

# Notes from the Field

A researcher-practitioner partnership aimed at  
police reform

Jennifer Eberhardt

Stanford University | Stanford SPARQ

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# Research Partners

- Professor Benoit Monin
- Professor Dan Jurafsky
- Professor Hazel Rose Markus
- Rob Voigt
- Nick Camp
- Vinod Prabhakaran
- Camilla Griffiths
- David Jurgens
- Will Hamilton
- Rebecca Hetey
- MarYam Hamedani
- Amrita Maitreyi

# Practitioner Partner









# Traffic Stops: Common and Consequential

- Traffic stops are the most common form of police contact (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011)
- The respect an officer communicates in these interactions shapes trust in the police and compliance with the law (Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Huo, 2001)



# Language from Body Cameras



- Oakland PD policy requires officers to activate cameras in all officer-initiated stops before contacting driver
- Footage captured from 981 traffic stops of Black (N=682) and White (N=299) drivers in Oakland, CA, conducted by 245 officers

```
00:00:00.000 [Officer] I'm going to get the book on the desk, please. Thank  
00:00:00.000 you. I'm going to get the book on the desk, please. Thank  
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```

Officer: No. So go  
down to the  
courthouse. You see  
way at the bottom  
where I checked it?

- Videos transcribed with speaker and utterance information
- 36,738 officer utterances in dataset



$N_{\text{Raters}} = 70$  (39 Female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 25.3$ )

60 utterances/rater; 10 raters/utterance

To what extent was the officer:

- Respectful/Disrespectful
- Polite/Impolite
- Friendly/Unfriendly
- Formal/Informal
- Impartial/Unfair





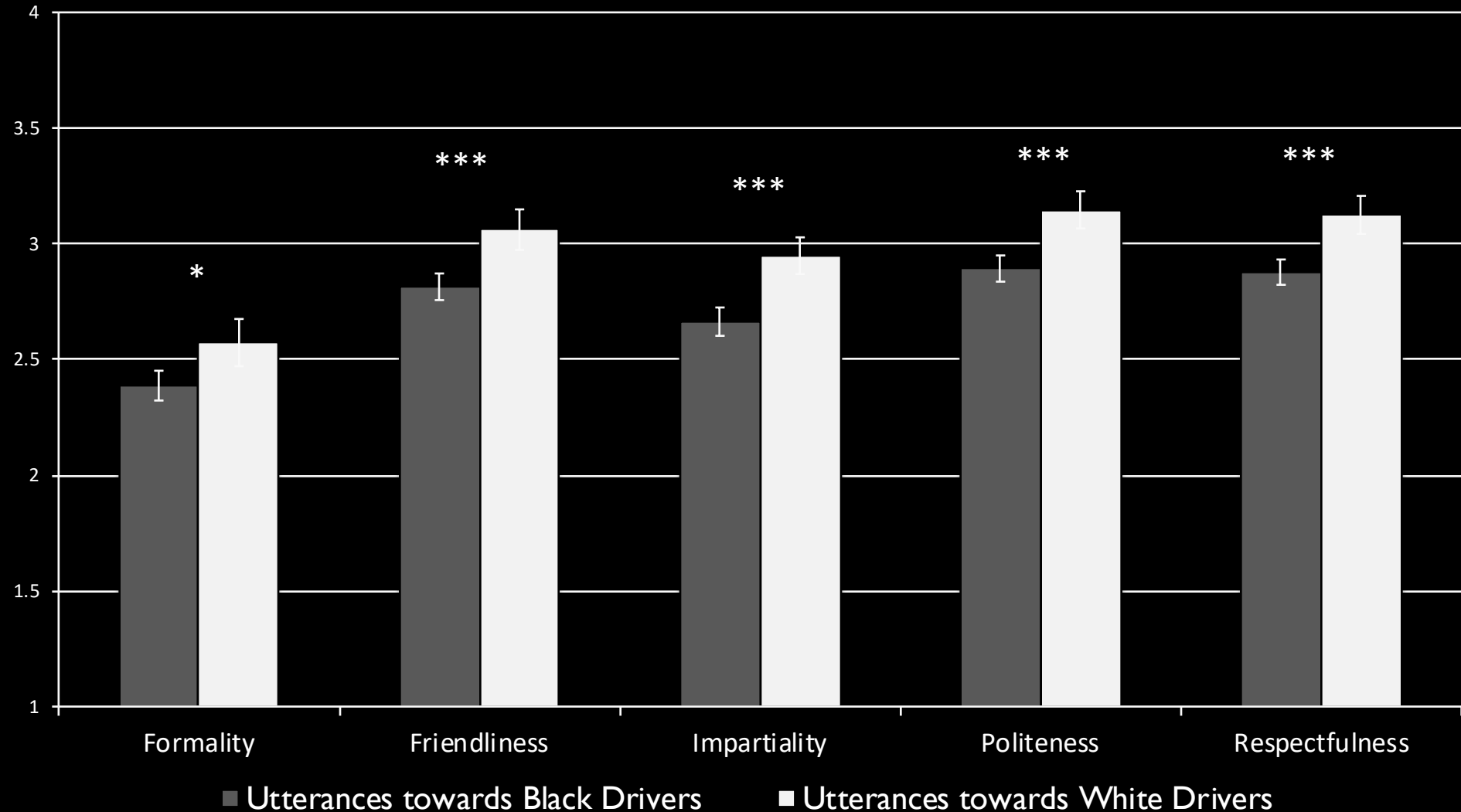
$N_{\text{Raters}} = 70$  (39 Female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 25.3$ )

60 utterances/rater; 10 raters/utterance

To what extent was the officer:

- Respectful/Disrespectful ( $\alpha_s = .78-.87$ )
- Polite/Impolite ( $\alpha_s = .84-.87$ )
- Friendly/Unfriendly ( $\alpha_s = .82-.89$ )
- Formal/Informal ( $\alpha_s = .77-.91$ )
- Impartial/Unfair ( $\alpha_s = .73-.86$ )

# Racial Disparities in Officer Speech



# What kinds of utterances are high in respect?

- Apologies
- Gratitude
- Reassurance
- Safety
- Formal titles



# Respect Scores

- Ran a computer model on 36,738 utterances
- Each utterance was automatically assigned a **respect score**

# More **formal titles** to White drivers

- "All right, **sir**, take care."
- "Okay, **ma'am**. Do you have your insurance and registration, **ma'am**?"
- "All right, **sir**, I'm just going to give you a citation for the cell phone use, okay?"
- "All right **Mr. X**, listen. I'm going to let you, uh, go with a verbal warning tonight."

# More concern for safety of White drivers

- "Okay. All right. **Drive safely.** All right?"
- "All right. You **have a safe night**, okay?"
- "So I'm just glad you're **safe**. You're cool. Right? It just take a little bit of, like, distraction to, to get someone hurt. You know? And **I just want you and your baby to be safe.**"



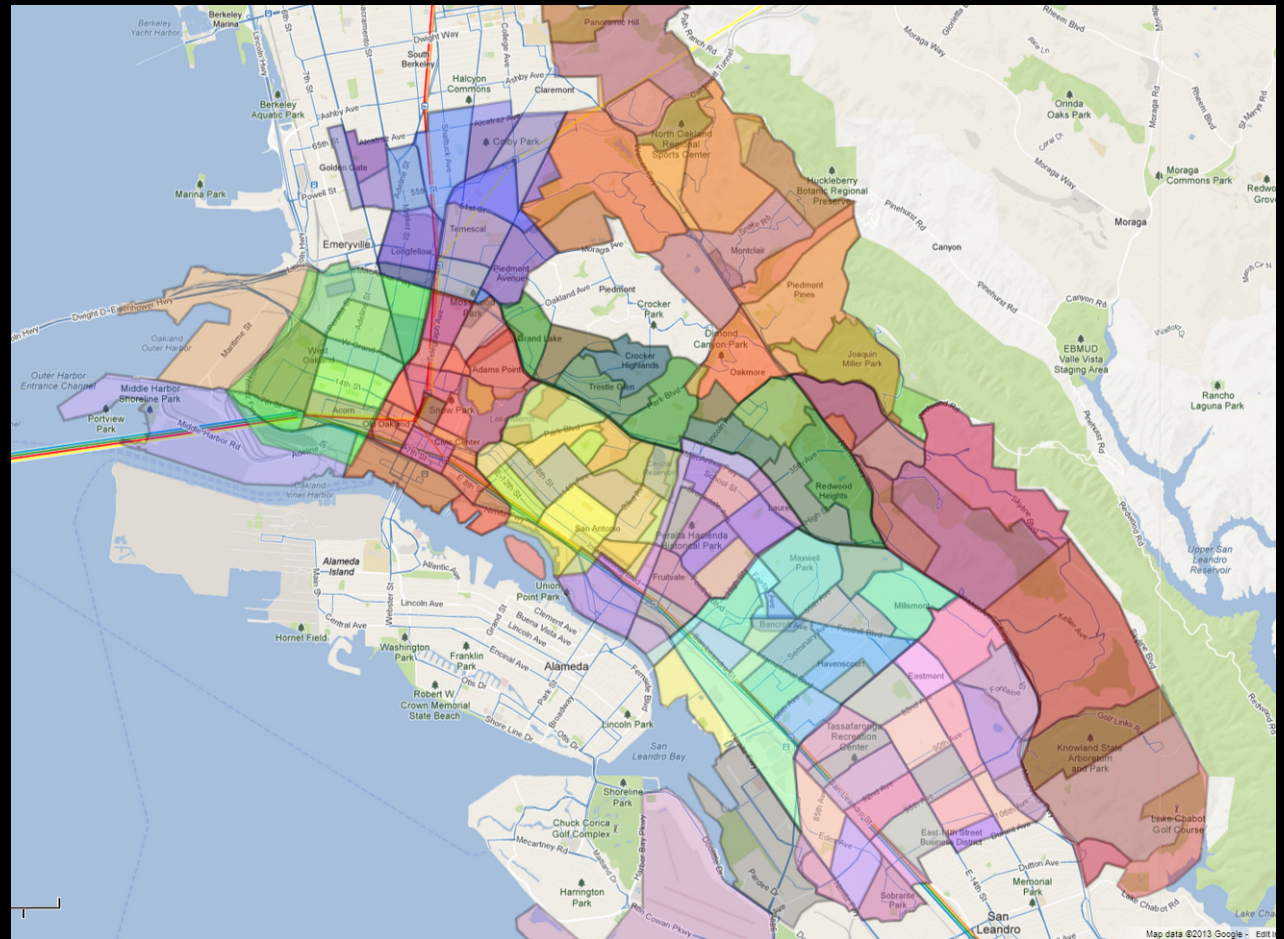
# More **reassurance** to White drivers

- "**No problem.** I understand. Just your license, please."
- "Yeah. **Don't worry** about that. **It's all good.**"
- "**No big deal,** just make sure you get those things fixed."
- "**Just** have uh, anybody sign the back of, the back of that, to **just** uh, **just** prove that it's been taken care of."

Could this be an artifact of some  
confounding variable?

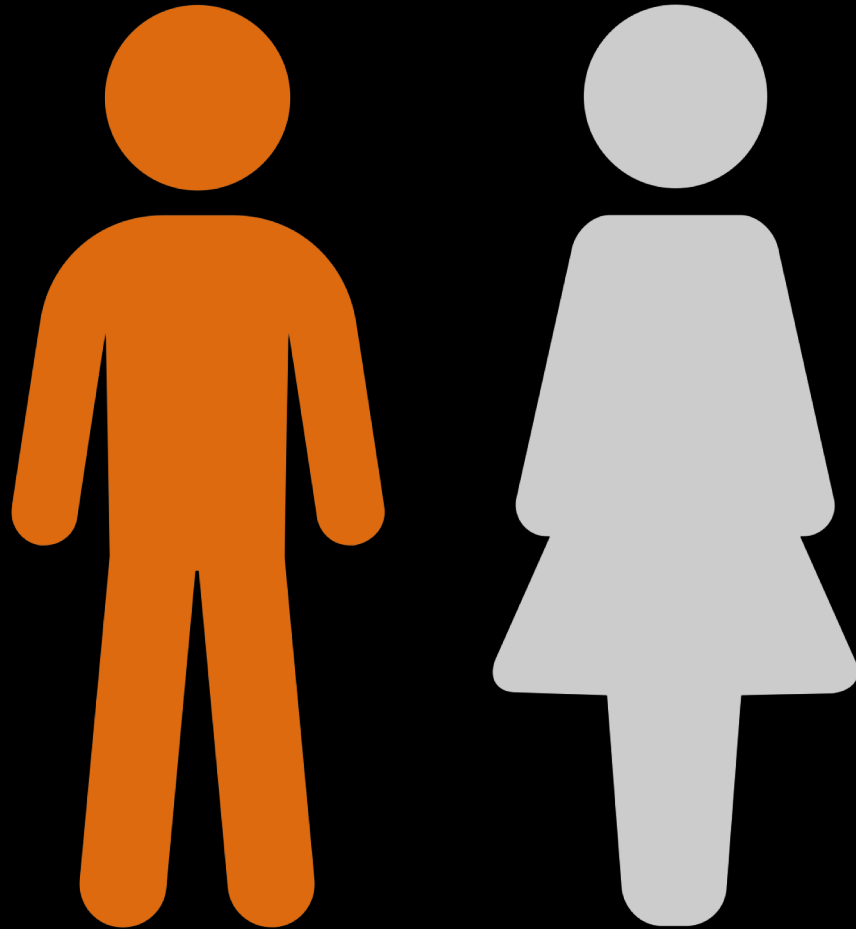
# Maybe the disparity is caused by police being less respectful in high-crime neighborhoods?

- Nope



# Or just being less respectful to men?

- Nope



Maybe the racial difference is caused by police being less respectful to those with a recent criminal history?

- To test this:
  - Removed all stops where a driver was searched
  - Those on probation or parole can be freely searched (and therefore are searched)
- Police are still more respectful to White drivers

# Maybe the racial difference is because the raters are college students?

Replicated the lab study with large, racially diverse sample

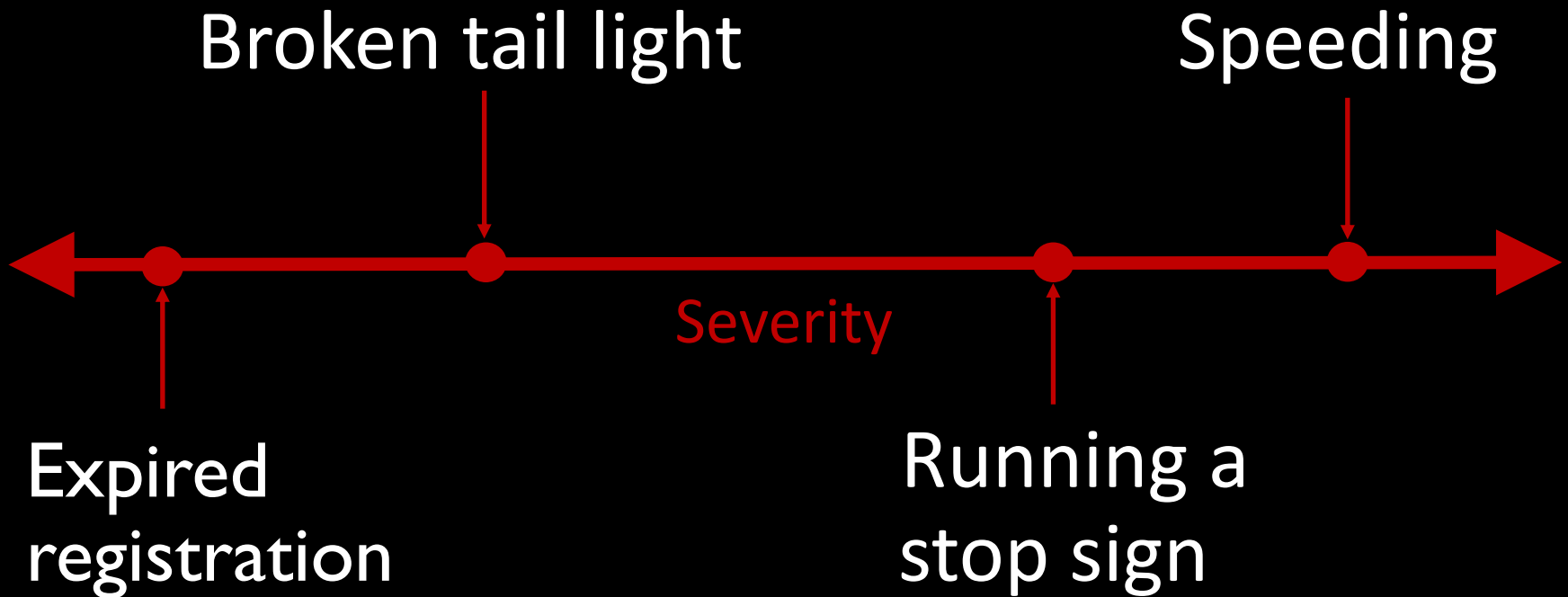


## Police still more respectful to white drivers

- Participant race doesn't matter



Maybe police are more polite to  
White people because they are  
stopped for more minor offenses?



# We asked police officers to code every stop for severity of the infraction

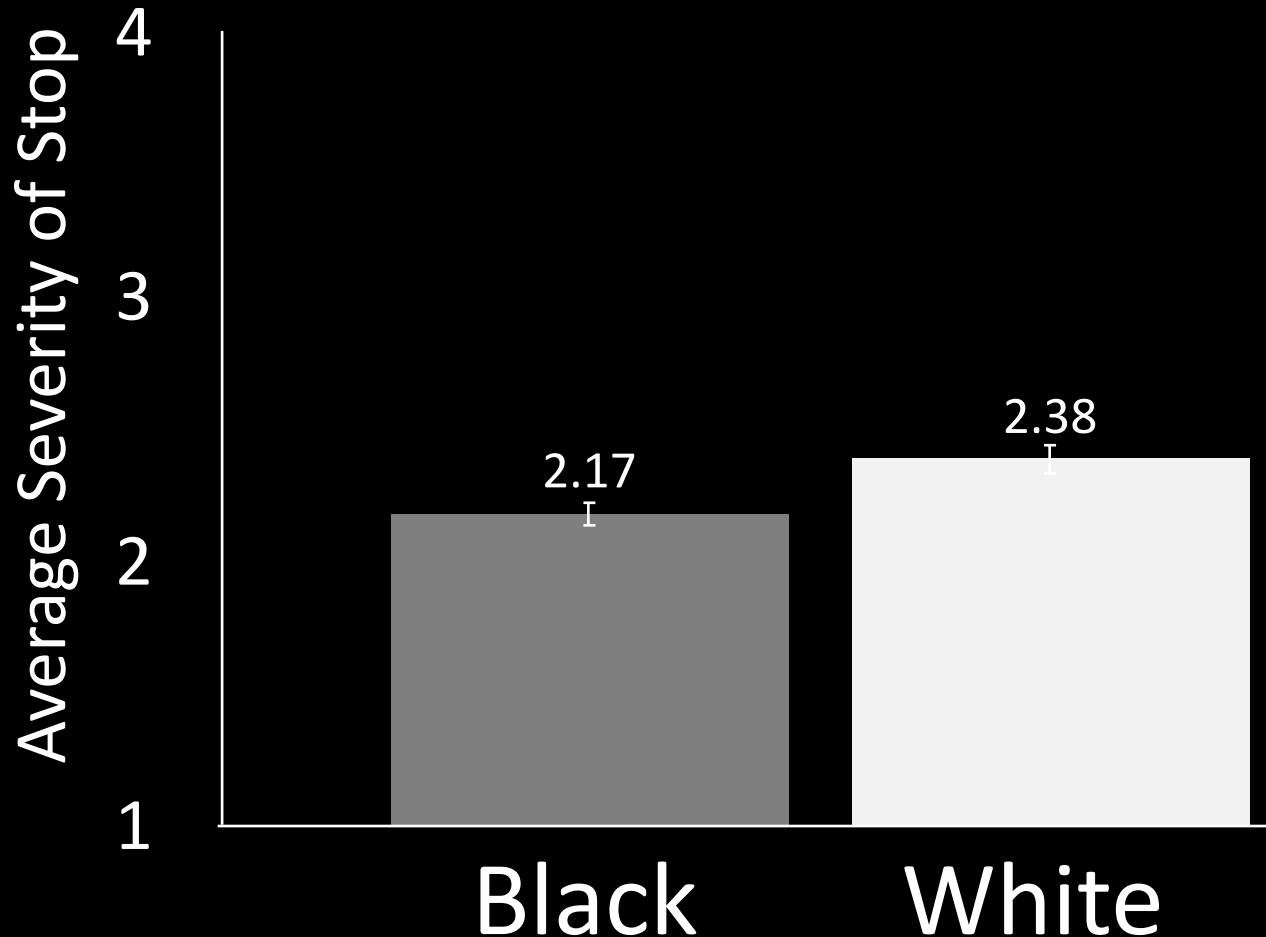
*1) Very Minor (expired registration)*

*to*

*4) Very Severe (speeding)*

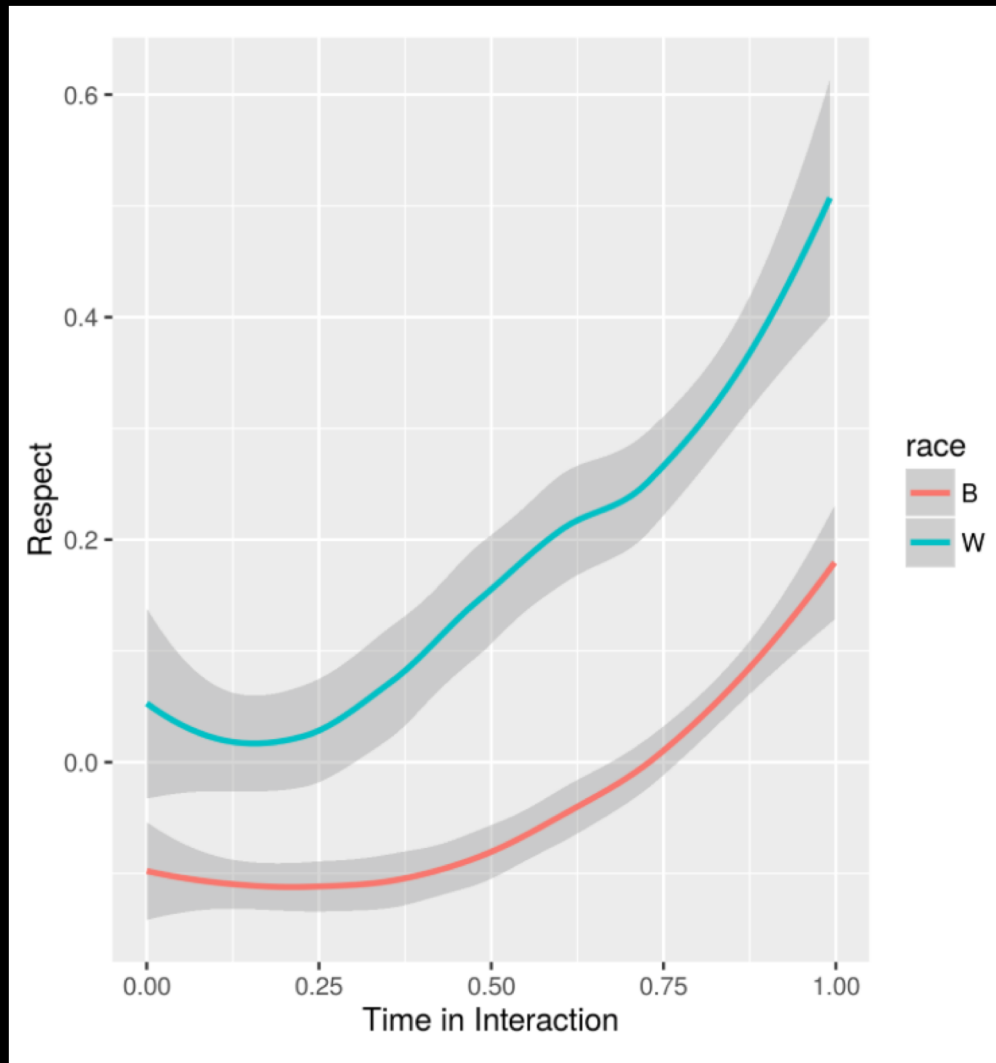


# Black motorists are stopped for less severe violations than whites



# Driver's Language?

# Racial Disparities in Respect Across Time



# Does Tone of Voice Matter?

- ~15 second clips of officer speech
  - Mundane traffic stops, male drivers
  - Content filtered
- People rated:
  - Respectful/Talking Down
  - Tense/At Ease
  - Friendly/Cold



# Police Tone of Voice

- Talking Down:  
- Respectful:  

# Media Impact: National Coverage



Police speak less respectfully to black drivers, study suggests



REUTERS

Footage shows Oakland police less respectful to blacks than whites

**The New York Times**

*Police Are Less Respectful Toward Black Drivers, Report Finds*



PBS

Police respect whites more than blacks during traffic stops, language analysis finds

**BBC  
NEWS**

Racial 'disparity' in police respect

**Los Angeles Times**

Oakland police tend to treat black drivers with less respect than white ones, linguistic analysis shows

**WIRED**

This psychologist could stop police racism before it happens

# Next Steps

OFFICER:	Sir, hello, my name's Officer [NAME] of the Oakland Police Department.	Greeting	Giving Reason
MALE:	Hi.		
OFFICER:	The reason why I pulled you over is when you passed me back there you were texting or talking on your cell phone.		
MALE:	I was looking at a text, yes.	Requesting additional info	
OFFICER:	Okay. Do you have um, what year is the car you're driving?		
MALE:	It's a 2010.		
OFFICER:	2010. And do you still live in [ADDRESS]?		
MALE:	Yes.	Issuing Sanction	
OFFICER:	All right, sir. This is a citation for having your cell phone in your hand [...] It's not a moving violation. [...] You actually have two months ... to take care of the citation, okay? Please drive carefully.		
MALE:	Okay.	Good Bye	
OFFICER:	Thank you.		



# Procedural Justice

- Voice
- Neutrality
- Respect
- Trust



1. Greeting
2. Reason for the stop
3. Requesting information
4. Deciding on a sanction
5. Goodbye





# Beyond Oakland



# Beyond Policing

# Funders and Sponsors

The logo for the MacArthur Foundation, consisting of a blue rectangle on top and a green rectangle on the bottom, with the text "MacArthur" in white on the blue background and "Foundation" in white on the green background.

MacArthur  
Foundation

The logo for SPARQ, consisting of a solid red rectangle with the text "SPARQ" in white.

SPARQ



Thank you

## The New York Times

U.S.

# *Body Cameras Have Little Effect on Police Behavior, Study Says*

By AMANDA RIPLEY and TIMOTHY WILLIAMS OCT. 20, 2017

## The Washington Post

Public Safety

# Police officers with body cameras are as likely to use force as those who don't have them

## Use of force down

75% Mesa, AZ<sup>1</sup>

59% Rialto, CA<sup>2</sup>

53% Orlando, FL<sup>3</sup>

47% San Diego, CA<sup>4</sup>

40% Flagler County, FL<sup>5</sup>

34% Birmingham, AL<sup>6</sup>

## Complaints down

87% Rialto, CA

70% Birmingham, AL

65% Orlando, FL

41% San Diego, CA

40% Mesa, AZ

38% Arlington, TX<sup>7</sup>

33% London, UK<sup>8</sup>

23% Phoenix, AZ<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Miller, Toliver, & Police Executive Research Forum, 2014

<sup>2</sup> Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Wing, 2015

<sup>4</sup> Perry, 2015

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, 2015

<sup>6</sup> Robinson, 2015

<sup>7</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, 2017

<sup>8</sup> Grossmith et al., 2015

<sup>9</sup> Katz et al., 2014

# Investments in Body-Worn Cameras

- 95% of police departments reported that they had implemented or planned to implement BWCs
- \$40 million spent by the federal government – and more by local governments

Durkheimer, 2017, *Forbes*  
Layfayette Group et al., 2015  
Ripley, 2017, *New York Times*

# What the Research Says and What We Don't Know Yet

- RTCs in American and European PDs found:
  - BWCs reduced the number of complaints filed by residents against the police
  - Mixed effects on use of force by and against police officers<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
  - Local context matters
- Evaluating the evaluation studies
  - Issues with the research
  - What we don't know

<sup>1</sup> Ariel et al., 2015, 2016

<sup>2</sup> Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Ariel, Sutherland, Henstock, Young, & Sosinski, 2017

<sup>4</sup> Doleac, 2017

# Aligning Criminal Justice Goals

- Criminal justice ecosystem
  - Racial disparities and racial biases
- Strong practitioner-researcher collaborations
  - Data-driven change
- Improving how law enforcement and criminal justice organizations operate in the communities they serve
  - Community focus