Identity traps: How to think about race & policing

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abstract

Since the summer of 2014, Americans have seen more videos of violent interactions between police and non-Whites than ever before. While the interpretation of some specific incidents remains contentious and data on police use of force are scant, there is evidence that racial disparities in policing exist even when considering racial disparities in crime. The *traditional civil rights model* of institutional reform assumes that racial bigotry is the primary cause of these disparities; it attempts to address problems through adversarial litigation, protest, and education. This article offers an expansion of that model—one based on insights from behavioral science— that facilitates a less adversarial approach to reform and allows one to be agnostic about the role of racial bigotry. The new *behavioral insights model* focuses on identifying the contexts—called *identity traps*—that can escalate negative interactions between police and communities, as well as ways to interrupt them.

Core Findings

What is the issue?
Implicit bias and self-threats are important identity traps that mediate the relationship between law enforcement and communities. The *traditional civil rights model* of reform should therefore be expanded to include these behavioral insights.

How can you act?
Selected interventions include:
1) Creating standards for law enforcement data capture to enable more robust studies
2) Increasing the Bureau of Justice Assistance budget and linking funding to evidence-based programs or practices
3) Disseminating best practices and guidance across law enforcement departments communities

Who should take the lead?
Policymakers and decision makers in law enforcement, behavioral science researchers

Recent disturbing videos depicting the deaths of unarmed Black citizens via police interactions continue to stoke protest and outrage among communities in Baltimore, Maryland; Oakland, California; and Ferguson, Missouri, to name a few. Many non-Whites believe that, because of their race, they routinely experience injustice at the hands of law enforcement. Indeed, people of all colors feel that racism is likely a fundamental problem in American law enforcement.[1]

To combat racism, many reform-minded citizens have depended on what I call the *traditional civil rights model* (TCRM), which relies on direct action, litigation, and legal sanction. In the case of policing, this model has meant that people have responded to racism with protests, lawsuits, and calls for federal oversight to address grievances. Although these remain valuable tactics, an adversarial approach can, at times, also have the unintended consequence of exacerbating tensions between police and the communities they are sworn to protect. In this article, I present an expanded—and less antagonistic—model, the *behavioral insight model* (BIM). It is based on behavioral science research, and I apply it to police reform.

Taking advantage of the insight that situations are more powerful than attitudes when predicting behavior (including racial attitudes such as prejudice),[2–4] the BIM approach involves attempting to determine which situations improve and which situations undermine interactions between police and civilians. A collateral benefit of this framework is that it allows researchers and advocates to remain agnostic about the intentions and character of police officers while developing a plan to promote equity. Similarly, with its focus on identifying the mechanisms that produce inequality, the BIM also communicates that doing the right thing merits significant resources. Taken together, these two messages can help defuse threats to the self-concept that arise when racism is discussed.[5,6] It is important to note that a BIM approach need not sublimate concerns with explicit bigotry nor absolve the need for direct action and litigation. Rather, it provides an expanded tool kit for addressing contexts where naked bigotry is insufficient to explain racial disparities.

What follows is an introduction to the BIM and its core scientific elements. The scientific research on BIM for racial reform revolves around *identity traps*, the universal psychological tendencies that can produce racial injustice or detriment for a group, and *procedural justice*, the consensus among behavioral scientists that compliance with the law is more readily facilitated by trust in the justice system than fear of it. (See *Glossary of Key Terms*.) Finally, having outlined the process and the science on which it is based, I conclude with examples of successful interventions (with caveats on their limitations) and recommendations for improving both the science and the practice of police reform.

A Model Based on Behavioral Science Insights

The founder of experimental social psychology, Kurt Lewin, is famous for saying, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory." Theories orient people to problems, guide strategic thinking, and shape decisionmaking. For instance, a theory that a sports team's losing record is the fault of a subpar defense will lead to very different hiring, practice, and salary decisions than will a theory that the subpar offense is at fault. And so too it is with theories of racial inequality. The belief that racial inequality stems from the immoral behaviors of Blacks and Latinos leads to different solutions to the problem than the theory that the racial prejudices of Whites cause racial inequality.

The theory that has tacitly undergirded much of the work around police reform and racial justice is the TCRM. This model assumes that racially disparate outcomes and bigotry are synonymous and that the solutions to racial inequality, therefore, must engage prejudice.[7] If the problem is racial bigotry, then the solution must be education, confrontation, litigation, or a combination of these strategies.

Think about what applying the TCRM might do to a police department that believes it is progressive despite what appear to be racial disparities.

Someone embracing a TCRM approach might accuse the department of not caring about those disparities or, worse, welcoming them. If these claims are inaccurate, then the TCRM may alienate an otherwise cooperative department—and likely provoke a powerful identity trap in police officers: the concern with appearing racist.[5,6,8] The accusation will also seem unfair—or illegitimate—in the minds of law enforcement, which in turn jeopardizes police participation in the reform process. And, as Figure 1 illustrates, when the TCRM fails, it can lead to further adversarial entrenchment. This is not to claim that a TCRM approach is never best or suitable. It often is. However, the BIM sees racial disparities through a different lens and adds to the variety of tools available. As no two situations are the same, having a diversity of tools is useful for fixing stubborn problems.

The BIM is an expansion of the TCRM, not an alternative. The BIM is rooted in certain facts: that racial disparities can arise from a variety of causes, that situations are often more powerful predictors of human behavior than attitudes, and that collaboration is usually preferable to combat. When the BIM is used in policing contexts, researchers and advocates take the time to look into the causes of disparities. This communicates that they take seriously a police department's desire to reduce racial inequality. By working backward from the disparity without an a priori theory about police officers' character, the BIM allows researchers to assume (either strategically or genuinely) that all actors involved intend to do the morally just thing. If the implementation of the BIM falls short of reformers' expectations, then the more tested TCRM approach is still available (see Figure 1). It is more challenging, however, to move in the other direction—from TCRM to BIM—because accusations of ignorance, apathy, and bigotry cannot be unsaid.

Identity Traps: Thinking, Fast & Slow, About Race

Social psychology research offers two main sets of literature regarding the mechanisms of racial bias. Both emphasize situations over attitudes or intentions in explaining racially disparate

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Racial Inequity in Procedural Justice & Use of Force by Police

How much of a problem are racial disparities in policing? After all, if one group commits more crimes than another, we should expect that group to experience more negative consequences of the criminal justice system, right? This expectation, however, does not hold up in the light of several analyses of police stops,[A,B] use of force,[C,D] sentencing,[E,F] and subsequent employment prospects,[G] all demonstrating that the size of racial disparities across every phase of the criminal justice system cannot be fully explained by racial disparities in crime.

For instance, in a recent study that my colleagues and I conducted for the White House and the Austin, Texas, police department, we examined both the frequency and the severity of force used in that city by police. By controlling for the level of crime in a given census tract, as well as other factors such as income, graduation rate, percentage of owner-occupied homes, and employment, we were able to see the degree of racial disparities that persisted.[C] The results demonstrated that even though both neighborhood crime and poverty were strong predictors of police force, neither was sufficient to explain increased use of force in Black and Latino neighborhoods. This analysis was consistent with previous research my colleagues and I conducted across 12 departments that examined how racial disparities in arrest rates related to racial disparities in the number and severity of police force encounters.[C] There, again, we found that racial disparities in arrests predicted racial disparities in force, but they were not sufficient to explain them completely.

This is consistent with other research on use of force that shows a similar pattern nationwide at the state level.[D] So although there is still considerable research to be done on the nature of race and policing, the basic question of why racial disparities exist in police outcomes cannot be answered with a simple "because of racially disparate crime."

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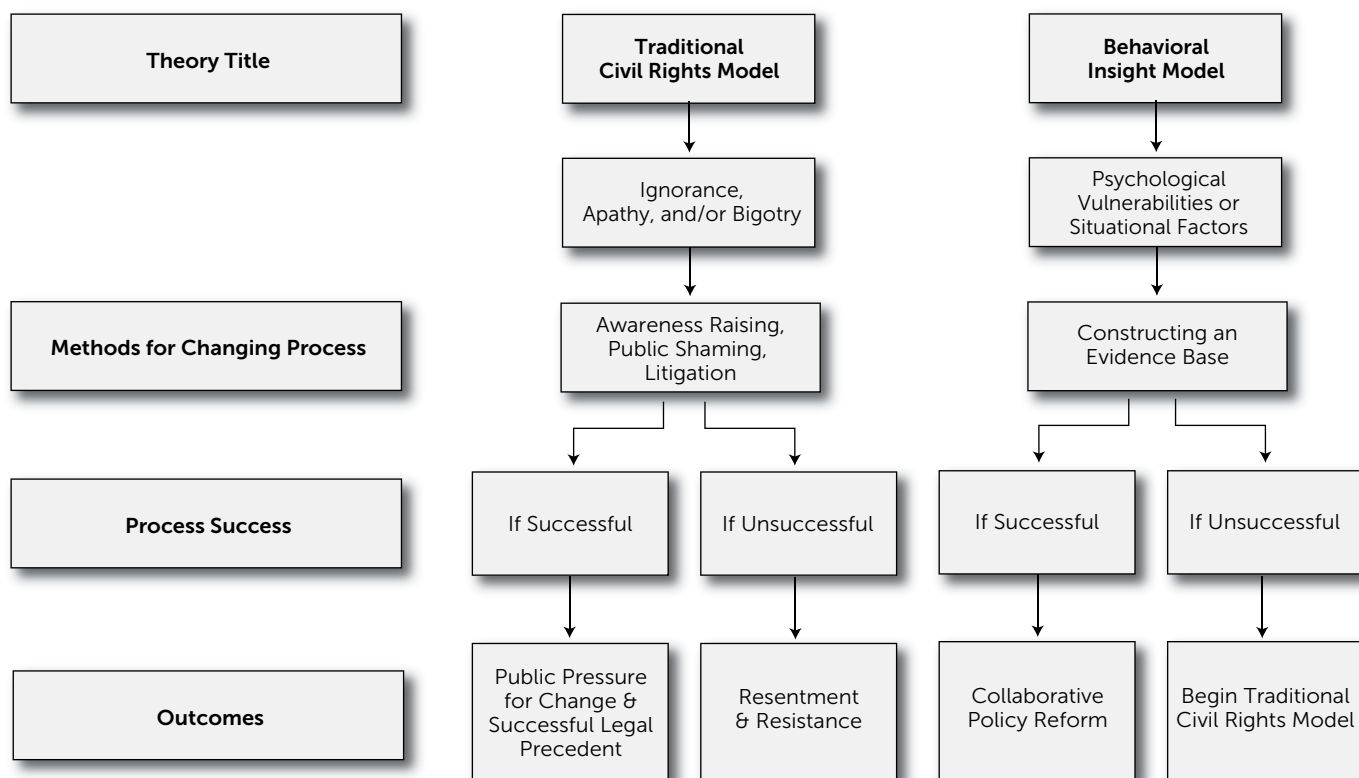
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outcomes. And, it is important to note, both literatures demonstrate how racial inequality can arise even in the absence of racial bigotry. The first concept, *implicit bias*, refers to the human

Figure 1. A conceptual flow chart comparing the traditional civil rights model & the behavioral insight model for addressing racial disparities

Theory Title	Traditional Civil Rights Model	Behavioral Insight Model
	↓	↓
	Ignorance, Apathy, and/or Bigotry	Psychological Vulnerabilities or Situational Factors
Methods for Changing Process	Awareness Raising, Public Shaming, Litigation	Constructing an Evidence Base
Process Success	If Successful / If Unsuccessful	If Successful / If Unsuccessful
Outcomes	Public Pressure for Change & Successful Legal Precedent / Resentment & Resistance	Collaborative Policy Reform / Begin Traditional Civil Rights Model

tendency to store and retrieve information about groups and group members in associated chunks.[9–14] Simply storing information in chunks is not, in itself, bias. If memories did not function this way, it would be difficult to recall lines for a school play, burdensome to navigate one's commute to work every day, and impossible to remember the name of anyone encountered at a cocktail party. The second concept, *self-threats*, refers to the social contexts that cause people to be concerned that they will be negatively stereotyped because of their identity, that their identity will not be valued, or that they will be denied membership in an important identity group.[15–18]

Because the literatures about these two concepts often overlap, "implicit biases and self-threats" is cumbersome to say, and I am often asked what to call the mechanisms of racial inequality that do not require prejudice, I refer to both literatures by one name: *identity traps*. Identity traps are robust human psychological tendencies triggered by someone's identity (our own or

another's). They can cause people to act inconsistently with their beliefs and often in ways that disadvantage already stigmatized groups (again, either one's own group or another's). In addition to unifying two research literatures, this term has the advantage of simultaneously reducing the emphasis on individual attitudes and foregrounding the importance of the situation.

To distinguish between the two literatures, I borrowed from Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.[19] Because implicit bias works quickly and beneath conscious awareness, I refer to it as a *fast trap*. And, because people are often aware that they are experiencing self-threats, they seem the appropriate analog to a *slow trap*. Some examples may make the distinction more clear.

Fast Identity Traps
Here's an example of a fast identity trap. If we regularly see Norwegians playing handball, we would tend to think of handball as a Norwegian pastime. Because we store trait information (for

example, handball players) alongside category information (for example, Norwegian), we would tend to recall them together and make an automatic—implicit, or unconscious—association between the two. These automatic associations can influence behaviors ranging from when we look at a person[2] to what we see[14] and how we respond to her or him.[20,21] For instance, in research by Dovidio and colleagues, implicit anti-Black bias influenced the subtle elements of interpersonal communication. In one laboratory study, undergraduate students were brought in two at a time to have a conversation that researchers videotaped. Coders then counted the number of eye blinks, nervous fidgets, and gaze aversions (that is, times when one participant wasn't looking the other in the eye). What they found was that White students who were higher in implicit bias were less likely to make eye contact and more likely to look uncomfortable with Black students—regardless of their explicit values.[2]

Certain situations can promote fast traps, such as being in a bad mood or mentally taxed, feeling threatened, needing to make a quick decision, or experiencing unfamiliar circumstances.[10,12,22–25] In these situations, people tend to rely on overlearned associations—such as when, after a long, frustrating day at the office, you choose the tried-and-true restaurant rather than the new one around the corner. But fast identity traps happen much more quickly than a decision about where to eat.

Can training help? In a laboratory simulation study published in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Sim and her colleagues found that, among people who were not used to making decisions about shooting, exposure to negative stereotypes about Blacks exacerbated the likelihood of "shooting" unarmed Black targets.[25] However, participants who were trained not to associate race with criminality (through exposure to a set of pictures in which race was uncorrelated with the likelihood of the person being armed) were not as easily influenced by stereotypes.

It is tempting to view these laboratory successes as promising evidence that fast traps can be trained out of people, yet it is important to resist that temptation. Analyses of hundreds of thousands of data points suggest that Americans hold automatic associations between Blacks and negative stereotypes (for example, criminal, dangerous, armed) at high rates and that these associations are difficult to eliminate.[26–28] The success of the Sim intervention, as well as successes experienced by others using similar methods,[29] are better viewed as interventions that target the situations within which officers encounter suspects. This is because, although researchers are able to alter behavior in the moment, there is not good evidence that those changes persist over significant periods of time, and the automatic associations that undergird them are often not materially altered.[29–32] Consequently, it may be more useful to focus racial equality interventions on defusing the traps that situations lay for one's automatic associations than on identifying who is or is not "implicitly biased."

Slow Identity Traps

Again, slow identity traps roughly correspond to self-threats, which are threats to a person's concept of him- or herself. How could a threat to one's self-concept lead to racially biased behavior? Here's one example.

In a series of studies on interactions, social psychologists found that Whites who were gearing up to have a conversation with someone of a different race sat farther away from that person when they feared that their racial attitudes might come up,[5] and they spontaneously worried that they would be stereotyped as racist.[5,8] Further, after having an introductory conversation with an individual of another racial group, both Whites and Blacks reported concerns with being stereotyped as prejudiced, and this concern was cognitively taxing.[33,34] This cognitive depletion can, in turn, lead to subtle forms of bias that disadvantage the stigmatized group by facilitating a reliance on stereotypes found in fast traps as well as a desire to avoid those situations altogether.[35]

"procedural justice constitutes a revolution"

The literature on self-threats suggests that they are most powerful when the threatened identity is salient (for example, when people are reminded of the identity),[36] when people care about the outcome,[16,37] and when people believe failure might reveal something about their character.[5,38–40] The problem is that some situations threaten many people to the detriment of vulnerable groups (for example, Blacks). For instance, worrying about being seen as racist can cause Whites to avoid looking at Blacks[41] and even harbor more racist attitudes.[42]

It is easy to imagine how these laboratory results could prove disastrous in police–community interactions. For instance, in the current climate of concern among many citizens regarding police legitimacy, officers patrolling majority Black neighborhoods—regardless of their own race—may fear being seen as racist. This could, in turn, provoke a relative retreat from proactive community engagement and an increased reliance on racial stereotypes through fast traps. Obviously, none of these possibilities bode well for police–community relations. Also notable, however, is that these can happen even when an individual officer is not bigoted.

Procedural Justice

Within the last three decades, behavioral science research on the concept of procedural justice has significantly advanced understanding of how the mind interprets fairness in policing contexts. The *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* asserts the following:

> Decades of research and practice support the premise that people are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have authority that is perceived as legitimate. . . . The public confers legitimacy only on those whom they believe are acting in procedurally just ways. In addition, law enforcement cannot build community trust if it is

seen as an occupying force coming in from outside to impose control on the community.[43]

It may at first seem that the insights of procedural justice are obvious: Treat people fairly and they are more likely to comply with an officer's lawful request. Respect someone's dignity and she or he will return that respect. Threaten someone, on the other hand, and he or she will act to defend themselves against you. Yet, in a criminal justice system long governed by deterrence theory—the notion that threats of harsh punishments are the best way to deter crime[44–47]—procedural justice constitutes a revolution.

Indeed, for those who believe that force best protects communities, it may seem laughable to suggest that preserving citizens' dignity is more important. But research confirms that concerns about fair treatment trump the threat of sanction in producing compliance with the law.[48,49] Issues of procedural justice are more powerful than the fear of punishment in predicting criminal behavior,[50] compliance with police,[51–53] and reporting crime.[54,55] When officers are trained to communicate the reason for a contact, provide residents with a voice in their outcomes, and ensure equitable treatment, this actually improves outcomes.[54,56,57]

In two large surveys of New York City residents, Sunshine and Tyler of Yale Law School tested whether concerns with fair treatment were a bigger, a smaller, or an equal predictor of intentions to cooperate with the law. In samples taken before and after the events of September 11, 2001, and for both Black and White respondents, the perception that police treat people fairly rather than the fear of getting caught was the primary driver of an intention to cooperate with the police.[52]

Given that large and robust racial differences exist in the perceptions of procedural justice in policing,[58–61] it stands to reason that racially disparate gains can be made by improving a department's procedural fairness. Again, this need not implicate the racial attitudes of individual officers nor those of an entire department. Rather, where procedural justice

is a newly popular concept in the profession of policing, a cultural shift in police philosophy may accomplish a great deal to improve community trust.[62]

Identity Traps in Policing

The concepts of identity traps and procedural justice are highly relevant to officers' day-to-day experiences. Line officers frequently multitask.[63] They engage the neighborhoods most vulnerable to crime and violence.[64,65] They are often asked to do so while working odd hours[66,67] and being stereotyped as racist.[49,68] Their uniforms are a constant reminder of their police identity. And they are tasked with making high-stakes, split-second decisions—some that remove liberty and some that end life. A police officer's day seems to be the perfect context for promoting behavior influenced by fast and slow traps. So how can a police department defuse them? The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), Queensland (Australia) Police Department, and the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing provide promising examples and recommendations.

Case Study, Las Vegas, Nevada: Defusing the Fast Trap of Foot Pursuits

In 2010, the LVMPD reached out to the Center for Policing Equity (CPE), a nonprofit research and action think tank based at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the University of California, Los Angeles. The LVMPD asked CPE, where I serve as cofounder and president, to conduct research that would determine whether it showed a pattern of excessive use of force that would be considered racially disparate based on the distribution of force in the city. Before CPE's formal analyses began, it was discovered that a high percentage of use-of-force incidents occurred immediately after foot pursuits. Although good data on foot pursuits were lacking (the LVMPD did not begin collecting foot pursuit data until 2014), these chases were still deemed an ideal context in which to gather evidence because of the nature of the contact.

For anyone familiar with police serial dramas, it may seem as if foot pursuits are high-adrenaline chases that end when an officer springs on the suspect, tackling the runner to the ground (and, potentially, moaning that he or she is "getting too old for this"). However, although foot pursuits are indeed high-adrenaline events, they do not tend to end via police tackle. Rather, the bulk of foot pursuits stop when the suspect realizes he or she is surrounded and gives up. Yet, if asked, "How do most foot pursuits end?" a police officer's most likely response will be, "With the use of necessary force to subdue the subject."

Recall that depletion, time pressure, high stakes, and limited resources are all likely to exacerbate identity traps. Consequently, CPE used the BIM theory of change to recommend a revised policy to the LVMPD: whenever possible, the officer in the foot pursuit is not permitted to be the first person to lay hands on the subject if the subject has surrendered and is not deemed to be an immediate danger to him- or herself or others. Adjusting the situation so that the officers experiencing an adrenaline-pumping chase were not the ones to "go hands on" with a possible criminal should help prevent police from succumbing to identity traps.

The policy went into place at the end of 2011. Figure 2 reveals that the LVMPD experienced a 23% drop in use-of-force incidents and a further decline the following year. However, the data did not look at foot pursuits in particular. Because the department did not keep foot pursuit statistics and because of other simultaneous policy changes, it is unwise to make a strong causal statement about the effects of this intervention. Still, although this is far from a randomized experiment, both the LVMPD and Department of Justice (DOJ) believe the interventions were central enough to these declines in force that they feature prominently in the DOJ report on the progress the LVMPD has made in keeping the department out of a federal consent decree, the tool that the DOJ uses to compel departments to reform.[69] In addition, more than 10 major police departments, including those in Los Angeles, Seattle, and St. Louis County, have visited the LVMPD with the aim of adopting this program (among others). It is critical that additional rigorous research be run to test the potential benefits of this intervention.

23%
drop in use-of-force incidents experienced by the LVPD after piloting behavioral interventions

$14m
amount set aside by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation for randomized controlled experiments in policing

the **National Justice Database** is the largest US effort to collect, standardize, and analyse data on police behavior

Figure 2. Number of nondeadly use-of-force incidents per year in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), 2010−2013

Intervention in late 2011/early 2012
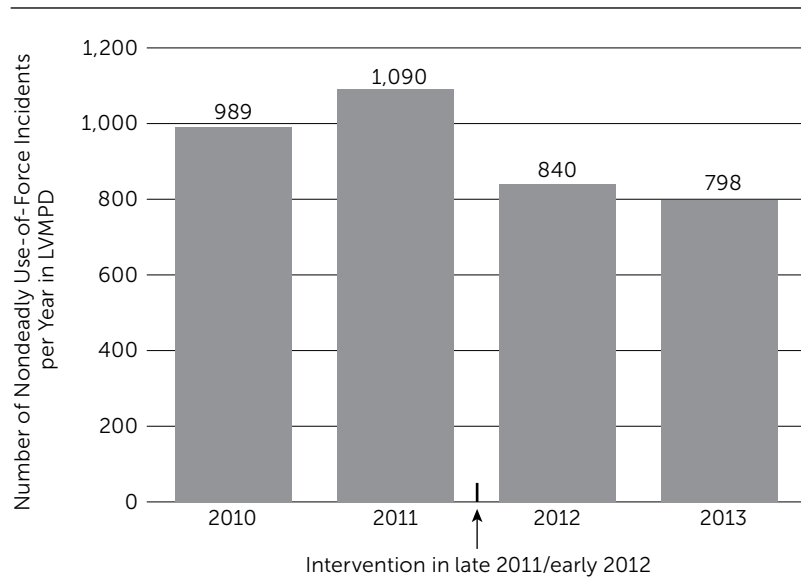
Source: Data are from *Collaborative Reform Model: Final Assessment Report of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department,* by G. Fachner and S. Carter, 2014, Washington, DC: Community Oriented Policing Services. Copyright 2014 by CAN.

Case Study, Queensland, Australia: Trust Breeds Compliance

To demonstrate the benefit of procedural justice in improving compliance with the law and the perceived legitimacy of a police action, Mazerolle and her colleagues convinced a police department in Queensland, Australia, to work with them on a randomized, controlled study.[70,71] Mazerolle, who is an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow, and her research team randomly assigned officers at random breath tests (roadblocks to screen for intoxicated driving) to conduct business-as-usual stops or to read from a treatment script designed to communicate the tenets of procedural justice during a stop (community voice, respect, neutrality, and trustworthiness). Drivers were then given a survey about procedural justice and their intended compliance with police. Drivers who received the procedural justice script reported that the stop was more legitimate than did those subjected to the business-as-usual stop. Moreover, the procedural justice script drivers felt the police department itself was more legitimate and

these factors, in turn, predicted their intended future compliance with police. In other words, fair treatment improved perceptions of a specific stop and of the police in general; it also promoted future police compliance.

Unfortunately, this study is among the few randomized field tests of procedural justice in policing. So, although research exists that supports the claim that procedural justice works in the field, both the laboratory and the survey studies would benefit from significantly more evidence on generalizability and boundary conditions. For instance, because Black Americans are far more likely to experience contact with police, would similar interventions be more or less powerful in improving perceptions of law enforcement in those communities?

The Intersection of Policy & Research

President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing provided a series of recommendations designed to advance public safety. Although the recommendations are not binding and a change in administration likely means a pivot in the federal agencies' priorities, the task force recommendations still constitute a road map for reducing racial disparities. Many of those recommendations stem from research consistent with the BIM approach to racial inequality. For instance, Pillar One of the recommendations is an articulation of the need for procedural justice.[62] Similarly, there is a strong emphasis on training, policies, and officer wellness designed to reduce the influence of fast traps (for example, recommendation 5.9 that all states adopt training sessions on implicit bias) and slow traps (for example, recommendations 6.3 and 6.3.1 that encourage new standards for officer shift length and limits on hours worked based on evidence that sleep debt can produce suboptimal decisionmaking, including a sway toward racial bias).[62,71]

Both private and federal funders have turned their attention to building a pertinent evidence base. For instance, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation recently launched a $14 million initiative designed to promote randomized control experiments in policing. Additionally, the Obama administration launched the Police Data Initiative

in 2015[72] in an effort to aggregate successful police interventions.

In addition, researchers at CPE are involved in two initiatives that follow the BIM. The first is the creation of the National Justice Database,[73] the largest effort to collect, standardize, and analyze data on police behavior (for example, on stops and use of force). In so doing, the National Justice Database is an early attempt to overcome some of the methodological barriers to understanding if, where, and when racial disparities exist—a critical gap in the extant literature. The second involves a partnership with two other research bodies (the Yale Justice Collaboratory and John Jay College of Criminal Justice) to create a scalable set of interventions regarding police culture (http://trustandjustice. org). The goal of this project is to test the BIM interventions that have worked independently and try them together in the hopes of producing a collection of best practices for policing interventions to come.

Recommendations for Improving the Research

The BIM approach requires rigorous analytics in the field, which is difficult. Doing fieldwork in a context in which data are poorly managed makes most comparative or longitudinal projects impractical. And doing it in a context where randomization may put officers and residents at risk makes some projects infeasible. Following are some concrete suggestions for making research easier.

Create Standards for Data Capture. As was the case in the LVMPD example, the uneven variety of data captured by police often makes it difficult to answer fundamental questions about what is happening in a given police department. At other times, a researcher's frustration is that data are not comparable across departments. Consequently, creating standards for data capture, aggregation, and storage is a priority for improving policing equity. This could be done through state Peace Officer Standards and Training offices, state departments of justice, or governors' executive orders or with the collaborative consent of statewide professional

organizations (for example, the California Police Chiefs Association).

Provide Assistance. One of the reasons for the lack of data capture is the monetary and staffing capacity limits of a given police department. Consequently, the Bureau of Justice

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Glossary of Key Terms

Traditional civil rights model (TCRM): This model assumes that racially disparate outcomes and bigotry are synonymous and that the solutions to racial inequality, therefore, must engage prejudice.[A] If the problem is racial bigotry, then the solution must be education, confrontation, or litigation. The TCRM theory has tacitly undergirded much of the work around police reform and racial justice.

Behavioral insight model (BIM): The BIM is an expansion of the TCRM, not an alternative. It is rooted in several behavioral science findings: that racial disparities may arise from a variety of causes, that situations are often more powerful predictors of human behavior than character, and that collaboration is often preferable to combat. Consequently, the BIM lends itself to a process that foregrounds the importance of diagnosing the cause of observed disparities and, consequently, requires some degree of agnosticism about that cause.

Procedural justice: Procedural justice is the fair treatment of the public that renders a public institution legitimate in society. Recently, a consensus among behavioral scientists has emerged that compliance with the law is more readily facilitated by trust in the justice system than fear of it. That is, procedural justice discourages criminal activity more than fear of punishments or other negative consequences do.

Identity traps: Situations that increase the likelihood that an individual will behave in a way that disadvantages someone on the basis of his or her group membership. Identity traps operate independently of group-based prejudices and can even disadvantage a member of one's own group or oneself. That is, every member of society can fall into an identity trap regardless of his or her race, gender, ethnicity, or other identity group memberships.

Fast identity traps: A subcategory of identity traps, fast identity traps are situations that increase the likelihood that an individual's automatic associations will produce behaviors that disadvantage someone on the basis of his or her group membership.

Slow identity traps: A subcategory of identity traps, slow identity traps are situations that increase the likelihood that threats to an individual's self-concept will produce behaviors that disadvantage someone on the basis of his or her group membership.

Implicit bias: Referencing race or other social groups, implicit bias can best be understood as the automatic association between group categories and stereotypic traits about that group. This automatic association can shape thoughts, perceptions, and actions.

A. Goff, P. A. (2013). A measure of justice: What policing racial bias research reveals. In F.C. Harris & R.C. Lieberman (Eds.), *Beyond discrimination: Racial inequality in a postracist era* (pp. 157–185). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory"

Assistance budget for technical assistance to small and midsize departments should be greatly increased. Specifically, the Justice Assistance Grant Program could expand its funding of data capture as part of its emphasis on evidence-based programs or practices. States should also prioritize this as a budget issue.

Offer Guidance on Community & Research Engagement. CPE and other organizations have been using the BIM approach to broker productive collaborations between communities and the departments sworn to protect them, and these collaborations should be expanded.

Concluding Thoughts

The BIM theory of racial inequality and of racial justice activism may be a useful tool for moving the country closer to its ideals. Consequently, perhaps the greatest lesson learned in the field to date is that Lewin was as right about policing as he was about the world: There is nothing so practical as a good theory. And here, if the theory of the problem can expand from one that is exclusively about bigotry to one that includes the human need for fairness and recognizing every human's vulnerability to identity traps, then the solutions may become more effective.

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supplemental material

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