

Rethinking Diversity in Policing: An Analysis of Diversity Training Standards in Basic Police Academies Across the United States

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Recent events of police interactions with citizens have raised a nationwide debate on the effectiveness of police training and whether police officers are prepared to address the needs of and successfully interact with populations of diverse cultural backgrounds. This research uses a mixed methods design to explore the emphasis placed on diversity training in state-mandated basic police curricula across 49 U.S. states from a public administration-oriented perspective. The study analyzes interviews and course content and hours to evaluate the coverage of four dimensions for effective diversity training: 1) **Why** is diversity relevant in basic police training? 2) **Who** are “the diverse” addressed in the training? 3) **What** is the diversity content in the basic police curriculum? and 4) **How** is diversity taught in basic academies? The article concludes by offering practical recommendations on how to improve diversity competencies in police training and practice.

The United States has become more diverse over the years, and it is projected that non-Hispanic whites will drop below 50% of the population by 2060 (Vespa et al. 2020). The rapid changes in our society’s characteristics have sparked renewed interest in the role that effective diversity practices play in the workforce in general, and the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training, in particular.

The importance of diversity education has long been recognized in the public administration literature. Hewins-Maroney and Williams (2007) state that diversity education promotes social concern about humane values which are essential for the development of a democratic state. When public employees fail to understand diverse populations, it limits their ability to achieve equity, fairness, representativeness, and responsiveness—the core values that underlie public service jobs (Mullins, Charbonneau, and Riccucci 2021). Thus, understanding the extent to which DEI training exists in public organizations and what it teaches public sector employees is important in the context of public human resource management and employment.

More than that, in the context of policing, the need for DEI training goes beyond the need to simply understand the changing demographics of the citizenry. Salient issues of institutionalized racism and discrimination remain unresolved in the criminal justice system and continue to derail the trust between racialized groups and the police (White and Escobar 2008). One example is the death of George Floyd in May 2020, which led to violent protests throughout the country under the “Black Lives Matter” banner—a movement that brought to the public eye the systematic social and racial injustices experienced by African Americans for centuries (Lopez-Littleton, Blessett, and Burr 2018).

Such high-profile incidents of police brutality and deadly force in situations involving members of racialized groups due to their perceived criminality have caused many to question police training. Of particular interest is whether such training adequately educates officers to overcome the presumption of dangerousness and guilt that has become entrenched within the criminal justice system to this day (Davis 2017; Narnolia and Kumar 2021).

Police leaders and policy makers are looking to the training function as a part of the remedy for these problems. For example, the *Report of The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (2015) recommended major changes to policing in the United States. Among those recommendations, there is a need for police departments to better emphasize areas of culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion and become more culturally competent in the way that they deal with diverse populations and communities. A central theme of DEI training is that future police officers will be better able to meet community expectations and manage successful interactions with residents if they understand the culture of their community. The DEI training that police officers receive in the police academy builds that foundation for the rest of their career (Birzer 1999).

The purpose of this study is to examine state-mandated diversity training for new officers and provide a comprehensive model for diversity competence training in basic police training academies. The study contributes to the literature by offering police leaders, policy makers, and curriculum designers insights into the current state of mandated cultural diversity training in basic academies and how it can be improved. Specifically, we present a model for diversity training that focuses on the most important aspects for the police to address if they wish to develop an effective DEI curriculum.

Diversity Training in Public Administration Literature: A Missing Component

The law enforcement profession has a duty to provide safety services to a diverse society while protecting citizens' multiple interests. To uphold such duties, police officers must be able to understand and appreciate the concept of diversity (White 2004). Police academies play a significant role in future police officers' knowledge of diversity and the extent to which they are exposed to the diversity issues at the center of the police and the policed. By providing effective diversity training, law enforcement academies help develop street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) that effectively represent the public interest, a fundamental principle of a democratic society (Lipsky 1971).

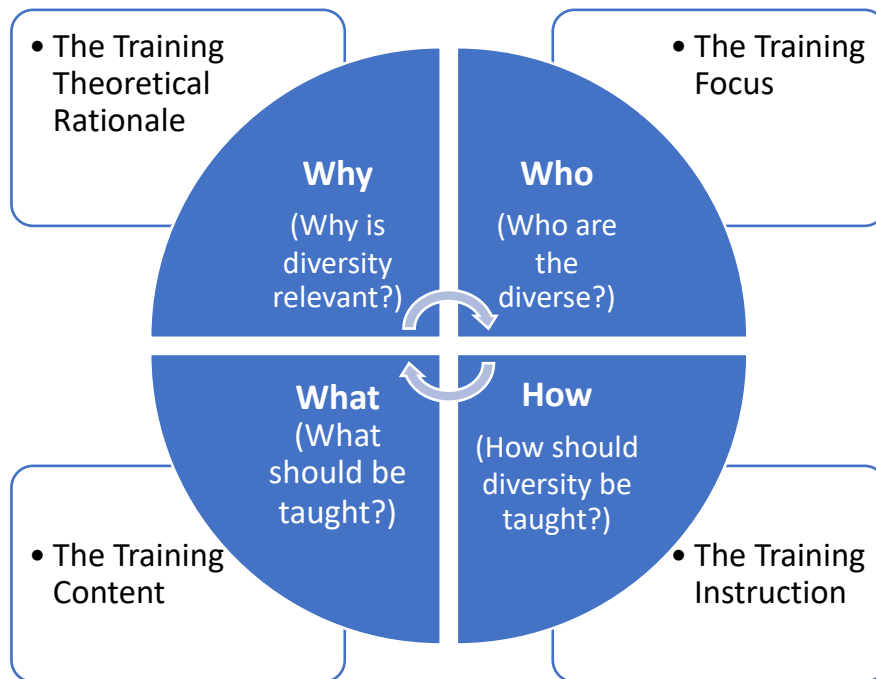
The plethora of diversity studies in the public administration literature is primarily focused on diversity within public organizations, and the ways in which di-

versity management can promote work outcomes (e.g., Andersen and Moynihan 2018; Hoang and Sabharwal 2022), improve representative bureaucracy (e.g., Carroll, Wright, and Meier 2019; Das 2019; Vinopal 2018), ensure inclusion in public programs implementation (e.g., Denhardt and deLeon 1995; Sowa and Selden 2003; McCandless et al. 2022), and enhance the overall delivery of public service (Ricucci and Van Ryzin 2017; Ricucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016). However, what remains unclear is *how* public employees become diversity competent, in other words—what training do they receive to learn why it is important and how to practice it?

The literature does not offer a unified or accepted list of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that public employees need to possess to successfully operate in a diverse community. In fact, our attempt to conduct a systematic review of the published research on diversity training in the public administration literature was abandoned after yielding only 35 studies (e.g., Bernotavicz 1997; Blessett and Pryor 2013; Carrizales 2010; Kim and Ofori-Dankwa 1995; Lopez-Littleton and Blessett 2015; Rice 2004; 2007; 2015; White 2004). Moreover, the studies that were retrieved either focused on diversity training policies (e.g., Groeneveld and Verbeek 2012), or on the effectiveness of training programs through employee perceptions of the training (e.g., Kim and Ofori-Dankwa 1995; Naff and Kellogg 2003). The few studies that analyzed the actual content of diversity training focused on diversity curricula for graduate students in public administration academic programs (e.g., King 2022; Sabharwal, Hjal-Moghrabi, and Royster 2014; Sabharwal, Levine, and D'Agostino 2018), rather than for professionals in the public workplace (excluding Cohen 2021 and Carrizales 2010).

As a result, in order to learn “what works” in diversity training in public organizations, we moved to review the interdisciplinary scholarly literature on diversity training programs. In this section, we provide a comprehensive review of the dimensions of diversity training which according to scholars, contribute to the development of successful training programs in organizations. In other words, the model we present explores the why, who, what, and how of diversity training. Figure 1 presents the framework for this study and a summary of the dimensions discussed.

Figure 1. Diversity Training: The Why, Who, What and How



The Theoretical Rationale: Why Diversity?

The term diversity is broadly defined as the cultural and demographic differences between members of society (or organizations) (Norman-Major and Gooden 2012). In the public administration literature, discussions of diversity are often used interchangeably with concepts such as cultural competency, inclusion, and social equity (Lopez-Littleton and Blessett 2015). However, Lopez-Littleton and Blessett (2015) explain that while the relationship between these terms is interdependent, each concept has a distinct and significant meaning on its own.

In a comprehensive analysis on the progression of diversity research in the field of public administration, Sabharwal and her coauthors (2018) demonstrate how the attributes that comprise the term diversity in public administration scholarship have shifted from a focus on race and gender to also include “ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, political affiliation, educational attainment, religion, physical ability, and even generational cohort” (249). Blessett (2021) adds that diversity goes beyond individual attributes to encompass “the ways in which people, ideas, and approaches are integrated within and across the discipline” (197).

One of the basic tenets of training research dictates that effective diversity training programs should be based on a clear theoretical rationale that answers questions

about when, for whom, and how prejudice is reduced. Simply stated, it needs to answer why diversity is important (King et al. 2010; Paluck 2006). In the public administration literature, this rationale is inherently connected to democratic theory and its fundamental principles of autonomy, equality, and freedom (Ansell et al. 2021). Such principles integrate with core values of public administration such as racial justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (Chordiya 2022). DeHart-Davis et al. (2018) underscore that public institutions derive their performance and legitimacy from relying on these foundational principles. Additionally, Gaynor and Carrizales (2018) explain that the democratic ethos of public administration requires public servants to be accountable to the citizenry and to espouse democratic values on those who are impacted by their professional decisions. As such, when public administrators engage in discriminatory activities or decisions, they fail to fulfill their duty to uphold the constitutional values of fairness, justice, due process, and equity, which in turn suppresses the process of democracy (Gaynor and Carrizales 2018).

Diversity scholars agree that a theory-driven approach to diversity training programs has better potential to deliver effective outcomes, such as prejudice reduction and increased social inclusion (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007). In a reflection essay on the behavioral public administration movement, Hassan and Wright (2020)

write that the utilization of theories from psychology and experimental research designs by public administration scholars is much needed and can improve the rigor of public administration research. In diversity training scholarship, such theories are extremely noticeable. Perhaps the most prevalent theoretical framework utilized is the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett 2006). The underlying assumption of the model is that trainees develop intercultural sensitivity through six developmental stages (denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration). As their experiences of cultural difference become more sophisticated, their intercultural competency increases.

Another framework that has also received attention in diversity training literature is intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew 1998). This theory specifies four optimal conditions under which prejudice is reduced and perceptions of similarities increase among group members, even when they do not come in direct contact. Other diversity training theories recognized in the literature are the theory of planned behavior (Wiethoff 2004), social identity and social categorization theories (Tajfel and Turner 2004), and theories of group processes (e.g., Gibson and Vermeulen 2003).

However, diversity training in the world of practice shows a different picture. While almost all workplaces in the United States utilize some type of diversity training, most training programs remain atheoretical in the way they are designed and evaluated (Bennett 2006; Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell 2012). In a meta-analysis of 178 studies on diversity training, Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell (2012) report that more than half of the training programs they reviewed did not follow any theoretical framework. Similarly, a recent meta-analysis on diversity training in the multidisciplinary literature by Devine and Ash (2022) discovered that of the 250 studies reviewed, only 15 articles were theoretical. The authors conclude that diversity trainers often choose a training approach that is based on personal preference or intuition rather than on a specific theoretical approach (also see Cox and Devine 2019).

In her call for action research in diversity training, Paluck (2006) states that more effort should be made to connect diversity training programs with theory. She urges researchers and practitioners to join in a coordinated effort to develop programs that are guided by established diversity theories. This can give insight to real world contexts (Paluck 2006). In the public administra-

tion literature, Lopez-Littleton and co-authors (2018) also call for the incorporation of antiracist pedagogy in public administration education and training curricula. They argue that effective academic and professional training programs for public service personnel, at all levels of government, must draw from race theories. According to them, such purposeful discussions of race and racism promote a deeper level of understanding of the impact of race as a disruptive social factor (see Kato 2016) and enhance racial and social justice.

The Training Focus: Who Are “the Diverse”?

A second dimension in the design of effective diversity training pertains to the focus of the training, or in other words, “Who are the diverse?” The literature suggests that effective training programs should embrace a broad definition of diversity, one that emphasizes inclusiveness across multiple groups rather than focus on group-specific differences such as race, gender, or other categories (Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell 2012; Thomas, Tran, and Dawson 2010).

The group-specific focus in diversity training has been criticized by scholars as one that hinders the transformation of organizational culture (Thomas and Ely 1996), increases intergroup tensions (Gilbert and Ivancevich 2000) and leads to group polarization attitudes (Stratton et al. 2006). Thomas, Tran, and Dawson (2010) argue that group-based methods do not promote appreciation of inclusion because they drive the majority group to look at members of minority groups as “the other” rather than as a part of “us.” In addition, he states that by focusing on a certain cultural group, such as women or Latinos, we fail to recognize the diversity between individuals in those groups.

Conversely, an inclusive focus, as Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell (2012) explain, shifts attention away from “‘what is wrong with this outgroup’ . . . to ‘what is wrong with this organization that treats outgroups worse than ingroups?’” (216). Other scholars agree that the adoption of an inclusive approach in diversity training is likely to yield more opportunities for intergroup contact (Gilbert and Ivancevich 2000) and increased openness to learning about other cultures (Goldstein Hode, Behm-Morawitz, and Hays 2018). Furthermore, an inclusive focus is more likely to result in trainees’ greater understanding of the value of diversity (Goldstein Hode, Behm-Morawitz, and Hays 2018) and greater awareness to the varied perspec-

tives and contributions that members of different identity groups bring to the workforce (Thomas and Ely 1996).

Nonetheless, most diversity training programs in organizations present culture as a static concept, depicting a specific group as the stereotypical “other” (King, Gullick, and Avery 2010). Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell (2012) found that most diversity training programs focused on group-specific training, typically on race and gender as the primary group attributes. In a study that explored the construction of cultural diversity in medical curricula in the Netherlands, Zanting, Meershoek, Frambach, and Krumeich (2020) found that while the explicit definition of culture in the curricula was broad and did not target specific groups, the implicit interpretation suggested that the “exotic other” was a non-Western person located outside the Netherlands. Irving, Perl, Trickett, and Watts (1984) explain that this is an example of how the realities of training have fallen short of the aspirations from training. “Diversity training” eventually turns into “minority training.”

However, this is not to say that training on group-specific issues should be completely abandoned. While there is a common agreement among scholars that diversity training programs should expand their content beyond the teaching of group-specific attributes to include all segments of the diverse workforce, they also acknowledge that the group-specific approach can be beneficial. Thomas et al. (2010) state that group-based methods of diversity instruction have some merits as they promote an appreciation of differences. According to Roberson, Kulik, and Pepper (2003), training that is narrowly focused on a specific group attribute such as race or LGBTQ+, is highly effective when the organizational goal is very specific (e.g., increase LGBTQ+ awareness). Similarly, in their future agenda for diversity training, Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell (2012) suggest incorporating individual group experiences as examples within an inclusive program instead of making them the focus of the training.

The Training Content: What Should Be Taught?

The third dimension of diversity training pertains to the content of the curriculum. Although training content should be adjusted to the specific needs of each organization, the literature identifies several core content areas that should be addressed in any effective diversity curriculum. We adapt Carrizales’ (2010) framework for a cultural competency curriculum in public administration to

divide these curricular components into two conceptual domains: knowledge-based curriculum and skills-based curriculum.

Knowledge-Based Components

The knowledge-based curriculum is comprised of curricular components that focus on information (Kripalani et al. 2006) and provide trainees with basic definitions and principles that are fundamental for an in-depth understanding of cultural diversity (Carrizales 2010; Lopez-Littleton and Blessett 2015; Rapp 2006). Carrizales (2010) states that nothing is more important than understanding and appreciating the importance of cultural diversity in the public sector. They explain that principles of cultural competency present a theoretical challenge for trainees because they do not fit the neutrality and equality principles that are at the core of public administration (see Rice 2007).

For example, Rice (2004) argues that the core curriculum in diversity training should address the concept of social equity because it is critical that public servants understand the practical meaning behind it. He writes that although social equity is a basic pillar in public administration that focuses on fairness and equity in the delivery of public service, this perception does not fit the practice of cultural differences in public administration. Public servants should be taught that a diverse public has diverse needs, and that equity does not always mean treating all clients the same. It can also mean giving different treatment for the purpose of achieving equality of outcomes (see Rice 2007).

Pendry, Driscoll, and Field (2007) describe another core content area which underscores the policy and legal aspects of cultural diversity. They state that when employees understand their legal responsibilities under the various anti-discrimination laws, they are more likely to value diversity (as well as to decrease their organizations’ exposure to legal action over employee bias). In the context of public administration, Carrizales (2010) explains that understanding legislation is a prerequisite for promoting cultural diversity among employees who are recipients of public funds. Other scholars also asserted that public administrators must understand the legislative background and history of congressional legislations such as civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action (Bernotavicz 1997); how public sector diversity has been influenced by landmark court decisions (Pitts, Recascino, and Wise 2010); and how the

legal environment affects dimensions of diversity, such as disability status (Harding and Peel 2007), sexual orientation (e.g., Israel et al. 2017), and other protected classes (Bernotavicz 1997).

On the other hand, Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell (2012) warn against diversity training programs that rely too heavily on teaching legalistic terms and compliance issues, thus turning the program into a “check-the-box” training in which attendance is the only aspect that is being considered (see Anand and Winters 2008). Dobbin and Kalev (2018) explain that the combination of mandatory participation and legal curriculum makes participants feel that an external power is trying to control their behavior.

Clearly, the knowledge-based component of a cultural diversity curriculum has many other topics that can be further taught through definitions and policies. Other diversity themes include knowledge about the local and national demographic trends and the diversity of communities being served (e.g., Rapp 2006), understanding the concept of social disparities (e.g., Lopez-Littleton and Blessett 2015), and incorporating the concept of a representative bureaucracy (e.g., Carrizales 2010).

Skills-Based Components

The skills-based curriculum addresses acquisition of diversity-related skills that enable professionals to evaluate their behavior and cultural biases on an ongoing basis (Gilbert 2003). Naturally, such curricula focus on the teaching of tools and strategies related to communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, especially when cross-cultural differences exist (Knipper, Seeleman, and Essink 2010). The basic premise here is that public administrators should possess a set of skills that would allow them to deliver high quality service to their customers (Betancourt 2004). Two content examples, communication and decision-making skills, are explored further here.

According to Carrizales (2010), one way to effectively advance communication skills is by helping trainees recognize diverse languages and understand the need to improve the ability to communicate in diverse populations. Kellar (2005) wrote, “languages are the front door to another culture” (8). Many municipalities apply this principle by providing programs, websites, and published materials in multiple languages (Kellar 2005). In addition, Gilbert (2003) argues that diversity training should be taught in a *realistic* way for practitioners, one

that teaches them how to assess their own proficiency in cultures and languages.

An additional skill that should be covered in the training curriculum is effective decision-making. Decision-making skills are of particular importance in public administration training because of the high discretionary power and autonomy available to street-level bureaucrats when performing their jobs (Ellis, Davis, and Rummery 1999). While the ambiguous nature of frontline decision-making and its impact on policy making has been extensively researched in the literature (e.g., Cohen and Hertz 2020), the mechanics of how decision-making is being taught and what content is included in the training curricula have been largely overlooked.

The medical discipline is one field where diversity training curricula have been extensively researched. For example, in their examination of cultural competence training in the healthcare profession, Jernigan et al. (2016) recommend that courses on diversity-related decision-making courses should include learning the history of stereotyping, recognizing bias, discrimination and racism, and understanding the impact of stereotyping on decision-making. Studying police cadets, Marion (1998) found that during diversity courses, cadets demonstrated a poor understanding of the impact that cultural bias might have on their decision-making. Cadets argued that they do not hold any of the negative attitudes mentioned by the instructors in class and that they would never make decisions about suspects based on racial or ethnic characteristics. In her analysis of basic police training curricula across the United States, Cohen (2021) concluded that police academies should incorporate into their curricula more decision-making training that teaches trainees methods for developing effective decision-making patterns and strategies for assessing the effects that diverse groups can have on their decision-making processes.

The Training Instruction: How Should Diversity Be Taught?

Lastly, our review shifts from the way diversity training is designed in terms of rationale, focus and content, to the way it is delivered. How diversity training is implemented in the classroom is another dimension researchers identify as critical for effective diversity training programs. Castillo-Montoya (2019) argues that instructors need to develop ways of teaching students diversity by using

“interim points” which connect conceptual academic content and students’ experiences. Interim points can be enacted through various pedagogical strategies such as providing relevant real-life examples, asking open questions, and facilitating classroom discussions around cultural and personal topics. In addition, King, Gulick, and Avery (2010) found that instructors can improve trainees’ diversity competence by utilizing group activities, such as written and video case studies, role play scenarios, and simulations. According to Castillo-Montoya (2019), such strategies create opportunities for students to learn about each other as well as on the subject matter.

Yet, learning diversity implies that diversity instructors know how to teach diversity, which raises an important question: What are the qualifications of the instructors who teach diversity? In a study by Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1999), 58% of the diversity experts that were interviewed for the study identified “utilizing qualified trainers” as a critical component of effective diversity programs. The experts stated that diversity trainers should exhibit professional, academic, and interpersonal skills. They explain that the volatile nature of diversity issues requires trainers that are not only experts in the subject matter but can also reduce resistance and defuse conflict that may arise in the classroom (Wentling and Palma-Rivas 1999). Gilbert (2003) adds that diversity instructors should be proficient in teaching methods, have strong teaching skills, and be knowledgeable in the literature and resources available for training on cultural diversity.

In addition, demographic shifts and increased diversity in our society have led college students to demand increased racial diversity in faculty. In the fall 2015, in an effort to bring awareness to systematic and structural racism on campuses, students from 80 U.S. universities wrote open letters demanding the hiring of culturally competent educators who can demonstrate accountability on issues of race and equity and utilize teaching practices that accommodate cultural differences (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017).

However, in reality, while diversity training has been getting increased attention in the academic setting, the standards related to the qualifications of those expected to do the training have been largely overlooked (Gilbert 2003). Comparing the diversity training and diversity education frameworks, King et al. (2010) argue that when it comes to instructor qualifications, the diversity training model should follow the diversity education model because the latter requires instructors to demonstrate a

minimum level of competence, such as an advanced degree, to be eligible to teach diversity. This is rarely the case in the training model. In a study examining the preparedness and abilities of cultural competency instructors in the nursing field, 78% of the faculty participants said that they do not believe that their school has faculty that are formally prepared to teach diversity. The study also found a serious shortage in development programs for faculty who teach cultural diversity (Ryan, Hodson Carlton, and Ali 2000).

Nonetheless, an academic degree is not the only criterion for qualified instructors. According to Gilbert (2003), the ability to provide effective training is not necessarily degree dependent. She asserts that it is also important that trainers have credibility with their focus audience, the knowledge, and skills relevant to their trainees’ field, and a thorough understanding of their work settings and the type of service they provide. King, Gulick, and Avery (2010) emphasize the importance of selecting instructors who are able to give students a realistic “preview” of how the diversity skills they are taught would be implemented in their world of practice. This means that trainers should also know how to recognize the limits of their own knowledge and be open to supplementing it with contributions from community members (Gilbert 2003).

The knowledge and expertise of the instructors is of particular importance in law enforcement, a field that is traditionally known as highly resistant to change (e.g., Cohen 2018). Israel and her coauthors (2017) explain that when “outsiders” provide training for law enforcement, they can anticipate more resistance to the training because it is harder for them to establish their credibility, as well as to predict potential sources of resistance they might encounter. When law enforcement trainees feel that trainers understand their perspective and the climate in which law enforcement operates, it neutralizes some of the resistance that emerges during diversity training, and trainees are more receptive to the trainers and their content.

Methodology

Study Design and Data Sources and Collection Procedures

This study utilized an exploratory, mixed-methods study design to analyze and compare state-mandatory diversity training for police recruits in 49 U.S. states. We use two main data sources: (1) Our primary data source is

49¹ basic training curricula (N = 49) and their accompanying support materials and (2) to augment the validity of our data and their interpretation, 20 semi-structured interviews with police training experts from 16 states were conducted (N = 20).

To obtain our data, during 2020–2021, the law enforcement standards and training agency in each state was contacted with a request to send their state-mandated basic police curricula and other supportive materials, such as lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations. In addition, the email message also included a request to interview the agency's director or his/her delegate. These agencies, which depending on the state, are known as The Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) commission, The Law Enforcement Training and Standards Boards (LETSB), or The Criminal Justice Standards and Training (CJST) Commission, serve as the regulatory agencies responsible for developing and approving the mandatory basic training requirements and curricula for the state. All states cooperated with the requests to submit their curricula, and 20 executives out of the 49 states agreed to an interview.

For the interviews, we used a convenience sample of key informants. A total of 20 key informants (N = 20) from 16 states across the United States were interviewed via phone or video call. Each of the key informants participated in an in-depth interview, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes. According to Marshall (1996), a key informant is an in-depth understanding of and extensive work experience in the researched topics. We consider our interviewees key informants because they are executive level officials at LETSB and have a key role in creating and updating the mandatory basic training curricula in their respective states.

Our key informants sample consisted of 20 male respondents, 17 (85%) white and 3 (15%) Black, with an average age of 46.7 years. Their highest completed level of education varied from an undergraduate degree (77%) to a master's degree (23%). With regard to tenure, the average overall experience in law enforcement or law enforcement-related agency was 21.5 years.

We recognize that because we used a convenience sample for our interviews, the findings may be prone to selection bias. However, the purpose of key informant interviews is to gather experts' thoughts, ideas, and insights on the topic of interest (Knaak et al. 2019).

This aligns well with the primary purpose of this study, which is to analyze state mandated diversity curricula. In this study, the key informant technique provided us with the opportunity to strengthen the content analysis by deepening our understanding of curricula through knowledgeable experts.

Data Analysis Procedures

Once all curricula were collected, we used a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive thematic analysis to gain a contextual understanding of the diversity training within these curricula. First, using Tutty et al.'s (1996) approach, the narrative data of each curriculum was analyzed inductively to identify the diversity-related courses. For this article, diversity training was defined as any course that deals with race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other categories that represent differences between people. We also searched for general terms such as diversity, multiculturalism, culture, or variations of these words.

Second, the course descriptions, learning objectives, and other diversity course contents were deductively coded into an organizing framework (Braun and Clarke 2006) of the four dimensions of diversity training programs: the "Why, Who, How, and What" as described earlier. Lastly, we calculated the required diversity training hours (when applicable) for each state to identify the percentages devoted to diversity training out of the overall basic training program.

Two coders evaluated the data independently and then shared their interpretations of the texts. Disagreements were discussed until intersubjective consensus was achieved (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2015). Once the thematic analysis of the diversity curricula was completed, we deductively analyzed the interview data by coding it "against" the analyzed curricula data. We used statements from the interviews to clarify information and add meaning to our thematic map.

Results and Analysis: The Case of Basic Police Academies

In this section, we use the aforementioned dimensions as a conceptual framework for analyzing basic police training curricula from a new public administration-oriented perspective. We explore how state-mandated diversity training programs in basic police academies are

¹ The State of Hawaii does not have mandated training standards and was therefore excluded from the sample.

constructed in terms of rationale (why), focus (who), content (what), and instruction (how and by whom). As previously stated, these dimensions are identified in the academic literature as key components for effective diversity training and can serve as a blueprint for diversity curriculum design and evaluation. Table 1 presents a comprehensive picture of the theoretical model derived from our analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

All U.S. states, excluding Hawaii, (98%, $N = 49$) utilize a state-mandated curriculum which outlines the minimum training standards in terms of hours and/or content for basic police academies in that state. Of the 49 states, 69% include in their curricula a required diversity course which yielded a sample of 34² curricula (i.e., states) for our study's content analysis ($n = 34$). As Table 2 demonstrates, 26 states out of the 34 (76%) specify the minimum training hours required for the diversity course.³ On average, diversity training constitutes only 0.78% (5.09 hours) of the overall basic police training program hours ($n = 26$). These extremely low hours across the nation already suggest that the coverage of diversity issues in basic academies does not constitute anything close to a reasonable amount of coverage needed to fully understand the concept of diversity.

In an initial mapping of course titles, we found three major categories of diversity curricula utilized in states. The first category, with the largest number of courses (82%, $n = 28$), used general diversity titles such as "cultural diversity," "cultural awareness," "cultural competency," and "human relations," which suggests coverage of multiple aspects of diversity. In the second category, 9% ($n = 3$) of the courses used a group-specific element of diversity in their title, such as gender (e.g., Montana with "gender diversity"); religion (e.g., Pennsylvania with "cultural and religious considerations") and race (e.g., Iowa with "cultural competency and race relations"). A third category of three courses (9%, $n = 3$), utilized a title that connected diversity with ethics-related topics such as sexual harassment (e.g., Michigan with "cultural

competence and sexual harassment"). Table 3 provides a summary of the characteristics of our research sample.

Content Analysis

The "Why": Why Is Diversity Relevant in Police Training?

The first dimension in our framework is the "why" of diversity training. Here we looked for theoretical frameworks states use in their curricula to explain the rationale behind teaching diversity. We found Nebraska's curriculum to be the *only* one to specifically mention a diversity theory. The curriculum includes a single course objective asking students to be able to "define contact theory." As outlined in the literature review, the contact hypothesis states that under certain conditions, intergroup contact can reduce bias and prejudice between groups (Pettigrew 1998). Moreover, the instructor's manual highlights the importance of a theory-driven curriculum by stating, "the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center is not a 'boot camp' style of academy. It is based on adult learning theories with the emphasis placed on the learner." In addition, in the Connecticut curriculum, we found mention of ethnology and ethnocentrism.

No other state referenced (in their curriculum at least) a unifying framework for diversity theory that makes a clear *theoretical* connection between culture, beliefs and norms, and law enforcement behavior with different populations. In fact, in the rest of the curricula, the question of *why* it is important to teach diversity in law enforcement was addressed from an *atheoretical* perspective, mostly by pointing to pragmatic personal, professional, and organizational outcomes that result from practicing diversity. In other words, the focus shifted from "why is diversity important?" to "why *should I* practice diversity for my own good?" The curricula list benefits such as avoiding liability caused by unlawful acts of discrimination (i.e., personal), developing the skills needed to perform the job effectively and achieving professional success (i.e., professional), and developing positive police–community relations (i.e., organizational).

² Although a rigor attempt was made to identify all diversity-related courses, it is possible that some courses included content that applies to diversity and that was not mentioned in the course name, description, objectives, or other teaching materials. Therefore, it is important to note that excluding a certain state from this sample does not mean that diversity is not taught in the training program but rather that we were not able to identify it.

³ The number of training hours represents the minimum hours required by the state. Some regional academies across the country exceed the compulsory minimum training standard set by their state.

Table 1. Analysis of Diversity Domains and Subdomains Addressed in State-Mandated Basic Police Training Curricula (N =34)

Category of Analysis	Main Themes	Subthemes	Example Course Objectives, Assignments, Keywords and Phrases
Why <i>Why is diversity relevant?</i>	Theoretical rationale	Diversity theories	Define contact theory; Define ethnocentrism; Identify ethnology.
	Atheoretical rationale	Avoiding liability	Communities complain about officers who make assumptions and respond in inappropriate and biased manners; officers need to become aware of stereotyping that could lead to prejudicial viewpoints and unlawful acts of discrimination.
		Professional success	Identify the personal benefits of valuing diversity within the community; list communication factors which get negative public response.
		Organizational benefits	Positive police-community relations; increased law enforcement funding; improved media relations; greater community cooperation in solving/preventing crime; you need the public's respect, support, and cooperation to provide effective law enforcement services.
Who <i>Who are the diverse?</i>	Group-specific focus	Gender focus	Understand the importance of fair representation of people of different genders; instructors should reference the academy's policy regarding sexual harassment.
		Ethnicity focus	List some cultural differences between Hispanic and American population; learning experiences about race/ethnicity.
		Race focus	Understand the conceptual definition and the legal definition of racial profiling; discuss the impact of racial profiling; identify statutory reference related to racial profiling; identify the basic responsibility of the officer related to filling out racial profile forms.
	Multiple groups focus	The multiple dimensions of diversity	Getting to know the various cultures within the communities; law enforcement officers interact with people of many backgrounds, cultures, religious beliefs, and ethnicities; officers need to communicate with people from and with various socioeconomic backgrounds, ages, physical abilities, religious beliefs, living situations, sexual orientations, political beliefs, and ideologies.
What <i>What should be taught?</i>	Knowledge-based training content	Basic definitions and concepts	Differentiate between discrimination and prejudice; what is culture; understand the difference between stereotype and bias; recognize the relationship between bias, prejudice, and cultural diversity; define power; define the term cultural diversity.
		Laws and policies	State the legal definition of a hate crime based on the Penal Code; Identify statutory reference related to "racial profiling"; Identify the basic responsibility of the officer related to filling out racial profile forms; discuss Fourth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment, current case law; state the legal definition of sexual harassment; discuss the federal and state laws dealing with sexual harassment.

		Community demographics	Identify relevant demographics; explain the historical and current cultural composition; learn the demographics and social characteristics of your community; community demographics and cultural background; demographical and cultural composition; socioeconomic background.
	Skill-based training content	Communication skills	Recognize essential elements of communication; understand active listening; recognize basic cultural differences in nonverbal communication; demonstrate appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication; communicate with a “low EQ” citizen; emotional Intelligence (EQ) and its importance in communication.
How <i>How should diversity be taught (and by whom)?</i>	Pedagogical strategies for curriculum implementation	Instructor-led discussions	Discussion of the major subcultures in the academy’s service area; discussion of methods of overcoming barriers between law enforcement and each subculture; small group discussions which address perceptions, experiences, fears, and stereotypes concerning contact with cultural groups.
		Tabletop exercises and video cases	Video reenactments depicting law enforcement contacts with cultural groups. . . the student will participate and evaluate the appropriateness and professional quality of the contact; video reenactments depicting possible sexual harassment; tabletop scenario or a video clip that depicts a law enforcement officer’s response to an incident involving individuals from a different culture.
		Self-assessments	Diagnostic instrument; questionnaire; personal inventory; self-assessment to determine your own level of cultural sensitivity.
		Role-playing exercises	Role playing exercises are used to demonstrate how culture and other factors can affect an individual’s perceptions of an officer’s behavior; written scenarios involving law enforcement are used to explore the dynamics of officer/citizen interactions; based on scenarios of peace officer situations, practice making decisions in real time.
	Instructors qualifications		N/A

The question of whether states purposely exclude theory from their curricula is an interesting one. The Ohio curriculum explicitly states that the purpose of the diversity course is “to assist you, as peace officers, in performing your duties in a safe, effective, and professional manner . . . it is not our intention to present a lot of theory.” This specific example suggests that the state does not overlook addressing diversity theory unintentionally, but rather purposely avoids it.

The reason for discounting theory as an essential part of diversity curricula can be twofold. First, since diversity instructors in basic academies are police officers themselves, it is possible that they rely more on their personal and professional practice to plan their lessons and do not have the conceptual understanding needed to teach the-

ory and the way it is applied to practice. As one interviewee stated, “we are police officers, not professors, we don’t think in those terms [theory].” This point will be further explored under the “how” dimension.

Second, there is a common perception among professionals that theory-driven discussions are not as relevant to the job as technical knowledge that emphasizes the “do’s and don’ts” of a topic. The health literature specifically highlights the dilemma of incorporating theory in training professionals and the difficulty they face when trying to make sense of theoretical explanations (e.g., Kaihlanen, Hietapakka, and Heponiemi 2019; Yardley, Walshe, and Parr 2009). The statement in the Ohio curriculum reflects this idea. The subtext behind “it is not our intention to present a *lot of theory*” is that the course

Table 2. Summary of Diversity Courses in Basic Police Training Curricula (N = 34)

State	Course Title	Total Hours for Basic Police Training Program	# Min Required Hours (% of Total Training Hrs.)
Average		646.88 (n = 26)	Avg. 5.09 (.78%) (n = 26)
Alaska	Cultural Diversity	650	NA ⁴
Arizona	Cultural Awareness	585	8
Arkansas	Cultural Diversity (Implicit Bias)	520	1
California	Cultural Diversity	664	3
Colorado	Law Enforcement Ethics and Anti-Bias Policing	556	8
Connecticut	Cultural Awareness and Diversity	871	4
Delaware	Cultural Diversity and Community Relations	584	12
Florida	Knowing Your Community: Interactions in a Diverse Community	770	NA
Georgia	Cultural Diversity	408	4
Idaho	Cultural Diversity	NA	NA
Iowa	Cultural Competency and Race Relations	620	7
Kentucky	Cultural Awareness	800	4
Louisiana	Diversity in the Community	496	2
Maine	Cultural Diversity	720	3
Michigan	Cultural Competence and Sexual Harassment	594	4
Minnesota	Recognizing and Valuing Diversity and Cultural Differences	NA	NA
Missouri	Cultural Diversity	600	4
Montana	Gender Diversity	508	2
Nebraska	Community Relations	626	6
Nevada	Cultural awareness	480	NA
New Hampshire	Cultural Diversity	653	2
New Jersey	Cultural Diversity	NA	NA
New Mexico	Cultural Diversity	675	4
New York	Cultural Diversity/Bias Related Incidents and Sexual Harassment	699	5
North Dakota	Cultural Awareness	NA	NA
Ohio	Community Diversity and Procedural Justice	737	16
Oklahoma	Cultural Awareness	583	2.5
Oregon	Community Competency	640	6
Pennsylvania	Cultural and Religious Considerations	859	3
Tennessee	Human Relations	480	NA
Texas	Multiculturalism and Human Relations	696	8
West Virginia	Cultural Diversity	800	2
Wisconsin	Cultural Competence I and II	720	8
Wyoming	Human Diversity	605	4

⁴ NA represents states that do not specify minimum required hours for specific courses and/or for the basic police training program as a whole.

Table 3. Characteristics of Research Sample (N = 34)

Title's Subject Theme	n	States
Diversity (general)	28	Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming
Group-specific	3	Iowa, Montana, Pennsylvania
Sexual harassment (ethics)	3	Colorado, Michigan, New York

is not aimed to “burden” officers with philosophical ideas, but rather to give them the practical knowledge they need to perform their job effectively. This idea was reinforced by this statement from an interviewee: “officers will usually ‘tune-out’ when they hear this word [theory] . . . they feel [that it does not] actually help with the day to day job . . . it’s not practical.”

The “Who”: Who Are “the Diverse” in Basic Police Training?

The second dimension in our framework pertains to the “who” of diversity training. The objective here was to determine the focus of the training and answer the question “who are the diverse that the curricula are designed to address?” When trying to differentiate between curricula that emphasized group-specific topics and curricula that emphasized inclusiveness across multiple groups (Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell 2012), we noticed an interesting pattern in the data. On the one hand, the explicit definitions of diversity used in most curricula take an inclusive approach and do not target a specific group of people. However, on the other hand, the operationalization of such definitions, as expressed in the course titles, descriptions, and objectives, suggests, albeit implicitly, that “diversity” is indeed a group-specific concept that predominantly refers to race, ethnicity, and gender.

One example is the California curriculum. The learning objective for the course, entitled “cultural diversity” states, “Peace officers need to recognize and respect the complexities of cultural diversity to develop skills necessary for identifying and responding to California’s changing communities.” However, a thorough review of the course content showed that the course, in fact, focuses on race-related issues such as defining the term racial profiling, understanding the impact of racial profiling, and discussing the legal considerations related to racial profiling. Similarly, in Arkansas, a one-hour

block, under the “legal issues” module, is dedicated to “understanding and valuing cultural diversity,” but the only group recognized in the curriculum is “Hispanics” under “emergency Spanish for police officers.” In this four-hour block, students learn basic Spanish phrases as well as to recognize cultural differences between Hispanic and the American non-Hispanic population.

One of the most comprehensive answers to the question of “who are the diverse?” was found in the Florida curriculum, where the course “interactions in a diverse community” is divided into multiple lessons, each dedicated to a unique subculture. Among the communities specifically identified are the hearing impaired, autistic, veterans, juveniles, elderly, homeless, mentally ill, and substance abusers. Other states also utilize diversity curricula that, on their face, appear to be structured around multiple group attributes. However, a careful examination of the content still suggests a clear preference for the narrow, group-specific training approach.

For example, in Texas, the “Multiculturalism and Human Relations” curriculum lists multiple groups that are subjected to prejudices, such as age, religion, weight, and physically challenged. However, the exercises utilized in the class seem to focus on students’ race and ethnicity experiences. In Michigan, community diversity is defined as encompassing “multiple dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, citizenship, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and other ideologies” and yet, the course is entitled “cultural competence and sexual harassment” and focuses on teaching students how to avoid stereotyping based on gender, race, or ethnic background. Overall, in these curricula, other minority groups receive little, if any, attention, which sends the message that diversity training is eventually no more than racial discrimination or sexual harassment training, with the “other” being mainly Blacks and women.

The “What”: What Diversity Content Is Taught in Basic Police Training?

The next dimension in our analysis addresses the “what” of diversity training. Following frameworks presented in the literature review, we distinguish between knowledge-based and skill-based training content in the state-mandated curricula. In terms of *knowledge-based content components*, three recurring themes were identified in the sample: (a) basic definitions and concepts, (b) laws and policies, and (c) community demographics. First, all curricula included broad definitions of diversity and other concepts associated with it. The vast majority of course objectives across curricula are mostly limited to students’ ability to define and memorize basic concepts and terms such as culture, discrimination, prejudice, stereotype, and bias (implicit and explicit). In some cases, curricula went beyond conceptual definitions to also explain the difference between certain concepts. The Connecticut curriculum, for example, addresses the difference between intentional and unintentional discrimination and how to prevent both.

One common issue we have noticed is that curricula had a tendency to cluster several concepts under the same definitions as if they have the same meaning. For example, “multiculturalism” and “diversity” were often used interchangeably, implying they are synonyms. According to Rice (2015), these two concepts might share common themes in their definitions, however, each concept is operationalized differently and leads to different implementation strategies and outcomes. Multiculturalism emphasizes cultural differences and creating an environment in which everyone feels valued and accepted; managing diversity is a pragmatic way to build specific skills within employees to drive productivity and service delivery (Rice 2001).

The second most frequent content subtheme is laws and policies that address diversity. All curricula mentioned legal considerations related to diversity that peace officers are obligated to know. Course objectives in this content area varied from simply stating legal definitions based on the Penal Code and explaining federal and state laws, to a more in-depth expectation for discussing current case law and understanding the available legal remedies.

Even more than that, we noticed that in some states, while courses are entitled “diversity” or “cultural competence,” the course descriptions and objectives do not go much beyond the legal issues surrounding topics such

as racial profiling, hate crimes, and sexual harassment. It is possible that the inclusion of the term “diversity,” without actually covering its various dimensions, in these curricula, is used more as a “safety net,” possibly for accreditation purposes.

The third subtheme of diversity knowledge-based content is community demographics. Course descriptions across our sample address the need for officers to learn the demographics and social characteristics of the communities they serve. Some states also require cadets to identify the relevant demographics of the state (e.g., Connecticut) and to explain its historical and current cultural composition (e.g., California). The demographic composition of a community includes, but is not limited to, factors such as socioeconomic background, age, geographical origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and even political beliefs and ideologies. Having such knowledge of their communities allows officers to recognize differences between people in the community, avoid biased responses, communicate better, and overall to be more effective in their job. However, it is important to note that having knowledge of community demographics is not enough to drive such outcomes. To really earn the public’s respect and trust, it must be accompanied by a sincere effort by police officers to use this knowledge to actively learn about the belief systems of those they serve.

As for *skill-based content components*, the most frequent content area focused on interpersonal communication skills. All curricula emphasized the importance of understanding the ways culture can impact communication. The Florida curriculum offers the following explanation for intercultural communication: “intercultural communication takes place when people from different cultures communicate. . . [and] information is filtered through your life experiences and shapes your opinions. When you communicate with someone from another culture, and don’t take intercultural differences into account, misunderstanding can result.”

Furthermore, our analysis shows that states consider the most essential elements for effective communication to be verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, and emotional intelligence. Course objectives outline barriers to cross-cultural communication and relations, and strategies for effective and improved communication within a diverse community. We did not identify other skill-based content areas in the diversity curricula; however, it is important to note that topics such as de-

cision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution were often included as stand-alone courses rather than as part of the diversity course.

The How: How (and by Whom) Is Diversity Taught in Basic Police Training?

The final dimension of our conceptual framework is concerned with the “how” of diversity training. For this dimension, our analysis focused on identifying the pedagogical strategies used to facilitate trainees’ learning and the types of instructors who are teaching the course.

In terms of pedagogical methods, it seems like the variety of tools and curricular approaches to learning used by curriculum designers in basic police academies has undergone extensive development in the last two decades. We found four major instructive tools for delivering cultural and diversity curricula content: 1) *instructor-led discussions*, 2) *tabletop exercises and video case studies*, 3) *self-assessments*, and 4) *role-playing exercises*.

Instruction-led discussions address a variety of topics, from discussing the subcultures’ perceptions and attitudes toward law enforcement to understanding the major subcultures in the academy’s service area. For example, in Connecticut, instructors are required to facilitate discussions in which recruits examine their own cultural differences and life experiences. *Tabletop exercises and video case studies* present participants with scenarios to review and analyze. For example, in Michigan, scenarios and cases are utilized to evaluate officers’ responses to incidents involving individuals from diverse groups. For example, participants are asked to identify the cultural issues involved in the incident and how to solve them effectively.

Self-assessments are diagnostic instruments that serve as a starting point for instructor-facilitated classroom discussions. In California, students are required to complete self-assessments, such as personal inventories to determine their own level of cultural sensitivity when interacting with cultural groups. Finally, many academies utilize *role-play exercises* that allow recruits to practice, observe, and learn through trial and error how to effectively communicate and solve problems with diverse citizens. In Arizona, the curriculum utilizes role playing exercises to practice the dynamics of officer/citizen interactions as well as methods for effectively communicating with members of different groups such as the elderly and non-English speakers. At the end of the scenario, the instructor is expected to facilitate a debrief in which officers can receive feedback on their actions.

One thing that is clear from these progressive pedagogical tools is that they require skilled instructors to facilitate them effectively. However, the one area not discussed in the curricula, and perhaps is taboo, is the qualification of the instructors who deliver diversity instruction. It is important to note here that while POST agencies set the mandatory curricula in terms of content and hours, the instruction itself is left in the hands of the regional academies and is much less regulated (or standardized) by the state. Since none of the state mandated curricula provided information about the instructors of these courses, we addressed the topic of instructors’ qualifications in the interviews we conducted with 20 training officials across the United States.

The content analysis of our interviews yielded several interesting findings. First, law enforcement diversity instructors are typically current (or retired) certified police officers who are employed by law enforcement agencies or police training commissions. In most cases, they are full-time police officers who are not compensated separately for their instruction, but rather teach during their official work hours and as part of their job.

Second, no state-mandated minimal level of knowledge, expertise, or education is required of diversity instructors. While law enforcement instructors must be certified as training instructors for teaching of tactical skills such as firearms, defensive tactics, and vehicle operations, they are not likely to get special certifications on academic topics such as human diversity and interpersonal communications. Therefore, as indicated by our interviewees, it would be rare to find training officers who are diversity experts or have received some type of diversity education. For the most part, each instructor is responsible for conducting their research and developing their lesson plan.

All interviewees agreed that selecting a diversity instructor is a very important decision because diversity issues are sensitive in nature and can be volatile. Diversity education requires trainers who not only have the academic knowledge of diversity but also individuals who have interpersonal, communication, and presentation skills. Unfortunately, budget constraints and the small pool of volunteering instructors make it difficult for police academies to utilize qualified instructors who can teach diversity. As one interviewee explained: “*We don’t have money to bring in fancy educated instructors like yourself [the researcher] to teach our officers. We have to use who is available and free; that’s the reality.*” Another said: “*We*

had some terrible instructors who couldn't stand in front of a class. They were chosen only because they had some kind of a diversity background . . . it was like 'hey, you're black, so surely you understand diversity.'"

Even more than that, it seems that utilizing under-qualified instructors is somewhat institutionalized in academies by using “problem officers” as instructors. This practice, referred to by interviewees as “common knowledge” was explained by the following executive: “*many times, you use ‘problem officers’ as instructors . . . you put them in the academy because you can’t trust them on the streets . . . for example, officers that are on the Brady list, district attorney won’t take their testimony . . . so it is basically useless to have them work cases, they can’t work cases but you also can’t fire them—so what can you do? You just put them on ‘special assignment’ in the academy.*”

The lack of qualified instructors has critical implications for policing. Diversity trainers are responsible for laying recruits’ foundational understanding and skills of cultural diversity. What recruits are taught in class will be later applied on the streets, and the way they behave with citizens will naturally bring attention to the training they have received in the academy. This practice of moving failed officers from the streets to the classroom, as instructors of future police officers, is concerning. Diversity instructors bare a great amount of responsibility for the performance of their recruits and the extent to which they expose their agencies to liability risk.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of our study highlight the need to address cultural diversity within basic police training curricula, particularly given the importance of cultural diversity to the practice of the modern day police officer. As a public service profession, law enforcement should make an active commitment to cultural diversity awareness. We offer recommendations as to how this can be accomplished.

First, to develop the next generation of law enforcement professionals who can understand, appreciate, and effectively interact with diverse groups of people, police academies must first get their own basic training curricula in order. One way to achieve this is for academies to shift from curricula that treat diversity as a liability to curricula that focus on diversity as an asset. In addition, they need to increase the length of training so that diversity can be taught in a more substantive way as well as restructure their learning objectives to align with

the changing demographics of society and the increased public expectations for social justice and equity. This means articulating of a clear rationale for learning diversity and contemporary topics that are more relevant in this postmodern policing era (e.g., LGBTQ+).

Second, commitment to quality diversity programming is not only established through rigorous curricula. As our findings suggest, the selection of competent instructors who are well versed in the diversity literature and can effectively reduce emotional and negative reactions to the training is just as critical to the effectiveness of the training. We recommend that state POST or related agencies also develop educational and professional training standards for diversity instructors to ensure that basic academy instructors have at least some level of diversity training expertise. Some possibilities here include adding explicit certification requirements related to culture and diversity, establishing educational programs for diversity instructors, and implementing train-the-trainer models by utilizing academic institutions and advocacy groups to better prepare diversity trainers. The use of advocacy groups for the development and implementation of police training curricula was also highlighted in the final *Report of The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. It recommended that police academies obtain “assistance of advocacy groups that represent the viewpoints of communities that have traditionally had adversarial relationships with law enforcement” (2015, 58).

We also believe that an action plan is needed to establish nationwide diversity training standards for basic police training that aligns with 21st century policing principles and replaces new officers to deal with the current challenges faced by today’s police officers. Such centralized standards would include mandatory minimum training hours, learning objectives, and instructors’ qualifications. In fact, a call for national training and certification standards for policing was also recommended by the Task Force on Policing (2021). It recommended training on the topics of procedural justice and implicit bias. Lack of diversity awareness and lack of respect is not an isolated problem that affects a specific state—it is a nationwide problem and should be addressed as such.

Finally, beyond recommendations for basic police academies, the law enforcement profession as a whole should commit to the promotion of professional diversity practices. Diversity training is not “a one and done” and should be mandated throughout the career of law enforce-

ment officers as part of their in-service training (which is presently not the case). Other than training, an active commitment to diversity must come from within police agencies by incorporating a culture of diversity awareness into their missions and management practices. Police leaders and agency heads must make concerted efforts to provide officers with continued experiences related to diversity outside the classroom. This can include forming long-term partnerships with local academic institutions and community organizations, involving officers in community programs that address diversity issues, and inviting speakers from underrepresented cultural groups in the community. Such activities can help promote officers self-reflection and increase “real-time” self-awareness to cultural diversity (Di-Angelo 2018; Kendi 2019).

Conclusion

Given the national crisis in police–public relations, diversity awareness in public safety delivery is a primary concern for basic police academies. The purpose of the present study was to analyze the content and length of state-mandated diversity training curricula in basic police academies in the United States. The overall findings are disappointing, suggesting that DEI training is a missing component of the basic police curricula. Although it is difficult (if not impossible) to say what percentage of the overall curricula would reflect states’ positive commitment to diversity, our finding is that, on average, only about 0.78% (5.09 hours) of the overall basic training program hours address diversity issues. This is an indication that states do not address diversity training in basic academies in a meaningful way.

This study also identified a serious gap in the public administration literature related to diversity training of public employees. We hope this article is useful for public agencies who wish to develop effective diversity training and enhance the development of public servants’ diversity readiness. We encourage public administration scholars to consider further addressing this gap in research and practice by working toward developing an effective, evidence-based, diversity training that is focused on public employees.

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