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Race and Crime in a Rustbelt Suburb: Irondequoit, NY Part III

Working Paper 2024-08

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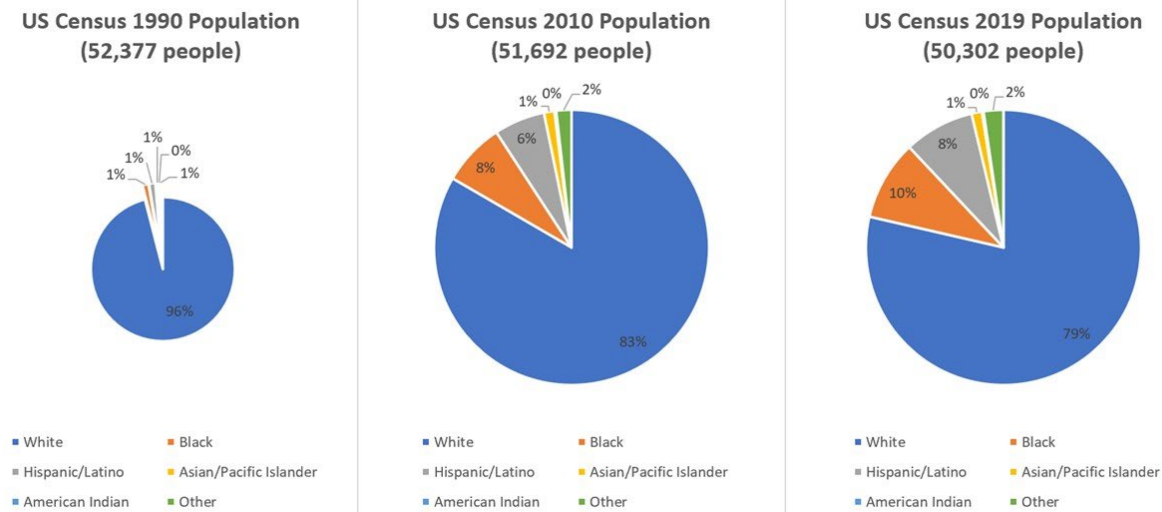Research Associate, Center for Public Safety Initiatives
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Introduction

The first paper in this three-part series focused on dispelling the idea that crime in Irondequoit, as measured by arrest data, became worse as the Town became more diverse. The second paper focused on race/ethnic specific felony arrest data over a 30-year period and illustrated that while overall crime and felony arrests decreased during said period, racial/ethnic disparities in felony arrests increased. An important caveat to this finding, and the findings of this paper, is that the race/ethnic specific rates of arrests are based on Census data for individuals who reside in Irondequoit, and some of the people arrested in Irondequoit come from other areas. This final paper of the series focuses on race/ethnic specific misdemeanor arrest data over a 30-year period and illustrates that while overall crime and misdemeanor arrests decreased from 1990-2019, racial/ethnic disparities in misdemeanor arrests increased.

Review of data presented in parts I & II

Figure 1 provides a review of U.S. census data from 1990, 2010 and 2019 for the Town of Irondequoit.

Figure 1. Racial Demographics - Census Data 1990, 2010 and 2019

This data confirms the assertion made in the first paper. Irondequoit has historically been, and continues to be, a white majority suburb. The town has become more diverse in the past two decades, and this diversity is not correlated with an overall increase in crime. As Irondequoit became more diverse the number and rate of crime (felonies and misdemeanors) as measured by arrest data, has decreased.

Table 1 provides data on arrest rates by race and ethnicity.

Table 1. Arrest rate by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	1990	2010	2019
White	14/1000	11/1000	7/1000
Black	690/1000	75/1000	70/1000
Hispanic	132/1000	35/1000	28/1000

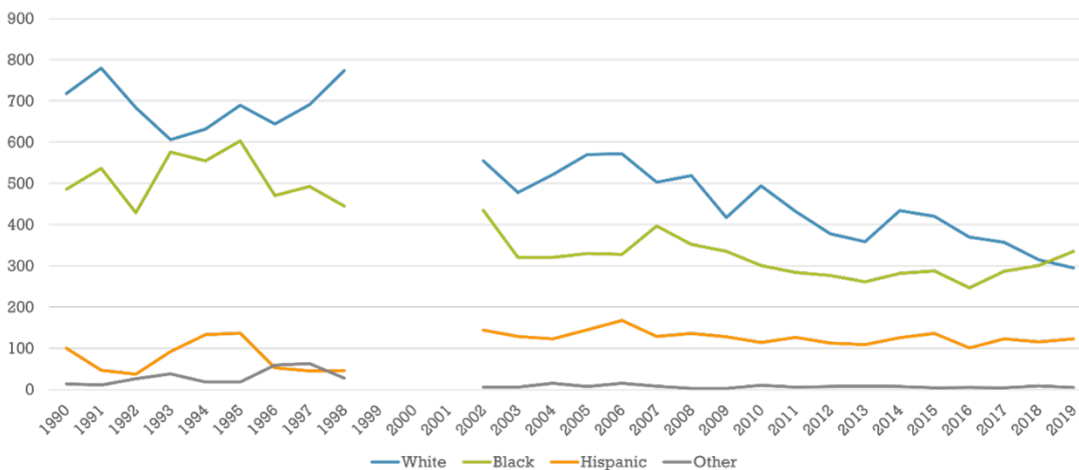*Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services*

From 1990 to 2019 the overall arrest rates for White, Black, and Hispanic individuals in Irondequoit decreased. While this fact is undeniable, it neglects more thoughtful consideration of the data. As per the previous caveat, non-residents of the Town are among those arrested in Irondequoit; however, only Town population data was used to calculate the rates above. Noting the relatively small proportion of Blacks and Hispanics who lived in Irondequoit in 1990, we must be cautious in our interpretation of the respective arrest rates (690/1000; 132/1000) because a significant portion of Black and Hispanic individuals arrested could have been non-residents of the Town thus calculating the arrest rate using Irondequoit population data may be particularly problematic in this case. It is subsequently best to compare the 2010 and 2019 arrest rates among Blacks relative to Whites as the overall population of Blacks in Irondequoit increased significantly during these two decades. Similarly,

it is best to compare the 2010 and 2019 arrest rates for Hispanics/Latinos relative to Whites as their population also increased significantly in the last two decades.

With the aforementioned caveat in mind, the data indicate that in 2019 Blacks were ten (10) times more likely to be arrested in Irondequoit compared to Whites. By itself this disparity does not indicate that IPD officers engaged in discriminatory behavior directed at Black Americans. For example, if the majority of Black arrests are not officer initiated, then the arrest disparity may be a function of other factors not related to officer-initiated behavior. That Blacks are 10 times more likely to be arrested relative to Whites, however, should be concerning given the history of discrimination against racial minorities by police,[1] and ample anecdotal evidence via members of the Irondequoit and larger Rochester community who claim to have experienced discriminatory behavior by IPD officers.

Figure 3 Illustrates the total arrest data broken down by arrestee's race/ethnicity.

Figure 3. Total arrests race/ethnicity, 1990-2019

Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

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[1] Hattery, A., & Smith, E. (2018). *Policing Black bodies: How Black lives are surveilled and how to work for change*. Rowman & Littlefield.

The gap in the chart indicates the fact that detailed arrest data broken down by arrestee's race/ethnicity was not available from 1999-2001.[2] Between 1990 and 1998, an average of 511 Blacks, 691 Whites, and 77 Hispanics were arrested each year. The years of 2002-2010 contained, on average each year, 347 Black, 514 White, and 135 Hispanic arrests. From 2011-2019, an average of 285 Blacks, 373 Whites, and 120 Hispanics were arrested each year.

Overall, arrests for individuals identified as Other and Hispanic remained relatively stable over the last two decades, while arrests for Blacks and Whites decreased. Beginning in 2015, however, the number of Black arrests each year began trending upward, and for the first time in the thirty-year period analyzed, Blacks surpassed Whites in 2019 as the racial/ethnic group with the largest number of arrests (335 arrests vs. 295 arrests).

Irondequoit misdemeanor arrest data 1990-2019

Table 2 provides data on misdemeanor arrest rates by race and ethnicity.

Table 2. Misdemeanor arrest rate by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	*1990*	*2010*	*2019*
White	12/1000	8/1000	5/1000
Black	583/1000	54/1000	42/1000
Hispanic	122/1000	28/1000	20/1000

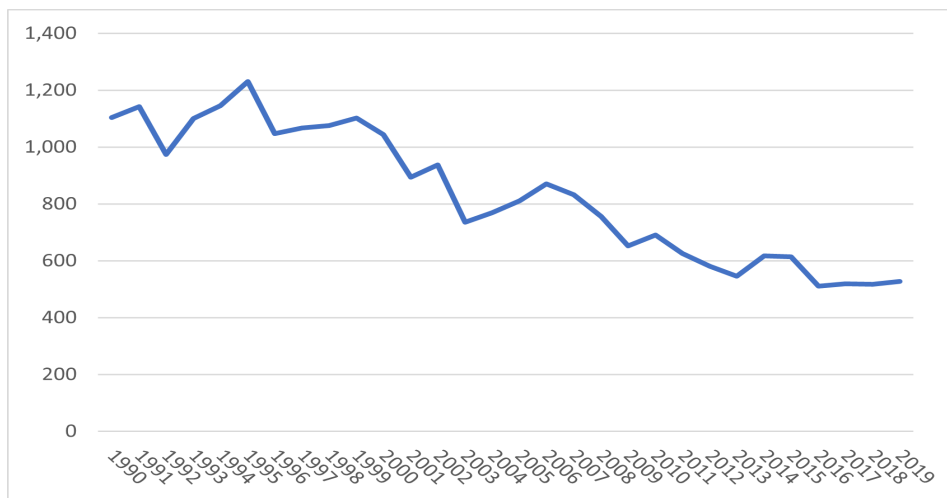*Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services*

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[2] Race and ethnicity data is not available for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 because the NYS DCJS did not collect such data outside NYC for those years.

Since 1990, the overall misdemeanor arrest rates for White, Black, and Hispanic individuals in Irondequoit has decreased. While this is undeniable, it neglects more thoughtful consideration of the data. As has been pointed out, non-residents of the town are not included in the town's population estimate. Therefore, calculating misdemeanor arrest rates using the town's population estimates may cultivate an inaccurate interpretation of the data, because a significant portion of these Black and Hispanic individuals could have been non-residents of the town. It is subsequently best to compare the 2010 and 2019 misdemeanor arrest rates for Blacks relative to Whites as the overall population of Blacks in Irondequoit increased significantly during these two decades. Similarly, it is best to compare the 2010 and 2019 arrest rates for Hispanics/Latinos relative to Whites as their population also increased significantly in the last two decades. With the aforementioned limitation in mind, the data indicates that in 2019 Blacks and Hispanics were more than (8) times as likely to be arrested in Irondequoit for a misdemeanor compared to Whites. On its own, this disparity does not indicate that IPD officers engaged in discriminatory behavior directed at Black Americans. However, this disparity should be considered in the context of other systemic issues. For instance, the United States has a long history of discriminatory policing against racial minorities and there is ample anecdotal evidence from members of the Irondequoit and larger Rochester community who claim to have experienced discriminatory behavior by IPD officers.

Figure 5 illustrates total misdemeanor arrests across the 30-year period of observation.

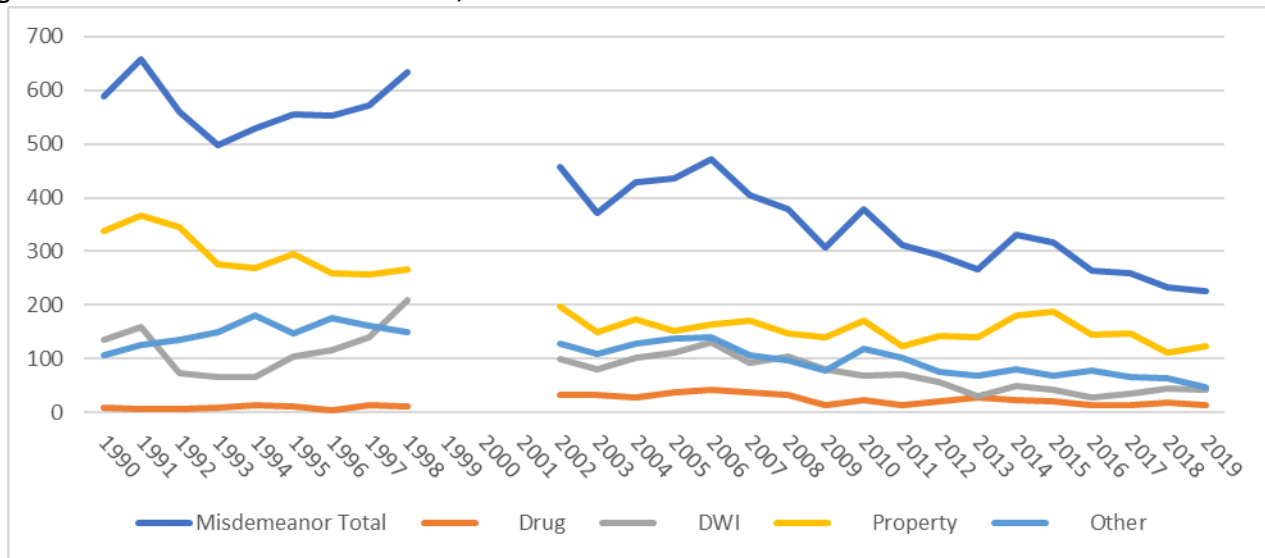*Figure 5. Total Misdemeanor arrests, 1990-2019*

Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

Across the 30-year period, the number of arrests each year ranges between 511 and 1,230 arrests. As illustrated above, over time, the overall rate of misdemeanor arrest decreased, however, the data indicates a disparity in the rate of misdemeanor arrest by race/ethnicity.

Figure 6 illustrates the total number of White misdemeanor arrests each year as well as the total number of arrests each year by specific misdemeanor type

Figure 6. White Misdemeanor Arrests, 1990-2019

Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

The gap in the chart indicates the fact that detailed arrest data was not available for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001.[3] Overall, White misdemeanor arrests decreased over the 30-year period. White misdemeanor arrests peaked in 1990 when there were 658 total arrests made. The great majority of Whites arrested on misdemeanor charges typically committed a property offense. From 1990-1998, there was an average of 296 White arrests for property related misdemeanor offenses each year, an

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[3] Race and ethnicity data is not available for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 because the NYS DCJS did not collect such data outside NYC for those years.

average of 162 White arrests for property related misdemeanor offenses each year from 2002-2010, and an average of 144 White arrests for property related misdemeanor offenses each year from 2011-2019.

Many Whites arrested on misdemeanor charges committed an offense categorized as 'other'. From 1990-1998, there was an average of 148 White arrests each year, an average of 116 White arrests each year from 2002-2010, and from 2011-2019 an average of 71 White arrests each year.
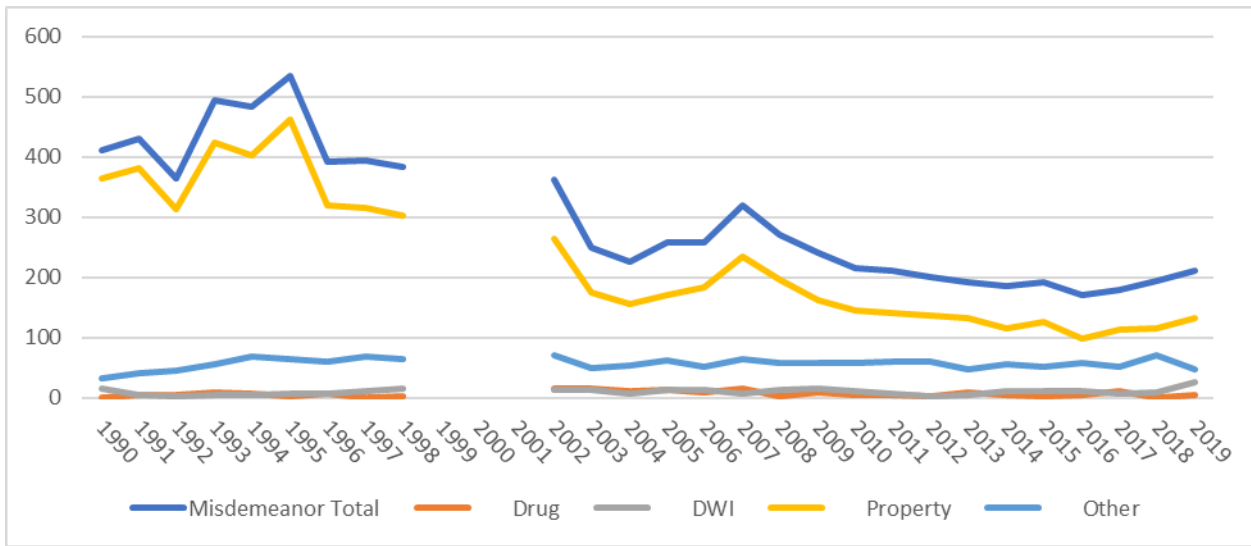
White arrests for misdemeanor DWI offenses were found to be much higher compared to Blacks and Hispanics. From 1990-1998, there was an average of 118 White arrests for misdemeanor DWI offenses each year, an average of 96 White arrests for misdemeanor DWI offenses each year from 2002-2010, and an average of 44 White arrests for misdemeanor DWI offenses each year from 2011-2019.

White arrests for drug related misdemeanor offenses were of relatively low prevalence and remained relatively stable over the 30-year period of observation. From 1990-1998, there was an average of 9 White arrests for drug related misdemeanor offenses each year, an average of 30 White arrests for drug related misdemeanor offenses each year from 2002-2010, and an average of 18 White arrests for drug related misdemeanor offenses each year from 2011-2019.

Figure 7 illustrates the total number of Black misdemeanor arrests each year as well as the total number of arrests each year by misdemeanor type.

Figure 7. Black Misdemeanor Arrests, 1990-2019

Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

The gap in the chart indicates that detailed arrest data was not available for the years 1999, 2000 and

2001.[4] From 1990-1998 there was an average of 432 Black misdemeanors arrests each year, an

average of 266 Black misdemeanor arrests each year from 2002-2010, and an average of 193 Black

misdemeanor arrests each year from 2011-2019.

Other Blacks arrested on misdemeanor charges committed an offense categorized as 'other'. From

1990-1998, there was an average of 55 Black arrests each year, an average of 58 Black arrests each

year from 2002-2010, and from 2011-2019 an average of 55 Black arrests each year.

Black arrests for both misdemeanor DWI and misdemeanor drug offenses were of relatively low
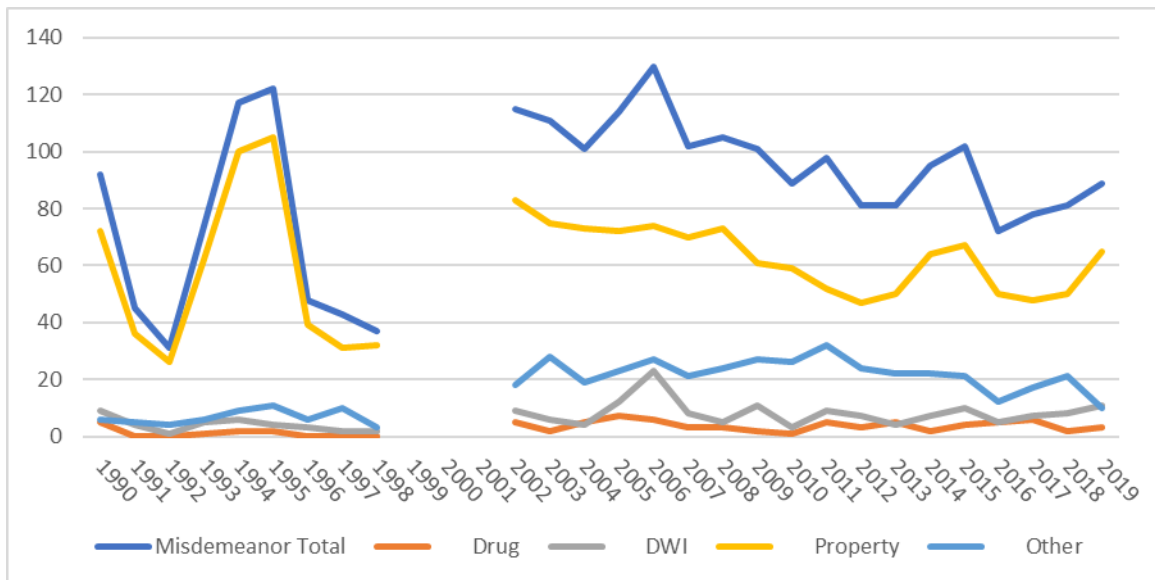
[4] Race and ethnicity data is not available for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 because the NYS DCJS did not
collect such data outside NYC for those years.

prevalence across the entire 30-year period of observation. Black arrests for misdemeanor DWI

offenses ranged from 3-26 in any given year, and were notably lower than White arrests for

misdemeanor DWI offenses (range of 28-208 arrests in any given year). Concerning misdemeanor

drug offenses, there were never more than 15 Black arrests in any given year.

Figure 8 illustrates the total number of Hispanic misdemeanor arrests each year as well as a

breakdown of the number of arrests each year by misdemeanor type.

Figure 8. Hispanic Misdemeanor Arrests, 1990-2019

Source: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

The gap in the chart indicates the fact that detailed arrest data was not available for the years 1999,

2000, and 2001.[5] Overall, there is much year-to-year variability in the number of Hispanic

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[5] Race and ethnicity data is not available for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001 because the NYS DCJS did not collect such data outside NYC for those years.

misdemeanor arrests. Total arrests each year ranged from 31 to 130 over the thirty-year period.

Hispanic arrests for misdemeanor property offenses compromised the greatest number of arrests each year. From 1990-1998 there was an average of 56 Hispanic arrests for property related misdemeanor offenses each year, there was an average of 71 Hispanic arrests for property related misdemeanor offenses each year from 2002-2010, and there was an average of 55 Hispanic arrests for property related misdemeanor offenses each year from 2011-2019.

Those misdemeanor offenses categorized as 'other' also generated a relatively high number of Hispanic arrests, especially in the last 20 years. From 1990-1998 there was an average of 7 Hispanic arrests each year, an average of 24 Hispanic arrests each year from 2002-2010, and an average of 20 Hispanic arrests each year from 2011-2019.

Hispanic arrests for both DWI and drug related misdemeanor offenses were relatively few. Hispanic arrests for DWI misdemeanor offenses peaked in 2006, when there were 23 total arrests. There were never more than 7 Hispanic arrests for drug related misdemeanor offenses in any given year during the period of observation.

Conclusion

The data presented in this three-part series of working papers paints a complex picture of race and policing in Irondequoit over a thirty-year period. From 1990 to 2019 the Town became more racially and ethnically diverse, yet the overall number of arrests declined significantly. Moreover, while racial

disparity in overall arrests declined in the 30-year period, it persisted in the rates of felony and

misdemeanor arrest such that in 2019 Blacks were fifteen (15) times more likely to be arrested for a

felony offense relative to Whites, and in 2019 Blacks and Hispanics were more than eight (8) times as

likely to be arrested for a misdemeanor offense relative to Whites. It is important to note that the

calculation of arrest rates by race/ethnicity uses Census population data for the Town of Irondequoit

and therefore does not account for those arrested in the Town who live elsewhere.

Both White felony arrests and White misdemeanor arrests were rather variable year to year,

however, from 2016-2019 they both saw consistent decline. Black felony arrests and Black

misdemeanor arrests were also rather variable from year to year, however, both consistently

increased from 2016-2019. By themselves, the arrest rate disparities in felony, misdemeanor, and

overall arrests[6] do not indicate that Irondequoit police officers engaged in any discriminatory

behavior directed at Black Americans. As previously noted, if the majority of Black arrests are not

officer initiated (i.e., the police were called by a third party), then the arrest disparity may be a

function of other factors unrelated to officer-initiated behavior. A dataset where it is possible to

disentangle officer-initiated arrests from other arrest types is one way to address this problem. The

racial disparities evident should be concerning, however, given the history of police discrimination

against racial minorities by police and ample anecdotal evidence via members of the Irondequoit and

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[6] In 2019, Blacks were ten (10) times more likely than Whites to be arrested in Irondequoit (Robertson & D'Angelo, 2023).

larger Rochester community who claim to have experienced discriminatory behavior at the hands of police.

Recommendations

The three papers in this series are based on highly aggregated arrest data and as such there are limitations for the type of analyses that could be conducted to ascertain racial/ethnic disparities in policing in Irondequoit, NY. We recommend that additional analyses be conducted with other datasets to get a more varied and nuanced understanding of racial disparities in the Irondequoit Police Department. There will be limitations of any source of data, however, analyses of multiple types of data (e.g., arrest data, body-worn-camera data, use of force data) will allow us to increase our confidence in the findings of our analyses. Below we offer several recommendations for data and analyses.

1. Collect data on race and ethnicity for traffic stops by noting the race/ethnicity of the person stopped. This will allow us to explore the rate at which different racial groups are stopped relative to their population in the Town. Additional analyses of stop data will allow for an exploration of differential racial outcomes of the stops (e.g., warnings, citations, searches, arrests).

2. When possible, IPD officers could note the race of suspects for crimes reported to officers that lead to a report being filed, but do not lead to an arrest. This will allow for a broader picture of the racial distribution of crime that comes to the attention of the police. One significant limitation of this type of data is that some people are likely to erroneously report the race of a suspect. The amount of error

present may not be significantly more than the error made by police officers in their assessments of

the racial/ethnic identity of civilians with whom they come in contact, however.

3. Compile a more detailed dataset that will allow for the discernment of officer initiated arrests

versus arrests whereby the police are contacted via a third party. This will allow for a more accurate

analysis of racial disparities in arrests.

4. Create a database of use of force by IPD officers over a period of time, and conduct analyses to

determine if there are disparities in the frequency, severity, and other circumstances in the use of

force against different racial groups.

5. Increase transparency via an analysis of the process for individuals to file a complaint against the

police to determine if there are any problems that impede the filing of a complaint.

6. Use available body-worn-camera data to conduct an analysis that compares police reports to body

worn camera footage for different racial groups, and additionally, compile a sample of body-worn-

camera footage and conduct analyses to determine if there are any significant differences in how

officers treat individuals of different racial/ethnic groups.

References

Robertson, O. N., & D'Angelo, V. (2023). Race and Crime in a Rustbelt Suburb: Irondequoit, NY, Part I. Rochester, NY: Center for Public Safety Initiatives. [CPSI Working Paper 2023.03_Race and Crime Irondequoit.pdf (rit.edu)](#)

Robertson, O. N., & D'Angelo, V. (2023). Race and Crime in a Rustbelt Suburb: Irondequoit, NY, Part II. Rochester, NY: Center for Public Safety Initiatives. [2023-12_CPSI Working Paper_RaceandCrimeinaRustbeltSuburbPtII.pdf (rit.edu)](#)

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