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](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. Recording can be started by the In-Car Video Camera system, by a remote Supervisor, by 911 Central Dispatch, by an internal Accelerometer measuring whether a police officer is running, from bodyworn sensors that measure an officer’s heart rate, or by other local or remote automatic triggering sources. Smart connected body-worn video recording devices do not make racially 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, 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. There can 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.


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 automatic video recording. Dumb unconnected video recorders cannot. Police departments should carefully consider the implications of purchasing dumb unconnected video recorders. A rushed short-term decision could well be a bad long-term decision.

**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 accountability.

As Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey has stated, everyone’s goal should be fair and impartial policing.
77% of Americans believe individual police officers should not decide when to manually start/stop video recording.

9 in 10 Americans believe police accountability and transparency can be increased with the following three body-worn camera features/technology:

- **72%**
  - All nearby body-worn cameras automatically start recording when the in-car video system is recording video.

- **71%**
  - Central dispatch (911) can remotely start body-worn video recording when the officer is dispatched to a call.

- **68%**
  - Immediate, real-time upload of recorded video to central dispatch over a wireless connection.

Of the 71% of survey respondents who were aware of the President's recommendation that police officers should wear body-worn cameras, only 5% of Black and 9% of Hispanic respondents thought that police officers should decide when to manually start or stop body-worn camera recording, compared to 21% of White respondents.

Concern over security of recorded video:

- **60%**
  - Concern recorded video will be leaked through social media.

- **59%**
  - Concern recorded video will be leaked on YouTube.

- **44%**
  - Concern recorded video will be leaked with other officers.

Women are more concerned than men with video security:

- **64%**
  - Women are concerned recorded video will be leaked on social media.

- **62%**
  - Women are concerned recorded video will be leaked on YouTube.

- **47%**
  - Women are less concerned recorded video will be leaked with other officers.

- **56%**
  - Men are concerned recorded video will be leaked on social media.

- **55%**
  - Men are concerned recorded video will be leaked on YouTube.

- **40%**
  - Men are more concerned recorded video will be leaked with other officers.

54% of Black respondents concerned over videos being shared with other officers vs. 46% of Hispanic respondents and 41% of White respondents.

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American Sentiment toward Police Body Cameras is a national survey of 1,007 adults (18 years old and older) commissioned by Utility, Inc. and conducted by ORC International. Conducted December 2014. For more information about the survey findings, visit www.Utility.com.