Innovative Analyses that are Driving Police Reform in Major City Police Departments

1. Tactical Errors in Officer-Involved Shootings

2. Measuring Quality and Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

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Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences 52nd Annual Meeting
Orlando, Florida
March 4, 2015
Collaborative Reform Initiative Overview

• Intensive, mixed-methods case studies designed to learn about an organization and generate substantive, tailored, and operational recommendations

• Case study method:
  – Document review
  – Interviews
  – Observations
  – Data analysis
Tactical Errors in Officer-Involved Shootings

• What tactical errors do police commit when in officer-involved shootings (OISs)?

• What are the frequencies of these errors?

• How can this information be used to reform police practice?
Tactical Errors in Officer-Involved Shootings

• **Data**
  – Open-source database compiled by Las Vegas Review Journal
    ▪ Suspect demographics, officer demographics, location, shots fired, fatalities
  – Police department administrative reports
    ▪ Personnel data, investigative findings
  – Fatal, non-fatal, non-injurious OISs
  – 2007 – 2011
  – N = 87

• **Methods**
  – Content analysis
  – Descriptive trends
  – Bivariate analysis
## Tactical Errors in Officer-Involved Shootings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio communication</td>
<td>• Covering communications; Failure to update dispatch; Wrong channel; Not announcing actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer approach</td>
<td>• Incident type not recognized; Failure to de-escalate; rushing into action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms tactics</td>
<td>• Firearm drawn unnecessarily; Failure to announce rifle deployment; Poor technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>• Not planning actions together; Lack of contact and cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover and concealment</td>
<td>• Not making use of cover; Placing self at tactical disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal commands</td>
<td>• Multiple officers giving commands simultaneously; Unclear commands; General lack of verbal commands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of backdrop</td>
<td>• Backdrop not assessed; Crossfire issue; Target not identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of force</td>
<td>• Disproportionate; Threat not imminent; No preclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less-lethal options</td>
<td>• Not used; Out of policy use; Poor technique; Lack of communication on intent to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Response</td>
<td>• Not requested; Not put on standby; Aid not rendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command and Control</td>
<td>• No supervisory control; Officers unaccounted for; Poor use of intelligence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tactical Errors in Officer-Involved Shootings

- **Finding:** radio communications errors; lack of de-escalation
- **Training reforms:**
  - Incorporate real radio communications into reality-based training
  - Periodic de-escalation training

![Frequency of tactical errors in OISs](image-url)

- Radio communications: 40%
- Approach: 31%
- Coordination: 31%
- Firearms tactics: 24%
- Command and Control: 17%
- Verbal commands: 17%
- Less-lethal force: 15%
- Assessing backdrop: 14%
- Use of deadly force: 13%
- Medical response: 6%
- Other errors: 3%
Tactical Errors in Officer-Involved Shootings

• Findings:
  – Coordination common (31%) tactical error
  – Tactical errors increase in frequency as more officers respond to the scene

• Training reform:
Incorporate multi-officer scenarios into reality-based training

Regression results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Dep. Var.</th>
<th>Ind. Var.</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>R2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (W/ outlier)</td>
<td>Tactical errors</td>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Sans outlier)</td>
<td>Tactical Errors</td>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

- How do we know if an agency does a good job investigating deadly force incidents?
- Is the quality of an investigation measurable?
- What can systematic research and analysis tell an agency about its investigative practices?
- Recent pilot study on closed OIS investigations from a major city police agency sheds some light on these questions
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

• **Data**
  – Random selection of 35 closed, complete deadly force investigation files
    ▪ Criminal investigation
    ▪ Internal affairs investigation
    ▪ Crime scene photos

• **Method**
  – Designed 90-point evaluation form for investigative practices
    ▪ Convened working group of deadly force investigators
    ▪ Reviewed standards and guidelines from various sources
    ▪ Yes/no and Likert scale (1-5) items
  – Investigators as evaluators
    ▪ Inter-rater reliability calculated as percent agreement amongst 4 evaluators
      ➢ 3 case files
      ➢ Percent rater agreement: 80.4, 80.6, 84.3
  – Generated descriptive trends in investigative performance
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

• Investigative activities

  – Scene walk-through
  – Public safety statement
  – Distance measurements at crime scene
  – Crime scene photography
  – Neighborhood survey/canvass
  – Crime scene management
  – Interviews
  – Incident reconstruction and analysis
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

**Crime scene photos**

- Perspectives labeled: 67%
- Appropriate perspectives: 64%
- Items labeled: 58%

**Crime scene photo ratings**

- Avg.: 3.2

- Very poor: 0%
- Poor: 24%
- Average: 33%
- Good: 42%
- Excellent: 0%
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

**Neighborhood survey/canvass**

- Documented all addresses unsuccessfully contacted: 69%
- Documented all addresses contacted: 69%
- Replicable: 50%
- Video/audio search: 25%
- Pub. Announcement: 0%

**Neighborhood survey/canvass ratings**

- Avg.: 3.5
- Very poor: 6%
- 2: 6%
- 3: 31%
- 4: 38%
- 5: 19%

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Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

Civilian witness Interviews

Officer witness Interviews

Discharging officer interviews

Quality and consistency in interviews

- Avg. Rating
- SD
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

Dynamic incident factors

- Verbal commands: 71%
- Probable cause: 34%
- Coordination amongst officers: 20%
- Officer safety: 14%
- Less-lethal options: 9%
- Equipment: 9%
- Sympathetic/contagious fire: 6%
- Assessment of target backdrop: 6%
- Command and control: 6%
- Proportionality of force used: 6%
- Identification as law enforcement: 3%
- Reasonable suspicion: 3%
- Communications with dispatch: 3%
- Availability of cover: 3%
- De-escalation of the incident: 0%
Measuring Quality & Consistency in Deadly Force Investigations

• Investigative excellence can be measured

• Evaluation can inform agency on investigative performance across various divisions, types of cases, crimes, and areas in need of improvement

• Agency needs:
  – Better documentation
  – Greater consistency and standardization
  – More incident analysis, broadened scope of investigation
Organizational Learning and Continual Improvement in Police Deadly Force Policies and Practices