

3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets Discussion Guide



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3 ½ MINUTES, TEN BULLETS DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

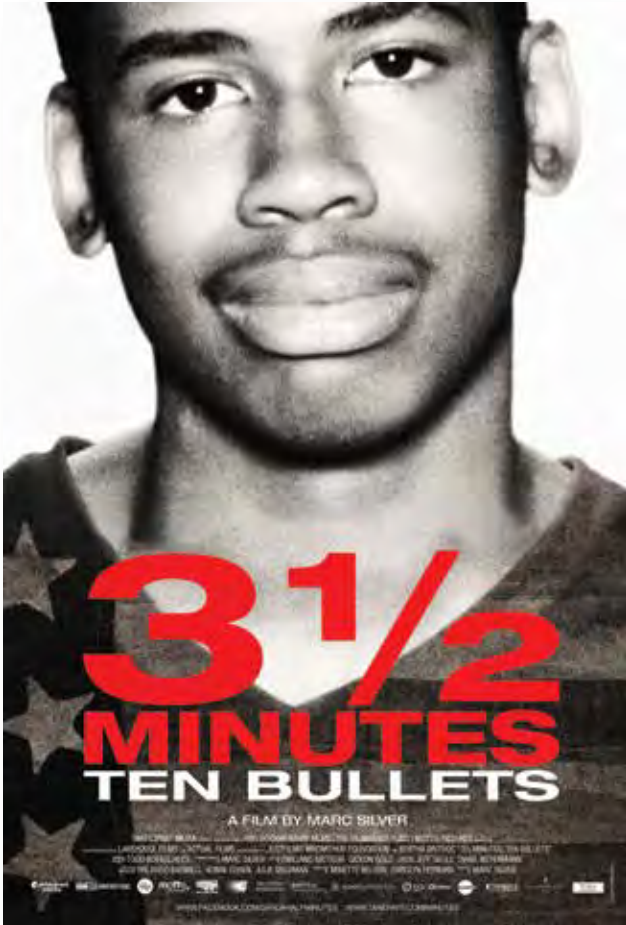
This guide is for people seeking to use the documentary *3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets* as a catalyst for discussion and action to address the role that race plays in our society, generally, and, particularly, the experience and treatment of black men and boys.

The growing list of unarmed black men and boys killed because they are perceived to be dangerous has been a trigger for protest in communities around the country. The tragic deaths at the hands of police or armed citizens are vivid examples of the role that race and perceptions play in the experience of black men and boys in the United States. The protests are outward expressions of grief and rage at a broader array of injustices black males face as the stereotypes linking them to danger and criminality create obstacles in education, the workplace, finding housing, and simply being seen as human.

The paradox is that these injustices are occurring even as most Americans of all races and ethnicities reject racism. A continuing challenge is how to talk about race in a way that brings people together to action rather than polarize. This guide shares research from the mind sciences about race and offers both a new set of insights and solutions. Our hope is that the combination of the film and the guide can begin to unlock the paradox.

Through discussion, reflection, and action, we can move together toward a more just future.

ABOUT 3 ½ MINUTES, TEN BULLETS



This powerful documentary shows how two lives intersected and were forever altered. On Black Friday 2012, two cars parked next to each other at a Florida gas station. A white middle-aged male and a black teenager exchanged angry words over the volume of the music in the boy's car. A gun entered the exchange, and one of them was left dead. Michael Dunn fired 10 bullets at a car full of unarmed teenagers and then fled. Three of those bullets hit 17-year-old Jordan Davis, who died at the scene. Arrested the next day, Dunn claimed he shot in self-defense. Thus began the long journey of unraveling the truth. 3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets follows that journey, reconstructing the night of the murder and revealing how hidden racial prejudice can result in tragedy.

REFLECTIONS

Each of you has just been immersed in the aftermath of Jordan Davis's murder. His loving parents shared their grief, sorrow, loss, but also their courage and strength with all of us. Jordan's friends gave us a window into Jordan's life, but also their own.

Each of you has also been exposed to the innermost content of Michael Dunn's mind.

Through his prison phone calls with his fiancée and his testimony, you heard his voice directly.

Let us first reflect on the loss. Jordan Davis was 17 years old. He was the only child of two loving, devoted parents. Let us have a moment of silence to think about the loss to Jordan's family, his friends, his community, and to all of us.

OPPORTUNITY FOR SHARING

Participants in the discussion are likely to be feeling their own strong emotion in response to the movie and to events they have witnessed or experienced. This may be a moment for sharing to let people talk in pairs about how they are feeling. As a prompt, you may want to suggest that they share with each other:

1. How they think they might help someone who is feeling stuck in the pain and emotion of the moment move forward; or
2. If they are feeling stuck, what help they might need from the group to think about how to move forward.

The brutal murder of Jordan Davis—as we are all too aware—is not the only tragic death of a young black boy or man to gun violence or to police brutality. The list of similar deaths is long and seems to keep growing.

Let us now reflect on the culture and customs of our society that has nurtured the Michael Dunn's, George Zimmerman's, Dylann Roof's, and the number of police officers who have engaged in violent acts toward unarmed black boys and men, and women as well.

How does this culture and set of customs affect all of us? Where do we fit? What can we do to actively resist?

The first step is for us to learn. In this discussion guide, we will learn about how the mind sciences—which include neuroscience, psychology, and other scientific fields which help us understand how our brains operate—have developed tools that show how race operates within our minds, but also how culture affects how our brains respond to race.

TOPICS

This discussion guide covers a broad range of topics. You may not want to cover them all—you may want to spend more time on some than others. This guide is a tool for you to use how you think can best help the group you are with process the movie, experience their own emotion, consider how they can be part of change, and any other community building you think will best work with your group. The topics include:

1. Bias and the Brain
2. Racial Threat
3. The Power of Stereotypes
4. The Role of Words and Labels
5. Emotions and Empathy

6. Is Noticing Race “Racist”?
7. Standing in Some Else’s Shoes
8. Stand Your Ground Laws
9. Next Steps
 - a. Reducing Bias
 - b. Group Actions

For each of the topics we address, we will provide:

- a quote or scene from the movie,
- a set of questions for general discussion,
- the mind sciences that provide a window into the topic,
- a second set of questions that invite discussion of what the science teaches us about the topic, and
- an action question.

The topics and questions can be provocative and you may find that small group or pair sharing is important to provide participants with a chance to work through their ideas with a small group of people or just one other person rather than with the whole group.

A black and white close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with short, slightly graying hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white collared shirt, and a patterned tie. A large, semi-transparent green graphic element, consisting of overlapping triangles, is positioned in the lower-left corner of the image. The text 'TOPIC ONE: BIAS AND THE BRAIN' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters over this green area.

TOPIC ONE:
BIAS AND THE BRAIN

1. BIAS AND THE BRAIN



This is an exchange that occurred between Michael Dunn and an investigating police officer (“Male Voice”):

Male Voice (on video)	So just kinda walk me through, you know, just tell me from your point of view what happened at that point.
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A guy that was in the back was getting really agitated. You know, there was a lot of, "Fuck him," and, "Fuck that" ... And, "Fuck that bitch." And then the music comes back on. I don't know if they're singing or what, but they're saying, "Kill him." So I put my window down again, and I said, "Excuse me. Are you talking about me?" You know, I'm still not reacting to them. This guy, like, goes down on the ground and comes up with something. I thought it was a shotgun. And he goes, "You're dead, bitch." And he opens his door. And I'm shittin' bricks. But that's when I reached in my glove box.	Michael Dunn (on video)
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Male Voice (on video)	I'll be the first to tell you, there's no weapons in that car. I don't know what you saw.
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The following comments were made by some citizens interviewed in the film about the Stand Your Ground law:

Male Voice	The Stand Your Ground law has nothing to do with race. It benefits everyone equally –
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Female Voice	But there's a perception that it benefits white shooters more than African-American. That's the perception many black...
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Female Voice	All different demographic groups are more likely to see a nonexistent weapon—it could be a cell phone, a backpack—they think it's a gun when it's in the hands of a young African-American.
Female Voice	This defendant could very well have seen a completely nonexistent weapon.

Discussion Questions



- Do you think Michael Dunn saw a gun that wasn't actually there? Why or why not?
- Even if you don't think Michael Dunn saw a gun, what do you think of the claim in the movie that people are more likely to think they see a gun when looking at a young young black man? If people are more likely to think they see a gun, does that mean that they are racist?
- If they claim they aren't racist, are they lying?



The Science

It may seem impossible – but neuroscience and social psychology have shown that we all have the possibility of seeing something that is not there or missing something that is **there**. Knowing how the brain works is critical to understanding how race operates. It allows us to understand how a person can believe that people are equal, but still respond differently to people depending on their race, gender, or other “groups” they fit into.

(Extended Activity: You may want to show “Awareness Test” a short youtube clip that allows people to actually experience this)

Most of our actions occur automatically without our conscious awareness. This automatic operation of our brain is what allows us to do things like drive a car, which requires us to see and do many things at the same time. Our brain’s automatic reactions are based upon how our brain creates categories for most of the sights we see and sounds we hear.

We use categories for people as well as objects. Based upon quick images and sounds, we make automatic judgments about what category a particular person fits within and we often act on those judgments. Adult, child, older adult, young adult, teacher, or doctor are all categories we slot people into at different times. These categories and judgments normally serve us well.

However, we can obviously be wrong. Our errors are usually meaningless—for example, if we see someone in a classroom and assume they are a teacher, but they are actually a parent helper, our mistake can be easily corrected without harm.

But sometimes, these errors can be life-threatening—the object in a man’s hand is a cell phone and not a gun. Why might the life-threatening errors occur more in some situations than others? Because categories also influence what people pay attention to, how they organize their attention, and what they later remember. **Not surprisingly, our brain’s automatic use of categories is particularly risky with respect to race. The widespread stereotype of black criminality makes it more likely that a cell phone will appear to be gun if the man holding it is black rather than white (Correll, 2007).**

Implicit bias refers to the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes toward categories of people without conscious awareness. Everyone has some sort of implicit bias.

- **Implicit:** a thought or feeling about which we are unaware or mistaken.
- **Bias:** when we have a preference or an aversion toward a person or a category of person as opposed to being neutral, we have a bias.
- **Stereotype:** a specific trait that is associated with a category of person.
- **Attitude:** a feeling toward a category of people or objects—either positive or negative—indicating what we like or dislike.

Implicit Bias Affects Behavior

Implicit biases affect behavior and actually predict what we will do more accurately than our descriptions of our views. Everyone has some sort of implicit biases—but implicit racial biases are both widespread and have particularly harmful consequences. Studies have shown that implicit biases predict behaviors including:

- the speed and likelihood of shooting an unarmed person based on race;
- employment callbacks relative to equally qualified white applicants;
- the treatment of otherwise similar black and white patients with symptoms of heart disease (for review, see Godsil et al., 2014).

Discussion Questions



- Would implicit racial bias explain why someone might be quicker to see a gun when looking at a young black man?
- As you understand implicit bias, can a person genuinely believe that racism is wrong and still hold implicit racial bias?

- Have you ever had someone make an automatic judgment about you that turned out to be wrong?
- Do you think you ever make automatic assumptions or judgments about other people?

Action Question

- If you are interested in learning more about how to reduce your own biases, you can learn to “break the prejudice habit” by following the steps at the end of this guide.
- If you are hesitant to take these steps, why?



TOPIC TWO:
RACIAL THREAT

2. RACIAL THREAT

In the documentary, we hear the following exchange between Michael Dunn, Jordan's murderer, and his fiancée, Rhonda Rouer:

Michael Dunn	When the police said that these guys didn't have a record, I was like, you know—I wonder if they're just flying under the radar.
--------------	--

Right.

Rhonda Rouer

Michael Dunn	Cuz they were bad.
--------------	--------------------

Yeah.

Rhonda Rouer

Michael Dunn	The YouTube videos of these guys. And they're all gangster rappers. It's absurd, everything is absurd, everything is absurd. It's like, I'm the fucking victim, here. It's a hundred percent on, uh, Jordan. A hundred percent. I don't even take a half a percent. I mean, he, he made that happen. But, you know, maybe he would've killed somebody if it hadn't 'a been me.
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Discussion Questions



- What does Michael Dunn seem to be saying about Jordan Davis's death?
- After seeing the movie, does Michael Dunn's description of Jordan Davis seem accurate?
- Michael Dunn didn't have all of the information you have about Jordan Davis. He only knows what was presented in the courtroom. Think about what information he would have learned about Jordan Davis in the courtroom—based on that information, is his conclusion about Jordan Davis more understandable?

Why would Michael Dunn not have remorse about Jordan Davis's death?

- Do you think most [white] people would have provided a similar description of
- Davis and his friends? Why or why not?



The Science

Michael Dunn may have been experiencing something scientists call “racial threat.” This term applies when one group—here, whites—consider another racial group as economic or political competitors, or essentially linked to crime or other “deviant” behavior.

If Michael Dunn considered black people—or at least young black men—as “criminal,” he may have stopped seeing him as a person whose death should be mourned. Instead, he may have “dehumanized” Jordan Davis.

Dehumanization is a practice that has occurred in genocide, war, and other examples of extreme violence toward other groups throughout history. The association of groups of people as non-human has been used as a way to

reduce the moral resistance to actions that would otherwise be unacceptable to the actor.

Dehumanization of black people explains slavery. While very few would claim to dehumanize black people now, the associations linger. A recent study has found that the association of black people with apes is closely correlated with police officers’ use of excessive force against young black males (Goff et al., 2008).


Discussion Questions



- Does racial threat help explain how Michael Dunn could justify his actions to himself? How about dehumanization?
- Do other white people in the movie seem to be experiencing racial threat? How about Rhonda?
- What happened in the movie that suggests that Rhonda saw Jordan Davis as a person who should be treated fairly?

Action question

- What steps do you think you can take to address behavior or policies that reflect racial threat?



TOPIC THREE:
THE POWER OF
STEREOTYPES

3. THE POWER OF STEREOTYPES

Ron Davis, Jordan's father, talks about how stereotypes are formed in this clip from the film:

Ron Davis	He drove up, she was just getting out of the car. That was within seconds of driving up. And what did he say to her? "I hate that thug music." If I'm white, and I don't have any interaction with black people, the only thing I have to draw from is what I see on TV. That's the only thing. And so, when I do come in contact with you, my thoughts about you is based on what I've seen on that TV screen.
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Michael Dunn converses with Rhonda Rouer about the incident that sparked the violence that led to Jordan's death:

They're like freaking out because a white guy dared to ask 'em, to turn their, I mean—you know, come on. If you ask me turn down my music, I'm going to kill you, and if you tell me to mind my own business, I mean—Jesus Christ. I mean, you know—no wonder people are afraid to tell them to pick up their pants.	Michael Dunn
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Rhonda Rouer	I don't know, honey
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I'm not racist. They're racist. What is it with this subculture that feels entitled to exert their will? The only thing I can think of is the culture. I mean, there's MTV culture, gangster rap—and where are their dads? I don't know what good is gonna come out of this, if any good can come out of it... But I'm thinkin' that, somewhere, somehow, I need to make a public statement about the subculture, and we need to recognize—

Michael Dunn

Discussion Questions



- Ron Davis suggests that Michael Dunn may have a particular image of his son based on TV. Why would he think that? Do you think he may be right?
- What does Michael Dunn seem to be saying about Jordan Davis's death?
- Michael Dunn has a particular image of Jordan Davis and his friends—he refers to them as a “subculture.” What assumptions does he make about them?
- Are his assumptions about them accurate? What do you think are the sources of his assumptions?
- Have you ever come across similar images? How often?



The Science

Scientists define stereotypes as the beliefs and opinions people hold about the characteristics, traits, and behaviors of a certain group. Stereotypes often cause us to make assumptions (both negative and positive) about people based upon superficial characteristics. They also tend to be recurring—and whenever we see something that confirms them, they become more powerful. And often, when we see something different than the stereotype, we think of it as the “exception.”

Media plays a significant role in shaping our perceptions of race. People often live in neighborhoods and go to schools that are mainly filled with people from their same racial and economic background. This means that for many whites and people of other races and ethnicities, the media’s portrayal of black men and boys is the main source of information about them.

Obviously, we have a black President and other notable examples in politics, but in the media, the dominant images of black males are as athletes, entertainers, or criminals. Past research has shown that local and network news portray black people, particularly male, as criminals and whites as victims far out of proportion to the actual arrests (Dixon, 2000).

In some contexts, this is changing. In 2015, Travis Dixon published a study finding that portrayals of black males improved in Los Angeles news coverage and that black males were essentially “invisible” with respect to crime on network news, **but a 2015 study by Color of Change found that local New York news distorted the numbers of black people as perpetrators of crimes by alarming degrees:**

WABC:	31%
WNBC:	22%
WCBS:	19%
FOX5:	11%

Discussion Questions



- Does Michael Dunn's image of Jordan Davis and his friends seem consistent with the media portrayal of Black males?
- Did Ron and Lucy Davis worry about the stereotypes about young black males?
- (for participants who are not black) How do you think it feels to have people make assumptions that you are dangerous or are a criminal?
- How do you think people treat young black males? Is it differently than other groups?
- Does the media have any obligation to portray people accurately and fairly?
- Are local and network news under a different standard than entertainment?
- What about video games or music?

Action question

- What role can you play in challenging the false and distorted portrayal of black males in the media?

Color of Change has an online pledge:

Stand with Color Of Change in demanding that cable and network news directors nationwide agree to eradicate racism denial.



HAVE A ♥
GIVE US A
COUNTRY

LOUD MUSIC
and
Hoodies Does Not
CONSTITUTE
MURDER /



TOPIC FOUR:
THE ROLE OF
WORDS AND LABELS

4. THE ROLE OF WORDS AND LABELS

Tevon Thompson, Jordan's friend, talks about language and how young black men are perceived:

Tevin Thompson	Thug is the new n-word. That's the new way they're pursuing us, now. n-word is out, and 'thug' is in.
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Tevin Thompson	They don't call Justin Bieber a thug. He reeks in Lamborghinis and all this crazy stuff. He's not a thug. He's just a misled kid, you know what I'm saying? So it's just like, 'thug' is just something for African-Americans to be called the n-word without being all... without being... They don't wanna seem wrong for calling us the n-word, so they be like, "Look at those thugs."
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Erin Wolfson, Assistant State Attorney, interrogates Rhonda Rouer in court:

Did the defendant say anything about the music when he parked the car next to the red car?	Erin Wolfson
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Rhonda Rouer	Yes.
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And what did the defendant say?	Erin Wolfson
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Rhonda Rouer	[SIGHING] "I hate that thug music."
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Discussion Questions



- Michael Dunn was not charged with a hate crime largely because he didn't say the n-word. And yet he was understood to have referred to Jordan Davis and his friends as “thugs.” Why would referring to them as “thugs” potentially be as problematic as if he had used the n-word?
- Michael Dunn denied that he said “thug music” and claimed that he called it “rap crap.” Why do you think he did that?
- What do you think it meant when Rhonda testified differently?
- Do you think she knew the significance of her testimony?
- How did Lucy and Ron respond to Rhonda’s testimony?



The Science

Social psychologists report that the stereotypes about black males and criminality lead to behavior toward them that can be particularly life threatening. This behavior includes considering ambiguous behavior aggressive, thinking something is a weapon when it is not, and the speed at which someone shoots. But the stereotypes aren't evenly applied. In our time, skin color and other attributes such as clothing and perceived education can prevent the stereotypes about criminality from applying to some black males.

We live in a culture in which being “racist” is considered wrong—and so people try hard to avoid being considered racist. But the stereotypes are still powerful—so words like “thug” may serve as a way to define a group within black males as deserving of the negative stereotypes.

Once a group or category has been defined, humans tend to exaggerate the differences between different groups and to presume homogeneity among all “members” of the group (Quattrone & Jones, 1980; Nelson, 2006). People are more easily able to differentiate or individualize among members of their own group (Whitley & Kite, 2010). They are also more likely to attribute negative behavior of a member of their own group to the particularities of the person or situation, but to attribute the same behavior of a member of an “out-group” to a characteristic of the group (Pettigrew 1979; Duncan, 1976).

If a word is used that denotes a set of characteristics about a group of people, it runs the risk of suggesting that everyone who fits within that group is the same. The n-word has historically been used as an epithet against black people generally, but sometimes toward a subset of people who fit certain stereotypes. This allowed people to differentiate and treat a particular group of people badly and consider them to have deserved their fate.

Discussion Questions

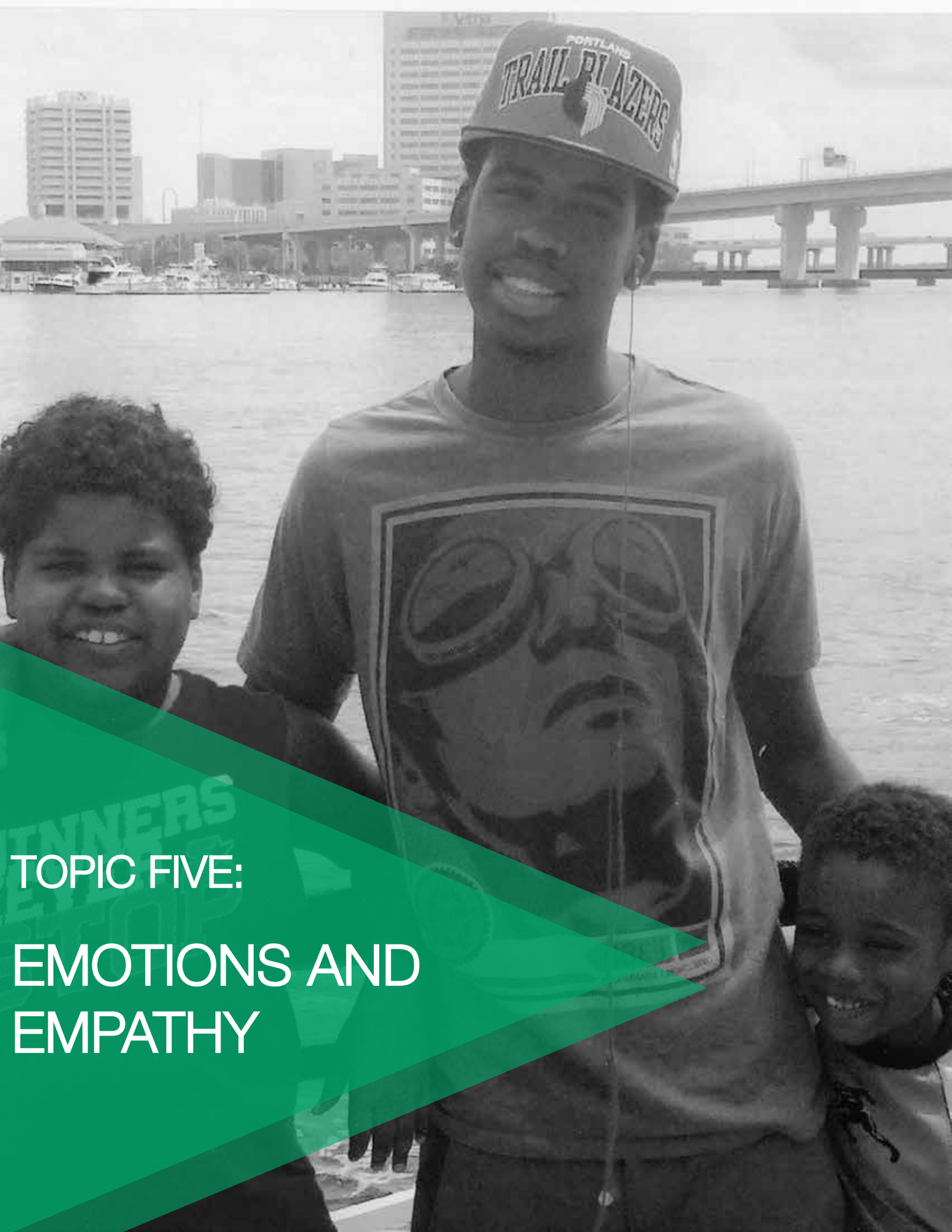


- Why was it so important whether or not Michael Dunn used a particular word?
- What would it have meant if he had used the n-word?
- Do you agree that “thug” is the new n-word? Why or why not?

In what ways could someone see it as similar?

Action Question

- If you consider the word “thug” to be like the n-word, what do you think you will do if you hear someone calling black males “thugs”?



TOPIC FIVE:
EMOTIONS AND
EMPATHY

5. EMOTIONS AND EMPATHY

Judge Healey provides instructions before the jury's verdict is read.

Judge Healey

Alright. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, again. I understand that we now have a verdict, apparently as to all counts. I've never seen a case where deliberations have gone on for this length of time, and we must respect the jury's verdict. This is a very, very emotional time. I understand that. I would ask you to continue to abide by my rules of decorum and ask you to please refrain from any emotional outbursts once you hear the verdict read. This case is not about winning or losing.

I have the verdict form on count one. There are no markings on it, but I will provide it to the clerk for the record. And based on the jury's inability to reach a verdict as to count one, I will declare that mistried. The other verdict forms are in order. I'll give them to the clerk for publishing.

Discussion Questions Pre-Science



- The judge requests that everyone “refrain from any emotional outbursts” once they hear the verdict. Whose emotions were on display during the trial?
- Lucy and Ron followed the judge’s request to contain their emotions during the trial—even though the trial filled them with anguish—as did Jordan’s friends when they were on the witness stand. What effect do you think the lack of emotion by anyone connected to Jordan might have had on the jury?



The Science

Empathy is a powerful emotion—it is how we feel someone else’s emotions as our own. Research shows us that we have differing levels of empathy toward people. Seeing people as similar to ourselves often makes it easier to empathize with people. Another factor that affects how much we empathize is whether we think they have a full range of emotions (see Leyens et al., 2003 for a review).

We see “primary emotions,” such as pleasure, fear, and rage, more easily than more subtle “secondary emotions,” such as sorrow, admiration, resentment, and disappointment (Demoulin et al. 2004). It turns out that we believe (and research supports) that both human and non-human animals experience primary emotions—but only humans experience secondary emotions.

So if we don't see secondary emotions in people—we consider them less than human. Some people are less able to see secondary emotions in people from other racial or ethnic groups—whites often have a harder time seeing emotions like sorrow in black people than emotions like rage.

Even if it may be more difficult to see secondary emotions in people unlike ourselves, it is possible. And when we do, we are more likely to empathize with them and feel like we share common humanity.

Discussion Questions



- If it is harder for whites to recognize emotions like sorrow and anguish in black people, does that effect the significance of the judge's rule preventing Ron and Lucy from showing any emotion during the trial?
- What role do you think seeing how Ron and Lucy really felt had on you as you watched the film?
- Do you think that Michael Dunn had any empathy for either Jordan Davis himself or Ron and Lucy as his parents?
- Do you think race was relevant to whether Michael Dunn felt empathy?
- Think about characters in movies or TV—do you think there is a difference in how black characters show emotion?

Action Question

- Are you interested in learning what can you do to learn about and empathize with people of different races or ethnicities than your own?



TOPIC SIX:
IS NOTICING RACE
“RACIST”?

6. IS NOTICING RACE “RACIST”?

Cory Strolla is Michael Dunn’s defense attorney. He makes the following statement during a press conference:

Cory Strolla

And if somebody says that politics and race aren't gonna be played in this, just look outside the front of that courthouse this entire last two weeks. It is, and it's unfortunate, and again, I want to be very clear: nobody from my office or Mr. Dunn has brought race into this, period. As a matter of fact, I filed a pre-trial motion to keep it out. Cuz there's case law that says, you can't make it about race, unless it's charged as a hate crime, which this was not. Michael Dunn was not charged with a hate crime. He's never been racist, he's never been accused of racism. As a matter of fact, the guys in the car, even testified on cross examination that that night, he never said anything racial.

Discussion Questions



- Why do you think Cory Strolla, Michael Dunn’s defense lawyer, moved to keep race out of the trial?
- What might have led the judge to grant the motion and prevent the prosecution from talking about race?
- Do you think talking about race is “racist?” Why or why not?



The Science

While it may seem like preventing the discussion of race would be more likely to prevent racism from entering into the decision-making in a trial involving someone black and someone white, research shows race is more likely to affect our decision-making when it is unacknowledged. In studies of juries, white jurors were more likely to recommend a harsh sentence against a black defendant when the victim was white and the issue of race was never mentioned than when the issue of race was expressly part of the case. Implicitly biased doctors recommended different treatment for black patients with heart disease than white patients, except when the doctors had been informed that race can sometimes affect diagnosis or treatment recommendations—then the doctors treated everyone equally. These surprising findings stem from the fact that most people want to be fair and non-biased and so if the issue of race is explicit, they work hard to make sure it doesn't affect how they act or the decisions they make. But if race is “in the air” but not acknowledged, implicit biases can affect our decisions without our realizing it.

Noticing race is sometimes seen as “racist” because it means that we are not “color-blind.” Often, it is assumed that our goal should be to be “color-blind.” The implicit bias science shows us that it is impossible for us to be “color-blind”—but most of us don't realize this. This dilemma often causes **racial anxiety** before or during an inter-racial interaction. It affects both people of color and whites. People of color experience racial anxiety in anticipation of being discriminated against, while whites experience it in anticipation of being considered racist. Racial anxiety causes us to have increased heart rate and other physical symptoms. We often show the anxiety by engaging in less eye contact, talking less, standing further away from the other person, and seeming cold rather than warm. These actions not surprisingly often confirm the other person's racial anxiety – the person of color feels like the white person is biased toward them and the white person feels like the person of color thinks they are racist. It can be a vicious cycle. Realizing that acknowledging race and addressing it non-racist can alleviate the anxiety on both sides.

Discussion Questions



- Is it possible that the jurors in the first trial were affected by stereotypes when considering whether Michael Dunn reasonably feared for his life?
- What evidence do you think there is that implicit bias or stereotypes might have played a role in the verdict in the first trial?
- If the prosecution had been able to talk about race during the trial, what should the prosecutors have brought to the jury's attention?
- Why do you think talking about race or hearing about it might help people behave in a less biased way?
- Have you ever experienced racial anxiety in an interaction with a person of another race? Describe your experience.

Action Question

- If you are in a situation where you have to make a decision where race is involved and no one is talking about it, do you think you will bring up the topic for discussion? Why or why not?



TOPIC SEVEN:
STANDING IN
SOMEONE ELSE'S
SHOES

7. STANDING IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

Ron Davis shares his thoughts about Trayvon Martin's death.

Ron Davis

When me and Jordan had talked about the Trayvon Martin case, I remember Jordan put a hoodie on; he has a brown hoodie. He said, "We kinda look alike, Dad."

Trayvon Martin's father texted me a couple of days after it happened. "I just want to welcome you to a club that none of us want to be in."

Discussion Questions



- When you hear about a tragedy that affects someone who looks like you or whose life is similar to yours, do you imagine how it might feel if it happened to you?
- Is there a difference if the tragedy affects a person of a different race or ethnicity or a community very different from yours?
- Why might it be harder to stand in someone else's shoes—to feel empathy—when someone is different from you?



The Science

Cutting edge brain science reveals that many people do not “feel someone else’s pain”—feel empathy—to the same degree when the person is from a different racial or ethnic group. This is demonstrated by using fMRI studies measuring the level of activity in the amygdala (an area of the brain that mediates pain). In a 2009 study, researchers showed participants video clips of faces contorted to reflect the experience of pain (Xu et al., 2009). When participants viewed pictures of people of the same racial or ethnic group members experiencing pain, the fMRI documented high activity levels in the relevant brain region, but the activity level dropped when they viewed clips of people from different racial or ethnic groups.

A study using a different method of measuring brain activity measured activity levels in participants who were shown short video clips of a needle entering into the hand of either a white or black target (Avenanti, 2010). As with the 2009 fMRI study, researchers here found that region-specific brain activity levels are higher when a white participant views the clip of a white target experiencing pain than when a white participant sees a clip of a black target experiencing pain.

Discussion Questions



- Why does it matter if we have a harder time “feeling someone else’s pain” when they are of a different race or ethnicity?
- What effect might that have on jury decisions?
- The prosecution retried the case and Michael Dunn was convicted of first-degree murder. Why do you think the verdict was different?



TOPIC EIGHT:
STAND YOUR
GROUND LAWS

8. STAND YOUR GROUND LAWS

Judge Healey addresses Michael Dunn prior to sentencing.

Judge Healey

Mr. Dunn, this tragedy could have and should have been avoided. You hear people talk about and debate the right to “stand your ground,” and there is such a huge misunderstanding among the general public about that term. Self-defense, justifiable homicide, and excusable homicide are very complicated legal doctrines and laws. While that debate will, I'm sure, continue, we should remember there's nothing wrong with retreating or de-escalating a situation.

The following voices represent the viewpoints of various Jacksonville citizens, a reporter, radio host Andy Johnson and State Attorney Angela Corey:

Female Voice

Michael Dunn is claiming self-defense. Floridians and the country became very familiar with Florida Stand Your Ground law with the George Zimmerman/Trayvon Martin case.

Female Voice

Dunn claims he shot in self-defense because he thought the teenager had a gun.

Female Voice

I feel sick to my stomach. I feel sick to my stomach, because they're going to argue that he did have a reasonable belief that his life was in danger. He had a reasonable belief, because maybe they didn't have a gun, but he thought they had a gun. What do you say?

Female Voice

There's a possibility you can get away with, you know, pulling a trigger and shooting someone, and saying, "Oops, I'm sorry."

Andy Johnson

It doesn't have to be a real threat. It has to be a perceived threat.

Angela Corey

Self-defense laws were a lot easier for prosecutors when there was a duty to retreat. The change to no duty to retreat, and to be able to stand your ground and meet force with force, has truly muddied the waters quite a bit.

Discussion Questions



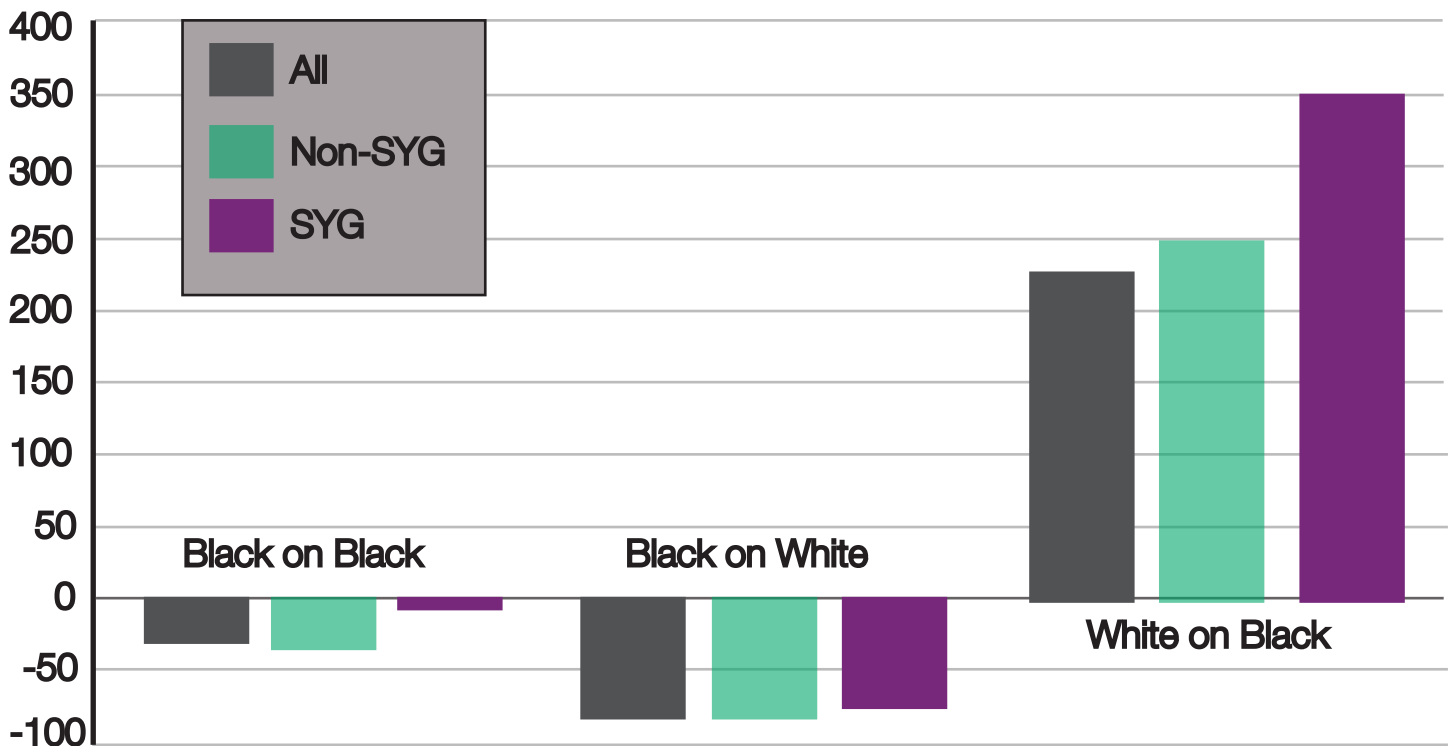
- Do you think race and "Stand Your Ground Laws" are linked? Why or why not?
- Why might race be linked to whether a person is "perceived" to be a threat?



The Science

Whites who kill blacks in Stand Your Ground states are far more likely to be found justified in their killings. In non-Stand Your Ground states, whites are 250 percent more likely to be found justified in killing a black person than a white person who kills another white person; in Stand Your Ground states, that number jumps to 354 percent.

You can see the breakdown of the killings in the chart below. The figures represent the percentage likelihood that the deaths will be found justifiable compared to white-on-white killings, which was the baseline used for comparison:



The figures represent the percentage likelihood that killings will be found justifiable, compared to white-on-white killings.

SYG = Stand Your Ground. Source: PBS

Discussion Questions



- What that you have learned about implicit bias helps to explain the results of this study?
- What role do you think the media plays in the study results?
- Do you think that the Stand Your Ground laws provide people with more protection? Do they make communities more dangerous?

Action question

- If you consider Stand Your Ground laws to make people less safe, what role can you play to challenge them?



NEXT STEPS

Actions

Individual Actions

People are not destined to behave in biased ways or to experience racial anxiety when interacting with people from other races and ethnicities. We can take action to reduce biases we have and to prevent bias from affecting our behavior. These same actions go a long way to reducing racial anxiety for whites – and the effect of reduced bias and racial anxiety in whites means that people of color will not be subject to the all too common biased treatment that currently creates so many obstacles.



Reducing Bias

If we want to reduce our implicit bias, we have to literally practice. What this means is that we need to take active steps to see people as they are, not to generalize based upon stereotypes. “Breaking the prejudice habit” (as University of Wisconsin, Madison Professor Patricia Devine calls it), includes five steps. The examples below mainly involve black males given the topic of 3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets, but the reducing bias steps work for bias against other groups as well—and research shows that we all have implicit biases to work on.

Step 1: Stereotype Behavior Recognition:

start figuring out when we are responding to people based upon stereotypes, to examine our own behavior and what triggers it. This allows us to begin working to avoid the biased response and replace it with an unbiased response.

Example: When a young black man walks by, a biased response is to move away or flinch out of automatic fear that he is somehow dangerous. Would we have had the same response if the young man were identical in every way, but white? If we conclude no (and we think about the fact that inter-racial crime is actually very, very rare), we can behave differently in the future.

Step 2: Counter-Stereotypic Imaging:

surround ourselves with images of counter-stereotypic examples and think about them in detail to help make those images more automatic in our brains.

Example: Think about friends you have who are of other races and how they differ from the negative stereotypes, or if you don’t know many people of other races, think about people you have seen in the media who aren’t like the stereotypes. 3 ½ minutes is a terrific source of “counter-stereotypic” images of young black males. Think about Jordan Davis himself, and his friends, and have their faces in your mind, rather than negative images from the media.



Step 3: Individuate: instead of viewing about people of other racial and ethnic groups from the perspective of broad generalizations based upon stereotypes, start noticing differences in the way people look and act, and learn specific information about them so that you aren't relying upon stereotypes.

Example: Again, 3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets provides a powerful tool for individuating among young black males. Think about Jordan Davis and each of his friends, how did they differ from each other, in their looks, their personalities, their interests.

Step 4: Empathic Perspective Taking:

imagine that you are a member of a different racial or ethnic group and how your life would be different, how you would be treated, and how that would feel.

Example: Pick a character in 3 ½ Minutes, Ten Bullets and think about what you now know about that character. Imagine yourself as that character and think about how you would feel going through their experiences. Think about someone you know or who you have seen in your community who is of another racial or ethnic group and what you imagine would be different.

Step 5: Increase Contact: seek out opportunities to interact with people from other racial or ethnic groups. This increased contact with people from other racial or ethnic groups will allow you to build relationships with people who are different from you and to better engage in Steps 1-4 above.

Example: Join a group or choose an activity that includes people from other racial and ethnic groups.

If you engage in these practices over a period of weeks, research shows that you will have lower implicit bias. Ideally, you will also be part of a broader community of people.



GROUP ACTIONS

- What do you have direct control over that needs to change to address any of the forms of discrimination: implicit bias, racial anxiety, or even racial threat?
- What institutions in your community need to change to address these forms of discrimination?
- As a group, what can the people here do to collectively work toward positive change?
- Who will begin the work?
- Who will be part of the work?



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