

October 2021

## The Effect of Respondent Race and Sex on Police Use or Threatened Use of Force

Viola L. Sawyer  
*Western Michigan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview>

Digital Part of the Sociology Commons  
Commons

---

Network  
Preferred Citation Style (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)  
Logo  
ASA

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Hilltop Review by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).

Footer logo

In the last few years, incidents of police violence against Black people in the United States have sparked a national discussion about the function of police in our society, the militarization of our police forces, police brutality, and, most importantly, police accountability. In the summer of 2014, we bore witness to the police shooting and killing of 18 year old Michael Brown in St. Louis, Missouri, and the use of an illegal chokehold on Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, which ultimately killed him (Hill 2016). The deaths of Black men and boys, like Tamir Rice, garnered extensive coverage that appears to render invisible the experiences of Black women, and other people of color in their interactions with police.

Sandra Bland was a twenty eight year old Black woman who was on her way to start a new job when she was pulled over by Officer Brian Encinia, for failing to signal while turning on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (Pitman, Ralph, Camacho, and Monk-Turner 2017). Upon initial observation, this appeared as a routine traffic stop. However, this situation escalated after the state trooper took note of her irritated disposition, and her refusal to put out her cigarette at Encinia's request. In response to Bland's demeanor and behavior, Encinia threatened to "yank" Sandra out of her car, refused to answer questions, and warned her that he would "light [her] up" (Pitman et al. 2017: 1). When he ordered Bland to step out of her car, the state trooper threatened her with a Taser, injured her arm while throwing her to the pavement, and charged Bland with assaulting a public servant (Graham 2015; Pitman et al. 2017: 1). Within three days of her arrest, authorities reported Bland dead in her cell (Graham 2015). The medical examiner ruled that Bland's death was a suicide. However, this finding has been widely contested as many argue that Bland did not take her own life (Graham 2015; Rogers 2016). Ultimately, the fundamental and common components in the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, and many others, are twofold: while Michael, Eric, and Sandra were racially marginalized, Sandra experienced racialized gender marginalization as a woman. Their interactions with police are situated within a social context informed by the interlocking systems of oppression that we call White supremacy and patriarchy, hence, their movement through social spaces-and their interactions with police officers were racialized and gendered. Secondly, at the core of the interactions between these three individuals is the issue of police use of force.

The purpose of the present study is to provide evidence that the intersection of race and gender is an important dimension of police use of force in police-public contacts. Since the summer 2014, we have continued to see the streaming of incidents in which police officers exert excessive and lethal force on unarmed civilians, who are often racially marginalized. We have borne witness to the rise of #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName, as responses to the public brutalization of Black men, women, and gender nonconforming people by police. We have also

seen the backlash to such claims taking the form of “Blue Lives Matter.” In this paper, I review the pertinent literature about factors that influence police use of force, provide an overview of intersectionality theory and examples of intersectionality in criminology. Then, I discuss the logistic regression of the Police-Public Contact survey data (2008). Ultimately, the results of the binary logistic regression provide support for the contention that the multiplicative identities of race and gender have an effect on police use, or threatened use, of force.

## RESEARCH ON FACTORS INFLUENCING POLICE USE OF FORCE

The relationship between a suspect’s race and police use of force has been widely examined (Engel and Calnon 2004, Lawton 2007; McCluskey and Terill 2005). The relationship between race and police use of force is one informed by an historical legacy of racialized social control (Blackmon 2008; Bass 2001). Bass (2001) asserts that during slavery, slave patrols constantly policed the movement of slaves and tracking down runaways whom they would punish with impunity. Further, Alexander (2010) argues that the hyper-surveillance of Black bodies and the exposure to physical force from state agents of social control continued after slavery ended, throughout Reconstruction, and through Jim Crow. Jim Crow refers to the period after the Civil War, between the 1870s and the 1960s, during which a brutal, formal, codified system of racial segregation emerged and crystallized in the American South (Blackmon 2008; Alexander 2010).

Immediately after the Civil War, almost every Southern state implemented several “interlocking laws essentially intended to criminalize black life” and routine black behaviors (Blackmon 2008: 53, 67). For example, by 1865 almost every Southern state outlawed unemployment (vagrancy); vagrancy was loosely defined so that any formerly enslaved person “not under the protection of a white man could be arrested for the crime” (Blackmon 2008: 53). Often Blacks were arrested for a range of actions including carrying a weapon, “riding on the empty freight train cars.... , speaking loudly in the presence of White women” (Blackmon 2008; 67), failing to show deference to Whites in public spaces, violating segregation laws, “mischief” and a variety of behaviors that appeared to threaten the dominant racial social order (Kelley 2016: 19; Alexander 2010: 31).

Another behavior that appeared to threaten White supremacy was eye contact. Throughout slavery, slaves who made eye contact with whites were seen as committing an act of rebellion (Hill 2016: 69); this idea pervaded Jim Crow. Black men and women who made eye contact with whites and police officers were suspected of being “insufficiently deferential,” and starting trouble (Taylor 2016; Kelley 2016). This characterization of mundane behavior engaged in by Black people towards whites and police officers as “insufficiently deferential” persists

today. When Black men and women fail to demonstrate appropriate deference, in the form of suspicious eye contact police officers or “talking back, they are often regarded by police officers as committing a “sign of guilt, an act of disrespect, and an affront to state power” (Hill 2016: 6). Because these assumptions remain today, Black men and women are often more likely to experience the threat of use of force or use of force from police officers when interacting with them (Hughey 2015).

Studies on police stops appear to be consistent with the persistence of the overrepresentation of racially marginalized people in stops. Findings from the Ferguson Report (2016:5) reveal racial dimensions of police stops:

Data collected by the Ferguson Police Department from 2012 to 2014 shows that African Americans account for 85% of vehicle stops, 90% of citations, and 93% of arrests made by FPD officers, despite comprising only 67% of Ferguson’s population...These disparities are also present in FPD’s used of force. Nearly 90% of documented force used by FPD officers was used against African Americans. In every canine bite incident for which racial information was available, the person bitten was African American.

As this evidence shows, the current era of neoliberal colorblindness has not encouraged a decline of the hyper-policing of Black communities. In fact, it has persisted.

Although the historical legacy of racialized social control of Blacks in the United States is an important element of understanding likelihood of police use or threatening to use force in police-public contacts, it is equally as important to explore the effects of racialization for other groups in the United States. In their study about the intersectionality of race and gender among Latino participants, Bell (2013) asserts that most research examining the intersection of race and gender is limited to Blacks and Whites. Incorporating Hispanics into the current study aids in disrupting binary understandings about race. Armenta (2017) considers the institutional production of immigrant criminality regarding Latinos and reveals the mechanisms by which Latinos are criminalized. This process occurs through the construction and implementation of facially neutral and colorblind policies, police practices, and through encounters with police, as part of the emergence of the “crimmigration” system (Stumpf 2006). Although Armenta’s (2017) work illustrates the unique process by which Latinos are criminalized, they do not consider the intersection of race and gender, and how criminalization of Latino people impacts differentially racialized and gendered Latino people.

While it is established that race is a prominent factor in terms of how often individuals from certain groups are likely to interact with police and experience police use of force (Brunson and Weitzer 2009; Russell-Brown 2009; Crutchfield, Skinner, Haggerty, Anne McGlynn, and Catalano, 2012), there are several different

factors documented in the literature that inform police use of force. Westley (1953) found that police were more likely to deploy force when confronting a suspect who did not demonstrate respect for officers, and as a method to gain information. Paoline et al.'s (2018) study resulted in similar findings. They found that both White and Black police officers used force in response to suspects' actions that undermine their authority. However, while their study suggests that Black officers only respond to threats to their authority, White police appeared to use more forceful actions against Blacks who undermine their authority as a result of the absence of deference *and* because of the suspect's race (Paoline et al. 2018). In other words, for White police officers, the need to maintain control over the encounter is informed by both their status and potentially perceived racial superiority.

Additional factors that are consistently identified with increasing the likelihood of police using force in interactions with citizens include evidence of criminal behavior being present (Paoline and Terill 2004), suspect is in possession of a weapon (Rydberg and Terill 2010), officer is in the presence of conflict between citizens (McCluskey and Terrill 2005), and police officer is arresting the suspect (McCluskey and Terill 2005). In addition, Rydberg and Terill (2010) found that social class impacts officer likelihood to use force. They found that lower class individuals have a greater risk of experiencing officers' use of force during encounters. Bolger (2015) argues that there still exists uncertainty regarding the effect of the suspect's sex on police use of force. In response to this uncertainty, Bolger (2015) suggests that the type of force used by police officers may impact the relationship between suspects' sex and use of force.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

Multiracial feminism and intersectionality provide a useful lens through which we can explore how the intersection of race and sex impact police use of force. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, women of color feminisms were challenging taken-for-granted explanations of women's and people of color's experiences. As a tenet of both Black feminism and critical race theory, intersectionality (Collins 2006; Potter 2013; Delgado and Stefancic 2012) acknowledges that oppression is not experienced along one dimension of social inequality. Davis (2008: 68) defines intersectionality as the interaction between race, class, gender, and "other locations of inequality in individuals' lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies, and the outcome of these interactions in terms of power." In other words, an intersectional analysis takes into consideration and centers certain forms of intersecting systems of oppression (e.g., race, gender, class inequalities) and challenges us to acknowledge that these systems of oppression work simultaneously to produce inequality and injustice (Collins 2006).

Critical race and Black feminist scholars have used intersectional approaches to examine how the intersection of race and gender shape various experiences, including interpersonal victimization, criminal offending, and interactions with police. For example, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) applied Black feminism to understand how anti-racist and anti-violence against women movements, which either centered Black men or White women, erased Black women and neglected their interest. Because these movements were mobilized along single dimensions of social inequality (i.e., race and gender, respectively), Black women's experiences as racialized gendered people, experiencing oppression as a result of their Blackness and femininity, were rendered precarious and vulnerable to racialized gendered violence in ways the Black men and White women were not. Similarly, Beth Richie (2012) deployed Black feminism to understand how Black girls and women uniquely experience gendered violence. In her work, she develops the male violence matrix, which is comprised of the "intersectional relationship between male violence and ideology around race, gender, sexuality, and class" (Richie 2012:132), and illustrates how Black girls and women experience physical and sexual assault, and emotional manipulation in unique ways. Bell (2013) used a multiracial feminist and intersectional approach to explore offending across the early life course, and found that the intersection of race and gender is significant for young adult offending. Ritchie (2017) explicitly explores the ways in which differently racialized women experience encounters with police, while demonstrating the historical and contemporary role of policing of gender and sexuality in the criminalization of communities of color.

While intersecting identities shape women of color's experiences with victimization, criminal offending and how they experience policing, Messerschmidt (2014) argues that intersecting identities also shape boys and men's engagement in crime. Rios' (2011) work demonstrates just how intersecting identities and systems of oppression shape youths' interaction with formal social control agents. In *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Rios (2011) highlights the significance of exploring the relationship between racialized gender, class, and age, and policing for young Black and Latino adolescent boys in Oakland, California. Specifically, he examines the effect of racialized masculinity and policing, and found that these youth used the commission of crime and interactions with various social control agents, including police, as a method through which they construct and demonstrate their manhood. Rios (2015: 66) has also discussed issues regarding young Black and Latino boys and their expression of resilience and resistance in ways that were "were often rendered deviant, and the boys were excluded as criminal." In sum, intersectionality has been used to examine the experiences of both boys and men, and girls and women in the criminal processing system.

Although attributing the concept of intersectionality to Black feminism is important, my use of intersectionality in the current study looks at two other racialized groups: Whites and Hispanics. Therefore, I am also drawing on a multiracial feminist perspective. According to Burgess-Proctor (2006: 28), multiracial feminism was developed by women of color who recognized the need to develop approaches to studying gender that called attention to issues of “power and difference in ways that previous models had not.” Like Black feminists, multiracial feminists reject gender-alone analyses of social phenomena. They assert that gendered experiences are informed by race, class, age, sexuality, physical ability, and “other locations of inequality;” and that the “social relations based on gender and race [are] interactive terms and not just additive” (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996: Burgess-Proctor 2006: 36). Thus, where Black feminism centers the lived experiences of Black women and other Black genders, and sexuality, marginalized people, multiracial feminism provides a framework to examine, and hold relationally to each other, differential racialized genders, and the effect that race and gender have on police use of force in police encounters.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

### *Data, Methods, and Hypotheses*

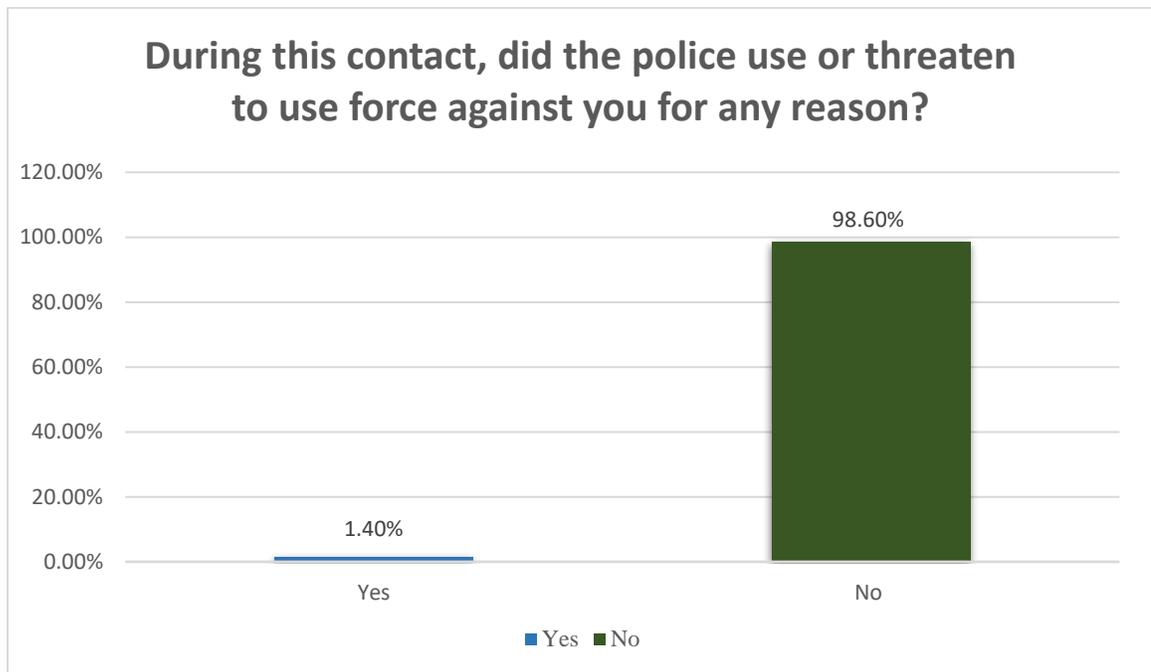
The survey data set in this study is from the Police-Public Contact Survey (2008), a supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The data were obtained from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. The Police-Public Contact Survey (2008) was administered via telephone and in person interviews with a stratified, multistage cluster sample of U.S. households. It was administered as a supplemental survey in 2008 to all persons 16 years old or older within households sampled for the NCVS (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008).

The purpose of the Police-Public Contact Survey (2008) was to gather data regarding the nature and characteristics of face-to-face contacts between police and the public, including the reason for the contact and contact outcomes (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008). Respondents were asked about police officer behavior during face-to-face interactions, whether police used force in interactions, whether they felt the use of force was excessive, whether respondents were injured in interactions with police and the type of injury suffered, whether respondents were arrested and handcuffed in this police-citizen interaction, as well the nature of their behavior when they interacted with police. Respondents were also asked about the reasons for contact with police, and a series of questions that pertained to traffic stops, specifically. Additionally, respondents were asked about whether they were searched by police in their interaction with them, and outcomes of other contacts with police (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008). Demographic data including race, ethnicity, sex, age, and employment status were also collected. Ages of those

surveyed ranged from 16 to 90, with a mean of 39.84 and a median of 38. Respondents were 53.1% male and 46.9% female, while 74.9% were White, 10.3% Hispanic, 9.5 % Black, 3.5% Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.1% two or more races, .7% American Indian/Alaskan Native (N= 37,872,494).

For the purpose of this study,<sup>1</sup> I identified one dependent variable from this data set-- likelihood of police use or threatening to use force in face-to-face interactions with citizens. The specific question used in this analysis was, “During this contact, did the police USE or THREATEN TO USE force against you for any reason?” The frequency distribution of for this question can be found in Figure 1. A large majority reported that the police had not used or threatened to use force against them, 98.60%, while 1.40% reported that the police had used or threatened to use force against them. The dependent variable was dummy coded, where 1 = yes and 0 = no.

Figure 1 Frequency distribution of police using or threatening to use force in police-public contacts



Source: Police-Public Contact Survey, 2008

### *Independent Variables*

<sup>1</sup>A filter was created so as to only include those who indicated that they had a face-to-face contact with a police officer in the last 12 months.

Primary independent variables for this study include race and sex, while control variables include age, verbal altercation with the police,<sup>2</sup> respondent disobeyed the police, respondent tried to flee from the police, and respondent resisted arrest. All independent variables except for the intersectionality and age variables were transformed into dichotomous dummy variables (1= yes, 0= no) for analysis. The intersectionality variable is comprised of the sex and race variable and consists of six categories: White male, White female, Black male, Black female, Hispanic male, and Hispanic female.<sup>3</sup> Age<sup>4</sup> is a six-category variable comprised of the following intervals: 16 to 19, 20 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, and aged 60 and older.

Review of literature regarding police use of force suggests that race is an important factor in police use of force, while the effect that sex has on use of force is fairly inconclusive. I hypothesize that, generally, the intersection of race and sex will have an effect on use of force. Specifically, I hypothesize that Black males, Black females, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females will have greater likelihood to report police use or threatened use of force than White males. I also expect White females to have a lesser likelihood to report police use or threatened use of force than White males.

Youths, adolescents, and young adults tend to have greater encounters with the police than older people (Langton and Durose 2013). As a result, I hypothesize that because they have more contacts with police, respondents between the ages of 16 and 19, and 20-29, will be more likely to report police use or threatened use of force than older respondents.

Displays of “insufficient deference” with police have been linked with police use of force, historically and contemporarily (Hill 2016: 69; Taylor 2016; Kelley 2016). Therefore, I hypothesize that respondents who indicated they had verbal altercations with police, disobeyed the police, attempted to flee the presence of the police, and attempted to resist arrest would be more likely to report police use or threatened use of force than respondents who did not indicate engaging in any of these behaviors.

---

<sup>2</sup> The survey question was: At any time during this contact did you (a) disobey or interfere with the officers(s) (b) Try to get away? (c) Push, grab, or hit the police officer(s)? (d) Resist being handcuffed, arrested, or searched? (e) Physically do anything else? Please specify

<sup>3</sup> Multicollinearity is not a problem as tolerance and VIF values were within the acceptable range of greater than .40 and less than 2.5, respectively (Allison 1999)

<sup>4</sup> Multicollinearity is not a problem as tolerance and VIF values were within the acceptable range of greater than .40 and less than 2.5, respectively (Allison 1999)

## ANALYSIS

The dependent variable in my analysis of the Police-Public Contact Survey (PPCS) data was dichotomous. As a result, I ran a binary logistic regression model to assess the likelihood of respondents reporting that police either use or threatened to use force when interacting with people. Because this study relies on a binary logistic regression, I do not run the risk of violating core assumptions of the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions, including linearity (Pampel 2000). Moreover, there are multiple statistics that are used in the logistic regression analysis. The chi-square statistic shows me to determine whether the model is statistically significant, while the unstandardized slope,  $B$ , represents the change in the dependent variable based on the independent variables in log odds (Pampel 2000). For this logistic regression analysis, I use the Wald statistic to determine the statistical significance of the independent variables. In addition, the odds ratio estimated in the logistic regression allows me to determine the likelihood of a statistically significant independent variable increasing or decreasing the extent to which police used force or threatened to use force when interacting with respondents (Bachman and Paternoster 2004).

### *Missing Data*

Listwise deletion of missing data in the logistic regression resulted in an insubstantial loss of cases in the data set; .5% of the 9,504 cases were dropped due to missing data.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of my logistic regression using the PPCS data. The model  $\chi^2$  is statistically significant, indicating that the model significantly reduces the -2 loglikelihood ( $\chi^2 = 962541.164$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The Hosmer and Lemeshow test for goodness of fit of the model to the data is statistically significant, suggesting that we reject the null hypothesis of good fit ( $\chi^2 = 19506.671$ ,  $p = .000$ ). McFadden's pseudo  $R^2$  shows there is a 17.3% reduction in error compared with the null model.

**Table 1** Police-Public Contact Survey (2008): binary logistic regression coefficients, standard errors, and odds ratios for police use of force

Variable	Coeff.	se	Odds
White Male			
White Female	-.779**	.004	.459
Black Male	.789**	.005	2.201
Black Female	.646**	.005	1.909
Hispanic Male	.180**	.005	1.197

Hispanic Female	-.696**	.008	.498
Age (60 or older)			
Age 50-59	.058**	.009	1.060
Age 40-49	.595**	.008	1.814
Age 30-39	1.003**	.008	2.727
Age 20-29	1.594**	.007	4.924
Age 16-19	1.599**	.008	4.947
Verbal Altercation	2.733**	.005	15.386
Disobeyed	3.530**	.008	34.111
Flee	.951**	.015	2.588
Resisted Arrest	1.405**	.013	4.076
Constant	-5.442**	.007	.004
Model $\chi^2$	962541.164**		
Omnibus $\chi^2$ for Race,Sex and Age	962514.164		
McFadden pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.173		
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test	19506.671**		

\*\*p<.01, \*p<.05 one tailed tests

The results of the regression indicate that the intersectionality variable, RaceSex, overall, had a statistically significant relationship with the likelihood of reporting police use or threatened use of force in police-public contacts. When observed as individual categories, being Black male ( $\beta = .789, p < .01$ ), Black female ( $\beta = .646, p < .01$ ), and Hispanic male ( $\beta = .180, p < .01$ ), had statistically significant positive relationships with police use of force. Black males and females were about 2 times more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force in police-public contacts than White males. Hispanic males were 19.7% more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force in interactions with police than White males. These results support the hypotheses about the overall effects of the intersection of race and sex, on police use force, and they also support the hypotheses about the effects of being Black male, Black female, and Hispanic male on police use of force.

It was found that being White female ( $\beta = -.779, p < .01$ ), and Hispanic female ( $\beta = -.696, p < .01$ ), had statistically significant negative relationships with police use of force. White females were 54.1% less likely to report police use or threatened use of force in police-public contacts than White males, while Hispanic females were 50.2% less likely to report police use or threatened use of force in police interactions than White males. While results for White females support the

hypothesis about the effect of being White female on police use of force, the results for Hispanic females contradict the hypothesis about the effect of being Hispanic female on police use of force.

Age, overall, was found to have a statistically significant relationship with police use of force. For respondents between the ages of 50 and 59 ( $\beta = .058, p < .01$ ), they were 6% more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force than the oldest respondents, aged 60 and older. Respondents between the ages 40 and 49 ( $\beta = .595, p < .01$ ), were 81.4% more likely to report police use or threatened use of force. Those between the ages of 30 and 39 ( $\beta = 1.003, p < .01$ ), were 2.7 times more likely to report police use or threatened use of force than the oldest respondents. Respondents between the ages of 16 and 19 ( $\beta = 1.599, p < .01$ ), and those between the ages of 20 and 29 ( $\beta = 1.594, p < .01$ ), were about 5 times more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force in police-public contacts than the oldest respondents. These results are consistent with the hypothesis about the youngest groups of respondents--those aged 16 to 19 and 20 to 29—would be most likely to experience force or the threat of force in police encounters.

Consistent with the hypotheses about the effect of absence of deference variables on police use of force, it was found that all four absence of deference variables had statistically significant positive relationships with police use of force. Respondents who indicated they disobeyed or interfered with the officer(s) ( $\beta = 3.530, p < .01$ ) during contact were 34 times more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force than those who did not. Respondents who claimed to have argued with, cursed at, insulted, or verbally threatened the police ( $\beta = 2.733, p < .01$ ) were 15 times more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force in contacts with police, than respondents who did not. Additionally, respondents who indicated that they resisted being handcuffed, arrested, or searched ( $\beta = 1.405, p < .01$ ), were 4 times more likely to report police use, or threatened use, of force by police in police-public contacts. Respondents who claimed that they tried to get away from the police ( $\beta = .951, p < .01$ ) were about 2.5 more likely to report police use of force than those who did not such attempts.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research analyzed whether the combined effects of respondent race and gender identities on police use, or threatened use, of force are significant. My hypothesis that the intersection of race and sex will have an effect on use of force, generally, was supported. The more specific hypotheses regarding Black males and females, White females, and Hispanic males were supported, while the hypothesis about Hispanic females was not supported. Because there remains a need for the quantitative exploration into the combined effect of race and gender on police officers use or threatened use of police force when interacting with civilians, this

study aimed to address this need in the literature. The revelation of the positive association between Black males, Black females, and Hispanic males and police use of force is consistent with literature regarding racially marginalized populations and policing in the United States (Jacobs 2017; Kelley 2016) and may be related to police officers having racialized gendered expectations of members of marginalized groups (Kelley 2016, Paoline et al. 2018).

The significance of the insufficient deferential authority measures, and the significant effect that age has on police use of force in this model suggests that police officers also have racialized and gendered expectations for deference, especially among younger people. In his study about Black and Latino youth, Rios (2015) suggests that youth of color may engage in behaviors toward police officers, that police likely interpret as inadequate deference. As a result, police may feel the need to deploy force to “keep them in their place” (Bonilla-Silva 2014: 42). However, the likelihood of reporting that the police threatened the use of force or used force in their interactions, by respondents between the ages of 40 and 49 is a surprising finding; there is an expectation that the quality of interactions with police should improve as respondents age. This is a change we can see in the gradual decline in odds between those respondents in the response categories of 20-29 and 30-39. It is worth conducting an in-depth analysis on the factors and influences that shape respondents’ experiences with police who fall into the age range between 40 and 49 years old.

White females’ reduced likelihood to report police use or threatened use of force compared to White males was consistent with my expectations about effect of this combination of respondent’s race and sex, because White female’s position as the normative standard for femininity (Jacobs 2017) may afford them an assumption of innocence not extended to women of Color. In their study about Black women’s perceptions of the police, Gabbidon, Higgins, and Potter (2011) note White females are less likely to be arrested for violent offenses and incarcerated for drug offenses than Black females. White females’ lower arrest rate compared to their Black counterparts suggests that they also have fewer contacts with police than Black females. Additionally, White females’ social status may render them less likely to have interactions with police informed by the conflation of their racialized gender expressions with deviance, hyper-sexuality, or aggression-- all of which may be viewed as needing to be restrained (Jacobs 2017). It appears that Black females are disadvantaged by misogynoir, or the co-constitutive, anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience (Bailey 2010; Bailey and Trudy 2018), in their interactions with police in ways that White females are not.

The findings for Hispanic females suggest that, unlike their male counterparts who are more likely than White males to report police use or threatened use of force, they are less likely than White males to report that police used or

threatened to use force in their interactions. This indicates that there is something unique about occupying a social position in which one is both Hispanic and female, that reduces the likelihood of police threatening or using force in their interactions with Hispanic females. Additionally, the institutional and structural dynamics that shape Hispanic females' interactions with police officers may have a different impact on Hispanic males and may differ from those that influence Black males' and Black females' interactions with police. Future research should examine the broader social forces that shape Hispanic females' interactions with police, and when police are more likely to threaten to use, or use, force when interacting with Hispanic females. In the last few years, we have seen anti-immigrant rhetoric targeting Hispanic and Latinos and their presence in the body politic, so it is important to consider how the more recent political climate influence interactions between police and Hispanic females.

## LIMITATIONS

Although the results from this study have afforded us some insight into the effects of the intersection of race and sex on police use of force and provide support for the claims of criminologists who conduct intersectional analyses, this study is not without its limitations. First, I only examined the likelihood of police use or threatened use of force. Further questions raised by the results of this study include whether and to what extent the race\*sex intersection predicts specific use of force outcomes, like the use of a Taser on a suspect, or being shot by the police. Additionally, due to the dichotomous nature of the use of force outcome in the data set, I was not able to examine whether there is a linear relationship between race\*sex variables and use of force. Therefore, future research should examine more specific use of force outcomes and develop continuous measures of use of force to assess whether there exists a linear relationship between race\*sex and other important variables. In particular, the use of continuous outcome variables may present an opportunity to conduct more complex analyses in the future.

Second, because this research utilizes a cross-sectional design, causality cannot be inferred from the model. While it may appear that the independent variables tested in this variable are in fact predictors of police use or threatened use of force in police-public contacts, it is also very much possible that variations in police behavior, like type of force used by individual police officers may influence the effect that the interaction of race and sex has on police use of force (Paoline and Terill 2004). Therefore, I propose the following suggestions. Future research should use a longitudinal research design to examine the effect of the intersection of race and sex on police use or threatened use of force, across time. Currently, there are several police-public contact survey data sets available, so it is a possible option for future researchers. It may be useful to test three-way interactions between

respondent race, sex, and officer race, as well as respondent race, sex, and each of the different insufficient deference variables.

The use of secondary data sources presents a unique set of limitations for the present study. The purpose for collecting these data was to provide information about the nature and characteristics of face-to-face contacts between police and the public, including the reason and outcome. While these data were helpful in gaining insight about the effect of race and sex on police use or threatened use of force, I was still left with some less than ideal measures that resulted in the removal of categories from some variables that may have enriched the current study. The most pressing problem with using this data set is that there does not exist a gender variable. Because “sex” is being used as proxy for gender in this model, it is important to exercise caution about the conclusions that can be made about the combined effect of race and sex on police use of force. In other words, as sex refers to biological traits, not the more fluid and dynamic social construct that is gender, caution must be used when attempting to generalize these claims. Future research should merge available data sets from the police-public contact survey to provide enough cases in certain variables (e.g., race categories including two or more races), as a remedy for the former issue. For the latter, it is important that surveys and questionnaires that collect official data include items treating gender and sex separately, including more than two sex categories for those who are intersex, and including more categories in the gender item beyond the binary “woman/man” categories to capture more than these two genders.

While this study draws on Black feminist and multiracial perspectives, the variables in the study do not allow for an exploration into the ways in which the Black, Hispanic, and White females and males are experiencing their interactions with police officers in uniquely gendered ways. In other words, we are not able to gain insight into how the context within which the situations in which police officers threatened to use force or use force in their interactions with civilians, are experienced differently by males and females. This is another direction in which future research may be directed.

Given the different odds ratios revealed in these analyses, future researchers may begin more in-depth, qualitative studies to explore the dimensions of racialized gender identities that either increase the odds of certain racially marginalized people to experience and report police use of force in interactions with police, and decrease them for others, compared to White males. Additionally, along with theorizing about how White maleness and masculinities are privileged in this society and how these privileges appear to make respondents more or less likely to report police use of force, we should conduct qualitative studies to explore those who identified as both White and male to understand what other social conditions, and identities enhance or minimize their likelihood to report police use, or threatened use, of force in interactions with police. Lastly, another possibility for

future research might be to look at the interaction between intersectionality and the absence of deference items on likelihood to report police use, or threatened use of force in interactions with police.

---

#### References

- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press
- Armenta, Amanda. 2017. "Racializing Crimmigration: Structural Racism, Colorblindness, and Institutional Production of Immigrant Criminality." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 3(1):82-95.
- Baca Zinn, Maxine, and Bonnie Thornton Dill. 1996. "Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism." *Feminist Studies* 22 (2): 321-331.
- Bachman, Ronet, and Raymond Paternoster. 2004. *Statistical Methods for Criminology and Criminal Justice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill
- Bass, Sandra. 2001. "Policing Space, Policing Race: Control Imperatives and Police Discretionary Decisions." *Social Justice* 28 (1):156-176
- Bell, Kerryn E. 2013. "Young Adult Offending: Intersectionality of Gender and Race." *Critical Criminology* 21: 103-121.
- Blackmon, Douglas A. 2008. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. NY: Anchor Books.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. *Racism Without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Bolger, Colin P. 2015. "Just Following Orders: A Meta-Analysis of the Correlates of American Police Officer Use of Force Decisions" *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 40: 466-492.
- Brunson, Rod K., and Ronald Weitzer. 2009. "Police Relations with Black and White Youths in Different Urban Neighborhoods" *Urban Affairs Review* 44(6): 858-885
- Burgess-Proctor, Amanda. 2006. "Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Crime: Future Directions for Feminist Criminology." *Feminist Criminology* 1(1): 27-47.

- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2006. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 14: 139–67.
- Crutchfield, Robert D., Martie L. Skinner, Kevin P. Haggerty, Anne McGlynn, and Richard F. Catalano. 2012. "Racial Disparity in Police Contact" *Race and Justice* 2(3): 179-202
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. 2012. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Engel, Robin Shepard, and Jennifer Calnon. 2004. "Examining the influence of drivers' characteristics during traffic stops with police: Results from a national survey." *Justice Quarterly* 21: 49-90.
- Gabbidon, Shaun L., George E. Higgins, and Hillary Potter. 2011. "Race, Gender, and the Perception of Recently Experiencing Unfair Treatment by the Police: Exploratory Results From an All-Black Sample" *Criminal Justice Review* 36(1): 5-21
- Graham, David A. 2015. Sandra Bland and the Long History of Racism in Waller County. *The Atlantic* Retrieved June 16, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/sandra-bland-waller-county-racism/398975/>
- Hill, Marc Lamont. 2016. *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond*. New York, NY: Atria Books
- Hughey, Matthew W. 2015. "The Five I's of Five-O: Race Ideologies, Institutions, Interests, Identities, and Interactions of Police Violence." *Critical Sociology* 41(6): 857-871
- Jacobs, Michelle S. 2017. "The Violent State: Black Women's Invisible Struggle Against Police Violence." *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 24(1): 39-100.
- Kamat, Anjali. 2016. "The Baltimore Uprising" Pp. 74-82 in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*, edited by J.T. Camp and C. Heatherton. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.

- Kelley, Robin D.G. 2016. "Thug Nation." Pp. 15-33 in *Policing the Planet: Why The Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*. Edited by J.T. Camp and C. Heatherton. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.
- McCluskey, John, and William Terill. 2004. "Departmental and citizen complains as predictors of police coercion." *Policing: An international Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 28: 513-529.
- Lawton, Brian A. 2007. "Levels of nonlethal force: Baseline data from an observational study" *Journal of Crime and Delinquency* 44: 163-184
- Langton, Lynn and Matthew Durose. 2016. *Police Behavior during Traffic and Street Stops, 2011*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Lipsitz, George. 2016. "Policing Space and Taxing Time on Skid Row." Pp. 123-139 in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*. Edited by J.T. Camp and C. Heatherton. Brooklyn, NY: Verso
- Messerschmidt, James. 2014. *Crime as Structured Action: Doing Masculinities, Race, Class, Sexuality, and Crime*. United Kingdom: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Pampel, Fred. 2000. *Logistic Regression: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage University Press
- Paoline, Eugene, and William Terrill. 2004. "Women police officers and the use of coercion." *Women and Criminal Justice* 15: 97-119.
- Paoline III, Eugene, Jacinta M. Gau, and William Terill. 2018. "Race and the Police Use of Force Encounter in the United States." *British Journal of Criminology* 58: 54-74
- Pitman, Brian, Asha M. Ralph, Jocelyn Camacho, and Elizabeth Monk-Turner. "Social Media Users' Interpretations of the Sandra Bland Arrest Video." *Race and Justice* 9(4): 1-19.
- Potter, Hillary. 2013. "Intersectional Criminology: Interrogating Identity and Power in Criminological Research and Theory." *Critical Criminology* 21:305-318
- Richie, Beth E. 2012. *Arrested Justice: Black women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. New York: New York University Press.

- Ritchie, Andrea J. 2017. *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Rios, Victor M. 2015. "Policed, Punished, Dehumanized: The Reality for Young Men of Color." Pp. 59-80 in *Deadly Injustice: Trayvon Martin, Race and the Criminal Justice System*, edited by D.Johnson, P.Y.Warren, and A. Farrell. New York: New York University Press.
- Rogers, Katie. (2016). F.B.I. investigating police accounts of black woman's death in custody. The New York Times Retrieved February 19, 2016.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/17/nytnow/online-campaign-questions-official-account-of-sandra-bland-death.html>
- Russell-Brown, Kathryn. 2009. *The Color of Crime*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Yor: New York University
- Rydberg, Jason. and William Terill. 2010. "The effect of higher education on police behavior." *Police Quarterly* 13: 92-120.
- Taylor, Keenga-Yamahatta. 2016. *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Westley, William A. 1953. "Violence and the police." *American Journal of Sociology* 59: 34-41.
- U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Police-Public Contact Survey, 2008 [Computer File]. Conducted by U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.