Article

Racial and Ethnic Recidivism Risks

A Comparison of Postincarceration Rearrest, Reconviction, and Reincarceration Among White, Black, and Hispanic Releasees

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Despite a large and rapidly growing Hispanic population in the United States, few researchers have attempted to examine what happens to Hispanic offenders once they have been released from criminal justice control. The present study helps fill this gap by examining differences in the likelihood of recidivism between White, Black, and Hispanic prison releasees using three different recidivism measures: rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration. The authors use Bureau of Justice Statistics data that track a cohort of offenders for 3 years after their release in 1994 from state and federal prisons. Overall, the study findings show that White releasees have the lowest levels of recidivism and Black releasees have the highest levels of recidivism, net of important legal factors associated with recidivism risk; Hispanic recidivism levels are between those of White and Black releasees. Any conclusions drawn about the relative recidivism risk of Hispanic releasees vis-à-vis Black and White releasees must, however, consider how recidivism is measured. The study finds that Hispanic rearrest and reconviction levels more closely mirror those of Whites, but Hispanic reincarceration levels are more similar to those of Blacks. The authors discuss these findings in light of a growing body of research suggesting that Hispanic defendants may face more punitive outcomes relative to similarly situated White (and even Black) defendants at various stages of the criminal case process because they are perceived as more blameworthy and a greater threat to public safety than other defendants.

Keywords: *recidivism; race; ethnicity; Hispanics*

309

Increasingly, researchers interested in the impact of race on criminal jus-
tice decisions and outcomes have come to recognize the importance of
expanding the scope of their investigations to include Hispanic offenders. Given
the rapidly increasing size of the Hispanic population in the United States (U.S.
Census Bureau, 2000) as well as past research on racial/ethnic stratification and
inequality suggesting a history of antagonism toward Hispanics as representing
a social, economic, and criminal threat (Healey, 1995; Mata, 1998), it is critical
that researchers and policy makers improve their understanding of the unique
circumstances and challenges facing Hispanics involved with the criminal
justice system. Most studies to date that include Hispanic offenders, however,
have focused on their treatment within the system. A growing body of research
suggests that Hispanic defendants may face more punitive outcomes relative to
similarly situated White (and even Black) defendants at various stages of the
criminal case process (e.g., pretrial release, Demuth, 2003; Schlesinger, 2004;
sentencing, Spohn & Holleran, 2000; Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2001).Harsher
punishments may indicate that Hispanics are perceived as more blameworthy
and a greater threat to public safety than Whites. Unfortunately, few studies
have attempted to examine what happens to Hispanic offenders once they have
been released from criminal justice control—they have not examined recidi-
vism during postincarceration release.

The present study helps fill this gap by examining differences in the like-
lihood of recidivism between White, Black, and Hispanic prison releasees
using three different recidivism measures: rearrest, reconviction, and rein-
carceration. Importantly, the findings of the current project help inform
the discussion among researchers and policy makers about the reentry of
former prisoners into free society. Traditionally, recidivism studies have
been viewed primarily as assessments of offender risk or incarceration/
program success. But, increasingly, researchers have expanded the scope of
their studies to investigate more broadly how recidivism may serve as an
indicator of various barriers to successful reentry (e.g., Kubrin & Stewart,
2006). Especially relevant to current research on the impact of race/ethnicity
on criminal case process decision making, the present study sheds light on
the perception among legal agents that Hispanics are particularly crime
prone, bad recidivism risks, and, hence, more deserving of punishment than
are Whites (Demuth, 2003; Healey, 1995; Mata, 1998).

Research on Race and Recidivism

A considerable amount of research has reported findings on Black–
White differences in postincarceration recidivism (Beck & Shipley, 1989;

Bonta, Law, & Hanson, 1998; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996; Hanley & Latessa, 1997; Hepburn & Albonetti, 1994; Kruttschnitt, Uggen, & Shelton, 2000; Langan & Levin, 2002; Leclair, 1985; Petersilia, 1983; Spohn & Holleran, 2000). Some of the research on recidivism by race and ethnicity shows that Blacks are more likely than Whites to recidivate (Blumstein & Beck, 1999; Beck & Shipley, 1989; DeCome, 1998; Leclair, 1985; Petersilia, 1983; Sabol, Adams, Parthasarathy, & Yuan, 2000; Spohn & Holleran, 2002). In addition, several recent state reports find that the Black recidivism rate is higher than that for Whites (Cannon & Wilson, 2005; Kentucky Department of Corrections, 1995; Massachusetts Sentencing Commission, 2002; Moore et al., 2001; Sentencing Guidelines Commission, 2005). Other recidivism research focusing on Black/White differences includes studies on offenders with HIV and program completion versus noncompletion in drug courts. Analyzing a small sample of HIV-positive offenders, Harris, Rafii, Tonge, and Uldall (2002) found that proportionately more HIV-positive Blacks were rearrested than Whites. The research on drug courts also shows that Blacks are more likely to drop out of programs than are Whites (Brewster, 2001; Butzin, 2002; Schiff & Terry, 1997; Sechrist & Shicker, 2001). In a review of 30 court-ordered drug treatment programs, however, Belenko (1999) found mixed results.

Several studies show mixed or no effects (Bonta et al., 1998; Gendreau et al., 1996; Mbuba, 2004), especially when contextual factors are considered (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). Kubrin and Stewart found that those who returned to disadvantaged neighborhoods recidivate at greater rates than those who return to resource-rich environments, controlling for individual-level factors such as race. Although much has been made of the Black/White differences in recidivism, it is not yet known whether this difference is because of racial discrimination or greater criminal involvement in by Blacks. An ongoing debate in criminological research is the question of whether criminal justice officials differentially process and sanction defendants (Tonry, 1995; Wilbanks, 1987). The debate centers on risk factors associated with race, specifically charges of racial discrimination by criminal justice officials directed at Black defendants. Critics of the sentencing process contend that Black defendants are punished more harshly and sentenced to prison more often than similarly situated White defendants, which in turn leads to higher recidivism rates (Hagan, 1987). Others, however, challenge this criticism and instead assert that harsher sentences imposed on Blacks reflect the seriousness of their crimes and prior criminal records as well as other legally relevant factors that judges consider in determining appropriate sentences (Kautt & Spohn, 2002). This debate, which has

generated 40 years worth of research, has yet to be resolved (Chiricos & Crawford, 1995; Spohn, 2000; Zatz, 1987).

Recidivism Research on Hispanics

Although much has been made of the Black/White differences in recidivism, little research has been done on Hispanics. Reasons for the dearth of Hispanic recidivism research may include a lack of data, lumping Hispanics in with Whites in the data, and little interest in the subject. Because their numbers are rising, Hispanics have been the subject of recent criminological research. Although Blacks comprise only 13% of the population, 45% of all prisoners are Black. The proportion of Hispanics is less clear, because of the unknown number of those entering the country illegally, but in the 1980s, it was estimated that they made up 10% of the population and accounted for 18% of prison inmates (Petersilia, 1983). Current data indicate that Hispanics constitute 14.1% of the general population, 15.2% of the 2,131,180 incarcerated persons (Harrison & Beck, 2003). Because so many Hispanics are imprisoned, and because those released from prison often have no structural safety net, many will recidivate. It is, therefore, important to consider Hispanics separately from Blacks and Whites when analyzing recidivism rates.

The most significant problem with data on Hispanics and crime is that the data are not adjusted for gender and age (Hagan & Palloni, 1999). Hispanics and specifically Mexicans who are immigrating to this country are typically young males, which Hagan and Palloni contend are the group, regardless of citizenship, most likely to be engaged in crime. These researchers analyzed age- and gender-adjusted data on Mexican immigrants—the most numerous Hispanic immigrants to the United States—and found that rates of imprisonment are not strikingly different from those of U.S. citizens. In addition, the researchers argue that, because they are a perceived "flight risk," Mexican immigrants are more likely to be detained before trial. Research has consistently shown that these restrictive decisions at entry points in the criminal justice system have the cumulative effect of increasing the likelihood of conviction, imprisonment, and recidivism (Hagan & Bumiller, 1983; Hood, 1992; Petersilia & Turner, 1986).

The distribution of Hispanics in varying geographic locations in this country is another characteristic that affects recidivism rates. Large numbers of Hispanics live in six states, Texas, California, Illinois, New York, Florida, and New Jersey, which may overstate recidivism rates for Hispanics

in specific jurisdictions if this demographic distribution is not considered (Massey & Schnabel, 1983). The problems with data and measurement issues have led to very little research on Hispanic recidivism rates.

Much of the research on recidivism rates of Hispanics is limited to specific states, types of offenses, and state correctional department reports. A few studies show that Hispanics are less likely than Blacks or Whites to recidivate (Beck & Shipley 1989; Langan & Levin, 2002; Sentencing Guidelines Commission, 2005). In another study including Hispanics, Benedict and Huff-Corzine (1997) found that Hispanic property offenders with a history of drug abuse were more likely to be rearrested than either Blacks or Whites. The recidivism rate for Hispanic males was 39.8%, compared with 25% for Whites and 35.8% for Blacks. Holley and Ensley (2003) analyzed recidivism rates for Florida's Department of Corrections from 1995 to 2001. Race and ethnicity were measured, but findings were mixed. Being Hispanic was associated with lowered recidivism rates but only for females.

Imprisoned Hispanics that participated in fellowship programs were the least likely to recidivate according to a study in New York State (Johnson, Larson, & Pitts, 1997). Other studies show that Hispanics are less likely than Blacks to recidivate but more likely than Whites (Flaherty, 2004; Harer, 1994). In a national study of federal prisons, Harer (1994) found that 33.5% of Whites recidivated compared with 45.2% of Hispanics and 58.8% of Blacks. Results for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (Flaherty, 2004) indicate that Whites recidivated at a rate of 40.6%, whereas 49.3% of Blacks and 45.3% of Hispanics were rearrested. A vast majority of these offenders are eventually released from prison and all face challenges on reentry.

The pressing challenges faced by the more than 600,000 criminal offenders that are released back to their communities each year include housing, transportation, marketable skills, drug and alcohol treatment, family and child support, and employment (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Turner & Petersilia, 1996). Most do not remain crime free, and within 3 years of release, 40% are returned to jail nationwide (Langan & Levin, 2002; Turner & Petersilia, 1996). Hispanics may be at a greater risk for several reasons.

Offender's problems are often structural in origin. Most are young, minority males with a history of disadvantage. Many Black and Hispanic offenders share the same social problems: poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, residence in high-crime neighborhoods, and failing educational systems. In the case of Hispanics, difficulty with the English language, general ignorance about or distrust of the criminal justice system, and an unwillingness to cooperate with authorities out of fear of deportation

of family and friends are also considerations (Demuth, 2000). Those who do succumb to the pressures of such a life, and turn to drugs and crime, face additional problems when they are eventually released from prison.

On being released from prison, ex-offenders face the stigma of being an "ex-con" and generally are not financially solvent. The burden of supporting ex-offenders usually falls on the family, most of whom are lower class and poor. An additional mouth to feed can be a considerable drain on already limited resources (Rossi, Berk, & Lenihan, 1980). In addition, Mexican families exist in an "honor-based" subculture, in which the stigma of having a family member that is an ex-offender can be especially destructive (Horowitz, 1983).

Employment opportunities for ex-offenders are also limited. The stigma of being an ex-offender excludes them from many occupations and significantly lowers their acceptance by employers and coworkers. In addition, most come from minority groups that are already disadvantaged in the marketplace (Tonry, 1995; Wilson, 1996). The amount of time spent in prison is a factor in job experience as well. Those who have spent a majority of their adult lives in jail have little or no job experience, putting them at a distinct disadvantage in the job market. Lack of steady employment, combined with generally low educational attainment, disadvantages a great many ex-offenders (Rossi et al., 1980).

Data and Method

The data for this study are derived from a database created by the U.S. Department of Justice, Langan and Levin (2002), which contains information on 142,095 (weighted) sampled prisoners released from prisons in 15 states in 1994. The states included in the study are Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia. Females are excluded from these analyses because of their small numbers and missing offense data. The Bureau of Justice Statistics data are exceptionally well suited for these analyses because they (1) track convicted offenders for 3 years following their release; (2) contain information about each released prisoner's entire officially recorded criminal history, both before and after the 1994 release date, with the exception of juvenile records; (3) furnish adequate numbers of cases across White, Black, and Hispanic groups; and (4) permit considerable generalizability of findings because the states sampled represent a sizable portion of all inmates released from state and

federal prisons in 1994. The sources for criminal history information are state and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) automated Records of Arrests and Prosecutions sheets. These files contain records of arrests, adjudications, and sentences. They include no information on how often arrest records are not forwarded to the FBI, or the matched rate for received reports. This may be problematic in that reporting differences may vary by race of offender or community.

Dependent Variables

The goal of this study is to determine whether Black and Hispanic defendants are more likely to recidivate than Whites, controlling for legal factors. The dependent variable for this project is recidivism. Although Maltz (1984) asserts that the most practical definition of recidivism in a correctional context is rearrest after release from prison, he does suggest that analysis based on reconviction or resentence to prison can be helpful as a quality control check on arrest. The present study, therefore, employs all three measures of recidivism. Doing so provides evidence of the "funnel effect" (President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967) that shows that, at each stage of the process, the number of offenders is reduced. Not all offenders that are rearrested are convicted, and of those that are convicted, only a small percentage are returned to prison. This project employs all three measures largely because using the reconviction measure alone may understate recidivism rates. Not all offenders are prosecuted or have a trial. The same problem exists when using the measure "resentenced to prison." Often, offenders are returned to prison for technical violations and not because they were arrested for new offenses. Although there is substantial variation in the way recidivism has been measured in varying projects, Maltz's (1984) suggestion to use all three measures—rearrest, reconviction, and resentence to prison—is followed in this project. The data for all three measures are recorded for a 3-year period following the offenders' release from prison in 1994.

A shortcoming in the database is that all the recidivism measures are based exclusively on official records and may therefore understate recidivism rates in a number of ways. They cannot reflect offenses that do not result in arrest. Police agencies making arrests may not forward the notifying document to the state or FBI repository, and even if a report is sent, the repository may not be able to match the person in the document to the correct individual in the repository (Maltz 1984).

Independent Variables

Three extralegal variables are included in the analysis: age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Age, one of the most robust predictors of recidivism, is measured from the offender's date of birth, supplied by state Department of Corrections files. Two measures of age are included in the current analyses. The first is the offender's age, measured as a continuous variable. The second is an age-squared component that is centered and orthogonal to the linear component. Younger offenders are more likely to recidivate than are older offenders (Benedict, Huff-Corzine, & Corzine, 1998; Hepburn & Albonetti 1994). Some research, however, suggests a nonlinear relationship with incarceration and term length outcomes (Steffensmeier, Kramer, & Ulmer, 1995). In this case, the youngest and oldest offenders are viewed as the most reformable and least dangerous, respectively (Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998). The modal age category for offenders in this project is 25 to 29 years. The range is 15 to 88 years.

Gender is a dichotomous variable recorded as (1) male and (2) female. Because males are more likely than females to recidivate and because too few females were included in the sample to permit separate analysis, females are excluded from the analyses.

Race and ethnicity are measured separately. Race is measured as (1) White, (2) Black, (3) American Indian/Aleutian, (4) Asian/Pacific Islander, (5) other, and (9) unknown. Ethnicity is a dichotomous variable measured (1) Hispanic, (2) Non-Hispanic, and (9) unknown. Both the race and ethnicity variables were recoded to exclude all but non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, and Hispanics. In the current project, race and ethnicity are dummy coded.

In any analysis of differential treatment in the criminal justice system, robust measures of an offender's prior record and offense severity must be included in the analysis. Inability to control for these effects may lead to incorrect conclusions regarding the effects of race and ethnicity. Prior research has shown that Blacks have more extensive prior records than do Whites (Gibson, 1978; Spohn & Welch, 1982), but little data are available on the criminal histories of Hispanics. One reason for the lack of data on Hispanics is the practice of incorporating them in the racial category "White."

Another is that many Hispanics in jails and prisons in the United States are foreign-born and criminal histories from their country of origin are unknown. Criminal history variables in this project include number of prior arrests and dichotomized measures (i.e., "any" or "none") of prior convictions and prior prison sentences.

Offense seriousness is measured with several variables. Much past research groups offenses into categories of violent, property, and drug crimes. This type of categorization may mask distinctions in the types of offenses that lead to prison sentences for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Drug trafficking, for example, is punished more harshly than drug possession. The data set used in the project is well suited for this division. Detailed lists of offenses provide a more specific categorization. Violent crimes analyzed in this project are homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes are burglary, larceny-motor vehicle theft, and fraud, forgery, and embezzlement. Drug offenses include possession and trafficking.

Results

First, the descriptive statistics for the whole sample are presented, followed by the same for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Then the results of binary logistic regression models examining the effects of race and ethnicity on three separate recidivism measures are presented.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the entire sample and separately for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. The majority (90.8%) of the sample is male. Because they are so few in number, female offenders are excluded from this project.

As displayed in Table 1, Whites comprise 30% of the analytic sample. Blacks comprise 48%, and Hispanics of any race account for 22% (weighted).

Recidivism, the dependent variable in this analysis, is measured with three dichotomous variables—rearrest, reconviction, and resentence to prison. Approximately 64.9% of the offenders were rearrested after their 1994 release.

As can be seen in Table 1, clear racial and ethnic differences are evident when the data are partitioned by race and ethnicity. Beginning with age at release in 1994, Whites are the oldest (mean = 33 years) and Hispanics (mean = 31 years) the youngest. Black (mean = 31.1 years) offenders are in the middle. The range for the age variable is 18 to 88 years of age. Although little difference exists in age at release, noticeable differences are present between racial and ethnic groups in the original offense charge, sentence variables, criminal history, and recidivism rates.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Legal, Extralegal, and Recidivism Variables
for the Total Sample and White, Black, and Hispanic Subsamples

Variable	Total (%)	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)
Male	90.8	89.9	89.9	94.0
Age (mean)	31.7 years	33.0 years	31.1 years	31.0 years
18-24	25.5	20.6	26.8	29.4
25-29	22.7	21.8	23.1	23.1
30-34	21.5	21.5	21.5	21.6
35-39	14.8	16.6	14.5	12.8
40-44	8.4	9.8	8.4%	6.3
45+	7.2	9.7	5.8	6.8
Incarcerated offense				
Violent	25.1	24.3	25.6	25.2
Murder	2.0	2.4	1.7	2.0
Rape	4.3	7.3	2.7	3.7
Robbery	11.4	6.4	14.1	12.4
Aggregate assault	7.4	8.2	7.1	7.1
Property	29.7	39.8	25.9	23.8
Burglary	15.2	19.9	13.3	12.8
Larceny	11.4	14.3	10.2	10.1
Fraud	3.1	5.6	2.4	0.9
Drugs	34.2	21.2	39.1	41.7
Possession	8.4	6.9	10.0	7.1
Trafficking	25.8	14.3	29.1	34.6
Public order	11.0	14.8	9.4	9.3
Weapons	3.2	2.8	3.7	2.6
DUI	3.8	6.6	1.4	5.4
Other	4.0	5.4	4.3	1.3
Sentence length of Incarcerated offense	59.7 months	58.0 months	63.9 months	52.8 months
Prior record				
Number of prior arrests	7.9	7.6	8.6	6.7
Prior prison sentence	37.6	34.4	42.6	31.1
Recidivism measures				
Rearrested	64.9	58.5	70.9	60.6
Reconvicted	43.9	38.4	48.8	40.7
Resentenced to prison	24.4	20.0	28.0	22.8
N (weighted)	142,095	43,317	67,962	30,816

The offenses with the most disparate results between racial/ethnic groups are drug offenses. Much research has shown that Blacks and Hispanics are more often charged with drug crimes than are Whites. This same pattern exists in this data set. Blacks (39.1%) are almost twice as

likely as Whites (21.2%) to have been imprisoned for a drug offense. Hispanics are incarcerated most often (41.7%) for drug offenses. The distinction between drug possession and drug trafficking is an important one. Although racial and ethnic groups differ somewhat in proportions imprisoned for drug possession, much larger differences exist in rates of imprisonment for drug trafficking. Hispanics (34.6%) are the most likely to have served a prison term for trafficking, followed by Blacks (29.1%) and Whites (14.3%).

The differences in offense type by racial/ethnic group continue in sentencing dispositions. Regarding sentence length, Blacks (63.9 months) were given longer sentences on average, followed by Whites (58.0 months) and Hispanics (52.8 months).

Blacks (8.6) have a higher number of prior arrests than do Whites (7.6) and Hispanics (6.7). The same trend is evident in the percentage of prior prison sentences with 34.4% Blacks having been in prison before, followed by Whites (34.4%) and Hispanics (31.3%). Finally, with regard to recidivism, Blacks are the most likely to be rearrested (70.9%), followed by Hispanics (60.6%) and Whites (58.5%). Blacks are also more likely to be rearrested and reconvicted than Hispanics or White.

In conclusion, Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be rearrested, reconvicted, and resentenced to prison than are Whites. Blacks and Hispanics are also more likely to have been incarcerated for violent crimes and drug trafficking crimes than Whites. A more sophisticated statistical analysis, weighted logistic regression, is used to ascertain whether these differences are statistically significant.

Multivariate Analysis

The descriptive statistics in the previous section revealed racial and ethnic disparities in sentencing, offense type, and imprisonment decisions. In and of themselves, however, descriptive statistics do not tell the whole story. The differences noted using descriptive statistics might disappear, after controlling for relevant legal factors, when more advanced statistical techniques are applied to the data.

Table 2 shows three models of recidivism: rearrest, reconviction, and resentence to prison. In the rearrest model Blacks and Hispanics are 1.56 and 1.13 times, respectively, more likely than Whites (the reference group) to be rearrested after being released from prison. The differences are significant, although Hispanics are closer to the White rate than are Blacks. Males (1.50) and 25- to 29-year-old are also more likely to be rearrested. Those in prison

Table 2
Weighted Logistic Regression of Three Recidivism Variables
on Legal, Extralegal, and Contextual Factors

Variable	Rearrested (Odds Ratio)	Reconvicted (Odds Ratio)	Resentenced (Odds Ratio)
Race/ethnicity			
White (reference group)			
Black	1.56***	1.33***	1.38***
Hispanic	1.13***	1.00	1.27***
Male	1.50***	1.34***	1.66***
Age (years)			
18-24 (reference group)			
25-29	0.56***	0.65***	0.72***
30-34	0.43***	0.52***	0.60***
35-39	0.35***	0.48***	0.56***
40-44	0.22***	0.29***	0.40***
45+	0.16***	0.24***	0.33***
Incarcerated offense			
Murder (reference group)			
Rape	1.23***	1.15*	1.26**
Robbery	1.81***	1.64***	1.88***
Aggregate assault	1.49***	1.59***	1.56***
Burglary	2.01***	2.12***	2.34***
Larceny	1.83***	2.06***	2.22***
Fraud	1.64***	1.66***	1.87***
Drug possession	1.55***	1.69***	1.70***
Drug trafficking	1.48***	1.58***	1.80***
Weapons	1.17**	1.31***	1.26**
DUI	1.49***	1.39***	1.67***
Other	1.51***	1.81***	1.76***
Ln(sentence length of incarcerated offense)	0.76***	0.74***	0.92***
Prior record			
Ln(number of prior arrests)	2.03***	1.83***	1.47***
Prior prison sentence (yes = 1)	1.07***	1.07***	1.27***

Note: N (weighted) = 142,095.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

for burglary (2.01) and larceny (1.83) are more likely to be rearrested, and as previous research has shown, a record of prior arrests (2.03) and a prior prison sentence (1.07) are indicative of rearrest. Interestingly, those in prison for weapons offenses (1.17) are least likely to be rearrested. The results for the above mentioned factors are statistically significant.

The results for the reconviction model show that the odds of Blacks (1.33) being reconvicted are greater than those for Whites. Hispanics (1.00), however, are no more likely to be reconvicted than Whites. Again, 25- to 29-year-old males are more likely to be reconvicted, with those who are 18 to 24 year serving as the reference group. Again, those who were in prison for burglary (2.12) and larceny (2.06) are more likely to be reconvicted. Murder serves as the reference group. The odds of being reconvicted are also higher for those who have prior arrests (1.83) and a prior prison sentence (1.07). Sentence length, as in rearrest, is also a significant factor in reconviction decisions.

In the final model of Table 2, the odds for being resentenced to prison are shown. Although Hispanics mirrored Whites in the odds of being rearrested and reconvicted, they are almost as likely as Blacks to be resentenced to prison. The odds of resentence to prison for Blacks are 1.38 whereas those for Hispanics are 1.27. Males (1.66) in the 25- to 29-year-old category (0.72) are again more likely to be resentenced to prison as are those whose original offense was burglary (2.34) or larceny (2.22). Sentence length (0.92), prior arrests (1.47), and prior prison sentence (1.27) are all statistically significant factors in the decision to resentence to prison as well.

These three models show that young Black males with prior arrests and prison sentences are more likely to be rearrested, reconvicted, and resentenced to prison than are Whites. Hispanics, on the other hand, mirror Whites in the first two models, rearrest and reconviction, but are much more likely to be resentenced to prison than Whites. This is a very clear indication of differential treatment based on ethnicity and should be taken into account by all those conducting recidivism (and sentencing) research without separating offenders by group.

In general, our findings show that White releasees have the lowest levels of recidivism and Black releasees have the highest levels, net of legal factors associated with recidivism risk. The consistency of these findings with those of other researchers suggests that reforms in the criminal justice system have not eliminated the unjustifiably harsher treatment of Blacks. In addition, the current findings shed light on the increasingly evident disadvantage Hispanics face in the criminal justice system. Notably, Hispanic rearrest and reconviction levels mirror those of Whites, but Hispanics reincarceration levels are more similar to those of Blacks. This may indicate that Hispanics are singled out for arrest and resentenced to prison not because of their actions but because of their ethnicity and presumed dangerousness.

Discussion

This study contributes to research on race, immigration, and crime in several important ways. First, the extensive criminal histories of offenders available in this data set allow for an analysis of the specific types of crimes committed by offenders throughout their recorded criminal history.

The data set used in this project comes closest to being a "national" study of recidivism that exists. The entire adult criminal history of each offender is known, which is critical in determining if specific ethnic groups are more criminal than others. Several researchers have stated that this type of study, with this type of data set, is exactly what is needed in criminological research (Kramer & Ulmer, 2002; Maltz, 1984). Maltz (1984) argues that new analytical techniques offer promise for additional recidivism research. Kramer and Ulmer (2002) also urge researchers to study recidivism in general and compare serious violent offenders with the general population of offenders. The current project was designed to advance knowledge about recidivism, using the types of data and methods of analysis suggested by these scholars.

Key Findings

The multivariate analyses in this project show evidence of the continued disadvantage Blacks and Hispanics face in the criminal justice system. These data indicate that, net of controls, Blacks are more likely than Whites and Hispanics to be rearrested, reconvicted, and resentenced to prison. The central and possibly more important finding is that although Hispanics mirror Whites in rearrest and reconviction, they are far more likely than Whites to be resentenced to prison. Hispanics may be facing a double disadvantage because of their ethnicity. Criminal justice officials may be more likely to resentence Hispanics to prison because they may be deemed a "flight risk" or are simply seen as more dangerous to the public. Whatever the reason, these findings show a marked disparity in the process and indicate the continued importance of racial and ethnic stratification in criminal justice processing.

Recidivism rates of serious offenders are a neglected area of study, and this study highlights the importance of looking at the disposition of Hispanic offenders at the back end of the system. The findings in this project indicate that Hispanics are slightly more likely to recidivate than Whites, but much remains unknown about differences in Hispanic recidivism rates. First,

because the research on Hispanics has improved, it is now known that the various subgroups subsumed under the rubric "Hispanic" have very different social, economic, and political realities. Future research of serious offenders should analyze Hispanics by country of origin, including Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, El Salvador, and others. Real differences in social, economic, and political power could lead to similar differences in the rates of crime and treatment by the criminal justice system.

Second, time to recidivism must also be included in the analysis of serious offense patterns. In the present study, Hispanics are slightly more likely than Whites to recidivate. This study, however, does not disaggregate Hispanics into subgroups. If Mexican immigrants, for example, recidivate more quickly than American-born Hispanics, and American-born Hispanics recidivate more quickly than Whites or Blacks, this difference could, in part, explain the harsher penalties imposed on Hispanics. Perhaps those who are back in court the quickest after being released from prison or jail are given harsher sentences because of their incorrigibility rather than their ethnicity.

Third, research needs to examine not only serious, repeat offenders but also those who have been charged with violent crimes. The present study includes serious offenders that have been released from prison but does not include multivariate analysis separating violent, property, and drug offenders. Those who repeatedly commit violent crimes present the biggest threat to public safety and may justifiably incur the wrath of judges sworn to protect the public. Detailed specification of offenses must be employed where possible in all future research.

Conclusion

In sum, the most notable finding from this study is that Blacks and Hispanics pose higher recidivism risks than do Whites. Black and Hispanic offenders are more likely than White offenders to be rearrested and resentenced to prison. Hispanics, however, are no more likely than Whites to be reconvicted, indicating that some (unknown) proportion of the rearrests of Hispanics may be unfounded. Although several sentencing studies have found that Hispanics are subjected to harsher punishments, few studies have examined recidivism among Hispanic releasees. This article addressed the issue of recidivism to ascertain whether the likelihood of rearrest is greater for Hispanics than for Whites. The results of this project indicate that such disparity does exist. More research is necessary, however, and

should include a breakdown of Hispanics by national origin and time to recidivism by race/ethnicity. In addition, because an unknown number of Hispanics in this country are illegal immigrants, more analysis on immigration status of offenders is needed.

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