Implicit Bias Awareness Training

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Implicit Bias v. “Traditional Notions” of Prejudice

- **Traditional notions:**
  Discrimination is only caused by ill-intentioned people, who have animus towards groups.
  The bias is conscious and the discriminatory behavior is deliberate.

- **Implicit bias** impacts well-intentioned people outside of conscious awareness.
  The discriminatory behavior is not based on animus and is not deliberate.
Fair and Impartial Policing, LLC

- Provides Implicit-Bias-Awareness Training (IBAT)
- Traditional Audience = Sworn law enforcement at all levels
  - Largest provider, small to large, Psych Today, Harvard Bus Rev, CBS SM, National Geographic
- New programs for:
  - Community members
  - Civilians in Law Enforcement agencies
  - Other CJ professionals

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What is Implicit-Bias-Awareness Training or “IBAT”? 

Core Content of our courses:

- The nature of (and scientific evidence for) implicit biases;
- How implicit biases might impact sworn law enforcement personnel;
- The consequences of biased decisions/behaviors;
- Skills to reduce and manage biases.
PATROL: Individual-Level Skills

- Skill #1: Reduce your biases
- Skill #2: Manage your biases
- Skill #3: Beware of other people’s biases
- Skill #4: Reduce ambiguity by slowing it down when feasible
- Skill #5: Know your agency’s policy
- Skill #6: Analyze your options with a FIP lens.
What IBAT can do

- Motivate well-intentioned individuals to recognize, reduce and manage their implicit biases.
- Provide them with skills to recognize, reduce and manage their biases.
What it can’t do.

► NY Post (9/2019): IBAT “is meant to counterprogram the racist responses that supposedly are wired into our brains.”

► CBS (9/2019): FIP “failed” – did not stop White Supremacist cops from posting …

► Unnamed Mayor (9/2019): The national implementation of IBAT “can end this horrible history that’s holding us back.” [History of discrimination in policing, history of poor police-community relations.]
Does IBAT Work?

1) Scientific assessments of skill effectiveness
2) Why satisfaction surveys DO matter
3) IBAT evaluations
4) FIP evaluation
#1. Scientific Assessments of Skill Effectiveness

- Preview: Controlled evaluations in infancy
- BUT: All content based on voluminous body of science, and
- Strong empirical support for the effectiveness of mechanisms (“skills”) for reducing and managing biases …
Empirical support for skills

- Knowledge about IB provides motivation to reduce/manage in well-intentioned people (Devine et al., 1991; Pope et al., 2013; van Nunspeet et al., 2015)
- Mechanisms to reduce bias work (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001; Lai et al., 2014; Meleady & Seger, 2016)
- Mechanisms to manage bias work (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 2010)
#2. Satisfaction Surveys

- When assessing effectiveness, *who cares if police rate the training highly?*
- I DO!
- Picture our “usual audience”
- NC Sgt (background)…..

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“(I) wanted nothing to do with FIP or its philosophy. As fate would have it I was ‘hand-picked’ to attend the train-the-officer classes and forced to go after presenting every excuse I could come up with …. I came in Monday as opposed and defensive as I could covertly be without getting into trouble…. (Cont.)”
We will *not* have an impact unless we overcome that hostility.
And we do.

“(I) wanted nothing to do with FIP or its philosophy. As fate would have it I was “hand-picked” to attend the train-the-officer classes and forced to go after presenting every excuse I could come up with … I came in Monday as opposed and defensive as I could covertly be without getting into trouble…. It took about two hours and I was sold on the theory of the class and wondering why I had not been through this training sooner.”
How do we do it?

- Science-based, not accusatory/blaming
  - Non-threatening (to SB)
- Put experienced cops in the front of the room
  - Talking about how biases impact *them*
- We tell the truth
  - e.g., People of color ARE…..
  - “Disparity stats” do not prove bias
  - Yes, your implicit biases could help you in some situations, but…..

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How do we do it?

► Science-based, not accusatory/blaming
  ► Non-threatening
► Put experienced cops in the front of the room
  ► Talking about how biases impacted them
  ► Lots of frank, realistic discussions
► We tell the truth
  ► e.g., People of color ARE…..
  ► “Disparity stats” do not prove bias
  ► Yes, your implicit biases could help you in some situations, but…..
Evaluations from LE

- Overwhelmingly 4’s and 5’s on 5-point scale
- NYPD, even though under court order…
  - 85% rate it as 4 or 5
  - 83% report that the training will help them do their jobs more effectively
- Similar proportion: training will help them personally.
#3. Outcome Evaluations of IBAT

- Lacking! (At least in terms of controlled evaluations that go beyond self-report.) BUT …

- Devine et al., (2012):
  - Evaluated an implicit bias training/intervention
  - Premise:
    - If we raise awareness about implicit biases and their negative consequences …..
    - people will be motivated to implement strategies to address their biases and …..
    - those strategies will work.
  - Randomized, control design.
Devine et al., 2012 (Cont.)

- Intervention, participants received:
  - Feedback on their IAT scores
  - Information on how IB impacts behavior, producing discriminatory behavior
  - Five strategies for reducing/managing bias
Devine et al., 2012 (Cont.)

- RESULTS, intervention group showed:
  - Increased concern about bias and discrimination [huge for police!]
  - Greater IB consciousness (important for managing biases)
  - Greater:
    - Willingness to use strategies
    - Reported use of strategies
  - Recall from #1 above: Strategies to reduce/bias work.
#4. Controlled Outcome Evaluation of FIP

- Occurring in the context of our NYPD training of 36k early participants are the “intervention” group compared to later participants (before they take FIP course)

- Sources of data
  - Before/After (After x 2) surveys: Knowledge, attitudes, skills (intent to use skills, did they use them)
  - Interviews with selected trainees
  - Disparity in activities.
Sample Survey Items

✓ Implicit biases can affect even individuals who consciously reject prejudice and stereotypes.
✓ Biased policing is produced only by racist officers.
✓ Implicit biases may lead officers to be over-vigilant – that is, act aggressively when someone is not a threat.
✓ Bias in the police profession is merely a “fiction” produced by the media.
✓ After #1: Do you intend to use these skills…..?
✓ After #2: Did you use these skills…?
Caveats, Disparity-in-activities Measures

- Including as outcomes some low-discretion activities (e.g., felony arrests).
- For the high-discretion activity outcomes, serious concerns about validity/reliability of data.
- We don’t assume IBAT impacts everyone (but no link between survey data and activities).
- Producing fair and impartial policing on the streets is about MUCH MORE than training line personnel in implicit bias awareness ……..
Elements of a “Comprehensive Strategy to produce FIP”

- Recruitment, Hiring & Promotion
- Policy
- Training
- Leadership, supervision & accountability
- Measurement
- Operations
- Outreach to diverse communities
Summary: “Does it work?”

- Quite limited in terms of controlled, outcome evaluations (of IBAT & FIP)
  - And critical challenges associated with them
- We do have empirical support for key aspects of IBAT
  - Can produce motivation
  - Motivation can produce skill use
  - Skills to reduce/manage biases are effective