



What Works in Police Training?

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Today's Context

- George Floyd's murder sparks a new and stronger push for police reform
- Three areas of reform that are often targeted:
 - Police hiring/selection
 - Police policy/accountability
 - Police training
- “What works” in police training?





What Works in Police Training?



- Implicit Bias Training

- Mixed evidence regarding the extent to which police officers' implicit biases influence their behavior in laboratory settings.
- **ZERO** evidence that implicit bias training will change officers' attitudes or behavior.
- **ZERO** evidence that such training could work...
 - Implicit associations can sometimes be altered
 - BUT....such changes are small and **DO NOT** translate into changed behavior
 - Why?
 - Implicit associations are very difficult to change and impact behavioral change
 - Most trainings and interventions are too short to even hope they would matter
- Conclusion = ***Implicit bias training likely will not impact excessive force by the police***



What Works in Police Training? (continued)

- Crisis Intervention/Mental Health Training
 - Some evidence that such training is beneficial
 - But...
 - It must be longer than 1 or 2 days for repetition and skill acquisition to set in
 - It is too narrow
 - Conclusion = ***CIT training may help but will not be enough to impact excessive force by the police***



What Works in Police Training? (continued)



- Procedural Justice Training
 - Allow citizens a voice, be respectful, explain the reasons for decisions
 - **Some evidence** that this type of training leads to attitude and behavior change
 - But...
 - It must be longer than 1 or 2 days for repetition and skill acquisition to set in
 - It is too narrow
 - Conclusion = ***Procedural justice training may help but will not be enough to impact excessive force by the police***

What Works in Police Training? (continued)



- De-escalation Training

- No evidence that it works, but several studies in progress
- But, even if effective, it is narrowly focused
 - Doesn't focus on not getting to tense situation to begin with, or when escalation may be necessary
 - Doesn't take into consideration full dynamic nature and complexity of interactions with people
 - Also, the term tends to alienate officers which dooms the training from the start
 - And, 1 or 2 day trainings are ineffective
- Conclusion = ***De-escalation training may help but will not be enough to impact excessive force by the police***



Social Interaction Training for Police Officers

- **Project Framework:**
 - Framed in the social interaction research on police-citizen contacts and force.
 - Conceptualizes police-citizen encounters as a dynamic process – which unfold in an escalation to force or de-escalation of tense interaction away from force.
- **Underlying Assumption and Question**
 - Police-Citizen interactions involve some degree of agency in both parties, and shaping interactions to avoid incidents resulting in force require efforts from both parties.
 - Present student only focuses on the officer contribution
 - Can police officer be trained to better read and engage interactions with citizens in a way that reduces the likelihood of force while not increasing the vulnerability of officers to physical assault?
- **Program examined – Polis Solution’s T-3Program (Tact, Tactics, and Trust)**
 - Product of \$40 million DARPA funded “Good Stranger” program



Polis Solution's T-3 program (Policing Application)

Components

1. **Concepts of T-3** –*pattern detection, engagement, self-control, empathy, influence, error repair, de-escalation effects awareness, decision-making.* **2 hrs**
2. **Video based training exercises** to develop decision-making in line with T-3 Concepts.– Instructor facilitated video-based decision-making exercises. **1hr each**
3. **Interactive and scenario-based sessions** geared toward rapport building based on identifying cues to another person's Goal, Identity, and Relation (“GIR factors”) **4 to 8 hrs**



Key - training repetition

Deliberate Practice



Evaluation of T-3

Randomized Control Trial – Tucson (AZ) PD & Fayetteville (NC) PD

Officers Randomly Assigned to Three Groups:

1. ***High Dose of Training*** – (7 Months): T-3 Concepts session, 13 video Training sessions, 2 Scenario-Interactive sessions,
2. ***Low Dose of Training*** - – (3 Months): T-3 Concepts session, 6 video Training sessions, 1 Scenario-Interactive sessions,
3. **Control Group of Officers** – No Training



Evaluation Design

- ***Officer Receptivity to Training*** (Survey and Interview Officers)
- ***Change in officer attitudes and perspectives*** (Survey)
- ***Change in officer behavior*** (Use of force Reports)



What We Found

- Officers that completed the training...
 - ...more likely to prioritize procedural justice during citizen interactions
 - ...more likely to focus on staying self-controlled during citizen encounters (only in one agency)
- Dosage mattered
 - 3 months of training impacted procedural justice and self-control prioritization
 - 6 months of training reduced officers' willingness to rely on physical control during citizen encounters
- What about actual behavior?
 - Fayetteville use of force was rare and, thus, no change observed
 - Policy and reporting problem
 - Tucson – both experimental and control officers experienced declines in use of force
 - Statistical artifact or diffusion of benefits



What We Found (continued)

- Receptivity matters!
 - Officers that were motivated to train, were much more satisfied with the training and more likely to have attitudinal change
 - So, how do we motivate officers?
 - Police supervisors and command staff need to communicate the value of the training, seek officers' opinions about the training, and ensure the training is administered in a fair manner.
 - Officers that felt their agency didn't do this were less satisfied and did not have attitudinal change.
 - This suggests that agencies need to “own” the training and not have it forced on them.
- Flexibility of social interaction training of this type
 - Web-based video interactive training
 - Helps with the operational tempo, time, and money issues that have always been



Moving Forward

- **Critical considerations in training for police citizen interactions**
 - Be repetitious
 - Consider logistical challenges of training
 - Consider who provides the training - MUST consider the audience's perspective
 - Consider interactions as dynamic and all the skills officers need to handle various trajectories
- **Be evidence based**
- **If training is going to take place, especially if required by the state, it should be evaluated (independently).**