

**Title of Project:** The Proof is in the Precinct: Examining the Role of Masculinity, Police Trainings, and Rhetoric in Shooter Bias

**Anticipated number of participants:** 100

**Approximate ages:** 18-99

Submission date: XX/XX/XXXX

Anticipated start date: XX/XX/XXXX

**Expedited Review:** for research that does **not** manipulate participants' behavior, use deception, threaten privacy, or cause stress to participants (e.g. observational studies, studies of archival data, some questionnaire and interview studies). Review takes approximately 5 days.

**Full Review:** for all research that is not eligible for expedited review. Reviews occur once each semester.

### **Purposes of Investigation and Procedures:**

The first implicit association test was developed and published in 1998, and the initial experiment focused partly on positive and negative associations with Black vs. White faces (Greenwald et al., 1998). Since then, the amount of psychological research investigating implicit bias has increased dramatically, especially in the context of implicit racial bias. Within a few short years, some researchers began applying this phenomenon to the context of racialized policing. Payne (2001), for example, developed the weapon identification task, and found that not only were participants more likely to identify weapons faster when primed with a Black face rather than a White one, but they were also more likely to misidentify tools as guns when they were primed with Black (vs. White) faces. One year later, the first experiments using a first-person shooter task (FPST) emerged (Correll et al., 2002). In these tasks, participants are asked to play a computer simulation in which they are asked to make quick decisions to "shoot" or "not shoot" Black and White men, across many trials. Sometimes the men are holding harmless objects (e.g., cell phones) and sometimes they are holding weapons (e.g., guns). The goal is to be as accurate as possible by choosing "shoot" only when the target is armed. These experiments using the FPST found that, on average, participants were quicker to select the option in the simulation to "shoot" armed targets when they were Black, and select the option to "not shoot" unarmed targets when they were White. Perhaps more importantly, participants were also more likely to mistakenly "shoot" unarmed targets if they were Black and fail to "shoot" unarmed targets if they were White (Correll et al., 2002). These experiments are important because they are able to isolate race as a causal factor influencing a greater predisposition to shoot unarmed Black (vs. White) civilians.

This kind of research, which began over 20 years ago, has remained quite socially relevant. As most people living in the U.S. are aware, there have been a number of shootings of unarmed Black civilians, particularly Black men, by police officers that have obtained widespread media attention (and many more that do not reach that level of recognition).

Previous research has found that mere awareness of racial stereotypes linking Blackness with aggression/criminality, whether one actually endorses those stereotypes or not, can affect the ways that we process ambiguous information such as a playful shove (Devine, 1989). Additionally, it has been found that certain aspects of police culture can reinforce racial bias and contribute to violence against Black Americans (Richardson, 2014). For example, inexperience leads officers to rely on training materials and guidelines for guidance that often depict Black people as more "menacing" than White ones (Pryor, Buchanan, & Goff, 2020). Indeed, training materials are

more likely to depict Black targets than White ones (Beliso-De Jesús, 2020). Informal culture in conjunction with these guidelines can exacerbate these racial stereotypes, such as when police chiefs reinforce stereotypes about gang and drug related violence being associated with Black and brown perpetrators in “urban” and “high crime risk” areas, and de-emphasize the weight of implicit bias in their practice by portraying racially-biased conduct as inevitable and non-reflective of their character (Carson, 2020; Beliso-De Jesús 2020).

In the present research, we seek to investigate the roles that police training and culture play in contributing to shooter bias. Specifically, we hypothesize that exposure to standard police training materials, as well as racially biased rhetoric from senior police officers, will contribute to more mistakes in shooting unarmed Black (vs. White) targets in a FPST. Additionally, we hypothesize that those who are found to subscribe more to masculine norms as found on the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) will be more likely to perform worse on the FPST than those who do not (Levant et al., 2020).

### **Study Methods:**

We will first measure masculinity by having all participants take a shortened version of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) (Levant et al., 2020). This measure assesses the degree to which one subscribes to masculine norms along ten dimensions: emotional control, winning, playboy, violence, heterosexual self-presentation, pursuit of status, primacy of work, power over women, self-reliance, and risk taking. We decided to use this measure of masculinity because it can effectively assess masculine norms held in both male and female participants in order to better account for a potential gender imbalance in participants, given the predominantly female participant pool. The questions that will be used from this measure are as follows:

- **Winning**
  - “it is important for me to win”
  - “The best feeling in the world comes from winning”
  - ”I like to always get my way”
- **Emotional Control**
  - “I like to talk about my feelings” (R)
  - “I tend to keep my feelings to myself”
  - ”I try to be unemotional”
  - ”it it’s important for me to show my feelings” (R)
- **Pursuit of Status**
  - ”I would hate to be important” (R)
  - ”I feel uncomfortable when people think I am important” (R)
  - “Having status is not important to me” (R)
- **Playboy**
  - “I would change sexual partners often if I could”
  - “I would feel good if I had many sexual partners”
  - “For me, committed relationships are better than casual sex” (R)
- **Power over Women**
  - “I like having equal relationships with members of the opposite sex” (R)
    - *This was changed from with women*
  - I treat members of the opposite sex as equals (R)
    - *This is changed from women*
- **Risk Taking**
  - “Taking risks helps me to prove myself”
  - ”I put myself in risky situations:
  - ”It would be foolish of me to take risks” (R)

- Primacy of Work
  - “I tend to prioritize my work over other things”
  - “I feel good when work is my first priority”
- Heterosexual self-presentation
  - “I do not think it would be bad if someone thought I was gay” (R)
  - “If someone thought I was gay, I would not argue with them about it” (R)
  - “It is important to me that people think I am straight”
- Violence
  - “It is never okay for me to be violent” (R)
  - “I think violence is necessary sometimes”
  - “I am willing to get into a physical fight if it’s necessary”
  - ”Even if a person made me very angry, I would not use violence”
- Self Reliance
  - “I am not ashamed to ask for help”
  - “If I asked for help it would be a sign of failure”

We will also evaluate the role that police training materials and rhetoric espoused in police settings play in contributing to shooter bias by randomly assigning participants to one of two conditions. In the experimental group, participants will read selections from the NYPD Use of Force Policy, as well as quotes from senior police officers taken from news articles regarding race and policing. These materials can be found at the link below: [google doc link was provided here for materials that included images and could not be entered directly in the system]

Those in the control group will go into the FPST without any priming. As described above, in the FPST, participants will see White and Black men targets on a screen against a real-life background such as a street corner. Some targets will be holding harmless objects (e.g., cell phones, wallets, etc.), others will be holding guns. Participants will be tasked with selecting the “shoot” option for targets holding guns and the “don’t shoot” option for targets holding harmless objects. This task will need to be completed on a smartphone because the free version of the task that we were able to find via Correll’s (2002) website, and after speaking with him directly, does not perform well on computers. At the end of the task participants will receive their results for the percentage of how many Black armed and unarmed, as well as White armed and unarmed, targets they shot. Participants will send screenshots of their results back through Qualtrics as well as enter their results manually into the Qualtrics survey.

Here is a link to the FPST we plan to use; with the caveat, as mentioned above, that it only works on cell phones:

<https://run.pavlovia.org/vespr/first-person-shooter-task/>

Finally, all participants will report their basic demographics so we can describe our sample. These demographic items will include gender, age, family education and income, and racial identity.

### **Anticipated Risk and Potential Benefits to Participants**

We do not expect any potential benefits to participants, however there are some risks. Asking participants to engage in questions about masculinity, gender, violence, and sexuality can potentially make them uncomfortable. Additionally, the police training materials and quotes from news articles discuss racialized police violence in quite graphic terms. This information can be potentially upsetting for some participants, especially those who have personal experience with the subject or are more likely to be affected by police violence. Participants can opt to not answer certain questions or withdraw from the study at any time and still receive research credit on SONA.

Participants will also be told that the study covers these topics in the informed consent.

### **Steps Taken to Protect the Participants**

All participants will confirm that they are at least eighteen years old at the beginning of the study. Participants will also be informed of their right to refrain from answering certain questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants will provide informed consent and will learn ahead of time that the study involves engaging in a FPST and reporting their results. Participants will be debriefed once the study is complete and be informed of the purpose of the study, as well as given several resources, such as the counseling center, in case they feel any distress. They will also be provided resources that can help them learn about associations between Black people and crime and how those associations can affect important life outcomes like use of force by police.

Finally, participants' data will be protected on password protected computers and their names will not be associated with the responses they provide in Qualtrics. While Qualtrics does record IP addresses by default, this column of data will be deleted before data analysis and only deidentified data will be shared among researchers. This information also appears on the consent form.

### **Manner of Obtaining Participants**

Recruitment of participants will occur through the SONA platform. Information about the study will be posted on SONA and interested participants can choose to participate by clicking on the link, reading and signing the informed consent document, and verifying that they are 18 years old or older. Participants will further learn both via SONA recruitment and the informed consent that they must complete the study on a smartphone due to the fact that one of the tasks (i.e., the FPST) is only compatible on a smartphone.

## **Certificate of Informed Consent**

### **Overview and Procedure:**

You are being asked to take part in a psychological research study, the details of which are elaborated upon below. It is important to carefully read through and understand the following information in order to be able to make an informed choice about whether or not you want to participate. Please also note that you will also need to use a smartphone (rather than a computer) to complete this study, as one of the tasks only works on smartphones.

During this study you may be asked to read police training materials and few quotes from police that are graphic and reference violence. Next, you will take a survey assessing personal traits and engage in a first-person shooter task (FPST). The FPST is a task you will complete by following a link on your phone. In this task, you will be asked to determine whether White and Black men are holding weapons or harmless objects as quickly as you can by pressing buttons on your phone. You will then be asked to submit a screenshot of your results which will track how accurately you completed the task. Your time in this study should last approximately 30 minutes.

### **Risks and Benefits:**

We anticipate some risks to the study. It is possible that some of the reading materials, questions, and FPST itself could make you feel uncomfortable. However, we believe that the split-second decision-making involved in this task is a salient societal topic. For that reason, the content of the study should not deviate too greatly from the types of topics covered in popular news and media. The questions you will answer, information you may read, and tasks you will engage in have the potential to be upsetting due to their relevance to police use of force.

You may not benefit personally from being a participant in this study.

### **Confidentiality:**

You signed up for this study through the online research participation system, SONA. Although your name appears on SONA, we will not ask for your name during the study itself, so your name will not be attached to the data you provide in the Qualtrics survey. That said, by default, Qualtrics records your IP address. However, we will delete this column of data after data collection is complete and before beginning data analysis. Thus, only de-identified data files will be used by the research team once data collection is complete. We will program the survey in Qualtrics to automatically grant you credit on SONA once you reach the end of the survey. However, if you complete the study and notice you do not have credit on SONA, please email the research team to let them know and they will manually grant you credit.

### **Compensation:**

You will receive 0.5 credits on SONA for participating in this research study. You will receive credit for your participation even if you decide to stop at any point in time and for any reason. However, if you stop early, you will need to email the researchers to let them know so that they can grant you credit via SONA.

**Your Rights:**

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. You also may refuse to participate. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, and without penalty. You can also skip any questions without penalty after agreeing to participate in the study. If you begin the study, even if you withdraw early or skip questions, you will still receive SONA credit for your time.

**Contact Information:**

All research using human volunteer subjects is reviewed by a committee (IRB) that is here to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions, concerns, would like to obtain information, or would like to obtain officer input please contact the Colgate Institutional Review Board via email at [IRB\\_Chair@colgate.edu](mailto:IRB_Chair@colgate.edu). For more information about the study, please contact the faculty advisor, XXXX at [email here], or the principal investigator, XXXX, at [email here].

**For Your Records:**

If you would like a copy of this consent form, please print this page now for your records and before continuing. You may also email the researchers working on this project to request an electronic copy of this consent form.

**By providing electronic agreement below you are confirming that 1) you have read this consent form 2) that you agree to participate and 3) that you are 18 years old or older.**

## Debriefing Form

Race and policing in the United States have been intertwined since the founding of the U.S. criminal justice system (DuVernay, 2016). The earliest forms of policing originated from Slave Patrols formed in the early 1700s with the express goal of capturing runaway slaves and forcibly returning them back to their masters (Durr, 2015). As policing has moved into the modern era, thousands of unarmed people of color, [particularly Black people](#), have been shot and killed by police. In this study, we are interested in factors that influence decisions to shoot unarmed Black and White men.

In the study you completed today you reported your personal traits and also completed a First-Person Shooter Task. In this task, you saw images of Black and White targets holding either harmless objects (wallets, phones, etc.) or guns. You were tasked with correctly selecting the “shoot” or “don’t shoot” option based on whether or not the target had a gun. Depending on which condition you were assigned, you may have also read police training materials on firearm discharge and quotes from police officers on the subject of race.

We hypothesized that those who scored high in masculine traits, as well as those who were primed with the police training materials, would shoot a higher percentage of unarmed Black (vs. White) targets.

The data collected from this study will allow us to better understand the psychological mechanisms behind racial biases in decisions to shoot and potentially help to inform best practice for the language used in police trainings.

The following resources are available if you would like to seek further help or mental health services:

[The Counseling Center](#) (Confidential)

[The Office of Chaplains](#) (Confidential)

[24-Hour Crisis Hotline](#) (Off-campus)

Colgate’s ALANA Cultural Center engages in many community-building initiatives and education and training workshops that everyone is invited to participate in. You can get involved by contacting Carly Dougher at [cdougher@colgate.edu](mailto:cdougher@colgate.edu).

If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, please contact the *Institutional Review Board* at [IRB\\_Chair@colgate.edu](mailto:IRB_Chair@colgate.edu)

For further information on the topic of racial biases in policing, please consult the following sources:

Carlson, J. (2020). Police warriors and police guardians: Race, masculinity, and the construction of gun violence. *Social Problems*, 67(3), 399-417.

Correll, J., Park, B., Judd, C. M., & Wittenbrink, B. (2002). The police officer's dilemma: using ethnicity to disambiguate potentially threatening individuals. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(6), 1314.

Durr, M. (2015). What is the difference between slave patrols and modern-day policing? Institutional violence in a community of color. *Critical Sociology*, 41(6), 873-879.

DuVernay, A. (Director). (2016). *13th* [Film]. Kandoo Films.

Payne, B. K. (2001). Prejudice and perception: the role of automatic and controlled processes in misperceiving a weapon. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 81(2), 181.

## References

Beliso-De Jesús, A. M. (2020). The jungle academy: molding white supremacy in American police recruits. *American Anthropologist*, 122(1), 143-156.

Braga, A. A., & Brunson, R. K. (2015). *New Perspectives in Policing*.

Caban, Edward A. (2023), 2022 Annual Use of Force Report, *New York City Police Department*

Carlson, J. (2020). Police warriors and police guardians: Race, masculinity, and the construction of gun violence. *Social Problems*, 67(3), 399-417.

Correll, J., Park, B., Judd, C. M., & Wittenbrink, B. (2002). The police officer's dilemma: using ethnicity to disambiguate potentially threatening individuals. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(6), 1314.

Devine, P. G. (1989). Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 56(1), 5.

Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: the implicit association test. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(6), 1464-1480. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.74.6.1464>

Godfrey, H., Ba Tran, A., & Rich, S. (2024). *Police shootings database 2015-2024: Search by race, age, Department - Washington Post*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>

## For Your Records:

If you would like a copy of this debrief form, please print this page now for your records and before continuing. Importantly, we ask that you do not share this debriefing form with anyone who might participate in the study, so as to preserve the integrity of the study. You may also email the researchers working on this project to request an electronic copy of this debrief form.

**By providing electronic agreement below you are confirming that 1) you have read this debrief form.**