

DE-ESCALATION: STRATEGIES, IMPACTS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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THE TEMPE DE-ESCALATION PROJECT

DESIGN

DELIVER

EVALUATE



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

SMART | Data.
POLICING | Analysis.
Impact.

DESIGN: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT



SEND OFFICERS TO DE-ESCALATION TRAINING

Total number of trainings attended: 22

- Online: 5
- Local: 4
- National: 13
 - Includes visits to other agencies



De-Escalation Completed Training Form

ASU Center for
Violence Prevention
and Community Safety
Arizona State University

Name of Evaluator:

Title of Training:

Organization:

Presenter:

Date(s) of Training:

Location of Training:

Link to Training Information:

Is access to the curriculum provided to attendees?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What were your initial expectations for the training?

EVALUATING THE TRAINING OVERALL

Did you find the training beneficial?

Why or why not?

Would you recommend this training?

Why or why not?

Ride-Along Coding Instrument

Interaction Questions Questions in Blue – Ask Officer Directly

Questions 1-17: Pre-Arrival Stage

1. Interaction Identifier in order observed with each officer
2. Was this a casual (no LE response), brief (minimal LE response), full interaction, or traffic stop? (1=brief, 2=full, 3=traffic stop, 4=accident) 1 2 3 4
3. What time was the officer dispatched to the call? (military)
Midnight = 00:00 13:00 = 1 p.m.
4. What time did the officer arrive on scene? (military)
Midnight = 00:00 13:00 = 1 p.m.
5. What time did the officer leave the scene? (military)
Midnight = 00:00 13:00 = 1 p.m.
6. How was this interaction initiated? (1=call for service, 2=citizen flag down, 3=officer-initiated, 4=other) 1 2 3 4
7. Did the officer travel with urgency to the scene? (0=no urgency, 1=urgency, increased speed, 2=urgency, lights and/or sirens) 0 1 2
8. What type of problem was initially dispatched or observed? (see list of codes)
9. What did the problem turn out to be once the officer arrived and accumulated information? (see list of codes)

THE TEMPE TOP DE-ESCALATORS

ASU and the 14 Top De-escalators

- 44 ride-alongs

166 interactions observed

- 107 variables recorded per citizen interaction

One-on-one interviews

Focus groups

Exploring Variation in Police Perceptions of De-Escalation: Do Officer Characteristics Matter?

Michael D. White*, Victor Mora** and Carlena Orosco***

Abstract Though de-escalation has become popular in policing, there is very little research on the topic. We know virtually nothing about what it is, whether it works, or even how officers perceive de-escalation. The authors surveyed over 100 officers in the Tempe (AZ) Police Department regarding their perceptions of de-escalation, including tactics used to peacefully resolve potentially violent encounters, the frequency of use, and their perceptions of de-escalation training. We examine perceptions overall, as well as by officer race/ethnicity and sex. Findings suggest that officers view de-escalation through a lens defined by their authority and officer safety. They use certain tactics multiple times each shift. Officers are open to de-escalation training but are skeptical about its impact on citizen encounters. Lastly, minority and female officers use certain tactics more often than white male officers. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications for the larger debate on de-escalation in policing.

Introduction

Use of force has served as a longstanding source of tension between police and citizens, particularly in minority communities (White and Fradella, 2016). The consequences of a use of force incident can be both tragic and severe, including loss of life, riots, destruction of property, large civil judgements, and erosion of police legitimacy (Fyfe, 1988). Use of force incidents sparked numerous riots during the

1960s, leading the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (1968) to conclude that 'deep hostility between police and ghetto communities' was a primary cause of the unrest. Controversial force incidents also led to riots in 1980 (Miami), 1992 (Los Angeles), 1996 (St Petersburg), and 2001 (Cincinnati). The Los Angeles riot following the acquittal of the four officers who beat Rodney King lasted for 6 days, resulting in 63 deaths,

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OFFICER SURVEY

Fall 2018 (n=96)

Summer 2019 (n=113)

Patrol Briefings

- Perceptions of de-escalation training
- What tactics do you use?
- How often do you use them?

DELIVER: THE TRAINING

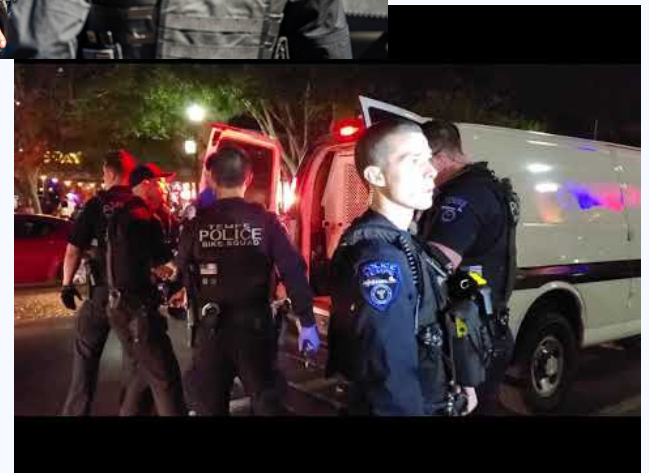


THE TEMPE DEFINITION OF DE-ESCALATION

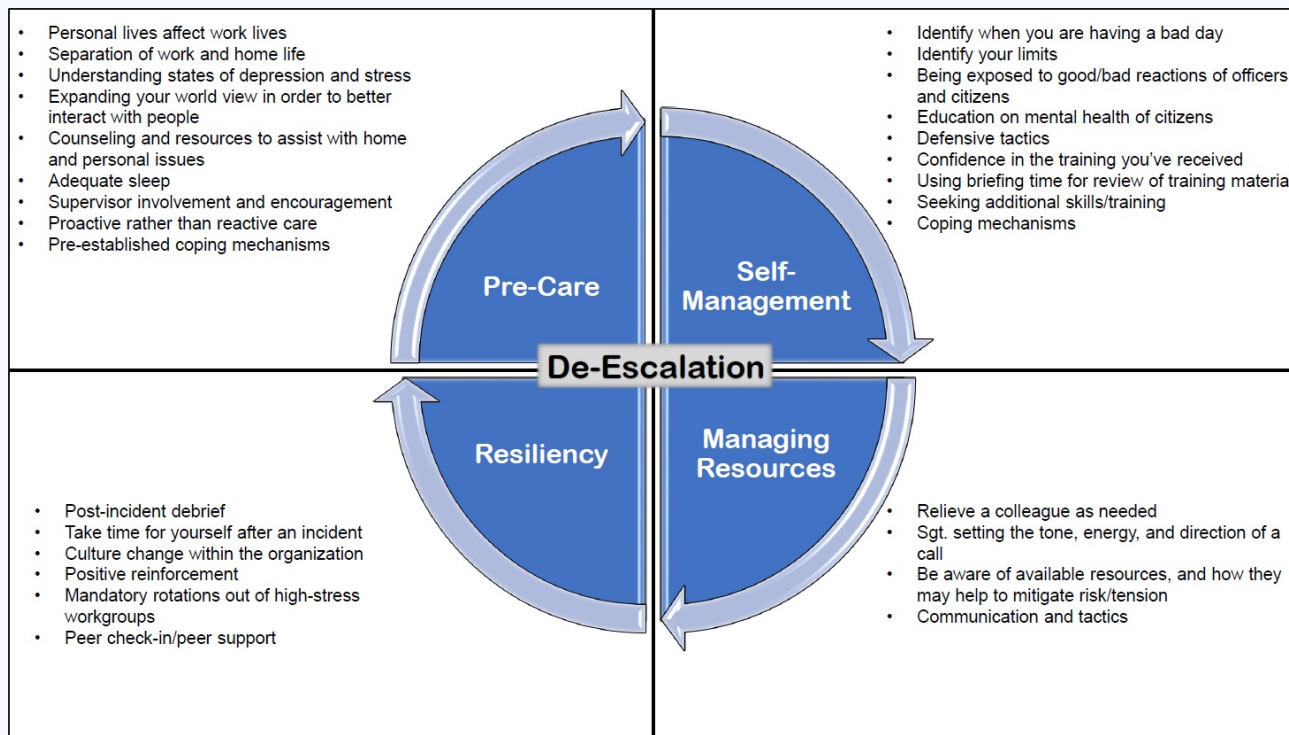
Officer Safety as a Centerpiece

De-escalation: Techniques used to gain compliance with the goal of reducing violence or aggression. This can be accomplished through application of the PATROL model, communication, the use of appropriate force, and/or other reasonable techniques.

Note: Officers should not compromise their safety or increase the risk of physical harm to the public when applying de-escalation techniques.



THE TRAINING FRAMEWORK





FINAL TRAINING FRAMEWORK

- Defining de-escalation
- Pre-care and self-management
- Sources of stress and trauma
- Effective coping mechanisms and critical incident stress management
- Active listening
- Emotional intelligence
- Planning (including pre-planning), creativity, improvisation, and adaptability affect police work
- The PATROL model – application to scenarios
- PATROL debriefing

THE TRAINING (APRIL 2021)



- A test run, January 2020
- Series of one-day sessions, February-March 2020
- Instructors – TPD training unit, Top Ds, outside experts (ASU)
- Refresher (virtual) roll call trainings

EVALUATE: THE RESEARCH



THE EVALUATION

Squad-based randomization (100+ per group)

Comparing outcomes among officer groups

- Self-reported attitudes/behavior (survey)
- Administrative data (use of force, complaints, injuries)
- Citizen surveys
- Body-worn camera footage
 - Random review
 - All use of force

OFFICER PERCEPTION SURVEY

6 months before and after training (June/July 2019, 2020)

Rate importance and use of 18 different de-escalation tactics.

Post-training Differences for Trained Group

Importance - **compromise**

Use – **compromise, maintaining officer safety, knowing when to walk away**

Moving the needle: can training alter officer perceptions and use of de-escalation?

Officer perceptions and use of de-escalation

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Abstract

Purpose – De-escalation training for police has received widespread attention as a method for reducing unnecessary and excessive use of force. There is virtually no research on de-escalation, and as a result, there is little understanding about what it is, what it includes and whether it is effective. The current study compares attitudes about the importance and use of de-escalation among officers who were randomly assigned to participate (or not) in de-escalation training.

Design/methodology/approach – The current study draws from a larger randomized controlled trial of de-escalation training in the Tempe, Arizona Police Department (TPD). Approximately 100 officers completed a survey in June–July 2019 and again in June–July 2020. TPD delivered the de-escalation training to half the patrol force in February–March 2020. The authors compare treatment and control officers' attitudes about the importance of specific de-escalation tactics, how often they use those tactics and their sentiments about de-escalation training. The authors employ an econometric random-effects model to examine between-group differences post-training while controlling for relevant officer attributes including age, race, sex, prior training and squad-level pretraining attitudes about de-escalation.

Findings – Treatment and control officers reported positive perceptions of de-escalation tactics, frequent use of those tactics and favorable attitudes toward de-escalation before and after the training. After receiving the training, treatment officers placed greater importance on compromise, and reported more frequent use of several important tactics including compromise, knowing when to walk away and maintaining officer safety.

Originality/value – Only a few prior studies have examined whether de-escalation training changes officer attitudes. The results from the current study represent an initial piece of evidence suggesting de-escalation training may lead to greater use of those tactics by officers during encounters with citizens.

Keywords Training, Police, Use of force, De-escalation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

August 9, 2020 marked the six-year anniversary of Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri. The police killings of Brown, Freddie Gray and others led to public outrage, riots and demands for police reform. In late 2014, former President Obama created the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing to examine the causes of the crisis, and to identify recommendations for improving community trust and enhancing police accountability. The Task Force final report included nearly 60 recommendations to improve policing, but

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CITIZEN PERCEPTIONS



Phone interviews of citizens who had recent encounters with a Tempe officer

- Compared perceptions – Trained v. Not Trained officer

Of 28 variables, 16 are statistically significant favoring positive training impact:

- the officer treated them **fairly** (2.65 vs 2.46);
- the officer was **honest** with them (2.65 vs 2.48);
- the officer **listened** carefully (2.61 vs 2.41);
- they were **satisfied** with how they were treated (2.56 vs 2.33);
- the officer remained **neutral** throughout the encounter (2.61 vs 2.43);
- the officer was **patient** with them (2.63 vs 2.46);
- the officer actively **listened** (2.57 vs 2.40);
- the officer **compromised** with them (2.38 vs 2.14);
- the officer showed **empathy** (2.47 vs 2.23);
- officer did or said things to **calm them** down (2.40 vs 2.10).

BWC RANDOM REVIEW

Randomly select 10 officers per week

- Pre-training (n=230); Post-training (n=246)

Trained officers were significantly:

- less likely to use a condescending/patronizing tone.
- more likely to attempt to build rapport with the citizen.
- less likely to fail to transfer control to another officer, if necessary.
- less likely to use charged/imposing body language.
- more likely to resolve the encounter informally.



BWC IN USE OF FORCE INCIDENTS



All- 6 months pre- and post-training
(8/1/2019 - 8/30/2020)

- Pre-training (n=658); Post-training (n=320)

Citizen Injuries Post-Training (n=320)

- **Not Trained - 26.2%**
- **Trained - 11.2%**

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER AREAS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



DISPATCH

- Continuity
- Citizens and Officers
- Front End Resolution



DETENTION

- Compliance
- Injury Mitigation
- Lawsuit Liability



LESSONS LEARNED

- First challenge – what does de-escalation mean to us? How is it defined?
- Teaching the material effectively
- Follow-up – policy, force review, citizen review, city-level policy
- Should be embedded throughout
 - Promotional processes
 - Across entire department – surround sound effect
- Benefits of visiting other agencies
 - What works for them? How does it translate?





Thank you!

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