



CSLS SPEAKER SERIES
Monday, October 21, 2019

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**“Color-Blind Cops: How Racism Makes
Its Way into Everyday Policing”**

(co-authors Kenly Brown, Eduardo Bautista Duran, Kaily Heitz,
Jasmine Kelekay, Gil Rothschild Elyassi, Geoffrey Raymond)

This paper presents preliminary findings from an analysis of over 80 hours of ethnographic interviews conducted with police officers during ride-alongs in a major metropolitan area in the western U.S. Specifically, we use micro-interactional concepts (Schegloff 2005, Van Manaan 1978), along with literature on everyday racism and spatial racism (Anderson 2014, Bonilla-Silva 2016), to document and explain the ways that officers’ seemingly race-neutral categorization of people and places informs, by their own account, how they interact with members of the public generally and, more specifically, how and why they manage encounters differently with people in “certain” parts of the city. In contrast to discussions of implicit bias, which suggests that officers are not conscious of the biases they deploy during interactions with the public, we show how officers consciously construct “nice” people and “people in the projects” as fundamentally different and how understandings of Black Space remain central to officers’ encounter logics even in places outside of Black Space (Anderson 2014). Our analysis reveals how tacit racist biases documented in classic ethnographies on policing have evolved into a form of institutional expertise that affirms disparate patterns of treatment in everyday policing. This reliance on colorblind forms of expertise acts as a vehicle for the construction and maintenance of spatial and racial inequality in the city. These distinctions are especially consequential in high-surveillance Black and Latinx neighborhoods where colorblind framing of racial difference legitimizes routine expressions of dominance and aggression during the earliest stages of encounters.

PLACE Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue
TIME 12:45 – 2:00pm. Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.
INFO <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>
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