The Effects of Diversity Awareness Training
on the Attitudes of Police Officers

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Introduction

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, racial profiling has been escalated (Harris, 2002). However, discrimination against non-dominant groups by law enforcement officers has an extensive history. This has led to bad relations between police and minority groups. Not only is there a history of discrimination against minority culture groups but there is a history of discrimination against other minority groups such as those with mental disabilities (Bailey, Barr, and Bunting, 2001).

This calls for a look at the attitudes of law enforcement officers. Is there evidence of negative attitudes towards non-dominant groups with the law enforcement agencies? In a study conducted by Gould (1997), police officers were indeed found to harbor negative attitudes toward non-dominant groups. If this is the case, what can be done now?

The bad relationship between minority groups and the police has caused problems within the community. Minorities are more reluctant to call the police when needed. Other times, when minorities do call the police, there sometimes arises a conflict between the two. The reasons for these problems are most often attributed to the insensitivity of the law enforcement officers (Gould, 1997).
Diversity awareness training is a workshop-type class that for the purpose of this study is set up to assist law enforcement officers in addressing prejudiced behaviors that create road blocks between themselves and non-dominant group members in the community (Kurke and Scrivner, 1995). Its purpose is to allow various non-dominant groups to live happily and peacefully together. Many law enforcement training institutions are already including a diversity awareness training class in their programs (Barlow and Barlow, 1993).

**Background**

Law enforcement discrimination of minority groups has a long and extensive history in the United States and in other countries as well. Racial profiling is, perhaps, the most notable part of law enforcement discrimination. However, there are other ways in which law enforcement officers have been known to discriminate. In addition to racism and racial profiling, officers have historically discriminated against other minority groups such as women and the intellectually disabled. This section will examine the history of racism, and the background of bias against other minority groups by law enforcement officers and finally, minority discrimination by law enforcement in other countries.

Perhaps the most famous case in recent times of police racism is in the case of Rodney King. On March 3, 1991, Rodney
King was brutally struck fifty-six times with nightsticks by a group of white policemen. The policemen were charged and acquitted on all charges except for one. A few hours after the decision was made riots broke out in south central, LA. (Hatchett, 1996). At this point, people were realizing that there was obviously a problem between law enforcement and minority groups. There were numerous other incidences before the King beating in which excessive police force was used against minority group members. These cases are further evidence of the need for diversity awareness training in law enforcement.

Historically, law enforcement officers have discriminated against other ethnic groups. There was a case in LA where a Chinese couple was nearly arrested for child abuse when they took their son to an emergency room. The doctor saw bruises and slashes across the boy’s chest and back and notified authorities. The parents claimed they had administered an old Chinese remedy called “coining” to their son. Coining involves running hot coins lightly across one’s body to treat a fever. The marks on the body are superficial and disappear in two to three days. The authorities validated their story and the couple was not arrested (Corwin, 2000). This is yet another instance of discrimination and a lack of knowledge of cultural traditions. There are numerous other examples of culture clashes with law enforcement.
Take a look at racial profiling, post-September 11, 2001. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, racial profiling has become more accepted by society as a means of combating terrorism (Ramirez, Hoopes, and Quinlan, 2003). According to Ramirez, et.al. (2003), using race to signal criminality, either as the sole factor or based on a general or circumstantial perception that there is a correlation between the race of an individual and her propensity to commit a particular crime, violates civil liberties and hinders potential short-and long-term law enforcement effectiveness. (pg. 14)

The term, racial profiling, was coined back in the 1980’s by the Drug Enforcement Agency in an attempt to educate officers on how to recognize people and vehicles for further investigation (Ramirez, et.al, 2003). Although the use of race as part of a suspect description can be helpful in an investigation, the use of race to predict crime can harm an investigation (Harris, 2002).

What about other minority groups such as those with a mental handicap? People with ID, Intellectual Disability, are another group of people that are discriminated against by law enforcement officers. Rosser (1990) found that police officers often fail to take seriously statement made by crime victims with Intellectual Disability. The Roeher Institute (1993) found
that law enforcement officers tend to believe that persons with Intellectual Disability have poor memories, tend to exaggerate and will fail to be credible witnesses. Assumptions like that can only hurt an investigation.

Discrimination by law enforcement officers of non-dominant groups is a problem found, not only in the United States, but in other countries as well. In Canada, Canadian police have had difficulty with discrimination. In the 1980’s the Canadian police had at least five official inquiries regarding treatment of minority groups (Ungerleider, 1991). Normandeau & Leighton (1990) report that the reason for the bad relationship between law enforcement officers and minority groups is because of the influx of immigrants. However, Canadian officials have attempted to right the wrong of police discrimination by establishing a Task Force on Race Relations and Policing. The purpose of this task force is to examine police-race relations (Lewis, 1989).

Non-dominant groups have a strong history of discrimination by law enforcement. There is not only a problem with racism but with discrimination against other groups, such as those with Intellectual Disability, as well. The scope of this problem extends outside the United States of America. It is a problem that other countries have as well. What can be done now?
**Statement of the Problem**

At the moment there is no formal diversity awareness training classes on the cultural attitudes of law enforcement officers to help combat culture bias and racial profiling by law enforcement.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of diversity awareness training in reducing the negative multicultural attitudes of law enforcement officers.

**Questions to be answered**

- Is diversity awareness training an effective means of reducing culture bias in law enforcement officers?
- Is there evidence of negative attitudes regarding multiculturalism, in law enforcement?

**Research Hypothesis**

There will be a significant difference in the scores obtained from the Diversity Awareness Profile of the law enforcement officers that receive the diversity awareness training when compared to the law enforcement officers that do not receive the diversity awareness training.

**Importance of the Study**

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, racial profiling became stronger. Suddenly, it was respected by society in an effort to ensure national security (Harris, 2002). In addition,
there is a history of discrimination by law enforcement officers of other minority groups such as the intellectually disabled and other minority groups (Bailey, et.al, 2001). This study will benefit the community as a whole. By giving law enforcement officers diversity awareness training, perhaps it will aide in better relations between law enforcement and the community.

**Assumptions**

In order to better assist the testing of this research hypothesis, there are certain assumptions to be made.

- The law enforcement officers receiving the diversity training will all attend each session and will be present for the allotted time.
- The law enforcement officers receiving the diversity training will all actively participate in the training.
- All law enforcement officers, those in the treatment group and those in the control group, will answer the questions on the Diversity Awareness Profile, honestly.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, there are a few terms that need to be operationally defined.

- Diversity awareness training. The training referred to in this study is a class organized according to
Barlow and Barlow (1994) in which the instruction is designed to increase cultural awareness and awareness of other groups that have been historically discriminated against.

- Intellectually disabled. This term is operationally defined as any person diagnosed with any degree of mental retardation (Bailey et.al, 2001).
- Non-dominant groups. This term refers to any group of people that have historically been discriminated against (Buzzanell, 1999).
- Attitudes. For the purpose of this study, “attitudes” shall be defined as a combination of values and beliefs that when integrated influence a person’s behavior (Bailey et.al, 2001).

Scope and Delimitation’s of the Study

This study is intended to show an effectiveness of diversity awareness training on law enforcement officers’ attitudes towards non-dominant groups. It will not attempt to show any causes of any negative attitudes toward non-dominant groups. It will not attempt to offer any evidence of corruption in the judicial and legal systems. It will not assess any validity of cultural and minority stereotypes. This study is an attempt to recognize a possible treatment to the problem of police discrimination against minorities.
Chapter 2: Review of the Related Literature

Law enforcement and discrimination

The relationship between law enforcement officers and minority groups is strained. Piper and Piper (1999) conducted a study on the relationships of the police and minority groups in tow towns in Northwest England with a low-density minority ethnic population. They gathered information via a questionnaire, individual and group interviews of minority participants, and interviews with police officers. The authors found that minority group members had a less favorable view of the police than the non-minority group members. It was the younger minority group members that had the stronger negative views of the police. These views, however, stem from media coverage and history instead of personal encounters with the police. The study concluded that, regardless of minority population density, there is a general negative relationship between the police and minority groups (Piper and Piper, 1999).

This study brought to light some important information, but more importantly, it raised some new questions. If the relationships between the police and minority groups are bad because of historical incidences, then how can that be changed? Do law enforcement officers truly have discriminatory attitudes? These questions are legitimate questions upon which further research may be able to shed a little light.

In another study conducted in Finland, researchers found that Finnish police officers have negative attitudes towards immigrants (Kouki and Pitkanen, 2002). They conducted a survey
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of five authority groups that work with or frequently come into contact with immigrants, namely police officers, social workers, teachers, border guards, and employment agency workers. The survey consisted of questions regarding attitude along with open ended questions. The data was analyzed by finding means and percentages. A chi square test was used also. The teachers, employment agency workers, and social workers reported more positive attitudes regarding immigrants while the attitudes of the border guards and police officers were more negative. This study also showed that police officers felt that they lack adequate training in dealing with immigrants, with language being the largest barrier (Kouki and Pitkanen, 2002).

This study reported that police officers do have negative attitudes towards immigrants. It also offers up a possible reason, lack of effective communication. This further endorses the need for diversity training.

In the United States, police discrimination must also be considered. In an article authored by Bass (2001), the issues of racial and gang profiling are discussed. Racial profiling emerged as an effort to combat the War on Drugs. It began as traffic stops made my law enforcement officers of minority members in an attempt to locate those involved in drug crimes. Gang profiling has a similar origin. It was an attempt by law enforcement to use stereotypical characteristics of gang members to track possible members. Gang profiling typically focuses on characteristics such as race, clothing and territory. The author examines two policies brought about to deal with both racial and
gang profiling. Quality of life policing involves police officers targeting aims to clean-up and strengthen communities that suffered from environmental factors such as trash, prostitution, graffiti and run-down buildings. Zero tolerance policy, as introduced by New York City mayor, Rudy Giuliani, held much the same aims as quality of life policing. Officers were directed to crack down on prostitutes, drug dealers, graffiti artists and to stop and question persons on the premise of suspiciousness instead of other characteristics such as race. Although these aims were positive in theory, in reality there has not been a significant decrease in racial tensions. A question arises. Why? (Bass, 2001).

Diversity awareness training

Because of the wide range of various cultures present in society today, diversity awareness is a necessity. An understanding of different culture traditions and values is necessary in order for all groups to live harmoniously together. Diversity awareness training is a way in which individuals can learn of various cultures and how to get rid of biases.

In a study conducted by King, Maushund, and Timm (1995), the researchers sought to determine the effects of diversity training on nonverbal awareness. This study used college students as participants. They took four accounting classes consisting of twenty-nine females and forty-three males and randomly assigned them into a treatment and a control group. Each group then received a pretest consisting of ten multiple choice questions designed to assess nonverbal awareness. The treatment group then
received a sixteen hour diversity training course. At the end of the course, both the treatment and control groups received a posttest consisting of the same ten questions in the pretest but in a different order. The results showed that, as a result of the diversity training, the students were more aware of the impact of nonverbal cues and how they can reinforce stereotypes. The females were found to have higher awareness than the males (King et. al., 1995).

This study was well planned and conducted. However, the female to male ratio was low. In the future, when looking at gender, perhaps a study should include a more equal ratio of females to males. The question arises, diversity awareness training may make one more aware but can it lessen negative attitudes?

Sussman (1997) presents a model for cultural-diversity training. He asserts that there are two components to discrimination, interpersonal competence and prejudice. Interpersonal competence is defined as, “the extent to which an individual communicates and behaves in a manner that enhances the self and supports the normative standards for appropriate behavior established by the larger group” (Sussman, 1997). Prejudice can be defined as negative, often stereotypical, attitudes towards a minority group. In his model for cultural diversity training, Sussman presents four archetypes that represent a mixture of interpersonal competence and prejudice. The courteously tolerant archetype is one that is prejudiced and interpersonally competent. The second archetype, the comfortable
and comforting colleague, is both interpersonally competent and free of prejudice. The third archetype, the classic bigot, is both prejudiced and void of interpersonal competence. The fourth and final archetype is the benign fool who is free of prejudice but is interpersonally incompetent. Sussman suggests a cultural diversity training designed specifically for each archetype with an easy to understand vocabulary (1997).

This information brought to light some interesting observations. According to Sussman, the interpersonal competence, being the behavioral component of discrimination, is the area to be targeted in an effort to change. This article brought up a question. Can prejudices be removed or can only behaviors reflecting prejudices be changed?

Multicultural education and antiracist education are two programs used in schools to combat discrimination. Multicultural education was developed in response to the Civil Rights movement in the sixties. It has three goals, achievement equality, positive minority attitudes, and pride of heritage (Morelli and Spencer, 2000).

In a study conducted by Ungerleider and McGregor (1992), they investigated the effects of intercultural training on the attitudes of military and police personnel. They did a meta-analysis and found that military and police personnel respond more effectively to positive approaches to combating racism than to approaches that criticize them. The police and military personnel responded more to the intercultural training than to the race relations training (Ungerleider and McGregor, 1992).
Morelli and Spencer (2000) conducted a two-phase multi-method field design to collect information on racism in schools. They gathered information from a sample of forty-four school employees using interviews and surveys. Findings show that ninety percent reported that there have been incidents of racism in the school or community. Over half of the participants prefer multicultural education over antiracist education. They also made recommendations to decrease racism such as getting the community and families involved and to provide diversity training for school employees. This study has found that some sort of diversity training is clearly needed in schools along with an active involvement of the community (Morelli and Spencer, 2000).

Law enforcement attitudes and diversity training

As has been found in historical incidences, such as the Rodney King incident, there has been evidence of discrimination by law enforcement officers. In a study conducted by Gould (1997), the issue of the effectiveness of cultural diversity on police officers, is broached. Gould was particularly interested in “increased resistance to cultural diversity training as the length of time in service increases” (1997). To test this hypothesis, a sample of one hundred fifty-one police officers in various career stages underwent a sixteen hour cultural diversity course. They completed a questionnaire regarding their attitudes toward the material to be presented in class. Results showed that the officers still in training were more receptive to the course than the more experienced officers. In conclusion, the study shows that a relationship between the amount of time spent
as a police officer and negative attitudes toward the training is a positive correlation (Gould, 1997).

This study reflects resistibility by more experienced officers to diversity training. However, the study only looked at police officers’ reactions to the course. It did not look at the officers’ attitudes toward minority groups and did not attempt to show whether or not diversity training increased behavioral sensitivity toward minority groups.

In recent times, there has been a movement towards diversity training for police officers in an effort to decrease bias towards minority group members (Barlow and Barlow, 1993). According to Bittner (1980), police work is discriminatory. It focuses more on crimes of the lower class and no amount of diversity awareness training can change the structure of the lower class. Barlow and Barlow (1993) state that these cultural diversity training courses do not look at the issue of authority and power which is what police officers are supposed to defend.

After reviewing the previous article, several ideas arise. Developing a diversity awareness training course that is instructional regarding how officers may still be able to do their job of decreasing the power struggle between some lower class groups and the authorities while keeping discriminatory behaviors minimal would be more effective. If a diversity course were to be developed took into account law enforcement goals and issues, would it be more effective?

Kurke and Scrivner (1995) discuss the objectives that need to be included in any sensitivity training program for law
enforcement officers. The main point of sensitivity training is to improve non-dominant group relations by changing perceptions and to eliminate bias and stereotypes. To make a police diversity training course more effective, concentration on the non-dominant groups in that particular community should be emphasized (1995). Therefore officers in areas with higher Asian populations should focus on diversity awareness trainings that focus on improving Asian group relationships with police. The same goes for higher concentrations of other non-dominant groups in other areas. Himelfrab (1991) found that in Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police received a more specialized multicultural awareness training and it was more effective. As a result, the method has been taken on by other law enforcement agencies.

A focus on diversity awareness training for diverse ethnicities has been discussed but another minority group has also been traditionally discriminated against by police, those with intellectual disabilities. Bailey, et.al. (2001) conducted a quasi-experimental design focusing on police officer attitudes toward individuals with Intellectual Disability. A sample of officers in training from four different groups was used. They were randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group. The treatment group received an awareness training focused on positive attitudes toward individuals with Intellectual Disability. The control group and the treatment group received the Attitudes toward Mental Retardation and Eugenics questionnaire. It is a self-report questionnaire that focuses on issues concerning Intellectual Disability and used a Likert
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scale. The questionnaire was given as a pretest and a posttest. The results show that there was a significant increase in scores in the treatment group meaning that the awareness training did have a positive effect. There was no significant difference in the scores of the control group (2001).

This study will examine the attitudes of police officers towards a non-dominant group that most people do not often consider those with Intellectual Disability. The use of a pretest and a posttest is effective in determining the significance of the treatment. The results are clear and conclusive. Overall, this was a well-thought-out study and the procedures and data analysis were comprehensive.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

This study will use a two-group posttest-only randomized experimental design. It will consist of one treatment group and one control group. The independent variable in this study will be the Diversity Awareness Training that will be administered to the treatment group. The dependent variable, given to both the treatment and the control group, is the Diversity Awareness Profile.

The purpose of an experimental design is to attempt to establish a causal relationship between two things (Grant and Ross, 1996). This study is a true experimental design as defined by Grant and Ross (1996) in which there is an independent and a dependent variable. This design will examine the relationship between diversity awareness training and the attitudes of law enforcement officers.

Null Hypothesis

There will not be a significant difference in the scores obtained from the Diversity Awareness Profile of the law enforcement officers that receive the diversity awareness training when compared to the law enforcement officers that do not receive the diversity awareness training.
Selection of Subjects

The subjects will consist of 60 randomly selected law enforcement officers drawn from the Escambia County, Florida Sheriff’s department. Each participant will be randomly selected using a computer generated randomization numbering system.

Instrumentation

The Diversity Awareness Profile is a standardized test used to help people assess ways in which they discriminate against others (Mental Measurements Yearbook). The test is not widely used because it is tailored to explore discrimination on the job. In this study, The Diversity Awareness Profile will be used as a pretest and a posttest in order to best determine if the Diversity Awareness Training is effective.

The Diversity Awareness Profile is a self-report assessment. It consists of forty questions in which participants will rate their behavior using a four point Likert scale. The Likert scale is set up with one being “almost never” and four being “almost always”. Some of the items on the Diversity Awareness Profile are: “Disregard physical characteristics when interacting with others and when making decisions about competence of ability?” and “Reinforce others for behaviors that support cultural diversity?”. The total score is tallied. The lower scores indicate a higher occurrence
of discrimination and the higher scores, a lower occurrence of discriminatory behaviors. The score ranges are divided into five categories, “Fighter”, “Change Agent”, “Avoider”, “Perpetuator”, and “Naïve Offender”.

The Diversity Awareness Profile is not a widely used test but for the purposes of this study it is useful. It was formulated, specifically, to be used with those that come into contact with minorities on the job. It has also been used in the area of diversity training (Mental Measurements Yearbook).

**Procedures**

After the participants have been randomly selected from a target population of Escambia County, Florida law enforcement officers and have been randomly assigned to either the control group or the treatment group, the orientation to the research experiment will take place. Each participant will receive an information letter. The letter given to the participants in the control group will inform them of the purpose of the study, to assess cultural attitudes in law enforcement officers. It will continue to explain the procedures of the study starting with the administration of the Diversity Awareness Profile as the pretest and of the administration of the same test a week later. The letter closes with the rights of the participants and thanks them for their participation. The letter given to the treatment group is similar. It also begins with an explanation of the purpose of the study followed by the administration of the Diversity Awareness Profile assessment as a pre-test. It then informs the
participants of a five day, forty hour Diversity Awareness Training course that they will be required to attend and that they will receive state approved continuing education credits in the amount of the length of the course. They are informed that at the conclusion of the course they will again receive a posttest.

After the participants receive their letter of information and consent, each group will be asked to report to an assigned classroom, one for the control group and one for the treatment group. In each room, the proctor will distribute the Diversity Awareness Profile and read the directions to the participants (See Appendix). The participants in the control group will complete the Diversity Awareness Profile and then be dismissed. The participants in the treatment group will be given the instructions for the Diversity Awareness Profile and given the information of date, time, and place to report for the Diversity Awareness Training course. They will then complete the assessment and be dismissed. The same individual will administer both the pre-test and posttest for the control group and a different individual will administer the pre-test and posttest and will be the instructor of the Diversity Awareness training for the treatment group.

The Diversity Awareness Training course will consist of five, eight hour days of instruction set up in blocks similar to Barlow and Barlow (1994). The first block will consist of an explanation of the importance of the training to law enforcement officers. The second block will consist of an examination of
prejudices and an evaluation of personal prejudices. The third block will look at the relationships between law enforcement and minorities while the fourth block will introduce ways in which the officers can better understand diversity. The fifth block will focus on management and supervisory issues within law enforcement regarding diversity while the sixth and final block will serve as a discussion period in which the officers can openly respond to the material presented to them. Each of the blocks of instruction will consist of lecture, limited discussions due to time constraints, role-plays, and other informational activities.

At the end of the Diversity Awareness Training course, the treatment group will be given the Diversity Awareness Profile again, as a posttest. The control group will have reported back to a specific classroom and they, too, will be given the same assessment as a posttest. At the end of the testing, the participants will again be thanked for their participation and then dismissed.

**Data Analysis**

The data examined will be the results of a comparison of the posttest scores between the treatment group and the control group. Means will be calculated and a t-test will be conducted to determine the significance of the difference.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations in this study that need to be addressed.
• Because of the requirement of the treatment group to undergo a diversity awareness training, there is a possibility that participants will drop out of the study due to work schedules and other issues that may arise that keep them from attending the training. This will decrease sample size.

• Another consideration is the Diversity Awareness Profile. It will be administered both as a pre-test and a posttest and participants could possibly answer the questions on the assessment in the way in which they think the researchers want them too instead of answering both administrations honestly.

• There are also extraneous variables that could be a factor during the test administrations such as room temperature, tiredness of the officers, physical ailments of the officers, etc.

As many of these factors as possible have been taken into account in order to assure the most accurate results possible.

Follow-Up

If a significant difference is found between the treatment group and the control group showing that the treatment does have a positive effect then there will be a six months and one year follow up to determine if the results that were obtained from
this study will actually carry over outside of the this study and be effective in a real world situation.
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