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The Relationship Between Race and Policing

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2023 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

Department of Sociology

Moderator: Erin Pryor, Ph.D.

April 19, 2023, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

The Relationship between Race and Policing.

Ashley Dorway, Dalton Hodge, Sofia Wells

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Erin Pryor

Racial disparities exist in nearly all areas of the criminal-legal system: such as arrests (Mitchell, O. & Caudy, M.S. 2015; Schleiden, Soloski, K. L., Milstead, K., & Rhynehart, A. 2020), incarceration and sentence length (Omori, & Petersen, N. 2020), and capital punishment (Ndulue, N. 2020), to name a few. These disparities have been discussed at length by traditional and contemporary scholars and activists alike, including Angela Davis, Michelle Alexander, Bryan Stevenson, and Tarana Burke. Within this context, we examine the issue of police violence against people of color. While disproportionate contact with the police can be traced back to the beginnings of the police force as a runaway slave patrol in the South (Brucato 2020), and the Jim Crow era in the North when Black Americans from the south migrated North, the last century has seen numerous, highly publicized cases of police violence (AP News, 2021) and the emergence of data about the overrepresentation of people of color in such fatal encounters (Schwartz & Jahn 2020). Throughout the course of Dr. Pryor's class, we have learned and utilized various social research methods. Through this course process, we reviewed existing data in regards to the criminal-legal system, conducted a survey completed by individuals in the Introduction to Sociology class at Belmont University, analyzed existing secondary data, performed a content analysis of accounts from Portland protesters, and will be interviewing an individual with direct experience with the law-enforcement system. Through the use of these methods, our research explores the relationship between racial biases and law-enforcement, as well as the differing perception of policing within minority communities.