

JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT
RESOLUTION ON RACIAL/ETHNIC PROFILING AND OTHER RACIAL/ETHNIC
DISPARITIES IN LAW AND SECURITY ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Relevance to Psychology and Psychologists and Importance to Psychology or to Society as a Whole

Racial profiling is the practice of targeting people for law enforcement and security examination based significantly on their race or ethnicity. Psychologists as researchers, educators, and practitioners can play an important role in developing guidelines, protocols, and recommendations for prevention, treatment, and evaluation programs that focus not only on individuals (victims and perpetrators) involved in racial profiling and other law enforcement activities characterized by racial/ethnic disparities, but also on the immediate and extended families of both groups, and local communities wherein both the victim and perpetrator reside. In addition, associated effects on more extended communities (e.g., other counties, states, provinces, and countries) that vicariously experience the unjust and sometimes horrific acts of abuse and violence merit investigation.

Documented discriminatory practices of police departments and state troopers directed toward motorists (ACLU, 1999) in several states (e.g., New Jersey, Maryland, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Florida) constitute additional reminders that “skin color” has apparently become synonymous with the presumption of propensity to commit crime.

Outcries from ethnic minority communities regarding disparate passenger search practices at airports also seem supported. Recent reports (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 2000b) clearly point out that passengers of certain ethnic minority groups are more likely than other passengers to be the recipients of more intrusive searches (i.e., stripped search or x-rayed) despite statistics showing they are *less* likely to be transporting contraband substances.

Recently, President Clinton ordered federal law enforcement agencies to collect traffic stop information related to race, ethnicity, gender, and reason for detainment (“Fairness in Law Enforcement,” 1999). Additionally, U.S. House Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich) reintroduced legislation to hold law enforcement officers accountable for routine traffic stops. The “*Traffic Stops Statistics Study Act of 1999*” would require police officers to carefully document each routine traffic stop. In addition, under this act the U.S. Attorney General would conduct a study based on traffic stop data collected from law enforcement departments nationwide and report the findings to Congress.

We know that psychologists currently work in the law enforcement system and provide services. Most psychologists working in law enforcement agencies are involved with personnel selection and individual counseling. They are not as likely to be involved in activities to help prevent stereotyping. In a Psychology and Law Enforcement Roundtable (August 4, 2000), it was reported that 50 of the largest cities identified 95 psychologists that were working with their respective departments. This suggests that most departments use more than one psychologist (Scrivner, 1995).

The significance of these potential roles and contributions of psychologists is underscored by the fact that outcries from African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Hispanic/Latino American communities claiming that they are targets of disparate abuse and violence by law

enforcement personnel have been given credence recently in the national media (Fletcher, 2000; A Forest Service Order Singled Out Latinos,' 2000; "Panel Cites New York Police for Profiling," 2000; Kondo, 2000; Stockwell, 2000; Wang & Wu, 2000). Moreover, the fatal outcomes involving Amadu Diallo (Jacoby, 1999), Tyisha Miller (Fears & Krikorian, 1998), and Anthony Baez (Fletcher, 1997), the torture of Abner Louima by New York police officers (Peterson, 1999), the beating of Rodney King (Mitchell, 1991; Raspberry, 1991; "Victim's Account of the Police Beating," 1991), the gunning down of Latasha Harlin (Coleman, 1997), and the abuses of the Rampart Police Department in Los Angeles, California (O'Neill, 2000) represent acts of power abuse and violence that, heretofore, were downplayed in their importance and in their frequency of occurrence.

The officers involved in the above referenced situations and the police departments wherein each is employed continue to experience the emotional, psychological, and financial consequences of their decisions to perpetuate violence. The families of each of these officers also have had to endure the consequences of the decisions made.

Community demonstrations have been less evident in cases involving motorist stops and airport passenger search practices. The impact of disparate motorist stops and airport searches on victims is no less important and merits ongoing documentation. Intervention efforts aimed at correcting these abuses of power practices are warranted and at present absent. Critical evaluation of said interventions also are needed.

Nevertheless, from an empirical standpoint, the impact of these abusive, discriminatory, and violent acts and practices remains unknown. Research efforts aimed at addressing the impact of police violence and racial profiling of motorists and airport passengers is clearly needed. Anecdotal reports, however, validate what intuitively feels true: That abuse and violence perpetrated by law enforcement against groups of people based on their race/ethnicity will have an adverse impact on the victim. The victim's immediate and extended families and the community wherein the victim resides also will be impacted. The rippling effect continues as the surrounding communities, as well as the state, national, and international communities, receive information about these abusive and violent acts via the media. The discriminatory and disparate practice of abuse and violence directed toward racial groups also will have an adverse impact on the perpetrator, the perpetrator's work unit and department, and the perpetrator's family.

Witness the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict. Massive civil unrest erupted in the streets of Los Angeles in response to the acquittal of the four officers involved in the incident. Community demonstrations fueled with angry emotions came on the heels of the Amadu Diallo, Abner Louima, and LaTasha Harlin situations. The families of the victims in each of the above referenced situations continue to adjust to those traumatic experiences.

Quality and Quantity of Psychological Data and Conceptualization Relevant to It

Psychologists are well equipped to address racial/ethnic profiling and other racial/ethnic disparities in law enforcement activities at the victim, perpetrator, organizational, and societal levels. Psychologists as researchers have contributed to our understanding of the effect of racial/ethnic

profiling upon its victims. Such victim effects include posttraumatic stress disorder and other forms of stress-related disorders (Cervantes & Salgado de Snyder, 1989; Norris, 1992), perceptions of race-related/ethnic-related threats (Bachman, 1996; Jackson & Volckens, 1998; Vrana & Rollock, 1996, 1998), and failure to use available community resources (Norris, 1992). Psychologists as researchers have also examined the perpetrators who apply racial/ethnic profiling in their work. These procedures tend to be related to racism, which in turn intensify the racist feelings (Harris, 1997; Irving, 1989; Wortley, Macmillan, & Hagan, 1997). Finally, psychologists as researchers have examined the effects of racial/ethnic profiling on the broader society. Such societal effects include reification of racism (Wordes, Bynum, & Corley, 1994), societal fear (Irving, 1989), and financial cost to society (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 2000a).

These existing contributions of psychologists are suggestive of the special responsibility psychologists now incur to further increase their awareness and knowledge of racial profiling and other racial/ethnic disparities in law and security enforcement activities and their impact on individuals and communities of color.

Likely Degree of Consensus Among APA Constituents

Given that psychologists are ethically guided to “respect the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people” (Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, American Psychological Association, 1992, Principle D, p. 3-4), and to be aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live (Ethical

Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, American Psychological Association, 1992, Principle F, p. 4), one might expect overwhelming consensus among psychologists in support of the resolution on *Racial/Ethnic Profiling and Other Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Law and Security Enforcement Activities* as described. Increasingly federal and state agencies are recognizing the presence of racial profiling and other racial/ethnic disparities in law and security enforcement activities, and calling upon legislators and policy makers to provide data related to incidence and to recommend intervention and prevention activities to deal with these issues.

We live in a world whose demographics are rapidly changing. These changes are reflected in our neighborhoods, schools and workplaces. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the population of the United States is undergoing radical demographic changes that will continue well into the 21st century (Bennett, 1995; Byerly & Deardorff, 1995). By the year 2010, it is expected that more than one third of the population will be racial or ethnic minorities, and they will make up approximately 45% of the students in public schools (Sue, Parham, & Bonilla-Santiago, 1998). Therefore, given the reality of the changing complexion in the United States and the increasing fact that psychologists will encounter people who are ethnically different from themselves, the need for our profession to address issues of race, culture, and ethnicity have never been more urgent. According to Jones (1997), the ways in which people react to racial differences between themselves and others reveal racial biases that can “operate without conscious intervention or awareness.”

In consideration of our changing demographics, the documented existence of racial profiling in communities where a number of psychologists live and work, and the ethical mandates that govern the professional behavior of psychologists, one should expect overwhelming support for this resolution. Support for this resolution further provides a forum for the psychological community to proactively support the development of a database and interventions that embrace and support the diverse nature of our community and moves us closer to the development of a society that values and respects cultural differences.

Likelihood of Racial Profiling Resolution Having a Constructive Impact on Public Opinion/Policy, Assessment, Consultation, and Training

The involvement of the psychological community in advancing knowledge on racial/ethnic profiling and other racial/ethnic disparities in law and security enforcement activities will assist in the development of a research base that examines the role of stereotypes and racist beliefs on law enforcement practices and policies, and related effects on victims. Research may be used to inform policy makers and the public. Additionally, the psychological community can facilitate the use of such scientific information in the development of workshops and other relevant interventions for training law enforcement officers to recognize their own potential racial biases when working with people of color, and for developing policing procedures that are less affected by such biases. The composite of these efforts will enhance the learning environment for police personnel such that their approaches will reflect a deeper understanding of the communities and

the people, which they serve. In addition, psychologists can contribute to the development of proactive and restorative interventions for victims (and their families and communities) of racial profiling and other racial/ethnic disparities in law enforcement activities. Finally, consultation and organizational development are two strategies that can be useful in addressing organizational cultures and procedures that currently condone racial/ethnic profiling and other racial/ethnic disparities in law and security enforcement activities.

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