

Exposing Dave Grossman: Founder of “Killology” and Pioneer of Fear-Based Police Training

A Work in Progress

Grossman 101

Lt Col Dave Grossman studies what enables people to kill and what restrains them from killing, and calls this new field inquiry of “killology.” He began developing his ideas in his first book, *On Killing* (1995), and in subsequent writings as well. In *On Combat* (2004), he introduced the simplified schema of the “sheep dog” (the police) that protects the “sheep” (the public) from the “wolves” (criminals). “Most people in society are harmless sheep, the theory goes; a small number are wolves that prey on the sheep; and an equally small number are sheepdogs that confront the wolves. The three types coexist in a circle of violence” (Featherstone).

More importantly, Grossman has made a career out of training law enforcement officers based on these ideas. Although Grossman’s trainings have been conducted all over the country, many have raised questions about the effectiveness and safety of his fear-based approach. One attendee complained that the seminar made officers “so paranoid that they were afraid to stop a car without three backups” (Bjorhus).

Grossman’s seminars are designed to over-ride the human hesitance to kill by heightening the perception of fear or threat. He claims soldiers and law enforcement can only be safe by escaping their instinct not to kill, which is so powerful that even U.S. troops in World War II would fire their weapons only 15-25% of the time. According to Grossman, the resistance to killing is so strong that many soldiers would sooner be killed themselves than overcome it. To ensure success on the battlefield, the military needed to condition its combat troops to kill the enemy. It progressively accomplished this goal in subsequent military conflicts, culminating in a firing rate of 90-95% in the Vietnam War. Grossman’s law enforcement seminars import this idea to the field of policing: Police officers – who he asserts are also “at war” on the domestic front – need special psychological training to become “warriors” who can overcome their ingrained resistance to killing. If not, they themselves could be killed in the line of duty.

Is Grossman's plan to prime officers' fear of the public good for anyone? This document will begin to explore the basis and validity of his research and how he has gained prominence; it will then turn to questions about what ideas should shape police training and who should guarantee their merit. This analysis, while preliminary, may suggest directions for future research.

Research vs “Research”: Fatal Flaws in Grossman's Work

As many scholars have noted, Grossman's attention to a systematically neglected area of inquiry – the psychology of state-sponsored killing – is an important contribution to a body of research that's in its infancy at best. However, as scholars have also pointed out, much of Grossman's research does not stand up to scrutiny at even the most basic level. These are not simply criticisms of speculative conclusions he draws from otherwise sound research. The very premises on which Grossman rests his central claims are like a foundation full of cracks: whatever is built on it is unsafe, shaky, unreliable.

“Even a layman's examination of the literature in biology and psychology shows little support for Grossman's theory on a resistance to killing,” writes Robert Engen, a military historian. The sciences clearly demonstrate that “killing is a natural, if difficult, part of human behavior,” and “an innate biological resistance to killing is neither simple nor consistently demonstrable in human beings” (Engen). Professor of Anthropology Michael Ghiglieri said that Grossman's landmark book, *On Killing*, is full of “unabashed wishful thinking” (Ghiglieri 178). Grossman also has a “flawed understanding” of the evolutionary process of natural selection and how it would shape violent behavior.

Criticizing not just Grossman's book *On Killing*, but other unscientific understandings of human violence as well, Ghiglieri writes that books like these “...were written by people with little or no understanding of biology – or who simply ignored or denied its findings ... anyone insisting that men do not have an instinct to kill other men is in factual error.” Grossman's revisionist view may be appealingly optimistic – “wishful thinking, as Ghiglieri says – but it is incorrect. By uncovering killology's weak, erroneous basis in scientific research, Ghiglieri substantially undermines Grossman's authority.

Grossman’s claims also rest on shaky historical grounds. His central claims about soldiers’ low rates of fire in World War II are based on the work of S.L.A. Marshall, an historian whose “credibility has been thoroughly undermined” (Engen). “[T]he bulwark of [Grossman’s] historical evidence – historian S.L.A. Marshall’s assertion that soldiers do not fire their weapons – can be verifiably disproven.” Other historians, such as Frederic Smoler and Roger Spiller, have pointed to serious problems with Marshall’s methodology and data collection process that led to his conclusions about the low “ratio of fire” in World War II. Spiller, an historian at the Army's Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas,

challenged Marshall's claim that he questioned 400 companies of approximately 125 soldiers each immediately after they had fought in combat: "The systematic collection of data that made Marshall's ratio of fire so authoritative appears to have been an invention." Spiller studied Marshall's records and other documents. He discovered there was no evidence to support Marshall's grand claims (Matthews).

While many historians respect and admire S.L.A. Marshall as a journalist with a lively writing style, these systematic errors in his research process have cast much doubt on the credibility of his work. Whatever value Marshall may have, he “was not a serious historian” (Matthews).

This is another serious charge against Grossman, who claims authority, in part, based on his research. Over-reliance on problematic sources that can be “verifiably disproven” is not the path to travel if one’s destination is credibility:

Although Grossman cites a few other pieces of evidence from military history to support his “killology” thesis, S.L.A. Marshall’s “hard data” is the centerpiece of his argument regarding the inability to kill: most of what remains is either derived from Marshall or anecdotal in nature. Since it is Marshall that forms the core of evidence underlying many of Grossman’s claims about killing in war, there are obvious problems inherent to reading the “killology” literature without reservation (Engen).

Thus, there is no evidence to support Grossman’s creative thesis – that there is an innate resistance to killing, so much so that the majority of soldiers will not even

kill; thus, if they are to kill, they must be psychologically prepared for it. In Engen's assessment, "the theory of an innate, biological resistance to killing has little support in either evolutionary biology or in what we know about psychology." And with S.L.A. Marshall's "rate of fire" research debunked, "there is little basis in military history for such a theory either" (Engen). Although he seems aware of the charges against him, Grossman brushes them off in the revised edition of *On Killing* (2009), suggests that this "small group of scholars" is disrespecting Marshall, and re-states the biologically untenable claim that "man is not by nature a killer" (xvi). He also suggests that the book's popularity in military circles is "the ultimate acid test" validating his ideas (xv).

Again, Grossman's revisionist thesis is not based on evidence; at best, it is a hypothesis that has not been scientifically tested. Engen ponders the implications of Grossman's selective approach to history and the sciences, worrying that his research may actually "hinder our understanding of warfare." Indeed, "Grossman's current 'killology' literature contains some serious problems, and there are some worrying flaws in the theories that are being preached as truth..." (Ibid). If his theory doesn't even apply to Grossman's original field of military psychology, should he be allowed to "test" it or preach it by training police officers and sending them out into the civilian public?

One could understand if a careful researcher were confident about their findings. By contrast, one would hope that someone playing so fast and loose with the facts might be tentative about his conclusions, perhaps proceeding with some modesty. This is not the case with Grossman. In deliberate provocation, he grandstands in his 2004 book, *On Combat*: "everything you think you know about war is based on 5,000 years of lies." Somehow, Grossman is the only one who has discovered the truth. And if you're in law enforcement, he's prepared to bring it to you. For a small fee.

From Warrior "Research" to Warrior Seminars

It's one thing to discover a phenomenon that's under-researched and then try to learn more for the general advancement of knowledge. It's another thing to operationalize ideas drawn from that same controversial, fatally-flawed research. By building trainings on the notion that police officers should be explicitly trained

to over-ride what Grossman claims, without evidence, is their natural reluctance to kill, he inappropriately rewrites police training to fit his own flawed understanding. Equating the willingness to kill with the “Will to Survive,” Grossman places at the center of his seminars this new conditioning to cognitively override the reluctance to kill. His “Bulletproof Warrior” training sessions explicitly seek to over-ride any prior training peace officers have received: “Unfortunately, the Will to Survive is all too often Trained out of the psyches of our police officers.” “Is your training actually counterproductive? Does your culture create officers afraid to act?” “Under stress in a crisis, you will instinctively revert to the way you have trained.” (“Calibre Press Presents: The Bulletproof Warrior” training materials from 2014). With these claims to awaken officers’ fear that their work puts them in lethal danger, Grossman begins cultivating fear of the public and readiness to kill.

If, according to Engen, Grossman’s ideas could actually “hinder our understanding of warfare,” we would do well to ask what his ideas are doing to police departments around the country, the key markets to which he is exporting these ideas. If there *is no* innate reluctance to kill, do police officers really need a training that primes their reactions for lethal violence?

Prominent scholars in the fields of criminology, law, and criminal justice have questioned Grossman’s “bulletproof warrior” trainings for years. Seth Stoughton, a former police officer and law professor at the University of South Carolina, views Grossman's approach as outdated and ineffective, emphasizing that "some of it is dangerously wrong" (Schatz). Casting doubt on Grossman’s credentials, Stoughton referred to Grossman as "more of a motivational speaker than a trainer" (Ibid). Professor Peter Kraska of Eastern Kentucky University, who has testified before congress regarding the militarization of policing, has described Calibre Press trainings as “irresponsible” and “dangerous” (Bjorhus). Kraska contends that such trainings are an unexplored factor in the deadly confrontations taking place across the United States between police and civilians (Ibid). Samuel Walker, a criminal justice professor and expert on police accountability, says Grossman’s approach may be “okay for Green Berets, but unacceptable for domestic policing. The best police chiefs in the country don’t want anything to do with this” (Schatz).

Major police policy organizations, such as the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), have repudiated the “Bulletproof” course (a re-branding of “Bulletproof Warrior”) and similar fear-based training seminars. Michael Becar, Executive Director of the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement (IADLEST) said of this training, “Everything they were doing made the police officers very paranoid. At some point, they wouldn’t even stop a car without 3 back-ups” (Bjorhus).

Are the writings of Dave Grossman peer reviewed?

How could research with such fatal flaws be reaching into public practice? One reason may be that Grossman has published his ideas through paths that often escape peer review.

“Peer review” is an academic term. It’s the “vetting” process by which experts in a given field or discipline evaluate each other’s research, provide feedback, determine its merits, and in many cases decide whether or not it should be published. “Peer-reviewed Journals,” for example, are regular academic publications in which editorial boards screen submissions to ensure that the research was conducted according to professional standards and protocols, that it makes a contribution to its respective field, that it is relevant to the concerns or theme of the particular journal, among other things. In short, peer review is an important gatekeeping process that lends both credibility and legitimacy to research, in turn preserving the credibility and legitimacy of the broader discipline.

Although the peer review process can determine whether a writer’s research ever sees the light of day (making or breaking aspiring careers in the process), peer review, depending on the academic field, can be somewhat conservative. It can be difficult to get support for research that does not conform to pre-established conventions. Nonetheless, such research can often break new ground or open new directions for research. Although there has long been a scholarly interest in, for example, mass-murder psychology, Grossman often says that no one has studied in any meaningful way, the act of state-sanctioned killing. Hence his term for this, “killology,” which he defines as

The scholarly study of the destructive act, just as sexology is the scholarly study of the procreative act. In particular, killology focuses

on the reactions of healthy people in killing circumstances (such as police and military in combat) and the factors that enable and restrain killing in these situations (“Killology Research Group,” www.killology.com).

Grossman does have several peer-reviewed publications to his credit. Early in his career, he wrote some entries for the *Oxford Companion to American Military History* (2000). In 2002, he also co-wrote an essay with David A. Klingler for the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* called “Who Should Deal with Foreign Terrorists on U.S. Soil?” Grossman himself often mentions these particular publications in his biographical blurbs. Indeed publications in these two venues were likely a big breakthrough for Grossman; his ideas may very well have found wider sympathy in the “national security” ethos immediately following 9/11.

Grossman’s first book, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (discussed above) grew out of his Master’s thesis in Educational Psychology. (It’s common for first books to grow out of a graduate thesis.) It was first published in 1995 by Little, Brown, and Company, a huge publishing house. It’s not a university press, which might lend more credibility to this book as work of scholarship; but it likely gave the book a wider circulation and popular appeal. Plus, being circulated by a popular publishing house rather than a university press, *On Killing* was automatically positioned to sell more. In addition to the evidence-based criticisms of this book documented above, none of the book’s three editions have footnotes that consistently document sources, and the bibliography consists only of “selected books.”

Since then, Grossman has written about a variety of topics ranging from military history to video games and aggression; however, much of his “killology” research is not peer reviewed. Many of Grossman’s “killology” books are actually *self-published*: That is, they are published by companies and groups that he himself started or is connected to through his business partnerships. *On Combat* (2004) was published by “WSG Research Publications.” “WSG” is the “Warrior Science Group.” (The website www.warriorscience.com now redirects to the “Human Factor Research Group,” Inc., which he is also connected to via his frequent collaborator, Bruce K. Siddle). And the ebook version of *On Combat* is published by Killology Research Group, LLC. His 2009 book, *Warrior Mindset*

follows the same pattern: It was initially published by the Warrior Science Group, Inc., with the ensuing ebook published by Killology Research Group, LLC in 2011.

The take-away: Self-publishing not only means NOT peer reviewed; it means that the “research” doesn’t have to be verifiable, reproducible, or valid at all.

Where does Grossman’s “authority” come from?

Given the fatal flaws in his “research” and the lack of peer review giving a professional stamp of approval to his controversial ideas, how is it that Grossman “passes” as a scholar or researcher? And what about the fear-based workshops that have developed, in part, from his research, which are not subjected to the equivalent rigors of a peer review process?

Grossman’s “civilian education” (as he calls it) involves a BS from Columbus College (Georgia) in 1984 and a MEd in Educational Psychology from University of Texas (Austin) in 1990. These are impressive degrees, and Grossman appears to have been an exemplary student (judging from his 4.0 GPA, which he also includes on his professional *curriculum vitae*). At the same time, an undergraduate degree in history does not make one a “historian” (which title he often claims) and a Master’s Degree in Education does not make one a “behavioral scientist” (which he also calls himself). One needs a doctorate for these professional titles.

An interview published by *Men’s Journal* narrates Grossman’s path from the military to academia:

Grossman had 14 years in the Army when he applied to teach at West Point and got selected to teach psychology. He’d never had any training in psychology: "What West Point does is it selects people as professors, then sends them to grad school en route," he explained. "I would have studied underwater basket weaving if it got me to West Point." He earned his master's in education psychology from the University of Texas at Austin and spent a year interning as a counselor at a local middle school. He taught at West Point from 1990 to 1993; the rest of his professorial experience came at

Arkansas State, where he spent four years teaching military science and overseeing the ROTC program (Eels).

Grossman's experience here is much different from the typical route a civilian would follow if a civilian wanted to become a Professor of History. That person would apply to doctoral programs in History. They would need to survive that competitive process and be accepted into a doctoral program, go through the rigors of that program, and complete that program by researching and writing a doctoral dissertation. After finishing the PhD, that person would begin a rigorously competitive process, applying to colleges and universities around the country – possibly the world – along with hundreds of other prospective professors, in the hopes of landing their first job as an Assistant Professor somewhere. Then, in order to stay employed and advance professionally, that person would need to conduct credible, extensive research, which would be evaluated and approved by the scholarly community and published in peer-reviewed venues. To be successfully promoted (from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to, finally, “full” Professor with “tenure”), at each stage, that person would endure a further review of their scholarly record, their teaching, and their administrative service by a committee of professional gatekeepers.

Military academies work differently. As Grossman himself explains, West Point essentially gave him a professorship, so long as he completed his Master's degree. This is quite different from competing for the position with everyone else in the field. And it seems an important starting point for attempting to figure out whether Grossman has credibility for using psychology to train police officers. While a lengthier investigation into the details of Grossman's two academic jobs at West Point and Arkansas State University is needed, the urgent question driving this investigation seems to be clear: Just as there is a difference between credible, authoritative, peer-reviewed research and “research,” was Grossman actually a professionally authoritative professor or a “professor”?

These questions seem to converge as journalist Josh Eels calls attention to Grossman's research methodology:

Though Grossman calls himself a behavioral scientist, he is not a researcher in the traditional academic sense. He wrote *On Combat*, a study on how soldiers and police officers cope with the stress

associated with deadly conflict, using what he calls an "interactive feedback loop" — gathering stories from combat veterans, then presenting the information to people he trains. He's more of a Malcolm Gladwell type, compiling anecdotes and fashioning them into a digestible narrative. As his chief qualifications, Grossman cites the "body of information I've crafted over the years" and his ability to "speak from the heart." "I truly am one of the best people on the planet in a couple of areas," he told me. "Whether it's preparation for a life-or-death event or walking the sheepdog path, I really feel like I'm the preeminent authority" (Eels).

For many scholars and researchers, to say that research is “anecdotal” is to discredit it as not based on evidence or sound methodology. For a sociologist, at least, the comparison to Malcolm Gladwell would not be flattering. “Speaking from the heart” is different from employing evidence-based best practices. (Again, the book referred to here, *On Combat*, was *self-published*, which means that this research was not peer-reviewed and did not need to be verified by *any* outside sources.) And with all due respect for unconventional scholarship that serves the human desire to document and develop new knowledge, Grossman’s controversial, fatally-flawed, non-peer-reviewed “research” is not just being collected for the appreciation of new ideas in the abstract. Instead, his questionable theory is being operationalized in workshops that prepare police officers to interact with the public they serve by telling them they are “warriors,” by insisting that “we. are. at. war,” and by encouraging them to question any previous training they’ve undergone. Grossman routinely puts cops on high alert in his seminars by insisting on the exploding murder rate or decrying “the systematic ambush, murder, and execution of cops” (Featherstone). Officers routinely hear that “every single traffic stop could be, might be, the last stop you ever make in your life” (Schatz). As another observer noted:

“A brief video excerpt from a ‘Street Survival’ course shows a presenter lecturing officers about the need to visualize shooting someone as part of the “Psychological Game” necessary to “win” encounters with what trainees are told is an implacably hostile public (Grigg).

A professor or a “professor”? If these academic degrees and academic posts give Grossman a certain facade of scholarly authority, they don’t seem to stop him and

his business associates from making ideology-driven, counter-factual pronouncements that could never withstand academic scrutiny.

So where does Grossman's authority come from? In addition to his "street cred" as former military, he seems to draw authority primarily from people's willingness to accept his authority as a professor. As filmmaker Craig Atkinson said,

"A lot of police officers aren't coming from a scientific background," he said. "So when Grossman — a professor — presents something as fact, they take it as fact. But when you really drill down into any of it, it's basically a small bit of reality blown up to justify his thinking. He's cherry-picking ideas to illustrate his point" (Ibid).

Once someone as savvy as Grossman establishes themselves, especially in hierarchically-organized groups like the military and law enforcement, the less likely their authority (or the processes through which they gained and maintain their authority ... or the access they are given on the basis of that authority), gets called into question. In this sense, Grossman is a beneficiary of the same "sheep" mentality he deplors.

The Grossman "Brand"

If Grossman's approach to "research" is questionable, it is indisputable that he excels in self-promotion. Indeed his skill in self-marketing – presenting himself as "the preeminent authority" – substitutes for the lack of scholarly vetting of his ideas. It also ensures that the Grossman "brand" has a carefully cultivated veneer of academic respectability, especially for audiences who may not necessarily know what academic credentials or evidence-based research consist of. Mass-marketing his ideas in more popular (less "academic") venues, Grossman can advertise himself everywhere, reinforcing his authority through his "brand" and creating desire for the products he sells.

The occasional publication in a peer-reviewed journal may give Grossman an "in" on the college campus lecture circuit. But average police department may not have a stack of the latest peer-reviewed criminology journals sitting by the coffee maker anyway, so why try to publish in these venues? Grossman has

enjoyed widespread dissemination of his ideas by energetically publishing in all manner of non-peer-reviewed magazines, newsletters, and bulletins that circulate in the law enforcement markets he's eager to tap into. These include state-based law enforcement publications (*Arkansas Lawman*, *South Carolina Trooper*), profession-oriented magazines (*Police Union News*, *The Professional Marksman*), the online publications of training organizations that are his business partners (*Police One*), bulletins geared toward a particular branch of law enforcement in a particular place (*ALERT 3: Journal of the Los Angeles Airport Police Officers Association*), and even publications that go beyond these specialized niches to reach a broader public, such the *Journal of the American Family Association*. The American Family Association would eventually be listed as a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center, though it did not have this designation at the time that Grossman wrote an article for them.

Grossman's *curriculum vitae* (the academic term for a resume) is prominently featured on his killology website, and it overflows with these popular, non-academic publications. And if Grossman is less meticulous in his "research," it's in his cv that he documents *everything* – and *more*. Grossman has written multiple articles for the same publications (he lists all of them); he has written versions of the same piece for different journals (all listed); and a chapter from one of his books ("Sheep, Wolves, and Sheepdogs") is re-published in at least five different magazines, newsletters, and bulletins. Overwritten and meretricious, it's a cv that's fluffed up and repetitive, more fitting for a fresh-faced job-seeker awaiting their first interview than an established authority. Grossman even includes his GPA (grade point average), which is unusual for an academic cv. (For an instructive exercise, contrast Grossman's cv on his killology website with the more academic cv of his 2002 co-author, David A. Klingler.) Most importantly, it's the kind of document geared toward impressing his trainees, followers, and potential recruits, as well as expanding his "brand" into new markets.

Self-promotion that's unchecked can turn into misrepresentation. Among other things, Grossman says that his first book was nominated for the prestigious Pulitzer Prize, which is not true. (He or his publisher sent Pulitzer a \$50 entry fee. Pulitzer states that they "use the term 'nominee' for entrants who become finalists. We discourage someone from saying he or she was 'nominated' for a Pulitzer simply because an entry was sent to us" [www.pulitzer.org and

thetruthaboutsocnetlies.wordpress.com].) Grossman also claims to have “co-authored” a *New York Times* Bestseller with Glenn Beck, even though Beck co-wrote that particular book with Kevin Balfe and Hannah Beck; Grossman’s actual role was to contribute material.

Grossman’s “brand” is becoming more visible in some spheres of popular culture. There’s a reference, for example, to sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs in *American Sniper*, the 2014 film directed by Clint Eastwood. Grossman has also tried his hand at writing fiction, co-writing four books in a military science fiction series. He’s even co-authored a line of **children’s books**: *Sheepdogs: Meet Our Nation’s Warrior’s* (2013), published by Delta Defense, LLC. (According to its website, Delta Defense is “a private company that provides marketing, operations, and customer care services to the United States Concealed Carry Association”; its members are also “culture defenders,” who “fiercely defend our values because they never fail us.”) Most recently the children’s book *American Sheepdogs: Why Mommy Carries a Gun* (2018), was published (self-published) by his own publishing outfit, Killology Research Group. Neither Grossman nor his co-author, Stephanie Rogish, have any previous experience with the genre of children’s literature. But it’s a way to get their message out and increase “brand” recognition.

Make no mistake: Despite being such a prolific author, Grossman is not just spending all of his time sitting at his desk writing. He’s a traveling salesman, “on the road 300 days a year spreading the warrior gospel” (Featherstone). In a two-year period, Grossman spoke to over 100 police departments (Eels.) “There’s probably no one in America who trains more cops; there’s almost certainly no one who trains cops who is better known” (Ibid). Benjamin Powers of *Paste Magazine*, relying on evidence from Grossman’s curriculum vitae, crunched the numbers:

...he has spoken and presented to the FBI or police over one thousand times from 1996 to 2013, which equates to speaking to law enforcement about once every five days over the course of 17 years.

This doesn’t include the over 200 times from 1992 to 2013 that he also spoke at universities and colleges, the more than 300 times he presented to U.S. armed forces over a similar period, or even the more than 260 times he spoke at “Educational, Youth, Civic & Service Organizations” (Powers).

He's also a regular speaker at NRA gatherings and on the gun show circuit in general. And early in 2017, records from a "Bulletproof Mind" training showed Grossman's interest in diversifying his audiences to include K-12 students and teachers (Muckrock). This series of presentations is now known as "Safe Schools and Healthy Students." (Consistent with Grossman's ideas about an armed public as the second line of defense behind law enforcement, Grossman is a proponent of arming teachers.) This expansion into the civilian market also includes *Bulletproof Mind for the Armed Citizen*, a 5-DVD set of Grossman's presentations available from the USCCA (United States Concealed Carry Association) for \$297.

The pricing for Grossman's services can differ. "Sheepdog Seminars for Churches" can fetch \$59-99 per person. A three-hour lecture is \$6000. The two-day "Bulletproof" seminar at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota in May 2018 cost \$209 per registrant. (The previous average Midwest rate was \$400.) All of his "merch" is on sale at his talks and seminars. He'll be happy autograph a book, often with the Biblical inscription "Ecclesiastes 3:3: a time to kill, a time to heal" (Featherstone).

Grossman has started companies and partnered with other businesses that seem to have cornered the market on law enforcement training, reinforcing their "warrior" ideology. A handful include:

- Grossman Academy
- Calibre Press (caliber + *libre* ["free"] = Calibre),
- Killology Research Group
- Warrior Science Group
- Target Solutions
- PoliceOne Academy
- Mission Critical
- Human Factor Research Group, Inc.

Target Solutions – the digital vendor that's breaking down Calibre Press courses into smaller online segments, reworking their titles – consists of the same board of directors as Calibre Press. In addition to running trainings, Police One Academy published an "8 Elements of a Warrior Mindset" article in *PoliceOne*, their online magazine. Police One Academy is part of Praetorian Digital Company, whose

motto is “Warrior Spirit: Vigilance Vigor, Intensity.” Grossman also sells “sheepdog” supplies, customized weapons, and t-shirts through the SheepDogKnifeandGun.com store (www.sdkandg.com). A customized Sheepdog knife can cost upwards of \$200. He and his son, Jon, invented and patented “an ergonomic grip for a slide of a semiautomatic firearm.”

Although these “companies” give the appearance of a broadly-based new field, just as the companies overlap each other, those designing and profiting from the field are a tight-knit circle of collaborators closely linked to Grossman. This network of likeminded warrior-oriented business partners are sharing ideas, strategies, and resources as they write books and articles together, and conduct trainings together. Among others, these include Bruce K. Siddle, Jim Glennon, and Loren W. Christensen, all former police officers (Grossman has never been a cop). They refer to themselves as “warrior scientists tm” (the term is Siddle’s). Siddle is a martial arts enthusiast who developed his own brand of street fighting; he has a handgun manufacturing company; he also oversees Human Factor Research Group, Inc, a law enforcement training and publishing company. Siddle, Grossman, and Grossman’s son, Jon, invented and patented together “off-trigger locators and off-trigger locator attachments for firearms.” Glennon is a former cop and the trainer who runs Calibre Press, another training and publishing company that also provides “expert witness and consultation services” (www.calibrepress.com). Christensen started LWC Books, “a distributor of hard-to-find, unique books and DVDs for martial artists, military, law enforcement, and other people concerned about their personal safety.” A Vietnam Veteran with three decades of law enforcement, Christensen is also a writer currently at work on “police and martial arts thriller fiction series.”

Whether or not self-published “warrior scientists” are scientists, these guys are extremely gifted salesmen, and they’re getting handsome contracts with local police departments around the country. In Minnesota, the Peace Officers Standards and Training Board lists the approved courses for which law enforcement officers can get continuing education credits. 341 courses are Grossman or Grossman-influenced courses. And according to the POST Board’s January 2018 meeting minutes, “Mr. [Nate] Gove said that additional funding is estimated to triple the per-officer share for training reimbursement to agencies and will start to be distributed in August 2018.”

Oversight and Evidence-Based Alternatives

Just as most of Grossman’s “research” has not been peer-reviewed, perhaps more importantly, the “warrior”-oriented, fear-based workshops that have partly developed from his research are not subjected to the equivalent rigors of a peer review process – or any outside evaluative process, for that matter. In theory, the Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST Board), “regulates and promotes the profession of law enforcement across ... Minnesota through the adoption, regulation, and enforcement of education, selection, licensing, and training standards” (<https://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/agencies/detail?AgencyID=1251>). In practice, the POST Board doesn’t do much regulating or enforcing at all.

For a prospective trainer (such as a community college law enforcement program or a company such as Calibre Press) to get a course it wants to teach approved by the POST Board, that prospective trainer must first become a “sponsor” of that course. But longevity rather than course content seems to be the POST Board’s only criterion. A prospective trainer can become a “sponsor” if that trainer has been in existence, offering its courses, for at least two years. Somewhat circularly, if the POST Board approves the training company as a “sponsor,” then the training company itself becomes the approver of its own courses. The POST Board, in other words, doesn’t really hold itself to its stated mission, “the adoption, regulation, and enforcement of education, selection, licensing, and training standards.” Since the content of these fear-based trainings actually runs counter to the professed ideals (if not practices) of many police departments – indeed St. Paul, Minneapolis, and St. Anthony police departments pulled their officers from the May 2018 Mall of America training – the POST Board’s approval process (or lack thereof) is particularly concerning.

A potentially promising trend – one that might reduce harm, at the very least – lies in the area of “evidence-based policing.” Cynthia Lum and Christopher S. Koper, both of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy and both Professors of Criminology, Law, and Society at George Mason University, have written a well-researched guide to this growing field. As the authors define it, “evidence-based policing” incorporates the use of “research, evaluation, analysis, and scientific processes ... in law enforcement decision making about tactics, strategies, and

policies” (Lum and Koper 3-4). It tries to connect models, actions, and strategies to “desired outcomes” (13). This “connection,” the authors emphasize,

should not be based on guessing, anecdotal experience, or gut feelings, as these may be wrong. Rather, experience, anecdotes, and gut feelings need to be tested. Thus, determining the connection between action and outcome needs research, analysis, evaluation evidence, and empirical information (13).

Among other applications, the authors suggest “using rigorous evaluation methods to examine the effectiveness (of various outcomes) of a police training program” (4).

Grossman: An Entrepreneur and an Ideologue.

The contrast with evidence-based policing and fear-based policing is somewhat glaring. In the context of his training seminars, Grossman is an “ideologue,” not a scholar. That is, his trainings are based on ideological beliefs that shape his interpretation of reality, rather than objective research or evidence-based best practices. Here’s Grossman’s common refrain at his trainings:

“We. Are. At. War,” he tells the officers, many of them from small towns in Pennsylvania. “And you are the frontline troops in this war. There is no elite unit showing up to save your bacon when the terrorists attack. *You* are the Delta Force. *You* are the Green Beret. *You* are British SAS. Can you accept that? Every single one of you is in the frontline of a live ammo combat patrol every day of your life” (Featherstone).

If this kind of thinking is for anyone, it’s for the military, not for the police. Grossman has never served as a police officer. Yet the militarization of the police is precisely Grossman’s mission. “With increased dangers at home and the Posse Comitatus Act preventing the military from operating on U.S. soil, he says, cops need to act more like soldiers” (Eels). It is not up to Grossman to decide that police should violate the Posse Comitatus Act. And yet, he has been given a lot of power (not to mention money – and in many cases, taxpayer money) to spread this belief. Journalist Josh Eels recounted his dinner conversation with Grossman:

[Grossman] likens protest groups such as the Black Lives Matter movement to "treason" and says "it has blood on its hands" for emboldening killers of police. He calls the media "dirtbags" and "bastards" for their coverage of Ferguson, and he accuses the Obama administration and other politicians of "pandering" to the police-reform movement. He also cites the so-called Ferguson effect — the hypothesis that cops aren't doing their jobs for fear of being prosecuted or sued — for what he sees as the surging homicide rate.

While this was not one of Grossman's public seminars, it gives some measure of the belief system shaping his interpretation of social realities.

In the workshop materials distributed at the class that Jeronimo Yanez, the officer who killed Philando Castile by shooting him seven times at point-blank range, attended ("Calibre Press Presents: The Bulletproof Warrior"), a particular case study focuses on a police officer interacting with a civilian. Workshop attendees are taught that the civilian's "hesitation when asked an easy question" is one of several "pre-attack indicators." Whether or not there is research-based evidence supporting this (there's an abundance of reasons one might feel anxious or hesitant in the presence of law enforcement), the participants' examination of this case study is not happening in isolation. It's happening in the context of a training in which cops are told they're under systematic attack and in which trainees are being taught to overcome their reluctance to kill by developing a "warrior" mindset: "being mentally prepared to kill at any moment" (Featherstone). It's happening in a seminar whose genesis lies in faulty, non-peer-reviewed research, and whose content favors sensational and ideological militarization of police-civilian relationships.

Some of Grossman's public comments even push this relationship to violence to the level of "fear porn," in filmmaker Craig Atkinson's words. In the class that Atkinson recorded, "Grossman at one point tells his students that the sex they have after they kill another human being will be the best sex of their lives. The room chuckles" (Bako).

Not surprisingly, Grossman and his fellow salesman are not mentioned anywhere in the pages of *Evidence-based Policing: Translating Research into Practice*.

What Kind of Training Should Police Undergo? Who Gets to Decide?

Clearly, the fear-based training sessions developed and facilitated by Grossman and his fellow salesmen are not subject to the equivalent of a rigorous peer review process. It is worth considering what might constitute “peer review” in this arena. Are evidence, research, and documented best practices prioritized in police training and policing – or is any skillful entrepreneur’s workshop considered “valid,” regardless of its content or ideology? How is “expertise” determined? What constitutes “credentials”? What are the broader institutional mechanisms through which a “gatekeeping” process might take place? And how would an evaluative process provide feedback and determine which trainings have credibility?

The related question is who gets to participate in this peer review process. Since fear-based trainings encourage participants to question, perhaps even repudiate, their previous training, what role do individual police departments have in determining whether fear-based trainings are in line with their officers’ prior training and preparation, or with that particular police department’s vision? What role do police academies have? What role does the public have, given that the public bears the greatest consequences? (Organizations that chart police killings “as a result of being chased, beaten, arrested, restrained, shot, pepper sprayed, tasered, or otherwise harmed by police officers, whether on-duty or off-duty, intentional or accidental” offer comprehensive numbers: Police killed 1,147 people in 2017, and they’ve killed 466 people to date at the time of this writing in mid-2018.) Which professional agencies, community-based advocacy groups, and government bodies would participate? And who *decides* who gets to participate?

Since groups that are hand-picked by the powerful, such as the Governor’s Council on Law Enforcement and Community Relations, have served as mere smokescreens – worse than doing nothing about police brutality – the public is weary of having its time wasted and knowledge ignored as it drafts up wish-lists of “recommendations” while law enforcement abuse continues unabated. Even if it were to happen, mere presence of everyone at the meeting table does not democratize entrenched power relationships or change systems of power.

In the meantime, one player seems particularly powerful, but has not risen to the occasion. The Minnesota Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training (the

POST Board), is “the licensing agency for law enforcement officers in Minnesota and is responsible for ensuring the professionalism of law enforcement departments and licensees in the state of Minnesota. If they did their job, they could significantly reduce police brutality in Minnesota, *but they don’t*. Their ongoing failure to enforce appropriate standards for their licensees or hold them accountable for misconduct has turned the agency into a rubber stamp for brutal policing” (Communities United Against Police Brutality).

Significantly, the POST Board refuses to take a position on fear-based trainings such as The Bulletproof Warrior. How many more unnecessary civilian deaths at the hands of unhinged “warrior” cops do we have to endure before they decide to use the power entrusted to them, which includes “the adoption, regulation, and enforcement of education, selection, licensing, and training standards”?

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