College of Nursing
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Stephen James, PhD
College of Nursing
Washington State University Health Sciences
412 E. Spokane Falls Blvd
Spokane, WA 99202

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Little Hoover Commission on Law Enforcement Training
925 L Street, Suite 805
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Commissionaires,

There is a (not so well kept) dirty little secret about law enforcement training: in many critical areas of policing there is very little evidence to show that training changes behavior on the street. When training is touted as research or evidence based, it often refers to studies showing pre/post changes in knowledge or attitudes, or in some cases, decision-making and behavior, but not in the training environment. Some training "validation" only asks the officer's opinion of whether or not they liked or "got something from" the training. This is not enough. It is not enough to keep our officers safe, our communities safe, or justify the taxpayer investment in law enforcement training. True validation of training inventions must be conducted; how does it change behavior in the field?

In 2009, I joined my mentor Dr. Bryan Vila in creating the lab I have run since 2015. This lab has the fundamental mission of understanding what level of performance is possible given the stresses law enforcement are under (e.g. physiological arousal, fatigue). To measure stressor impact on performance, our research group had to develop robust metrics for evaluating officer performance. These metrics of desired behaviors have formed the bases of our research group's social interaction and bias training development and evaluation. Our work on the causes and impact of law enforcement stressors that degrade performance has informed the development and analysis of fatigue and stress management training.

I will lay out the critical areas of police training reform I believe are essential to keeping officers and communities safe while maximizing taxpayer ROI; these insights are gleaned from more than a decade of research and training development in officer safety and performance. I would like to caveat the following comments with the acknowledgement that they are not bound by the financial or logistical constraints currently facing law enforcement agencies.

Behavior change in the field is the most critical element of training evaluation. What an officer 'knows and feels' is irrelevant if it does not direct their 'decisions and actions'. Implicit bias training, for example, is critical, but if an officer leaves a training session with an understanding of the concept but not an awareness of how it directs their behavior, the training opportunity is lost. My research group is conducting this type of rigorous training evaluation in a number of critical topic areas.

1) We are currently engaged in the evaluation of two modalities of Implicit Bias training with the Sacramento Police Department. This evaluation is funded by the US DOJ National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Our evaluation is comparing the efficacy of traditional classroom-based bias training with an interactive simulation-based bias training. We followed 300 officers' body camera footage over a 12-month period and coded their behavior while interacting with community members. Four cohorts were created: a control group (receiving no bias training), a classroom bias training cohort, a simulation bias training cohort, and a smaller cohort that received both training modalities. Post training, we are currently following each cohort's body camera footage. Cohort is blinded to the coders. We are asking a number of critical questions: a) did the training change behavior in the field, b) if so, which modality was more effective, and c) how long did the training effect last (did officers revert to pre-training behavior?). This is the first behavioral evaluation of the effectiveness of implicit bias training.

2) Another training evaluation topic area we are engaged in is training to reduce officer fatigue and stress. We have several evaluations under way: i) for the UK Police College (selected constabularies UK wide), ii) for Ottawa (Canada) Police Service, iii) CDC NIOSH (nationwide), and iv) for US DOJ NIJ (Seattle Police Department). For these evaluations we monitored officer

sleep, stress, and other health and work/personal life-related measures prior to the training interventions. We then followed up with post-intervention behavioral monitoring.

Robust *data collection* is critical to understanding the efficacy of training interventions. With our bias training evaluation, the coding of body camera footage has been conducted manually by trained staff (with appropriate CJIS training and background investigations). This process is time consuming and costly; however, we are working on artificial intelligence and machine-learning technologies to automate this process; the idea being that aberrant behavior or disparate service provided can be flagged for manual review. However, the fear that collecting data and analyzing behavior will increase liability and litigation functionally means agencies do not collect data. For example, use-of-force and decision-making simulators have a save function; it can record officer behavior, reaction times, shot placement, etc. In 12 years of working with law enforcement agencies, I have yet to work with one that has turned this function on. There is a fear that behaviors recorded in training will be used against officers in the event of adverse events in the field. But is training not the place to allow and correct errors? If we do not record poor performance, how do we correct it? Furthermore, if officers are performing so poorly in these simulated situations that their behavior shouldn't be recorded for fear of liability, why are they allowed to operate in the field? In a similar vein, agencies routinely do not record or save firearms proficiency and marksmanship on ranges. Agencies often have a qualification standard; this is often a percentage score on a paper target; a center 10 ring, moving out to an outer 1 ring. For example: an officer must score 70% or better to qualify with the weapon system; some arbitrary % value is problematic in itself. But is that 10 rounds in the 7 ring or better, 7 rounds in the 10 ring and 3 complete misses? If we do not capture the data, 1) we do not know if the training delivered to the officer improves or maintains their performance, and 2) we will not know if these trainings impact effectiveness in officer-involved shootings. Use of force and firearms training are often the topics to which the most time and resources are dedicated to – yet we are not collecting robust performance data from training and therefore, can never assess the training effectiveness in the field.

Learning model/modality/timing of training is critical to maximize the ROI of the taxpayer. In many agencies across the nation resources are limited; for many counties and

municipalities, the law enforcement function is their single biggest budget item. When considering the investment in training, effective and cost-effective training must be the goal. All too often, state legislatures and commissions mandate training hours either during basic police academy or in-service training. These mandates can come on the heels of local or national tragedies but usually with good intent, trying to service our communities better. We humans don't learn in four-, or eight-, or forty-hour blocks. Not all officers require the same dosage of training to master and internalize knowledge or behaviors. We need to move to a mastery model. This is tied to more robust data collection. Why mandate 8 hours of DV interviewing skills for an officer that interviews DV victims daily and has mastery over the skills required? The same 8-hour training would then be required for a traffic officer who potentially hasn't interviewed a DV victim in years. When we focus on behavioral outcomes of training and real-world mastery of skills, we can target our investment in training where the skill gaps are observed.

When we mandate training, and especially those that have a mandated allotted duration, we run the risk of officers simply turning up, being physically but not cognitively present for training, but no learning occurs. No behavior changes. With years of delivering and observing law enforcement training, it is sadly common to witness officers spending hours interacting with their phones while satisfying state training mandates. I have personally come to the point where I ask officers not focused on the training being delivered to leave, as their presence is corrosive to others' learning.

Another conversation often had when discussing law enforcement training is the number of hours allocated to topics within basic academies. This appears to be skewed towards use of force, firearms, officer safety and tactics (etc.), and away from community policing, de-escalation, communication, emotional intelligence (etc.). There are two critical elements to consider here: 1) not all learning domains are mastered at the same rate. Physical skill-based learning domains can take significantly longer to master than those based in the cognitive domain. Again, the answer returns to collecting robust training data to understand where each recruit or officer is in their mastery over a learning domain. 2) The conversation around hours dedicated to each learning domain becomes moot when we start to deconstruct the siloed

nature of traditional law enforcement training. In many academies and in-service training settings, subject matter experts and learning domain instructors/facilitators teach and assess solely in their own discipline. It is often then left to the student to synthesize learning from different domains. This synthesis needs to occur in the training environment. Officers need to better develop the skills to integrate use of force, firearms, and tactics training with community policing, de-escalation, communication, emotional intelligence training. We need to grow the understanding that all these topics are officer safety enhancers and the 'soft skills' are not just to be used when stress/threat is low. In addition to the syntheses of skills, it is imperative to instill confidence in an officer's own ability to keep themselves safe to allow them to 'decide and act' from the moralistic executive functioning part of their brain, the prefrontal cortex, and out of the *reactionary* part of the brain (amygdala and hippocampus).

Human limitations are ever present. Law enforcement officers are human and experience the same physiological and cognitive responses to stressors as everyone else. My lab's ethical position is that, 1) we must hold law enforcement accountable for their actions and their exercise of the powers given to them by the people, but 2) if we are to hold them accountable, the desired action must be achievable under the stressors they face. We strive to understand the impact stressors such as sleep deprivation, fatigue, physiological arousal (sympathetic response), and post traumatic symptomatology has on officer performance. I have been delivering fatigue and stress training to law enforcement for more than a decade. I have yet to meet an audience that is not chronically fatigued, dealing with extreme stressors, or suffering from various symptoms of exposure to trauma. The average hours worked in a year (without overtime) is 2,000. Most officers work a significant amount of overtime. Two thousand hours a year or more of potential exposure to trauma. Two thousand hours a year or more of night work leading to chronic fatigue. If we are serious about training reform, if we are serious about effective training, we have an ethical imperative to support officer wellness, and to reduce fatigue and stress. When we have well-rested non-stressed officers, they can cognitively access their training, they can decide and act, not just react. When we fail to support the officer, we leave the door open for the next tragedy.