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# Law Enforcement and Training

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# **Law Enforcement & Training**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
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## **Abstract**

The use of excessive force by law enforcement officers in America has created hostility between the public and the police officers that are sworn to protect them. The purpose of this research was to evaluate how the public felt about police brutality, as well as to evaluate the training programs for police officers and to determine if different training would be helpful in reducing excessive force. Previous research done by experts on this topic discussed the significance of police training in creating better prepared officers who are capable of handling situations without excessive force. These experts also gave numerous training ideas and how they would help law enforcement. Sociological awareness training, ethics training, scenario based training, communication and interpersonal skills are all examples of training that has been proven to lessen excessive force instances.

For this research, public citizens in New York State's Putnam County were surveyed to understand if the public was satisfied with their law enforcement agencies. The survey showed that most people were uncomfortable around police officers and didn't always trust them. However, the public also recognized that not all police officers were violent, but that there needed to be an upgrade in training to keep the violent officers from using excessive force. The second part of this research was written interviews with police officers from Putnam County. The officers interviewed agreed that excessive force was unacceptable but also that the media tends to cast a negative light on law enforcement. All officers did agree that de-escalation skills and interpersonal skills were essential training needs and could be better integrated into the police academy courses.

## Introduction

In America, the law enforcement agencies, from local to state to federal, all seem to have similar mission statements. In New Jersey, "The New Jersey State Police is committed to protect, preserve, and safeguard the constitutional and civil rights of all citizens through impartial and courteous law enforcement with integrity and professionalism. We shall ensure public safety and provide quality service in partnership with our communities" (State of New Jersey 2012). While the New York Division of State Police is more concise, "To serve, protect and defend the people while preserving the rights and dignity of all" (New York State Police 2001); both are clear that law enforcement is to protect and serve the public.

Use of excessive force by law enforcement officers is a controversial topic in America, followed by very few ideas or solutions addressing the problem. Cases of brutality can cause the public to fear and distrust the police, which can suggest that the police agencies aren't always following their missions and values. Many experts have done research on excessive force used by law enforcement and much of the literature discusses the significance of police training and how it must be done to ensure that officers are better prepared for situations and less likely to resort to excessive force. The use of excessive force is defined as any situation where a police officer uses brutality--physical, psychological, or emotional--in excess to the normal procedure. Excessive force can even go as far as deadly force. Police brutality cases are not uncommon and instances of deadly force have become more prevalent in recent years. Measuring police brutality is complex because instances may not be reported and many times the media covers the case as police brutality, but the law enforcement agencies do not report them as such internally (CATO Institute n.d.). Examination of cases and statistics may help to measure the increase in brutality.

Police training can't be measured simply either. It will take multiple indicators to measure where, if any, the deficiencies in current training are. Evaluation of training will need to be focused on practical uses in the field, principles related to mission and purpose, fulfillment of officer needs, weeding out of unfit or aggressive trainees, and concepts on how to deal with people. However, police interviews will help to get a personal, inside look at how satisfied officers are with their training and where they believe it was lacking. It will also get their opinion on how they feel about brutality and aggressive officers and what they think about better training in ethics and awareness of their social surroundings.

In America, very few statistics exist that focus on police misconduct. The US Department of Justice last reported on police misconduct in 2001 and less than 5% of police agencies offered statistics (CATO Institute n.d.). The CATO institute, however, has done a recent study across America of police misconduct. The Institute uses media reports of police misconduct and does research to be sure the information is accurate and the incident is not a duplicate. (Packman 2011) Some of their findings from 2010:

- **“4,861** – Unique reports of police misconduct tracked
- **6,613** - Number of sworn law enforcement officers involved (354 were agency leaders such as chiefs or sheriffs)
- **6,826** - Number of alleged victims involved
- **247** – Number of fatalities associated with tracked reports
- **\$346,512,800** – Estimated amount spent on misconduct-related civil judgments and settlements excluding sealed settlements, court costs, and attorney fees.”

(Packman 2011)

Almost seven thousand victims and over three hundred million dollars spent on fees to deal with misconduct demonstrate the need for more attention given to the problem of police brutality. Although the statistics show that certain areas are worse than others, there

is no question that this is a national problem. A citizen need only turn on the news to hear of a situation of police misconduct in their area.

### *Police Misconduct Comes to Westchester*

On October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Pace University celebrated its Homecoming with a football game. By the next day, they would be mourning one of their players. In the early hours of October 17<sup>th</sup>, students from Pace University poured out of a bar in Mount Pleasant, New York. A fight had broken out and the bar was closing, the students were left on the sidewalk to find a way home. Mount Pleasant police were soon on the scene and were supposed to calm and disperse the crowd of college students. Aaron Hess, a Mt Pleasant police officer, was on the sidewalk with his gun out of its holster, inciting panic and doing nothing to get the students home safely. DJ Henry, a Pace University student and football player from Massachusetts, was picking up some of his friends from the sidewalk. An officer waved his car along, gesturing for DJ to drive away from the sidewalk. As DJ rolled out of the way, Aaron Hess stepped off the sidewalk and ended up on the hood of DJ's car. Officer Hess fired shots through the windshield and hit DJ as well as grazing one of his friends. DJ Henry was pulled from the vehicle and thrown face down on the pavement and handcuffed. No medical assistance was offered to him. His friends fought with police to help DJ, asking to give him CPR, begging to help their friend. The police responded by using a Taser gun. DJ Henry died. His family, his friends, faculty and staff, and vast amount of students who watched him die, mourned for the boy who was kind, friendly, smart, and strong. DJ Henry was described many ways by those who knew him, but never as dangerous, never as someone who would deliberately run over a police officer. Later, after long trials where all officers were acquitted



of any misconduct, depositions came forward with information that police and their defense had lied about certain circumstances of the night.

This example is a personal experience that many from Pace University could attest to. Why did Officer Aaron Hess have his gun drawn at a crowd of college students who simply needed a way to get home? What was the purpose of firing so many shots into the car? Mt Pleasant is a wealthy, diverse, and normally peaceful area. Why weren't the officers trying to get some taxis to take the students back to Pace? The actions of the police officers that night were unpredictable, inconsistent, and definitely not in the protection of the students.

#### *Law Enforcement Agencies: Who Oversees?*

Law enforcement has many different agencies in America: federal, state, county, local, etc. To be able to assess the police force and its purpose, there must be a mission or value set to be the basis for the ideal law enforcement agency. The following organization will provide one, all-encompassing, definition of the mission and values of law enforcement agencies for the purpose of this research:

#### *International Association of Chiefs of Police*

Head of Police, Paul F. Williams, M.S., restates the Law Enforcement Oath of Honor to a class of new police officers in Springfield, Missouri,

"On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character, or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the Constitution and community I serve."

(William 2012)

This is the oath that police officers take when they receive their police badge. Williams tells the new class that as police officers this oath expects them to act as the Medieval Knights of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (William 2012).

The Law Enforcement Oath of Honor was adopted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at their 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in San Diego, CA. The purpose of the Oath was to provide the international profession of law enforcement with one strong statement that all agencies can use to promote and internalize their ethical values. There is no one governing board over the different law enforcement agencies, but the IACP “strongly recommends that all agencies adopt” the Law Enforcement Oath of Honor (Police Image and Ethics Committee 2000).

The IACP acknowledges that the biggest issue facing the law enforcement profession is maintaining strong ethical values and they believe that the Oath will “heighten the awareness and visibility of [their] ethical standards, both internally and externally,” (Police Image and Ethics Committee 2000).

The intention of the International Assoc. of Chiefs of Police is clearly professional and ethical. However, they don’t have the authority to oversee the implementation of the ethical training at police academies and agencies. They stress the importance of implementation of the Oath of Honor, stating that before taking the Oath individuals should have a complete understanding of the values they are going to attest to hold in high regard. The IACP website gives a list of the values and their relationship to the Oath of Honor, along with ways to implement the Oath’s use and significance:

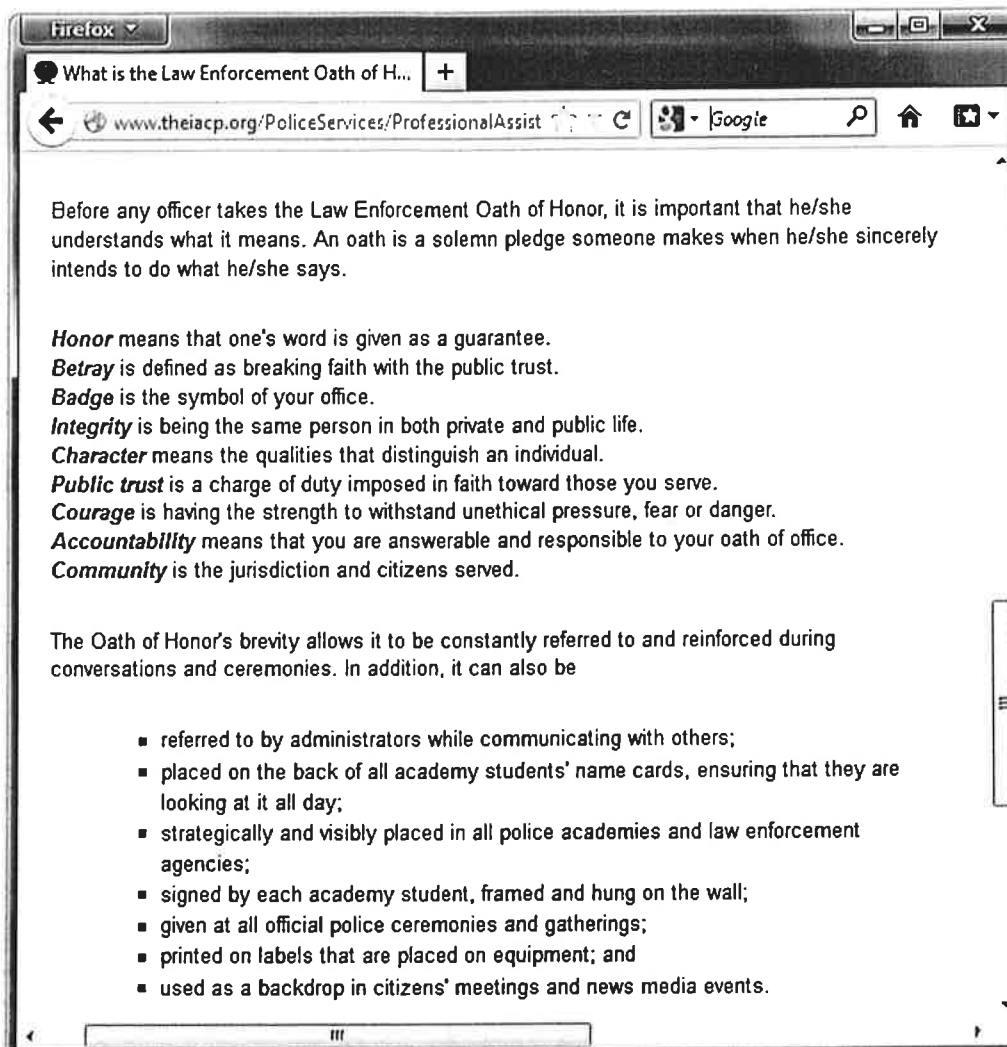


Table 1. Law Enforcement Oath of Honor (Police Image and Ethics Committee 2000)

It seems that the International Assoc. of Chiefs of Police has acknowledged that ethics is their most overwhelming issue and are trying to rectify it. They have taken the first step--evaluating their core values and mission. They also have begun implementing the Oath in agencies across the country.

The IACP has begun the process of professionalizing ethics for law enforcement agencies. The next step in the process is to train law enforcement officers with practices that derive from their core values. In respect to the work that the IACP has done in implementing

these values, they will be used as the definition of professional ethics for law enforcement agencies in regards to this research. When justifying best and worst practices, the IACP's values will be used as the ethical ideal.

### *Police Training and its Effects on use of Excessive Force, Aggression, Public Opinion and Police Officer Experience*

The purpose of this research is to evaluate how the people feel about police brutality, as well as to evaluate the training programs of law enforcement officers to determine if different training is needed to avoid the use of excessive force. Although police misconduct is a problem throughout the country, the research will focus primarily on Putnam County in New York. The questions the research hopes to answer are:

- Can training help to change the level of excessive force among police officers working in the suburbs of Putnam County?
- Are police academies giving sufficient attention to training on ethics and excessive force?
- What does the public expect from law enforcement and are they satisfied with what they have in their communities?
- How do police officers themselves see this problem?
- Do officers feel that there needs to be a change in training?
- What kind of training would be best to address excessive force?

With the help of scholarly research, police officer interviews and citizen opinion, the research hopes to show the effect that police training has on use of excessive force, aggression, public opinion and police officer experience.

## Review of Literature

The consensus of a large majority of studies that were read on law enforcement is that training is very important and must be better structured. Anthony Pinizotto, Shannon Bohrer and Edward Davis (2011) discussed the importance of ongoing training throughout the life of a police officer. They suggested, not only training for new recruits, but for supervisors, and administrators as well. Bohrer (2005) found that officers felt that they needed more training in the steps to be taken after a crisis incident. Bohrer shows that a majority of officers feel that there should be more information about incident reports and the emotional and mental state of an officer in a recent crisis situation (Bohrer, 2005).

Peter McDermott and Diana Hulse (2012) discussed the importance of corrective feedback and how the individual needs of each recruit should be assessed during the process of providing feedback during training. They discussed how this would help build important interpersonal skills (McDermott & Hulse, 2012).

Interpersonal skills were one of the most popular topics for scholars in this field, along with scenario-based training, because their research shows that both are essential and incredibly beneficial to officers. Michael Buerger (2004) discusses the many changes in society that have affected police officers. He examines the differences between educating and training and the challenges that face officers who do not have a criminal justice degree. He specifically discusses the needs for sociological awareness as part of training; how officers have to deal with many different people in various situations and how it is important for them to understand and act according to the social situation in front of them. He stresses the

importance of scenario-based training with policy and procedure training to support the scenarios decisions (Buerger, 2004).

Steven Hundersmark (2009) interviewed and observed 10 cadets and learned that most of the Academy training was classroom, lecture style and the recruits were getting almost nothing out of it. He found that any scenario-based training was much more effective and really brought out the cadets' critical thinking and problem solving skills. He poses the idea to align field training with academy training so the recruits can apply the things they learn to the job and to their lives (Hundersmark, 2009).

Janet Oliva, Rhiannon Morgan, and Michael Compton (2010) also emphasize the importance of effective communication skills in training. They discuss that police officers need scenario based training to be prepared to deal with crisis situations, including people with mental illness. They discuss the significance of de-escalating situations so that everyone is safe (Oliva, Morgan, & Compton, 2010).

Brian Arnsperger and Gordon Bowers (1996) would agree that de-escalation is the best tactic, but their evaluation showed that police officers did not feel confident in dealing with high risk situations and felt that they needed more defensive tactics training. Part of this scenario-based training program that was created to address the needs of the officers was a goal to use the correct verbal communication to lessen the need for any kind of physical force. Their scenario-based training program was hugely successful for officers (Arnsperger & Bowers, 1996).

In another development of a scenario-based training program, Dean Olson (1998) argues that recruits need to be trained in the policies of use-of-force, as well as the physical

effects that a stressful situation will have on the officers' bodies and minds. The 'Dynamic Training' program created for this study was so realistic that it allowed officers to feel those stressful effects and learn how to control them and react properly (Olson, 1998).

Michael Lynch (2005) also looked at scenario-based training and focused on officer safety, knowledge of the law, interpersonal skills, use of force, officer adaptability and policies and procedures (Lynch, 2005).

All of the studies agreed that officer discretion was a difficult part of the job and ethics was needed to ensure capability. Joycelyn Pollock and Ronald Becker (1996) focused specifically on ethics training. They discussed the importance of defining ethical dilemmas and their study showed that having officers write down ethical dilemmas that they have encountered helps to incite discussion on how to handle these dilemmas. They discussed that the arguments among officers were usually about what the exact policy and procedure was for the situation (Pollock & Becker, 1996).

Brian Kinnaird (2007) discusses that without a clear understanding of policy and procedure, officers have trouble following them. Kinnaird used a matrix of proximate cause to show that understanding policy and procedure, training initiatives and early warning systems can help to prevent police misconduct (Kinnaird, 2007).

These scholars have identified several factors that should be included in training to reduce excessive force. Many of the scholars agreed that scenario-based training was successful in helping officers prepare for situations that may arise. The need for officers to better understand policies and procedures is also discussed. A huge factor that the authors discuss involves ethics training and interpersonal skills. Although it could be argued that

many professions could use training in sociological awareness, it's clear that police officers, who deal with all different kinds of people every day, need to be more aware of the social situations that they encounter. An officer must be aware of the area around him, the culture, the people, their behaviors, and police officers must be willing and prepared to assist any kind of person. Communication plays a part in this as well. Police officers cannot just look and hear; they must *listen* and *see*. Realizing that a person has a mental handicap can change the way the officer approaches the situation. The authors make it clear that police officer training is missing some key elements that are crucial for a job that works so closely with the public.



## **Methodology**

### *Purpose:*

The main objective of this research is to analyze police training and its impact on the use of excessive force, public opinion and officer experience. The current research will be measured to provide insight on how to determine training expectations best suited to create well-prepared, confident, non-aggressive police officers. The research will also observe how training is conducted currently in Putnam County and how other local police departments have been conducting training. Public opinion will be analyzed to see if officers are fulfilling their mission of protecting the public, while police officer interviews will assist in showing how training has helped officers and where more training may be needed.

### *Research Design:*

Surveys will be used to collect data from the public. Questions will be given to assess how the public relates to officers and whether they feel safe in the presence of officers of the law. Interviews will determine police officers opinions and experiences. More specifically, interviews will include questions about training and whether the officers benefited from its effectiveness. During the interviews, discussion of personal experience will allow for better understanding of officers levels of confidence with their training. Present training techniques from Putnam County will be evaluated and compared to other training techniques that have been studied and discussed in scholarly articles.

### *Data Collection:*

Surveys will be completed by Putnam County residents using an online survey website, while interviews will be conducted with police officers from Putnam County, NY; both surveys and interviews will be voluntary. Evaluation of present training will be obtained from training academies that are used by the Putnam County Sheriff's office. Other training techniques from former research will be analyzed and correlated to present training. The evaluation measure in the current research will be to determine training effectiveness in Putnam County and how it can be strengthened to positively impact police misconduct. Collection of this data will be used to answer the following questions:

1. Does effective training decrease the amount of excessive force for police officers working in the suburbs of Putnam County, NY?

- Research will be done on a number of studies that pertain to officer training. The studies discussed will show results from various different training techniques and how they positively or negatively impact police officer behavior. Correlative research will show whether training can be used to decrease excessive force as well as better prepare officers for any situation.

2. Are police academies giving sufficient attention to training on ethics and the use of excessive force?

- Training information, course content and officer experience will be analyzed to evaluate the current police academy training. The evaluation will collect information about the objectives of training and whether they are concurrent with the mission to protect and serve. Other information will be examined to

determine if there are parts of training that discuss the mission and values of law enforcement while allowing the trainees to understand the significance of these values. Police officer interviews will cite specific experiences and opinions of current and past training practices. Evaluation will look into the use of ethics training and concepts of different sociological situations and behaviors.

3. What are the public's expectations for law enforcement and have officers satisfied expectations?

- ∞ Surveys will be given to Putnam County residents through an online survey website. Survey questions will allow the public to express how officers make them feel and how they believe the officers in their community are satisfying the mission of law enforcement. The survey will be targeted at public opinion and experience and help to evaluate whether police officers are being trained adequately to serve the needs of their community.

4. How do police officers see the problem of excessive force?

- ∞ Interviews with police officers will provide insight into the life of law enforcement and how the cases of police brutality are experienced by officers. Thus, officers will be given the opportunity to relay personal experiences and share their feelings about brutality as well as other situations that have created negative experiences and reactions among themselves or their colleagues.

- ∞ All officers will remain anonymous to protect their opinions and experiences.

5. Do officers feel that there needs to be a change in police training?

- ∞ Officer interviews will assess the effectiveness of police training upon graduating the police academy. Officers will provide insight and recommendations on restructuring programs to improve their effectiveness thus limiting uncertainty.
6. What types of training would be best to address excessive force and create more well-prepared and confident officers?
- ∞ Using the scholarly articles and studies, various training techniques will be presented with both the public and officers via surveys and interviews. All participants will be encouraged to share their opinions of training program effectiveness and whether they believe they can be strengthened. Supplementary research will be used to support these findings and determine which training techniques will positively impact police effectiveness.

### *Data Analysis*

After all surveys have been conducted, charts and graphs will be used to display pertinent public opinions in a clear pictorial format. Secondary information may be presented in a more concise report, dependent on the research. Detailed interviews will be used to extrapolate important results in comparison to questions asked. Any deductions that are not explicitly presented by the police officers will be duly noted. A program evaluation will be conducted on the effectiveness of current training, while training techniques from scholarly research will be discussed and compared appropriately.

## Findings

### *Public Survey*

With the use of an online program, 74 surveys were taken by public citizens in Putnam County. There were five interviews done with police officers of Putnam County. The survey began with several demographical questions. The first question was in regards to the age of participants. 71.6% of the participants were 21-26 years old. The average age of the participants is 24.4. See Figure 1. The second question was in regards to race and ethnicity. 94.6% of participants identified as white, while 2.7% identified as Latino or Hispanic and 2.7% identified as black or African American.

1. Please choose the range that includes your present age.

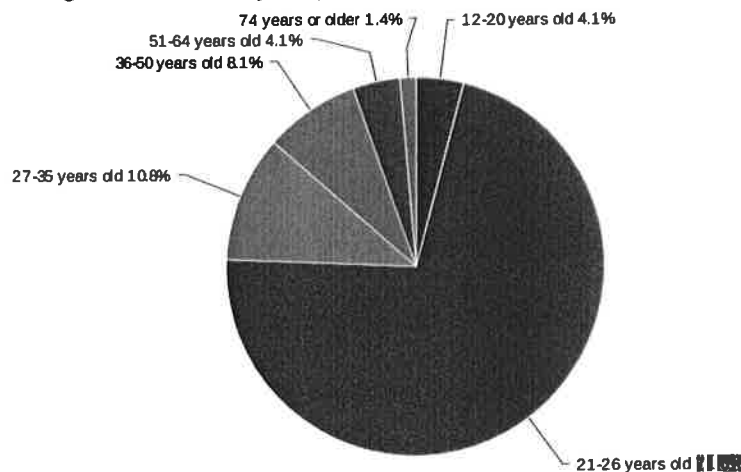


Figure 1. Ages of Public Survey Participants

The rest of the survey was meant to assess the participants' opinions of law enforcement. When asked whether they felt that law enforcement agencies satisfied their purpose of public safety, 39.2% of the participants believed that law enforcement thought

about public safety sometimes, but sometimes they only cared about enforcing the law.

However, 25.7% felt that police thought about the public safety most of the time.

One of the survey questions allowed the participants to pick words that described their feelings when they first spot an officer of the law. They were able to pick more than one word. 41.9% of the participants chose the words “intimidated” and “unsure,” while 40.5% chose “worried” and 35.1% chose “wary.” Although, 24.3% chose the word “safe,” 20.3% chose the word “scared.” See Figure 2 for full results.

4. Think about your first reaction when spotting an officer of the law. What are your feelings? (You can check all that apply)

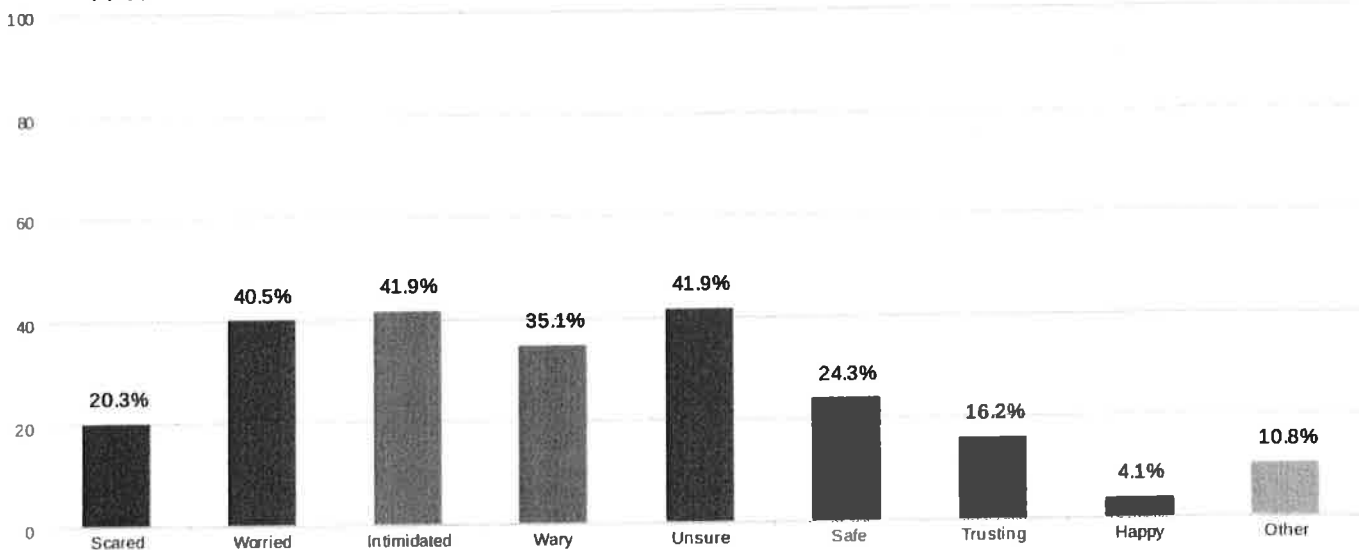


Figure 2. Public Participant's General Feelings Related to Police

When asked how the participants felt about how police officers handle most social interaction 55.4% thought officers were friendly sometimes, but they could also be intimidating. 24.3% of participants felt that officers tried to be aware of social situations, but it was hard to do.

The participants were asked whether they thought the Police Academy could be better at weeding out aggressive trainees. 63.5% of participants said “Maybe, but better training techniques could be more helpful.” 23% said that the Police Academy needs to do better because “an aggressive nature is not a good trait for a police officer.” See Figure 3 for full results.

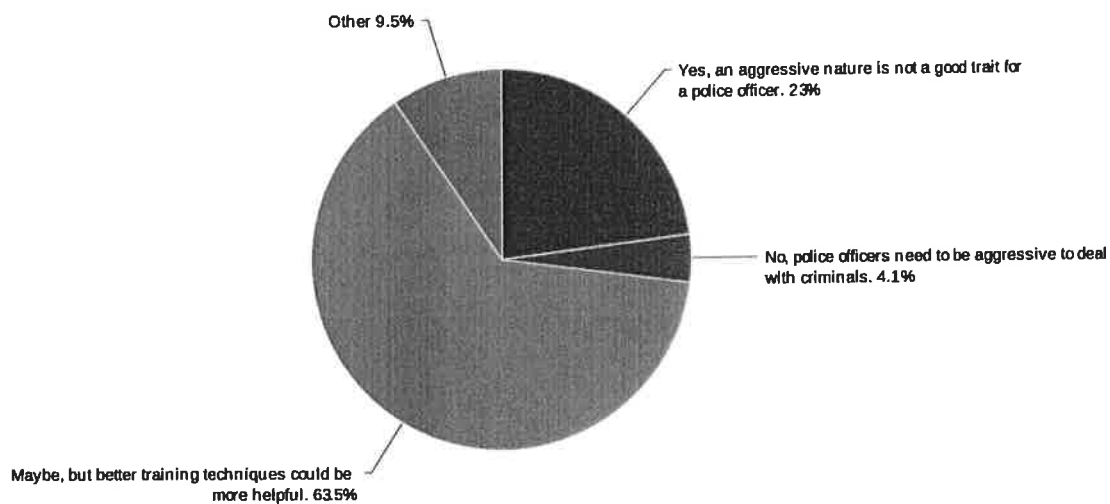


Figure 3. Aggressive Police Officer Trainees

In the survey, 75.7% of participants were in support of better training techniques for police officers. Only 1.4% was not in support of the better training techniques.

The participants were asked to choose which training techniques they thought would be best for police officers. They were able to choose more than one of the options. 62.2% of participants believed that ethics training was necessary, while 63.5% believed that procedure and policy training was necessary. 66.2% believed social awareness training was important, while 71.6% believed that de-escalation skills were very important. 91.9% of participants agreed that scenario-based training was necessary. There was an “Other” choice which one participant presented the option of “combat training, with an emphasis on

grappling. If a physical confrontation is inevitable, there are means by which someone can be subdued without causing damage.”

The participants were asked “When you hear about a case of police brutality in America, what do you think? How do you feel?” This was an open ended question and allowed participants to write whatever they truly thought and felt. 23% of participants mentioned that the media doesn’t give a full story and they want to hear both sides of the story before condemning the officers.

The most answers, 59.5%, involved feelings of disgust, disappointment, and anger. The participants wrote that they felt upset and unsafe.

In contrast, 10.8% feel bad for officers. They know that not all police officers are bad but they get bad reputations because of a few violent officers. Some even mentioned that it’s hard to keep the peace and go into situations knowing almost nothing.

Two participants mentioned that the department and supervisors should also be at fault for never dealing with the problem of violence appropriately. Only one participant wondered how the situation could have been avoided, what the consequences were and what are the policies to prevent the violence?

### *Police Officer Interviews*

Five interviews were done with different police officers from Putnam County. These were done on paper for the safety of the police officers identity. Firstly, the officers were asked what they remembered from training. Officers reported remembering training on officer safety, confidence and commanding presence, professionalism, penal and vehicle and traffic laws, service, paperwork, to always be alert, to always respect everyone and dealing



with emotionally disturbed people. One officer (Officer 5) gave more elaborate answers; he wrote, "What you learn in a classroom or in a textbook does not compare to experience. You can have all the right answers to a problem or situation, but how you react on the job can only be tested in a real life situation."

The same officer also discussed how scenario based training wasn't very helpful for him. He found the scenarios to be "uncomfortable and awkward."

When the officers were asked if training had prepared them for the job, all felt that it had. However almost all agreed that field training was integral to them feeling confident on the job. Officer 5 wrote that "Field training officers are the ones that transition young officers to gain confidence to act appropriately."

The police officers were asked if they experienced any ethics training, and if they did, what they remembered from it. All of the officers had experienced ethics training, but what they remembered varied.

"Everyone comes from different backgrounds and has different perceptions."

"Always do the right thing."

"Always remember that we work for the people."

"Professionalism in ethics."

Officer 5 wrote about an important topic; "During the academy, the training was more focused on what officers have gotten in trouble for in the past as well as what officers are getting in trouble with now. There was a focus on social media and video recordings as being two of the more popular topics for officers to be aware of while on duty and even off duty."

However when asked whether there was any sociological awareness training (training that focused on social aspects; other cultures and races, dealing with mentally disabled or handicapped persons, how to read and understand citizens and respond accordingly), even Officer 5 didn't have much to say. All agreed they had done such training, but only one officer gave more information. "The police academy teaches all new officers that they should take time to understand someone's culture and mental disabilities. Someone's culture or disability will sometimes determine the kind of action taken by an officer."

The officers were asked if aggressive behavior was penalized or condoned in the academy and all replied that it was and that they were taught to treat people with respect.

When asked how they felt about other police officers using excessive force, two officers said they didn't believe in excessive force, "use enough force to stop someone." Another officer wrote that "force should be contingent on subject resistance," while another officer believed it was unacceptable and an abuse of power.

The next question asked police officers about media and brutality. Did the officers think better training could avoid excessive force and "media shaming?" All the officers made note that the media's job is to build ratings and viewers, and that they can cut video to make their story sell.

Officer 5 summed up topic very nicely, "Officers are constantly under the microscope and any incident can become tomorrow's viral video on Facebook or YouTube. I think it's something that officer's need to think about constantly. It can be stressful to deal with a combative party on top of having a spectator videoing your every move. Keep in mind that video does not always capture the scene in its entirety and people's perception of a small

video of the incident can be misconstrued as excessive force. With that being said, I think officers need to focus on the concept of escalation and de-escalation to protect themselves from getting in trouble.... The media focuses on the behavior of the few and there is not enough coverage of the bravery of many.”

The officers were asked whether they participated in developmental training and whether any new training was mandatory. All mentioned that they had mandatory training every year on new policies, updated laws, and new issues. Officer 5 gave the example of extra training focused on domestic violence this past year.

#### *Police Academy Syllabus*

To correspond with the officers’ information, a syllabus from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services was examined. For simplicity the table below shows the topics and hours required on each. Not all topics are shown, only those that are pertinent to the research or interesting.

<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Required Hours</u></b>
Discretionary Powers	2
Ethical Awareness	12
Physical Fitness and Wellness	65
Justification – Use of Physical Force and Deadly Physical Force	7
Mental Illness	14
Interpersonal Skills – Arrest Techniques	40
Firearms Training	40
Supervised Field Training	160
Cultural Diversity/Bias Related Incidents and Sexual Harassment	5
Persons with Disabilities	2
Community Oriented Policing & Problem Solving – Media Relations	2
The Nature and Control of Civil Disorder	2
Domestic Violence	14

Table 2. Course Topics from Police Academy Syllabus (NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services 2014)

## **Analysis of Findings**

Reviewing the academic literature and police academy syllabus and analyzing the findings of the survey and interviews has given some answers to the original research questions.

Does training help to change the level of excessive force among police officer working in the suburbs of Putnam County?

This question can be answered by the review of academic literature. As reported in the literature review, several of the experiments done with police training gave evidence that certain training did lower chances of brutality. This question however would be the hardest to answer fully because this research couldn't test a different training with the police officers of Putnam County. It's also important to point out that officers can react to training in different ways; one may learn to avoid excessive force while another may ignore the training.

Are police academies giving sufficient attention to training on ethics and excessive force?

The syllabus from the New York State Criminal Justice Services can attest that there is training on both of these subjects, as can the officers interviewed. All of the officers were able to recall their ethics training and gave examples of what they learned. This shows that the training in New York State does try to create an ethical environment. However it is important to note that on the New York State syllabus for police training, there was only 12 hours put aside for Ethics training and only 7 put aside for training on physical force/deadly force. This may be sufficient training for some, but for the others who are focused on the 65 hours needed for Physical Fitness, there could be some confusion as to what is important.

What does the public expect from law enforcement and are they satisfied with what they have in their communities?

The public survey gave answer to this research question. The public is not necessarily blinded by brutality and the media. The findings show that they do think that many police officers are just trying to do their job and keep the public safe. However, most of the participants picked negative words to associate with police encounters, which means they do feel intimidated and uncomfortable around officers of the law. In the survey's, many people acknowledged how hard the job of police officer can be and sympathized with officers. However, over half were disgusted by cases of brutality and many felt that the academy and supervisors were to blame. The findings show that although people have high expectations of police officers, they are seeing a lot of aggression and intimidation and many believe training could help. The survey also showed that being a police officer comes with many bad stereotypes, and few people are willing to look past and think logically about law enforcement.

How do police officers view excessive force?

The findings definitely answered this question. Other officer believed excessive force was unacceptable and officers can and do abuse their power. However media influences the views of the people towards police officers and it can be frustrating for officers to always be seen as the "bad guys." New technologies, smart phones, cameras, have made life for police officers even harder and it's clear that these things have played a role in police behavior.

Do police officers believe that training programs need to be restructured?

The findings would indicate that police officers don't think there needs to be much of a change. However one officer did mention that a better focus on de-escalation skills would be helpful for many officers. This also helps to answer the last question:

What types of training would positively impact police misconduct?

In addition to de-escalation skills, scholars in the field discussed interpersonal skills as an important factor in decreasing excessive force. Interpersonal Skills were listed on the police training syllabus and required 40 hours of training; however, Interpersonal Skills was listed with Arrest Techniques. Why are these two listed together? It's clear that many times officers are put in situations where they are unsure of what to do or are overwhelmed. When this happens the easy answer sometimes is to arrest, or react more violently than maybe what is necessary.

It's important to note that the research in Putnam County was much more biased toward white young adults, ages 21-26. They made up a very large part of the public survey. This could be why there were a lot of negative thoughts about police officers, as young adults are usually more likely to be getting in trouble with the law.

The police interviews gave insight into the eyes of a police officer and helped to make them seem more relatable. They each had personal experiences that were special to them and it showed how important of a job it is to be a police officer.

It was especially interesting to hear about different trainings that the public may not be aware of. The officers mentioned domestic violence training because of an increase in domestic violence deaths in the past year. They also were being trained on community oriented policing and problem solving as well as media relations. These things are very important so that the officers can have good relationships with the people in their communities.

The research was successful in that it presented public opinion of officers and showed that the public is not very knowledgeable in police training or behavior. The research also found that there are many different training techniques that can be successful in decreasing

police brutality. However, it also showed that police officers do not ignore brutality and it is not accepted by other officers.

## **Conclusions**

The outcome of this research may not have a large impact nationally, but it has shown insight on the local level. Putnam County is a rural area with very few police brutality cases and the research did show that officers are trained to refrain from excessive force. However, the public survey revealed that even in an area with few brutality cases the public has little trust for the police. This shows that brutality in other areas, most probably in cities, is affecting the image of police everywhere. It would be important to continue this research across the nation and interview officers in different areas. Cities specifically could have an interesting impact on the outcome of the same kind of research. It would also be important to continue to look at newer training exercises like those suggested by the authors in this study's literature review, as well as testing the new training on officers and evaluating the outcomes. Another suggestion for officers and for research would be the effect of counseling on officers. Their job is not easy and counseling may help alleviate some of the stresses and frustrations that can cause aggressive behavior.

In regards to the findings specific to this research, local police could do more community outreach programs to help connect with the citizens. Especially in these areas with less brutality and a lot of public mistrust, meeting and interacting with the public in a way that is unrelated to law enforcing could have a positive impact on the police image in the area. The officers used in this research were given the opportunity to share an experience of any sort and all had very inspiring things to say. This could be a great opportunity for the local newspapers to spread some great stories of police helping the public as well as the public helping the police. The firemen in Brewster, New York have a parade every year and a



summer BBQ. These types of events would be great for police officers to show their personalities and allow the public to see them as neighbors instead of authority figures.

This research is important not only to the safety of the public but also to police officers. The outcomes of research can only benefit both parties. Law enforcement is a huge part of our nation's workforce and it would be irresponsible to ignore the needs of officers and the citizens they protect.

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