The Association Between Race and the Likelihood of Being Targeted by Law Enforcement in a Traffic Stop Through Racial Profiling

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Introduction

- Racial profiling is the discriminatory practice by law enforcement that targets individuals for suspicion of criminal acts based on race, ethnicity, religion or national origin (Hinton).

- This is a concern, as many researchers have seen a positive correlation between people of color in traffic stops and getting arrested for "petty crimes"(Walker).

- While the association has been well established in the literature, less is known about further consequences received after a traffic stop, depending on race and ethnicity, especially in a predominantly white state like CT.

- Additionally, majority of residents in CT are white and make up 66.3% of the population, while black people are 10%, Hispanic 8.97%, Asian 4.61%, and others 5.51% (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Connecticut).

Research Questions

- What are the odds that minorities (specifically Black people and Hispanics) will receive further consequences compared to their white counterparts? Do these results differ between males and females?

- Is there an association between race and ethnicity and getting stopped by police due to a blind check?

Methods

Sample

- The sample data from the CT Traffic Stop Data Codebook includes 366,060 subjects that represent citizens of Connecticut from the ages 16-75.

- CT Traffic Stop Data Codebook took racial/ethnic identity, sex, age, intervention reason, intervention technique, etc… for individuals.

Measures

- Data on the proportion of individuals who were blind checked and those who received further consequences in the stop were recorded based on police records that were then culminated into this data set. These are the variables of focus.

- Subjects were categorized by race and ethnicity to quantify which racial/ethnic group had the highest amount of traffic stops, blind checks, and further consequences (vehicle searched, vehicle towed, and/or custodial arrest).

- Variable blind check is an intervention reason by police that means that police had no tangible reason to stop driver other than their personal inclination (implies racial bias/profiling).

Results

Univariate

- 68.7% of respondents were white, 13.8% Black, 12.6% Hispanic, 3.2% Middle Eastern, and 1.6% Asian/Native American

Bivariate

- A chi square test of independence showed that **race/ethnicity** were significantly and positively associated with **receiving a traffic stop due to a blind check** (p<0.001) (Figure 1).

- A post hoc test was conducted via the Bonferroni Method that confirmed each racial/ethnic group was significantly different from each other, in relation to individuals getting blind checked.

Figure 1. Racial/Ethnic Identity and the Likelihood of Getting Blind Checked in a Traffic Stop

Is there a relationship between racial/ethnic identity and the likelihood of being stopped via blind check?
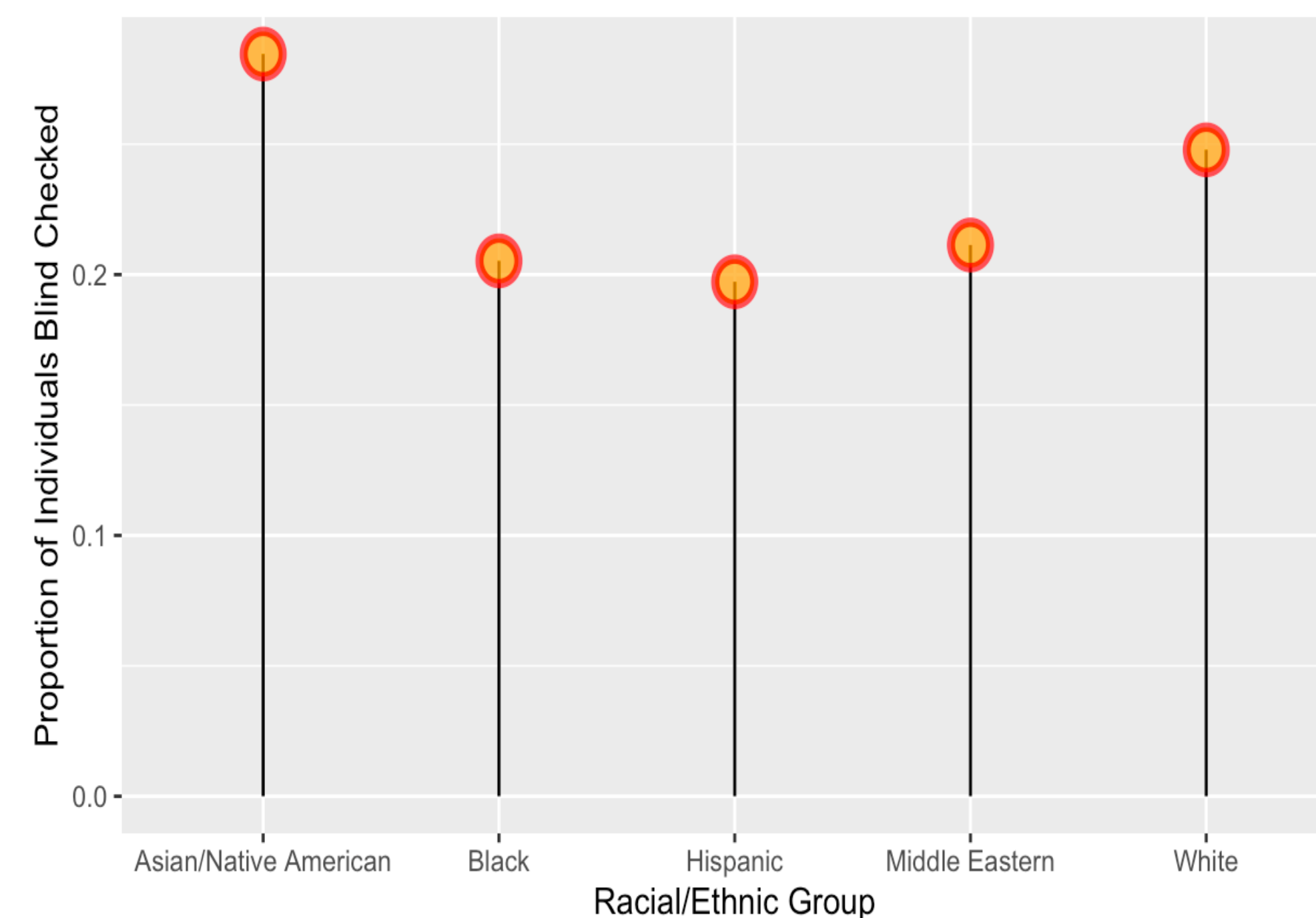
- A logistic regression analysis showed that **male individuals were significantly more likely to receive further consequences** in all racial categories, indicated by all groups having p < 0.001

- The **odds ratio for males is significantly higher than that of females in all racial groups** ranging from 3-11.5 times more likely to receive further punishment depending on the racial category (Figure 2).

Multivariate

- Gender appears to moderate the relationship between receiving further consequences in a traffic stop, in that in all racial/ethnic categories, **females are less likely to** experience more consequences (Figure 2).

- After controlling for gender and racial identity, the likelihood of further consequences received is **significantly associated with Hispanic and Black males having the highest numbers** for receiving more punishment in a traffic stop (p<0.001)

Figure 2. Proportion of Individuals in each Racial Group Who Received Further Consequences Separated by Gender

Is there a relationship between racial/ethnic identity and the likelihood of receiving further consequences in a traffic stop? Is there a difference depending on Gender?
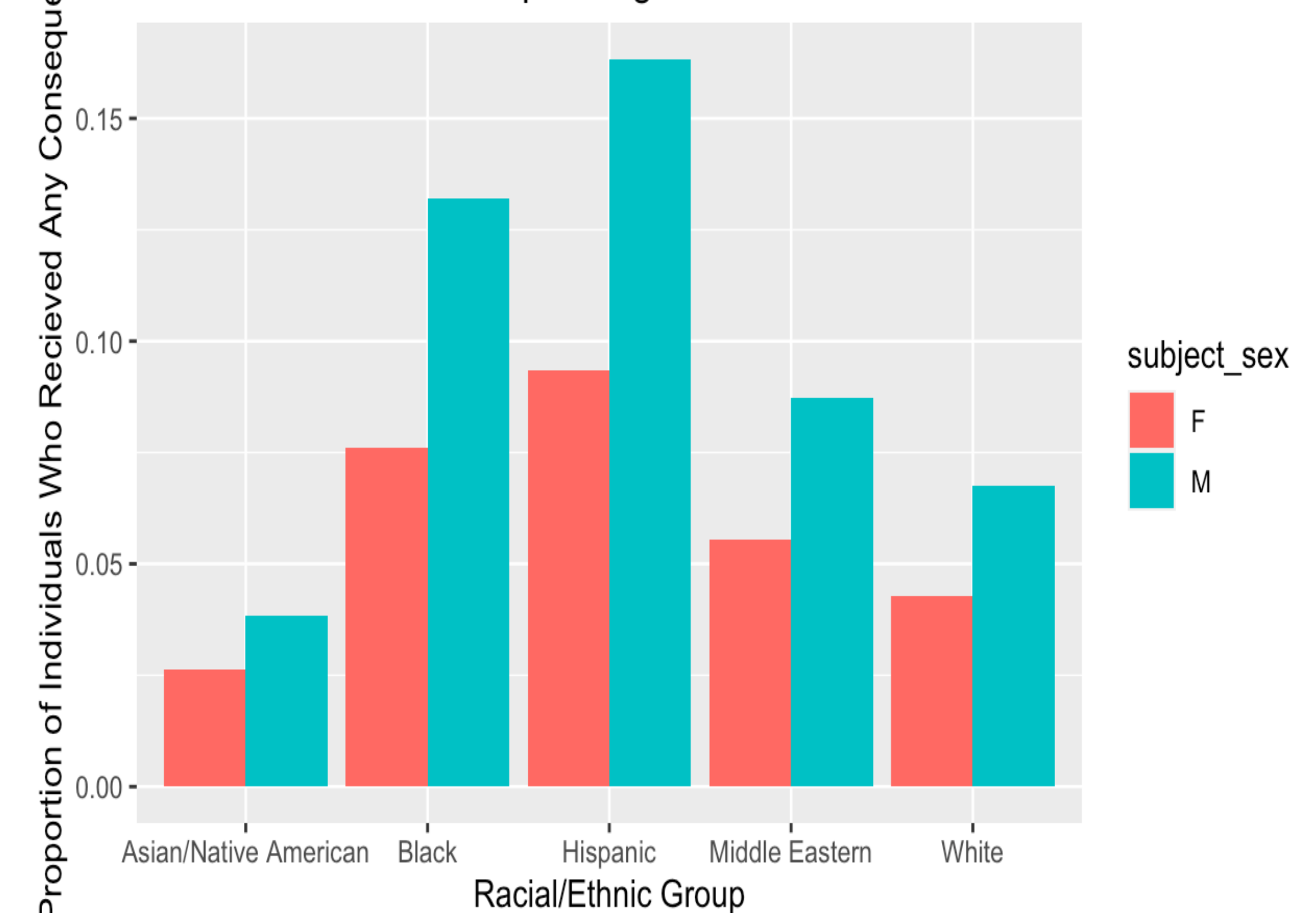
Discussion

- **Non-White individuals are disproportionately affected by blind check traffic stops**, as they all together make up the majority of those stopped via blind check when all non-white individuals only make up 32.2% of the data set.

- Race/ethnicity increases individuals' likelihood of being stopped in traffic by law enforcement through a blind check, as well as receiving further consequences in the stop compared to their white counterparts.

- Regardless of racial identity however, males in all racial categories are significantly more likely to be experience more consequences from the traffic stop than females.

- However, **Hispanic females and males have the highest rate of consequences received,** when comparing genders, during a traffic stop in traffic.

- Further research is needed to determine how these traffic stops derived from blind checks lead to violent altercations between police and non-white individuals, due to police racial bias.

Elizabeth Hinton[1] and DeAnza Cook[21]Departments of History and African American Studies. (n.d.). The mass criminalization of Black Americans: A historical overview. Retrieved May 05, 2021, from https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-criminol-060520-033306

"U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Connecticut." *Census Bureau QuickFacts*, www.census.gov/quickfacts/CT.

Walker, Bela August. "The Color of Crime: The Case against Race-Based Suspect Descriptions." *Columbia Law Review*, vol. 103, no. 3, 2003, p. 662., doi:10.2307/1123720.