

Development and Distribution of a “Know Your Rights” Car Sticker

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INTRODUCTION

- Police use of force is not a new phenomenon, and in certain situations may be necessary to protect themselves or the public. However, recent events in the United States have prompted several groups to declare that law enforcement’s use of excessive force is a matter of public health (1,2).
- In the first 24 days of 2015, police in the US fatally shot 59 people, compared to the 55 people shot by police in England and Wales, combined, over the past 24 years (3).
- The most common reason for contact with the police is being a driver in a traffic stop (4). In 2012, an estimated 1 in 291 police stops or arrests resulted in hospital-treated injury or death of a suspect or bystander (5). People of color (POC) are particularly more likely to experience potential lethal force when police uncover criminal activity and this disparity is greatest for black youth compared to white youth (6-8).
- Recent reform efforts have substantially reduced the number of stops annually; however, it is important to also look at interventions that will reduce the likelihood of lethal force being used during the stop.
- This project describes the creation, testing, printing, and distribution of a Know Your Rights (KYR) car sticker.

METHODS

Study Population

The target population is individuals between the ages of 18 (inclusive) and 89 (exclusive) whose primary mode of transportation is driving a car. We aim to recruit individuals using University of Colorado email Listservs from a wide range of income and education levels, as well as accurately represent the racial/ethnic, gender, and age makeup of the community.

- Cases: individuals who identify as POC
- Controls: individuals who identify as non-POC or white
- Exclusion factors: individuals outside of our specified age range, and individuals who identify their primary mode of transportation as anything other than car, or as a passenger in a car

Data Collection and Measures

We will conduct one-hour, virtual interviews with participants using a structured interview questionnaire. We will collect both quantitative and qualitative data. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on four main topics of discussion:

- Driving history and habits
- Experiences with law enforcement in a traffic stop
- Knowledge of rights and responsibilities during a traffic stop
- Thoughts on the KYR car sticker

Data Coding and Analysis

Interviews will be transcribed and the team will use qualitative content analysis to analyze the transcripts. Using a deductive and inductive approach (emergent codes/topics), the team will develop a set of codes from multiple readings of and immersion in the transcripts. Coded transcripts will be entered in to Atlas.ti qualitative data management software to be clustered into categories and analyzed across participant type and setting.

Quantitative data obtained from the surveys will be analyzed statistically and graphed using GraphPad Prism version 9 (GraphPad Software Inc, La Jolla, CA, USA).

WORK TO DATE

All personnel participated in a “Know Your Rights” information session hosted by the ACLU of Colorado. The KYR sticker design is 2 inches x 4 inches in accordance with Colorado windshield law. We developed over 20 iterations of the KYR car sticker (Fig 2) that were guided by multiple meetings with the ACLU design and legal teams. The current sticker design that was ultimately sent for printing can be seen in Figure 1. Some design and communication aspects that were discussed:

- Use of line breaks and alternating background colors to differentiate individual points
- Use of icons to indicate the type of action highlighted in each point
- Minimize dead space by choosing landscape orientation
- Use of color versus grayscale
- Language is at an eighth grade reading level



Figure 2: Some examples of sticker prototypes

CONCLUSION

- This study addresses the pressing issue of police use of force, particularly in the context of traffic stops, as a significant public health concern. By developing and testing the KYR car sticker, we aimed to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate encounters with law enforcement safely and effectively. We hope to underscore the importance of proactive interventions in promoting awareness of legal rights and responsibilities, particularly among communities disproportionately affected by police violence.
- The development and implementation of the KYR car sticker represent a step towards fostering greater transparency, accountability, and trust in police-community interactions. While our study provides some insight into the potential benefits of this intervention, it also highlights the need for continued research and collaboration to address systemic issues within law enforcement and ensure equitable treatment for all individuals.
- Furthermore, our work underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing complex societal challenges. By engaging with community organizations, legal experts, and law enforcement agencies, we were able to develop a resource that reflects diverse perspectives and priorities.
- Looking ahead, future research should explore the long-term impact of the KYR car sticker intervention, as well as evaluate additional strategies for promoting positive police-community relations. Ultimately, our collective efforts must strive towards building safer, more just, and inclusive communities for all.

PULLED OVER? KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Stay calm. Keep hands on wheel. Turn car off.

You have the right to remain silent.
Say: “I’m going to remain silent”

You have the right to refuse searches
Say: “I don’t consent to searches”

Show officer license, registration, and insurance when asked

You can record. Do not hide that you are recording.
Avoid asking for a badge number. Note car number, name, and agency.



SCAN ME

Figure 1: Current sticker design

- We also launched a website, which can be accessed by scanning the QR code on the sticker. The website includes additional resources that may be helpful for individuals involved in a traffic stop, such as links to the ACLU website, which describes in more detail rights during a police stop, in both English and Spanish.
- See handout for the finalized interview guide. Interview questions were developed with feedback from experts in qualitative research methods at the University of Colorado.
- All study procedures were given exemption status by the University of Colorado Institutional Review Board.
- Our team also met with the Chief of the Aurora Police Department in order to solicit feedback and gain insights from law enforcement regarding the sticker. The response was highly favorable, and officers expressed enthusiasm for the initiative.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE STUDIES

- Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient time to host focus groups and gather feedback from the community. Future work will include hosting focus groups and obtaining qualitative data as described in the Methods section.
- We would also like to translate the sticker to other languages, prioritizing Spanish, in order to increase accessibility.
- Methods to prevent fatal police violence may require different approaches in different parts of the country. For example, Colorado is a single-party consent to record state; other states require both parties to consent to a recording.
- We also acknowledge that our study may have limited generalizability and sample bias due to using University of Colorado email Listservs for recruitment.
- We also realize that we may miss confounding factors by comparing white and POC. We will attempt to minimize this bias by matching for age and income, but there may be additional factors that we failed to identify.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported by a grant by the Injury and Violence Prevention Center, Department of Public Health at the University of Colorado. We would also like to thank the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Colorado for contributing their design and legal teams to the development of the sticker. We would also like to thank the Aurora Police Department for their time and input on the distribution of the sticker.