

# RELEASE

DECEMBER 2013

**FOCUS ON**

# Bias



**R**elease, a publication devoted to collecting stories about citizens with criminal histories and the organizations that serve them. Produced by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) and created by students from Central Connecticut State University, the newsletter provides profiles, general features, interviews, videos, informative graphs and more. Our goal: to empower ex-offenders and to educate the larger Connecticut community on what it can do to stem recidivism. Release covers employment, housing, education, children of incarcerated parents and other subject areas that relate to building a productive life with a criminal history. For your free subscription to Release, which will be distributed online on a monthly basis and also published in print on a quarterly basis, please register at [www.releasenews.org](http://www.releasenews.org).

# Focus on Bias

## DECEMBER 2013

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# COMPENSATION

*Malik Jones was shot and killed over sixteen years ago, yet the racially divisive legislative battle continues today.*

By Jesse Duthrie

On April 14, 1997, a 22-year old African American man named Malik Jones was shot and killed by East Haven police officer Robert Flodquist after a high-speed traffic pursuit. Flodquist, a 12-year veteran of the force, claimed self-defense. According to his testimony and eyewitness reports, Flodquist and another police cruiser blocked Jones's car at the intersection of John Murphy Drive and Grand Avenue in New Haven. As Flodquist approached Jones's gray Cutlass Supreme with his weapon drawn, he shattered the driver's side window and ordered Jones to turn off his vehicle and cease and desist. Jones put the car in reverse and attempted to back away. As he began his reverse motion, he turned the steering wheel over, spinning the car in Flodquist's direction. Flodquist fired four shots into Jones' chest, and Malik Jones died at the scene.

Henry C. Lee, one of the country's foremost forensic scientists, took the lead in the crime scene investigation. Lee has worked as the forensic scientist on major national cases: the racially divisive O.J. Simpson murder trial, the mysterious JonBenét Ramsey murder investigation, the violent Washington D.C. Snipers case, the contentious re-investigation of the John F. Kennedy assassination.

By late September of 1997, State's Attorney Michael Dearington made an official ruling on the shooting. After a thorough crime scene investigation, autopsy reports, and statements from six eyewitnesses,

Dearington ruled that Flodquist's actions were "reasonable and justified." Dearington and the State's Attorney's office were able to collect enough evidence to prove that Jones repeatedly ignored Flodquist's directives as Flodquist stood alongside his car. In a September 23, 1997 article by the New Haven Register, Dearington added more insight to the ruling, saying, "There was no evidence that excessive force was used."

The same September 1997 New Haven Register article listed major pieces of forensic evidence to support Flodquist's case: silver paint chips found on Flodquist's uniform (indicating that Jones's car did hit him at some point), glass particles in a 20-foot rectangular pattern on Grand Avenue (proving that Jones's Cutlass Supreme was in motion as Flodquist fired his shots), proof that all shots were fired (at a distance of one to three feet and at a downward angle) while the car was moving; and evidence that the car was in reverse for six and half to eight seconds, leaving Flodquist little time to react. Other circumstantial evidence came to light that would help exonerate Flodquist. The lone passenger in Jones's car, Samuel Cruz, admitted to police that Malik Jones had been smoking "ill" that same evening. "Ill," the street name for marijuana soaked in phencyclidine (PCP) or embalming fluid, can cause a person's behavior to be highly aggressive and erratic. On top of the effects of "ill," Jones's autopsy also showed a blood alcohol



content level between 0.06% and 0.07%.

No amount of hard evidence backing Flodquist's actions could change the opinions of the majority of African Americans in East Haven and what they believed to be a direct instance of racially biased murder. In the months between Malik Jones's death and the State's Attorney's ruling, Jones's mother Emma had successfully rallied the Connecticut chapter of the NAACP, church officials, city alderman, and hundreds of town citizens to draw attention to the racial lines that had divided their town for years before the shooting took place.

For those who perceived Malik's death as an archetype of racially bias policing, no amount of crime scene evidence could sway their rancor. To these accusers, the State's Attorney's decision

represented a grave injustice of the law. After Dearington pronounced Flodquist innocent, Emma Jones publicized a louder, harsher voice than in the rallies she'd organized in the months preceding the ruling, deeming Dearington's decision a "gross miscarriage of justice to her family and the entire state of Connecticut."

One set of ears that heard her voice was then-Governor John G. Rowland. Just hours after State's Attorney Dearington made his decision, Rowland sent a letter to Chief Court Administrator Aaron Ment asking for a grand jury probe. Rowland's intervention stemmed from the internal process of State's Attorney investigations—a process of the police policing themselves—and in this case, did nothing to satisfy the strife and grief felt by the Jones family and the



growing group of citizens who supported their plight. Rowland himself admitted that the process was not a “perfect system.”

Following Rowland’s announcement of a federal probe into the death of Malik Jones, Emma began her long legislative battle of highs and lows.

In April of 1999, Emma Jones filed a wrongful-death lawsuit in federal court against Officer Flodquist, Officer Gary DePalma (the second officer with Flodquist at the scene of the crime), the East Haven Police Department, and the town of East Haven. She claimed excessive force, and a habit of East Haven police targeting blacks and Hispanics for

federal jury awarded Emma Jones \$2.5 million in punitive damages from the town of East Haven for civil rights violations, and for the failure to stop their police department from a pattern of racial profiling and using excessive force against minorities.

Punitive damages, opposed to compensatory damages (awards in civil suits to indemnify a person for particular loss as a result of unlawful conduct), are handed down in civil suits when the judge feels that compensatory are an inadequate remedy. Punitive damages are meant to punish the wrongdoer into paying fees beyond what compensatory damages would demand.

## “No amount of hard evidence backing Flodquist’s actions could change the opinions of the majority of African Americans in East Haven and what they believed to be a direct instance of racially biased murder.”

motor vehicle stops. Though the federal probe was still underway, she needed to file her wrongful-death suit within the two-year period of when the actual death occurred.

Seven months after Emma Jones filed her wrongful-death suit, the federal jury probe that began in 1997 cleared Flodquist of criminal wrongdoing for a second time. According to U.S. Attorney Stephen A. Robinson, there was not enough evidence to prosecute Flodquist on civil rights violations. The U.S. Attorney’s office did conclude that Flodquist did not follow proper procedure when he fatally shot Jones; however, the failure to follow proper procedure was not enough to garner civil rights criminal charges.

It wasn’t until July 10, 2003, nearly four years after the ruling of the federal jury and a little over seven years after Malik Jones’s death, when the next major milestone occurred in the Jones’s plight. A

During the trial, new testimony came to light that cast a nefarious shadow over Robert Flodquist. In 1990, Flodquist attempted to shoot an African-American man named Shane Gray. Gray was believed to be dead before the first civil suit began back in 1999, but was later found incarcerated for sale of controlled substances. According to Shane Gray’s testimony, Gray attempted to flee the scene of a crime and Flodquist struck him with his vehicle. Flodquist then fired his gun and missed. Eventually the police apprehended Gray. East Haven Police officials ignored his complaints about the shooting. Flodquist was exonerated for his actions by his captain without so much as interviewing Gray or taking note of his story. Flodquist told jurors during the first federal jury case that Gray had a gun, and that the gun was hidden by somebody in the crowd near the scene of the crime. Gray denied ever having a firearm, and no weapon

was ever found.

Again, these are memories that blur in the heat of the moment, their details boiling down to the credibility of those who speak them, but it does sound familiar. It would take seven years until a scenario like this would be played out again, only this time Flodquist’s bullets would land.

A mishap occurred in the final ruling. The judge found the town of East Haven guilty. Not Robert Flodquist. And federal law states that municipalities are immune from punitive damages. The judge’s ruling had been a legal blunder; a decision that the defense eagerly awaited to appeal and an award that journalists and legal experts knew would not stick. So the \$2.5 million that had been long fought for was stripped in appeals. Emma Jones would have to ask for her case to be reheard.

The case went back to federal court. Emma Jones won again, and was awarded a smaller but substantial compensatory award—\$900,000. Like the first \$2.5 million, the second award granted to Emma Jones would be held up in courts; appeals were imminent, although these appeals would be based not on judicial mishaps but on the ruling itself. But for that brief period it seemed like a victory. Rumors and talk of East Haven’s corrupt policing no longer warranted suspicion or a doubtful eye.

On August 1, 2012, the second appeal decision was handed down. The award would be reversed again. The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals concluded



that Emma Jones did not provide sufficient evidence to show that the shooting of her son was the direct result of “deliberate indifference” to the rights of blacks and other people of color by East Haven police officers. Reported in an August 1, 2012 Hartford Courant article, an official at the court said the decision reflects “only [the court’s] view that Jones’s suit failed to present sufficient evidence to establish liability by the town of East Haven for the shooting by one of its police officers.” Emma Jones and her attorneys were able to show to the court that there had been instances of “reprehensible and at times illegal and unconstitutional conduct by individual officers,” but to establish municipal liability she needed to prove that misconduct was so widespread in East Haven that the town “was aware of it, condoned it, or at least tolerated it.”

The last move for Emma Jones would be to take her case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. On May 30, 2013, Emma Jones and her attorneys filed a Petition for Writ of Certiorari (an official appeal to the United States Supreme Court). Inside the 20-page petition are explicit details of East Haven Police Department’s history of racial profiling.

The petition refers to instances of brutal treatment of African Americans in East Haven by unnamed EHPD officers, such as repeated references to African Americans as “niggers.” On page 5 of the Petition, the Writ of Certiorari discusses an incident involving a white man named Donald Jackman, who was told by East Haven officers that “if [he] were a nigger [he’d] be fucking dead.” The Writ goes on to state that the East Haven Police Department had a long-standing history of racial discrimination against African Americans, and that these complaints are warrant enough to file a lawsuit in conjunction with the civil rights case related to Malik Jones’s death.

The petition goes on to detail the moments after Jones was shot. Flodquist and his fellow officers laid



Jones on his stomach, hands handcuffed behind his back, feet still inside the car, bleeding out until his death. The petition states that, “A jury could find that Flodquist and his two fellow officers were confident in their ability to get away with racist misconduct.”

The United States Supreme Court accepts 65 to 80 Petitions for Writ of Certiorari per year. In an average year, 10,000 Writs are filed. With less than a 0.8 percent chance of acceptance, it was a long shot for Emma Jones.

The United States Supreme Court denied Jones’s Writ of Petition Certiorari. Town officials in East Haven heralded the decision, aware of the amount of money their town would potentially save and the catharsis accomplished in the Supreme Court’s decision. In an October 7 New Haven Register article, East Haven Mayor Joseph Maturo Jr. said in a fairly unsympathetic tone, “Malik Jones is done. I’m just happy for the taxpayers of East Haven. I’m glad it’s over.”

**“But for that brief period it seemed like a victory. Rumors and talk of East Haven’s corrupt policing no longer warranted skepticism or a doubtful eye.”**

East Haven has been saved the repercussions of another lawsuit and the accompanying mess: legal bills the taxpayers end up paying; national and local press; the long road back to 1997, reliving a memory that most town officials would rather let lay dormant. But as the Supreme Court was throwing out Malik Jones’s case, a second notable case began involving East Haven Police Department: East Haven PD’s officers Dennis Spaulding and David Cari faced federal charges for violating the civil rights of Latinos



in the same city as Robert Flodquist. The officers had been arrested after a four-year federal probe after allegations of EHPD racially biased policing. October 21, both officers were found guilty, and now face up to 20 years in prison. In an official statement released from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Spaulding and Cari were found guilty of “conspiring to violate and violating the civil rights of members of the East Haven community.” Their two counterparts, Jason Zullo and Sargent John Miller, got off light on plea deals and will face minimal to zero jail time.

If the past seventeen years have shown anything, it’s a malfunctioning police department, a division of opinion on what “racial profiling” includes, and the incapability of courts to arrive on a decision regarding this one isolated case. How will Malik Jones be remembered? As a martyr or a troublemaker? Given the trajectory of East Haven Police Department’s problems, it is entirely possible he may end up just another of many brought down by a broken system. For the sake of Emma Jones and those who fought to effect change in the town of East Haven and the state of Connecticut, let’s hope that Malik Jones’s name is not forgotten, nor the lessons we might learn left behind. ♦

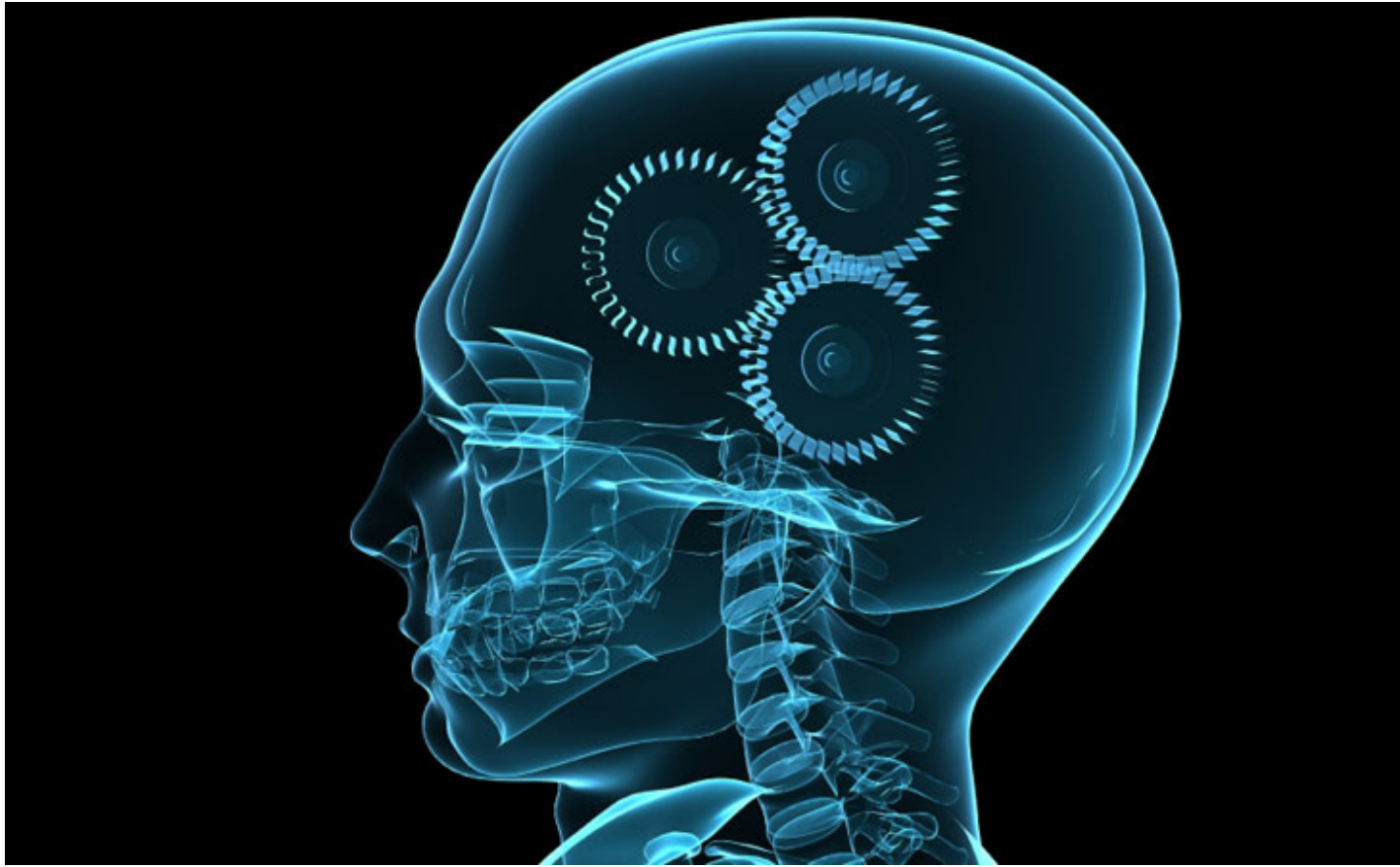


# The SCIENCE of BIAS

*The importance of managing bias and changing perceptions.*

By Lisa Cotsa





The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that since 1993, the rate of violent victimization in our country has declined by 72%. While various police efforts like data-driven policing and changes in technology have helped this overall decrease in crime, the issue of bias in policing remains a significant concern and has led many people to examine the science of bias. Dr. Lorie Fridell is an Associate Professor and Graduate Director in the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida, and creator of the Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP) training, which reflects a new way of thinking about biased policing. Fridell's training is used widely to help officers understand their biases and recognize how those biases can affect their behavior.

Fridell grew up the daughter of two public school teachers in northern California, though her own passion for teaching surprised her. "Originally, I wasn't that interested in teaching," she admits,

"but once I got in front of a class a couple of times, I decided that I loved it." She received her Master's Degree in Social Ecology from the University of California, Irvine, and continued on to her Doctorate after encouragement by her advisor. "Social ecology is a multi-disciplinary approach to social and environmental problems. I had to memorize that," she jokes. According to Fridell, crime in particular is an issue that requires a multi-disciplinary focus. "You'll find people in criminology departments around the nation trained in sociology, psychology, economics, and social work. Social ecology recognizes that some of the issues with which we deal can't be looked at with one particular perspective, but require instead a broad perspective."

Though Fridell has worked mostly as a professor and has more than twenty-two years of teaching experience at the college level, she left academia for six years to further explore and research bias in

policing. Between 1999 and 2005, she worked as the Director of Research at the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving policing. Right around the time Fridell joined PERF, bias in policing re-emerged as a major issue in our country due to heightened media coverage and became known as "racial profiling." "It is especially true that one reason I took the job at PERF was because I thought this was an important issue, and being there was a great vantage point for me to work on it," she says. "It was very exciting for me."

During her time at PERF, Fridell spoke on racial profiling at policing conferences. Her experience as a professor undoubtedly helped her, though she admits to feeling quite nervous early on because of the negative way people thought about racial profiling. "I knew that this was one of the least favorite topics of police, so I thought surely I would get passionate, negative responses to my presentations on this topic," she says. "In fact, I did not get that response. In retrospect, I think I was spared because it was not 'politically correct' to challenge the 'racial profiling lady,' especially since I had the PERF linkage. But I wonder to this day what they were thinking."

While at PERF, Fridell and her colleagues received a number of grants from the Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (DOJ COPS) Office, allowing her to consult with many different experts and reflect about racially-biased policing. She began speaking with social psychologists who study human biases, and those conversations led her to develop the FIP training. Though Fridell started doing command-level training in 2008, she didn't incorporate the science-based perspective until pilot sessions throughout 2009 and 2010. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with attendees saying things like, "I was very, very surprised and happy to receive this training," and "[The] most relevant discussions on the topic of race relations I have heard in 14 years." These kinds of responses motivated Fridell to continue training. "Hearing that the training has changed the way [officers] think about bias in policing, and that they will be thinking about their own biases in the future makes me think that what we are doing is very worthwhile," she says. "I like to hear officers who have taken the training share that they have reflected back on some actions they took and realized that they were biased. This is a critically important insight that bodes well for their future policing."

The training helps officers to understand and recognize their own implicit biases so they can perform their duties more effectively. Implicit biases work below consciousness; the brain is designed to make "quick generalizations," or "mental shortcuts," and many people do not realize how this affects perceptions and behavior.

The FIP curriculum includes concepts from Malcolm Gladwell, a New York Times bestselling author who discusses unconscious thought in his book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. He writes, "We don't deliberately choose our unconscious attitudes. The giant computer that is our unconscious silently crunches all the data it can from the experiences we've had, the people we've met, the lessons we've learned, the books we've read, the movies we've seen, and so on, and it

**"People sometimes believe that only ill-intentioned officers racially profile, but the science indicates that even well-meaning people can be affected by their implicit biases."**

forms an opinion.” People, because they are human, link groups to stereotypes without realizing it, and police are no exception. Gladwell goes on to say that “unconscious attitudes may be utterly incompatible with our stated conscious values.” In other words, any person, even a police officer, who consciously rejects stereotypes may still produce biased behavior. Fridell includes these concepts in the FIP training to help officers understand how their minds work so they can make a conscious effort to weaken their “blink responses,” which will subsequently lead to unbiased behavior. “I believe that many police and stakeholders narrowly characterize the nature and causes of biased policing,” she says. The narrow characterization Fridell refers to is that people sometimes believe that only ill-intentioned officers racially profile, but the science indicates that even well-meaning people can be affected by their implicit biases.

When people link groups to stereotypes, they are categorizing—a process of placing individuals into

and positive interactions with people who are different from themselves can reduce both conscious and unconscious biases.” For example, the more positive personal contact an officer has with someone of a different skin color, or even socioeconomic status, the more likely he or she is to reduce implicit biases. Once that recognition occurs, the officer can work to make sure his or her behavior is unbiased.

Once I started to understand the science, it completely changed the way I thought about bias in policing,” Fridell says. “It is that science and perspective that has been placed into the FIP training curriculum.” Fridell has created five training curriculums for different levels of police departments, like patrol officers and first-line supervisors, and another called the “Train-the-Trainer” will be coming to Connecticut in early 2014.

Fridell continues to travel around the United States and Canada training and consulting with various police agencies, and maintains a high opinion of the

**“I think that overwhelmingly, police in this country are good people—heroes even—who want to do good, effective, and impartial policing. The way we used to think and talk about the topic of ‘racial profiling’ did not reflect that fact.” - Fridell**

groups based on physical differences including race, ethnicity, and gender. This helps people differentiate between things to understand the world. “One of the roots of biases is categorizing people,” Fridell says. “Infants don’t have that negative content we learn over time, but even infants recognize people who are different than they are, and that’s the beginning of categorizing and turning [those categories] into stereotypes and groups.” One of the ways police can reduce their biases is by using a concept called “The Contact Theory.” Fridell teaches officers that “frequent

police. “I think that overwhelmingly, police in this country are good people—heroes even—who want to do good, effective, and impartial policing. The way we used to think and talk about the topic of ‘racial profiling’ did not reflect that fact. The police have felt attacked, accused of being racists,” she says. “This has produced reactions from frustration to anger. I’m glad that the Fair and Impartial Policing perspective changes this discussion. We are no longer talking about ‘bad police,’ we are talking about the fact that police are human, like the rest of us.” ♦

# Accepting Bias

*A personal journey to understanding unconscious bias.*

By Keith Dauch

Television often portrays corrections officers as the bad guys and inmates as their victims. Anyone who has seen Orange is the New Black or Prison Break knows about the power trips the officers are on, and the crimes they commit, like smuggling drugs into the prison or abusing an inmate for their enjoyment. It’s almost as if the moment a criminal walks inside the gates of a prison, he stops being a criminal and becomes a victim, and the corrections officers, meant to serve and protect, are the monsters.

As a corrections officer myself, I saw it on the news, on the looks I got from the inmates’ visitors, and I read about it in articles written by those who profess to be experts on the problems of our nation’s prisons. It became so I felt a little awkward if I had to stop somewhere on the way to work with my uniform on. I could feel people staring at me, disgusted by the

power complex they assumed I had, like I was going to leave the gas station with my cup of coffee and Power Bar and head off to work to lock the inmates in their cells, deny them any contact with the outside world, and basically treat them like caged animals.

I couldn’t help but notice a gap between the so called “studies and statistics” and the realities I witnessed on the front lines.

After many years of working as a CO, each individual inmate melded into one massive tan blob, a number I had to count twice a day, and worth no more attention than that, until they began overstepping the boundaries. Mostly things ran smoothly, but at times, like when the inmates would hang out on the walkway instead of in their bunk area or common area, or when they wanted extra recreation time, with which I could not comply, they became angry. Since I wore the blue uniform, I was the immediate enemy of everyone in



## “I understand now that I stopped



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the stereotypes associated with them.”



tan. Curses were exchanged, face-offs occurred, and sometimes even punches were thrown. When things became a bit too out of control, I would have to put the inmates on their bunks, or back in their cells.

The problem forgotten by academics and others who have probably never worked in a prison setting is this: How can a corrections officer tell which are the inmates who want to better themselves, and which are the ones who would have no problem attacking him. After nine years of working in the prisons, I learned to watch the shifting eyes and the tell-tale body language: the nervous hand rubbing and feet shuffling, coupled with those eyes that keep coming back to meet mine to see if I'm still looking.

So, yes, I profile, but I see nothing wrong with that. How else am I to protect myself? Color of skin makes no difference to me, but actions and body language might make me look at a person differently. When I see an inmate walking towards another with a hard-eyed stare, almost pushing others out of the way, I feel on edge; when I see a group of guys huddling in a back corner with one inmate up front watching me, I feel on edge; when I see someone tying his shoes tight and tucking in his shirt, which can be an indication of an upcoming fight,

I feel on edge, regardless of skin color. Each inmate represents a possible dangerous situation, and I have to be in a constant state of watchfulness: in other words, I need to be constantly profiling.

In many situations profiling helped me inside the prison

**“Each inmate represents a possible dangerous situation, and I have to be in a constant state of watchfulness: in other words, I need to be constantly profiling.”**

walls. But the profiling spread to everyone in tan, not just one specific ethnic group. On one particular night a few inmates somehow smuggled some marijuana back into the dorm. My partner and I smelled the distinct odor and began to look on the cameras for the source. Soon we noticed one very watchful inmate in the common area watching us instead of the television. As I got up to walk down that side of the dorm the inmate turned away from me and loudly mimicked the sound of a police siren. Immediately a

group of inmates began to flood out of the back where the cameras couldn't reach. Smoke filled that area, but by the time I got there the drugs were gone. I consider the drug use a multi-cultural effort. The look-out was an African-American, but the inmates running from the back were certainly a diverse group.

During another shift I noticed a white inmate walking into the common room with an angry look on his face. He began tying up his shoes while a group of inmates gathered further in the back. Pulling the inmate aside I learned he had an argument over a game of cards, and was about to fight. Once again this was a very diverse card game.

In no way did I have a bias for or against any specific group of people, only against those who were out to cause trouble.

In 1995 Doctors Anthony Greenwald and Mahazarin Banaji wanted to know, “why discrimination persists, even though polling and other research clearly shows that people oppose it.” They theorized that it was an unconscious action which they called “implicit social cognition.” To test this, they started “Project Implicit” and developed the Implicit Association Test which measures the test taker's reaction time while associating both



positive and negative words when paired with white and black faces.

I know I have biases, but I do not believe they are directed towards any ethnic group; they are directed towards criminals. I decide to take the simple 10 minute test to prove this to myself.

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While fills my stomach at the accusation on the screen before me. I try to think of just one person for whom I might have had a hatred due to skin color, and I come up empty. I say to myself again that I don't like criminals, be they white or black, but having a bias against a person for skin color is ridiculous.

My mind runs the gamut of excuses: The test is not reliable; it requires the test-taker to make fast decisions which leads to mistakes; and on and on the excuses come.

I decide to temporarily accept the results in order to make sense of them. Buying into excuses only buries the problem deeper, allowing its roots to take a firmer hold, so I accept that I have a bias against persons of color. I read further through the website, and come across a section giving the total results for this project: 27% of test takers had either a strong or moderate preference for European Americans, while only 2% had a strong preference for black Americans, and 4% had a moderate preference. The most shocking statistic of them all, according to a blog entry on the Project Implicit site: out of 900,000 test takers, 70% associated white people with good things, and black people with bad things.

If Doctors Greenwald and Banaji are correct that these preferences are unconscious, and that I, too, am

guilty of them, then how do I fight a behavior that I barely believe - and definitely don't understand - is happening?

Dr. Lorie Fridell, Associate Professor and Graduate Director in the Department of Criminology at the University of Southern Florida, has spent the last 20 years building an answer to this very question. She is a national expert on racial profiling, or "racially biased policing." Dr. Fridell opens her trainings by dispelling the myth that only ill-intentioned officers can produce "racially biased policing." The damage this idea creates causes a defensive police force and "has harmed police community/partnerships."

She explains that we link people on sight with their associated stereotypes and in racially biased policing, ethnic minority groups are associated with criminal activity.

Dr. Fridell claims that "one of the roots of biases is categorizing people." Studies have shown that infants categorize people in terms of whether they are the same or different. An infant can tell the differences in color between themselves and another infant, but the negative content and stereotyping comes later.

As people age, those biases which manifest below the conscious level can produce discriminatory behavior. I recognize this in myself. After nine years in the prisons I can see how those biases which may have formed unconsciously lead to my own discriminatory behavior.

Initially I joined the Department of Corrections with the intention of moving up the ladder as far as I could possibly go. I wanted to become a supervisor and a warden. I wanted to try out for and become a part of the Department's Special Operations groups. But a prison is a negative place which breeds misery in its inhabitants – those who are incarcerated and those who work there. And all too quickly that misery took hold inside me.

I understand now that I stopped seeing people

and began to see only the stereotypes associated with them. While driving with my family, if I saw an African-American man driving a nice BMW or Escalade, I would comment: "The drug business must be nice." If I saw any Spanish person with tattoos I would immediately look to see any gang symbols, assuming they must be gang bangers.

I see now, after taking the test and reviewing Dr. Fridell's training, that without knowledge of my unconscious biases, they sneakily became conscious, and like a cancer, they began eating away at me from the inside. This is the importance of Dr. Fridell's training: to learn to recognize the biases we don't understand we have, and to learn to fix them before they begin to manifest themselves outwardly. Especially for the officers who take an oath to protect and to serve their communities, which is an impossible task if first they do not carry respect for their community. ♦

**“Police are one of the most stereotyped groups in our society. When the police initiate frequent, positive interactions with community members, they can also reduce the biases that those individuals have about police.” - Fridell**



# Q&A

## *Dr. Lorie Fridell of the University of South Florida on her Fair and Impartial Police Training.*

By Lisa Cotsa

Lorie Fridell is an Associate Professor and Graduate Director in the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida. With over twenty years of experience conducting research on law enforcement, her primary focuses are police use of force and violence against police. Dr. Fridell is a national expert on racial profiling, or what she calls “racially biased policing,” and has authored and co-authored a number of chapters and books on the topic. She speaks nationally and has been travelling the country since 2008 to provide consultation and training to law enforcement agencies. She developed the Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP) perspective and has helped create five training curriculums: one for academy recruits or patrol officers, a second for first-line supervisors, the “Train-the-Trainer” program, a program for command-level personnel and another for mid-management. She previously taught at the University of Nebraska and Florida State University, and has received five university-level teaching awards.

***Your trainings are based on the idea that bias leads to discriminatory behavior, which can be managed if one is aware of it. How does bias manifest and cause this behavior?***

It used to be that bias in our country, even thinking back many generations, was more likely to manifest as explicit bias. If someone has explicit bias, he or she is aware of it and accepts it. They may frankly tell you that they don’t like this group or that group, and they might tell you why. An example of explicit bias would be a racist: someone who freely acknowledges his or her prejudice. We understand now that bias has changed in the way it manifests in our current society. Young people, and even people of my generation, are more likely to have implicit biases that can influence perceptions and behavior, in turn producing discriminatory behavior. And this can occur even in people who at a conscious level reject stereotypes and prejudices. It’s probably safe to say that all of us have implicit biases in one form or another.

***So the FIP perspective helps officers to better understand how their minds work. How does one learn to recognize his or her own biases, and then react with the knowledge that those biases exist?***

There are two general areas that I will call “remedies,” and we talk about this in the training programs. There are some mechanisms that can be used to try to reduce our biases, but that’s tough. It took us a long time to

develop our biases and they’re not going to go away soon. One example of how we can reduce our implicit biases is a concept called The Contact Theory. What it says is that the more we interact in a positive way with people who are different from ourselves, the less likely we will have conscious prejudices and the less likely, or the weaker, will be our implicit biases. For example, the more you interact with Muslims in a positive way, the more likely you are going to reduce your conscious prejudice as well as your implicit biases. The same would be true for people of different ethnicities or sexual orientations. So one remedy is to try reducing biases, and the second, as you point out in your question, is to manage them. That’s made up of two steps: one is recognizing them, and the other is making sure they do not affect our behavior.

***How does the training teach police to manage the biases they have?***

So, the bad news is that prejudice remains widespread and manifests below consciousness, even in those of

taking the perspective of the stigmatized “other” has been shown to reduce both explicit and implicit biases, at least temporarily.

***You stated that implicit biases could be reduced through positive contact with stereotyped groups. How does the training help police to interact more positively with people “different” from themselves?***

The training highlights for police attendees how they can harness the power of The Contact Theory to reduce their own biases, and reduce biases against police. They learn that frequent, positive interactions with people who are different from themselves can reduce both conscious and unconscious biases. Police are one of the most stereotyped groups in our society. When the police initiate frequent, positive interactions with community members, they can also reduce the biases that those individuals have about police.

***Are a lot of officers defensive when you start talking about racially biased policing***

**“The training not only [addresses] how bias might manifest in policing, but also it’s quite successful in reducing the very understandable defensive police attitude about the issue.”**

us who eschew, at a conscious level, prejudices and stereotypes. The good news comes from the large body of research that has identified how individuals can reduce their implicit biases or, at least, ensure that their implicit biases do not affect their behavior. Scientists have shown that implicit biases can be reduced through positive contact with stereotyped groups and through counter-stereotyping, whereby individuals are exposed to information that is the opposite of the cultural stereotypes about the group. The former mechanism provides further justification for community policing methods, such as permanent assignments and positive police interactions and partnerships with the diverse individuals within a community. The latter mechanism provides the theoretical rationale for use-of-force role-play training (including computer simulations) that randomly pairs the demographics of subjects to scenarios that do and do not result in threat or danger to officers. In addition,

Yes. Police are particularly defensive because of the way we have talked about this issue in our country for a long time. The general thinking has been that bias in policing is produced by explicit biases. Another way of saying that is that we have racial bias in policing because of widespread racism in policing. That has been the very negative way we have thought about this issue, so it’s very understandable. Police look at their colleagues, they look into their hearts, and they don’t see widespread racism. They are inclined to be: a) defensive and offended, and b) disinclined to acknowledge the existence of bias because they don’t see this widespread racism. It’s very true that people who come into this FIP training are angry, sometimes even hostile, but they leave very different. We get very good evaluations because we’re not pointing a finger at police and saying they’re bad people. The worst thing we say: “You’re human, like the rest of us, so let’s understand how our minds work.” The training



not only [addresses] how bias might manifest in policing, but also it’s quite successful in reducing the very understandable defensive police attitude about the issue.

*What are your future goals?*

We’re hoping to get funding from the U.S. DOJ COPS office that will do two things: It would make the police profession aware of the science of bias and the COPS office curriculum, which is the FIP curriculum, and the COPS office also wants to be able to respond to requests from agencies to receive FIP training. They will be sponsoring training, around the nation, to agencies approved to receive it.

*So the program is made up of five different curriculums for police departments, correct? It seems like you’re involved at every level.*

Yes. And actually, I spoke with a judge today who is thinking about how we can implement training for the entire criminal justice system. It is important to be thinking about prosecutors, judges, juvenile justice workers, and correction officials as well. There’s a whole world out there that needs to become aware of the science of bias. ♦

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