



Ideation Title: Evaluating Implicit Bias Training Approaches to Reduce Racial Disparities in Justifiable Homicides
Submitted by: Rayshawn Ray
Category: Researcher/ Scholar

Research shows racial disparities in police use of force and justifiable homicides. Justifiable homicide, also known as death by legal intervention, is when a police officer or peace officer kills someone in the line of duty. Data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation shows that police officers are more likely to kill a Black person, compared to a White person, even when the person is unarmed and not attacking. Even when controlling for social class background, the lower justifiable homicide rate for Whites is persistent over time. Research and policy makers have pursued ways to explain and reduce this racial gap. Implicit bias is a popular new term for addressing racial disparities in justifiable homicides and use of force.

Implicit bias is simply the association our minds make between two seemingly unrelated things, such as skin tone and the propensity to have a weapon or be violent. Although implicit bias is new to policing, it is a classic social psychological concept originating with Allport's (1954) theoretical assessment of prejudice. Everyone has implicit biases. However, implicit bias in policing can be dangerous, and even deadly, for citizens as well as police officers.

Despite implicit bias being a term that is readily used today, LITTLE RESEARCH ACTUALLY EVALUATES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS. Furthermore, implicit bias trainings typically do not directly address the specific biases that police officers may hold about race, gender, skin tone, or national origin. Social psychological research generally shows that sustained attitudinal change is short-lived with interventions because individuals return to their normal socializing spaces without any follow-up to reinforce learning objectives. This project aims to fill these important gaps.

Missing is a triangular approach that simultaneously addresses the initial biases of police officers, puts them in real-life social experiments that allow for them to see their biases in action, and conducts periodic follow-ups to reinforce learning objectives. Using data from 32 implicit bias in-services with a total of about 1800 police officers in Prince George County, Maryland, this study examines the effectiveness of different implicit bias approaches.

This study evaluates four main implicit bias training approaches: 1) Implicit Association Tests (IATs) as pre- and post-treatment assessments to reveal officers' implicit biases; 2) Interactive workshops to establish understandings of prejudice, discrimination, and racism; 3) Virtual reality simulations to assess discriminatory behavior in real-life scenarios; and 4) Dramaturgical re-enactments of real incidents between citizens and



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police officers. Using surveys and in-depth interviews with police officers, this study is designed to isolate which specific approaches of implicit bias training are most effective at decreasing racial bias. Based on preliminary results, implicit bias is present regardless of the racial or class background of officers. However, the training approaches collectively reduce social desirability bias and increase officers' acknowledgement and disclosure of their biases. We argue that realizing one's own biases, acknowledging that those biases exist, reflecting on ways to address those biases, and consistently working to hold those biases in check can reduce racial disparities in policing.

In sum, the deliverables of this study have the potential to become a national model for evaluating implicit bias training by streamlining the most effective approaches for attitudinal change. Our examination of implicit bias approaches can become a model for evaluation of not just implicit bias trainings but all trainings that police officers undergo. Our evaluation approach can be applied to a host of police trainings from dealing with individuals with mental health issues to other marginalized such as members of the LGBTQ community to provide better knowledge about what is effective and why. In addition to academic journal articles, we will produce an Implicit Bias Approaches for Police Officers Handbook and an Equitable Interaction App that can engage officers in continuing education. This app can be used to sustain learning objectives long-term through continuous reinforcement in order to help police officers reduce their implicit biases and hold them under control during social interactions. Removing biases that are socialized in all of us throughout our lifetimes do not change in a day. Yet, with persistent reinforcement of innovative training modules, implicit bias can decrease over time and be held under control. We believe that our model can unravel the socialization of bias and reduce racial disparities in justifiable homicides and use of violent force.