

# Recorded crime statistics and recorded crime criminology essay



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Researching Racially Motivated Offending and Offences. Racial violence refers to offences which are carried out simply because of an individual's racial background. A racist incident is any violent incident which is perceived to be racially motivated by the victim or anybody else who was around at the time of the attack or involved in the situation.

Two main ways that crime can be analyzed are through police recorded crime statistics and British crime survey data. Police recorded crime statistics are a good method in which local crime patterns can be analysed and assessed. The process involved takes place in three main steps: The crime being reported to the police, the police recording the crime and detecting a crime. Although these statistics are useful and informative, it's important to remember that the statistics are not 100% accurate as they only involve crime which has been reported to the police. Surveys' such as the British crime survey provide data measuring the amount of crime in certain areas including crimes which may not have been reported to the police or recorded by them. There may be numerous reasons why certain types of crime may not be reported to the police. One of the most common types of crime not to be reported is racial crime. Victims may feel that the crime committed is 'too trivial' or victims may feel that police couldn't do anything about it. The British crime survey uses a consistent methodology and unlike police recorded crime statistics, it is unaffected by changes in reporting or recording practices. Never-the-less, both the police recorded crime statistics and the British crime survey data work hand in hand in order to provide an overall image of crime rates. I will now go on to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of both these methods in more detail.

Police recorded crime is the only source of crime data for more serious crimes, including racial offending. The police reported crimes cover a range of victims who have been the target of racially motivated violence, unlike British crime survey which only covers households. However, there are many disadvantages to this method of recording crime statistics. This method fails to record all types of crime. Most of the time, the types of crimes reported to the police tend to be based around theft, as it is the requirement of pursuing insurance claims for the offence to be reported. People often lack confidence in the police force. This lack of confidence has an effect on the amount of crime which goes unreported because victims are made to feel that even if they did report the crime, nothing would be done about it. Police recorded crime is also effected by local policing priorities and changes in reporting crime. As mentioned above, unlike car thefts, some crimes are less likely to be reported. For this reason, official crime statistics do not reflect the true extent of crimes, such as racial attacks, often because of the unwillingness of the victims to report such crimes to the police.

Data from British crime surveys are a better reflection of the true extent of crime. The data provides a better indication of the trends and patterns within a society, as it always uses the same methodology. In addition, data from this source provides many crimes which haven't been reported to the police or by the police therefore gives a better idea of the amount of racially motivated crime taking place. In spite of this, there are also downsides of this method. The survey often asks individuals if they have been victims of crime in a certain time frame. Yet, people often still report crimes which happened before or after the specified time period which makes the results

obtained from the questionnaires inaccurate and inconsistent. Research has shown that the wording of a question can often influence the answer and often cause dramatic changes in accounts of the incident. An example of how the wording of a question can affect the answer received is illustrated in the following study. Loftus and Palmer (1974) conducted a study where participants were shown a film of accident involving two vehicles. After watching the film, participants were asked to estimate how fast they think the car was travelling. Participants were split into different condition and each group was presented with a slightly different reworded question. Depending on the condition, participants were asked to estimate the speed the car was travelling when the two cars 'hit', 'smash', 'collided', and 'bumped' with each other. Those who had the question worded with 'smashed' reported a higher estimate in speed, whilst those with the word 'bumped' estimated a much lower speed. Also, the questions may not allow victims to give a full account of what they encountered. For example, in the study above, participants who were in the 'smashed' condition, were much more likely to report broken glass at the scene (even though there was non) than participants in the 'bumped' condition. Victims of sexual and racial crime may be less willing to give an account of the incident in order to avoid bringing back painful memories. The British crime survey has shown low crime rates in areas where actually, the rate of crime is high. This suggests that the survey doesn't use a large enough sample size which means that generalisation cannot be made. It's also important to remember that data from this survey doesn't include any crime which may have been conflicted on children (16+) as the questionnaire is only completed by over 16's.

In order to investigate the extent of racially motivated violence, statistical data can be analysed. As well as using the forms of statistical data discussed earlier, other data sources providing statistical data from other parts of the world can also be used. Records show that in England and Wales (2007/2008) police recorded crime showed 57, 055 incidents of racially motivated incidents where as British crime survey data showed 207, 000 incidents off racially motivated violence. The US FBI statistics show that in 2008, of 7780 single bias crime reported 51. 3% was racially motivated. Data provided by the Home Office shows a vast increase in the number of reported racially motivated crime since 1990. This would suggest that the amount of this sort of violence has increased. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the case may be that victims were never given a chance to voice racial attacks in the past. It has also been proposed that in the 1990's, police often overlooked racial violence and explained it by referring to it as 'disagreement between neighbours' rather than addressing the true motives behind the offences. The Home Office report ion 1981 showed that victim's o racial violence lacked confidence in coming forward to police authorities (Home Office, 1981: 17). The above data, along with other statistical resources, trends and patterns can be analysed and conclusions can be made of the extent of racially motivated crime. Although data from surveys such as the British crime survey provide a better picture of the extent of racially motivated crime than police recorded statistics, there are still many incidents which go unreported which makes it difficult to make any firm conclusions.

The best way to investigate racial crime and violence is to take a methodological approach which can report and explore repeat victimization. In order to get the best research and best understanding of racial violence, both qualitative (research from open questioned questionnaires, surveys and case studies) and quantitative (data from closed questions providing overall numerical data) research methods must be adopted, as demonstrated by Bell and Newby, 1977. Quantitative data allows trends and patterns to be analysed. This type of method of research aims to collect a data which can later be sorted and explained. It is often a preferred method of research as it is independent of the individual's personal feeling and judgements and is purely based on the trend present through the data. On the other hand, qualitative data gives a better insight into why people are motivated to commit racial violence. Some researchers have argued that human behaviour is very complex and cannot be explained by quantitative data. Qualitative data, with regard to racially motivated violence, would provide a better and deeper insight into the original motivations of the offender. British criminologists have also proposed that case studies of racial incidents are useful in analysing motives and behaviour. The problem with case studies are that they individual to that case and the findings cannot therefore be generalised, however, analysis and conclusions made from a case study, combined with data from surveys (such as the British crime survey) offers a strong explanation for motives behind racial violence.

There are many practical, moral, ethical and legal issues which must be dealt with when investigating motivations of racially motivated offenders.

Criminologist, Jeff Ferrell, suggested that in order to completely understand

and appreciate motivations of racial offenders, it's essential for researchers to be prepared to be emotionally and logically involved in participating in criminal acts. Through doing this the researcher can gain a profound understanding of what goes on in a criminals mind. The individual would need to make some ethical decisions with regard to what sort of criminal activity they would be prepared to take part in. It is also important for them to assess what is appropriate for their study and any responsibilities they have to victims, criminals, themselves and others involved in their study. The researcher should take general responsibility for the investigation on the whole. In order to do this, the researcher should familiarise themselves with the basic knowledge of racial offences. They should seek advice when necessary in order to maintain their professionalism throughout the study and to maintain the general responsibilities they have. It is also the researcher's responsibility to ensure the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of participants is not affected. In order to do this, researchers should be wary of certain vulnerable factors such as age and status. The manner in which the researcher approaches possible racist offenders should not be affected by the researcher's personal feelings. At the beginning of the research, participants should be informed clearly to what extent anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed. Before making these guarantees, it's important for the researcher to take into account any laws which may affect the individual. A major ethical issue in this type of research is privacy. In sensitive cases, such as case studies, it's important that the researcher respects both the victim and offenders privacy. A great deal of care should be taken when handling any data obtained from case studies and the individuals involved should be given the opportunity to withdraw their data if

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they wish. Individuals are protected by the data protection act which means that the individual's identity and personal details should be kept private. At the beginning of the research, some deception may need to take place in order to avoid demand characteristics. For example, if the researcher openly tells individuals the reasons for this research, they may be inclined to give answers they feel the researcher wants. To avoid these demand characteristics, the true aims of the research should not be revealed straight away. However, because deception is unethical, at the end of the research, all individuals involved should be debriefed and given the opportunity to withdraw their data. This particular topic of research may be seen as socially sensitive. As a result, it's important that the researcher treats all individuals involved fairly and equally.

Over the years, police recorded crime and general crime statistics have seen a rise in racially motivated acts of violence. In order to carry out research into investigating the motivations involved in racially motivated offending, a number of ethical issues, as discussed above, need to be considered. To conclude, successful research into this topic should involve various different research methods: data from statistical measures of crime (quantitative data) and case studies (qualitative data). By using both of these methods, a good understanding of the extent of racially motivated violence should be obtained.