

Seeing is Believing: How video of police action affects criminal justice beliefs

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Abstract

It is well established that the news media both shapes and distorts how citizens view issues of crime and justice in the U.S.. Media coverage in the U.S. is at best loosely related to local crime conditions (Graber, 1980; Lowry, Nio and Leitner, 2003) and often reinforces stereotypes of black criminality (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000; Gilliam et al., 1996). Yet the growing availability of video footage of citizens interactions with the police, recorded by both individuals and police departments, may fundamentally change this process. By providing a more direct account of what happened, it is possible such footage leads citizens to rely less on their preconceived notions of race and crime and more on the specific facts of situation. In this study, we explore the consequences of viewing citizen-police interactions on the interpretation of those encounters and attitudes about crime, justice, and politics more generally. First, we explore the extent to which evaluations of the same unedited police body-worn camera footage of traffic stop that resulted in a citizen's complaint can be influenced by changing the justification for the release of that footage. By manipulating the title of the video, participants are informed that the released footage either confirmed or refuted a charge of officer misconduct. Participants responses in these conditions are compared to those in control condition in which no justification for the release of the footage is given. Second, we explore the effects of such footage when mediated through the frames of local news. Again, we compare participants evaluations of the interaction when it is framed as either confirming or refuting the charge of officer misconduct to a neutral presentation of the information. We find that interpretations of this footage depend both on how it is framed and the format in which it is presented, as well as the prior beliefs and experiences of the viewer.

INTRODUCTION

On April 4, 2015, Walter Scott was shot and killed by a police officer in North Charleston, S.C. Initial accounts of the incident told a sad but familiar story.¹ Scott had been stopped for driving with a broken third taillight. At some point during questioning, Scott ran. The officer pursued Scott firing his Taser and then his gun, hitting Scott eight times in the back. The officer would later report Scott had grabbed his Taser, leading him to fire his service weapon.

These initial reports would later be called into question, when a witness to the events provided video recorded on her cell phone that appeared to contradict many portions of the officer's report. In particular, the video showed the officer placing the Taser Scott had allegedly grabbed next to Scott after he had been shot.

Police shootings like the one that resulted in Scott's Death are not an uncommon occurrence in the U.S. According to the *Washington Post's* Fatal Force database, there have been 611 police shootings through the month of August in 2017, and 963 fatal shootings in 2016.² Such shootings often illicit a familiar pattern of divergent responses. Many argue this pattern of police-related violence that disproportionately affects poor minorities is tantamount to what Michelle Alexander calls the New Jim Crow. Yet others focus on the behavior and past of the individual victims, arguing their actions contributed to the tragic results.³

Yet the response to Scott's death was different. Commentators from both sides of the political spectrum expressed outrage after the release of the video footage.⁴ The officer involved in the shooting was indicted on state charges of murder as well as federal charge of violating Scott's civil rights. The South Carolina state legislature fast-tracked legislation and funding, named in Scott's honor that would require all officers to wear body cameras. Before Scott's death, police in Charleston stopped nearly 200 drivers a day. After his death that number was cut in half.⁵

Had the eyewitness video not existed, would the response have been the same? Would the officer have been indicted? Would commentators on the left and right expressed joint outrage? Would the

¹See for example: Christina Elmore and David MacDougall "Man shot and killed by North Charleston police officer after traffic stop; SLED investigating", *The Post and Courier* 4 April, 2015, accessed online at <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20150404/PC16/150409635> on July 4, 2016

²"Fatal Force" *Washington Post* accessed online 13 August 2017, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-2017/>

³See for example Gibbs, John, "If You Don't Want Police To Shoot You, Don't Resist Arrest," *The Federalist*, 11 July 2016, accessed online 13 August 2017 at <http://thefederalist.com/2016/07/11/if-you-dont-want-police-to-shoot-you-dont-resist-arrest/>

⁴See for example Charles C.W. Cooke, "A Camera Will Mean Justice for Walter Scott" *The National Review* 8 April 2015, available online at <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/416645/camera-will-mean-justice-walter-scott-charles-c-w-cooke>

⁵Andrew Knapp, "Walter Scott effect: North Charleston traffic stops cut in half after shooting, but is it the lasting change critics seek?" 2 April, 2016

legislature have acted as quickly as decisively as it did? Or would the story have ended with that initial account adding another row to the *Post's* database?

In this paper we explore the political relevance of such direct footage both for specific policy debates about police reform and our larger understanding of public opinion on issues of race and justice. Specifically, we examine the extent to which such video leads people to a common interpretation of given event, whether this process is influenced by the context in which that information is presented. Using a unique survey experiment, we randomly expose individuals to police body camera footage of a traffic stop in which the driver alledged he was racially profiled. In some conditions subjects are left to interpret the footage for themselves while in others they are told it either confirms or refutes the driver's claim. Further, we randomly manipulate whether subjects view the unedited footage directly, as if on a videosharing site like YouTube, or whether they encounter the clips of the footage mediated through a nightly news cast that is further manipulated to either confirm, refute or give no information on the driver's claim.

Our work speaks to a larger literature on public opinion about race and criminal justice system. By using actual footage of a real citizen-police encounter, our work extends past research that has explored these dynamics by asking citizens to evaluate hypothetical encounters through text-based vignettes (e.g. Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005; Peffley and Hurwitz, 2010) By varying whether this footage is presented directly or indirectly through a news cast, our work speaks to how differences between "old" and "new" media environments may alter the dynamics of public opinion.

We find that [brief preview of findings here]

We begin by explaining why the growing availability of direct footage of citizen police encounters has large implications for our understanding of issues of race and criminal justice. Next we describe the design of our study and offer a set of expectations about how people will respond to treatment. We present our results and conclude with a discussion of the larger implications of our work for politics and policy.

MOTIVATION

Issues of police misconduct are not a new development in American politics. On August 11, 1965, Marquette Frye was arrested on suspicion of drunk driving in the in the predominantly black Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. The stop escalated leading to the arrest of Frye and his family members. In a neighborhood already rife with tension between L.A.'s largely white police force and

the community's largely black populace, the arrest of Frye and his family members ignited nearly six days of rioting resulting in 34 deaths and \$40 million in damages. Twenty-seven years later, the acquittal four L.A. police officers videotaped beating Rodney King, would set off another six days of demonstrations and civil unrest. In recent years, the deaths of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Tamir Rice, and others during interactions with the police highlight the persistent importance and challenge of issues of race and justice in the U.S.

While these issues are not new, the way we encounter them has changed. Part of what made the Rodney King incident so controversial and matter of national concern was the existence of actual footage showing his brutal beating by police officers. Today, advances in technology make the production and distribution of such footage far more easy and far more common. Camera phones among citizens and dashboard and body-worn cameras from police, enable both sides of a citizen-police encounter to record the interaction.

In the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, M.O., the Obama administration announced a \$23 million dollar grant initiative to provide funding for body worn cameras for police departments in 32 states.⁶ A survey by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics found that about one third (3,900) of local police departments reported providing body-worn cameras to at least some of their officers.

The audience for this footage has also drastically changed with the growth of social media and video sharing sites like YouTube. Launched in February 2005, the first, co-founder Jawed Karim posted the first video—capturing his trip to the zoo—that April. Today, the platform boasts over a billion users watching over a billion hours of video a day⁷ Increasingly groups such as Stop the Killing and Cop watch have used platforms like YouTube and other social media sites as means to encourage and disseminate citizen recordings of their encounters with the police.

A telling example of the changing environment through which we see citizen-police interactions came in July 2017, when the Orlando Police pulled over black driver, Aramis Ayala, who also happened to be State Attorney. A public records request lead to the release of the police body-worn camera footage. The video showed Ayala asking why she had been pulled over and the officer's explaining nothing had come back when they ran her license plates and that her tinted windows made it difficult to see who the driver was. When asked by Ayala, why they'd ran her plates, the officers explained it was just something they did to see if cars were stolen. The public release of the footage made

⁶See "Justice Department Awards over \$23 Million in Funding for Body Worn Camera Pilot Program to Support Law Enforcement Agencies in 32 States," Department of Justice, 21 September 2015, accessed online 13 August 2017 at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-awards-over-23-million-funding-body-worn-camera-pilot-program-support-law>

⁷See YouTube for the Press accessed 8 August 2017 online at <https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/press/>

national news and sparked debates about the appropriateness of the stop and the broader issue of racial profiling by the police.⁸ As of August 2017, the footage had been viewed over a 1.2 million times on the Orlando Police Department’s YouTube account⁹, while a CBS news story on stop had over 980,000 views.¹⁰

The growing use and availability of such footage raises many interesting questions for researchers and policy makers. Proponents of the adoption of body-worn cameras highlight it’s potential to improve accountability and transparency among the police (e.g. Marks, 2013). Skeptics among both the police and broader public worry about issues of privacy, data security and implementation (e.g. Joh, 2016; Smykla et al., 2016). Much of early research has focused on how such technology may change police behavior and alter the outcomes of citizen-police interactions. One field experiment randomizing the use of body-worn cameras in a California police department found the cameras significantly reduced the use of force and citizen complaints (Farrar and Ariel, 2013; Ariel, Farrar and Sutherland, 2015). Subsequent follow-up studies have yielded more mixed results. Replicating the design of the California study across seven departments in two English-speaking countries, (Ariel et al., 2017) found citizen complaints decreased overall, but found no difference between treatment and control groups. In another analysis of the study, (Ariel et al., 2016) found an increase in assaults on officers with body-cameras, but no change officer use of force.

In this paper, we consider the broader impact of these developments on public opinion. Specifically, we seek to understand how the ways people encounter footage of of citizen-police interactions shape their interpretations of those events and their broader beliefs about race and the criminal justice in the U.S. In doing so, our work contributes a growing set of research on the the ways body-cameras and video of citizen-police interaction shape public attitudes and behavior as well as a broader literature about the dynamics of public opinion on race and criminal justice system. For example, Bock (2016) finds that viewing such footage can be powerful call to local activism, and in study that speaks most directly our present question, (Culhane, Boman IV and Schweitzer, 2016) finds that the effects of footage of a police shooting depend both on the format and background information of the footage, as well as the larger social and political context in which that footage is viewed. They

⁸See for example, Mele, Christopher, (2017, July 17) Video Shows Orlando Police Pulling Over Florida State Attorney. *The New York Times*, accessed 8 August 2017 online at https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/us/florida-state-attorney-police-stop.html?_r=0. For some of the conflicting views of the interaction see, Rogan, Tom (2017, July 12) The police officers who stopped Aramis Ayala are not racists. *The Washington Examiner* accessed online 8 August 2017 at <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/the-police-officers-who-stopped-aramis-ayala-are-not-racists/article/2628466> and Bailey, Isaac, (2017, July 16) The real injustice wasn’t pulling over Aramis Ayala. *CNN.com* accessed online 8 August 2017 at <http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/16/opinions/outrage-over-rick-scott-treatment-of-aramis-ayala-opinion-bailey/index.html>. On the larger issues of racial profiling during pre-textual stops see Epp, Maynard-Moody and Haider-Markel (2014).

⁹Accessed 8 August 2017 online at <https://youtu.be/VVx1afdB02c>

¹⁰Accessed 8 August 2017 online at https://youtu.be/iiUkbE_ktHs

conducted the same survey experiment before and after the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. Subjects either viewed, heard, or read a transcript of body-camera footage of a police shooting with varying information about the officers orders in the situation. Before Ferguson, subjects who read the the transcript were far more likely to perceive the shooting was less justified than those who saw the video or heard the audio. After the shooting, however, subjects viewing the video footage were far more likely to evaluate the shooting negatively. In a follow up study a year later, (Culhane and Schweitzer, 2017) find that the pattern of responses had reverted back to those found in the pre-Ferguson study.

Our work makes the following contributions to these fields. First, rather than focus on the extreme case of a police shooting, we focus on perceptions of racial bias and injustice during the more common occurrence of questionable traffic stop where racial bias have shaped the outcome. This is not to discount the importance of more serious cases of police violence and misconduct, but rather to extend our understanding to a class of interactions experienced by large segment of society (Epp, Maynard-Moody and Haider-Markel, 2014; Gelman, Fagan and Kiss, 2007).

Second, (Culhane, Boman IV and Schweitzer, 2016) findings suggest the mode of presentation of such footage matters. We agree, and extend this line of research to consider how the effect of such footage varies when subjects view the video directly, compared, to when they encounter the footage as part of news coverage that may contain additional information that interact and activate pre-existing beliefs and narratives. We believe this comparison is particular important given the large body of literature that exists demonstrating, the ways the media, shape views of the criminal justice system. Stories about crime make consistently make up a large portion of local news coverage—although they are only loosely related to changes in the actual incidence of arrests and crime (Graber, 1980; Chermak, 1998; Lowry, Nio and Leitner, 2003). The way the media cover crime in turn reinforces stereotypes about the nature and causes of crime. Jamieson (1993) finds a disproportionate number of stories about Blacks relate to crime and Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) find blacks are overrepresented as perpetrators of violent crime. Summarizing the media’s coverage of crime, Gilliam et al. (1996, p. 8) find “the typical news story on crime consists of two ‘scripts’: crime is violent, and criminals are non-white,”¹¹ The growing availability of actual footage from police encounters may alter these scripts, changing both both how the media covers issues of race, crime, and justice, as well as how the public responds.

Finally, we believe this work can contribute to our larger understanding about of public opinion is formed and changes around question of race and justice in the U.S. One of the key findings from this

¹¹Although Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) find that it is predominantly Whites, and not Blacks, who are influenced by these frames.

large and diverse literature is the persistent gaps in how White and Black Americans think about issues of crime, punishment and justice.¹² For example, in their 2001 Race, Crime, and Public Opinion Study, Bobo and Johnson (2002) find that 89 percent of African Americans believe the the criminal justice system is biased against Blacks, compared to just 38 percent of Whites. The origin of these disparate beliefs are complex, but in part reflect the divergent experiences of Whites and minorities with the criminal justice system. In short, for some racial minorities, contact with the police, courts, and prison is far more common and often far less just than for Whites (Western and Wildeman, 2009; Western, 2006; Spohn, 2013; Tonry, 1995).

Recently, Mondak et al. (2017) argue that large portion of the gaps between how Whites and racial minorities—particularly Black Americans perceive the police and courts could be attributed to differences in the information provided by the vicarious experiences of their peers. Social networks in general, tend to be characterized by a high degree of homophily across a number of dimensions including race (e.g. Marsden, 1988; Mollica, Gray and Trevino, 2003). Mondak et al. (2017) show that such homophily is also evident in people’s networks of acquaintances who have had encounters with the police and courts. This pattern of association coupled with the disparate experiences of Whites and racial minorities with the criminal justice system serves to widen perceived gaps in the general fairness of the police and courts. That is, Whites are more likely to know other Whites who have had more positive experiences with the police and courts, than Blacks and to some extent racial minorities. Control for these differences in the content of knowledge obtained about the criminal justice system, and the gaps between White and Black opinion remain, but are greatly diminished.

Of course, another chief source of vicarious information about the criminal justice system is the media. Just as the vicarious experiences of peers can contribute to widening of racial gaps in perceptions of the criminal justice system, it is possible that the ability to see actual footage of encounters one might never hear of or experience, such as instances of racial profiling (or the use of violent force) may serve to narrow those gaps and help citizens reach a common understanding of what has happened and what may need to be done. Past research suggests information provided visually, such as that provided by police-worn body cameras, can have a particularly strong impact on the decision making in mock jury experiments (e.g Fishfader et al., 1996; Eva Martín et al., 2007). By using actual footage of encounters and news coverage, this paper extends past work on that has often focused on exploring racial divides in public opinion on criminal justice using hypothetical vignettes (e.g. Peffley and Hurwitz, 2010)

There is no guarantee, however, that people viewing the same footage will reach the same conclusions

¹²For work discussing the divergent criminal justice beliefs of Whites and Blacks see for example Peffley and Hurwitz (2010); Bobo and Johnson (2004); Unnever and Cullen (2007*b,a*); Unnever, Cullen and Jonson (2008)

about what it means. Ample research in social psychology demonstrates the power of prior beliefs and the ability of individuals to engage in motivated reasoning when presented with information that may conflict with a belief say that police are generally fair or that race is not a factor in how people are treated by the police.¹³ In one particularly striking study, Peffley and Hurwitz (2007) find that Whites who believe crime is rooted in dispositional characteristics of individuals actually become more supportive of the death penalty when they are presented with evidence that it disproportionately affects Black Americans. Similarly, studies abound showing how the way information is framed influences how people process it.¹⁴ In trying to understand how direct, “objective” footage of police encounters may shape current debates and public opinion around criminal justice, we wish to know the extent which people draw the same conclusions when viewing that footage, and whether those conclusions are in turn influenced by the context in which that footage is presented and the prior information and beliefs that people bring when viewing it.

DATA AND DESIGN

In this section we provide an overview of the experimental design and data used to test two questions: When presented with footage of a citizen police encounter, do people reach the same interpretations, or can simple frames of the interaction change their interpretations? Do these dynamics differ according to the context in which its presented and the prior beliefs that people bring to viewing it? We begin, by outlining our experimental design. Next, we describe a set of possible responses to the information provided by our treatments and explain our general expectations. Finally we describe the specific data and measures used in our analysis.

THE CITIZEN-POLICE ENCOUNTER

To answer our questions, we draw on body-worn camera footage from a recent traffic stop in Memphis, TN. The footage was released by the Memphis Police Department following a citizen complaint, and became the subject of a news segment on local television.¹⁵

The driver, a black man, was pulled over for a window-tint violation and for driving above the speed

¹³For examples in the context of politics, see Redlawsk (2002); Braman and Nelson (2007); Lodge and Taber (2000); Taber and Lodge (2006) and more broadly Kunda (1990)

¹⁴See for example Chong and Druckman (2007*b,a*); Druckman (2001); Druckman and Nelson (2003)

¹⁵The original news broadcast can be seen here: <http://www.wmactionnews5.com/story/35851842/mpd-body-cam-footage-refutes-racial-profiling> and the unedited body camera footage is available here <http://www.wmactionnews5.com/segment/13480531/raw-body-camera-footage-of-traffic-stop-where-attorney-says-he-was-profiled>

limit. During the stop, the driver hands the white police officer his license and registration, as well as his gun permit. He informs the officer that he has his gun with him in the car, leading to the following exchange:

[Officer]: "You got your gun on you?" [Driver]: "Yes sir." [Officer]: "Don't reach for it."
[Driver]: "I'm not going to reach for it." [Officer]: "I'm just saying don't reach for it man.
Normal thing I say." [Driver]: "I'm not going to reach for it." [Officer]: "But you went
like that. I don't know what you're doing."

The driver claims he saw the officer reach for this gun during this interaction. This combined with his belief that he had been racially profiled led him to file his complaint with the police. During an interview with the driver and local media, the chief of police would dispute this interpretation, while the driver maintained his position that the stop was unjust.

We chose this particular interaction for several reasons. First, it depicts a relatively common interaction with the police, a traffic stop, that is often associated with issues of racial profiling (Harris, 1999, 1997; Epp, Maynard-Moody and Haider-Markel, 2014).¹⁶ Second, the nature of this specific interaction is ambiguous. The driver claims he was profiled and feared for this life¹⁷ while the police maintain the officer generally followed standard procedure and behaved appropriately. These divergent interpretations are common in discussions of criminal justice and we wish to understand the impact of information which potentially provides an objective or more direct view of such events.¹⁸ Finally, the existence of both the unedited body camera footage and a news segment covering that footage allows us to assess the impact of this information in both new and more traditional media environments. With the raw footage alone, we are able to assess whether people reach the same conclusions when presented with the same "objective" view of an event, or whether their interpretations are shaped by subtle framings of the context of this information and their prior beliefs about the criminal justice system. Similarly, the news account lets us assess whether these dynamics play out differently when the information is conveyed directly as viewed on YouTube and other forms of social media, or indirectly through the more traditional format of a televised news cast. We believe people may process information differently across these formats which in turn may

¹⁶According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics most recent Police-Public Contact Survey, in 2011 about one in four Americans over the age of 16 had one or more contacts with the police in the past year. About 27.7 million of the estimated 62.9 million interactions came from traffic stops.(Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; Langton et al., 2013).

¹⁷See Askin, Jerry, "Memphis attorney: I was racially profiled during traffic stop", *WMCAActionNews5*, accessed online 8 July 2017 at <http://www.wmcactionnews5.com/story/35837627/memphis-attorney-claims-he-was-racially-profiled-during-traffic-stop>

¹⁸This is not to discount the impact of footage showing more extreme cases of misconduct, such as instances of police brutality, officer-involved shootings or the planting of evidence. Here too, we think direct footage matters for the adjudication of cases in both the formal legal system and court of public opinion. We discuss the implications of such footage in the conclusion of this paper.

have important implications for our understanding how citizens think about issues of racial bias and criminal justice.

MANIPULATING THE FRAMING AND FORMAT OF BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE

We assess these questions through a survey experiment that manipulates the framing and format of the footage. To assess whether people viewing the same footage will draw the same conclusions, we randomly assigned a set of respondents to view the unedited body camera footage with one of three frames justifying the release of the footage. One group of respondents viewed the footage with the simple title: “Police Release Body Camera Footage from Traffic Stop.”¹⁹ A second group, viewed the same footage, but with the title: “Police Release Body Camera Footage from Traffic Stop **Confirming Charge of Officer Misconduct.**” A third group, viewed the same footage but with the title: “Police Release Body Camera Footage from Traffic Stop **Refuting Charge of Officer Misconduct.**”

To explore whether the format of the footage matters, we constructed a similar set of treatments from the original news coverage of the footage. Again respondents were assigned to one of three groups viewing a news segment that offered no justification for the release of the footage, or news segment that claimed the footage either confirmed or refuted the charge of officer misconduct. In addition to manipulating the title associated with the news segment, we further manipulated the content of each segment to reinforce a specific frame. All respondents saw the initial introduction from the news anchor explaining this was the first look at body camera footage released by the Memphis Police Department when a local attorney called a traffic stop into question. In the neutral/no justification condition, the video precedes with a reporter’s narration of the body camera footage but excludes the outcome the traffic stop. In the refutation condition, the video includes a statement by the Memphis police chief claiming he thought the officer would be yelling at the driver and then a transition by the reporter implying the opposite was shown by the body camera footage. The narration continues unchanged until the exchange about the driver’s gun, which is shortened to include only the officer initial direction not to reach for the gun and includes the information that the driver did not receive a ticket from the stop. In the condition confirming misconduct, the statement by the police chief officer is replaced with a statement by the driver questioning why he was stopped. The full exchange about the gun is included, and the information about the outcome of the stop is excluded. A summary of the experimental manipulations is provided in Table 1

¹⁹The video ran 3:35 seconds and was set to autoplay when the page loaded. The survey paused on the page for the duration of the video. Video keyboard controls were disabled to ensure respondents watched the footage in its entirety.

Table 1: Summary of Experimental Manipulations of News Clip

	Justification for Release of Footage		
	None	Confirming Misconduct	Refuting Misconduct
Title	Police Release Body Camera ...	Confirming Charge of ...	Refuting Charge of ...
	Footage from Traffic Stop	Officer Misconduct	Officer Misconduct
News anchor introduction	✓	✓	✓
Police Chief Statement	–	–	✓
Exchange about driver’s gun	Full	Full	Shortened
Driver Statement	–	✓	–
Outcome of stop	–	–	No ticket

EXPECTATIONS

Broadly, our experiment is designed to test the extent to which individuals’ interpretations of another person’s encounter with the police are influenced by the context and format in which that information is provided. Specifically, whether there is some justification for why that footage is released (none/confirming misconduct/refuting misconduct) and the manner in which that footage is what footage is conveyed (unedited or as part of a news segment). For both the unedited and news coverage versions of our treatment, we consider four possible patterns of response for how people’s perceptions of the legitimacy of the stop, the appropriateness of the officer’s behavior, and the likelihood of that stop represents a case of racial profiling may be influenced by manipulating the framing for the justification of the release of the footage. To facilitate our discussion, we describe these hypotheses in terms of predicted differences among those in the confirm and refute conditions relative to responses of those who viewed the footage with no explicit justification for its release.²⁰ Specifically, we consider the following possible patterns of interpretation:

Hypothesis 0. Interpretations independent of justification for release of body camera footage

Hypothesis 1. Interpretation consistent with justification for release of body camera footage

Hypothesis 2. Interpretation consistent with justification for release of body camera footage conditional on prior beliefs and experiences

Hypothesis 3. Interpretation counter to justification for release of body camera footage conditional on prior beliefs and experiences

²⁰In our analysis, we also examine differences between those in the confirm and refute conditions adjusting for the multiple comparisons being made.

Hypothesis 0 (H0) predicts that individuals interpretation of the event will be similar regardless of the justification associated with the release of the footage. This null hypothesis implies that direct, “objective” nature of the footage supersedes any attempt to frame its meaning. Hypothesis 1 (H1) offers the expectation that individuals will interpret the body camera footage of the stop in a manner consistent with which it was framed. Relative to respondents given no reason for why they are viewing this body camera footage, people told the footage is evidence confirming a charge of officer misconduct, should view the the stop as less legitimate and be more likely to believe the officer behaved inappropriately and that the driver’s race played a significant role in the interaction. Similarly, people told the footage refutes charges of misconduct should view the stop as more legitimate and be more likely to believe the officer behaved appropriately and less likely to think the driver’s race shaped the interaction.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 suggest individuals prior beliefs and experiences will condition their interpretation the this footage, but make competing predictions as to how these factors matter. The direction of the effects for Hypothesis 2 (H2) remains the same as for H1; People are expected to adjust their interpretations in a manner consistent with the framing of the footage, but H2 claims these the effects will be primarily concentrated among people for whom that framing runs counter to the prior beliefs about and experiences with the criminal justice system. In essence, H2 suggests that the effect of a particular frame will be largest among the respondents for which that frame provides some sort of novel information. Thus, H2 predicts that the framing refuting the charges of officer misconduct, will have the greatest impact on respondents who prior to viewing the footage, tended to think the police and criminal justice system were generally unfair. Likewise, H2 predicts the framing suggesting the footage confirms the charge of officer misconduct will have the largest effects on individuals who think the police and system is generally fair. In contrast, Hypothesis 3 (H3) predicts a pattern of motivated reasoning in response to these these different framings. When presented with information that counters their prior beliefs, H3 predicts respondents will adjust their interpretations to fit more closely with their prior beliefs and experiences. Individuals who think the police are generally fair or who are members of groups that generally fare worse in the criminal justice system, are predicted to evaluate the interaction in a more favorable light when told it is allegedly evidence of officer misconduct. Similarly, respondents who think the police are generally unfair, will be more likely to view the interaction negatively, when told it allegedly refutes a charge of officer misconduct. A summary of the expected pattern of results for each hypotheses (defined relative to respondents viewing the footage with no justification given) is provided in Table 2

Our general expectations with regard to these hypotheses are as follows. If police body camera

Table 2: Summary of Expected Responses to Justification Framing

Predicted Response to Justification Framing						
	H0	H1	H2		H3	
Framing Refutes Misconduct	Independent of Framing	Consistent with Framing	Consistent CJS Fair	Consistent CJS Unfair	Counter CJS Fair	Counter CJS Unfair
Legitimacy of Stop	0	+	0/+	+	0/+	-
Appropriate Officer Behavior	0	+	0/+	+	0/+	-
Racial Bias	0	-	0/-	-	0/-	+
Framing Confirms Misconduct	Independent of Framing	Consistent with Framing	Consistent CJS Fair	Consistent CJS Unfair	Counter CJS Fair	Counter CJS Unfair
Legitimacy of Stop	0	-	-	0/-	+	0/-
Appropriate Officer Behavior	0	-	-	0/-	+	0/-
Racial Bias	0	+	+	0/+	-	0/+

footage provides a purely objective view of an interaction, than it is possible that respondents will be unmoved by the manipulation of the justification for the footage of the release or by the format in which this footage is presented (H0). We think this is unlikely and instead expect interpretation in the confirmation and refutation treatments to differ from condition in which no justification is given.

As for the direction of those differences, we believe this pattern of response further depends on the format of the footage and the beliefs of those viewing it. We suspect that the “objective” nature of the unedited body camera footage will make evidence of interpretations consistent with the framing (H1, H2) more likely than interpretations counter to the framing (H3). Further it seems likely that magnitude of these effects will be concentrated among respondents for whom the footage would seem to provide new information (H2). In contrast, we suspect that when this footage is presented as part of a news segment that may format activate familiar scripts about race and crime making a pattern of response of counter arguing the justification more likely (H3). Alternatively, it is possible that the news format lends authority and strength to particular frame (as well as additional information)–making patterns of consistent interpretation more likely, while the lack of such context may make counter arguing more likely when the unedited footage is presented without the interpretative script of a news segment.

We believe prior beliefs and experiences will shape the interpretation of this footage. Such beliefs are likely intertwined with the race of our respondents which in turn are linked to divergent experiences with the criminal justice system (Tonry, 1995, 2011; Mondak et al., 2017). We explore these dynamics in two ways. First, we conduct separate tests based on pre-treatment evaluations of the general fairness of the police. Second, we divide respondents into groups which objective indicators such

as rates of incarceration suggest are relatively advantaged (Whites and Asians) and disadvantaged (Blacks, Latinos, and respondents who identified as race other than White or Asian) within the current criminal justice system.²¹ In this analysis we expect that the relative effectiveness of the justification framing may differ by group and prior beliefs. Thus Blacks and Latinos, who are more likely to hold negative beliefs about the general fairness of the police, may be more more response responsive to the confirmation framing (H1, H2) and more likely to counter argue the refutation framing (H3). In contrasts, Whites and Asians may be more likely to counter argue the confirmation framing (H3) and more likely to accept the refutation framing (H1,H2).

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

A total of 1,442 respondents were recruited for this study through Amazon Mechanical Turk.²² The median respondent was a 36-year-old white woman with a college degree and an income between \$50,000 and \$59,999. A table of descriptive statistics is provided in the appendix.

Our primary outcomes of interest are respondents' perceptions of the legitimacy of the stop, the appropriateness of the officer's behavior, and whether they believe stop represents an instance of racial profiling. Each outcome was measured using a five-item battery of questions. For each item, respondents were asked to rate on seven-point scale the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement like: "the driver broke the law" (legitimacy of stop), "the officer behaved appropriately" (appropriateness of officer behavior), or "the driver was stopped because of his race" (racial profiling.) The five items were recoded and averaged to form a single measure for each outcome with higher values corresponding to agreement that the stop was legitimate, the officer behaved appropriately, and that racial profiling occurred.²³ Descriptive statistics and. question wordings are available in the appendix.

As discussed above, we think it likely that effects of treatment will vary across respondents. In particular, we believe conditioning on subject's race and prior beliefs about the criminal justice system may yield predicted heterogeneous response. We measure pre-treatment beliefs about the criminal justice system using a five-item battery adapted from Tyler (1997) to measure the extent which people believe the police behave in a procedurally fair manner. This battery is then used to construct a summary measure of whether respondents believe the police are generally fair or unfair. We classify respondents with values below the median thinking the police are unfair and those with

²¹See Nellis (2016) or a detailed summary of the racial disparities in mass incarceration by state.

²²Respondents were paid \$0.60 to complete a 12-15 minute survey administered through Qualtrics.

²³The Cronbach's α 's' for these measures ranged from 0.87 for evaluations of the legitimacy of the stop to 0.95 for the measures of the appropriateness of the officer's behavior and the likelihood that race played a factor in the stop.

values equal or above the mean as thinking the police are generally fair.²⁴ To assess the effect of race on our treatment conditions, we group respondents based on whether members of their racial group are relatively advantaged (Whites and Asians) or disadvantaged (Blacks, Latinos and members of racial groups other than Whites and Asians) with respect to the criminal justice system.²⁵ We also include a two batteries designed to capture the emotional response of respondents from watching a particular video. Specifically, respondents are were asked to imagine they were in the position of driver and officer²⁶ and for each, to rate the extent which they would have felt six dimensions of negative affect²⁷. The six dimensions are scaled together to provide a single measure of negative affect. Finally, although we do not expect viewing a single video about a traffic stop in which racial profiling may or may not occur to dramatically alter individual’s beliefs about the criminal justice system in the U.S., we include a set of items designed to capture some aspects of these beliefs. The full question wordings and analysis are provided in the appendix.

RESULTS

We begin our analysis by examining the effects of manipulating the format and justification for the release of the body camera footage. Next we explore how these effects differ conditional on respondents’ prior beliefs about the general fairness of the police and the relative position of their racial group within the current criminal justice system. We conclude with a brief discussion of the effects of treatment on some of our secondary outcomes: respondents’ emotional responses to treatment and the potential effects of treatment on their more general beliefs about the criminal justice system. A more complete discussion of these analyses are provided in the appendix.

²⁴Dividing respondents into thirds (low, medium, high) yielded similar results. Given differences across racial groups in CJS beliefs, when we conduct subgroup analyses across race we use classifications schemes using racial-group specific means and contrast these to results obtained using the overall means for the sample.

²⁵While the experiences and attitudes of of these groups with the criminal justice system are unique (Weitzer, 2014), past research suggests a degree of intergroup empathy between Blacks and Latinos with regard to the criminal justice system (Hurwitz, Peffley and Mondak, 2015) as well as a degree of similarity between the attitudes and experiences of Whites and Asians. In the appendix we repeat our main analyses separately by racial group. The the general pattern of results are unchanged, although the statistical power of these tests is somewhat weaker given the smaller size of the subgroups being compared.

²⁶The order of these questions were randomized so that half of the respondents were asked to imagine they were in the position of the driver first and then the officer, while the other half imagined they were in the position of the officer first and the driver second.

²⁷Specifically, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they would have felt afraid, angry, unsafe, frustrated, panicked, and anxious, using an 11 point bipolar scale (e.g. 0=very afraid, 10=very unafraid)

THE EFFECTS OF FRAMING AND FORMAT ON BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE

Figure 1 shows the average response to the framing of the justification for the release of the body camera footage by the format in which that footage was presented (unedited body camera footage or edited body camera footage as part of a news segment). Overall, across all conditions and formats respondents tended to view the stop as legitimate, the behavior of the officer as appropriate, and were relatively unlikely to say race played a major role in the outcome of stop. Yet, the general pattern of response for both formats provides initial support for H1. Respondents' interpretations of the legitimacy of the stop (top panels), the appropriateness of the officer's behavior (middle panels) and the likelihood that racial bias influenced the interaction (bottom panels) conform to the framing of the justification for the release of the footage. Respondents who were told the footage confirmed a charge of police misconduct, tended to see the stop as less the legitimate, view the officer's behavior more negatively and were more likely to think race played a role in shaping this interaction. Further, the effects of the justification framing appear to be larger when the footage was presented as part of a news segment that provided further context and information about the interaction (such as the driver's statement or the police chief's account).

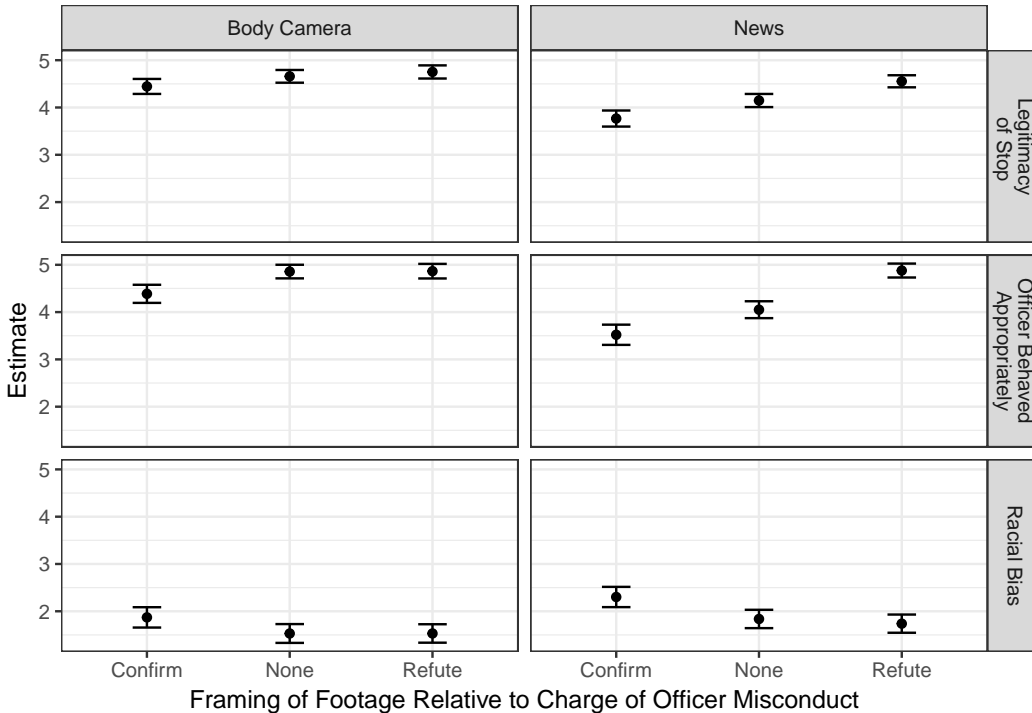


Figure 1: Respondents interpret the footage consistent with the justification for its release. The framing effects are larger when the footage is part of a news broadcast then when it is viewed directly.

Figure 2 provides a more formal test of the differences between framing and format. The black dots correspond to the estimated differences between frames for a given condition, while the horizontal lines provide 95 percent confidence intervals adjusted for the multiple comparisons. Table 3 provides the corresponding values of the estimates and intervals, as well as the standard errors, test statistics and p-values adjusted for multiple comparisons using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).

Looking first at the effects among respondents who saw the footage as part of a news segment, we see that across all but one comparison the effects of framing are larger and consistent with the context provided by the frame. This is particularly true for evaluations of the officer's behavior. Relative to those told the footage refuted a charge of misconduct, those told it confirmed a charge of misconduct evaluated the officer's behavior a full 1.36 points lower on a seven point scale ($p < 0.05$). On the question of racial bias, the framing had mixed effects. Relative to those who viewed the neutral broadcast with no justification for the release of the footage, people told the footage was evidence of officer misconduct were more likely to agree race played a role in the interaction ($\Delta = 0.46$, $p < 0.05$), while those told the footage refuted a charge of misconduct showed no difference in their beliefs relative to the neutral framing condition.

The differences are smaller and less significant among respondents who viewed the unedited body camera footage. Those told the footage confirmed misconduct, tended to view the interaction as less legitimate ($\Delta = -0.21$, $p < 0.10$), and were more likely to believe the officer behaved inappropriately ($\Delta = -0.47$, $p < 0.05$) and agree that interaction reflected a degree of racial bias ($\Delta = 0.34$, $p < 0.05$) compared to those who viewed the footage with no justification for its release. The interpretations of those told the footage refuted misconducted were indistinguishable from those given no information.

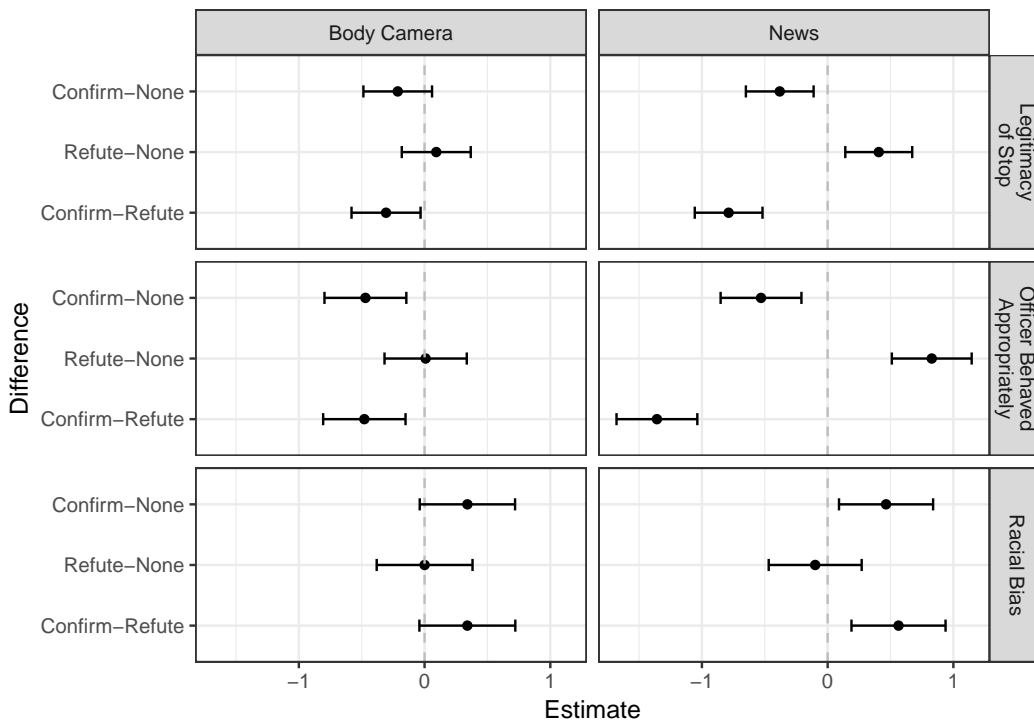


Figure 2: The framing effects are large and significant across all but one comparison in the news format condition. In the body camera condition, only the differences between the opposing Confirm-Refute framings reach statistical significance when adjusting for multiple comparisons.

Table 3: Differences by Justification and Format

	Body Camera				News				
	Difference (95% CI)	SE	tstat	pval	Difference (95% CI)	SE	tstat	pval	
Legitimacy									
Confirm-None	-0.21 (-0.49;0.06)	0.10	-2.04	0.05	-0.38 (-0.65;-0.11)	0.10	-3.68	0.00	
Refute-None	0.09 (-0.18;0.37)	0.11	0.88	0.38	0.41 (0.14;0.67)	0.10	3.98	0.00	
Confirm-Refute	-0.31 (-0.58;-0.03)	0.11	-2.90	0.01	-0.79 (-1.06;-0.52)	0.10	-7.61	0.00	
Appropriate Behavior									
Confirm-None	-0.47 (-0.80;-0.15)	0.13	-3.76	0.00	-0.53 (-0.85;-0.21)	0.12	-4.29	0.00	
Refute-None	0.01 (-0.32;0.34)	0.13	0.07	0.95	0.83 (0.51;1.15)	0.12	6.79	0.00	
Confirm-Refute	-0.48 (-0.81;-0.15)	0.13	-3.81	0.00	-1.36 (-1.68;-1.04)	0.12	-11.00	0.00	
Racial Bias									
Confirm-None	0.34 (-0.04;0.72)	0.15	2.34	0.03	0.46 (0.09;0.84)	0.14	3.23	0.00	
Refute-None	0.00 (-0.38;0.38)	0.15	0.00	1.00	-0.10 (-0.47;0.27)	0.14	-0.70	0.58	
Confirm-Refute	0.34 (-0.04;0.72)	0.15	2.32	0.03	0.56 (0.19;0.94)	0.14	3.92	0.00	

* P-values adjusted using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to account for multiple comparisons and control family-wise error rate.

THE EFFECTS OF JUSTIFICATION AND FORMAT CONDITIONAL ON PRIOR BELIEFS ABOUT THE POLICE

The results of the previous section suggest context and framing matter for the interpretation of footage from citizen-police encounters. Respondents appear to adjust their interpretations in a way that is consistent with the justification provided. When told the footage confirms a charge of police misconduct, they evaluate the stop more negatively. When told it refutes misconduct, they evaluate the stop more positively. This was particularly true when the footage was filtered through the lens of the nightly news.

Next, we examine whether these dynamics hold when conditioning on respondent's prior beliefs about the general fairness of police. We expected two patterns of possible response. H2 suggested the framing effects should be concentrated among individuals for whom the footage provided new information. Thus people who tend to think the police are general fair, should be most influenced by seeing footage confirming a charge of misconduct. Likewise, those think the police are generally unfair would be most responsive to footage that purports to refute misconduct. Alternatively H3, suggested people's prior beliefs may lead them to counter argue conflicting information. Rather than adjust their interpretations to be consistent with the framing, H3, suggests their interpretations would move closer to their prior beliefs.

The subgroup means presented in Figure 3 depict a pattern of interpretations consistent with the framing of the footage. Those who think the police are generally unfair (blue triangles) view the stop as consistently less legitimate, see the officer behavior as less appropriate, and are more likely to think race was factor in stop than those who tend to think the police are generally fair (red dots). However, both groups respond consistently to how the footage was framed and again these effects appear larger when footage is encountered as part of a news segment.

As for the conditional effects of framing, again the results depend on the presentation of the footage. Figure 4 and Table 4 again provide the relevant comparisons conditional on respondents' prior beliefs about the fairness of the police. When told the unedited body-camera footage confirmed misconduct, respondents who felt the police were generally fair (red dots) viewed the officer's behavior as less appropriate ($\Delta = -0.42, p < 0.05$), but were relatively unmoved on whether the stop was legitimate and whether race played a role. Respondents who believed the police were generally unfair (blue triangles) adjusted their interpretations accordingly, but these differences were only consistently significant when contrasted to to the views of those told the footage refuted misconduct.

Respondents who saw this footage in the context of the news cast again responded with interpreta-



Figure 3: Prior beliefs about the fairness of the police predict differences in respondents interpretations, but both groups respond to the framing of the footage. Difference tend to be smaller in the body camera conditions.

tions consistent with the footage, across all but two outcomes and conditions. Further, the relative size of these differences conditional on prior beliefs about the police provides some support for H2's claim that the framing effects will be concentrated among the those for whom the frame provides novel information. For example, among those who's prior belief was that the police were generally unfair, being told the footage refuted a charge of misconduct increased their evaluation of the legitimacy of the stop by 0.60 points ($p < 0.05$)—an effect more than double the size seen among those who felt the police were generally fair ($\Delta = 0.30, p < 0.05$). Similarly, the decrease in respondents evaluations of how appropriately the officer behaved were nearly 40 percent greater among those who felt the police were generally fair ($\Delta = -0.61, p < 0.05$) compared to those who felt the police were generally unfair ($\Delta = -0.44, p < 0.05$).

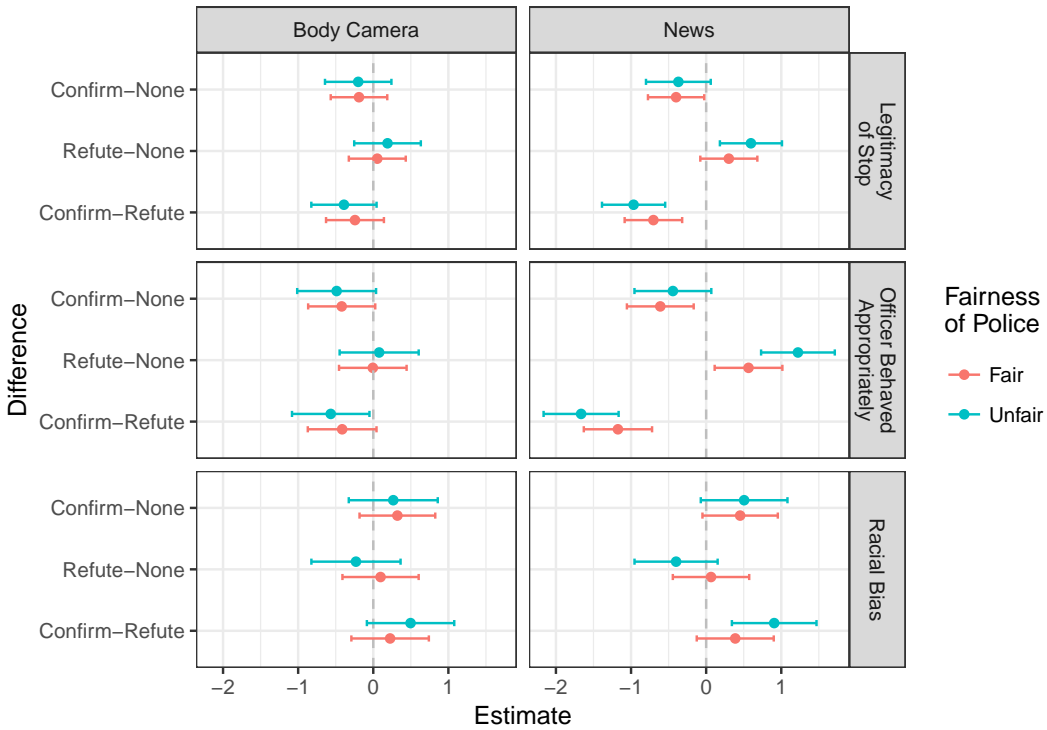


Figure 4: The framing effects tend to be larger in the news format condition, while the size of this effect is similar across respondents with differing prior beliefs about the general fairness of the police.

Table 4: Differences by Justification, Format, and Prior Beliefs about Police Fairness

	Body Camera				News			
	Difference (95% CI)	SE	tstat	pval	Difference (95% CI)	SE	tstat	pval
Legitimacy Police: Fair								
Confirm-None	-0.19 (-0.57;0.19)	0.13	-1.43	0.20	-0.40 (-0.77;-0.03)	0.13	-3.03	0.01
Refute-None	0.05 (-0.33;0.43)	0.13	0.40	0.69	0.30 (-0.08;0.68)	0.13	2.26	0.04
Confirm-Refute	-0.24 (-0.63;0.14)	0.14	-1.79	0.11	-0.70 (-1.09;-0.32)	0.13	-5.21	0.00
Legitimacy Police: Unfair								
Confirm-None	-0.20 (-0.64;0.24)	0.16	-1.29	0.24	-0.37 (-0.80;0.06)	0.15	-2.44	0.03
Refute-None	0.19 (-0.25;0.63)	0.16	1.21	0.25	0.60 (0.18;1.01)	0.15	4.10	0.00
Confirm-Refute	-0.39 (-0.82;0.04)	0.15	-2.55	0.03	-0.97 (-1.39;-0.55)	0.15	-6.52	0.00
Appropriate Behavior Police: Fair								
Confirm-None	-0.42 (-0.87;0.03)	0.16	-2.67	0.01	-0.61 (-1.06;-0.17)	0.16	-3.90	0.00
Refute-None	-0.01 (-0.46;0.44)	0.16	-0.04	0.97	0.56 (0.11;1.01)	0.16	3.55	0.00
Confirm-Refute	-0.41 (-0.87;0.04)	0.16	-2.57	0.01	-1.17 (-1.63;-0.72)	0.16	-7.34	0.00
Appropriate Behavior Police: Unfair								
Confirm-None	-0.49 (-1.01;0.04)	0.18	-2.64	0.01	-0.44 (-0.95;0.07)	0.18	-2.46	0.02
Refute-None	0.08 (-0.45;0.60)	0.19	0.42	0.73	1.22 (0.73;1.71)	0.17	7.07	0.00
Confirm-Refute	-0.57 (-1.08;-0.05)	0.18	-3.12	0.00	-1.66 (-2.16;-1.17)	0.18	-9.47	0.00
Racial Bias Police: Fair								
Confirm-None	0.32 (-0.18;0.83)	0.18	1.81	0.12	0.45 (-0.05;0.95)	0.18	2.56	0.05
Refute-None	0.10 (-0.41;0.60)	0.18	0.54	0.64	0.06 (-0.44;0.57)	0.18	0.36	0.72
Confirm-Refute	0.22 (-0.29;0.74)	0.18	1.23	0.29	0.39 (-0.13;0.90)	0.18	2.15	0.08
Racial Bias Police: Unfair								
Confirm-None	0.27 (-0.33;0.86)	0.21	1.28	0.29	0.51 (-0.07;1.08)	0.20	2.49	0.05
Refute-None	-0.23 (-0.82;0.36)	0.21	-1.10	0.33	-0.40 (-0.95;0.15)	0.19	-2.05	0.08
Confirm-Refute	0.50 (-0.09;1.08)	0.20	2.42	0.05	0.91 (0.34;1.47)	0.20	4.57	0.00

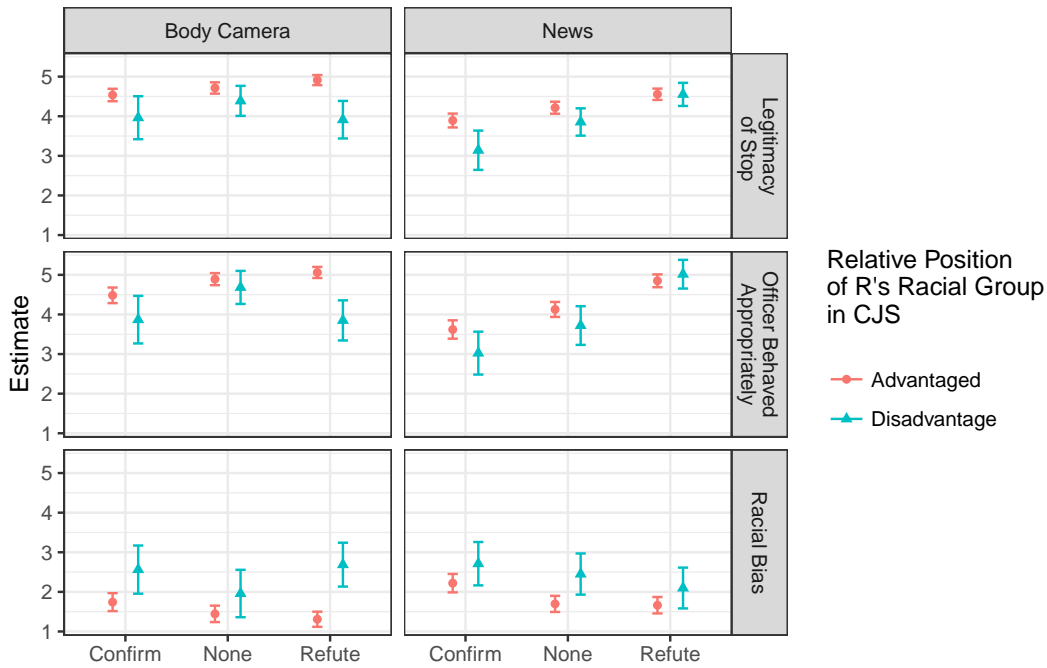
* P-values adjusted using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to account for multiple comparisons and control family-wise error rate.

THE EFFECTS OF JUSTIFICATION AND FORMAT CONDITIONAL ON THE RELATIVE POSITION OF RESPONDENTS' RACIAL GROUP IN THE CJS

In the previous section, we considered how interpretations of the footage varied conditional on prior beliefs about the police. While we found some variation in the size of the effect relative to the novelty of the information provided by the frame, the general pattern of interpretation was consistent with the frame for both those who felt the police were generally fair and those who felt the police were generally unfair. In this section, we explore the race respondents conditions their interpretation of the footage. We group respondents based on the relative position of their racial group within the current criminal justice system in the U.S. Whites and Asians are coded as relatively advantaged, while Blacks, Latinos, and respondents of other races (American Indian, Pacific Islander and those who identified as some other racial category) are coded as belonging to groups that are relatively disadvantaged.²⁸

Figure 5 shows the group means by relative position of a respondents racial group (red dots=advantaged, blue triangles=disadvantaged). For respondents in the news format condition, both members of relatively advantaged and disadvantaged groups display interpretations consistent with the framing of the footage. For respondents who viewed the unedited body camera footage, a different pattern of response emerges. Among members of advantaged racial groups, we see relatively small differences consistent with the framing of the footage. Among the disadvantaged however, we see interpretations that provide some suggestive evidence of the kind of counter arguing predicted by H3.

²⁸As shown in the appendix, the same pattern of results reported below holds when comparisons are made between Whites and each racial minority (Blacks, Latinos, and Asians) separately, although the statistical power of these comparisons is somewhat diminished



Framing of Footage Relative to Charge of Officer Misconduct

Figure 5: The pattern of interpretations in the news format condition is consistent with the framing of the footage. In the body camera condition, however, respondents from racial groups relatively disadvantaged in the current criminal justice system (Blacks, Latinos, and those who didn't identify as either White or Asian) appear to counter argue framings that suggest the footage refutes a charge of officer misconduct.

Figure 6 and Table 5 again offer a formal tests of these comparisons. We see that, relative to the neutral framing condition, the evidence of counter-arguing among disadvantaged racial groups to a frames purporting to refute a charge of officer misconduct is strongest for the evaluations of the officer behavior ($\Delta = -0.83, p < 0.05$) and weaker with regard to evaluations of the legitimacy of the stop ($\Delta = -0.48, p < 0.10$) and the likelihood of racial bias ($\Delta = -0.83, p = 0.12$). Our statistical power for these comparisons is limited by the relatively small number of minority respondents (N's between 32 and 40) and our adjustments for multiple comparisons.²⁹ Still, it is interesting that respondents from racially disadvantaged groups who viewed the unedited footage of the encounter showed some evidence of counter arguing while those saw the footage as part of newscast interpreted the event in manner consistent with its framing. Perhaps, when provided more limited background and context, individuals from these groups are more likely to draw on their own prior experiences and beliefs, leading them to challenge the interpretation suggested by the title of the video.

²⁹The unadjusted p-values are 0.06 for differences perceptions of legitimacy and 0.04 for differences in perceptions of racial bias in the refute condition relative to the neutral framing condition among members of disadvantaged racial groups.

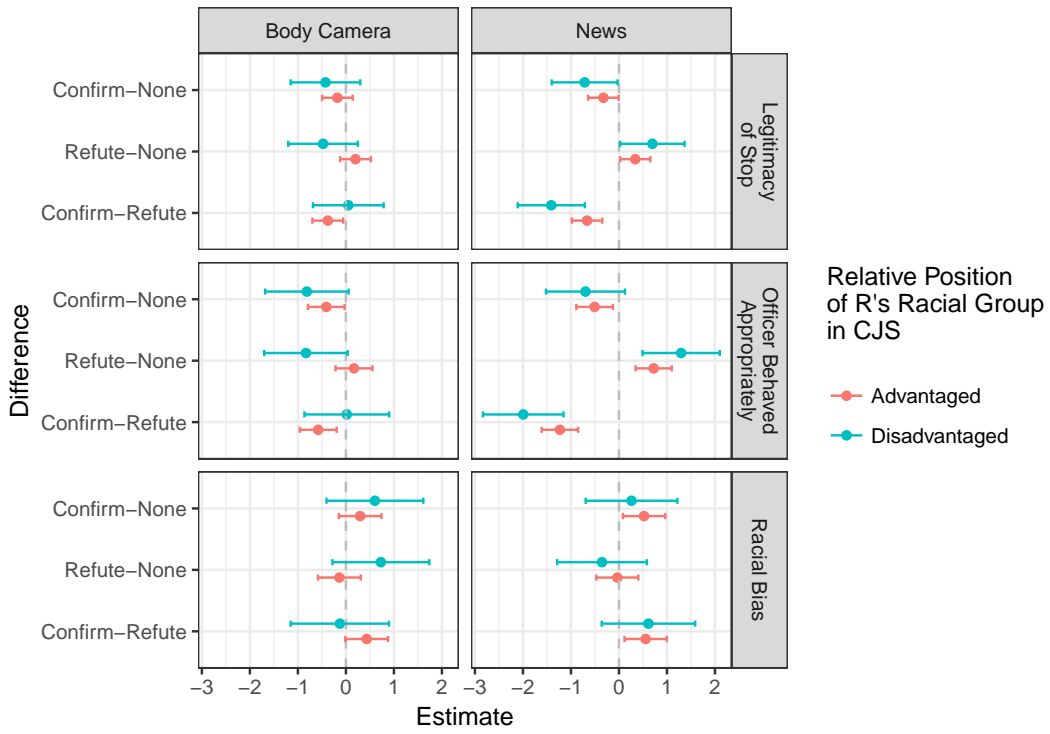


Figure 6: The evidence of counter-arguing among relatively disadvantaged racial groups is strongest for evaluations of the appropriateness of the officer's behavior and only suggestive for in the other outcomes of legitimacy and racial bias.

Table 5: Differences by Justification, Format, and Relative Position of Racial Group in CJS

	Body Camera				News			
	Difference (95% CI)	SE	tstat	pval	Difference (95% CI)	SE	tstat	pval
Legitimacy CJS: Advantaged								
Confirm-None	-0.18 (-0.50;0.14)	0.11	-1.58	0.13	-0.32 (-0.64;-0.01)	0.11	-2.89	0.01
Refute-None	0.20 (-0.12;0.52)	0.11	1.77	0.10	0.34 (0.03;0.65)	0.11	3.07	0.01
Confirm-Refute	-0.38 (-0.70;-0.06)	0.11	-3.34	0.00	-0.66 (-0.98;-0.35)	0.11	-5.95	0.00
Legitimacy CJS: Disadvantaged								
Confirm-None	-0.43 (-1.15;0.30)	0.26	-1.67	0.12	-0.71 (-1.40;-0.03)	0.24	-2.95	0.01
Refute-None	-0.48 (-1.20;0.25)	0.26	-1.86	0.09	0.70 (0.02;1.37)	0.24	2.94	0.01
Confirm-Refute	0.05 (-0.69;0.79)	0.26	0.19	0.85	-1.41 (-2.11;-0.71)	0.25	-5.72	0.00
Appropriate Behavior CJS: Advantaged								
Confirm-None	-0.41 (-0.79;-0.03)	0.13	-3.04	0.00	-0.51 (-0.89;-0.13)	0.13	-3.78	0.00
Refute-None	0.17 (-0.22;0.55)	0.14	1.24	0.23	0.72 (0.35;1.10)	0.13	5.45	0.00
Confirm-Refute	-0.58 (-0.96;-0.19)	0.14	-4.27	0.00	-1.23 (-1.61;-0.85)	0.13	-9.21	0.00
Appropriate Behavior CJS: Disadvantaged								
Confirm-None	-0.81 (-1.68;0.06)	0.31	-2.66	0.01	-0.70 (-1.52;0.13)	0.29	-2.40	0.02
Refute-None	-0.83 (-1.70;0.04)	0.31	-2.72	0.01	1.30 (0.49;2.10)	0.28	4.57	0.00
Confirm-Refute	0.02 (-0.86;0.90)	0.31	0.06	0.95	-1.99 (-2.83;-1.15)	0.30	-6.75	0.00
Racial Bias CJS: Advantaged								
Confirm-None	0.30 (-0.15;0.74)	0.16	1.90	0.14	0.52 (0.08;0.97)	0.16	3.36	0.00
Refute-None	-0.14 (-0.58;0.31)	0.16	-0.86	0.52	-0.03 (-0.47;0.40)	0.15	-0.22	0.83
Confirm-Refute	0.43 (-0.01;0.88)	0.16	2.76	0.02	0.56 (0.12;1.00)	0.15	3.59	0.00
Racial Bias CJS: Disadvantaged								
Confirm-None	0.60 (-0.41;1.61)	0.36	1.70	0.15	0.26 (-0.69;1.22)	0.34	0.78	0.52
Refute-None	0.73 (-0.28;1.74)	0.36	2.05	0.12	-0.35 (-1.29;0.58)	0.33	-1.07	0.43
Confirm-Refute	-0.12 (-1.15;0.90)	0.36	-0.35	0.80	0.61 (-0.36;1.59)	0.34	1.79	0.15

* P-values adjusted using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to account for multiple comparisons and control family-wise error rate.

DISCUSSION

Together these results suggest both the framing and format of footage of citizen-police encounters matters. In general, respondents tended to interpret the encounter consistent with how the interaction was framed, and these effects tended to be larger when that footage was presented as part of a news segment. It seems likely that the supplemental information provided by the news coverage, as well as the pre-existing narratives or scripts associated with this format serve to amplify this effect. The smaller framing effects for the unedited body camera conditions may reflect the relative weakness of the frame (Chong and Druckman, 2007*a*). Alternatively, these more modest framing effects may speak to the more “objective” nature of the footage—suggesting at least in this particular interaction that individuals reach a common interpretation of the event.

In the appendix, we provide some discussion of the possible mechanisms behind this result as well as the effects of treatment on more general beliefs. First, as to the mechanisms behind our pattern of observed responses, we find that the degree to which respondents said they would have had a negative emotional response had they been in either the driver or officer’s position tended to be higher when the footage was framed as confirming the charge of misconduct and in general was greater across all justifications when the footage was viewed as part of news segment. This is consistent with the generally larger main effects of the news format conditions reported above. It may also be a function of the particular interaction which unlike past studies involved only the driver’s perceived threat of violence. As to the larger potential consequences of viewing such footage, we find few differences across post-treatment beliefs about general and relative racial fairness of the police and the relative likelihood of respondents attributing crime to systemic versus individualistic causes. This makes sense within the context of more general models of how opinions are formed and updated overtime (Zaller, 1992; Redlawsk, 2002). To understand the full impact of the growing availability of direct footage of citizen-police encounters likely requires a consideration of repeated exposure to and the relative prevalence of such information—a topic we return to in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The murder trial of the officer who shot who shot Walter Scott ended in a hung jury. Simply because video exists of citizen-police encounters does not guarantee a common understanding of events. Instead, as our work shows interpretations of these events can be influenced by the framing and format of the information, as well as the prior beliefs and experiences of the audience.

The fact that the same footage can be framed news account to produce opposite patterns of interpretation speaks to continued importance of traditional media for how we think about issue of race and justice. The fact that these dynamics are muted, and some cases reversed, when this footage is presented more directly illustrates the need to consider the new and varied ways citizens seek out and encounter information about criminal justice in the U.S.

In conclusion we offer three directions for future research we feel are particularly important given our present findings. First, further work can be done to explore how the dynamics of race and class interact across more complete set of citizen-police encounters. Does it matter if the instance of alleged misconduct occurred to someone who looks like you or shares your social and economic background? Our present findings suggest the relative frequency of such events (and thus the novelty of the information conveyed by these interactions) relative to persons social position and racial identity will play important role in how they respond to and interpret such footage. Second, while we have attempted to accurately capture the way people encounter information about citizen-police interactions through the use of actual footage, future research can go further to examine the tendency of individuals to select into (or out of) exposure to different kinds of information in different formats (Gaines et al., 2007; Knox et al., N.d.). We suspect that effects of inadvertent exposure to a news segment on police brutality or racial profiling differ from seeing that same segment shared through social media. Finally, the full impact of these changes requires us to move beyond examining the effects of single event and consider how the growing availability of this such footage may change both the way the media covers issues of crime and justice and how the public thinks about these pressing questions.

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APPENDIX