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Kendra Bengtson

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Bad cops or bad training?  
How police officer training impacts use of force incidents.

Kendra Bengtson

An Honors Thesis  
Submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
graduation with honors in Criminology and Criminal Justice  
from Hamline University

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### **Abstract**

There has been growing tension between the police and public for allegations of excessive use of force, racism, and insufficient knowledge of mental illness. The purpose of this project is to examine how officers are trained to use force and what changes in training are still needed to limit using force. This project involved a comprehensive literature review on training, use of force, racial bias and mental illness. Additionally, seven in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals involved in the policing community, and four hours of use of force training and forty hours of de-escalation training were observed. This project found that there is limited research currently available on police use of force and officer training. All of the interview participants expressed that training can be improved, but were divided on how training should be improved. The observed training showed that de-escalation is not incorporated into pre-service scenario-based training and officers received conflicting information on de-escalation techniques.

*Keywords:* police, training, use of force, de-escalation

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### **Part 1: Literature Review**

Police officers around the country repeatedly come under scrutiny for allegations of excessive use of force, racism, and brutality. Minnesota is no exception. On November 15, 2015 Jamar Clark, a young African-American man, was fatally shot by two white Minneapolis police officers (MPR News Staff, 2015). The officers believed they were responding to a domestic violence call, and when Clark did not comply with orders from the officers, they immediately took him to the ground (Lissarrague, 2016; MPR News Staff, 2015). What happens next is debatable. Some witnesses say officers handcuffed Clark; others said they did not use handcuffs. One thing is for certain: Clark was unarmed when he was shot in the head. The officers involved in the incident said Clark was attempting to grab one of their guns and they acted in self-defense. After Clark was shot, two-thirds of Minneapolis police officers participated in training to recognize their own biases (Golden, Walsh, & Chanen, 2016).

A similar incident on July 23, 2015 involved Derek Wolfstellar, who was shot and killed by police when he was experiencing a mental health crisis (Smith, 2016). In that case, Wolfstellar also attempted to grab the officer's gun. Minnesota once again was in the national spotlight on July 6, 2016 when Philando Castile was shot by a St. Anthony police officer (Associated Press, 2016). The aftermath of the shooting was live-streamed on Facebook by Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds. In the video Reynolds says the officer shot Castile four times after Castile told the officer he was armed and had a permit to carry, and then reached for his driver's license (Associated Press, 2016).

The purpose of this project is to examine how officers train to use force nationally and in Minnesota, and what changes in training are currently needed. Throughout this project a variety of experiences contributed to understanding officer training. These experiences included

interviewing individuals involved in the policing community, personal observations of forty-four hours of training, and examining Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) documents. This project concludes that training currently teaches officers many different tactics in use of force, but lacks de-escalation techniques and cultural competency training. Police officers in Minnesota and nationally are not adequately trained to de-escalate situations or to recognize their biases, instead they are trained extensively on how to use force, which results in increased use of force incidents. Training can be improved to include de-escalation into scenario-based use of force training. Training should also address implicit biases and teach officers how to recognize their own biases. Finally, mental illness training needs to be improved to provide accurate information on mental illness and de-escalation techniques.

### **Definitions of Force**

There is not a single definition on what constitutes use of force. Since police do not use force in every citizen encounter, researchers on this topic use broad definitions when describing force. The International Association of Chiefs of Police describes force as the “amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject” (as cited in “Police Use of Force,” 2015). In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, threats of force were included in use of force statistics (Hyland, Langton, & Davis, 2015). Under Minnesota law deadly force is any force used with the purpose of causing death or great bodily harm. Intentionally discharging a firearm is considered deadly force, unless the firearm is loaded with less lethal munitions (Minn. Stat. § 609.066). The Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) (2011) mandates that any force, except deadly, is force used without the purpose of causing, or creating the risk of causing, death or great bodily harm. For the purposes of this project, the term “force” will be used broadly to include verbal threats of force, physical

force, and deadly force. The term “subjects of use of force” describes individuals who have been involved in a use of force incident with police.

### **Prevalence Rates**

There is not a complete government-agency national database on lethal use of force incidents. The FBI does have a system for tracking fatal police shootings, but the database has been inconsistent and incidents are underreported (Kindy, 2015). *The Guardian* (2015) attempted to create such a database, and found that 1,146 people died at the hands of police in 2015. *The Washington Post* has a similar database, and estimates that 990 people were shot dead by police in 2015. The Department of Justice found that there were 715,500 nonfatal use of force accounts from 2002 to 2011 (Hyland, Langton & Davis, 2015). Relatively few police-citizen encounters result in the use of force. Of all encounters with police only 1.6% resulted in police use of nonfatal force (Hyland, Langton, & Davis, 2015). Even though police use force relatively little compared with how often police encounter citizens, approximately 13% of citizens believed police acted properly when force was used. When force was not used, 89% of citizens had positive perceptions of police (Hyland, Langton, & Davis, 2015).

Young African American males are overrepresented in police use of force incidents. In *The Washington Post* database, 26% of individuals shot by police in 2015 were African American. In nonfatal use of force incidents 22% of subjects were African American (Hyland, Langton & Davis, 2015). In Minnesota, 45% of individuals killed by police from 2000 to 2015 were people of color (Bjorhus, Webster, Hargarten & Smith, 2016). *The Washington Post* database also took mental illness into consideration, and found that 25% of fatal shootings involved an individual with mental illness. In Minnesota, from 2000 to 2015, 45% of individuals

who died after a physical confrontation with police had a history, or displayed symptoms of mental illness (Bjorhus, Webster, Hargarten & Smith, 2016).

### **Why Force is Used**

**Types of force.** There are a variety of force options available to police officers. A use-of-force continuum is a common policy that departments have regarding the escalation of use of force, which typically spans from officer presence to lethal force (National Institute of Justice, 2009). Empty-hand control techniques include soft techniques such as grabbing or holding, and hard techniques such as punching and kicking. Less-lethal methods include blunt impact with a baton or other object, chemical spray, and conducted energy devices (CEDs).

Several less-lethal options are available to officers and research is beginning to study the impact of these less-lethal options. Preliminary research has found that the use of Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs or commonly known as TASERS) has resulted in less injuries to officers, but when CEDs and another form of force was used the risk of injury to officer increased (Paoline, Terrill & Ingram, 2012). Others contend that the use of pepper spray or CEDs decreased the likelihood of injuries to subjects, but officer injury increased with the use of OC spray, and there was no correlation of officer injury and CEDs (MacDonald, Kaminski & Smith, 2009). When CEDs were introduced to departments, subject injury decreased by 30-53% and officer injury by 25-62% (MacDonald, Kaminski & Smith, 2009).

**Decision to use force.** Research on police use of force reveals mixed conclusions on why an officer decides to use force (Klahm & Tillyer, 2010). The decision to use force depends on a multitude of cognitive factors based on the officer's perception of the situation; including, how complex the situation is, the consequences of the decision, time constraints, and the officer's emotional state (Dror, 2007). When studying how officers and subjects recount their experiences



with use of force, subjects will focus on treatment by the officer, whereas officers will focus on the resistance the subject displays when deciding to use force (Rojek, Alpert & Smith, 2012).

Subject resistance (verbal, passive, defensive, active) is the most cited reason for an officer using force (Alpert, Dunham & MacDonald, 2004; McCluskey & Terrill, 2005; McCluskey, Terrill & Paoline, 2005; Rojek, Alpert & Smith, 2012; Terrill, Leinfelt & Kwak, 2008). In a study of a smaller police department, officers reported when subjects displayed higher levels of resistance, the officers resolved the situation with lower levels of force, but the study concluded officers used force at a higher rate than officers in larger departments (Terrill, Leinfelt & Kwak, 2008). When subjects are more emotional, officers who are in less aggressive peer groups are more likely to use higher levels of force (McCluskey, Terrill & Paoline, 2005). If subjects are disrespectful, officers in more aggressive groups are more likely to use higher levels of force (McCluskey, Terrill & Paoline, 2005). In a department that was a leader in community policing efforts, officers who received verbal discourtesy complaints (complaints filed by citizens regarding an officer's disrespectful language) have a higher likelihood of using force in citizen encounters (McCluskey & Terrill, 2005). Whereas, excessive force complaints had little value in predicting future use of force (McCluskey & Terrill, 2005).

**Police culture.** Police culture is cited as contributing to the excessive use of force by law enforcement. Police culture is characterized by the work police do, the norms of police officer actions, and how officers perceive their role in law enforcement (Chan, 1996). In a study of police officer occupational attitudes, officers' views ranged from being distrustful of citizens and supervising officers and approving of aggressive police tactics, to embracing due process rights of citizens and believing citizens are cooperative (Paoline, 2004). Officers that hold traditional views of policing (distrust of citizens, order maintenance) are more likely to use force than those

with nontraditional cultural views (Terrill, Paoline & Manning, 2003). One study argued that while recruits with traits like intelligence, honesty, common sense, reliability and/or conscientiousness are highly regarded, the police culture can quickly ruin an officer's values (Sanders, 2003). Experts debate whether officers should maintain a guardian or a warrior mindset. Guardians aim to protect community members, whereas warriors remain separate from the community and fight crime (Rahr & Rice, 2015). This warrior mindset starts in training, especially in academies that emphasize following orders without questioning (Rahr & Rice, 2015).

**Racial bias in the decision to use force.** The perception of racial bias in policing is a major contributor to tensions between the police and the public. The Department of Justice found that 6.3% of African American citizens reported force was threatened or used, or excessive force was used during an encounter with police, compared with 3.5% of Hispanic citizens and 2.4% of white citizens (Hyland, Langton, & Davis, 2015). Cities that have a larger population of African-American and Hispanic residents report higher amounts of excessive use of force complaints (Smith & Holmes, 2014). Higher levels of force is more likely used against males, lower class, younger, and intoxicated subjects (McCluskey & Terrill, 2005; McCluskey, Terrill & Paoline, 2005). One study found that police officers were more likely to use greater force compared with the subject's resistance if the officer had more authority than the subject (Alpert, Dunham & MacDonald, 2004). Authority was based on age and race, so older white officers had more authority than young minority subjects (Alpert, Dunham & MacDonald, 2004).

Shoot-don't shoot simulators are a common method to identify racial bias. In shoot-don't shoot simulators involving African American and white suspects with or without weapons, police officers displayed racial bias in response time to African Americans with weapons

(Correll et al., 2007). This means that officers were quicker to shoot an African American male with a weapon, than a white male with a weapon. Studies have also found that non-police citizens are more likely to shoot African-American men (Correll et al., 2007; Plant, Goplen & Kunstman, 201).

### **Officer Characteristics**

Officer characteristics have frequently been brought up in the literature when considering which officers use force. Characteristics such as an officer's gender, race, and educational background are considered to determine who is more likely to use force.

**Experience and background.** How much experience an officer has and what an officer experiences may indicate if an officer uses force. Younger officers are more likely to use coercive behaviors, such as force, than their older counterparts (Sun, Payne & Wu, 2008). In one study looking at internal investigations of use of force, officers who were younger and had less policing experience were more likely to use force (McElvain & Kposowa, 2004). If officers have shot a subject before, then there is a higher likelihood that they will shoot again (McElvain & Kposowa, 2004; McElvain & Kposowa, 2008). Officers with a lower ranking in the department, such as patrol, are more likely to shoot (McElvain & Kposowa, 2008). One study found that officers assigned to the evening and night shift patrols were more likely to use coercive behaviors, such as force, than were day shift officers (Sun, Payne & Wu, 2008).

Researchers studied officer educational and military background in relation to use of force and training performance. The President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing encourages officers to seek higher education (2015). Officers with more education are less likely to use force or shoot subjects (McElvain & Kposowa, 2008; Rydberg & Terrill, 2010). One study found that reading level is the most predictive factor of academic performance in training, and whites and

males outperformed minorities and females (White, 2008). Military experience has been studied, but there is little consensus as to how a military background contributes to use of force. One study that compared citizen complaints of officers and officer demographics placed officers into three groups based on how many complaints they received (Harris, 2010). Officers with prior military experience occupied a large percentage of the mid- and high-rate complaint group, but the study concluded that this does not mean military experience contributed to a higher complaint rate (Harris, 2010).

**Gender and race.** Male officers are more likely to use deadly force and receive more complaints than female officers (Harris, 2010; McElvain & Kposowa, 2008) Male officers are also more likely to use coercive behaviors than female officers (Sun, Payne & Wu, 2008). Studies are inconclusive on if female and male officers use similar levels of force. One study found that female officers are less likely to use extreme controlling behaviors when dealing with subjects, such as force and threats, but males and females are similar in lower level controlling behaviors, such as commands and advice (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Another study found no gender differences in use of force (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006). This may be because females are also more likely to be community police officers who are less likely to be in situations that may require force (Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

Few studies have examined the effect of officer race on use of force, and with mixed results. One study found white officers are more likely to shoot than Hispanic officers (McElvain & Kposowa, 2008). When looking at citizen complaints, African American officers received complaints at a higher rate (Harris, 2010). White officers performed better in academy training than any other race (Henson, Reynolds, Klahm & Frank, 2010; White, 2008), suggesting that training curriculum may be racially biased (White, 2008). Overall, young male officers are more

likely to use force. The effects of female and minority officers use of force is difficult to study, most likely due to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in departments.

### **Use of Force Law**

Officers in Minnesota are instructed on relevant use of force laws. The rulings of *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985), *Graham v. Connor* (1989), and Minnesota Statutes § 609.06 and 609.066 guide police use of force decision-making. When justifying use of force, an officer's actions must conform to these laws.

**Supreme Court case law.** In *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985) the Supreme Court ruled a Tennessee common law statute allowing police officers to shoot an unarmed fleeing suspect as unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment's reasonableness requirement. The reasonableness requirement requires that a seizure by law enforcement, such as an arrest or lethal force, be balanced with the suspect's constitutional rights and the interests of law enforcement. In this case, Garner brought a wrongful death action against the police officer who shot and killed his unarmed son as he was fleeing after burglarizing an unoccupied house. The Court decided that the use of deadly force cannot be justified to kill nonviolent suspects, and the police's goals in making an arrest "do not outweigh the suspect's interest in his own life." Even though the Court stated a more restrictive use of lethal force policy was necessary by departments, many departments already had a more restrictive policy than the fleeing-felon statute (Walker & Fridell, 1992). In fact, many other factors influenced departments to change their policies regarding lethal force including political pressures and increased civil liability of police departments (Walker & Fridell, 1992). One study that examined lethal police use of force incidents after *Tennessee v. Garner* found that a more restrictive departmental lethal force policy lowered police shootings against African-Americans (Nowacki, 2015).

In *Graham v. Connor* (1989) the Court expanded *Garner*'s ruling to include all claims of excessive force by law enforcement must be analyzed under the Fourth Amendment's "objective reasonableness" standard. The Court identified that the reasonableness standard cannot be subject to one definition, but says reasonable use of force depends on the totality of the circumstances of each case. In other words, all facts of the case must be considered when deciding if force was unreasonable. The Court concludes that the officer's intention or state of mind when using force does not automatically make the use of force unconstitutional. In an examination of use of force claims ten years after the *Graham* decision, Ross (2002) found that the court ruled in favor of the police in 65% of cases involving excessive non-deadly force claims, and in 80% of lethal force claims.

The Court revisits the issue of excessive force claims under the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause in *Kingsley v. Hendrickson* (2015). In *Kingsley*, several jail officers were accused of using excessive force against a pretrial detained individual. The officers used force because Kingsley had placed a paper over the light in his cell and refused to take it down when officers asked him to. The Court affirmed that in order to prove an excessive force claim, the standard is to prove the officer's use of force was objectively unreasonable. The court listed examples of objective circumstances surrounding the use of force such as the relationship between the need for force and amount of force used, the effort made by the officer to limit force, and the threat perceived by the officer.

**Minnesota statutes.** Minnesota has two statutes related to the use of force by police officers. The first is Minnesota Statute § 609.06 which provides when use of force is authorized. Reasonable force may be used by a police officer when they are making a lawful arrest, executing a legal process, enforcing an order of the court, or during any other duty imposed upon

by the officer. This statute also allows force to be used to restrain a person with a mental illness to prevent self-injury, injury to another, or to control the person. Finally, deadly force may not be used against police officers who have announced their presence and are performing their official duties. The statute was enacted in 1963, and has remained virtually unchanged.

Minnesota Statute § 609.066 authorizes deadly force by peace officers. The statute identifies that the intentional discharge of a firearm when acting within the scope of the officer's duties and fired in the direction of a person constitutes lethal force, unless the firearm is loaded with less lethal munitions. Lethal force is justified in situations when the officer must protect themselves, or another from death or great bodily harm or to arrest or prevent the escape of a person who has committed or attempted to commit a felony involving force. This statute was enacted in 1978, and the only subsequent change was in 2001 when the definition was amended to no longer include less lethal force as deadly force.

The Minnesota deadly force statute requires a much higher threshold for justifying use of force than common law. In order for force to be justified, the officer must be protecting themselves or another from great bodily harm, rather than the subject has simply fled police after committing a felony. Both use of force and deadly force statutes give broad deference to police officers, and these laws can be improved. The statutes could include that officers may only use force as a last resort, and must employ de-escalation when reasonable. This has been attempted in Missouri in 2014, when a bill was introduced to amend Missouri's deadly force law to include using force as a last resort (Fazal, 2014). Even though departments may already mandate force as a last resort in their policies, amending state laws could ensure greater protection to subjects of use of force.

These cases and statutes give great deference to police officers. In his dissent in *Kingsley* (2015), the late Justice Scalia mentioned it should not be inferred that because a prison guard

may have used more force than necessary, this does not prove intent and it could be that the guard misjudged the use of force required in that situation. Justice Scalia's comment is exactly why police officer training needs to be addressed to limit use of force incidents. If officers are misjudging the use of force necessary in a situation, then training may fix this problem not only by teaching de-escalation techniques to reduce force, but also catering the amount of force needed to control a situation.

### **Mental Illness and Use of Force**

**Mental illness in the criminal justice system.** Individuals with serious mental illness are often at risk for police use of force. Deinstitutionalization resulted in many individuals with mental illness entering the criminal justice system because of state psychiatric hospitals closing, decreasing admittance to psychiatric hospitals, and new medication for treating mental illness (Slate & Johnson, 2008). Instead of entering hospitals patients are referred to community services to reduce the costs of long-term care in psychiatric hospitals, but adequate community services never truly developed (Slate & Johnson, 2008). When individuals with mental health concerns are experiencing a crisis, police are often called to control the situation. Officers report that dealing with individuals in a mental health crisis is a serious problem in their department (Borum et al., 1998). Officers report mixed feelings on if they are adequately trained to handle calls involving mental illness (Wells & Schafer, 2006).

Police often encounter individuals with mental illness. Approximately 75% to 92% of officers report experiencing at least one encounter involving mental illness (Borum, Deane, Steadman, & Morrissey, 1998; Wells & Schafer 2006). Individuals with mental illness who have come into contact with police often experience negative perceptions of police (Watson, Angell, Schafer, Morabito, & Robinson, 2008). In positive experiences with police, individuals with



mental illness stated officers were kind and let them explain their side of the story. During negative experiences individuals described unnecessary force and disrespect from police (Watson et al., 2008). Individuals with serious mental illness are sixteen times more likely to be killed by police than those without mental illness (Fuller, Lamb, Biasotti, & Snook, 2015). Of the 990 people fatally shot by police in 2015, 25% displayed signs of mental illness (The Washington Post, 2015). In Minnesota 45% of individuals who died after police encounters had a mental illness (Bjorhus, Webster, Hargarten, & Smith, 2016).

**Responses to mental illness crisis.** There are three common programs among police departments when handling a mental health crisis. The first is a police-based specialized police response, also known as the Crisis Intervention Team training model, which trains officers on how to respond to a mental illness crisis and works with mental health service providers (Deane, Steadman, Borum, Veysey, & Morrissey, 1999). Police-based specialized mental health programs employ mental health professionals to assist officers during a crisis. The third program is the mental-health based specialized mental health response, which are collaborations between police and mental health crisis teams (Deane et al., 1999).

After Memphis police officers fatally shot a man with serious mental illness, police, scholars, and mental health providers created the Crisis Intervention Team model (Watson & Fulambarker, 2012). This program was created as a result of police officers fatally shooting a man with serious mental illness. The forty hour long training teaches officers about mental illness and de-escalation techniques, and works with community resources that are able to get individuals help on crisis calls. This model aims to divert individuals in crisis out of jail and into mental health resources, while keeping officers and individuals safe during a mental health crisis.

**Training.** In Minnesota there are two training programs based on the CIT model, one through the Minnesota Crisis Intervention Team Officer's Association, and the other is the Mental Health Crisis Response Institute. Both training programs focus on de-escalation techniques when responding to mental health crisis situations. As of 2015, The Minnesota POST Board requires officers to know various mental illnesses and what the CIT model is (MN POST, 2015), but it is unclear how much de-escalation is taught in pre-service training. The Minnesota Legislature heard a bill in April of 2016 that would require all Minnesota police officers to go through a four-hour training session on de-escalation techniques during a mental health crisis (Feshir, 2016). If this training is being mandated, then the training must be evaluated to determine if officers are truly prepared to handle a mental health crisis call.

**CIT research.** The CIT model is increasingly popular, but since CIT training is still a fairly new initiative there is very little research on the training and the long-term effects of CIT on use of force incidents are unknown. 74% of officers employed by a department with a CIT model stated the training is effective in meeting the needs of individuals in crisis (Borum et al., 1998). Officers received CIT training have more positive perceptions on responding to crisis calls than before they went through the training (Wells & Schafer, 2006).

The effects of CIT on use of force and de-escalation are not well known. Some studies found that CIT officers are more likely to use verbal negotiation with individuals in crisis compared with non-CIT officers (Compton et al. 2014 II; Hanafi, Bahora, Demir, & Compton, 2008). Officers report that the de-escalation skills learned during CIT training helps reduce the risk of injury to officers and subjects (Hanafi et al., 2008). Physical resistance is the strongest predictor that police will use force on an individual with serious mental illness (Morabito et al., 2012). Studies found that CIT officers use less force on individuals with serious mental illness

when the individual is increasingly resistant (Morabito et al., 2012; Skeem & Bibeau, 2008). Conversely, one study found no difference in use of force between CIT and non-CIT officers (Compton et al., 2014 II). A review of existing research on CIT arrest and officer safety outcomes found that CIT has no impact on arrests or use of force (Taheri, 2016).

**Implementation issues.** One of the biggest issues with police officers responding to mental health crisis is the stigma surrounding mental illness. Violence is often associated with mental illness, but individuals with serious mental illness are more often the victims of violence rather than the perpetrators (Chloe, Teplin, & 1Abram, 2008). CIT training has can improve an officer's empathy towards individuals with serious mental illness (Compton et al., 2014 I). Another issue with widespread implementation of CIT is the training is not always available to rural areas, and small departments do not always have the resources available to send officers to the week long training (Compton et al., 2010; Skubby et al., 2013).

### **Training**

There is limited research on police officer training and available research contains older data and scattered topics. Training typically consists of pre-service training in an academy or college program and subsequent in-service training after being hired. Minnesota is the only state to require officers to have a two or four year college degree in law enforcement, but many departments across the country are requiring officers to hold college degrees.

**Pre-service training.** Pre-service training teaches officers basic police procedures such as writing reports, firearms, vehicle pursuit, and use of force before officers are certified police officers. In every state but Minnesota officers are trained at an academy. In some states officers must be sponsored by a department before attending pre-service training, and others allow students to attend without being sponsored. The national average training program is about 840

hours over 21 weeks (Reaves, 2016). After Minnesota officers receive their two or four-year degree, they will attend a “skills” course at a POST-accredited college. At skills Minnesota officers learn the policing procedures that officers typically learn at an academy. The training courses may differ by school. Once being hired by a department, officers may go through the department’s own training academy.

**Curriculum.** Community policing gained popularity in 1994 with the creation of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS, n.d.). Community policing focuses on collaborating with communities to solve issues, rather than police only responding after a crime occurred. Police training is still catching up to this new form of policing (Chappell, 2008), with an average of 40 hours of training devoted to community policing (Reaves, 2016). One study that looked at demographic differences in community-policing training and traditional-policing training found those with at least an associate’s degree achieved higher academy scores in the community-based policing training (Chappell, 2008). Women in community training were more likely to be employed (Chappell, 2008). Under a traditional policing training curriculum, recruits with a military background achieved higher academy scores, but were less likely to be hired after graduation. Non-white recruits achieved lower academy scores and were more likely to be hired under both types of training.

The implementation of community policing has also been studied in field training. Field training is a program officers may go through after completing pre-service training and upon being hired by a department. During field training new officers are paired with and evaluated by a more experienced officer. In a study that examined one department’s field training evaluations found that a majority of feedback involved traditional policing skills, such as officer safety and writing reports, and little on community policing (Chappell, 2007).

**Instructor viewpoints.** Lecture is predominately used to teach students, and instructors would like to incorporate more hands-on activities and scenarios in training (McCoy, 2006). Instructors expressed that lecture does not work to train adults in law enforcement and students need to actively participate in the classroom to retain information (McCoy, 2006). The Department of Justice found that 75% of police training academies required their instructors to have an average of four years of law enforcement experience (Reaves, 2016). Some studies suggest that current instructors are not prepared to teach recruits about community policing because they were trained in the practice of traditional policing (Chappell, 2007; McCoy, 2006).

**Training use of force.** Police are taught that a moment's hesitation can be deadly for the officer (Stoughton, 2014). The Department of Justice found that nationally 20% of training is concerned with use of force (Reaves, 2016). The majority of use of force training concerns firearms skills (71 hours) and the least amount of time is spent on nonlethal weapons (16 hours). There are a variety of ways deadly force is taught such as computer simulations, role-playing scenarios, and live-fire range training (Morrison, 2006). One study found the amount of training hours does not effect police use of force (Lee, Jang, Yun, Lim, & Tushaus, 2010). Perhaps the content of officer training needs to be examined in order to determine if training can decrease use of force incidents. Others argue that improving training may not result in better officers, instead hiring practices need to be changed to diversify police officers (Lantigua-Williams, 2016). Departments that require higher levels of college, require higher pre-employment screening standards and give many opportunities for training receive less use of force complaints (Stickle, 2016).

**Training implicit bias.** Implicit biases are biases that are unknown to the individual and that cannot be controlled (Levinson & Smith, 2012). Implicit bias can be activated by priming a

person with stereotypes of a specific group, which causes them to act differently than they would without the implicit bias (Levinson & Smith, 2012). Police officers may be at high risk for developing implicit racial bias due to repeatedly contacting minority individuals involved in crime and overestimating crime among minority citizens (Smith & Alpert, 2007). This leads to sub-consciously developing stereotypes that influence behavior (Smith & Alpert, 2007).

Research on implicit bias found that officers' individual beliefs such as the amount of violent crime in a community and cultural stereotypes of people of color, are related to bias in shoot-don't shoot simulators (Sadler, Correll, Park & Judd, 2012). The implicit association test (IAT) measures implicit bias by linking associations between concepts (groups of people) and stereotypes (Project Implicit, 2011). The score is based on the amount of time it takes a person to categorize words and images. Tests such as these could be used to determine bias among officers.

It is unclear to what extent officers are trained in implicit bias. According to a Bureau of Justice Statistics study, 97% of training academies instructed students on cultural diversity and human relations for an average of 12 hours (Reaves, 2016). The study did not include data on implicit racial bias training. Implicit bias differs from diversity and cultural competency training. Cultural competency training is focused on officers being able to understand and work with individuals of diverse backgrounds (Community Relations Service, n.d.). Diversity training teaches officers on aspects of cultures. Implicit bias training teaches officers prejudices, and how to deflect those prejudices. Officers do believe that diversity training should be taught, but many expressed that they are tired of hearing about diversity (Coon, 2016). There are new training initiatives that help officers recognize their own implicit biases and more and more officers are attending these trainings (Abdollah, 2015). After Jamar Clark was shot in Minneapolis, two-

thirds of Hennepin County officers went through bias training (Golden, Walsh, & Chanen, 2016).

### **Perceptions**

**Public.** Procedural justice promotes fairness in how police treat citizens, which fosters police legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). When the public views the police as fair and legitimate, they are more likely to comply with police (Bain, Robinson, & Conser, 2014). If citizens are complying with police, such as following orders and being cooperative, then police may be less inclined to use force. One London study suggests if citizens perceive police as a procedurally unjust institution, citizens are more likely to believe violence is a way to achieve goals, either personally or politically (Jackson, Huq, Bradford & Tyler, 2013). These types of attitudes can be seen during the Los Angeles riots of 1992 that stemmed from the acquittal of police officers in the beating of Rodney King; in 2015 during the Baltimore riots after Freddie Gray died from injuries sustained in police custody; and when five Dallas police officers were killed following the deaths of two African-American men at the hands of police (Karimi, Shoichet & Ellis, 2016; Levs, 2015; “Los Angeles Riots,” 2016). It is clear that the police have a lot at stake when public and police relations are negative.

Police officers patrol and invest resources in areas with high crime, and when residents have negative experiences they feel hostile towards police and police feel hostile towards residents (Bain, Robinson, & Conser, 2014). Citizens may draw their viewpoints of the police through a variety of sources such as personal encounters with police, close friends or family’s opinions, and the media (Miller & Davis, 2008). Personal encounters can have a ripple effect on others’ perceptions of police, as well. African Americans are more likely to view police behavior negatively when stopped by a white officer (Cochran & Warren, 2012). When one person is

subject to a negative encounter with police, they will tell their friends, neighbors, or relatives about the encounter (Miller & Davis, 2008). These friends, neighbors, and relatives repeat the story and in turn form their own negative viewpoints of officers. The media also plays a role in how people view the police. Miller and Davis (2008) found that New York City residents who frequently consume news are more likely to see the police as prone to misconduct.

In general, the public holds mostly favorable views of the police. A recent poll released by Gallup found 52% of Americans feel confident in the police (Jones, 2015). On the other hand, people of color typically have less favorable views of police than whites. African Americans retain the lowest confidence in the police, with only 30% confidence (Jones, 2015). A poll conducted by Pew Research Center shortly after Michael Brown was fatally shot by an officer in Ferguson, Missouri found 30% of all Americans and 57% of African Americans believe police do a poor job using the right amount of force (Page, 2014).

It is not entirely clear how Minnesotans view police officers. One study released by the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) found that 90% of respondents approve of their local police department (Norfleet, 2015). There are many significant problems with this study. The sample of this survey was only derived from registered voters in Minnesota, with a majority being white. What is missing from the sample of respondents is those who do not hold favorable views of the police: young, African American males. This study found 85% of respondents felt officers use good judgment in their use of deadly force (Norfleet, 2015). It is also important to note that this survey was conducted before the fatal Jamar Clark shooting in Minneapolis. Perhaps a better indication of how the community feels about police use of force is the protesting done by the Black Lives Matter movement in the Twin Cities after the shootings of Jamar Clark and Philando Castile (MPR News Staff, 2015).



**Black Lives Matter.** The Black Lives Matter movement began after George Zimmerman was acquitted of killing Trayvon Martin in 2012 (Black Lives Matter, n.d.). What started as a hashtag on social media quickly became a national campaign against injustice and institutionalized racism in many aspects of African-American lives (Day, 2015). Black Lives Matter is now a national organization with chapters throughout the country (Black Lives Matter, n.d.). BLM has used social media as a platform to bring attention to police violence against African-Americans (Day, 2015). Social media has allowed videos and images of use of force incidents to be acknowledged instantly, and protests can be quickly organized to address the incident (Day, 2015).

In response to police violence activists launched Campaign Zero. Campaign Zero is a series of policy solutions that address ten issues of police violence such as allowing more community oversight of police misconduct, requiring body cameras, and requiring independent investigations and prosecutions of police-involved killings (Campaign Zero, n.d.). Campaign Zero's policy solutions to limiting use of force include requiring de-escalation first, intervening in other officers' use of excessive force, and monitoring how police use force through reports and early intervention systems to correct officer's excessive force. Officers should go through periodic, scenario-based training for implicit bias, de-escalation, and cultural competency. Officers should also be tested in implicit racial bias and bias should be considered in law enforcement certification and hiring decisions (Campaign Zero, n.d.).

**Police.** Police officers' perceptions of procedural justice is important to consider as well, because of its implications for how officers do their job. Procedural justice, also called organizational justice, in a police department is the fairness in which they perceive their department treats individual officers (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Police officers feel that citizens hold

negative viewpoints of officers and that the media fosters these perceptions (Tooley, Linkenbach, Lande, & Lande, 2009). This is important for procedural justice, because if officers feel they lack support from the public they will most likely turn to their department for support. A study conducted among Argentina police officers found that procedural justice may enhance officers' compliance with departmental rules and policies. (Haas, Craen, Skogan, & Fleitas, 2015). The same study suggests when supervisors foster trust, officers may treat citizens more fairly. One study suggests officers are more likely to endorse community-oriented policing and reject the use of excessive force if they believe their agency treats them fairly (Trinkner, Tyler & Goff, 2016). The President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing (2015) recommends that police departments develop models of procedural justice, not only within the department itself, but also for officers' interactions with citizens.

### **Part 2: Exploration of Training**

A variety of experiences occurred during this project including obtaining POST documents, interviews, and training observations. The POST documents are the 2011 and 2015 Learning Objectives, and a curriculum guide from a POST-accredited college. The POST learning objectives are reviewed to understand what officers are required to know from their pre-service training. Reviewing the college curriculum guide is useful to understand how the required POST learning objectives are taught. Seven interviews were conducted with two police chiefs, three trainers, the League of Minnesota Cities, and a Black Lives Matter leader. Interviewing a diverse group of individuals gained an all-inclusive perspective of police use of force and training. The Minnesota Legislature is considering mandating Crisis Intervention Team training, so observing this training gave insight on how officers are taught mental illness and de-

escalation. Lastly, traffic stop training that included use of force training was observed to understand how use of force is being taught.

### **Document Analysis**

The Minnesota POST Board Education Coordinator provided the 2011 and 2015 Minnesota POST Learning Objectives. The two versions of the POST Learning Objectives were compared with each other to determine which use of force, diversity, and de-escalation objectives were removed from the previous objectives and which objectives are new. A rural POST-accredited college provided the curriculum guide. The curriculum guide helps to understand how use of force and de-escalation are taught at the college. Words such as, “demonstrate” or “describe,” may indicate whether students performed actions or only had to understand a concept.

**POST Learning Objectives.** The Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) is the licensing agency for Minnesota police officers. POST is charged with establishing policies that all police officers must follow and creating learning objectives that must be taught at POST training programs throughout the education and Skills component of training. In 2015 the POST Board updated its Learning Objectives from the 2011 Learning Objectives.

***Use of force.*** Use of force learning objectives include officer survival techniques, firearms training, defensive and physical control tactics, and knowing when force is lawfully authorized. Officer survival techniques focus on safely controlling critical situations. The Learning Objectives require officers to prepare for physical and psychological stressors that can happen before, during, and after a critical incident (2011, 1-1; 2015, 1.8.4). The new POST Objectives for officer survival are more focused on identifying and coping with stress. They

include a lot more information on an officer's well-being and mental health such as finding support services after critical incidents and understanding how police work may impact personal relationships (2015, 1.8.3 & 1.8.5). I think knowing the effects of stress on the job is important, and could possibly lead to limiting use of force if officers are able to cope with their stress. A significant change in the new Objectives is discussing the survival mindset for officers including knowing the physical and psychological effects on a use of force incident (2015, 1.8.1).

Although officers should be ready for anything, a survival mindset can be problematic because officers are constantly looking and preparing for a threat. The Objectives also state officers should know the long term effects of hypervigilance (2015, 1.8.3), which may counteract the survival mindset of an officer.

Officers must understand when force is authorized by law and department policy, and the liability that comes with using unauthorized use of force. The Objectives require that officers participate in and analyze use of force scenarios (2015, 4.3.3). The 2011 Objectives recommended that officers learn about civil rights issues related to use of force and to participate in deadly force exercises, but these recommendations were taken out of the 2015 Objectives (2011, 1-2 Recommended Content). Officers should be required to understand the civil rights implications of use of force, because force subjects are disproportionately people of color.

Firearms training is concerned with operating handguns and long guns in various situations. Officers learn to shoot from various distances, positions, lighting conditions, and in various subject situations. The only change from the 2011 to 2015 Objectives is the recommendation that programs use "shoot no-shoot" targets was taken out for 2015. Using shoot no-shoot targets could be utilized to identify implicit bias in officers, and this method should be studied to determine if officers can recognize their biases.

Defensive tactics and physical control tactics are the techniques officers use to control a subject. These techniques encompass a broad range of force including fighting, handcuffing, batons, electronic control weapons (TASERS) and chemical agents. The 2011 Objectives included information on verbal and nonverbal communication (2011, 1-4) and recommended teaching communication behaviors that should be avoided (although it was not stated what behaviors that entailed). This information is not included in the same section in the 2015 Objectives, and is instead included under the “Conflict Management and Mediation” section. I feel it is important to include these skills with use of force techniques, because it teaches officers how to de-escalate a situation before force is needed. One troublesome objective that is included in both versions is knowledge of excited delirium. Excited delirium is a controversial condition in which a subject displays aggression, “superhuman” strength, and often ends in sudden death while in police custody. This condition is currently not recognized by the American Medical Association or the American Psychological Association (Jouvenal, 2015).

***Decision making and de-escalation.*** Critical thinking skills are imperative for police officers to make quick decisions during demanding situations. Officers learn critical thinking, decision making and discretion during their POST education. The Objectives require that officers apply critical thinking, logic, and decision-making to problems law enforcement face (2011, 5-3; 2015, 1.3 & 1.4). There is more focus on decision-making skills and using activities to apply those skills in the 2015 Objectives.

Officers need to know the importance of communication. The 2015 Objectives require officers to learn active listening skills (paraphrasing, reflecting meaning, summarizing) and how language, stress and bias can be barriers to communication (2015, 1.1). The 2015 Objectives for “Conflict Management and Mediation” have been improved to include de-escalation techniques

and basic understanding of abnormal psychology (2015, 2.21.7 & 2.21.1). The new Objectives also bring in more information on mental illness and the influence that de-escalation skills can have on crisis situations (2015, 2.21.8). The previous Objectives included information on mediation skills, and this was taken out for the current Objectives (2011, 5-11).

The biggest changes in the 2015 Objectives is the “Crisis Intervention and Mental Illness Crisis” section. Officers must know symptoms of mental illnesses, such as, schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (2015, 2.20.2). The previous Objectives required officers to know signs of individuals in crisis, de-escalation skills, and what mental health services are available in Minnesota (2011, 5-4). Officers now need to know the medications individuals with serious illnesses may take, the bias of mental illness, how substance abuse can contribute to mental illness, and issues military veterans may have reintegrating into society. Officers participate in a situation involving mental illness and demonstrate de-escalation skills (2015, 3.14.56). Many of the techniques listed to de-escalate a crisis situation including “being patient, calm, honest and compassionate” are skills that should be used in any interaction between law enforcement and citizens, not exclusively for individuals in crisis. Finally, excited delirium is also included in this section and its relation to mental illness and drugs (2015, 2.20.4). This needs to be taken out of the POST education, because it is not a recognized medical condition.

***Diversity and racial bias.*** Officers are required to learn about diversity of cultures, gender, age, status, disability, and sexual orientation, and how diversity affects law enforcement. Officers need to know cultural differences to facilitate with information gathering and promote officer safety (2011, 3-2; 2015: 1.6.3). In 2011, one objective was to understand the impact of media images on perception. This was removed for the 2015 Objectives. I feel this objective

should be included in the educational component of training because of media's impact on implicit bias. Officers need to know how communication may differ among various cultures and appropriate responses to situations involving individuals of diverse backgrounds (2011, 3-2; 2015, 1.6.5). A new addition to the 2015 Objectives is to research the relationship between crime and being underprivileged (1.6.8). The Objectives are vague on which cultures and culturally appropriate responses are taught.

Racially based profiling is a significant concern of law enforcement. Officers are required to know what racially based profiling is, how racial profiling affects trust between citizens and law enforcement, and how to handle the perception of biased treatment by law enforcement (2015, 2.12.1). The Objectives do not mention implicit bias, and officers should be required to recognize their own biases. This could potentially decrease use of force incidents by teaching officers not to be fearful of certain groups based on stereotypes.

**POST college curriculum guide.** A curriculum guide was obtained from a POST-accredited college that has two-year law enforcement programs and the summer Skills program. The two-year programs involve academic coursework of the criminal justice system and law enforcement concepts, and practical exercises of law enforcement techniques. The summer Skills certificate is a 480-hour program over ten weeks where students learn law enforcement techniques such as investigations, firearms, report writing, and use of force. The average basic law enforcement training program is about 840 hours over twenty-one weeks (Reaves, 2016). Minnesota's Skills training is probably shorter than the national average because Minnesota is the only state to require officers obtain at least a two-year degree.

***Degree options.*** This college has several options for law enforcement training. One program is the Law Enforcement Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree, and students can

enter this program with a high school diploma or GED. The Law Enforcement Associate in Science (AS) degree is designed for students who plan to obtain a four-year degree after completion of the program. The Law Enforcement Career Transition program is for students who have already obtained at least an associate's degree or have a military background and meet the POST military reciprocity requirements. Students pursuing the AS degree and transition degree would both have to complete the Summer Skills certificate program, whereas the AAS degree includes the Skills requirement throughout the program. The college also contracts with other colleges to provide Skills for students outside this college.

*Use of force.* The college offers four use of force related courses. The Physical Training/Use of Force Training course is for students to improve physical abilities for a use of force situation. The Firearms/Officer Survival Tactics course expects students to safely handle various firearms, know the physiological effects after a critical incident, and demonstrate techniques for responding to critical incidents. One course objective states students should understand the use of body language and voice to de-escalate a situation. Police Tactical Management Training teaches students to respond to in-progress crimes and report-writing. Course learning objectives include the ability to conduct interviews, arrest procedures, the application of deadly force, and verbal and physical de-escalation. The Use of Force Management Training course teaches students defensive tactics. Students demonstrate physical use of force, batons, tasers, and chemical agents, and are also expected to explain escalation and de-escalation of force. De-escalation is scattered throughout use of force training, but it is unclear if students have the opportunity to practice de-escalation in scenarios or if de-escalation is just taught in a classroom lecture.



*De-escalation and diversity.* There is one required course that relates to de-escalation skills, which is Tactical Communications/Relations. Tactical Communications/Relations is focused on interpersonal communication and prepares students for the emotional toll of working in law enforcement. Students can take elective courses like Social Problems and Critical Thinking in Society, but the courses are not law enforcement specific. Students are required to take a Diversity/Community Policing/Domestic Abuse and Victimization course. This course covers many aspects of policing, including, racial profiling, cultural diversity and mental illness. Since so many topics are covered in one course, officers may not spend much time learning about various cultures, recognizing mental illnesses, or understanding racial bias.

### **Interviews**

During the course of this project seven interviews were conducted with individuals who are involved in the policing community including three police officer trainers, two police chiefs, a Black Lives Matter leader, and the League of Minnesota Cities. The interviews provided information on training and other policing issues from different viewpoints. This information was difficult to obtain from a literature review because of the limited research on officer training. The open-ended interview questions depended on the participant's role with the police. During the course of the interviews seventeen topics were brought up surrounding policing such as training, hiring practices, law and policy, and public and media relations.

Trainers were questioned about the content of training, how training has changed over time, and their own training experiences. The interview with Trainer 1 took place at a suburban POST-accredited college on June 24, 2016 and lasted for three hours. The interview with Trainer 2 was conducted over email; the trainer provided their curriculum vitae and answers to questions. The interview with Trainer 3 occurred at a rural POST-accredited college on July 28, 2016 and

lasted for one hour. Police chiefs were asked about hiring practices, what they wish to see in training, and their own training experiences. Chief 1 was interviewed at an urban police department on August 23, 2016 and lasted for half an hour. The interview with Chief 2 was conducted over the phone on July 7, 2016 and took a half an hour. The Black Lives Matter leader, who also trains officers around the country, was asked about the content of their training and how Black Lives Matter is shaping the conversation around policing. The interview with the Black Lives Matter leader took place at Hamline University on July 14, 2016 and lasted for one hour. The League of Minnesota Cities was asked about what cities are currently doing in the wake of a force incident. The interview with The League of Minnesota Cities employees took place at The League of Minnesota Cities on July 27, 2016 over the course of an hour. Table 1 contains all of the interview participants' topic responses.

**Use of force training.** Five out of seven interview participants directly addressed use of force training. One chief was hesitant to speak on use of force training, because the department employed an in-house use of force expert. The Black Lives Matter leader could not directly speak to use of force training, because they did not train on use of force. The first trainer stated trainees are taught to think tactically when using force, if one technique does not use force then try something else. This trainer also described how training has evolved over time, from mostly lecture to dynamic scenario-based training. A second trainer spoke about how training has not been around for very long and has continued to change for the better. The third trainer explained the importance of physical fitness and when an officer knows their abilities they should not use force out of fear. One chief said Minnesota has leading standards in training. The League of Minnesota Cities explained they offer online POST-accredited use of force training. Two individuals brought up the purpose of using force. A trainer stated force is used to incapacitate

Table 1

*Responses of Interview Participants*

*Note:* “Yes,” indicates the participant discussed the topic. “No” indicates the participant did not discuss the topic.

Topics	Trainer 1	Trainer 2	Trainer 3	Chief 1	Chief 2	Black Lives Matter Leader	League of MN Cities
Use of force training	Yes, trained to think tactically with force (if one technique does not work, try something else)	Yes, training has not been around for long and continues to develop for the better, resulting in more professional officers	Yes, focus on physical fitness when training use of force	No	Yes, Minnesota has leading standards in training	No	Yes, LMC offers some use of force training
Physiology training	Yes, are trained to keep stress response in mind	No	Yes, when focusing on physical fitness it teaches officers to not be in fear when force is needed	No	Yes, need to know own stress response	No	No
Purpose of force	Yes, use force to incapacitate immediately, while balancing pain and injury with control	No	No	Yes, need to be aware only of the actions leading up to force, not using force simply because someone looks different from you	No	No	No

De-escalation	Yes, are trained to de-escalate	No	Yes, wants more flexibility in program to work on critical thinking skills	No	Yes, more emphasis in past few years but too soon to tell if effective	Yes, officers have no incentive to de-escalate	Yes, needed
Racial bias training	Yes, cannot change prejudices, so behavior must be changed	No	Yes, can help and is needed	Yes, needed	No	Yes, needed	Yes, needed
Implicit bias training	No	No	No	Yes, needed	No	Yes, needed	Yes, needed
Cultural competence training	No	No	No	Yes, needed	No	Yes, needed	Yes, needed
Mental illness training	No	No	Yes, does not know much about it	Yes, needed because compliance looks different	Yes, needed because behavior of mentally ill can seem threatening to officers; all of the department's officers will go through CIT training	Yes, needed	Yes, needed
More training	Yes, need more time in training	No	Yes, wants more flexibility in training for critical thinking skills	No	Yes, needed	Yes, officers already think they have enough training	No
Hiring practices/Academy screening	Yes, before POST required licensing departments hired the biggest individuals, after	Yes, since training is more standardized new hires have more training	Yes, marketing of policing needs to be changed to involve community policing, not just guns and fights	Yes, respect, kindness, compassion; academies need to be better about not just	Yes, new hires need common sense	Yes, psychological exam proven to be biased; need more women; officers want	No

	licensing began departments started to hire a more diverse demographic	and are more professional		getting students through the door; need better screening in the academy		authority	
Demographics/Diversity in police	Yes, policing changes with diversity	No	No	No	Yes, young have limited experience, military background may not mean a better officer	Yes, need more diversity	No
Laws/Policy	Yes, laws are clear; need procedural justice within department	Yes, law enforcement has suffered from not having national training standards	No	No	Yes, need more policy on how to handle use of force situation	Yes, policy needs to hold officers accountable	Yes, LMC helps create model policies
Accountability	Yes, officers do cover for other officers	No	No	No	Yes, if officers killed someone for no reason they should be arrested	Yes, there is no accountability	No
Goal of policing	No	No	Yes, policing needs to be community focused and involved	Yes, goal of policing is to protect the community and this needs the support of public	Yes, policing is more professional and transparent, citizens should be viewed as customers	No	No
Militarization	Yes, police are Para-military	No	No	No	Yes, policing has come far from militarization	Yes, police is based on military model	No

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Public relations/perceptions	Yes, public opinion is not important during force incidents; citizen classes offered by police departments can help opinion	Yes, public does not understand decision making process of officers	Yes, law enforcement is face of the public when bad things happen and police get bad reputation; need transparency; need to get police chiefs, trainers, lawmakers, League of Minnesota Cities together to improve training and public perception	Yes, need community involvement	Yes, majority of people view police favorably; need to know how people want to be policed; people need to talk through differences to change perceptions	Yes, poor relations with public and police; too many people think all cops are good	Yes, cities need more citizen outreach, a place for citizen input and transparency
Media	No	Yes, media can change perceptions	No	Yes, controversial for both sides (police and subjects)	Yes, the way things are worded has an effect on public perception	Yes, individual reporters can be helpful to BLM; BLM has to change story behind use of force incidents	Yes, League can help with media relations when police-involved incidents happen

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the subject immediately, while balancing pain and injury with control. A chief said officers need to be aware of only the actions leading up to needing to use force, and not to use force simply because someone looks different.

**Racial bias training.** When asked about racial bias training, five out of seven interview participants agreed officers need to be trained on bias. Most individuals simply stated bias training can help, but did not elaborate further on what the training should consist of. One trainer stated that prejudices cannot be changed, but behavior can. Three participants, one chief, the Black Lives Matter leader, and the League of Minnesota Cities, all said implicit bias and cultural competency training is needed for officers. The Black Lives Matter leader trains officers on cultural competency and re-entry of incarcerated individuals, and stated officers already think they have enough training.

**De-escalation and mental illness training.** A majority of participants agreed mental illness training is needed. Both chiefs stated compliance can look different with individuals with serious mental illness, so officers need to know what those behaviors look like and how to react to them. De-escalation training received mixed responses from five out of seven participants. One trainer stated officers are trained to de-escalate when they can. Another expressed they would like more flexibility in the POST program to work on critical thinking skills. One chief stated even though there has been more emphasis on de-escalation in the past few years, it is too soon to tell if the training is effective. The Black Lives Matter leader stated officers have no incentive to de-escalate a situation, because officers will cover for each other and officers are not held accountable for excessive force.

**Hiring practices and diversity in law enforcement.** Six out of seven interview participants spoke about hiring practices and academy screening. Both chiefs said they look for

common sense, respect, kindness, and compassion in officers. One chief also said there needs to be better screening in the academy such as asking people why they want to be in law enforcement. One trainer expressed that the marketing of policing needs to be changed. This trainer believes there should be less gunfights shown and more images of helping people. The Black Lives Matter Leader stated more women need to be in law enforcement, because women have necessary de-escalation skills. Three individuals brought up demographics and diversity of police officers. One trainer stated policing changes when there is more diversity of officers. A chief stated officers with a military background may not necessarily make better officers, because police officers are not in combat with citizens.

**Law and policies.** Laws and policies were brought up in five out of seven interviews, with mixed reactions. One trainer felt the laws regarding use of force are clear and a national standard on using force may not be helpful, because cops will cover for other cops. Another trainer felt law enforcement needs national standards. One chief said policy on how to handle use of force incidents is needed. Finally, Black Lives Matter stated policy needs to be enforced and hold officers accountable. This individual also felt that currently officers are not held accountable.

**Public relations.** The most popular topic was the relationship between the public and police. Each interview participant spoke about public perceptions. All participants agreed that there needs to be community involvement and transparency when police-involved shootings occur. One police chief believed a majority of people view the police favorably. However, the Black Lives Matter leader felt too many people believe all cops are good. All three trainers said the public does not understand what happens during use of force incidents or the reasoning behind officer's decisions. During four out of seven interviews the media was discussed. Each



participant felt the media can help or hinder public relations depending on how things are worded and which side the story is skewed towards (the subject's side or the police's side).

These interviews give a holistic viewpoint of why officers use force. Over the course of these interviews, participants considered hiring practices, training, policies, and public perception in relation to use of force. From these interviews it is understood that police work attracts individuals who are interested in the exciting, action-packed aspect of police work. However, departments want to hire individuals who are compassionate and want to help people. Use of force training teaches officers to use many techniques to control a subject, with a focus on physical fitness and stress response so students do not use force out of fear. Little is known about the effects of de-escalation, racial bias, and mental illness training. When asked about how training should be changed, three individuals stated there needs to be more time in training to work on critical thinking skills when using force. Policies on training and when to use force are debatable within the policing community. Some believe the laws are clear on when to use force, whereas others feel policies need to be more unified and hold officers accountable. Finally, a majority of participants said there needs to be transparency and community involvement when a force incident happens.

### **Training Observations**

Forty hours of Crisis Intervention Team training were observed at Maple Grove High School in Maple Grove, Minnesota during the week of August 1st-5th, 2016 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Four hours of training involving use of force were observed at a suburban POST-accredited college in Minnesota on June 27, 2016 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

**CIT training.** The Minnesota CIT Officers Association training provides various CIT training courses, including, a half-day, one day, and the 40-hour certificate course (n.d.).

Minnesota's CIT is focused on improving officer response to mental health crisis and partnering with local mental health providers. Over the five-day course officers received a comprehensive review on mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, autism, and personality disorders. The main trainers for the course were two police officers.

*Daily activities.* On the first day of training officers were given an introduction to the CIT model by the main trainers. Officers then heard from a panel of parents with children who have mental illness. The parents described how they found out their child has mental illness and their experiences with law enforcement. The main trainers then gave presentations on mental illness, de-escalation skills and active listening skills. The main trainers described mental illness as a "brain disease." Officers were taught de-escalation skills in relation to the severity of the crisis. During a mild crisis the officer should use active listening skills, identify the level of functioning by the person in crisis, reduce stimuli by turning off lights, sirens, and radios, and develop a strategy for care with the caregivers. During a moderate crisis officers should establish boundaries for behavior and identify delusional or hallucinatory activity. A severe crisis calls for directive communication, assertive verbal directions, breaking delusional or hallucinatory activity and triggering what can make the person in crisis focus.

The second day started with a presentation by a child psychiatrist on issues specific to children with mental illness and medications used to treat mental illness in children. The child psychiatrist explained symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, autism, bipolar disorder, and depression in children. A retired police officer who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) while on duty spoke about his experience with mental illness. The officer explained how he sustained the injury and how the injury has affected his life. The main

trainers gave presentations on mental illness and de-escalation skills. The day ended with two and a half hours of role-play scenarios. The main trainers for the course covered panic disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and phobias. The trainers explained officers should try to reduce anxiety and gain compliance through building trust, motivating the individual in crisis, and being understanding to the individual's situation while keeping in mind personal survival.

On the third day a military veteran gave a presentation on military reintegration and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The military veteran explained when responding to a veteran in crisis officers should give clear, direct orders when diffusing the situation; because veterans are used to authority and following orders. A clinical social worker from the Veteran's Affairs Hospital then presented on suicide prevention. The social worker described warning signs of suicidal individuals and how to help veterans in crisis. The social worker encouraged the officers to address their own biases around suicide, because bias directly impacts how they will handle a crisis situation. The main trainers then reviewed information on PTSD and suicide. Finally, officers participated in two and half hours of role-play scenarios.

The fourth day of training started with a presentation on personality disorders by the main trainers. The main trainers focused on symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder and antisocial personality disorder. When handling an individual with a personality disorder, officers needed to understand their own emotional reactions. Then, officers did three hours of role-play and visited one of two mental illness hospitals in the Twin Cities. Finally, a doctor presented on geriatric mental health issues which covered delirium, dementia, and depression.

Finally, the fifth day of training started with a presentation by a CIT trainer on suicide by cop and excited delirium. The CIT trainer explained behaviors exhibited by individuals planning

to commit suicide by cop including showing a weapon, pointing the weapon at police, and threats and assaultive behaviors towards others. Officers were told officer safety comes first when dealing with these individuals and they should be prepared to take appropriate action. Excited delirium was described as a state of extreme mental and physiological excitement where individuals show extreme strength and agitation. The trainer stated excited delirium may result in sudden death while in custody. Two employees of a community mental health resource discussed the services they provide to individuals in crisis. The community mental health resource is based in the twin cities and deploys mental health crisis teams to families in need of help. The goal of this organization is to get people into the mental health system and avoid the court system. The Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disability presented on civil commitment. He explained the legal requirements for officers to commit an individual in crisis into a mental health facility. Officers then participated in three more hours of role-play scenarios.

During the role-playing scenarios the officers used de-escalation skills during a crisis scenario with a professional actor. Officers participated in a total of eleven hours of role-play. While participating in the scenario, officers gained and lost compliance with the individual in crisis. After the scenarios were completed a debriefing session allowed officers to discuss the scenarios.

*Observations.* The majority of officers present at this training were school resource officers. I felt this training did well with catering the training to officers working with children by offering a lot of information on children with mental illness. On the first day of training everyone in attendance explained what they wanted to learn from the training and what they were currently seeing on crisis calls. I observed many officers describe individuals in crisis as “crazy;” and the trainers never addressed these stigmas. One purpose of CIT is to address

stereotypes of mental illness. Therefore, stigmas need to be addressed at the beginning of training. The main trainers reported some information that was inaccurate and dated. For example, one instructor gave a lecture on excited delirium, but excited delirium is not a medical or mental health condition (Jouvenal, 2015).

Officers were taught to use certain de-escalation skills depending on the severity of the crisis. Trainers did not describe characteristics of a mild, moderate, and severe crisis; so it is unclear how officers should differentiate between which skills to use depending on the crisis. Officers need to learn to be flexible with crisis situations and be ready to employ a wide variety of skills depending on if the crisis escalates or de-escalates. De-escalation skills need to be emphasized at every aspect of the training. Often times the main trainers would mention a crisis situation they have been in, but did not discuss how they resolved the situation. When trainers talk about crisis situations they have been in, they should also discuss the resolution to the situation.

For future training courses, it may be best if a trained psychologist teaches the information on mental illness to ensure accurate information is given. Since many officers work in diverse communities, cultural aspects of mental illness need to be introduced to officers. Officers should learn about other contributing factors of mental illness, such as, poverty and traumatic incidents. Many of the community resources available to officers were based in Hennepin County, Minnesota. Officers whose jurisdiction is not in Hennepin County were not told of resources available to them. In order for police to form collaborative partnerships with community mental health programs, officers will need to be aware of what those programs are. Much of this training was lecture-based and CIT training needs to be interactive to include group discussions, time for reflection, and encourage officers to ask questions of presenters. The

content of this training should be further studied to determine if CIT can really prepare officers for handling crisis situations.

**Traffic stop training.** During this training officers participated in a traffic stop where the subject could pose a threat and may or may not be compliant. All subjects got out of the vehicle, either while complying or not complying with the officer's commands. After the officer initiated the traffic stop and interacted with the subject, a backup officer would come to help. There were seven scenarios total, where five scenarios included the subjects with weapons and one subject was compliant with the officer for the entire scenario.

**Scenarios.** In the first scenario a subject had a gun in the car that was visible to the officer and was compliant with all of the officer's commands. The officer did not use their gun. In the second scenario the subject had a gun, but was not compliant, and resulted in a gunfight between the officer and subject. The third scenario involved two subjects with guns, who were not compliant and resulted in a gunfight. In the fourth scenario a suicidal subject with a gun got out of the car immediately and walked towards the officer, then the officer used their gun to kill the subject. The fifth scenario was a deaf subject who got out of the vehicle and held up a card that read "I am deaf" to the officer. The subject did not comply with commands and the officer used their weapon to threaten the subject before the card was shown. In the sixth scenario, the subject had a medical emergency and passed out in the vehicle. The officer did not use their weapon and rendered medical aid. In the final scenario, the subject began as compliant, then pulled out a knife and stabbed the officer. The officer did use their gun to kill the subject.

**Trainer comments.** The purpose of these scenarios was to put officers under stress and use a variety of skills and techniques in the situation. After each scenario, the trainers and officers would come together to discuss the scenario, what the officer did well, and what could

be improved. Trainers commended one officer for explaining to a compliant subject what the officer was doing while searching for weapons. The trainers stressed that even during a gunfight officers still need to be giving commands to subjects. One trainer stated if the officer sees a gun in the vehicle the officer should tell the subject, “if you put your hand on the gun, I may shoot you.” Trainers emphasized making a plan and communicating with their backup officer. If the officer used deadly force, the trainers discussed what to write in a report when describing why deadly force was needed.

*Observations.* Throughout these scenarios the officers did not have a chance to de-escalate the situation. In three of the scenarios subjects got out of the vehicle with weapons as soon as the vehicle stopped. In only two scenarios officers did not use their weapon at all. During this training officers carried their gun, baton, and handcuffs on them. Officers should be able to demonstrate using less-lethal weapons such as tasers and pepper spray to control a subject. Because of these factors it was difficult to determine how officers use de-escalation skills and how trainers teach de-escalation. It is imperative that officers learn how to use the appropriate amount of force in a critical situation, but officers also need to exercise their de-escalation skills in training and scenarios need to give officers the opportunity to de-escalate.

## **Conclusions**

This project aimed to understand how police officer training teaches officers about use of force, de-escalation, and cultural competency. The POST documents, interviews, and training observations reveal that use of force training does not currently incorporate de-escalation into scenario-based training. Current de-escalation training is focused on crisis situations involving mental illness, even though de-escalation can be used in any contact with citizens. Pre-service training does not include enough cultural competency training for officers to be aware of their

own biases and appropriately interact with individuals of different backgrounds. As tension between the police and public continues to grow, it is imperative that actions are taken to limit use of force. Based on this project recommendations for future research and improvements to training and hiring practices are proposed.

### **Part III: Recommendations**

#### **Police Use of Force Training That Reduces Force Incidents**

Police use of force incidents have been brought to the public's attention through increased media scrutiny and protesting emerging across the country. Police training teaches officers many techniques to use force, but does not equip officers to de-escalate a situation without force. Although training can be improved to potentially decrease use of force incidents, recruitment and hiring practices should also be considered to hire officers that have the skills to de-escalate crisis situations.

#### **Current Research**

**Public opinion.** A Gallup poll found 52% of all Americans feel confident in the police, but only 30% of African Americans feel confident in the police (Jones, 2015). Of 715,500 nonfatal police contacts, only 1.6% resulted in force (Hyland, Langton & Davis, 2015). Approximately 35% of individuals that experienced use of force were minority citizens.

**Implicit bias.** Officers most likely use force due to verbal or physical subject resistance (Rojek, Alpert & Smith, 2012). Implicit racial bias may also contribute to the decision to use force. Implicit bias is a bias that is unknown to the individual, and causes the individual to act differently than they would without the bias (Levinson & Smith, 2012). Little is known about implicit bias and to what extent it affects police work. Police officers may be at high risk for developing implicit racial bias due to repeatedly contacting minority individuals involved in



crime, resulting in overestimating crime rates among minority citizens and developing stereotypes that influence behavior (Smith & Alpert, 2014). More research is needed to determine if officers can be trained to recognize implicit bias. Even if officers are able to recognize bias, can they separate implicit bias from use of force decision-making? Although implicit bias training is gaining attention from police and researchers alike, it is unknown if the training can be effective.

**Mental illness.** Individuals with serious mental illness are sixteen times more likely to be killed by police than subjects without mental illness (Fuller, Lamb, Biasotti & Snook, 2015). This may be due to stigmas surrounding violence and mental illness, and officers being ill-prepared to handle a crisis situation involving mental illness. Crisis Intervention Team training is a popular model for training officers in de-escalation techniques for individuals with mental illness, but research provides little consensus on how effective the training is. Are officers provided with accurate information on mental illness? Are the de-escalation skills officers learn in training effective in a crisis situation? Finally, does CIT training lower use of force and deter individuals in crisis from going to jail? CIT training needs to be further evaluated to determine if the training is effective.

**Training.** Minnesota is the only state to require police officers to have at least a two-year college degree. College-educated officers are less likely to use force (McElvain & Kposowa, 2004). The average pre-service training is 840 hours consisting of legal concepts, report writing, firearms, and use of force (Reaves, 2016). Approximately 20% of training is spent on use of force and a majority of academies receive about 12 hours of training on human relations and cultural diversity. Use of force training needs to be further studied. How are officers trained to use force in relation to subject resistance? Does training teach officers to overuse force when a

threat is minimal? Can officers be trained to use force only in relation to subject resistance, or do certain traits in an officer make them more likely to use force? To have the best possible training for officers, training will need to be re-evaluated and redefined.

### **Recommendations**

**Changing the marketing of police work.** There are endless tv shows and movies depicting police work as taking down bad guys with high speed car chases and guns drawn. This marketing attracts officers with a warrior mindset, instead of officers ready to be guardians. In order to recruit the best possible officers, police work should be marketed as the job officers actually do, which is helping people and working with communities.

**Improve screening before and during training.** Departments that have high pre-employment screening standards receive less use of force complaints (Stickle, 2016). Prospective students should go through background checks and be tested for racial and gender bias before and during training. When practicing use of force, students should be monitored for any tendency to overuse force and for any bias in the decision to use force.

**Diversify departments by hiring more women and racial minorities.** Although research is inconclusive on if women and minority officers are less prone to use force, young male officers are more likely to use force. Departments also need to strive for fair hiring processes when screening candidates (Jany, 2017).

**Prepare officers with mental illness training that teaches de-escalation.** Minnesota does require new officers to know what the Crisis Intervention Team model is and various mental illnesses (MN POST, 2015). Simply knowing symptoms of mental illnesses may not be enough to de-escalate a situation involving mental illness. Officers should be taught what actions

can be more harmful than helpful when handling a crisis situation and how to de-escalate a situation involving mental illness.

**Train with implicit bias and cultural competency.** Minnesota officers are required to learn about cultural groups officers may encounter, but it is unclear if officers are equipped to interact with diverse groups. New training initiatives teach officers to recognize their own biases that may affect their jobs (Abdollah, 2015). Implicit bias training and cultural competency training should be used throughout pre-service training to ensure officers have the skills they need to interact with diverse individuals.

**Integrate de-escalation training into all aspects of use of force training.** In training officers should experience how a situation can escalate depending on the officer's and subject's words and actions. Officers should display de-escalation skills throughout training to prepare for crisis situations and any interaction with citizens. De-escalation needs to be used in use of force scenario training.

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