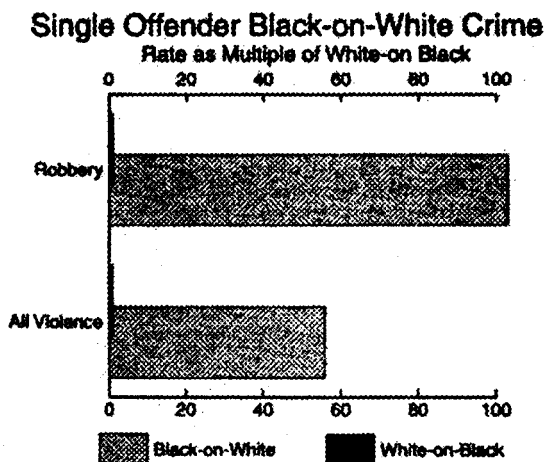
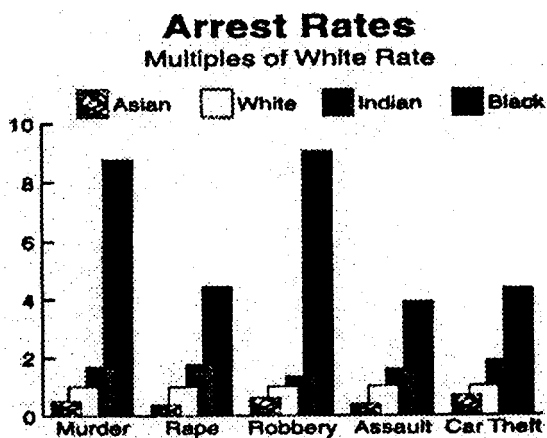


Figure 2  
Arrest Rates Multiples of White Rate



of which 1,140,670 or 89 percent were committed by blacks.

To get the *rates* at which blacks and whites commit interracial crime we divide the number of crimes by the population to get crimes per 100,000 population. The Census Bureau reports that the 1994 white and black populations were 216,413,000 and 32,653,000 respectively. Whites therefore committed acts of interracial violence at a rate of 62.55 per 100,000 while the black rate was 3,493.63 per 100,000, a figure that is 55.85 times the white rate. Put in the most straightforward terms, the average black was 56 times more likely to commit criminal violence against a white than was a white to commit criminal violence against a black. The multiple of 56 does *not* mean that blacks commit 56 times as much interracial violence as whites. What it means is that if whites commit interracial violence at a rate of 10 crimes per 100,000 whites, the rate for blacks is 560 per 100,000, or 56 times the white rate. This is the kind of calculation that is represented in most of the analyses in this report.

### Results and Discussion

Calculations from the NCVS similar to those detailed above indicate that in the US the black rate for interracial robbery, or "mugging", was 103 times the white rate. The single-offender robbery rates, as well as the single-offender overall violence rates explicated above, are illustrated in Figure One.

Again using the NCVS (USDJ, 1997), we calculate the total number of crimes committed by perpetrators of each race, and the percentage that is committed against the other race. The 1,140,670 acts of violence committed by blacks against whites constitute 56.3 percent of all violent crimes committed by blacks. That is to say that when blacks commit violent crimes they target whites more than half the time or, put differently, there is more black-on-white crime than black-on-black crime. Similar calculations for whites show that of the 5,114,692 acts of criminal violence committed by whites, only 2.6 percent were directed at blacks. Although homicide is a violent crime, the NCVS does not include it because victims cannot be interviewed. The number of interracial homicides is rather small and does not substantially affect the percentages and ratios presented here.

It may be suggested that American blacks commit violence against whites because whites are more likely to have money and are therefore more promising robbery targets. However, of the 1,140,670



black-on-white acts of single-perpetrator violence reported in 1994, only 173,374 were robberies. The remaining 84.8 percent were aggravated assaults, rapes, and simple assaults, which presumably were not motivated by profit. Rape, in particular, has nothing to do with the presumed wealth of the victim. More than 30,000 white women were raped by black men in 1994, while about 5,400 black women were raped by white men. The black interracial rape rate was thus 38 times the white rate.

The NCVS (USDJ, 1997) Table 48 contains interracial crime data for acts of violence committed by multiple offenders. By doing calculations as before, we determine how much group or "gang" violence (not in the sense of organized gangs) is interracial and how much is committed by blacks and by whites. Of the total of 490,266 acts of multiple-offender interracial violence, no fewer than 93.9 percent were committed by blacks against whites. Robbery, for which there is a monetary motive, accounted for fewer than one third of these crimes. The rest were gang assaults, including rapes, presumably for motives other than profit. Rates of group violence for each race can be calculated as before, and the difference between the races is stark. The black rate of overall interracial gang violence is 101.75 times the white rate; for robbery it is 277.31 times the white rate.

### **"Hate Crimes" in Perspective**

In 1997, the most recent year for which data are available, there were a total of 9,861 "hate" offenses, of which 6,981 represented bias crimes based on race or ethnic origin (USDJ, 1999). The remainder were for reasons of religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

The FBI reports 8,474 suspected offenders whose race was known. Of that number, 5,344 were white and 1,629 were black. Their offenses – which included all categories of hate crime, not just racial bias – can, in turn, be divided into violent and nonviolent offenses, and in then calculating the rate of offense by race we find that blacks were 1.99 times more likely than whites to commit hate crimes in general and 2.24 times more likely to commit violent hate crimes.

As for cases of racial bias, there were 718 blacks charged with anti-white (as opposed to anti-homosexual, anti-Semitic, etc.) crimes and 2,336 whites charged with anti-black hate crimes. Although the number of whites charged was larger, the black rate per 100,000 was twice as high. A larger number of whites are charged with these

crimes, but blacks are 2.0 times more likely to be charged with similar offenses. This overrepresentation of blacks in hate crimes, not just in race bias cases but in all categories, runs counter to the common impression that whites are the prime perpetrators of hate crimes and are certainly more likely to commit them than blacks.

But perhaps of even greater significance is the relatively small number of bias crimes to begin with. Of the 6,981 offenses based on race or ethnicity, only 4,105 were violent, involving murder, rape, robbery, or assault. The rest included such offenses as vandalism and intimidation. These numbers are almost insignificant compared to the 1,766,000 interracial crimes of violence (combining both single- and multiple-offender offenses) reported in the NCVS.

Needless to say, part of this huge disparity in numbers is explained by the fact that the NCVS covers all crimes – whether reported to police or not – whereas for a crime to be included in the FBI's hate crime statistics it must first be reported to police and then be officially classified as a hate crime. No doubt there is some number of crimes never reported to the police that authorities would consider hate crimes if they knew about them.

However, how important is the distinction between interracial crimes that are officially designated as hate crimes and those that are not? For a crime to be considered a hate crime, the perpetrator must make his motive clear, usually by using racial slurs. It is not hard to imagine that of the 1,766,000 interracial crimes committed in 1994, some –perhaps even a great many – were “motivated in whole or in part, by bias” but the perpetrators did not express their motives.

Given the realities of race in the United States, would it be unreasonable for a person attacked by someone of a different race to wonder whether race had something to do with the attack, even if his assailant said nothing? Such suspicions are even more likely in the case of the 490,266 acts of group violence that crossed racial lines in 1994. What is the psychological effect on a victim set upon by a gang of people of a different race? A white woman gangraped by blacks or a black man cornered and beaten by whites can hardly help but think she/he was singled out at least in part because of race, even if the attackers used no racial slurs.

Many states have passed laws that increase penalties for people convicted of hate crimes. These laws recognize the harm done to society when people are attacked because of race or other character-

istics. However, one might ask which does more damage to society: the few thousand violent acts officially labeled as hate crimes or the vastly more numerous interracial crimes of violence that go virtually unnoticed?

### **Hate Crimes Committed by Hispanics**

The government's treatment of hate crimes is misleading in another, even more obvious way, in that the FBI reports hate crimes *against* Hispanics but not *by* Hispanics. The FBI's "Hate Crime Incident Report" includes Hispanics as a victim category but not as a perpetrator category. In effect this forces local law enforcement agencies to categorize most Hispanic offenders as "white" and the values for 1997 reflect this. The total number of hate crimes for that year – 9,861 – includes 636 crimes of antiHispanic bias, but not one of the 8,474 known offenders is "Hispanic" because the designation is not included on the FBI form.

If a Mexican is assaulted for reasons of ethnicity he is officially recorded as Hispanic. However, he becomes white if he commits a hate crime against a black. Even more absurdly, if a Mexican commits a hate crime against a white, both the victim and the perpetrator are reported as white. And, in fact, the 1997 FBI figures duly record 214 "white" offenders who committed antiwhite hate crimes (USDJ, 1999, p.12). The offenders were probably Hispanic, but if that is the case the report should say so. If some of the "whites" who are reported to have committed crimes against blacks are also Hispanic, the report should indicate that, too.

An examination of specific crimes shows that official reports can be misleading. Murder is the most serious of hate crimes, and the FBI lists five cases of racially motivated murder for 1997 – three "anti-black" and two "anti-white". The FBI report does not provide details about the perpetrators or the circumstances of the killings, but the local police departments that reported the crimes to the FBI have this information.

Two of the anti-black killings took place in the same town, a largely Hispanic suburb of Los Angeles called Hawaiian Gardens. Hawaiian Gardens has a history of black-Hispanic tension that is so bad many blacks have decided to leave. In one of the murders, a 24-year-old black man was beaten to death by 10 to 14 Hispanics who took turns smashing his head with a baseball bat. In the other, a

Hispanic gang member challenged a 29-year-old black man's right to be in the neighborhood. A few minutes later he returned and shot the man in the chest. In both cases, the victims and killers did not know each other and the motivation appears to have been strictly racial (Russel & Mejia, 1998). These crimes are typical of what we think of as hate-crime murders, and because no Hispanics are identified as perpetrators in the FBI data, it is safe to assume the killers were classified as white.

The third anti-black killing took place in Anchorage, Alaska. According to press reports, a white man, 33-year-old Brett Maness, killed his neighbor, a 32-year-old black man, Delbert White, after a brief struggle (Sullivan, 1997). Mr. Maness, who was growing marijuana in his apartment and kept an arsenal of weapons, had been shooting a pellet gun at Mr. White's house, and the black man had come over to complain. Interestingly, a jury found that Mr. Maness killed Mr. White in self-defense, but convicted him of weapons and drug charges. The incident was designated a hate crime because Mr. Maness had brandished weapons and shouted racial slurs at Mr. White in the past (Porco, 1998).

The remaining two killings were classified as anti-white, but only one fits the usual conception of such crimes. Four white men were walking on a street in Palm Beach, FL, when a car came to a stop not far from them. Two black men got out with their hands behind their backs and one said "What are you crackers looking at?" One of the white men replied, "Not you, nigger," whereupon one of the blacks brought a gun from behind his back and fired several times, killing one white and wounding another. Attackers and victims did not know each other, and the criminal motivation appears to have been purely racial (Offense Report, 1997). The other anti-white killing involved a Texas businessman from India, who shot his Mexican daughter-in-law because his son had divorced an Indian wife to marry her. He was incensed that his son should marry anyone who was not Indian (Padilla, 1997). Presumably this crime should have been classified as anti-Hispanic rather than anti-white.

These five racially motivated murders reported for 1997 do not fit the popular image of hate crimes, namely, of whites brutalizing non-whites. In fact, only one perpetrator was "white" in the usually accepted sense. What was the nature of the thousands of other officially reported hate crimes? Without examining all 9,861 of them

it is impossible to say.

It is clear, however, that the FBI report gives a false impression. It inflates the number of hate crimes committed by “whites” by calling Hispanics white. At the same time it gives the impression that Hispanics never commit hate crimes. The reason for gathering these data is to arrive at a better understanding of the extent of racial friction and violence in the United States. If statistics are to have any meaning they must reflect American reality, namely, that most Hispanics think of themselves as a separate group, distinct from non-Hispanic whites, and are perceived by others as a different group. It is impossible to understand or alleviate group friction without recognizing this. If the FBI wants to collect meaningful data, it must recognize Hispanics as a perpetrator category as well as a victim category.

### Race and Crime

Different racial groups in the United States commit crimes at different rates. Most Americans have a sense that non-white neighborhoods are more dangerous than white neighborhoods – and they are correct. However, it is very unusual to find reliable information on just how much more dangerous some groups are than others.

The *Uniform Crime Reports* (UCR) from the FBI is the standard reference for crime and crime rates in the United States. In trying to determine crime rates for different racial groups, it is important to be aware of the differences between the UCR and the NCVS referenced above. The NCVS contains only one kind of information: crimes Americans say they have suffered. The UCR includes two different kinds of data: crimes reported to the police and arrests of perpetrators. Even for the same year and for the same crime, these three sets of numbers are different. The largest numbers are in the NCVS, because they include crimes not reported to the police. Somewhat smaller are the UCR figures on offenses reported to authorities, and smaller still are arrest figures, which represent offenses for which a suspect is arrested.

For example, in the 1997 NCVS Americans say they suffered a total of 1,883,000 cases of aggravated assault (USDJ, 1998a), but according to the UCR, only 1,022,000 were reported to the police. During that same year, there were only 535,000 arrests for aggravated assault (UCR, 1998). Racial data enter the UCR numbers only when

an arrest is made, so it can be argued that racial comparisons should not be based on UCR data. Different racial groups may report crime to the police at different rates, some groups may be more successful at escaping arrest, and the police may discriminate between racial groups in their arrest efforts. However, although racial bias in arrests is frequently discussed, when investigated the data suggest that arrest rates actually track perpetrator rates (Dilulio, 1996; Wilbanks, 1987). Furthermore, there is an advantage to using UCR data because its racial categories are more detailed. Unlike the NCVS, which reports only "black", "white", and "other", the UCR compiles arrest data on "black", "white", "American Indian/Eskimo", and "Asian/Pacific Islander". These are the only national crime data that make these distinctions. Also, as will be explicated below, UCR arrest data can be compared to other data sources in ways that make it possible to treat Hispanics as a separate ethnic category.

Another good reason to use UCR arrest data (race of persons arrested) is that the racial proportions are actually quite close to those from NCVS survey data (race of perpetrator as reported by victims). For example, according to the UCR, 57 percent of people arrested for robbery in 1997 were black, as were 37 percent of those arrested for aggravated assault (UCR, 1998). According to NCVS data on single-offender crimes, 51 percent of robbers were reported by their victims to be black as were 30 percent of those who committed aggravated assault (USDJ, 1997). Since there is a greater overrepresentation by blacks in NCVS-reported multiple offender crimes, combining the two sets of figures brings the racial proportions in the NCVS figures extremely close to the racial proportions in UCR arrest numbers. Put differently, police are arresting criminals of different races in very close to the same proportions as Americans say they are victimized by people of those races.

By this measure, who is committing crime in America? In Figure Two are presented arrest rates as multiples of the white arrest rate for various crimes.

The white rate is always set to one, so if the black rate is three, for example, it means that blacks are arrested at three times the white rate. Once again, it does not mean that three times as many blacks as whites were arrested; it means that if 100 of every 100,000 whites were arrested for a crime, 300 of every 100,000 blacks were arrested for the same crime. The data show a consistent pattern: Blacks are

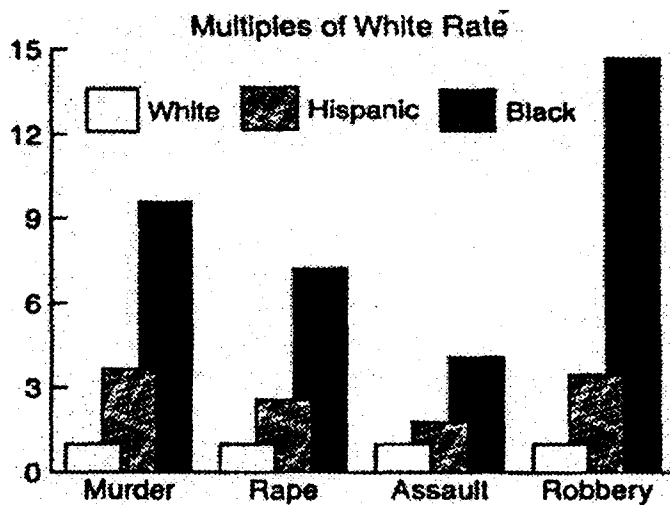
arrested at dramatically higher rates than other racial groups. American Indians and Eskimos (hereinafter "Indians") are arrested at slightly higher rates than whites, and Asians/Pacific Islanders (hereinafter "Asians") are arrested at consistently lower rates. The popular conception of crime in America is correct: rates are much higher among blacks than among whites or other groups.

To return to the view that arrest data reflect police bias rather than genuine group differences in crime rates, police actually have very little discretion in whom they arrest for violent crimes. Except for murder victims, most people can tell the police the race of an assailant. If a victim says she was mugged by a white man, the police cannot very well arrest a black man even if they want to. For this reason, many people accept that police have little discretion in whom they arrest for violent crime, but still believe drug laws are enforced unfairly against minorities. Drug offenses are beyond the scope of this investigation, but here, too, there is independent evidence that arrest rates reflect differences in criminal behavior, not selective law enforcement. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services keeps records by race of drug-related emergency room admissions. It reports that blacks are admitted at 6.67 times the non-Hispanic white rate for heroin and morphine, and no less than 10.49 times the non-Hispanic white rate for cocaine (the rates for Hispanics are 2.82 and 2.35 times the white rates; information is not provided for American Indians or Asians) (USDJ, 1998b). There is only one plausible explanation for these rates: Blacks are much more likely to be using drugs in the first place. Finally, if racist white police were unfairly arresting non-whites we would expect arrest rates for Asians to be higher than those for whites. Instead, they are lower for almost every kind of crime.

### Measuring Hispanic Crime Rates

Any study of crime rates in America is complicated by the inconsistent treatment of Hispanics by different government agencies. For example, the Census Bureau's official estimate for the 1997 population of the United States divides all 268 million Americans into four racial groups: white, black, Indian and Eskimo, and Asian and Pacific Islander. The bureau then explains that among these 268 million people there are 29 million Hispanics who "can be of any race". However, it also counts *non-Hispanic* whites, *non-Hispanic*

Figure 3  
California Arrests by Race



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blacks, Indians, etc. Thus we find that although according to the strictly racial classification, there are 221 million whites in the United States, there are only 195 million *non-Hispanic* whites. When American Hispanics, approximately half of whom are Mexican, are apportioned to the four racial categories, the Census Bureau considers 91 percent to be white, six percent black, one percent American Indian, and two percent Asian.

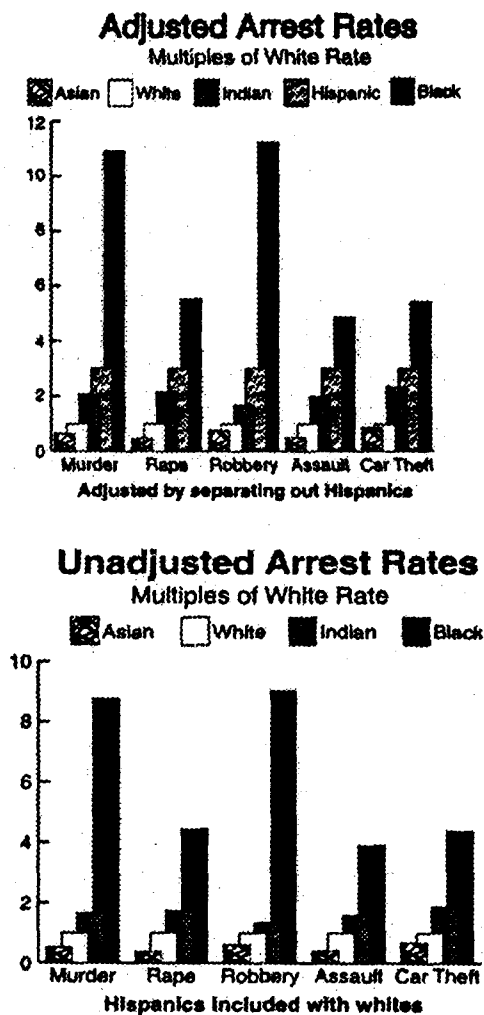
The treatment of Hispanics can make for odd results. For example, according to the 1990 census, the 3,485,000 people of Los Angeles were 52.9 percent white, 13.9 percent black, 0.4 percent American Indian, and 22.9 percent Asian – which adds up to 100 percent. This makes the city appear to be majority white. However, Los Angeles was also 39.3 percent Hispanic, and if we subtract the 91 percent of them who are classified as whites, the non-Hispanic white population drops to only 16.6 percent.

What does this mean for crime statistics? Because the UCR figures do not treat Hispanics as a separate category, almost all the Hispanics arrested in the United States go into official records as “white”. This is contrary to the usual cultural understanding of the term, which is not normally thought to include most Mexicans and Latinos.

If violent crime rates for Hispanics are different from those of non-Hispanic whites, putting Hispanics in the “white” category distorts the results. This is not as serious as in the case of hate crimes, in which the crime itself has to do with the very personal characteristics that are being omitted from the records, but there is no legitimate reason not to make ethnic and racial comparisons as accurate as possible. The UCR tabulates separate data on American Indians and Eskimos – who are less than one percent of the population – but it ignores Hispanics, who are 12 percent of the population.

Some data-gathering agencies do treat Hispanic and nonHispanic whites separately. The California Department of Justice, which records all arrests within the state, consistently makes this distinction (although it lumps Asians and American Indians into the “other” category) (Calif., 1998). In conjunction with Census Bureau population figures for Hispanics, non-Hispanic whites, and non-Hispanic blacks living in California in 1997, we can calculate the arrest rates for the different groups for various crimes. In Figure Three these rates are once again presented as multiples of the white rate. As is

Figure 4  
**Arrest Rates with Hispanics Separated/Included with whites**



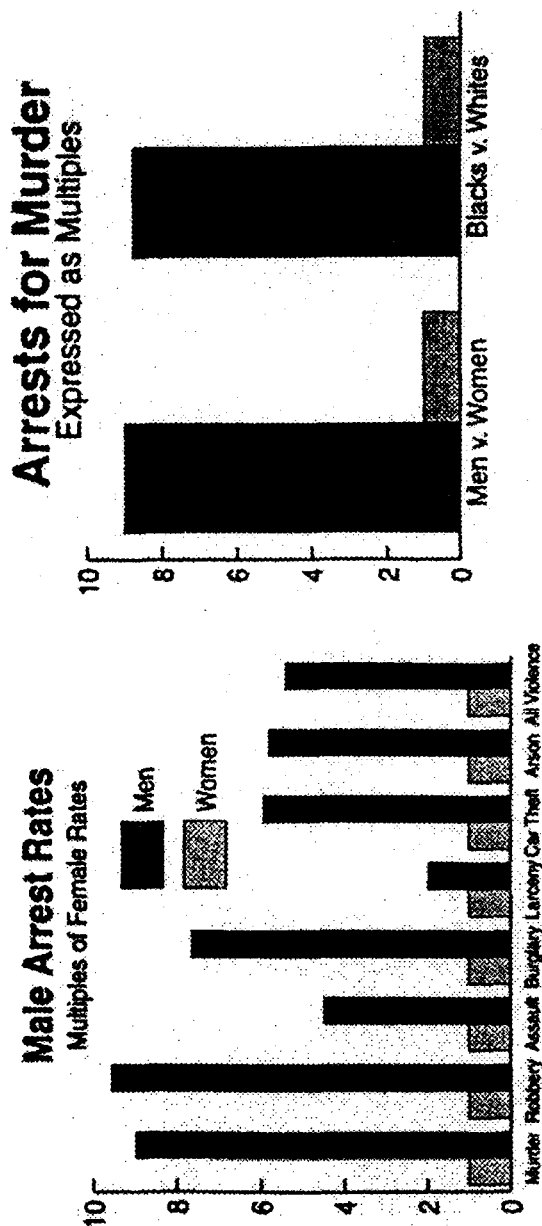
the case with national UCR data, blacks are arrested at much higher rates than whites, but Hispanics are also arrested at considerably higher rates.

The different rates at which Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites are held in prisons and jails are another indicator of the differences in crime rates between the two groups. Although the UCR does not treat Hispanics as a separate category for arrest purposes, some government reports on the prison population do consider them separately. For example, the Department of Justice has calculated incarceration rates per 100,000 population for non-Hispanic whites (193), Hispanics (688), and non-Hispanic blacks (1,571) (USDJ, 1998b). Expressed as multiples of the white rate, the Hispanic rate is 3.56 and black rate is 8.14. These multiples are close to those from the California arrest data, and justify the conclusion that Hispanics are roughly three times more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be arrested for various crimes. By accepting this assumption, we can use the following formula to incorporate this differential into the UCR racial data on white arrests so as to calculate more accurate arrest rates for nonHispanic whites:

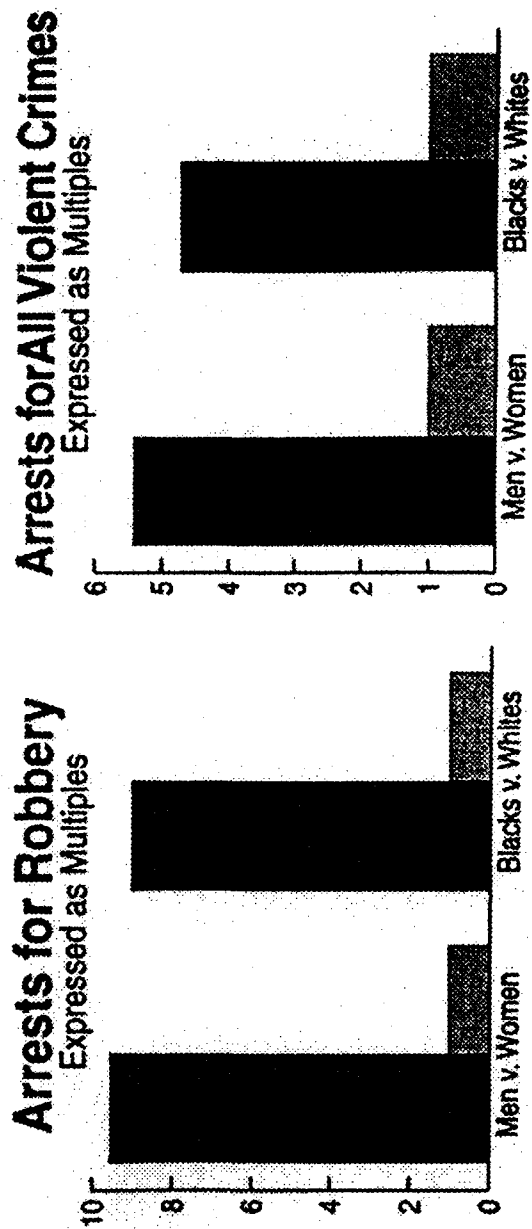
$$R \text{ (Number of non-Hispanic whites)} + 3R \text{ (Number of white Hispanics)} = \text{Actual Number of Arrests.}$$

Here,  $R$  is the arrest rate for non-Hispanic whites and  $3R$  is the arrest rate for Hispanics who are categorized as white when they are arrested. Calculations of this sort show that if Hispanics are broken out as a separate ethnic category with an arrest rate three times the non-Hispanic rate, the rate for non-Hispanic whites decreases by 19.5 percent. In Figure Four are shown arrest rates (as multiples of the white arrest rate) adjusted for the Hispanic reduction. Due to lack of precise information, the multiple for Hispanics is set to three times the white rate for all crimes even though there is certain to be some variation in the multiples for different types of crimes. A graph of unadjusted arrest rates is also presented for purposes of comparison. Because the evidence from national incarceration rates and California arrest rates suggests that Hispanics commit violent crimes at some multiple of the white rate, the adjusted graph in Figure Four is probably a more accurate indicator of group differences. Both graphs are on the same scale and show the extent to which separating out

Figure 5  
Sex Differences and Race Differences



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Hispanics raises arrests rates for other groups when compared to whites.

It should be noted here that the NCVS survey data on interracial crime also includes most Hispanics in the "white" category. It is therefore impossible to know how many of the "whites" who committed violent crimes against blacks were actually Hispanic or how many of the "whites" against whom blacks committed violent crimes were Hispanic. If Hispanics commit violent crimes against blacks at a higher rate than whites - and judging from their higher arrest and incarceration rates for violent offenses this seems likely, the NCVS report also inflates the crime rates of non-Hispanic whites.

### **Men vs Women, Blacks vs. Whites**

Many people resist the idea that different racial groups have substantially different rates of violent crime. However, there are several group differences in crime rates that virtually everyone accepts and, indeed, takes for granted. Men in their late teens and 20s, for example, are much more prone to violence than men beyond their 50s. When young men are arrested more frequently for violent offenses, no one doubts that it is because they commit more violent crime. Likewise, virtually no one disputes the reason for higher arrest rates for men than for women: Men commit more violent crime than women (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). This is the case for racial groups as well: Asians are arrested at lower rates than whites because they commit fewer crimes; blacks and Hispanics are arrested at higher rates because they commit more crimes (Levin, 1997; Rushton, 1995; Whitney, 1990).

When it comes to violent crime, blacks are approximately as much more likely to be arrested than whites, as men are more likely to be arrested than women. The multiples of black v. white arrest rates are very close to the multiples of male v. female arrest rates, suggesting that blacks are as much more dangerous than whites as men are more dangerous than women.

The first panel in Figure Five has arrest rates for men as multiples of arrest rates for women for the same crimes (UCR, 1998). The differentials are roughly similar to those between blacks and whites. The next two panels compare arrest rates for murder and robbery, and illustrate that the black/white arrest multiple is almost as great as the male/female multiple. The fourth panel of Figure Five

makes the same comparison for arrest rates for all violent crimes (these figures have *not* been adjusted for the fact that Hispanics are included with whites. As we have shown, adjustment would lower the white arrest rate by nearly 20 percent, and would make the black/white multiple greater than the male/female multiples).

What does this mean? Although most people have no idea what the arrest rate multiples may be, they have an intuitive understanding that men are more violent and dangerous than women. If someone in unfamiliar circumstances is approached by a group of strange men she feels more uneasy than if she is approached by an otherwise similar group of strange women. No one would suggest that this differential uneasiness is "prejudice". It is common sense, born out by the objective reality that men are more dangerous than women.

Likewise, there is now much controversy about so-called "racial profiling" by the police, that is, the practice of questioning blacks in suspicious circumstances in disproportionate numbers in the expectation that they are more likely than people of other races to be criminals. The philosophical, legal and rational case for racial profiling has been elaborated by the philosopher Michael Levin (Levin, 1997). "Racial" profiling is just as rational and productive as "age" or "sex" profiling. Police would be wasting their time if they stopped and questioned as many little old ladies as they do young black men. It is the job of the police to catch criminals, and they know from experience who is likely to be an offender. Americans who do not question the wisdom of police officers who notice a possible suspect's age and sex should not be surprised to learn those officers also notice race.

## Conclusions

Two things can be said about most of the information in this investigation: It is easily discovered but little known. Every year, the FBI issues its report on hate crimes, and distributes thousands of copies to scholars and the media. Why does no one find it odd that hundreds of whites are reportedly committing hate crimes against whites? And why does no one question the wisdom of calling someone white when he is a perpetrator but Hispanic when he is a victim?

For some years there has been an extended national discussion about the prevalence of black-on-black crime – and for good reason.

Blacks suffer from considerably more violent crime than do Americans of other races. And yet, amid this national outcry over the extent of black-on-black crime, there appears to be little concern about the fact that there is actually more black-on-white crime. Nor does there seem to be much interest in the fact that blacks are 50 to 200 times more likely than whites to commit interracial crimes of violence. Differences as great as this are seldom found in comparative studies of group behavior, and they cry out for causal investigation and explanation. It is probably safe to say that if the races were reversed, and gangs of whites were attacking blacks at merely four or five times the rate at which blacks were attacking whites the country would consider this a national crisis that required urgent attention.

Everyone knows that young people are more dangerous than old people, and that men are more dangerous than women. We adjust our behavior accordingly and do not apologize for doing so. Why then must we pretend that statistics regarding race differences in violent crime, are to be ignored? It is surely understandable that police should take these statistics into account when searching for suspects, and that they may wish to take more precautions when entering some neighborhoods than others.

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