

## **National Institute of Justice – Presentation to the Annual Conference on Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation - Urban Benchmarks and Racial Profiling, 2000**

Good Afternoon. I would like to express my appreciation to NIJ for asking me to participate in this conference. Of course, when Bob Kaminski called me and asked me to participate he was pretty adamant about saying something that was relevant to the people who would be here about benchmarks, specifically in urban areas. As I remember he suggested to me that a detailed discussion of the General Linear Model would be inappropriate. That, of course, took my security blanket away from me and made me think about how to approach the topic in a meaningful way.

So what I have decided to do is to describe some of the work that I am doing now in urban areas and where I hope this work will go. This is all by way of saying that this is a “work in progress” and I don’t have all, or even most of the answers right now. But hopefully that will change as time goes on. I’ve been in this situation before, back in 1993, when I was working on the issue of benchmarks for a highway. I sort of stumbled through that one and with your help and suggestions, hopefully we can come to some general consensus about what standard to compare the stop data that many departments are collecting to.

**I. Benchmarks and why they are necessary.** Let me start with an example of data collection without a benchmark. In North Carolina, where the State Legislature mandated that the State Police collect data, they did not mandate that a benchmark be established or that . . . . Recently a reporter from the Raleigh News & Observer called me and asked me for my reaction about the data that were published by the North

Carolina Highway Patrol. My response was simple—they mean nothing. To compare them to the overall racial/ethnic makeup of North Carolina is meaningless, primarily because those data do not take many variables into account. **The basic issue is how many of the cars that were travelling on highways that the North Carolina Highway Patrol patrols contain minority motorists. And unfortunately, the ethnic/racial makeup of a state probably does not reflect that number.**

Determining what the appropriate benchmark for different roads in North Carolina is a feasible project—in fact it can be done building upon the work we did in New Jersey and Maryland. Matt Zingraff will talk a little about that in a few minutes. The problem for many of you is that you don't need to know the racial/ethnic composition of a highway, but of highways, city thoroughfares and streets that make up your jurisdictions.

About a block away from my office at Temple University in Philadelphia is the intersection of Broad and Cecil B. Moore Avenue. The Philadelphia Police Department has been collecting data for about a year now on the race/ethnicity of every driver they stop. If they wanted to know what the appropriate percentage of black, Hispanic and other minority drivers stopped at Broad and Cecil B. Moore was, they would have quite a problem. The reasons for this are simple—the area in this part of Philadelphia is overwhelming made up of minorities. Yet Broad Street is a thoroughfare used by people coming into the city from Northeast Philadelphia and the northern suburbs, communities that are predominately white. Particularly at rush hours this intersection, with four lanes of heavy traffic is not primarily populated by North Philadelphia residents. Another confounding variable is Temple University, with a student body that is primarily white,

but with substantial minority students. The problem that I am working on is how to determine what the appropriate benchmark for an urban area is. And the reasons that we can't just arbitrarily use census data is that those data tell us how many of a given group live in a city, not how many drive on its streets. Let me give you an example of how census figures can vary. In 1993, when we determined that the percentage of African Americans violating the law on the New Jersey Turnpike was 15%, the percentage of African Americans who lived in New Jersey was 14.29%. That's pretty close. I could live with that difference. However, in 1995, when we determined that the percentage of African Americans who were violating the law on I-95 between Baltimore and the Delaware State line was 17.5%, the African American population of Maryland was 26.7%. Those numbers would have led us to a completely different and erroneous conclusion.

Why is this? I will mention only a couple of variables here in the sake of brevity. We know several things about certain minority populations. Certain minority populations, because they are overrepresented in the poorer segment of our population, have more young people below the eligible age to drive. This, of course, can be handled by making comparisons between groups on the basis of driving age eligible populations. We also know from the National Personal Transportation Survey that there are more African American and Hispanic than White households that do not own vehicles, so at the least they are less likely to drive. Nationwide, there are 6.8% fewer Hispanic than White Non Hispanic households that own vehicles and a huge 18.7% more African American than White households that do not own vehicles. Further, we know that that

nationwide, Whites average 4.4 vehicle trips daily and African Americans average only 3.9.

What I would like to be able to do is to develop an algorithm to move from population data to benchmark data. Further, I hope that there is some optical technology out there that can help us as well. A couple of weeks ago I was in London taking a cab from Gatwick to Heathrow airports. Because it was midnight when we got there and almost no cabs were available we doubled up with a Dutchman who lived in Washington and worked for the World Bank. I wasn't terribly interested in the conversation about Euro-2000, the soccer tournament, but when they turned to the cab driver's concern for being picked up speeding by a camera and fined, I became more interested. I am trying to find out what technology is out there already in place or deployable for a reasonable amount of money that would allow us to do some of the surveying that I'll talk about in a minute with technology. So far I don't have any definitive answers, but I suspect that with creative synthesis of population data, optical data and some research projects we will be able to develop urban benchmarks that are more inclusive and less resource intensive.

So in the interim, what do we do? I guess we can throw up our hands and say it can't be done—but that's no fun. What I want to talk about for a few minutes is what I am doing along with a Sheriff's Department in Washtenaw County, Michigan to try to get a handle on appropriate benchmarks for urban areas. Washtenaw County is just west of Detroit and contains Ann Arbor, but the Sheriff's Department does not patrol either Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti City. Their major urban area is Ypsilanti Township, but this is basically a county that has a rather large population concentration in urban

suburban areas. I have a partial map of the county that I would like to show you with several intersections circled. These intersections are in areas where the most tickets are presently issued. I spent 3 days in the County, selecting these places, or more accurately getting several people in the Department to show me the whole county and then working with them to select 15 places in the county we could survey that would fairly reflect their greatest areas of activity. Some of them are drug areas—when we rode by in an unmarked car with a plain clothes lieutenant driving, some of the people on the streets watched us intensely. Some of them are areas where people are coming from an outlying district into Ypsilanti or Ann Arbor. What I am reasonably sure the fifteen areas do is reflect a major part of the activity of the Sheriff's Department.

Our next step is to survey those areas and surveying in an urban area is different than surveying on an Interstate. One of the first problems is that the roads are often two lane, one in each direction and therefore, driving at the speed limit is not does not allow you to count cars. One advantage of working with a Police Department is they can tell you where there officers stop to observe traffic and that is what we are doing in this instance. There are already existing observation points for all of the 15 areas we have isolated and that's where our surveyors will work. So basically what we will do is survey traffic from fixed locations at randomly selected times and determine 15 different benchmarks for the area. These are areas that feed into each benchmark area and we will compare the stop data that the Department started collecting this month with the benchmarks to determine how the department is doing. Basically we have fifteen discreet areas to compare to 15 benchmarks. We have decided to postpone our surveying until September, because there are two major Universities in the County, Michigan University

and Eastern Michigan University. Together, these two schools enroll over 60,000 students and since the county population is a little over 300,000, my feeling is that we want to do our surveying when school is in session.

I don't think that this is the final chapter in what we will do to develop benchmarks in Urban Areas, rather it is the start. My intent is to put together the things I learn about roadway population in Washtenaw County and work on the best fit from the population data that will soon be available from the census. This will give us valuable information about building a recipe for translating census data to benchmarks. But there is a lot more to be done. One site is but a beginning. Adding optical equipment where it is available or feasible will add flexibility. But what we really need are two things—the first has been mentioned on several occasions—resources to develop benchmarks in other jurisdictions and police departments who are willing to work with us to develop them. I am confident that given these resources, it won't be long until we will be able to give each of you a lot more information about how to make meaningful comparisons to your stop data.

Thank you.