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Data Science for Political Science

Professor McCabe

Stop, Question, and Frisk in NYC: Did It Target Minority Groups?

Introduction

For my final project, I decided to utilize and examine a dataset from the Stop, Question, and Frisk program in New York City. This dataset includes data from the years 2011 and 2018. Notably, it consists of categories that include race, sex, date, build, weight, and even the mayor that presided over the Stop, Question, and Frisk program while it existed. With this dataset, I aimed to determine whether or not the Stop, Question, and Frisk (Stop and Frisk) program disproportionately affected minority groups within New York City.

I feel it is essential to examine this because, as a person who is a minority, I have personally seen that discrimination against minority groups is rampant within the United States and, despite being a “melting-pot” of identities and cultures, New York City is no different and could also have been agents of institutional racism and discrimination. Because of this, I hypothesized that the New York City Police Department (NYPD) did, in fact, disproportionately target minority groups. To examine this, I utilized the previously mentioned Stop, Question, and Frisk dataset and 2010 and 2020 census data to investigate the population of racial groups in New York City. For my approach, I created multiple barplots to visualize the data and create conclusions after comparing the stop, question, and frisk data to census data. After examining

my data, I concluded that the NYPD disproportionately stopped, questioned, and frisked minority groups.

Background

As mentioned previously, my research question and purpose for examining this dataset is to determine whether or not the Stop, Question, and Frisk program disproportionately affected minority groups in New York City. I've decided to examine this program for racial profiling since racial profiling practices are rampant throughout the United States. According to a scholarly publication published in the Georgetown Law Journal, racial profiling has been almost encouraged and is explicitly allowed under the law, despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964 overturning race-based discrimination (Johnson, 1006, 2010). As noted in the article, the United States had the opportunity to address racial profiling in the landmark case *Whren v. United States* but did not (Johnson, 1007, 2010). Further adding to the fact that the law encourages racial profiling is a Supreme Court case from 1975, *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce*, which encouraged profiling based on a "Mexican appearance" when enforcing immigration laws of the United States. This was permissible so long as the appearance or race of the person in question is not the only basis of detainment or questioning (Johnson, 1007, 2010).

Because racial profiling practices are so common in the United States, and the ramifications of such practices are extremely harmful to those who are subject to it, I decided it was imperative to examine whether or not the New York Police Department (NYPD) was privy to allowing and conducting racial profiling practices. To thoroughly examine this data, I created four barplots. Two of them consist of population data sourced from the 2010 and 2020 census, and two of them consist of data from the years 2011 and 2018 with a number of stop, question, and frisks for their respective year, subsetting by race. I plan to compare the total population of

racial groups in New York to the number of racial groups that were stopped and frisked. With this data, I plan to calculate the percentage of racial groups who were stopped and frisked in comparison to the total population of the respective racial group within New York City to determine if stop and frisks disproportionately targeted racial groups. With this data, I hypothesized that the NYPD *did* allow for racial profiling within their stop and frisk practices; the criminal justice system is inherently flawed. We have seen this numerous times within the United States and I am almost certain that the NYPD is not infallible and would be agents of racial injustice through stop and frisks.

Data and Approach

My dataset consists of data from the years 2011 and 2018 that were publicly available to the public as a part of records from New York City's Stop, Question, and Frisk program. Within the dataset, there was a total of 696,732 rows. These rows represent the total amount of stop, question, and frisks that were conducted in the years 2011 and 2018. From the Stop, Question, and Frisk dataset, I decided to specifically examine the race variable, which makes note of the race of the person who was stopped. The race categories are divided by AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE, ASIAN /PACIFIC ISLANDER, BLACK, BLACK HISPANIC, WHITE, and WHITE HISPANIC.

Furthermore, I also decided to manually upload a dataframe to my R code which consists of population by race and total population in the years 2010 and 2020 in New York City, used to compare the racial makeup of New York City in 2010 to the number of 2011 stop and frisks, and the racial makeup of New York City in 2020 and total population in 2020 to the number of 2020 stop and frisks. In short, I coded the census information by manually creating a dataframe and copying the categories and population numbers, including the total population, and grouping it

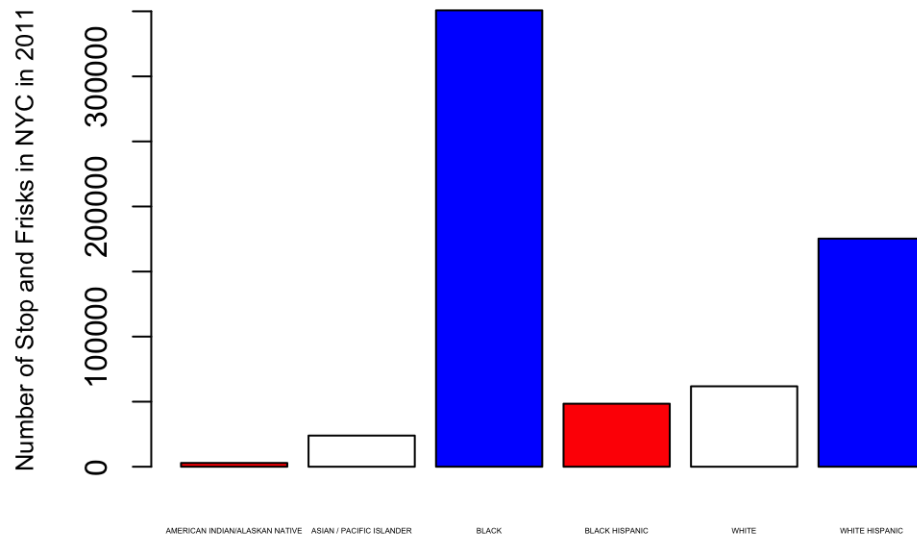
by year - 2010 and 2020. For these categories, I separated racial groups by what was utilized within the census data, which were White, Black, Asian, Hispanic Origin, and “Some Other Race”. For the purpose of this dataset, “Some Other Race” includes people that identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian.

For the census data, the dependent variable is the total population in New York City for the years 2010 and 2020. The independent variable is the amount of racial groups present within New York City in the years 2010 and 2020. For the Stop, Question, and Frisk data, the dependent variable is the number of Stop, Question, and Frisks that occurred in New York City in the years 2011 and 2018. The independent variable is the racial groups that were present in New York City and were subject to stop and frisks. I think my approach of cross-comparison - comparing the racial makeup of stop and frisks in NYC to the population of racial groups in NYC by using barplots - is effective. By doing this, I will be able to visualize the amount of stop and frisks by racial groups and compare it to racial population in NYC, which will allow me to come to conclusions about whether or not the NYPD disproportionately stopped and frisked certain racial groups by seeing the data in a chart.

Results

First, I decided to utilize the “nrow” function in R to determine how many Stop, Question, and Frisks occurred in NYC for 2011 and 2018. For 2011, 685,724 Stop, Question, and Frisks occurred in NYC. For 2018, 11,008 Stop, Question, and Frisks occurred in NYC. 2011 had a staggeringly high amount of stop and frisks in comparison to 2018, which I found to be notable. For my first barplot, I decided to create a barplot that examined the amount of Stop, Question, and Frisks that occurred in 2011 by racial makeup.

Assessing Number of Stop and Frisks in NYC in 2011 by Race



Racial Groups Present in NYC in 2011 That Were Stopped and Frisked

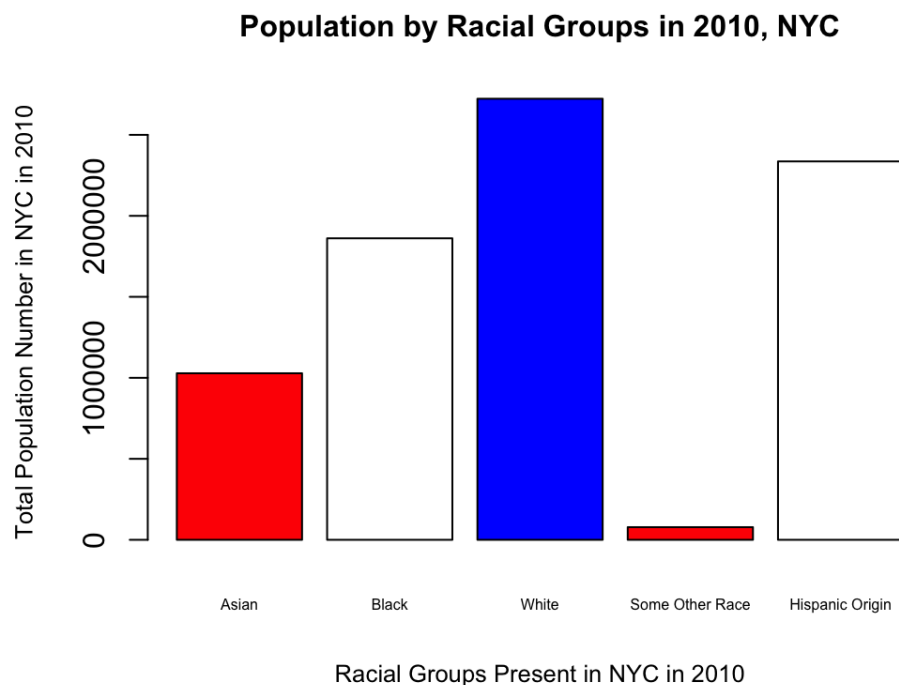
In this barplot, I capped the “ylim” in the R code to be 350,743, which was the amount of times Black people were stopped and frisked by the NYPD. As displayed by this graph, Black people received the largest amount of stop and frisks in NYC for the year 2011 in comparison to all other populations. American Indian/Alaska Native identified people received the least amount of stop and frisks. I also created a table to see the amount of stop and frisks by each racial group. The total amount of stop and frisks for each racial group are as follows:

- According to the table I created, in 2011, AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE persons were stopped and frisked 2,897 times.
- In 2011, BLACK persons were stopped and frisked 350,743 times.
- In 2011, WHITE persons were stopped and frisked 61,805 times.
- In 2011, ASIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDERS were stopped and frisked 23,932 times.
- In 2011, BLACK HISPANICS were stopped and frisked 48,438 times.

f. In 2011, WHITE HISPANICS were stopped and frisked 175,302 times.

Overall, the graph indicates that Black people and those of Hispanic origin were stopped and frisked the most in 2011. 53 percent of stop and frisks were conducted on Black people, and 32 percent (165,140 with Black/White Hispanic origin people combined) of stop and frisks were conducted on those of Hispanic origin. In comparison, only 9 percent of stop and frisks were conducted on White people.

In comparison, I've created a chart that illustrates the total population by racial group in 2010 NYC, using census data for the year 2010:



For this second barplot, I decided to create a table first using the data I inputted in R to determine the total population in NYC for 2010, while also determining the population for each racial group in 2010. The total amount of people for each racial group is as follows:

a. The total population in 2010 was 8,175,133 in NYC.

- b. The total population for Asian-identified people was 1,028,119.
- c. The total population for people classified as “some other race” (which includes people that identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian) was 78,063.
- d. The total population for White people in 2010 was 2,722,904.
- e. The total population for Black people in 2010 was 1,861,295.
- f. The total population for people of Hispanic origin was 2,336,076.

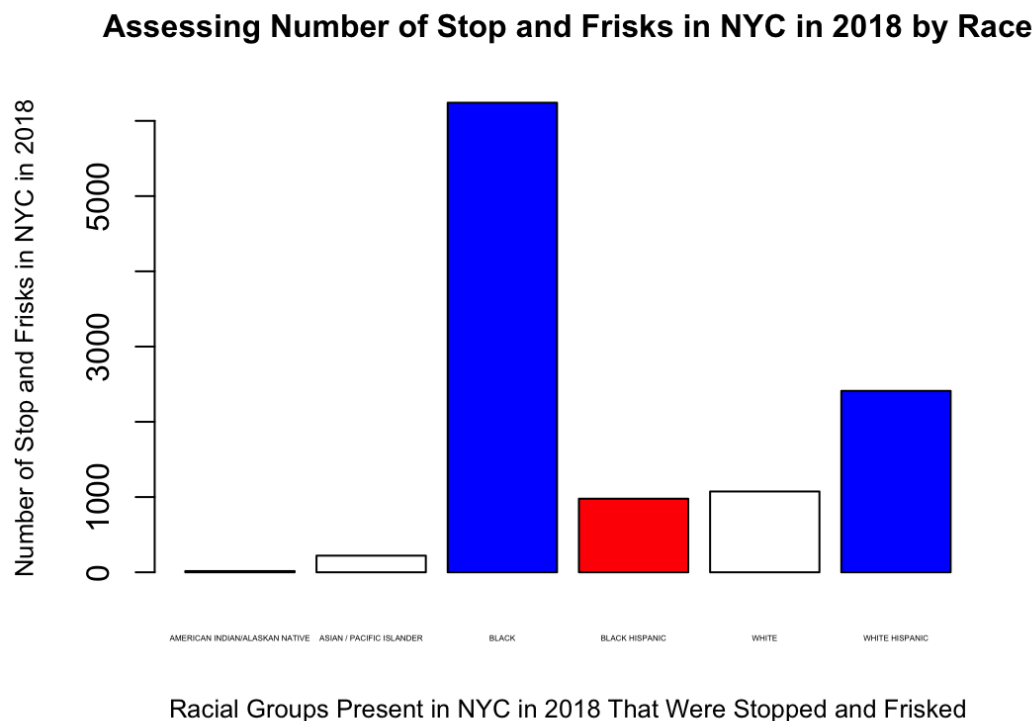
The graph illustrates the above results greatly, showing how White people are the most populous in New York City, followed by people of Hispanic origin, Black people, Asian people, and people who were classified as “some other race”. While examining both of the graphs, it’s shocking to see how Black people composed of a much smaller amount of the population in comparison to White people, which were the majority population in New York City in 2010, yet they made up 53 percent of stop and frisks in 2011. White people were only subject to stop and frisks 9 percent of the time in 2011. This leads me to believe that, for the year of 2011, the New York City Police Department *did* indeed disproportionately target minority groups, particularly Black people, for their stop and frisks.

To continue, I utilized the table function to determine the amount of stop and frisks by racial group in 2018. The total amount of stop and frisks for each racial group in 2018 can be seen below:

- a. AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE people were stopped and frisked 16 times.
- b. BLACK people were stopped and frisked 6,241 times.
- c. WHITE people were stopped and frisked 1,074 times.
- d. ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDERS were stopped and frisked 221 times.
- e. BLACK HISPANICS were stopped and frisked 978 times.

f. WHITE HISPANICS were stopped and frisked 2,411 times.

A graph illustrating the above results can be seen below:

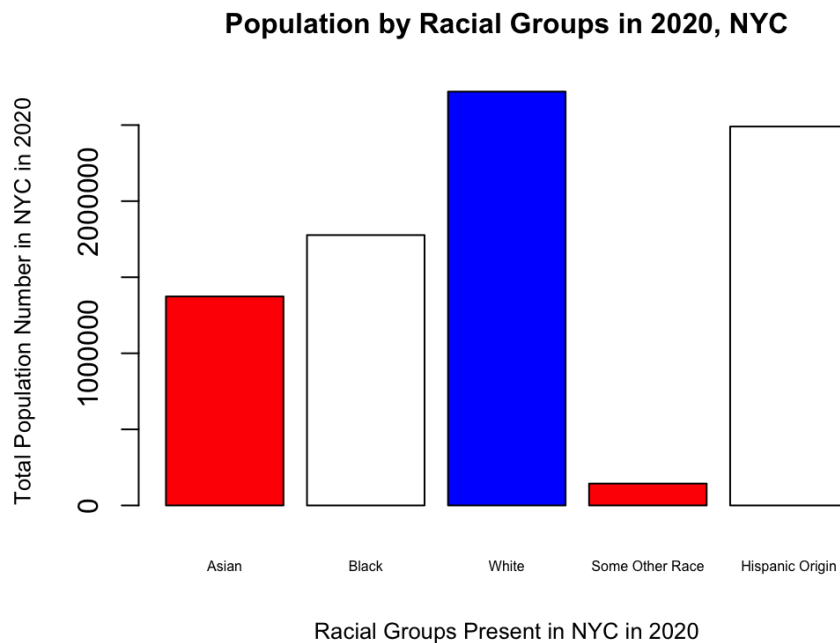


In this barplot, it is notable that the measurements on the Y axis are remarkably smaller than those of 2011, with 11,008 stop and frisks occurring this year in comparison to the 685,724 stop and frisks that occurred in 2011. However, like 2011's barplot, it is evident that Black people were stopped and frisked the most, with 57 percent of all stop and frisks for 2018 being conducted on Black people. 31 percent of all stop and frisks were conducted on people of Hispanic origin. In comparison, only 10 percent of all stop and frisks were conducted on White people.

To compare, I decided to utilize the dataframe I created for 2020's total population in NYC to determine the total population in NYC, while also dividing it by racial makeup. The total population of people in NYC in 2020 can be seen below:

- a. The total population in NYC in 2020 was 8,804,190.
- b. The White population in NYC was 2,719,856.
- c. The Black population in NYC was 1,776,891.
- d. The Asian population in NYC was 1,373,502.
- e. The population of people that were classified as “some other race” (which includes people that identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian) was 143,632.
- f. The population of people that were deemed to be of Hispanic origin was 2,490,350.

A barplot illustrating the above results can be seen below:



As you can see in the barplot, White people were again the majority population in NYC in 2020. In contrast, the amount of Black people in NYC decreased in 2020, going from 1,861,295 people in 2010 to 1,776,891 in 2020. Despite this decrease, Black people still composed of 57 percent of stop and frisks in 2018, a jump from 53 percent of stop and frisks in

2011. In contrast, despite White people making up a majority of the population, only 10 percent of stop and frisks were conducted on White people. This leads me to believe that the NYPD did disproportionately target minority groups, particularly Black people for their Stop, Question, and Frisk program for the year of 2018.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of this project was to determine whether or not the NYPD disproportionately targeted minority groups for their Stop, Question, and Frisk program in the years of 2011 and 2018. I utilized the barplot feature in R to create barplots that illustrated the amount of stop and frisks by racial group for the years of 2011 and 2018, while also creating barplots to compare these years to the total population by race in New York City for the years of 2010 and 2020. After examining this, I was able to conclude that the NYPD did indeed target minority groups, particularly Black people, despite Black people making up a substantially smaller amount of the population for NYC in comparison to White people, which were the majority group in both 2010 and 2020.

It is important to examine these findings because of the fact that racial injustice is so ingrained in the United States. As I mentioned previously, there have even been Supreme Court cases that have even made racial profiling *permissible*. Despite the fact that the amount of stop and frisks overall have decreased from 2011 to 2018, they were still found to disproportionately target Black people in both years. I think the program is explicitly allowing racial bias and should no longer be in practice; instead, maybe the NYPD could move towards a form of criminal justice that does not rely on racial profiling and instead only detains people when a serious crime has been committed.

Works Cited

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