

# Presentation Script

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## Slide 1

I am Alexander Ahmann and welcome to my presentation on implicit bias and police violence against ethnic minorities.

## Slide 2

Society is facing a problem that directly affects blacks, but nonetheless directly affects us all. That problem being blacks being disproportionately arrested or killed by law enforcement. If you turn your attention to the line graph at the left of this slide, you will see that blacks are more likely to be killed than blacks. You may also notice that while there has been a slight decrease in white murders, there has been a slight increase with black murders. The first step to addressing this problem would be to construct testable and falsifiable models that accurately predict the behaviour of police so that we can use them as an aid to make better decisions.

## Slide 3

So, this issue obviously affects blacks. It is unethical for someone to be more likely arrested due to something as arbitrary as their race. We therefore as a society have a duty to reduce the effects of implicit bias. But this issue also affects the majority white population, because police implicit bias can “extend” to them (such as with ableist bias against white individuals) and holding police accountable can hopefully prevent their biases from hurting everybody.

Politicians are somewhat affected too. While blacks make up a small fraction of the population, they tend to be more clustered in certain states. Furthermore, since elections are decided by an electoral college, the ethnic minorities in these states can influence how elections turn out. It would be wise for politicians to consider the interests of ethnic minorities.

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This issue also affects me as well. I myself might be less likely to suffer the negative effects of police implicit bias (I am half-white and half-Asian), but I do

care for other minorities. It pains me to see blacks and Latinos arrested or suffering a fatal encounter because of something so arbitrary. I want to help them anyway I can.

Furthermore, I have a strong interest in science, whether in the natural sciences or the social sciences. I feel that researching this problem feeds my (somewhat selfish) desire to learn how the world works. I also feel that I am more motivated to do research if there is a political motivation behind it, hence the “art of the problem.” And to complement my articulation of my feelings, I’ve added a social justice graphic and the YouTube channel “Art of the problem’s” logo.

## **Slide 5**

My social science question is: “are blacks more likely to suffer fatal encounter with the police compared to whites because of implicit racial bias?”

## **Slide 6**

Thinking like a social scientist can help clarify my thoughts. Scientists of all disciplines express their ideas in terms of testable and falsifiable models. These models are written in the universal, rigorous and definite language of mathematics. When our ideas are open to being proven wrong, we can begin creating useful knowledge.

We must however be careful with scientific method guiding our decision process. Science is merely a tool for updating knowledge, and it is important to think of the consequences of implementing policy. We should strongly consider ethical decision making and remember that our models are mere approximations of how Nature behaves.

## **Slide 7**

To demonstrate that blacks are more likely to suffer fatal encounter with the police than when compared to whites, Ross (2015) conducted a study where he used a Bayesian approach to work out the probabilistic odds of blacks getting shot when compared to whites. On the right, figure 6a shows the odds-ratio of unarmed blacks getting shot to unarmed whites getting shot arranged by the number of fatal police encounters by county on figure 6b, the “heat map” if you will.

## **Slide 8**

Several studies have been conducted that demonstrate that an implicit racial bias is taking place in these shootings. A study conducted by Leiner et al (2016) looked at black deaths in general (that don't necessarily involve the police) and concluded that counties that exhibited more implicit racial bias had more black deaths. Another study conducted by Nix et al (2017) that focused specifically on the police concluded that "civilians from 'other' minority groups were significantly more likely than Whites to have not been attacking the officer(s) or other civilians and that Black civilians were more than twice as likely as White civilians to have been unarmed." (*Nix et al 2017*) It is fair to say that implicit bias is a causal agent in black deaths.

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It is fair to say that implicit bias is a causal agent in black deaths. So what can be done about this? Scientific thinking can help guide our decisions, but they are not a panacea. Science is not a collection of models that have been proven, but a collection of models *that have yet to be disproven*. I will contend that good ethics are more important than quantitative analysis. Nassim Taleb (2010) discusses the limits of scientific method, and how our approaches should focus more on making the right decision. So given that we have some evidence that blacks suffer fatal encounters with the police because of implicit bias, what can be done about it? Perhaps we can require police officers to wear body cameras. Perhaps we can hold police more accountable. If they hurt a member of the black community (or any community for that matter) unfairly, they should be sued. Or perhaps we should disarm the police. Further research should be done to work out what the best strategy for dealing with this problem is.

## **Slide 10**

Sadly, blacks are more likely to be arrested or violently attacked by the police than whites. This is a pity, and we must attack this problem for their sake, for the sake of social justice and for the sake of American values.

## **Slide 11**

And here are the references for anyone who is interested in learning more. Thank you for taking the time to listen.