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Police-Community Relations in Cincinnati

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Summary

Introduction

In 2002, the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD), the Fraternal Order of Police, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) joined together in a collaborative agreement to resolve social conflict, improve community relations, and avoid litigation in Cincinnati. The collaborative agreement requires the parties (that is, the participants in the agreement) to undertake collective efforts to achieve these goals. Specifically, the agreement requires CPD to implement a variety of changes in pursuit of five primary goals:

- Ensure that police officers and community members become proactive partners in community problem solving.
- Build relationships of respect, cooperation, and trust within and between police and communities.
- Improve education, oversight, monitoring, hiring practices, and accountability of CPD.
- Ensure fair, equitable, and courteous treatment for all.
- Create methods to establish the public's understanding of police policies and procedures and recognition of exceptional service in an effort to foster support for the police (*In re Cincinnati Policing*, S.D. Ohio, 2003, pp. 3–4).

Evaluation is a stipulated component of the agreement. RAND was chosen as the evaluator in 2004 to aid the parties in understanding progress toward the agreement's goals. RAND will conduct the

evaluation for five years, with the results published annually in a report available to the public. The evaluation has used a variety of methods, including the following:

- two surveys of citizen satisfaction with CPD (one in 2005 and another in 2008)
- a survey conducted in 2005 of citizens who have interacted with the police through arrest, reporting a crime or victimization, or being stopped for a traffic violation
- a survey conducted in 2005, 2006, and 2008 of CPD officers about their perceptions of support from the community, working conditions, and other factors related to job satisfaction and performance
- a survey conducted in 2005, 2006, and 2008 of officers and citizens involved in a sample of citizen complaints against the officers and the department
- an analysis of motor-vehicle stops occurring between 2003 and 2007 for patterns of racial disparity in various aspects of the stop
- periodic observations conducted in 2005 of structured meetings between citizens and representatives of CPD
- a review of CPD statistical compilations of CPD data from 2004 to 2007
- analysis of a sample of videotaped interactions between citizens and officers during motor-vehicle stops that occurred between 2005 and 2007
- analysis of CPD staffing, recruitment, retention, and promotion patterns in 2005.

Under the terms of the evaluation protocol, this year 4 report consists of an analysis of a follow-up wave of surveys of the community, officers, and those involved in the complaint processes. The report also includes the review of statistical compilations, analysis of motor-vehicle stops, and analysis of videotaped citizen-police interactions during vehicle stops. This report contains our final assessment of the progress toward the goals of the collaborative agreement. The remaining report,

to be released in 2009, will contain only an analysis of motor-vehicle stops.

A Review of Findings, 2003–2008

Six years have passed since the signing of the collaborative agreement and the many reforms initiated before the start of our evaluation. Since we began analyzing the data and studying the issues in 2005, our analyses indicate that police-community relations in Cincinnati have improved in a number of ways. Relative to the community's long history that precipitated the collaborative agreement, three years is not a long time to expect substantial improvement in police-community relations, but the trends are promising. Cincinnati's black residents reported improvements in perceived police professionalism, although their level of trust in the police is still significantly[1] below that of white residents. Although the city's black residents believe that police often use race in deciding their course of action, the perception of racial profiling is on the decline. We also found that, when comparing stops of black drivers to stops of similarly situated nonblack drivers, racial differences in search rates and the durations of traffic stops that we observed for 2003–2005 did not occur in 2006 and 2007. Finally, we observe some improvement in the communication of CPD officers during traffic stops.

There are a number of potential causes for the observed changes. In this report, we do not aim to determine appropriate attribution for the improvement but wish to point out that many forces have been at work in the past several years.

First, the department has adopted numerous policy changes. Equipping every officer with a TASER® electronic control device (ECD) starting in 2004 has completely changed police use of force in the city. While CPD reports about one ECD incident per day on average, some of those incidents are cases that, prior to 2004, might

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[1] In this document, *significant* is used in the statistical sense, denoting a change or difference that is unlikely due to chance. This is its common usage in the social sciences.

have concluded with more-serious force. CPD has also implemented the Employee Tracking Solution (ETS), which monitors and reports on officer performance. In addition, RAND researchers have developed and deployed a system at CPD that assesses quarterly whether any officers are stopping a disproportionate fraction of nonwhite drivers. All patrol cars now have mobile video recorders (MVRs), providing the community with assurances that interactions with police are correctly documented. There are numerous other changes in policy, practice, and training, but these highlight some major changes that have had great impact on policing in Cincinnati.

Second, external monitoring by plaintiff attorneys and court-appointed monitors has also prompted changes. The monitoring team closely reviewed use-of-force incidents, monitored policy changes, and spurred CPD's adoption of problem-oriented policing.

Third, the community in Cincinnati shows signs of improvement. Animosity toward the police, which peaked in 2001, is likely declining as the years progress. Crime has decreased substantially, especially in the historically high-crime areas of the city, such as Over-the-Rhine. As crime decreases, the risk of problematic interactions between the community and the police naturally decreases. The longer this trend continues, the greater the trust that can be built between the community and the police.

This report does not aim to determine appropriate attribution for the observed improvements in police-community relations. In this report, we merely document the trends, showing both areas in which we observe improvement and areas that will continue to exacerbate the perception of racial bias.

While we do observe improvements in a number of areas, blacks and whites in Cincinnati experience differences in policing. However, as we note in our previous reports, those differences were based on when, where, and why their stops take place rather than on the driver's race. Nonetheless, these differences can undermine police-community relations. Reducing these differences will likely require a close alignment between police practices and community priorities, the implementation of policies to ensure that white and black officers police black neighborhoods in a similar manner, and efforts by individual officers

and citizens to minimize the inconvenience and irritation caused by traffic stops. For example, the high-crime neighborhoods may want more police assistance with drugs and violent crime, but perhaps they end up feeling like they get more tickets for expired registrations, more time having their passengers investigated, and more instances of being patted down in public. The ongoing challenge to effective policing everywhere is to identify methods of targeting the specific offenses that are a concern to the community while minimizing the impact on community members who are not involved in those offenses.

A critical component of the evaluation is to understand the context of policing in Cincinnati. To that end, CPD provides RAND with statistical compilations that detail arrest and citation activity, calls for service, and crime patterns. These compilations provide insight into how crime and, thus, the allocation of law-enforcement resources vary across neighborhoods. The compilations also feed into other analyses conducted as part of the evaluation.

Crime and Calls for Service

Overall, crime, the associated enforcement activities, and calls for service remained highly clustered in specific portions of the city. Overall crime rates have declined citywide by 9 percent since 2005. Downtown and Over-the-Rhine continue to post large reductions in crime, a 31-percent decrease in downtown and a 37-decrease in Over-the-Rhine since 2005. Some areas experienced increases; Fairview, just north of Over-the-Rhine, experienced a 20-percent increase in the same period.

In 2006, we reported that crime rates in Over-the-Rhine dropped by 13 percent after April 2006, when the Over-the-Rhine task force (later renamed Vortex) embarked on a zero-tolerance approach to policing in that neighborhood.

Use of Force

The rate of use-of-force incidents per arrest has remained constant since 2005: approximately 14 uses of force per 1,000 arrests. However, the number of arrests has declined substantially, resulting in much fewer use-of-force incidents than in previous years. ECDs continue to be the

single most commonly used force option, with 394 incidents in 2007. In 90 percent of ECD uses, the device is used in dart mode, the mode that incapacitates the subject's motor abilities, the preferred mode for that reason. Drive-stun mode, accounting for 10 percent of ECD uses, uses pain rather than incapacitation to induce compliance. We found no racial differences in the type of force used or the ECD mode used. Black subjects are involved in 75 percent of use-of-force incidents, nearly matching their representation among arrestees (73 percent). These rates are similar to the rates of arrest and use of force from 2004 to 2006.

Analysis of Vehicle Stops

Our analysis of vehicle stops assessed whether there is a department-wide pattern of bias against black drivers in the decision to stop a vehicle; determined the fraction of CPD officers who disproportionately stop black drivers compared to other officers patrolling the same neighborhoods at the same time; and investigated whether there are racial biases in post-stop outcomes, including citation rates, stop duration, and search rates.

Department-Level Stop Patterns

If CPD officers were actively targeting black drivers, we would expect stops of black drivers to represent a greater share of stops during daylight hours, when race is reasonably visible, than after dark, when race is less visible. Racial differences between stops during daylight and those after dark may also be due to differences in racial differences in drivers on the road at various times of day. To account for this each year, we have closely examined evening stops that occur near the switches to and from daylight saving time (DST). Examining these stops allows us to contrast stops that occur at exactly the same clock time with those during DST occurring during daylight and those during standard time occurring in darkness.

Table S.1 shows the results accumulated in 2003–2007 for stops occurring within four weeks of a change to or from DST. The odds ratio indicates how many times more likely daylight stops are to involve a

Table S.1
The Odds That a Stop in Daylight Involves a Black Driver Relative to a Stop After Dark, Controlling for the Clock Time

Year	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval
2003	1.02	(0.70, 1.47)
2004	1.19	(0.80, 1.77)
2005	1.10	(0.81, 1.51)
2006	0.71	(0.51, 1.00)
2007	1.17	(0.87, 1.60)
Combined	1.00	(0.86, 1.16)

NOTE: Includes all stops occurring within 30 days of the spring or fall DST change during evening hours.

black driver than are nighttime stops. Combining across all five years indicates that the accumulated data show no evidence of a racial bias in the decision to stop. Even excluding the 2006 data, which had a much lower odds ratio than any other, yields a combined odds ratio of 1.07 and still remains not statistically different from 1.0.

Additional analysis that included stops from throughout the year (rather than just those stops occurring near a change to or from DST) yielded the same result. Therefore, we conclude that there appears to be no evidence of a department-wide practice of targeting black drivers for stops.

Individual-Level Stop Patterns

While we found no evidence of a department-wide practice of disproportionately stopping black drivers, each year, our analysis flagged three to five officers with a disproportionate fraction of stops of black drivers. CPD has just more than 1,000 officers; 25 percent of those officers make more than 50 stops per year. We focused our analysis on these officers, who regularly interact with drivers in traffic stops. We compared the stops that these officers made with stops made by other officers at the same times and places and in the same contexts. The

flagged officers were substantially more likely to have stops involving black drivers than the similarly situated stops made by other officers. Table S.2 summarizes our findings for the past four years.

RAND, restricted by federal human subject–protection laws, does not provide identifiers of the officers that the analysis flags. Since 2007, CPD has been using a RAND-designed system to regularly repeat this analysis internally and including the results as part of officers' regular reviews.

Group-Level Stop Patterns

In our 2007 report (Schell et al., 2007), we conducted analyses in addition to those focusing on department-wide patterns and stop patterns of individual officers. In the 2006 stop data, we examined the stop patterns of a particular group of officers—those involved in Operation Vortex, a "highly visible proactive unit that has a zero tolerance approach to street crimes, drug trafficking, and quality of life issues. The focus of this unit is to seek out and physically arrest both minor and major criminal offenders by enforcing every law available and using every tool at our disposal to inconvenience criminals" (Green and Jerome, 2006, p. 7). The crime-reduction strategy provides saturation patrols to areas with the greatest problems with crime. Our 2006 analysis of this group's practices (Schell et al., 2007, pp. 46–48) found that Vortex officers were more likely to stop vehicles with black drivers than were other non-Vortex officers patrolling at the same times and places (71 percent versus 65 percent). Another analysis found that Vortex decreased crime in Over-the-Rhine

Table S.2
Findings on Individual Officers

Year	Number of Officers Flagged as Overstopping Black Drivers	Number of Officers Flagged as Understopping Black Drivers
2004	4	4
2005	5	1
2006	3	2
2007	3	1

13 percent more than would be expected, given the crime trends at the time (Schell et al., 2007, p. 9).

This presents a challenging dilemma for police-community relations. A program that appears to be responsible for a substantial decrease in crime consequently results in an increase in stops that involve black drivers. Since black residents exhibit the least trust of policing in Cincinnati, the deployment of programs—even ones that are successful with respect to crime reduction—that result in greater exposure of black residents to police require careful management to avoid deterioration of police-community relations. In spite of this approach, survey respondents from the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood reported that they perceive greater professionalism from CPD in 2008 than they did in 2005.

Post-Stop Patterns

When comparing all stops of black and nonblack drivers, the stops of black drivers take longer on average and black drivers are more likely to be searched. However, much of these differences appear to be driven by the location and time of the stop, the type of stop, whether the driver was a Cincinnati resident, and whether the driver had a valid driver's license. To assess whether race may play a role in officers' post-stop actions, we compared the stops of black drivers with the stops of similarly situated nonblack drivers—that is, white, Hispanic, or other nonblack drivers who were stopped in similar locations, at similar times, and for similar reasons as black drivers.

Comparing black drivers to similarly situated nonblack drivers, Table S.3 shows that both had nearly the same chance of having a stop lasting less than 10 minutes. In 2006 and 2007, the percentage was exactly the same. Similarly, we found that black and nonblack drivers had an almost equal chance of having a stop last more than 20 minutes (9 percent for black drivers and 10 percent for similarly situated nonblack drivers).

Table S.4 shows that black drivers received citations less frequently than did similarly situated nonblack drivers (57 percent, compared with 61 percent in 2007). This pattern has persisted in nearly all of the study years.

Table S.3
Percentage of Stops Lasting Less Than 10 Minutes for Black Drivers and a Matched Set of Nonblack Drivers

Year	Black Drivers	Nonblack Drivers (Matched)
2003	40	43
2004	40	44
2005	45	47
2006	47	47
2007	56	56

Table S.4
Citation Rates of Black Drivers and of a Matched Set of Nonblack Drivers (%)

Year	Black Drivers	Nonblack Drivers (Matched)
2003	75	75
2004	69	70
2005	68	71
2006	63	67
2007	57	61

Between 2003 and 2005, we found that CPD officers were more likely to search black drivers than similarly situated nonblack drivers (see Table S.5). However, in 2006, we found higher search rates for nonblack drivers, and, in 2007, search rates were nearly equal. Based on the two most recent years of data, we find no evidence of racial bias in the selection of stops resulting in searches.

High-discretion searches, such as searches in which the suspect gives consent, are most at risk for racial bias. However, when officers conducted high-discretion searches, they were equally likely to recover contraband, such as weapons or drugs, from black and nonblack drivers (Table S.6). The similarity of these hit rates indicates that there

Table S.5
Search Rates of Black Drivers and a Matched Set of Nonblack Drivers (%)

Year	Black Drivers	Nonblack Drivers (Matched)
2003	5.9	5.4
2004	6.7	6.2
2005	6.1	5.2
2006	6.1	6.7
2007	5.3	5.5

Table S.6
Hit Rates for High-Discretion Searches, by Year and Race (%)

Year	Black Drivers	Nonblack Drivers
2003	28	22
2004	29	27
2005	29	27
2006	23	24
2007	20	21

does not seem to be a racial bias in their selection of which drivers to search.

Even though we found no racial disparities in the hit rates, officers conducted 1,318 high-discretion searches of black drivers in 2007 that recovered no contraband. Such stops, which the motorist likely views as being made for no good reason, disproportionately affect the black community, since more than 1,000 black residents experienced such searches in 2007, nearly twice the number for nonblack drivers. This can contribute to blacks' perceptions of unfair policing that were identified in last year's report (Schell et al., 2007). While recovery of contraband from high-discretion searches, such as 29 weapon and 448 drug recoveries, can have a social benefit for the Cincinnati community, there is a societal cost for searches that result in no recovery of contraband.

Analysis of Videotaped Police-Motorist Interactions

We analyzed a stratified random sample of 325 video records of traffic stops from 2007 to analyze the objective characteristics of the stop (e.g., duration, infraction type, time of day) as well as measures of the communication between the driver and the police officer. The video analysis is not designed to determine whether racial inequalities are uniquely attributable to racial profiling. Instead, the analysis is designed to look for differences that community members are likely to perceive as evidence of racially biased policing, regardless of the actual reason for those differences. This approach highlights the factors that are barriers to improved police-community relations, but it cannot determine whether any differences occur because of race.

This analysis revealed two key differences associated with the officers' and drivers' races: (1) Black drivers were more likely to experience proactive policing (such as asking passengers for identification or searching the vehicle) during the stop, resulting in longer stops that were significantly more likely to involve searches, and (2) white officers were more likely than black officers to use proactive police tactics in incidents involving black drivers.

As noted previously, nonblack drivers stopped at the same times, places, and contexts as the black drivers had equal search rates. The first finding from the analysis of the recordings notes that Cincinnati's black drivers are stopped in times, places, and contexts in which CPD officers are more proactive and take a more investigative approach. Regardless of whether this is good policing strategy, it points out that black drivers in Cincinnati are more likely than nonblack drivers to have a protracted negative interaction with the police.

We continue to find significant evidence of more-intensive policing of black motorists by white officers than by black officers. Again, this may or may not be caused by racial bias but could reasonably lead some black drivers to believe that they are treated with greater suspicion. It may be useful for CPD to investigate how white and black officers are being assigned to, and are conducting, their duties so it can more effectively reduce or eliminate the appearance of racial differences in officer behavior.

These results are largely consistent with the findings in our earlier reports (Riley et al., 2005; Ridgeway et al., 2006; Schell et al., 2007). As noted in earlier reports, these findings cannot answer whether racial bias does or does not exist, but they do help explain why black Cincinnati residents perceive that it does, which may lead to a more negative attitude in future interactions with the police. It is therefore critical to take efforts to ensure that white and black officers act similarly when stopping motorists, so that improvements in relations between CPD and the black community are possible.

In addition to these findings, we found one significant difference over time that is unrelated to the race of the officer or driver: The communication quality of CPD officers has improved between 2005 and 2007. Specifically, officers displayed better listening to what the drivers say, as well as greater evidence of patience and helpfulness. This difference occurs for both white and black officers and for stops involving both white and black motorists. While the causes of this change are unknown, it could be a product of the broader reduction in tensions between CPD and the community, an improvement in police training, or an adaptation to the fact that traffic stops are now videotaped and monitored.

Police-Community Satisfaction Survey

To examine changes in police-community relations in the city of Cincinnati, we conducted a follow-up to the 2005 survey of Cincinnati residents. We conducted a phone survey of 3,000 Cincinnati residents in 2005 and again in 2008.[2] The results suggest that the relationship between the community and the police is headed in the right direction (see Table S.7).

Black respondents reported greater perceived police professionalism in 2008 than in 2005. Nonblack respondents generally reported

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[2] We obtained a 42-percent response rate in 2005 and a 45-percent response rate in 2008. For both years, we reweighted the responses to match the city's representation by neighborhood, age, race, and sex.

Table S.7
Summary of Community-Survey Responses

Survey Scale	Race	Average Response by Year	
		2005	**2008**
Police professionalism	Black	2.35	2.50
	Nonblack	2.92	2.94
Active policing	Black	1.61	1.62
	Nonblack	1.50	1.50
Perception of racial profiling	Black	2.88	2.79
	Nonblack	2.15	2.08

NOTE: The three scales reported here are the result of averaging several survey questions. Scales range from 1 to 4, with higher values indicating greater professionalism, more-active policing, and greater perceived racial profiling.

CPD's professionalism as "Good," and that rating was unchanged between 2005 and 2008. Black respondents, on average, gave significantly lower ratings than nonblack respondents, rating CPD's professionalism between "Fair" and "Good," but these ratings were significantly higher than they were in 2005.

Both black and nonblack respondents reported statistically significant decreases in the perception of the use of racial profiling by CPD officers. Black respondents still report that CPD officers treat blacks and whites somewhat unequally and usually use race in deciding how to police, more so than do nonblack respondents. However, the percentage of black residents holding this belief declined.

Police Officer Survey

A key objective of the evaluation was to obtain information from CPD officers whose duties entail significant interactions with citizens. The information was obtained through a survey that asked officers about personal safety, working conditions, morale, organizational barriers to

effective policing, fairness in evaluation and promotion, and attitudes of citizens in Cincinnati.

There were fairly low rates of participation in the survey. Of 300 surveys distributed to officers at their in-service training, only 40 returned completed surveys. As a result, these findings may not correctly reflect the views of those CPD officers who did not respond.

Of the officers who responded to the survey, their responses to questions about good policing practices were generally consistent with the principles of community policing. For example, the overwhelming majority of officers who responded to the survey believe that residents' input is critical to solving neighborhood problems. However, these officers did not express a great deal of confidence that cooperation is likely. Furthermore, few officers (15 percent) reported being aware of the Community Police Partnering Center. Officers generally felt that proactively stopping cars and "checking people out" were components of good police work. Such practices, though, taken to the extreme, may tax the relationship between the police and community members.

Officers who responded to the survey reported experiencing a great deal of stress on the job, including significant disrespect, suspects using physical force to resist arrest, and feelings of serious danger from physical violence. They generally gave high marks to the training that CPD gives them but do not feel that they get sufficient feedback about their performance. Despite the problems that the officers identified, they expressed a high level of commitment and derive personal satisfaction from their jobs. These responses were generally consistent with the responses to our 2006 officer survey (Ridgeway et al., 2006).

Satisfaction with the Complaint Process

We also fielded a survey to assess the perceived fairness of the complaint process, the level of input that citizens and officers had in the process, and justifications for the final resolution. Additionally, the survey asked for input from officers and citizens on improving the internal complaint process. We distributed surveys to each officer and each citizen complainant involved in each complaint handled through the Citizen

Complaint Resolution Process (CCRP) or Internal Investigations Section (IIS) and the Citizen Complaint Authority (CCA). Surveys were mailed with the findings upon closure of the investigations.

Few officers and citizens responded to the survey in 2008, although we received more than in 2006 (23 officer and 12 citizen surveys in 2008, compared to 11 officer and eight citizen surveys in 2006).

Of primary importance, respondents who responded to the survey reported that the complaint-review process is working, in that respondents indicated that investigators followed up on a majority of complaints (100 percent of police officers and 92 percent of complainants).

Officers and citizens who responded to the survey had disparate views on the honesty of the investigators; three-quarters of the officers (but only two-fifths of the citizens) thought that the investigators were honest. These officers and citizens felt that the process allowed them to tell their side of the story, but only half of them thought the investigators understood the facts of the case.

Officers tended to have more-favorable opinions of the investigation than complainants did. Three-quarters of the officers felt that their views were considered and that they were treated with respect and dignity, while only a third of complainants felt their views were considered, and half reported being treated with dignity and respect. Officers were more satisfied with the complaint process and outcome than citizens were. Most complaints generally appear to favor the officer, which is certainly associated with satisfaction with the process.

Summary and Conclusions

Progress Toward the Goals of the Collaborative Agreement

As initially noted, CPD is not the same as the department that policed Cincinnati in 2001. Policy changes, oversight, and a variety of reforms have produced a department that polices differently than it had in 2001. At the same time, the community has also changed, most notably with respect to large decreases in crime, particularly in the Over-

the-Rhine neighborhood. This reduces the risk of problematic interactions between the community and the police.

These developments have produced evidence of small but positive changes in the community's perception of the department. Black residents are reporting greater perceived police professionalism than they had three years ago. In addition, our analysis found no evidence of racial bias in traffic stops, such as in the decision to stop or in the decision to search. Overall, however, black residents still maintain significantly more negative views of the police than white residents do.

That said, there are several ways in which police interactions with the community can exacerbate and perpetuate the perception of racial bias. Every year, our analysis flags three to five officers who stop a disproportionately high number of black drivers relative to other officers patrolling in the same times, places, and contexts. CPD has set up a system to monitor such outliers, and it will be important to investigate and act on outliers as appropriate.

Blacks continue to bear a disproportionate share of the impact of policing services by virtue of the clustering of crime, calls for service, and policing in predominantly black neighborhoods. While we found no evidence that the police systematically or deliberately treat blacks differently, blacks nevertheless experience a different kind of policing from that experienced by whites. In particular, blacks experience more policing and, particularly, more of the proactive policing exemplified by Vortex. While it may not be possible to field a proactive enforcement strategy that is racially neutral, much of CPD's interaction with the citizenry comes through vehicle stops. The quality, tenor, and tone of such stops are largely under police control. CPD should continue to evaluate the intensity of traffic stops (both volume and degree of scrutiny), especially in the high-crime neighborhoods, to ensure that the intensity level balances the investigative and public-safety benefits of the stops with the risks of negative interactions with residents.

Our analysis of the video recordings of traffic stops consistently finds that white officers are more investigative of black motorists and passengers than are black officers. This difference in approach to traffic stops can certainly fuel the perception among stopped black drivers that their race played a role in the stop. The department should thus

pay special attention to training to ensure that these interactions are conducted in a consistent, courteous, and professional manner.

While the trends appear positive, without a concerted effort to ameliorate the disparate impact of these policies, it seems likely that black Cincinnati residents will remain less satisfied with policing services than will their white counterparts.