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.
  • **One study** that speaks to whether implicit bias training will change officers’ attitudes or behavior.
    • Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP) evaluated in NYPD with 36,000 sworn officers.
    • Survey given on day of the one-day training showed that the curriculum:
      – Increased officers’ knowledge of implicit bias and showed greater concern for discrimination (but, modest effect).
      – 70% reportedly gained a better understanding of implicit bias.
      – 66% reportedly learned new strategies and skills that they expected to apply to their work.
      – Less than 50% reported that they were likely to use the strategies they learned...
What Works in Police Training?

• Implicit Bias Training
  • **One study** continued...
    • Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP) evaluated in NYPD with 36,000 sworn officers.
    • Follow-up survey showed that of the officers that completed the training:
      – 42% had not used FIP training in their duties during the last month
      – 31% attempted to use them sometimes
      – 27% attempted to use them frequently
    • However, with respect to actual behavior, the report concluded:
      – “Overall, we found insufficient evidence to conclude that racial and ethnic disparities in police enforcement actions were reduced as a result of the training.”

• Conclusion = *Implicit bias training is likely insufficient to 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
  • Several studies show this type of training leads to attitude and behavior change
    • Greater Manchester Police study:
      – Officers more likely to support procedural justice
      – Officers more likely to use procedural justice during role-playing exercises
      – Citizen surveys—more satisfied with procedural justice trained officers
    • Queensland Recruit study:
      – Officers more likely to support procedural justice
      – More likely to use procedural justice with public as reported by training officers
    • Chicago Police Department studies (8,840 officers trained):
      – Officers that completed training were significantly more likely to support the use of procedural justice during interactions with the public

      – 10% reduction in complaints, 6% reduction in use of force

• Conclusion = Procedural justice training offers a lot of promise but likely needs to be combined with other skill development
What Works in Police Training? (continued)

- De-escalation Training
  - **Limited 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 not long enough
  - 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 study only focuses on the officer contribution
  - Can police officers 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. 1 hr 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. **Lose 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 with the training.
    • 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 roadblocks to effective training.
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).