BRIDGING THE INFORMATION DISCONNECT IN NATIONAL BIAS CRIME REPORTING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Background

Understanding the level of bias motivated crime is critical for both national and local law enforcement to effectively respond to and prevent bias motivated incidents. With the passage of the Hate Crime Statistics Act in 1990, the Attorney General charged the FBI to establish a national bias crime data collection program to improve our understanding of the scope and character of bias crime. Under this program, local, county and state law enforcement agencies participate by submitting incident level bias crime data to the FBI either through quarterly summary reports or through National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Although many local law enforcement agencies have participated in the data collection program for over a decade, variation in the accuracy with which these agencies classify and report bias crime incidents limits our understanding of bias crime nationally.

Spurred by the concern of advocacy groups and a common understanding that national bias crime statistics underreported the actual level of bias crimes reported to police, in 1999 the Bureau of Justice Statistics commissioned a study to evaluate the national data collection program. The study, conducted by researchers from both the Center for Criminal Justice Policy Research (CCJPR) at Northeastern University and the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA), identified a significant gap in bias crime reporting. Responding to a national survey, local law enforcement agencies indicated a greater number of bias crime incidents were reported to police than was captured in the annual Uniform Crime Report for the same year. The authors of this study concluded that, "between 5,000 and 6,000 additional agencies may have encountered bias crime that were not reported to the national program."[1]

Based on the realization that national bias crime data may be inaccurate for many local jurisdictions, the Bureau of Justice Statistics sponsored the present study to describe existing local bias crime reporting practices and identify common challenges to accurate reporting. Using a case study methodology, this report intensively examines the reporting practices of eight local law enforcement agencies throughout the country. Researchers examined both structural and contextual forces that may affect the completeness and accuracy of bias crime reporting. The conclusions drawn in this report can aid local law enforcement in developing successful bias crime reporting strategies and ultimately increase the accuracy and uniformity in national bias crime statistics.

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[1] Jack McDevtt, Jennifer Balboni, Susan Bennett, Joan Weiss, Stan Orchowsky and Lisa Walbolt (2000). *Improving the Quality and Accuracy of Bias Crime Statistics Nationally: An Assessment of the First Ten Years of Bias Crime Data Collection.* Final Report Submitted to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Washington, DC.

Methodology

Local police departments were solicited to participate in the present study based on a set of criteria including, regional balance, department size, crime reporting method (NIBRS versus Summary Reporting System) and bias crime reporting history. Eight local police departments agreed to participate in the study. These departments included two from each region of the country (North, South, Midwest, West); three agencies who reported using NIBRS and five agencies who used the Summary Reporting System; and most were large departments (serving populations greater than 100,000) and two were smaller departments (serving populations between 50,000 and 100,000).

The research team conducted site visits at each of the participating departments with two research objectives: review of police incident report records and conduct a qualitative investigation of the department's reporting process. First, researchers reviewed the participating agencies incident reports to estimate the extent of classification errors that might occur in these several departments. In one part of the records review, a random sample of simple and aggravated assault incident reports was drawn from each department's internal records. Using a systematic coding scheme developed by the authors, these incident reports were then reviewed to establish whether or not the officer's classification of the offender's motivation fit the narrative description of the incident. When the officer labeled an incident as non-bias motivated, but the narrative described an apparent bias motivation, the researchers determined the incident to be misclassified. In another part of the records review researchers sought to identify false-positives by reviewing the population (a sample in one department) of crimes that departments identified as bias motivated.

Qualitative focus groups and interviews of personnel directly or indirectly involved in the reporting process comprised the second part of the methodology employed at each site visit. These interviews and focus groups sought to gather information from personnel throughout the crime reporting process. At each site staff conducted interviews and/or focus groups with patrol officers, front line supervisors, detectives, records unit personnel and managers, information technology specialists and the chief of police (or another member of the command) staff. The interview or focus group protocol sought to identify the roles and responsibilities of different personnel in the reporting process, their opinions about the concept of bias crime in general and bias crime reporting, and to illuminate some of the challenges they face in identifying and reporting bias crimes accurately.

The findings based on both the records review and qualitative investigation are discussed below. After presenting the results of the records review analysis, we separately address both

infrastructure issues (reporting process design and characteristics) and contextual issues (organizational culture) that emerged during the qualitative investigation.

Records Review Analysis

This study is one of the first to measure the quality of national bias crime figures by assessing the potential level of misclassification of bias motivation in each of the host departments. To accomplish this, the research team attempted to review a sample of 'assault' incident reports to determine who often departments undercounted bias crimes.[2] Local departments had classified these incidents as assaults without bias motivation. As outlined in the methodology section of this paper in detail, a sample of assault incident reports from the year 2000 was provided to the research team by each department. Members of the research team then read each incident report and based on information from the pre-coded section of the report and the narrative description (when available) coded several characteristics of the incident, including: 1) the offenders' motivation, 2) the presence of racial/group differences between offender and victim, 3) whether the incident was a domestic violence incident, 4) assault type (aggravated or simple) and 5) whether the report was indicated as bias motivated.

The offender's motivation was coded according to a typology created by the research team. This typology consisted of the discrete categories of bias, ambiguous, non-bias, unknown, and victim initiated bias motivations. The research team was able to identify potential undercounting of bias crimes in most of the participating jurisdictions – jurisdictions had records of assaults with recognizable bias motivation characteristics that were not classified as bias motivated. In examining the sample of valid assault incident reports, we found that the observed percent undercount in each jurisdiction ranged from a low of zero to a high of 5.83 percent when using both 'bias' and 'ambiguous' motivated incident to determine undercounts. When using the more conservative measure of only 'bias' motivated incidents, the range varies from no observable undercount (in three jurisdictions) to 2.24 percent undercount error. While the observed percentage may seem low, estimating the undercount of the full population of assaults would substantively change the overall number of bias crime officially reported by some of these departments.

In addition, the research team reviewed reports of all incidents[3] that each department categorized as bias crime to determine the extent of potential over-counting of bias crimes. While

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[2] In some departments the 'sample' was close to the whole universe of assaults; our goal was to review between 250 and 500 cases in each department.

[3] In one department a sample of bias crimes was reviewed; in all other departments all bias crimes for one or more years was reviewed.

assault record review focused on one crime type, in this phase of the review we examined all known incidents of bias crime. First, we reviewed the records to determine whether the incident described an actual crime and whether the type of bias described in the report fit one of the FBI's bias crime type categories. Second, in an attempt to determine whether or not the incident was motivated by something other than bias, we reviewed the incident reports for the presence or absence of two pieces of information: 1) explicit evidence of bias (e.g.: documented racial symbols or language) and 2) prior provocation or other reasons that triggered the incident. In all departments, we found that over-counts of bias motivated incidents were rare. Most incidents of bias were indeed crimes and fit one of the FBI categories of bias. Additionally, all bias incidents reports contained either explicit bias evidence or had no other provoking event; and a vast majority both contained bias evidence and had no other provoking event.

Infrastructure Analysis

One of the primary goals of the present study was to understand the bias crime reporting infrastructures of local police departments in order to assess how certain reporting infrastructures present barriers to or promote the accuracy of bias crime statistics. To accomplish this, we outlined the bias crime reporting processes as a whole and then examined the characteristics of two key decision points within the reporting process.

Bias Crime Reporting Process Types

Through interviews and review of policy directives we outlined the steps in the reporting process for each department. This outline tracked the reporting of bias crime from the patrol officer response to submission of bias crime statistics to the FBI or state agency. In all of the participating departments, the responding patrol officer was responsible for making the initial classification of the incident's motivation (bias or non-bias motivated) and documenting this on the incident report in some way. After this common starting point, however, we found that subsequent steps in the reporting process differed across departments. Three types of bias crime reporting processes were identified in the participating departments:

*1. Integrated without Additional Review***:** Bias crime incident reports are processed along the same steps as all other crime incident reports. Records units handle the bias crime reporting as part of these units' overall crime reporting responsibilities. This unit is not explicitly instructed to check the accuracy of the bias crime classification in any way.

2. Integrated with Additional Review: Bias crime incident reports are still processed along the same steps as all other crime incident reports. Records unit personnel aggregate bias crime statistics as part of the

regular crime reporting duties. However, in contrast with the first type, the department designates some personnel the responsibility of conducting an additional review of those incidents initially classified as bias motivated to determine the accuracy of this classification.

3. Separate with Additional Review: Bias crime statistics outside the normal crime reporting process. Here, local departments establish or include units/personnel in the bias crime reporting process that are not typically included in the normal crime reporting process. These units or personnel are then responsible for aggregating and reporting bias crime statistics to the state agency or FBI. This unit or personnel is also responsible for conducting an additional review of those incidents initially classified as bias motivated to determine the accuracy of this classification.

We considered the relative value of each reporting process type based on the extent to which they maximize two important goals of crime reporting: efficient processing of incident reports and the validity of bias crime classifications. Efficient processing refers to the goal of insuring that all incident reports classified as bias motivated are included in the official statistics. Validity means that the classification of the offender's bias appropriately fits the official definition, meaning that the offender's motivation was, at least in part, bias against some group. The Integrated without Additional Review process maximizes *only* the efficiency of the process. In contrast, the Separate with Additional Review process maximizes *only* the validity of the bias classification by insuring that all bias reports included in the statistics get an additional level of review. Finally, the Integrated with Additional Review process incorporates both of these advantages, and thus, maximizes both process efficiency and classification validity.

Key Decision Making Points

The FBI previously recommended that local police agencies adopt a two-tier reporting model to best report bias crimes.[4] In this model, patrol officers – the first tier – are given the responsibility to initially classify suspected bias crime incidents and a designated specialist or unit – the second tier – is responsible for reviewing the bias classification before they are submitted to the official statistics. These steps in the bias crime reporting process comprise the two most important decision making points and their implementation is believed to be advantageous to accurately tracking bias crimes. While most departments in the present study had some form of a two-tier reporting model, we found a high degree of variation in the way the participating departments implemented this model.

First, we found that important differences exist in the responsibilities assigned to patrol officers for bias crime reporting. In one department, patrol officers were encouraged to apply a very broad, more inclusive definition of bias crime when making their initial motivation

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[4] Federal Bureau of Investigation (1996). *Training Guide for Hate Crime Data Collection*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

classification. This department expected patrol officers to send all incidents with any evidence suggesting bias motivation to a centralized unit for review. In all other departments, the patrol officer was instructed to make more specific judgments about the incident's motivation. While this judgment might be reviewed later in the reporting process, the officer had the responsibility of labeling an incident as bias motivated or non-bias motivated. The weakness of this situation is that once a patrol officer determines an incident to be non-bias motivated, the designated specialist can never review this incident. "Gray area" or ambiguous incidents, where officers express the most difficulty making a bias determination, may then be missed. This weakness is overcome somewhat when officers apply a broader definition, as in the first example, because a greater number of incident reports will be identified for review by the specialist and therefore minimizing the extent of classification errors.

The next important point in a bias crime process is the second level review. Although all but one of the participating departments had some designated to conduct an additional review, the characteristics of this second tier step differed dramatically across departments. First, departments assigned bias review duties to several different types of personnel including criminal detectives, intelligence unit detectives and records unit personnel. Second, in some departments the designated reviewer was responsible for conducting an investigation of all bias crimes, while in others the review was made solely on the information contained in the patrol officers incident report. Third, in only one department was the review step specialized – that the unit's only responsibility was handling bias crimes. The second level review added the most value to the reporting process when trained detectives – who could develop experience, expertise and routine – made final bias motivation classification decisions after conducting a complete investigation of the incident.

Contextual Analysis

Any comprehensive discussion about bias crime reporting must deal with the department culture around the issue of bias crime and how individual officers view their role in enforcing bias crime legislation. While choosing appropriate reporting infrastructures is an important starting point for accurate bias crime reporting, the effectiveness of such efforts may be undermined by a department culture that is resistant to the concept of bias crime.

In the present study, departments varied greatly in regards to the departmental culture around the topic of bias crime. We assessed department culture according to the organizational commitment to and the general sensitivity of its personnel towards bias crime. Organizational commitment consists of the department's leadership perspective towards bias crime, the amount of

resources allocated for bias crime and bias crime reporting, symbolic commitment and the degree to which the department reaches out to the community. Focus group and interview data were used to assess general sensitivity – the common perspective of personnel within the department around the issue of bias crime.

Several departments exhibited a relatively negative or resistant overall department culture towards bias crime. There was limited organizational commitment in these departments: leadership explicitly disagreed with policing bias crimes; few resources were allocated; no real system of accountability or rewards was evident; and community outreach was not integrated into the police strategy. In addition, common responses from personnel suggested a level of resistance to dealing with bias motivation. For example, in one department, which assigned the responsibility of tracking and reporting bias incident to an intelligence unit, barely any incidents had been reported to the national program over the past several years. Despite this lack of any measurable output, the department's leadership had not taken any steps to review or change this unit's practices; this omission of accountability sent a clear message to department personnel that reporting bias crimes was not a priority. Therefore, a negative or resistant overall culture towards bias crime does not support or encourage officers to formally identify the existence of bias crime, despite the presence of a formal policy or reporting mechanism.

Other departments in the present study displayed evidence of positive or acceptance departmental cultures towards dealing with bias crime. Here, the organization was committed to providing unique police services for bias crime: leadership expressed an opinion that bias crime was a priority; specific resources were set up for responding to bias crimes; there was evidence that officers were held accountable for their noncompliance or rewarded for their adherence to the department's policy; and community outreach was an explicit piece of the department's overall strategy. Similarly, patrol officers and other personnel communicated an orientation of acceptance towards bias crime policy. For example, in one department the bias crime responsibilities were centralized in a full detective unit, located physically and administratively in the chief's office, and a recent head of the unit was promoted to the command staff based in part on his record running the bias crime unit. In sum, departments with a positive or acceptant culture towards dealing with bias motivation implemented the department's bias crime policy in a way that would encourage officers to fully carry out their bias crime response and reporting duties.

Discussion: A Typology of Bias Crime Reporting Errors

Earlier studies found a disconnect in bias crime reporting – between the level of bias crime officially documented by police departments and the actual number of bias incidents in the community to which departments responded. Based on different reporting infrastructures and contextual forces, we identified three important types of reporting errors that can negatively impair the accuracy and validity of bias crime statistics. The first, Recognition Errors, occur when officers fail to collect information, using investigation techniques, about indicators of bias motivation. Second, by making an inaccurate judgment about the bias motivation, officers can make Classification Errors. Finally, despite appropriate recognition and classification, a department can be unsuccessful in transferring incident reports or crime data through the correct reporting channels by making Process Errors. Although identifying these error types is important to help reduce disconnect, a full examination of the challenges to successful tracking of bias crimes must also consider the inherent situational factors of bias crime incidents.

In the following discussion, we explain a typology of potential bias crime incidents that law enforcement encounter based on two situational factors: underlying crime severity and ambiguity of motivation. By developing this typology of potential bias crime incidents, we can better understand how certain reporting errors are associated with particular types of incidents. Moreover, any infrastructure or cultural changes adopted by departments attempting to improve their bias crime reporting would be more effective if developed with an understanding of the challenges presented by situational factors.

When examining potential bias crime incidents, we can conceptualize them according to two important concepts: (1) the relative severity of the underlying crime and (2) the relative extent of bias motivation found in the incident. Relative severity of the underlying (or 'parallel') crime refers to how severe one crime type is compared to another. While it is difficult to construct an absolute hierarchy of crime severity, there can be reasonable agreement that some crimes – holding all other factors equal – are more serious than others. The second concept, relative extent of bias motivation, describes the level of ambiguity an officer perceives to be involved in a potential bias crime. Some potential bias crimes are clear, subject to little interpretation. These crimes have a number of clear bias indicators, such as derogatory language or symbols of bias, and most importantly lack other explanations or motivations. Conversely, some bias crimes are more ambiguous. While crimes that are more ambiguous may have fewer bias indicators, the ambiguity presents itself mainly because there may be alternative motivations based on some prior provocation or dispute.

By combining the two concepts – relative seriousness of the underlying crime and the relative extent of bias motivation – four typologies of potential bias crimes emerge: (1) serious crimes with a clear bias motivation, (2) serious crimes with ambiguous motivations, (3) less serious crimes with a clear bias motivation and (4) less serious crimes with ambiguous bias motivations. Using the same factual situation, with minor modifications, we can establish examples that illustrate each of the four types of potential bias crimes:

- ❑ Serious and Clear Incident (Type I): A man assaults a black male with a deadly weapon, while yelling "Ni**er get out of our town" and other racially derogatory comments. No provocation for the incident existed.

- ❑ Serious and Ambiguous Incident (Type II): A man assaults a black man with a deadly weapon, while yelling, "Ni**er, get out of town" and other racially derogatory comments. Earlier that week the offender and victim were involved in a dispute over property lines.

- ❑ Less Serious and Clear Incident (Type III): A man graffiti's a black man's house, writing "Ni**er, get out of town" and other racially derogatory signs. No provocation for the incident existed.

- ❑ Less Serious and Ambiguous Incident (Type IV): A man graffiti's a black man's house, writing "Ni**er, get out of town" and other racially derogatory signs. Earlier that week the offender and victim were involved in a dispute over property lines.

Table 1 provides the matrix of potential types of bias crime incidents produced by the two concepts.

Each of these four types presents unique challenges for law enforcement officials. First, less severe crimes often pose problem in recognition. Officers typically pay less attention to less severe crimes, thereby conducting more cursory investigations into the causes or motives less thoroughly. This is problematic for bias crime reporting because accurate reporting necessitates a consideration of motive for all crimes and information is needed to make determinations. Second, crimes with ambiguous motivation pose problems primarily in the classification step. Many bias indicators may be recognized here, yet the police personnel making the classification decision may inappropriately think that the facts suggest the offender's motivation was not bias or not sufficiently applicable to the definition of bias crime. Finally, all types of crimes are susceptible to process errors in that they may not be appropriately passed from one point to the next in the bias crime reporting process. Even those incidents where information about bias indicators is collected (recognition) and classification decisions are made accurately may fall out of reporting systems for a variety of reasons. This problem extends beyond bias crime reporting and may be found in all types of crime reporting. Improving the accuracy and completeness of bias crime statistics can only be accomplished when departments fully understand the types of reporting errors that department personnel make and the situations in which such errors are most likely.

Conclusions

❑ This study is one of the first to address empirically the quality of national bias crime figures by assessing the potential level of misclassification of bias motivation in eight police departments. Through this process we identified potential undercounting of bias crimes in most of the participating departments. While the observed level misclassification was low in the sample assault reports drawn from each department, estimating the undercount of the full population of assaults would substantively change the picture of bias crime officially reported by some of these departments.

❑ Departments in the present study had different infrastructures for tracking and reporting bias crimes. Three types of bias crime reporting processes were identified in the participating departments: 1) integrated without additional review, 2) integrated with additional review and 3) separate without additional review. Integrating the bias crime reporting process and providing procedures for additional review emerged as a promising practice for reporting bias crimes.

❑ While most of the departments had some designated procedure for additional review similar to the FBI recommended two-tier reporting model, a closer examination revealed dramatic differences in the specific characteristics of each department's application of the two-tier model. We found the best practice for tracking bias crimes was when patrol officers (first tier) were instructed to identify all potential bias crimes using a broad definition of bias motivation and a trained specialist detective (second tier) made the final decision about the incident's bias motivation.

❑ Beyond establishing appropriate reporting infrastructures, department culture plays an important role in inhibiting or promoting accurate bias crime identification and reporting. In the present study, departments varied along a continuum from positive or acceptant cultures to negative or resistant cultures based on the organization's commitment to enforcing bias crime (e.g. leadership role, resource allocation, accountability systems, etc.) and the personnel level of general sensitivity towards the topic of bias crime.

❑ Leadership plays an important role in setting the priorities of the department. It is notable that the leadership of some departments we studied expressed explicit opinions resistant to identifying bias motivation, despite the fact that their departments are considered participants in the national data collection program.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from our research findings. The research revealed a variety of infrastructure and contextual issues that can lead to information disconnect in bias crime reporting. To improve the overall accuracy of bias crime reporting in local jurisdictions across the United States, we present several Infrastructure, Contextual, and Extra-departmental recommendations.

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Law enforcement agencies across the country should implement a two-tier model for bias crime reporting similar to the model originally suggested by the FBI. The overall goal of this model process is to shift the bulk of bias crime enforcement and reporting responsibilities from patrol

officer or general detective to a specialized, designated bias crime detective. For most law enforcement agencies the implementation of this model would involve two changes in responsibility and function for their personnel:

> First, each law enforcement agency should designate a detective (or detectives, depending on the size of the agency) as the bias crime investigator. This detective would be responsible for investigating and reviewing **_all_** potential bias crime incidents reported to the department and determining the existence of bias motivation. In most agencies this additional responsibility will be a small demand on a single officer's time and can be accomplished by officers with multiple other responsibilities. In all agencies this detective should receive special training on bias crime.

> Second, departments should change the role of first responding officers to identify all **_potential_** bias crimes and to alert the designated bias crime investigator of those incidents. Responding officers should be instructed to forward a broader, more inclusive set of incidents – those with any reasonable indication of bias motivation – to the department's designated bias crime detective for follow-up.

The FBI or other agencies such as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Council or the Regional Community Policing Institutes should develop and implement a training curriculum that offers guidance to law enforcement agencies across the country in the reasons for implementing this change in responsibility and function along with a model for implementing this change. In addition, the existing bias crime training programs of the FBI should be expanded slightly to accommodate the additional demand for bias crime training that will come as a result of the designation of bias crime investigators by local law enforcement agencies. In realization that there may be limited resources for this training, the Justice Department should also develop a training program that could be web based or provided in hard copy to each law enforcement agency across the United States.

The training should include a description of community outreach efforts that the bias crime investigator could initiate to increase the likelihood that bias crime victims will come forward and report incidents to the local law enforcement authorities. Our research revealed that most departments lacked any substantive outreach efforts to members of certain communities, specifically members of the Arab, Muslim and Middle-Eastern communities who may be targets of future bias crimes. In addition, law enforcement's traditionally weak ties with these communities may inhibit on-going terrorism intelligence investigations. Reaching out to these communities around the issue of bias crime is one way to build these ties and perhaps ultimately improve national intelligence efforts.

Law enforcement agencies should be encouraged to implement a unified crime reporting process that includes bias crime reporting. By including bias crime reporting as part of the normal reporting process there is less likelihood that bias motivated crimes will be overlooked or missed as cases are passed from one unit of the organization to another. Submitting bias crime statistics through the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS; or similar automated incident based reporting systems) is a positive example of how local agencies can unify bias crime reporting within the general crime reporting process.

Departments should be encouraged to conduct periodic audits of their incident files or incident database to determine if all cases where indicators of bias are present have been referred to the bias crime investigator. In addition once a year when the FBI releases the annual Hate Crime Statistics report, the locally designated bias crime investigator should reconcile the national statistics with

their own local bias crime statistics. A simple procedure for conducting this audit should be included in the training curriculum.

CONTEXTUAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Local law enforcement leaders should be encouraged to take a leadership role in establishing that the identification, investigation, and accurate reporting of all bias crimes is a priority for their agency. For bias crimes to be accurately identified and reported there must be a visible commitment from the leadership of the organization. The relative rarity and the political overtones of these crimes can make the some officers confused about how they should respond to potential bias crimes. An unambiguous message from the leadership of an organization that bias crimes are and should be handled in the same way as other serious crimes will go a long way to eliminating that confusion.

Law enforcement officials can demonstrate their commitment to the identification and accurate reporting of in a variety of ways. By assigning an officer to be the bias crime investigator, the leaders can take a major step in reinforcing their commitment. Second by arranging for training for officers as well as investigators, law enforcement leaders can signal that bias crimes are serious and should be handled as a priority crime. Finally by supporting and rewarding the actions of officers who identify bias crimes and officers who investigate and clear bias crimes, law enforcement managers can maintain an environment where bias crimes will continue to be seen as one of the priority areas of the Department.

EXTRA DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The FBI with the help of the Bureau of Justice Statistics should identify an annual Top Ten High Priority list of those Agencies where targeted efforts should be directed to improve their bias crime reporting. This research indicated that there is broad variation in the structure and context of bias crime reporting systems across law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. As an initial step in improving the national bias crime statistics we suggest that the FBI in conjunction with BJS develop a list of high priority agencies where efforts should be directed to improve their bias crime reporting. This list would not be punitive but would target a small number of agencies for additional training and support from the FBI, FLETC, or other similar agencies.

National policing groups and accreditation organizations, such as International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Black Law Enforcement Executives and The Police Executive Research Forum should consider adopting the recommendations presented here. National policing organizations are an invaluable resource for advancing the professional standards of policing. By adopting these recommendations they will help set a national standard for bias crime services and reporting. This uniformity in infrastructure and culture will drive more accurate bias crime statistics, making these statistics a better resource.

Table 1: Types of Potential Bias Motivated Incidents and Associated Errors

| | *EXTENT OF BIAS MOTIVATION* | |
	Clear	**Ambiguous/Multiple**
Serious	**Serious - Clear Bias Incident** Incident Example: A man assaults a black male with a deadly weapon, while yelling "Ni**er, get out of our town" and other racially derogatory comments. No provocation for the incident existed. **Process Errors** The primary source of error for serious incidents with clear bias motivation is Process Errors. Process errors are errors that occur in transferring bias crime information between actors. For example, an officer may fail to submit an incident report to the appropriate unit, technical problems may occur with crime data or a records personnel neglect to complete a state reporting form.	**Serious - Ambiguous Bias Incident** Incident Example: A man assaults a black man with a deadly weapon, while yelling, "Ni**er, get out of town" and other racially derogatory comments. Earlier that week the offender and victim were involved in a dispute over property lines. **Classification Errors** Classification Errors are mainly associated with incidents that are relatively serious crimes with ambiguous bias motivation. Classification Errors occur when officers erroneously make an official determination, once provided with a set of facts about the incident. For example, an officer may feel that the role of bias was too insignificant or that there was not sufficient evidence of bias to warrant a bias crime classification
Less Serious	**Less Serious – Clear Bias Incidents** Incident Example: A man graffiti's a black man's house, writing "Ni**er, get out of town" and other racially derogatory signs. No provocation for the incident existed. **Recognition Errors** Recognition Errors are primarily associated with incidents that involve relatively less serious parallel crimes with clear bias motivations. Recognition refers to the officer's ability to understand bias indicators, the decision to inquire about the role of bias motivation in an incident, for instance. Examples of this type of error include failing to ask the victim about bias, not believing the victim's claims of bias or not understanding the significance of bias indicators.	**Less Serious – Ambiguous Bias Incident** Incident Example: A man graffiti's a black man's house, writing "Ni**er, get out of town" and other racially derogatory signs. Earlier that week the offender and victim were involved in a dispute over property lines. **All Error Types** Incidents that are relatively less serious parallel crimes with ambiguous bias motivations are subject to all three types of errors. Officers may fail to recognize and identify them because they are less serious or not classify them appropriately because of the ambiguities present in the motivation. Process Errors may also prevent these types of incidents from being included in official bias crime statistics.
RELATIVE SEVERITY OF PARALLEL CRIME		