

# Fair and Impartial Policing

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Chief Noble Wray, Madison PD

# Sheriff Rahr

- Procedural Justice
  - Listen
  - Explain
  - **Equity**
  - **Dignity**

## My presentation will address:

- The “Fair and Impartial Policing” (FIP) perspective based on the science of bias.
  - The great potential of this perspective for producing change
  - COPS Office Curricula reflecting this new perspective.

The “Fair and Impartial Policing” perspective  
“Reframes” the issue of  
racially biased policing

# The “usual way” of thinking about racially biased policing

- Pertains to how police and stakeholders view the CAUSES of racially biased policing
- I believe that **many police and stakeholders** narrowly characterize the nature/causes of BP
- This has negatively impacted both the discussion and the change efforts.

Many  
stakeholders/police  
picture the  
“perpetrators” of RBP  
as

**Ill-intentioned officers**  
(and ONLY ill-intentioned officers)

# This narrow conceptualization has been detrimental.

- It has harmed police community discussions/partnerships on this topic
- It has produced (understandable) defensiveness on the part of police
  - ...led police to minimize the problem
- it has led to misguided (at least narrow) change efforts.

# The science tells us: Well Meaning Officers Can Produce RBP....

- Because their human biases impact on their perceptions and decisions/behavior.

# The science of implicit bias underlies the FIP perspective

Specifically, the minority-crime implicit  
association.

# “Implicit System”

- **Social Psychologists point to the “implicit system” in our brain**
  - **Designed to be “reactive rather than reasoned”**
  - **Designed for quick generalizations**
- **Produces mental shortcuts – valuable/necessary for facilitating thinking, reactions**
- **Works below conscious awareness ...**

It is our “thinking  
without thinking,”  
which Malcolm  
Gladwell refers to as

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Blink

# These “blink responses” or “mental shortcuts” include

- Linking people on sight to the stereotypes associated with their group
- Particularly relevant to our topic: Associations between racial/ethnic groups and criminal activity
  - **Per the Minority-Crime “Blink response”**
    - Racial/ethnicity minorities are linked to criminal activity

# **The Minority-Crime “Blink” response (like other “Blink” responses)....**

- **Impacts on perceptions and even behavior**
- **Operates below consciousness**
- **And the sit-up-and-take-notice news .....**

It occurs  
even in people who  
consciously reject  
racial stereotypes.

# What happens to us?

- Stereotypes “fill in” ambiguous stimuli
- Study: Subjects experienced ambiguous “bump”
  - The subjects interpreted the bump by African Americans differently from the bump by Whites.
- Bump by African Americans was perceived as more aggressive, hostile.

# What happens to us? (cont.)

- Viewed still photo of crime scene in subway.
- When asked: “Who was holding the deadly razor in a subway scene”....
- Subjects were more likely to (erroneously) identify a person of color.



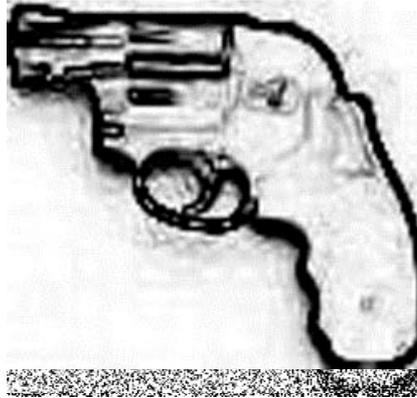
Research

**The Black-Crime  
Association  
Influences Visual  
Processing**

# Visual Perception Study: Methods

- Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies (2004).  
*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.*
- Subjects primed with Black male faces, White male faces, or no faces
- Completed object recognition task

# Levels of Degradation



# Crime Object

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# Crime Object

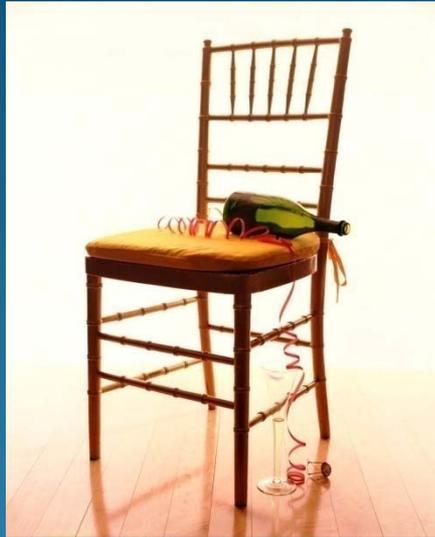
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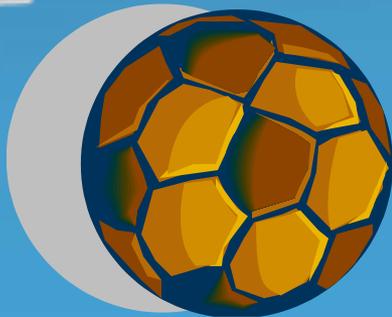
# Crime Object

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Also: Objects that were not related to crime.



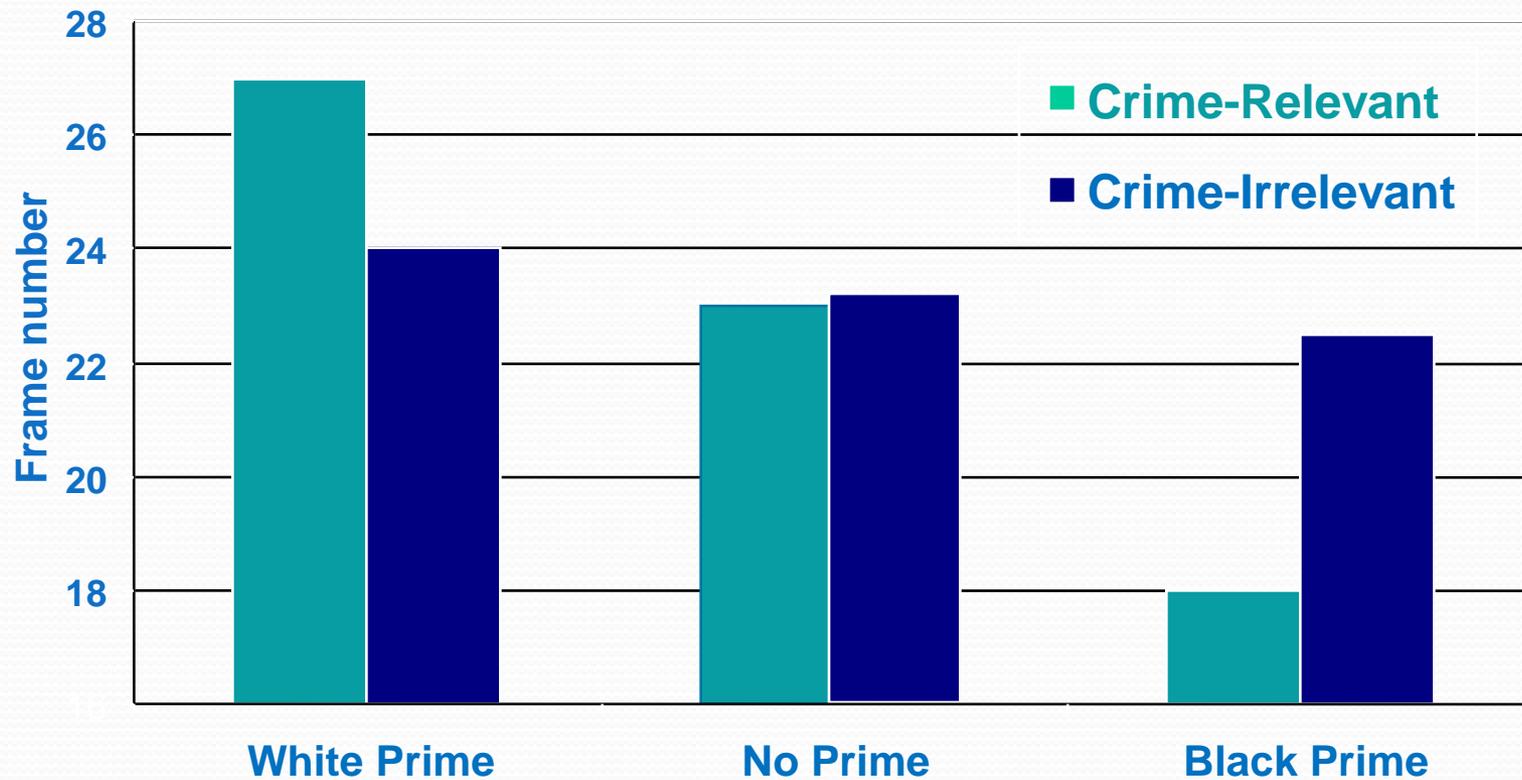
# Visual Perception Study: Hypotheses

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- **If there is a Black-crime implicit association**
  - **Participants primed with Black male faces should be faster to identify crime-relevant objects (compared to those primed with White male faces).**
    - [The crime objects would be more “accessible.”]
  - **There should be no effect of prime for crime-irrelevant objects.**

# Object Identification

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# Visual Perception Study: Conclusions

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- Exposure to **Black male faces** facilitated the identification of **crime-relevant** objects.
- Exposure to **White male faces** inhibited the identification of **crime-relevant objects**.

Is there some fact at the root of “stereotypes” including the Black-Crime association?

- **Yes**
- **But the issue for policing is in the application of this “stereotype” or call it “group characteristic” to all members of a group.**
- **Officers should not police based on group characteristics (whether one thinks they are stereotypes, biases, whatever)**
  - **Can produce unsafe, ineffective, unjust policing....**



# Research

## **The Black-Crime Association Influences Behavior**

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# Shooter Bias Study

Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink  
(2002). *Journal of Personality and  
Social Psychology*, 83(6).













# Summary of Results

- Reaction Times:

- Subjects are slower to see “Gun” with a white target.
- ... slower to see “No Gun” when it is a black target rather than a white target.

- Errors -- These are the most likely errors:

- Incorrectly shoot the Black with NO GUN
- Incorrectly NOT shoot the White WITH gun

# Research Using Police Subjects

- e.g., Peruche and Plant (2005, 2006), Correll et al., 2007
- Key finding: Officers manifest the race-crime Blink response...

# Research Using Police Subjects (Cont.)

- Some nuances:
  - Blink response is weaker in officers who have a history of **positive personal contacts with racial/ethnic minorities**
  - **Quality, role-play firearms training** seems to facilitate “unlearning” of race-crime blink response (at least for shoot-don’t shoot situations)

# This science, in summary

- It is not merely a small cadre of ill-intentioned police who might be producing biased policing
- *Even the best police officers, because they are human, might practice biased policing*
- *Even the best agencies will have biased policing because they are hire humans to do the job.*

# This broader, EVIDENCE BASED conceptualization of biased policing can:

- Produce a more constructive discussion of the issue between police and community
- Provide motivation and direction/guidance for agency intervention.

**Harm from the “old  
perspective”  
v. the new, FIP  
perspective.....**

# The "old" equation/perspective

Ill-intentioned  
("racist") police



Racially Biased  
Policing

# As shared: This has led to great police defensiveness and inaction

- Mid-sized east coast agency.....
- Fridell: (without science) “These are ways your agency can respond to RBP and perceptions...”
- Command Staff Member: “We can’t implement any of these recommendations, or we’ll be admitting we are racist.”

# The "old" equation/perspective

Ill-intentioned  
("racist") police



Racially Biased  
Policing

# Palo Alto Stakeholder Attendee at Training

- Conveyed the negative impact of the “old equation”
  - And the transformational nature of the “new perspective.”

## The common stakeholder/police perspective can be:

- RBP isn't produced solely by "ill-intentioned" people.
  - *Even the best officers might practice RBP*
  - *Even the best agencies, because they hire humans, will have biased decisions.*
- Allows Stakeholders to hear from police: *Yes, this is a issue.*
- Reduces police defensiveness and can motivate change. ["Transformational"]

**What IS that  
change?**

# Key implication of the science

EVERY agency, because they hire humans, must be proactive in producing fair and impartial policing.



...We must focus in our change efforts on both....

- Ill-intentioned officers
- Well meaning officers who aspire to fair and impartial policing.

Areas of intervention  
associated with a  
“Comprehensive Program To  
Produce FIP”

- **Recruitment and Hiring**
- **Policies prohibiting racially biased policing**
- **Leadership/supervision and accountability**
- **Outreach to diverse communities**
- **Assessing institutional practices/priorities**
- **Measurement**
- **Training....**

# COPS Office Resources: Training



USF and  
Circle Solutions, Inc.

# FIP Curricula for

- Recruits, in-service patrol
- First-line supervisors

Not just RACIAL bias.

# Curriculum Development Team

- Police (patrol officer, sergeant, chiefs, police trainer)
- Academic experts on RBP and cops
- Social psychologists who study implicit/unconscious bias (Eberhardt, Plant, Dovidio)

# Substance of recruit version

- We want the recruit, patrol officer:
  - ⑩ **To Understand:**
    - ⑩ That even good people have biases *and that might well include him/her*
    - ⑩ That biases/stereotypes impact on what we *perceive/see* and can (unless prevented) impact on what we do
    - ⑩ Policing based on biases/stereotypes is unjust, unsafe, ineffective.
  - ⑩ To have tools that help him/her (1) recognize the blink response, (2) implement controlled (unbiased) responses. **[Reflects science showing “remedy.”]**

# Piloted Three Times, Student comments

- “I will go into each situation with this training in the back of my head.”
- “This is about the best training on this subject I have had. I and several others thought that (due to the class title) it would be a boring class taught by liberals jamming info on how we were racist down our throats, rather than the good class it turned out to be.”
- Returning Cop:
- “I had [been impacted by stereotypes/biases] as an officer but did not know it until now. I could have used you guys back in 1995!”

# First Line Supervisor Training: Topics

- How bias manifests in even well-intentioned people
  - Science of bias
- How to identify officers who may be manifesting bias (What are they looking for? What are potential info sources?)
  - We discuss difficulty of ID'g biased behavior.
- How to intervene with officers when they have concerns about bias.
- How might bias manifest in their own work/decisions.
- How to talk about bias with individuals (officers, community members), community groups, media.

# Piloted twice, student feedback/comments

- Overwhelmingly reported that they **WILL** use the training in their daily jobs as supervisors.
- Comments:
- “I will better recognize bias and be able to address it with officers.”
- “Examples presented made me reflect on my personal behavior as well as behavior of my subordinates.”
- “(I learned) how to deal with biases that we all have.”
- “(Some of the most useful info included) the fact that bias can occur and the officer doesn’t realize it.”

# COPS Office also funded

- Two train-the-trainer sessions
- To be held in Rhode Island (2011) and Kansas (early 2012)

# Another resource: Command Level Training (or command/community)

- TOPICS (of 1.5 day training):
  - The FIP perspective
    - The social science of human bias and the implications for policing
  - The benefits and elements of a comprehensive program to produce fair and impartial policing
    - Coverage of each element
  - How to implement a comprehensive program.

# Summary and Conclusions

- “Old perspective”: Biased policing is produced only by ill-intentioned officers.
  - Has negatively impacted on discussion and change efforts
- Science provides the basis for the FIP perspective
  - Even the best officers might practice biased policing because they are human
  - Even the best agencies, because they hire humans, must be proactive in producing fair and impartial policing.....

The COPS Office model training programs will help to transmit this new perspective to police personnel across the nation.

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- Chief Burns, Palo Alto PD
    - The SF Bay Area regional experience with FIP
  - Chief Wray, Madison PD
    - The Wisconsin experience

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