

Source: Jeremy Briggs, jsbriggs@k-state.edu

Hometown connection: Topeka, Kan.

News release prepared by: Jennifer Tidball, 785-532-0847, jtorline@k-state.edu

*Thursday, June 21, 2012*

## **ROUTINE JUSTICE: RESEARCH SHOWS HOW RACIAL AND GENDER PROFILING CAN AFFECT OUTCOME OF TRAFFIC STOPS**

MANHATTAN -- Racial profiling has gained national attention in recent years, and a Kansas State University researcher is finding that it can involve an additional factor: gender.

Jeremy Briggs, doctoral candidate in sociology, **Topeka**, is analyzing police actions during routine traffic stops to understand how race and gender are connected. Perhaps one of his most significant findings is that black and Hispanic women are just as likely as white men to be ticketed, arrested or searched during a traffic stop.

"Racial profiling has really come back into political discussions, especially in national media," Briggs said. "It still matters in traffic stops."

For his research, Briggs is using a national set of data called the Police Public Contact Survey. The data set was collected in 2005 and includes information from citizens above the age of 16 about their most recent contact with police. The data set includes traffic stops, which are the most common form of police-level contact.

Briggs looked at reasons for a traffic stop, some of which included speeding, turning lane violations, traffic light or stop sign violations, drunk driving check lanes and other reasons. Speeding was the most common reason for a traffic stop. He also looked at outcomes of the traffic stop: if the driver received a warning, if the driver received a ticket, if the driver was arrested or if the driver was searched.

"In a real scenario, any of those outcomes are possible at the same time," Briggs said. "A person could receive a ticket and be arrested. Or they could be searched but just receive a warning. There are a number of possibilities in any given stop."

From 23 possible outcome variables in the data, Briggs constructed a dependent variable that consisted of four mutually exclusive traffic stop outcomes. He used multinomial statistical techniques to estimate the strongest predictors of each of these outcomes.

Some of his most significant findings include:

\* When compared with men, women were 23 percent less likely to be ticketed, 55 percent less likely to be arrested and 76 percent less likely to be searched when stopped by police. Women were more likely to only receive a warning or have no outcome when stopped by police during a traffic stop.

\* Black and Hispanic drivers were significantly more likely to be searched, ticketed and arrested than white drivers when stopped by police. For example, black drivers were more than twice as likely to be searched or arrested when compared with white drivers. Hispanic drivers were almost three times as likely to be searched when compared with white drivers.

By combining data dealing with race and gender, Briggs found the differences between men and women do not hold up for all races. Out of all racial and ethnic categories of male and female drivers, white women were most likely to receive a perceived benefit in a traffic stop, such as receiving only a warning or no outcome at all. But the same is not true for black and Hispanic women, who were just as likely as white men to be ticketed, arrested or searched instead of receiving a warning or no outcome.

Black and Hispanic men were the most likely to be ticketed, arrested or searched during a traffic stop. Black men were 2.5 times as likely as white men to be arrested and twice as likely to be searched. Hispanic men were 1.5 times as likely as white men to receive a ticket and more than three times as likely to be searched.

"We can't make sense of racial differences without also considering sex and gender," Briggs said. "We have to look at sex and gender at the same time as race and ethnicity because they're connected in important ways. What I found in the case of traffic stops was that racial differences are deeply gendered as well. This connection should be a part of the larger racial profiling discussion."

Briggs also studied the race of police officers during traffic stops. He found that officer race does not appear to have a significant effect on the outcome of the traffic stop. Rather, the outcome seemed to be most affected by driver's characteristics.

"It is possible that racial and gender differences are explained by some of the controls, such as the reason for the stop, driving frequency and other demographics," Briggs said. "But it's also possible that when considering all these other controls, racial profiling still stands. My analysis shows that race and gender do still matter in traffic stops, even controlling for many of these other factors."

Briggs plans future studies that will focus on different types of analysis with race and sex categories. His adviser is Dana Britton, professor of sociology.

#