

Suggestions for the Implementation of Training Focusing on Racial Implicit Bias in Law Enforcement.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAINING FOCUSING ON
RACIAL IMPLICIT BIAS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

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Abstract

Suggestions for the Implementation of Training Focusing on Racial Implicit Bias in Law Enforcement.

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Michael Klemp-North

In the United States, racial implicit bias influences racial disparities in law enforcement's use of lethal force. This has become a national headline throughout the past few years as the killings of unarmed people of color by the police have resulted in nationwide protests and calls for change. This paper will seek to explain the current literature on racial implicit bias in policing, as well as examine the problem through the critical race model, the racial threat model, and the general strain model. Finally, suggestions for scenario-based training programs will be presented, backed by research and proven efficacy from departments across the United States.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that lethal force incidents disproportionately impact minority communities due to racial implicit bias from law enforcement (Helms & Costanza, 2020). In addition, use force incidents overall are disproportionately impacting minority communities due to racial implicit bias. Examples of this can be seen in research conducted by Dabney et. al. (2017) showing that appearance factors commonplace in minority communities (dreadlocks, cornrows, afros, braids, etc.) were predictive of more severe outcomes imposed by law enforcement. Pre-conceived notions based on appearance is a symptom of racial implicit bias and this needs to be addressed for policing to regain the trust of communities across the United States. Training that focuses on racial implicit bias for law enforcement has been shown to be effective in reducing the racial disparities in lethal use of force incidents. In fact, participation in intensive scenario-based training programs have led officers to be more likely to make decisions based on behavior rather than simply on race. (Schlosser, 2018). Expanding training programs that focus on racial implicit bias while replacing older training programs that have not been shown to be effective is the best way to reduce racial disparities in lethal force incidents. Unfortunately, knowledge of the efficacy of these training programs still goes widely unnoticed in many law enforcement agencies because systemic review has not taken place (Worden et. al.). Several departments have presented evidence that their officers are more conscious of implicit bias and recognize that their actions should be guided by behavior, however until scenario-based implicit bias training is available for all departments nationwide, this problem will remain prevalent in policing.

B. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research will be to examine how scenario-based training focused on racial implicit bias can reduce the racial disparities in lethal use of force incidents by law enforcement. While multicultural and racial training programs exist, research suggests that training focused on racial implicit bias is the best way to reduce racial disparities in decision making (Worden et. al.). This paper will argue that first, racial disparities in lethal force incidents exist and will show research proving that this is true. Second, evidence showing the impact of areas that have adopted racial implicit bias training programs and the positive impacts these training programs have will be presented. Finally, examination of older training programs that are still used by many law enforcement agencies that are simply ineffective (Fagan & Campbell, 2020).

C. Implications of the Study

Decision making influenced by racial implicit bias has led to a disproportionate amount of inappropriate use of force incidents against minority communities by the hand of law enforcement. Research presented by Sherman et. al. (2020) called for scientific interventions and rapid research responses due to the critical nature of this problem. By analyzing training programs that are proven to work, such as the New York Police Department (Worden et. al.), this paper will provide recommendations to combat this serious problem in criminal justice. Additionally, by focusing on systems in play rather than individual officer behavior, this paper will help merge the gap between law enforcement leadership and scientific research. Worden explained that there is a disconnect between law enforcement officials in the field, and research scientists who may be “out of touch”. By focusing on training programs targeting a system, this will allow for law enforcement leadership to take control of how the training is administered, once evidence is presented showing the quality and efficacy of said training programs.

D. Method of Approach

The methodology of this research will be secondary research, examining existing research and the impacts that existing training programs have on lethal use of force incidents. First, a review of literature on implicit bias in policing will be presented. This will show that racial implicit bias is an ongoing problem in law enforcement. After defining and providing research on implicit bias, existing training programs will be analyzed for their efficacy and contribution to the problem of racial implicit bias. This research review will then be viewed through three theories on racial implicit bias and law enforcement: the racial threat perspective, critical race theory, and general strain theory. Each of these theories provides understanding of the existing research and how to best combat racial implicit bias. After the theories are examined, suggestions are made for the adoption of scenario-based training programs focusing on racial implicit bias in law enforcement. The research will show these programs are the most effective at combating the problem.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will focus on two main concepts: implicit bias in policing and existing training programs that are targeted at implicit bias. By first explaining existing research on implicit bias in policing, the problem trying to be combatted will be explained in detail. How police officers respond in high-stress situations, or how their biases impact their behavior, is at the core of what scenario-based training methods should be targeting. By understanding the efficacy of existing training programs, one will be able to decipher what works, what does not, and what the best course of action is moving forward. The evidence will suggest that the scenario-based training programs mentioned previously are the most effective at combatting racial implicit bias.

A. Implicit Bias

Understanding that implicit bias is both a real and consequential problem in policing needs to be accepted by all law enforcement professionals to help reduce improper use of force incidents involving inappropriate racial biases. Helms and Costanza (2019) sought to study race when it came to fatal interactions with law enforcement in the United States. By studying individual characteristics of lethal force incidents, Helms and Costanza were able to show that race was indeed a strong prediction of police killings along with economic conditions and previous violence. While this research does not suggest implicit bias is the main predictor of police killings, it does show that race of the victim is a strong predictor of said violence. What additional research will show is that these implicit racial biases are a problem in policing, and the best way to address this problem is through structured, scenario-based training methods.

One study that focused on implicit bias was conducted by James, Fridell, and Straub (2016) where they studied the psychosocial factors that impacts a law enforcement officers decision to use deadly force. One of their findings was, “Police professionals may use more force, or be quicker to use force, against Blacks because, like many humans, they have a Black-crime implicit bias producing greater perceptions of threat from Blacks than from people of other races”. The study goes on to say that this can be remedied by high-quality training in implicit bias and use of force. This further expands on the Helms and Costanza article by not only showing that race is a predictor of police killings, but rather shows that use of force in general is more likely to happen when a suspect or victim is Black. Implicit bias is, according to the authors, one of the causes of this inequity in policing and they recommend training in this area in order to reduce the racial inequities in law enforcement.

While implicit bias has been shown to be a predictor of racial incidents with law enforcement, how those incidents are reported can have an impact on both the validity of the theory and the acceptance of the theory for law enforcement at large. Gray and Parker (2019) studied how lethal force is reported in the United States, and whether there were differences between official and unofficial accounts of these incidents. What Gray and Parker found is that different reporting agencies, especially when it comes to lethal force incidents and race, are not replicated across separate reporting agencies. This provides an overarching problem with finding solutions to implicit bias, as reporting itself can be drawn into the problem. Solutions for this were presented in the article, however it is also mentioned that a perfect solution to crime reporting is unlikely to happen. When reporting agencies such as the FBI take self-reporting data from other law enforcement agencies, there is certainly a bias problem. However, non-profit reporting or victim survey analysis has also been shown to have reporting errors. What the focus

should be on is not how conclusive different reporting agencies are at proving implicit bias is a problem, but rather the existence of racial discrepancies in police use of force incidents and let researchers draw conclusions from there. It just so happens that implicit bias is what most of the research currently supports and appears to be the proper theory framework moving forward.

A compelling study completed by Nix et. al. (2017) examined 990 fatal shootings by the police in 2015 and examined the data for evidence of implicit bias. Their findings were troubling and showed the need to address the important problem of bias:

Our findings showed that citizens in the *other* racial/ethnic group were significantly more likely than Whites to have not been attacking the officer(s) or other civilians and that Blacks were more than twice as likely as Whites to have been unarmed when they were shot and killed by police. These findings suggest evidence of implicit bias in real-world scenarios. In line with previous police shooting simulation studies, it seems that officers may have been more likely to experience threat perception failures in fatal shootings that involved minority civilians. That is, officers subconsciously perceived minority civilians to have been a greater threat than they were.

What this study does is show the data behind implicit bias and lethal force incidents and provide further support for the need to address this invasive problem in law enforcement. While suggestions are provided in the article that are commonplace in the national discourse (body cameras, third party investigations, etc.) one the main points that this paper proves is the need for training in the area of implicit bias.

Critics to the understanding of implicit bias in policing do exist, although they are becoming less frequent as support grows for understanding and showing implicit bias. Research

was conducted by Petersen (2018) on how the understanding of implicit bias research may not be correct, which in turn impacts the application of said research in policy. Petersen argues that current study in implicit bias changes the narrative from “a few bad apples” in law enforcement that are involved with racial situations to a “everyone is racist and can’t control it” mindset. Petersen goes on to suggest abolitionist theory as a remedy to policy problems involving race and policing and believes this will be more effective than current efforts targeting implicit bias. A problem with Petersen’s article is that he relies mostly on his own previous research of prison populations and uses this article as reinforcement of his previous ideas rather than looking at implicit bias as a separate topic.

While it is common for implicit bias study to focus solely on one characteristic, race for example, this is a comprehensive problem that goes much deeper than single characteristics. Dabney et. al. (2017) found that appearance characteristics associated with contemporary hip-hop culture have an influence on police decision-making. This research was completed over a three-year period where research assistance would go on ride-alongs with police officers and record their findings. The data was collected using a structured template to measure a suspect’s physical appearance, demographics of the officer, and the outcome of the incident. Data was only recorded when the response was involving an interaction where a crime was alleged to have happened, and the suspect was present on scene. What this study found was that race as a variable alone was not a predictor of arrest, however hip-hop appearance was a significant predictor. As Dabney et. al. explains, “This finding suggests that simply including a suspect’s race in a regression model may not be sufficient to capture all of the complexity surrounding this issue.”. While this study does not confirm that implicit bias is the sole reasoning behind the increased likelihood of police interactions, it does show that those appearing a certain way are

statistically more likely to have interactions with the police beyond verbal warnings. This ties back to the need for understanding and training for implicit bias. Beyond race, past experiences may cause an officer to arrive to a situation with an incorrect assumption that the way someone appears dictates what is happening.

Furthering the support for acknowledgment of the reality of implicit bias, Morrow and Shjarback (2019) examined the consequential *Floyd et al. v. The City of New York* and explain how this decision helped contribute to the understanding of implicit bias and policing:

Among the major decisions made in *Floyd* (2013), the judge identified “furtive movement” as being a weak indicator for establishing the reasonable suspicion needed to justify a *Terry* stop. Moreover, the judge recognized that “Furtive Movement” is a vague and subjective term, which may be affected by unconscious bias and lead to racial and ethnic disparities in stop outcomes.

This is an example of a court decision ruling against a police department policy due to the role that unconscious bias may play within the scope of police power in a stop. This is important to consider in the context of finding a solution to implicit bias for a few reasons. First, this case is now precedent, and if the reality is that certain policies and procedures can be influenced by personal biases, training programs should be implemented to address those biases. Second, simply getting rid of a policy is not a solution to the underlying problem. As Morrow and Shjarback go on to explain, significant changes in police shootings were lowered from the 1970s and 1980s after training and court-developed rules limited discretion for use of a firearm. With the right direction, changes will hopefully be seen in racially biased use of force incidents over time.

B. Existing Training Programs

The most effective implicit bias training programs in practice today involve a scenario-based training model. Schlosser (2018) begins with the acknowledgment that implicit bias in policing is a major problem and goes on to explain how the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing correctly encourages the formation of training programs focusing on combating implicit bias. Schlosser goes into detail about how classroom education does not suffice, and scenario-based training where individuals are forced to examine biases that have built up over a lifetime should be government mandated for all law enforcement agencies:

The unconscious racism and implicit biases that officers possess are unlikely to be altered through limited police training involving only classroom education. While it is difficult to change such beliefs and attitudes, especially since they are developed throughout ones' life as a result of experiences and external factors, through intense and ongoing scenario-based training, police officers will be more likely to make decisions based on an individual's behavior rather than their race. It should be easy to implement this training in police academies, although how much time can be spent on such training for veteran officers within individual departments will vary depending on the resources available. Policies should be mandated by the government to implement proper scenario-based training for both recruit and veteran police officers.

Schlosser explains two very important concepts in the above passage; first that implicit bias is a real problem in law enforcement, and second that this problem is solvable through the proper training methods.

In Louisville, Kentucky, a training program was implemented for police officers and correctional officers to help address implicit bias after several high-profile killings of African American men at the hands of law enforcement were captured by the national spotlight. Leyderman, Collins, and Dickie (2018) explain this program and the importance of scenario-based models for implicit bias understanding:

The curriculum addresses issues related to power of authority, ethical decision -making, implicit bias, diversity, and restorative communication skills. During the training, participants are actively engaged via hands-on simulations, group activities, and classroom conversation. Correctional officers are challenged to critically self-reflect and evaluate where they are as individuals in the process of changing bias and to develop a more humane attitude toward working with justice-involved individuals.

The report goes on to explain that this training model has been recognized at national and international law enforcement conferences and is planned to expand into more aspects of Louisville law enforcement in the future. This is just one example of how the problem of implicit bias in policing can be addressed through structured scenario-based training methods.

The largest police department in the United States, the New York Police Department, starting using the Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP) curriculum in 2018 and released a report on the findings and results of this training in a report from 2020. The FIP program uses scenario-based training models to help identify and combat implicit bias in police officers. The results of using this program for two years were conclusive in proving that scenario-based training programs are effective:

First, we found that the training was associated with detectable pre and post training differences in officers' awareness of and knowledge about implicit bias, which were all in the hypothesized direction, and which we interpret as a training impact. Post-training officers were more likely to understand that unconscious biases could affect their interactions with particular groups of people even if they consciously reject the stereotypes on which those biases are based.

This clearly shows that the training program was effective in identify and combating implicit biases within the New York Police Department. While this finding was certainly positive, the report does mention that there was no change in actual incidents involving race and police interactions. The article gives several reasons for this happening, but the most promising appears to be the idea that these biases are engrained no just in a single police officer, but in the system. While there were no direct effects of the training reaching the real police work, the fact that officers were able to identify biases and acknowledge the reality that scientists have worked to prove is a promising first start.

Taking the focus off implicit bias-specific training, there is great evidence that scenario-based training methods are more effective than classroom only lessons. Andersen et. al. (2016) argue that this could result in officers not being prepared for real-world scenarios due to the high levels of stress that comes with a real-world situation. The best way to combat this unpreparedness, according to the authors, is to implement scenario-based training into law enforcement agencies across the country. This study was conducted by measuring heart rates before, during, and after real-world use of force incidents and comparing these heart rates to classroom-only instruction and simulation-based instruction. What they found was:

As hypothesized, physiological stress response arousal observed in high realism scenario-based training was significantly correlated with the physiological arousal displayed in real world UOF encounters among SWAT officers. Physiological arousal experienced in classroom-based training was not significantly correlated with high realism UOF training or real world UOF encounters. The results suggest two implications: first, high realism scenarios provide officers the opportunity to experience how physiological arousal may impact the outcome of the UOF encounter, and second, officers are afforded the opportunity to learn to perform optimally in spite of high physiological stress responses.

This study shows that being put into a scenario-based training model better prepares an officer for a real-world scenario compared to classroom only education.

By understanding both implicit bias in policing as well as existing training programs, it can be concluded that implicit bias is a problem for law enforcement officials in the United States, and the most effective programs to address this problem are scenario-based training methods. Next, three theories will provide more in-depth detail on these issues in a hope to solidify the case for the development and mandatory implementation of training programs targeting implicit bias.

III. THEORY FRAMEWORK

Three theories that will help provide better context to the problems and solutions of racial implicit bias in policing are the racial threat perspective, the critical race theory, and the general strain theory. The racial threat perspective focuses on the power struggle between the majority and the minority communities in this country. Critical race theory focuses on how systems were developed in a racist way so that white people remained in power and had control over other minority communities. General strain theory targets how strain can lead to problems, which is applicable to police work as a whole.

A. Racial Threat Perspective

When studying implicit bias in policing, one of the main concepts to understand is what racism actually looks like in the modern day, and how the United States arrived at this point. Dollar (2014) examined the Racial Threat Perspective (RTP) and explained that RTP was first proposed by Blalock as a way to explain social control:

Racial threat theory proposed that racialization occurs when Whites use their disproportionate power to implement state-control over minorities and, in the face of a growing minority population, encourage more rigorous, racialized practices in order to protect their existing power and privileges. Blalock posits three distinct forms of racial threat – economic threat, political threat, and symbolic threat.

As Dollar explains, RTP is a way to view society as a power struggle between the majority and minority communities. The majority does not want to give up power, and systems are put in place to prevent this from happening. This would apply to the criminal justice system, and the way police perform their duties every day. If white officers are already in a position of power in

society, one could expect social control measures to be put in place to when additional powers are granted to law enforcement.

Research in the area of applying RTP directly to policing was conducted by Lautenschlager and Omori (2019) when they used RTP to investigate use of force incidents perpetrated by the NYPD. This research suggests that use of force incidents were more common in communities of color:

Applying theories of racial threat, social disorganization, and Klinger's ecological theory of policing, we conceptualize use-of-force as a neighborhood phenomenon rather than individual events. Our results suggest that rates and levels of force operate in some distinct ways. In particular, while we find that use-of-force ins concentrated in Black neighborhoods, and is also more severe in Black neighborhoods, neighborhoods with higher racial and ethnic heterogeneity have decreasing force incidents, but with increasing severity. This may reflect different types of policing, with high rates of low-level police harassment occurring in primarily poorer, Black neighborhoods.

What the authors are suggesting is that using RTP in the context of police use of force incidents can help explain why there appears to be a racial component to these problems. As the literature review mentioned above in this paper, individual officer implicit bias is a reason for the unjustified use of force incidents that happen in the United States. What Lautenschlager and Omori suggest is that the systems should be looked at as well as individual behavior. RTP works to explain implicit bias from a top-down perspective, as the "racial threat" white officers may feel can impact their own biases when on duty.

Additional research in the area of RTP and policing comes from Eitle and Monahan (2009). The primary thesis of this research was that using the lens of the RTP, Black individuals will face more actions from law enforcement as a form of social control. This research focused on drug arrest rates and found that their thesis was supported. The research concluded that, “we find that racial threat measures are associated with Black drug arrest rates under conditions of relatively low organizational control”. While this is not directly tied to use of force incidents, it does demonstrate that policing misconduct on racial lines is present in the United States currently. One could assume that, if Black individuals are targeted for increased interactions and arrests by the police, that use of force incidents on Black individuals will also be disproportionately common. This is exactly what the research presented earlier demonstrated, and further theories will help explain why.

B. Critical Race Theory

One of the best theories to understand how implicit bias impacts the way police officers make decisions is the critical race theory (CRT). According to Bornstein et. al., critical race theory, “aims to help students overcome “color-blind” thinking, which minimizes awareness of racism, by raising their critical understanding of racism and framing it as a pervasive and institutionalized reality that everyone has a responsibility to change”. What this means is that racism is best addressed by confronting it directly and recognizing the reality that racism plays in all aspects of the United States, including the criminal justice system. The approach for many in law enforcement, due to training failures as well as social conditioning, was to ignore racism and act in a “color-blind” way that the authors are referring to. CRT has direct links to implicit bias, which is why it is plays a crucial role in developing training that will aid law enforcement

agencies in combating implicit bias, which will in turn decrease the number of unlawful use-of-force incidents.

In their research, Bornstein et. al. studied how higher educated classes offered to the New York Police Department impacted blindness to racism scores as well as the effectiveness of the prementioned classes. This study involved two groups of officers, one group receiving the police management and critical race theory classes, and the other group receiving only the police management class. A Color Blind Racial Awareness (COBRA) test was used to measure officers understandings of racial issues and implicit bias. The hypothesis going into this research was that the test group who received the additional CRT training classes would show higher awareness of racism on the COBRA scale versus those in the control group. This hypothesis was proven as those who received the CRT classwork ultimately showed higher awareness on the COBRA test. An interesting point to make is that, “White officers show the most dramatic differences between the comparison group and the test group in awareness in all three scales. Black and Latino officers showed a change in one of the cluster areas, white privilege, but the institutional discrimination and blatant racism scales show a statistically insignificant change in the mean scores”. This is important for a few reasons, the first being that white officers appear to have the most benefit from going through the CRT classes. Given the current state of criminal justice system through the national media lens, this would be a great tool to apply to all departments as a counteractive measure to the racism being shown during the 24/7 news cycle. Additionally, all officers will be better able to serve communities by increasing their understanding of important social issues such as race and white privilege.

While officers understanding their own biases is important to combating use of force incidents that result from implicit bias, an area that should be explained further is that the laws in

place are also racially biased, which can impact officer behavior. Bennett Capers provided their thoughts to the Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law. In this writing, an additional definition of CRT is provided:

Critical Race Theorists have not placed their faith in neutral procedures and the substantive doctrines of formal equality; rather, critical race theorists assert that both the procedure and the substances of American law, including American antidiscrimination law, are structure to maintain white privilege.

Applying this definition to the criminal justice system, Bennet Capers explains that understanding how the laws of the United States are based on a bedrock of white privilege is essential for those who enforce the law to understand. While this focuses on the systems in place, one can assume that an officer who does not address their own implicit bias will be negatively impacted by racially biased systems that are currently in place.

A study that combines the ideas mentioned previously in the CRT section comes from Webb, Savard, and Delaney. This research studied factors that related to wrongful convictions of Black youth in the United States who have been exonerated. By comparing Black youth to other demographic groups, it becomes apparent that Black youth are more susceptible to wrongful convictions due to a variety of factors including false confessions, faulty eyewitness identification, perjury, and official misconduct. Using the CRT model, these issues highlight the reality of racism being systemic, and provides real-world examples of the consequences of ignoring racism in the criminal justice system.

C. General Strain Theory

General Strain Theory (GST) was developed by Agnew in 1992, and generally proposes that strain in life is correlated with higher levels of crime. While GST has been primarily used to study crime committed by civilians, there is research that shows GST can be applied to law enforcement as well. Law enforcement is a high stress job, and GST predicts that this would result in some level of misconduct. Bishopp et. al. studied this fact and came to the conclusion:

Using data from a survey of over 1,400 police officers working in three large cities in Texas, we find that stress is significantly related to officers' acts of misconduct within both races. Moreover, there are noticeable differences in the role anger plays in the stress/misconduct relationship among white and minority officers.

What this shows is that GST is a solid framework for understanding why police officers may perform acts of misconduct while on duty. This can apply to the overall theme of this paper in a few different ways. First, by understanding that strain could be part of the problem in use of force incidents by police, increased training dealing with strain as well as implicit bias should be studied. Second, one could make the connection between implicit bias and strain being competing processes in an individual, which will evolve the situation in a negative way. A hypothetical would be an officer dealing with unresolved implicit bias problems against an individual, as well as being in a stressful circumstance, could both elevate the problem to misconduct.

Additional research looking at GST and law enforcement came from Moon (2012) who examined how occupational strain impacted commitment of law enforcement officers to their respective departments and roles in society. This research concluded that:

GST is a viable theoretical framework in which to study organizational commitment among police officers as various strains have been shown to result in officers being less committed to their police agencies. Consequently, policies that attempt to alleviate those strains or stressors commonly faced by officers can increase dedication and possibly the job performance of America's law enforcement officials.

The important part of this conclusion for interpretation in the scope of implicit bias is the idea that policies targeting strains or stressors can have a positive benefit on job performance for law enforcement in the United States.

By utilizing the ideas brought forth by the racial threat perspective, critical race theory, and general strain theory, further understanding of the causes and solutions to implicit bias in policing can be addressed. By showing that racism is part of every citizen's existence in the United States, policy makers can focus on corrective training for law enforcement to try and remedy the presumptions that have been demonstrated when dealing with minority populations. General strain theory shows that stress can lead to misconduct, and this only exacerbates the problems of use of force incidents that law enforcement may be involved in. Using these three theories will help guide and develop future training programs that should be implemented in every police department in the United States. What the evidence has shown is that these training programs should be scenario-based and focused on racial implicit bias. The next section will explain this recommendation in greater detail.

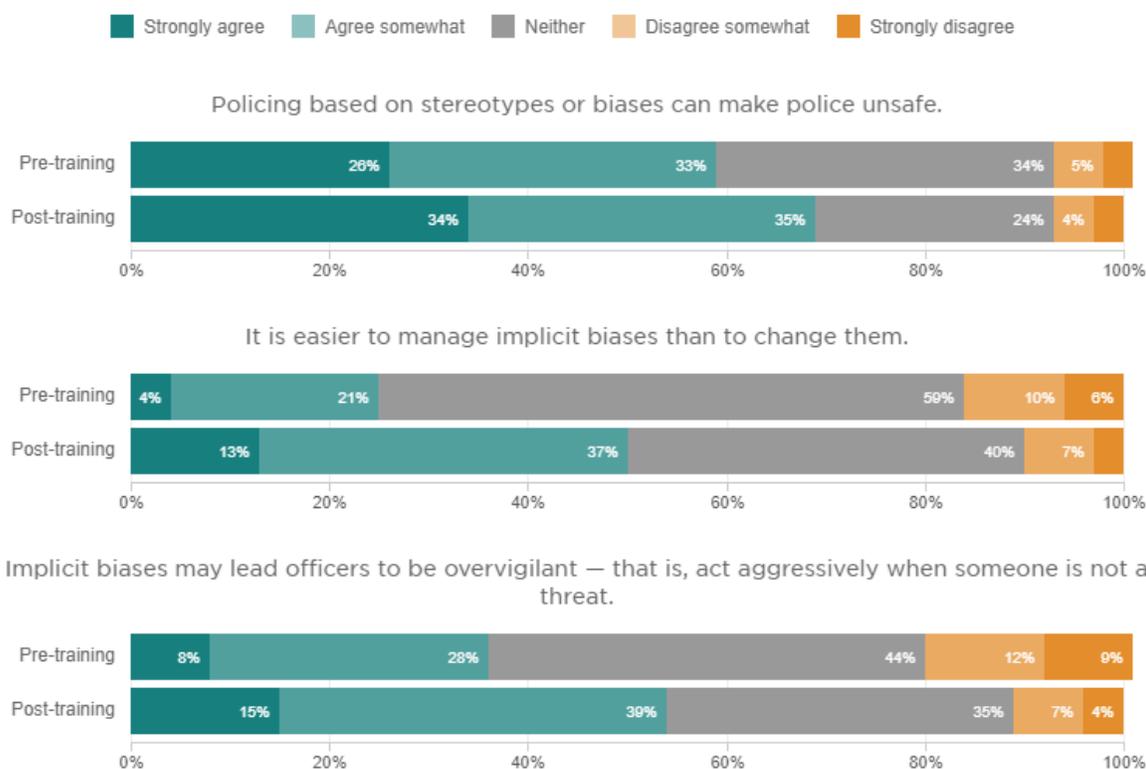
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

As the literature by Schlosser (2018) suggests, the most effective training programs to combat racial implicit bias in law enforcement involve scenario-based training methods. The literature review section of this paper showed several departments including Louisville, KY and New York City that have experienced positive changes to their policing due to scenario-based training methods. By developing programs that address implicit bias implement scenario-based methods into the training, law enforcement across the United States will be better able to serve their respective communities in a fair and transparent manner. As more departments begin to incorporate these training methods, it can be assumed that inappropriate use of force incidents that disproportionately impact communities of color will begin to decrease, which will in turn build trust between those communities and law enforcement.

One of the points to consider with this training format will be individual officer reception to new training focusing on implicit bias. As mentioned previously, training programs have been introduced to various departments across the United States. One of those departments is the NYPD, and various reporting agencies have presented the results from the training programs. National Public Radio author Martin Kaste even had an article where he explained the benefits of the training programs, the following data was collected:

Officers' Attitudes About Implicit Bias Shifted Post-Training

In surveys, the proportion of NYPD officers agreeing with these statements increased after training.



Source: Robert E. Worden, Sarah J. McLean, Robin S. Engel, Hannah Cochran, Nicholas Corsaro, Danielle Reynolds, Cynthia J. Najdowski and Gabrielle T. Isaza, 2020. "The Impacts of Implicit Bias Awareness Training in the NYPD." IACP/UC Center for Police Research and Policy & John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety. Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Credit: Connie Hanzhang Jin/NPR

What this shows is that officers' attitudes regarding biases, how to manage biases, and the role of implicit bias was positively impacted by the scenario-based training methods. Important to note are the changes in "It is easier to manage implicit biases than to change them" pre and post training. The strongly agree category increased by 9 percent, and the agree somewhat category increased by 16 percent. Meanwhile, the disagree somewhat category decreased by 3 percent, and the post training decreased as well. This shows with statistical backing that after scenario-based training methods focusing on implicit bias, officers were aware that their own biases can be managed, and in fact it is easier to manage them rather than change them entirely. This is

uplifting data that shows programs of this type of work, and are necessary for adequate policing. While the article does say that this does not necessarily mean that behavior changes, the fact that minds are being changed is a step in the right direction. If social scientists are able to convince and train law enforcement officers in the realities of racial implicit bias, all parties involved would be better suited. Not discouraged by the results of behavior not changing, one of the trainers explains, “We believe that our training reduces biased behaviors on the streets of the jurisdictions where we train. That the research didn’t detect those changes in behavioral outcomes does not mean that they did not occur”. The first step is addressing a problem, then solutions can be drawn such as the efficacy of scenario-based training methods.

While there was not statistical change in the racial disparities in enforcement post-training, the trainers and police leadership believe these programs are necessary and will continue to improve the job that officers do. The First Deputy Commissioner made the point, “The training was designed just to have them do some self-reflection and just to understand that any biases that they may have may creep into their job...That awareness, we think, adds value in and of itself” (Kaste, 2020). As these programs continue to develop and have increased police interaction, the scenario-based training models will become more effective and help reduce and prevent racial-implicit bias in policing.

It is clear based on all the evidence presented that racial implicit bias is a problem for police officers in the United States. Whether it is the disproportionality of the use of force against minority civilians, or the answers to surveys on personal bias presented by researchers, the problem has been shown by existing research conclusively. Evidence has also concluded that scenario-based training programs are the most effective way to train, and this includes with implicit bias. The recommendations presented in this paper have been the development of

scenario-based training programs targeting racial implicit bias for departments across the United States, and this is supported by all evidence presented.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper started by presenting a literature review on the concept of implicit bias, as well as an analysis of existing training programs targeted at implicit bias. Research by Helms and Costanza (2019) concluded that race was a predicting factor in use of force incidents by law enforcement. This was due to officers responding to personal characteristics rather than focusing on the behavior of the individual during the incident. Nix (2017) studied lethal force incidents and found that there was a proven racial discrepancy in the application of lethal force, and that officers perceived greater threat when dealing with Black and Brown citizens. Racial implicit bias is a provable problem in United States law enforcement, and to best address it the training programs currently being used by departments across the country were analyzed.

Existing programs that are primarily classroom based on not as effective as scenario-based training methods. A training program focusing on these problems presented by Leyderman, Collins, and Dickie (2018) has received national recognition for its efficacy, and this primarily uses scenario-based training methods. The Louisville Police Department saw notable changes in officers' ability to recognize and modify their implicit bias after going through the training program. A similar program was presented to the NYPD, which also showed encouraging signs that the program is effective in getting officers to recognize and combat their own racial implicit biases.

The racial threat perspective helps to understand the power dynamic between white people in the United States and minority communities. As Dollar (2014) explains, there are systems in place to ensure that white people remain in power, and this is certainly seen in the criminal justice system when taking into context the disproportionate use of force incidents against Black and Brown people in the United States. While these feelings and ideas may not be explicitly

mentioned, implicit bias plays a role in how police behave and interact with the general public and understanding how the racial threat perspective predicts behavior is paramount to helping both communities of color and law enforcement.

Critical race theory, as scrutinized as it may be, is a great foundation for understanding racial issues in the criminal justice system. Bornstein (2012) explained that “color-blind” thinking is not the way to address racial history in the United States, but rather to tackle the subject head-on and acknowledge the racist history. This applies directly to policing and is a great foundation for diving into the concept of racial implicit bias and training methods. Law enforcement is better suited by addressing their own biases rather than ignoring them until a problem presents itself in the field.

While general strain theory does not directly tie into racial implicit bias, it does target how stressors in life can lead to negative outcomes. Research presented by Bishopp (2020) showed that anger and stress can negatively impact police interactions, and lead to misconduct. By thinking of implicit bias as a type of strain, this problem continues to grow in scope and become an important training target for police officers.

Finally, suggestions for scenario-based training programs are presented by summarizing research and presenting statistical evidence of NYPD officers’ mindsets pre and post implicit bias training. Officers showed great change in their feelings on three important concepts: policing based on stereotypes can make police unsafe, it is easier to manage implicit biases than to change them, and implicit biases may lead officers to be over vigilant – that is, act aggressively when someone is not a threat. These three concepts are important to understanding implicit bias, and officers showed a great deal of recognition of their biases post training. It is clear based on the literature review, theory review, and training programs examined that the best

way to combat racial implicit bias in policing is to mandate scenario-based training methods targeting the racial implicit bias.

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