

# 5 Invisible Factors of Racial Discrimination in Policing



Community Police  
Review Commission

AUSTIN, TX



# Identifying Institutional Racism

Changes in law and societal norms toward the affirmation of egalitarian values in the 1960s also prompted another important change – a shift in the nature of racial prejudice in the United States. As a result of progress people appeared to more deliberately manage how others perceived their racial attitudes.

Contemporary forms of racial bias can contribute to racially disparate outcomes. Existing racial bias is not always accurately identified nor perceived, which makes it harder to enact change.



# Implicit Bias

**Implicit bias** is when we have attitudes, beliefs, fears towards people or associate stereotypes with them without full awareness but which influences our actions and feelings.

These implicit attitudes can subtly direct police officer's perceptions, attention, feelings of threat, which ultimately lead to racially disparate outcomes.

"Implicit associations are habits of mind," John Dovidio, Yale Psychologist says. "And habits are really hard to change." According to research it takes 2 months to break a habit.



# Race-conscious Policies

1. Those that involve explicit racial classifications (such as the University of Michigan Law School's race-as-a-factor admissions policy, where race was an express factor used in evaluating applicants)
2. Those that are neutral on their face but that are motivated by a racially discriminatory purpose, resulting in racially discriminatory effects.



# Racism in policing

**“It is not necessary for police officers to be outwardly and consciously biased for their behavior to reflect racial discrimination and perpetuate racial disparities in policing.”**

~ Policing and Race: Disparate Treatment, Perceptions, and Policy Responses

# Consequences of Racism in Policing

Since 2015, the overrepresentation of Black/ African Americans has risen from 4% to 7% of all motor vehicle stops in Austin, an increase of 3%.

Black/ African Americans are overrepresented by 17% in arrests from motor vehicle stops, a disparity that has generally increased from 16% in 2015.

**Since 2015 Black Austin residents are stopped and arrested at higher and disproportionate rates to white residents**



# Adultification

## What it is

Adultification bias is a form of racial prejudice where children of marginalized groups are treated as being more mature than they actually are by a reasonable social standard of development. Authorities in public systems are less protective and more punitive with Black kids

## In action

Nationally Black children are 6x more likely to be shot to death by police. Black girls are punished more frequently, even when they're under 6.

## APD Policy

Next step: Investigate, identify and correct those policies and personnel that perpetuate and exacerbate these disparities.

## Potential Solutions

Follow up with Travis County juvenile defender program training 50 defense attorneys in Central Texas and duplicate with Austin Police Department Victim Services team.

AISD Police policy recommendation



# Height Discrimination & “Brute” Stereotype

## What it is

The exploitation of these often -targeted victims' criminal records, physical appearances, or misperceived attributes has been used to justify their unlawful deaths. Black men are stereotyped to be savage, terrifying, destructive, and criminal.

## APD Policy

Next step: Investigate, identify and correct those policies and personnel that perpetuate and exacerbate these disparities.

## In action

For Black men, being tall increases threat stereotyping and police stops. Research highlights the perils of “occupying a Black body that is inherently threatening,” arguing that tall Black men receive more attention from police officers, and are perceived as threatening.

## Potential Solutions

Develop APD media relations incident language guide.

Other recommendations influenced by policy research and further investigation.



# Weight Discrimination & Fatphobia

## What it is

Individuals with excess weight or obesity experience negative bias, prejudice and discrimination. Ideological double bind that positions Black bodies as unable to be victimized because they are at fault for their death.

## APD Policy

Next step: Investigate, identify and correct those policies and personnel that perpetuate and exacerbate these disparities.

## In action

A 2013 study shows that when it comes to overweight and obese people, public authorities show less empathy, concern, and understanding toward them. NYPD Union lawyer argued that Garner's death is clearly not at fault because Garner died "from being morbidly obese."

## Potential Solutions

Collaborate with Travis County Medical Examiner's Office.

Develop restraint matrix with inclusive medical conditions and body sizes. Other recommendations influenced by policy research and further investigation.

# Poverty & Classism

## What it is

Class discrimination, also known as classism, is prejudice or discrimination on the basis of social class.

## APD Policy

Next step: Investigate, identify and correct those policies and personnel that perpetuate and exacerbate these disparities.

## In action

In Austin median household income and crime rate were also impactful predictors of police use of force. An increase in income reduced use of force by 33% and 50 crimes per 1,000 residents—increased the expected number of use-of-force incidents by 92%.

## Potential Solutions

Recommendations influenced by policy research and further investigation.



# Toxic Masculinity

## What it is

Masculinity threat occurs when a man's status as a man is threatened. Threats to male police officers' masculinity, including verbal and physical manifestations of threat, contribute to officer force against civilians. Increased aggression and dominance as a way of restoring control.

## In action

Because Black men are stereotyped to be hyper-masculine officers might be more likely to experience a direct or indirect threat to their masculinity, and compensate by using increased levels of force when interacting with Blacks compared to Whites, leading to the disparate application of use of force.

## APD Policy

Next step: Investigate, identify and correct those policies and personnel that perpetuate and exacerbate these disparities.

## Potential Solutions

Recommendations influenced by policy research and further investigation.



# Dismantling Racism in Austin

Institutional racism occurs when personal racism and bias contribute and become integrated into organizational policy, systems, practices and outcomes. It is evident based on reporting over the past few years that the Austin Police Department is racist and in need of immediate severe remedies and long-term strategies to correct and dismantle the institutionalized ideologies that contribute to deadly outcomes for marginalized communities.

As a commission we will continue to get the community's insight into making the Austin Police Department more equitable for all residents.



# Next Steps

## Possible Recommendations

1. The APD publish officer-level data to analyze how much racial disparities are attributable to individual officers (compared to the department or the region).
2. Improved alternatives to racial bias training.
3. End paramilitary approach of policing.
4. Audit of Electronic Communication Devices for Bias
5. Develop restraint matrix with inclusive medical conditions and body sizes.
6. Develop APD media relations incident language guide.
7. Other recommendations listed in this presentation

## Research

1. Research if there a correlation between level of discretion and use of force?
2. Explore where these 5 signs of racial bias influence current APD policy through obscurity, disparate outcomes, or officer discretion.
3. Explore where these 5 signs of racial bias influence current APD academy training.
4. Research what practices allow discrimination to occur.
5. Meet with community to discuss racial equity in policies.

**Progress update at June CPRC Meeting**

# Thank You

Have more thoughts or questions?

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