

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Stanford Reports on Improving Police-Community Relations in Oakland, California

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Law enforcement agencies across the United States are facing claims that they discriminate against community members of color. Inquiries into these claims typically take one of two approaches: either attack the agency for intentional racism, or deny the presence of racial disparities altogether. Yet neither of these approaches has yielded adequate progress toward many agencies' stated mission of serving their communities with fairness and respect.

Taking a different approach, the City of Oakland contracted with our team of Stanford social psychologists to examine relations between the Oakland Police Department (OPD) and the Oakland community, and then to develop evidence-based remedies for any racial disparities we might find. Since May of 2014, our team has undertaken five research initiatives. We describe these initiatives' methods, findings, and recommendations in *Strategies for Change: Research Initiatives and Recommendations To Improve Police-Community Relations in Oakland, Calif.* We provide a technical report of our analysis of OPD stop data in *Data for Change: A Statistical Analysis of Police Stops, Searches, Handcuffings, and Arrests in Oakland, Calif., 2013-2014.*

Across our research programs, we indeed uncovered evidence that OPD officers treat people of different races differently. At the same time, we found little evidence that disparate treatment arose from explicit racism or purposeful discrimination. Instead, our research suggests that many subtle and unexamined cultural norms, beliefs, and practices sustain disparate treatment. Our findings also suggest 50 evidence-based actions that agencies can take to change department cultures and strengthen police-community ties.

Below, we highlight some of our research initiatives, findings, and recommendations for improving police-community relations in Oakland and other communities.

The Five Research Initiatives

- Statistical analyses of “stop data” from 28,119 forms that 510 OPD officers filed after stopping drivers and pedestrians in Oakland, Calif., between April 1, 2013 and April 30, 2014 (for a summary of methods and findings, see Chapter 1 of *Strategies for Change*; for the full technical report, see *Data for Change*);
- Development of computational tools to analyze linguistic data from body-worn cameras (BWCs) and, using those tools, analyses of some 157,000 words from 286 OPD officers during stops in April of 2014 (see Chapter 2 of *Strategies for Change*);
- Development of computational tools to analyze written narratives from police stop data forms, and using those tools as well as human experts, analyses of some 1,000 OPD officer narratives from April of 2014 (see Chapter 3 of *Strategies for Change*);

- Two surveys of 416 Oakland community members assessing their attitudes toward and experiences with OPD officers, collected between July and December of 2015 (see Chapter 4 of *Strategies for Change*);
- To mitigate racial disparities, development and evaluation of implicit bias and procedural justice training modules with some 700 OPD officers (see Chapter 5 of *Strategies for Change*).

Key Findings

- OPD officers stopped, searched, handcuffed, and arrested more African Americans than Whites, and this finding remained significant even after we statistically controlled for neighborhood crime rates and racial demographics; the race, gender, and experience of the officer; and other factors known to influence police actions;
- OPD officers disproportionately stopped African Americans for minor offenses;
- Racial disparities in stops and stop outcomes were greater for less-experienced officers;
- With African American community members, OPD officers used more severe legal language (e.g., mentioned *probation*, *parole*, and *arrest*) and offered fewer explanations for the stop than they did with White community members;
- Oakland residents of color felt less trustful and more suspicious of the OPD;
- In police-initiated interactions, African American and Hispanic Oaklanders felt more disrespected and misunderstood than did White and Asian Oaklanders;
- In interactions with police that Oakland community members initiated themselves, there were no racial differences in perceived police treatment.

Select Recommendations

- Our findings suggest that the OPD has a culture whereby it's more acceptable to stop, search, handcuff, and arrest African Americans than Whites. We suspect that many other law enforcement agencies have similar cultures. In the *Strategies for Change* report, we thus recommend that the OPD and other agencies institute monthly reviews of policies, practices, and procedures for evidence of disparate impacts.
- As less-experienced officers show more racial disparities in their actions, better training of new officers could likely reduce disparate treatment. To this end, *Strategies of Change* presents several recommendations for how to improve officer training.
- Although the OPD collects copious amounts of data, few measures track the OPD's relationship with its community. In *Strategies for Change*, we thus recommend several actions that the OPD and other law enforcement agencies can take to measure what matters most.
- More broadly, our studies suggest that OPD officers view data as evidence to be used for punishment, rather than as feedback to be used for improvement. Consequently, the department has been slow to collect and use data, including BWC footage. In *Strategies for Change*, we recommend more than a dozen actions that the OPD and other law enforcement agencies can take to better leverage data, especially BWC data.