



Eliminating Racial Bias in recording body-worn videos

The recent events in Ferguson, MO and the death of Eric Garner in Staten Island, NY have ignited a national controversy about racial profiling, police accountability, and public trust in 21st Century Policing. There is a general consensus that police officers should wear and use body-worn video cameras. There is also clear consensus that police body-worn video cameras should not record all the time. As a result, there are big questions about when to record body-worn video, and when to stop recording body-worn video. This paper discusses how to eliminate racial bias in recording body-worn police video.

Racial Bias Academic Research

There is a solid body of academic research that shows that all human beings are biased. The book **Everyday Bias** by Howard J. Ross states “If you are human, you are biased”. Mr. Ross states that bias is natural to the human mind as a survival mechanism. Overwhelmingly bias is unconscious. Humans can work to become less biased, but unconscious biases will always remain.

The book **Blind Spot – Hidden Biases of Good People** by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald describes hidden biases all people carry from a lifetime of exposure to cultural attitudes about age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, disability status, and nationality. Mahzarin Banaji is the Richard Clark Cabot Professor of Social Ethics in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. Anthony Greenwald is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington. Their educational web site Project Implicit <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/> provides information and awareness about unconscious bias. The book **Blind Spot** explores how the perceptions of social groups unconsciously influence individual judgments about character.

Understanding Prejudice

The UnderstandingPrejudice.org web site was developed in 2002 with grant funding from the National Science Foundation and McGraw Hill Higher Education. This web site includes a link to the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The IAT was developed by **Blind Spot** authors Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald to reveal hidden “racial bias”. Dateline NBC did a broadcast about the Implicit Association Test on April 15, 2007, <http://youtu.be/sYQVDik69Nw>, so clearly the IAT is not a new concept.

The Implicit Association Test has been validated through a number of peer-reviewed academic journals over the past decade, and has been taken more than 1 million times. This 10 minute test is available on at the following internet link <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/iat/> .

Everyone is Racially Biased to some degree

So it is not a matter that some people are biased, and therefore are bad, while others are not biased, and therefore good. All human beings are more or less biased on an unconscious level. Police officers are human beings like the rest of us, and each has their own set of unconscious racial bias.

Unconscious racial bias affects behavior. Police officers have to make split-second decisions where a wrong decision can be the difference between death and going home safely after the shift. So it is clear that any task that a police officer is asked to manually perform will be subject to unconscious racial bias, regardless of training or department policies and procedures.

Automatic Video Recording Start and Stop

Almost all police body-worn video cameras on the market so far are manually controlled. They are neither smart nor connected. The police officer alone decides when to manually turn the body-worn video camera on and off. As a result, manually controlled starting and stopping police body-worn video camera recording is always going to be subject to unconscious racial bias regardless of training, published policies, or the good intentions of police departments and individual police officers.

The racially unbiased alternative is to have smart connected body-worn video cameras that automatically start and stop police body-worn video recording. Software code is not human, and therefore does not have inherent racial biases. Recording can be automatically started by the In-Car Video Camera system, by entering or exiting a GeoFence zone, by a remote Supervisor who is not viewing the citizens involved in a situation, by 911 Central Dispatch, by an internal Accelerometer measuring whether a police officer is running, from body-worn biometric sensors that measure an officer's heart rate, or by other local or remote automatic triggering sources. The officer does not have to be involved

in the decision to Start or Stop recording. Smart connected body-worn video recording devices can make racially un-biased video recording Start or Stop decisions. Smart and connected body-worn video cameras always follow the policy rules that are embedded in the body-worn video camera software code, are controlled by an independent third party or system, or are triggered to start or stop recording by a combination of these recording sources.

Manual Control of Video Recording

Police officers should have the ability to manually start and stop video recording. Citizen privacy rights are an important consideration, and there are times when it is appropriate to not record video or audio. However, manual recording control should be subject to technology checks and balances so that police accountability and public trust is maintained. Especially if a police officer manually turns off video recording before the end of an Incident, there should be a clear audit trail of when and why the recording was turned off. The bodyworn should have the ability to provide voice prompts that announce to all citizens in the vicinity that video recording has Started or Stopped. On the other hand, flashing red lights are intimidating, and any police officer is going to be uncomfortable with any red dot on their chest. There should be no unexplained recording gaps while an Incident is in progress. Otherwise public trust in police accountability will be lost.

Video Recording should be Automatic

Automatic recording triggers are the key to avoiding racial bias. Any body-worn video recording system that depends upon a police officer to decide and remember to turn on video recording is going to be flawed. Public trust in policing depends upon reliable, racially unbiased video recording.

A recent Consent Decree Monitor Report for the New Orleans Police Department is telling. In the period of July 1 to September 30, 2014, there were 25 incidents of major force since the deployment of body-worn cameras. In 9 cases, no body-worn camera video of the Incident was available for review.

http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2014/12/nopd_use_of_force_investigatio.html

The survey “American Sentiment toward Police Body-Worn Cameras” national survey showed that an overwhelming majority of the American public do not want individual police officers to determine when to record with body-worn cameras. Furthermore, 72% of Americans want body-worn cameras to start recording automatically when the police in-car video camera recording system starts recording.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/29/ga-utility-idUSnBw295065a+100+BSW20141229>

Smart connected body-worn video recorders can provide policy-defined software-controlled automatic video recording that is consistent and reliable. Dumb unconnected video recorders cannot. Police departments should carefully consider the implications of purchasing dumb unconnected video recorders. A rushed short-term decision to buy could well be a bad investment, and undermine public trust in police transparency and accountability.

Police Video Recording should not be racially biased

Reliable video recording technology that encourages everyone to be on their best behavior has proven to reduce the number of Situations turning into Incidents. Eliminating the possibility of racial bias in recording or not recording an Incident increases public trust in police transparency and accountability.

As Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey has stated, everyone’s goal should be fair and impartial policing.