

# MODULE 5

## Stereotypes: A Challenge for Policing

**Focus Question - What are some of the challenges posed by stereotyping in policing and how can we address them?**

### Overview

In this module, students will explore how we as a society all make use of stereotypes which are often inaccurate. Students are asked to consider the different kinds of profiling which exist in our society and to determine whether profiling is ever appropriate or fair – taking into account the perspectives of those profiling and those being profiled. Students are then invited to examine racial profiling by police officers as a challenge in policing and as an example of inappropriate profiling in society. Students will learn the factual underpinnings of racial profiling and consider the seminal case of *R v Brown*. Students will also be encouraged to reflect how the police force can move past some of the challenges with which it is faced.

### Learning Objectives

- To understand that everyone uses stereotypes to profile people and that these stereotypes are often inaccurate.
- To understand that there are many different kinds of profiling that are used and accepted in society and to question whether it is ever appropriate or fair.
- To openly discuss controversial policing issues, such as racial profiling, and to examine why these issues exist.
- To explore how members of the police force are moving past some of these difficult challenges.

### Note to Teacher

This resource was developed to provide teachers with tools to help students think critically about the many different facets of policing. We recognize that many of these issues are complex and may not be appropriate for every classroom. This entire module is dedicated to challenges in policing, including an open discussion of racial profiling. By including this module in the resource, we hope that it will provide you with resources to address some of the controversial aspects of policing. An introductory activity has been provided which encourages students to realize that each of us, as human beings, stereotype to some degree. We believe that this will help to move all of us towards a solution for these very real challenges that exist in the realm of policing and beyond.

## MODULE 5 - Stereotypes: A Challenge for Policing

**ACTIVITY 1****Stereotyping Exists in All of Us****Materials**

- Copies of *Examining Our Stereotypes* (one per student)
- Copies of *Defining Stereotypes* (one per student)

**Teaching and Learning Strategies**

1. Distribute copies of *Examining Our Stereotypes* to students and ask them to complete Part 1. Students should match each of the descriptive phrases with one of the pictures. Give a maximum of 5-10 minutes to complete the exercise. Have students debrief their answers with a partner or in small groups.
2. With the same partner(s), ask students to review and discuss the scenarios in Part 2 of the handout. The scenarios invite students to articulate more explicitly some of the stereotypes which are implied in Part 1. You should gauge the comfort level of your students in having such a discussion and manage that appropriately given the particular group. Discuss the following:
  - Which answers were similar between students? Which were different?
  - Why were some descriptive phrases consistently associated with one particular individual?
  - Why were some individuals consistently chosen for certain scenarios?
3. Review the handout, *Defining Stereotypes*, with students and discuss the following:
  - Where do you think stereotypes come from?
  - Do you think it's possible not to stereotype?
  - Are stereotypes negative and prejudicial, positive and helpful, both or something else? Why?

4. Read the descriptions of each person from the *Examining Our Stereotypes* activity aloud to students. Have them guess who they think it is and then reveal the answer. Review the descriptions of the individuals and how they do or do not reflect stereotypes commonly associated with him/her. (Descriptions on following page)

**Extension**

Have students write a response to one or more of the following:

- How did you react to the descriptions in Part 1? Were you surprised or shocked? Why?
- How many mismatches did you make in Part 1 based on stereotypes?
- How do you feel about any stereotypes you made throughout the activity?
- What is your view on where stereotypes come from?



## MODULE 5 - Stereotypes: A Challenge for Policing

## ACTIVITY 1 Stereotyping Exists in All of Us (Cont'd)



## Teacher's Key

## Examining Our Stereotypes: Descriptions

1. **Alejandra** (3, 10, 18): Alejandra earned her Masters degree in philosophy from the University of Toronto in 2011, and plans on pursuing her Ph.D. in the near future and eventually teaching in a university. She is married and has three children. Through the course of her philosophical education, Alejandra has come to respect the right of individuals to have a variety of religious beliefs, however she does not hold any herself.
2. **Nejeed** (5, 14, 22): Nejeed is the manager of a large flower store in Oshawa. Although both of his parents grew up in India, Nejeed only speaks one language, English, as his parents felt that this would be the best way for him to fit in and make friends in Oshawa. Nejeed loves to run and has completed four marathons, including the Boston marathon.
3. **Christie** (7,15, 20): Christie is a vice president at a major corporation in Toronto. Although this position has been a huge time commitment for Christie, she has still managed to continue her training as a track and field athlete. Christie represented Canada in the high jump at the most recent Commonwealth Games. Since she assumed the vice president position, Christie has been very vocal about making the company more accepting of the unique lifestyles of all company employees. She has taken part in the last two Gay Pride parades in Toronto, and has encouraged all senior executives at the company to do the same.
4. **Cameron** (4, 11, 24): Cameron lives in London, ON, where he owns and operates Cameron's Fine Pastries, a bakery specializing in gourmet cakes and other baked items. Cameron has always been very independent, and prefers to own and operate the bakery by himself, which has kept the business small. He is an excellent pastry chef and frequently travels to Europe to attend competitions and teach special courses. Cameron has never wanted, and never plans to have, any children, as he would rather focus on his profession and enjoy his travels.
5. **Samantha** (6, 9, 21): Samantha is a licensed welder in Ottawa. She has struggled at various workplaces because she clashed with coworkers and had trouble consistently showing up on time. As a result, Samantha has difficulty making ends meet and she does odd welding jobs in Ottawa when she can find them. Samantha has struggled with alcohol abuse, and has finally agreed to enter a rehab program at the urging of her parents. Samantha is also diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, which she has had since she was a child.
6. **Wei** (17, 19, 23): Wei is a manager at a Sudbury car dealership. When he isn't at work, Wei spends his time with his son, Joe. Wei's wife left him with Joe shortly after his birth, and Wei has acted as a sole parent to Joe ever since. Wei is also a devout Muslim, and is very involved within the Islamic community in Sudbury.
7. **Victoria** (2, 13, 16): Victoria had a tumultuous family life growing up and her school work suffered as a result. She dropped out of high school and never received her diploma. After moving out of the house, Victoria was able to re-focus and get her high school equivalency. She has since taken advantage of her linguistic abilities in English, Russian, Ukrainian, German and French and now has an excellent position as a government translator (Victoria's Ukrainian father and German mother both passed on their native languages to her). As a result, Victoria has been able to pursue her passion for automobiles and recently purchased a beautiful new sports car.
8. **Eduardo** (1, 8, 12): Eduardo has had a difficult life. He did not have an easy childhood, and although he managed to scrape through high school and graduate, he spent several years in jail following a conviction for assault. He wasted most of his money on drugs and alcohol, and now works at a fast food restaurant. In an effort to balance his frequent mood swings and find some discipline in life, he has become an active member in his local yoga club.

*Please note that the above descriptions are fictional and have been created for the purposes of this activity.*

# EXAMINING OUR STEREOTYPES

## PART 1

For each of the following pieces of information, select the photo that you think best corresponds. You will receive more information about each individual afterwards.

			
<b>Alejandra</b>	<b>Nejeed</b>	<b>Christie</b>	<b>Cameron</b>
			
<b>Samantha</b>	<b>Wei</b>	<b>Victoria</b>	<b>Eduardo</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a criminal record</li> <li>Did not finish high school</li> <li>Has a Masters degree in philosophy</li> <li>Owns a small business</li> <li>Runs marathons</li> <li>Has diabetes</li> <li>Is a track and field athlete</li> <li>Is a member of a yoga club</li> <li>Is in a rehab program for alcohol abuse</li> <li>Has three children</li> <li>Has no children and does not plan on having any</li> <li>Works at a fast food restaurant</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drives a fancy sports car</li> <li>Only speaks one language</li> <li>Is the vice president of a large corporation</li> <li>Is a translator for multiple languages</li> <li>Is devoutly religious</li> <li>Does not believe in any God or religion</li> <li>Works at a car dealership</li> <li>Takes part in Toronto's Gay Pride Parade</li> <li>Is a licensed welder</li> <li>Works at a flower shop</li> <li>Is a single parent</li> <li>Regularly travels to Europe</li> </ol>	

## PART 2

Which individual from above would you choose for each of the following scenarios?

- You are in a busy bus station and are having difficulty juggling all of your bags. You just need to run up to the ticket counter to buy one ticket before you lose your bus. Who would you trust to watch over your bags? Why?
- You are in a busy bus station and have just heard an announcement that there is a dangerous male on the loose with a gun. Who would you suspect to be man from the announcement? Why?
- It's dark and you are in an unfamiliar neighbourhood. You feel lost and know you need to ask someone for help with some directions. Who would you feel most comfortable walking up to and asking for help? Why?
- You're walking home alone late at night. Who would you feel most wary of if you saw him/her walking towards you? Why?
- You have two young children and need a responsible babysitter. Who would you ask to babysit your children? Why?
- You are a police officer who has been called to the scene of an armed robbery. You have been told that there are two victims and two males who are suspects in the robbery. Who would you choose as the suspects in the robbery? Who would you choose as the victims?
- You are a police officer who receives a call about a domestic assault. The only description you have of the suspect is that she is a female while the victim is the male. Who would you choose as the suspect? Who would you choose as the victim?

# DEFINING STEREOTYPES

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## What is a stereotype?

Stereotypes are as old as human culture itself. They reflect ideas that groups of people hold about others who are different from them.

A stereotype can be embedded in single word or phrase (such as, “jock” or “nerd”), an image, or a combination of words and images. The image evoked is easily recognized and understood by others who share the same views.

Stereotypes can be either positive (“black men are good at basketball”) or negative (“women are bad drivers”). But most stereotypes tend to make us feel superior in some way to the person or group being stereotyped. Stereotypes ignore the uniqueness of individuals by painting all members of a group with the same brush.

Stereotypes can appear in the media because of the biases of writers, directors, producers, reporters and editors. But stereotypes can also be useful to the media because they provide a quick identity for a person or group that is easily recognized by an audience. When deadlines loom, it is sometimes faster and easier to use a stereotype to characterize a person or situation than it is to provide a more complex explanation.

## Here are some common definitions of ‘stereotype’:

1. A simplified and standardized conception or image invested with special meaning and held in common by members of a group.<sup>1</sup>
2. Something conforming to a fixed or general pattern; especially a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.<sup>2</sup>
3. A fixed, commonly held notion or image of a person or group, based on an oversimplification of some observed or imagined trait of behaviour or appearance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/stereotype?s=t>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stereotype>

<sup>3</sup><http://mediasmarts.ca/backgrounders/stereotypes-teaching-backgrounder>

# ACTIVITY 2

## Profiling in Society

### Materials

- Copies of *Profiling Case Study: Young Men Pay More For Car Insurance Than Young Women* (one per group)

### Teaching and Learning Strategies

#### 1. Introduce the topic of profiling by discussing the following:

- What is profiling?
- What kinds of profiling were included in Activity 1?



### Teacher's Key

Some definitions include:

- The act or process of extrapolating information about a person based on known traits or tendencies (consumer profiling); the act of suspecting or targeting a person on the basis of observed characteristics or behavior (racial profiling).<sup>1</sup>
- The use of specific characteristics, as race or age, to make generalizations about a person, as whether he or she may be engaged in illegal activity.<sup>2</sup>
- Racial, cultural, religious, age, gender, class, appearance.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/profiling>

<sup>2</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/profiling?s=t>

- #### 2. In small groups, have students review the handout, *Profiling Case Study: Young Men Pay More For Car Insurance Than Young Women*. Have students discuss the questions as a group. You may choose to have them do the debate either in pairs, small groups or as a class. Encourage students to consider the balance between the justifications that those profiling provide versus the sense of unfairness that those being profiled experience.

# PROFILING CASE STUDY: YOUNG MEN PAY MORE FOR CAR INSURANCE THAN YOUNG WOMEN

**In most cities across Ontario, men under the age of 25 pay more for car insurance than women in the same age group. Insurance companies claim that their higher rates for young men are based on statistics which show that men between the ages of 16-25 are likely to get into more car accidents and to cause more damage than women.**

## Perspective of the Profiler: Insurance Companies

Insurance companies have concluded that young men cost them the most by being at 'high-risk' of making an insurance claim. Consequently, young men are charged the highest premiums and insurance rates. For insurance companies, insurance is ultimately a numbers game – using research data and statistics, insurance companies assess the probabilities of their clients getting into accidents and charge the clients with the highest probabilities the highest rates. Young men fall into this category and are thus charged the highest premium rates for car insurance.

## Perspective of the Profiled: Young Men

Johnny is 19 years old. His sister, Susie, is 20. Susie has been driving for four years and has already gotten into three major car accidents. Johnny has been driving for three years and has never gotten into any car accidents. Despite the fact that Susie has gotten into several car accidents, Johnny pays over 50% more than Susie for his car insurance rates. Johnny understands that insurance companies choose rate prices based on statistics, but he doesn't feel it's fair for him to pay more for his car insurance than his sister. After all, isn't it statistically true that individually, he is a better, safer and less-risky driver than Susie?

## Discussion Questions

- Why do you think some types of profiling are accepted in society?
- What is the perspective of the profiler (i.e. the one profiling)?
- What is the perspective of the profiled (i.e. the one being profiled)?
- Who do you agree with most?

## Debate Topics

- Insurance companies have a right to base their rates on statistical profiling.
- Young men should pay for car insurance based on individual statistics and driving history and not be included in general statistical profiling.

# ACTIVITY 3

## A Closer Look At Racial Profiling

### Materials

- Computer and internet access to view video
- Copies of Toronto Star article(s) (optional)
- Copies of *OJEN Landmark Case: R. v. Brown* (one per student)

### Teaching and Learning Strategies

1. Introduce the topic of racial profiling by having students watch the video, *Profiling – Or Practical Policing?*, from The Toronto Star Race Matters special section. The video is available online at: [http://www.thestar.com/news/2013/02/26/profiling\\_or\\_practical\\_policing\\_.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/2013/02/26/profiling_or_practical_policing_.html).



### 2. Discuss the following:

- Who is the profiler in racial profiling?
- What justifications might a profiler have? Do you agree or disagree with these justifications?
- How is racial profiling different than the other profiling examples accepted in society? (e.g. violation of human rights, violation of *Charter* rights, justification of profiler does NOT outweigh violations of those profiled, higher professional obligations of the police)

If video is not available, or as an extension, have students review one of the following newspaper articles:

#### ***Race Matters: Blacks documented by police at high rate***

[http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/raceandcrime/2010/02/06/race\\_matters\\_blacks\\_documented\\_by\\_police\\_at\\_high\\_rate.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/raceandcrime/2010/02/06/race_matters_blacks_documented_by_police_at_high_rate.html)

#### ***Police stop blacks more often than whites, data shows***

[http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/02/05/police\\_stop\\_blacks\\_more\\_often\\_than\\_whites\\_data\\_shows.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/02/05/police_stop_blacks_more_often_than_whites_data_shows.html)

For additional articles, videos and interactive maps, see <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/raceandcrime.html>

3. Have students complete the *OJEN Landmark Case: R. v. Brown*, available at: <http://www.ojen.ca/resource/583>



## MODULE 5 - Stereotypes: A Challenge for Policing

# ACTIVITY 4

## Moving Forward

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**Materials**

- Copies of Toronto Star article, *Should our police go on the record?* (one per student)

**Teaching and Learning Strategies**

1. Have students read the Toronto Star article, *Should our police go on the record?* and discuss the following:

- How do you feel about the growing diversity in the Toronto Police Service?
- Will this growing diversity help issues such as racial profiling? Why or why not?

2. In small groups or as a class, have students brainstorm strategies that can be used by police forces to address racial profiling. Debrief as a class.

**Extension**

Have students research the police force in their city and identify any progress that has been made with respect to diversity.





# Should our police go on the record?

By JIM RANKIN February 15, 2010

DEBATE HEATS UP on whether Toronto police, already 'heads and shoulders' above others when it comes to tackling racial bias, should collect data on race, ethnicity of people stopped by officers

Toronto police are considering making it mandatory for officers to note the race and ethnicity of people they stop in an effort to probe for patterns of potential bias - but there is no agreement on how best to go about it.

The police service, its board and the Ontario Human Rights Commission have been engaged in a partnership that may set the bar for police services and institutions across Canada in terms of equity within the service and better serving the public.

Data collection is one of the few sticking points.

The human rights commission believes the police and the community would benefit from the collection and analysis of such data - a common practice in many U.S. states and nationally mandated in the United Kingdom.

Following a 2002 Star series on race, policing and crime in Toronto, which showed black people in certain circumstances were treated more harshly, a number of groups, including the human rights commission, called on police to collect and analyze data on every interaction with police.

"Where anecdotal evidence of racial profiling exists, the organization involved should collect data for the purpose of monitoring its occurrence and to identify measures to combat it," the commission recommended in its 2003 report, *Paying the Price: The Human Cost of Racial Profiling*.

The Star obtained updated arrest and charge data, as well as a database that tracks who police choose to document in mostly non-criminal encounters, in a freedom of information request spanning nearly seven years.

Between 2003 and 2008, Toronto police filled out 1.7 million contact cards. Police use the card data to link people and find witnesses and suspects in later crimes. They don't fill out a card on every contact.

A Star analysis found black people are three times more likely to be documented than white.

An analysis of the updated arrest and charge data shows little change since 2002.

Black people arrested for drug possession are still more likely to be held for bail, and black motorists continue to be disproportionately ticketed for certain "out-of-sight" driving offences.

Black people are also charged with violent crime at a higher rate than any other group (see graphic).

Police feel there is no need for mandatory data collection and analysis because they have acknowledged bias is a factor in police decisions and are taking steps to deal with the problem.

Police services board chair Alok Mukherjee described the data debate as "one of the most important issues that we are grappling with" and "pretty intense."

"Animated," is how police Chief Bill Blair put it. "I have to tell you that we are exploring it."

The human rights commission does not have the authority to order the police to do anything.

Blair has said some of the disparity noted in the Star analysis is likely due to bias, but just how much is difficult to determine.

An issue often raised in the use of traffic stop data to gauge for racial bias is external benchmarking. For example, using residential population demographics to suggest inequity in who is stopped is problematic because it does not reflect who drives, or who drives where.

Researchers with RAND, a non-profit U.S. research organization, found looking at what happens after a stop may be more telling.

A study of Oakland, Calif., police stops found black motorists were more often subject to pat-down searches and faced longer stops.

Internal benchmarking is another means to identify potentially biased behaviour. It works like this: group together the traffic stop data of officers with similar duties in the same geographic area, and look for unusual racial patterns in who individual officers stop and frisk.

Lorie Fridell, a criminology professor at the University of South Florida, recently spoke to the Toronto police human rights charter group. Her work includes creating a police curriculum for controlling implicit bias or, as author and journalist Malcolm Gladwell put it, a "racial blink" most human beings have that can lead to good and bad automatic decisions.

Fridell said the steps Toronto police are taking puts them "heads and

**MODULE 5 - Stereotypes: A Challenge for Policing**  
**ACTIVITY 3: A Closer Look At Racial Profiling**

**STUDENT HANDOUTS**



## Should our police go on the record? (Cont'd)

By JIM RANKIN February 15, 2010

shoulders" above others, but that first step - acknowledging bias is a problem - was the bravest.

"It has to be stated carefully because people in the police department

have been hearing for certainly the last decade and certainly for decades before, that racially biased policing is about bad people, racist people in policing," she said.

"When they hear it from their chief, some are going to feel like they've just been thrown under the bus.

"It's important that the chief articulate and be clear, that 'There are well-meaning people, the humans that I hire, that I need to work with proactively to ensure fair and impartial policing.'"

Since 1994, the number of visible minority officers on the service has tripled, and today stands at 19 per cent. Each new graduating class looks a lot like Toronto does.

There are now two visible minority deputy chiefs, one of whom is regarded by some as a future chief.

Each new recruit is vetted, Blair said. "We do some aptitude testing, psychological testing to make sure that we have good people coming in the door."

That is difficult, Fridell said. "You need to hire people who can police in an unbiased fashion," she said.

"You'll notice I didn't say unbiased people, because the pool would be reduced to zero.

"The idea for me would be to hire people who are willing to reflect on our own human biases, and implement interventions to thwart the impact of these biases on their behaviour."

Fridell said police services can benefit from race data collection, but it can be expensive and prove nothing if done poorly.

Given a choice between data collection and training, she would choose state-of-the art programs.

If a service can afford it, Fridell said the simple act of requiring officers to document the racial and ethnic background of who they stop, every time, will likely cause officers to think about the reasons for the stop, and contemplate whether one of them is a bad decision based on a racial blink.

Windsor law professor David Tanovich, who has written a book on racial profiling in Canadian policing, lauds what Toronto has done. "It is - no hesitation to say it - one of the most progressive forces in North America," said Tanovich, who founded the Law Enforcement Accountability Project.

The University of Windsor law faculty program offers to review police service policies and offer training to reduce biased policing.

That said, Tanovich is critical of the police practice of documenting citizens in mostly non-criminal encounters, and entering their personal detail into a database for future investigative purposes.

Tanovich sees the reluctance by Toronto police to engage in a data collection project as "really troubling, when in fact they are doing it internally, with no oversight and that's a serious concern."

Technically, Toronto police are not permitted to do what the Star has done with the service's own data, and if it were decided today to study police stops for bias, the service could not.

A 1989 policy forbids police from analyzing and reporting race-based statistics. It was put in place over fears of stigmatizing communities.

Toronto police board chair Mukherjee is reviewing the service's policy to at least make it permissible to look, should it be decided the service wants to go there.

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