

Research paper on evaluating the effectiveness of police diversity training

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



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Unfortunately, police diversity training to date has not been effective. In fact, diversity training has been found to actually further stereotypes of ethnic groups simply by how the diversity training is presented. Another problem with diversity training is that some participants are given just a few hours of training. Blakemore, Barlow, & Padgett present solutions to each problem they feel exist regarding police diversity training. (1995) Blackwood discusses how Omaha, Nebraska handles their diversity training. (1998) If police departments utilize the suggestions presented by Blakemore et al., police personnel will be able to gain a much better understanding of the diverse populations which they serve. (1995)

The article by Blackmore et al. states that most police diversity training is done by presenting chunks of information about diverse groups of people which can inadvertently enforce stereotypes by presenting generalities about certain ethnic groups. (1995). Police officers are sought out as the target for change in regards to diversity sensitivity training when really, the whole agency needs to change. (Blackmore et al., 1995)

Suggestions for improving diversity sensitivity training center around the concept that learning is a process, not a once and done situation. (Blackmore et al., 1995) One idea allows for an interactive discussion rather than just a presentation of information. (Blackmore et al., 1995) In other words, allow the target audience to ask questions of the presenter.

In addition, focus on changing behavior, not attitudes, in regards to certain populations. (Blackmore et al., 1995) Bring it to the attention of police officers that certain racist behaviors can cause issues of civil and criminal liability for them as individuals and for the police department. (Blackmore et al., 1995) Also, tie the officers' behavior to their performance evaluations. (Blackmore et al., 1995) When police officers see how racist behavior affects them legally and affects them at performance evaluations, they are more motivated to change their behavior. (Blackmore et al., 1995)

Blackmore et al. also suggests having speakers from the various ethnic groups represented in the city give presentations regarding cultural diversity. (1995) Ideally, the speaker will be an employee of the police department or a related organization. This gives the presentation real life experience behind the words spoken. Similarly, assign police officers to attend a religious service or civil rights community meeting of a population that is different from their own. (Blackmore et al., 1995) If police officers get a chance to know different cultures in their own setting instead of during an arrest situation, it makes the other culture more real to the police officers.

Above all, make sure the diversity training promotes the idea that different is not the same thing as deficient. (Blackmore et al., 1995) Just because a culture is different does not mean it is inferior. In fact, have participants discuss how their own race or gender has affected their identity. (Blackmore et al., 1995) Maybe the participants themselves have been the target of some kind of bias. Having participants make this connection from their own experience to that of another culture's experience can bridge the gap of us

versus them and cause the police officers to have more empathy for groups different from themselves.

Blackwood's article reveals that new recruits in the Omaha, Nebraska police department receive only eight hours of cultural diversity training. (1998) The Omaha Police Department does try to achieve diversity in their hiring process. For example, out of the fourteen recruits in a 1998 class, there were three white women, two Hispanic men, and one black man. (Blackwood, 1998) The training staff included two black men, two white women, and four white men. (Blackwood, 1998)

In the Omaha Police Department, prospective employees are given psychological tests, interviews, and background checks. (Blackwood, 1998) The department admits that this does not necessarily weed out any racial issues. (Blackwood, 1998) Mostly, the psychological tests weed out those who are over-aggressive, hostile, or exhibit an excessive interest in firearms. (Blackwood, 1998)

The Omaha diversity class requires class participants to write down whatever they have heard about particular groups of people. (Blackwood, 1998) Then, class participants are assigned labels and the class is paired up and have to work out a problem with each other based on their labels, not on who they are. (Blackwood, 1998)

The Omaha Police Department adopted an anti-bias policy in 1993. (Blackwood, 1998) The bottom line is that everyone gets treated equally and with courtesy and respect. (Blackwood, 1998) Sometimes, police officers

develop racist attitudes because of their work and then the officers are counseled individually by their sergeant. (Blackwood, 1998)

The Omaha police department does not keep records of racial complaints made by the public. (Blackwood, 1998) In addition, police officers rarely tell on another officer. (Blackwood, 1998) Officers generally handle improper behavior amongst themselves. (Blackwood, 1998)

Both articles reach the same conclusion that diversity training in police departments is largely ineffective as it now stands. The article by Blakemore, Barlow, & Padgett offers practical solutions on how to make diversity training more effective while the article by Blackwood simply states the problems that exist in racial diversity training. (1995, 1998) Blakemore's et al. article offers hope for racial diversity training while Blackwood's article implies the situation will not change. (1995, 1998)

If the new plan outlined in the article by Blakemore et al. is followed, diversity sensitivity training will be a much more real experience for the participants and will be a good use of the police department's resources. Omaha's current diversity training is not a good use of the department's resources. Omaha needs to keep the exercise where participants relate to each other just based on a label and the department also needs to incorporate the ideas presented in the article by Blakemore et al.

Blackwood, K., (1998, April 12). How Omaha police fight racism in the ranks comparing

Omaha police diversity training. Omaha World Herald, pg. 1A.

Blakemore, J. L., Barlow, D., Padgett, D. L. (1995). From the classroom to the community:

Introducing process in police diversity training. *Police Studies*, 18(1), 71-85.