A CALL TO ACTION: DEVELOPING AN EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND PERFORMANCE SHAPING FACTORS IN TACTICAL TRAINING SCENARIOS

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INTRODUCTION

There can be numerous approaches to any given tactical training scenario. Variations in performance can be widespread and can alter outcomes. This can make the subject matter difficult for people to traverse without a frame of reference to understand factors that shape performance. A gap exists across the tactical training industry in mapping factors of performance into an accessible framework. This call to action is primarily aimed towards researchers. We believe that a collaboration between academia and trainers provides countless research opportunities within the tactical training space. We believe that it could also contribute to improving training industry standards and practices.

A SUMMARY OF TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES

'**Tactics**' generally refers to the theories and practices of individuals or groups confronting each other. Tactics are employed to meet situational challenges, usually in adverse environments. They can be viewed as general ways of operating (general practices). '**Techniques**' are variations of tactics employed via various methods. They can be viewed as specific ways of operating (specific practices). In the context of our training, tactics and techniques are taught, demonstrated and then employed in simulated scenarios. These scenarios represent events that police or military students might encounter, such as an ambush, hostage crisis or siege.

Tactics and techniques can be categorized as:

- **Formal**: adopted into a core doctrine, ideology or practice of the core group

- **Informal**: only adopted by individuals or subgroups with direct social ties but not the core group

- **Organic**: from an inside source, inside of the group, usually through direct connections

- **Inorganic**: from an outside source relative to the group, such as through the internet

- **Historical**: used in the past periods, sometimes as a precursor to current methods

- **Modern**: used in the contemporary period, within a recently defined period

- **Symbolic**: performed in demonstrations, usually as part of tradition or public display

- **Operational**: used in the real-world, a part of a group's procedures

Tactics and techniques, hereby simply 'tactics,' are formed through a process of discovery, development, implementation and maintenance. This often involves trial and error. Tactics are regularly organized through training within a unit. Resultantly, tactics might be different across groups or within subgroups. This is especially noticeable during joint training and cross training events with multiple units. In a tactical training company context, tactics are taught to students by instructors or cadre of instructors. This can include scenario, range, virtual simulator or other forms of training.

Tactics rarely remain static but adapt over time given the right attention, usually through iterative optimization or lessons learned in combat. Even 'old school' tactics can be given new life through contemporary modifications or contexts. Tactics are, therefore, shaped by more factors than just the person who uses them, but by things such as:

- **Organizational standards**
- **Organizational role**
- **Leadership**
- **Law**
- **History**
- **Politics**
- **Funding**
- **Operational experience**
- **Culture and tradition**
- **Creativity and innovation**
- **Level and type of threat**
- **Doctrine, education and training**
- **Level of risk tolerance to force and/or mission**

1: A student engages an opponent in a training scenario.

TACTICS AS PERFORMANCE SHAPING FACTORS

Tactics and techniques act as mediators for appropriate conduct—they propose what a group should do within a particular context. Practitioners try to modulate their own actions to fit the expectations of the group. Sometimes they are conditioned through training to respond in a specific way to stimuli. For example, when being shot at, a tactical team member is expected to take appropriate action, such as shooting back and/or taking cover. In that way, tactics shape performance which then impacts outcomes. When tactics fail, personal factors such as skills and mindset become more apparent, as do situational factors.

Tactics are one of the main elements of tactical performance. Consequently, they are measurable using various metrics. This can include examining the amount of time lapsed, shooting accuracy, and casualty rates during scenarios. It can also include student self-reporting, such as their perceived level of stress. Collectively, these can provide feedback to students and instructors about performance metrics and associated outcomes.

2: A student aims at a surrendering suspect in a training scenario.

OTHER PERFORMANCE SHAPING FACTORS

Tactics and techniques are not the only factors that shape performance. Understanding what impacts tactical performance, other than tactics themselves, is an important goal in training students. This helps trainers measure human performance and scenario outcomes beyond just actions or maneuvers.

Some factors influence performance positively while other factors influence it negatively. Sometimes a student will report feeling pressured yet they will perform above expectations. Pressure was not necessarily a negative indicator of performance in that case. Furthermore, performance can be consistent in some cohorts yet variable in other groups if measured over multiple scenarios or days. Factors such as fatigue and stress can coalesce into performance hindrances in those cases. Educating individuals on other factors affecting performance would then become an important debriefing point after the scenario ends.

Other performance influencing factors could include:

- Health and wellbeing, including pain or anxiety

- Level of fitness

- Age

- Skills

- Novelty

- Light levels

- Distractions

- Peer pressure

- Time constraints

- Sensory deprivation

- Situational awareness

- Distractions, including noise

- Level of resistance or compliance

3: An opponent is shot by a student in a training scenario.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

We aim to create an educational framework to understand performance shaping factors in tactical scenarios. This will involve developing academic definitions, criteria and categories for observed behaviours, expected actions (tactics and techniques), as well as methods of capturing variables of interest in high-fidelity, dynamic training environments. We want to mobilize researchers interested in a collaborative approach to challenging training industry gaps. We can offer hosted sessions, including both online and in-person collaborations. This can include meetups, training event attendances, access to internal tools and discussions.

This would best apply to researchers involved in:

- Military studies

- Counterterrorism studies

- Criminal justice studies

- Stress or human behaviour research

Research opportunities might include:

- Comparing tactics, techniques and procedures

- Studying human behaviour and performance

- Studying stress and responses to stress

- Studying movement, including tactical maneuvers

- Studying shooting effectiveness, such as accuracy

- Studying the usefulness of training programs

- Studying populations involved in tactical training programs, such as tactical teams

We believe that research could:

- Reduce overall training costs

- Give trainers and training companies more tools for training, increasing education quality

- Increase the relevance and transferability of training content to the real-world

- Provide an academic backdrop and reliable metrics for performance in tactical settings
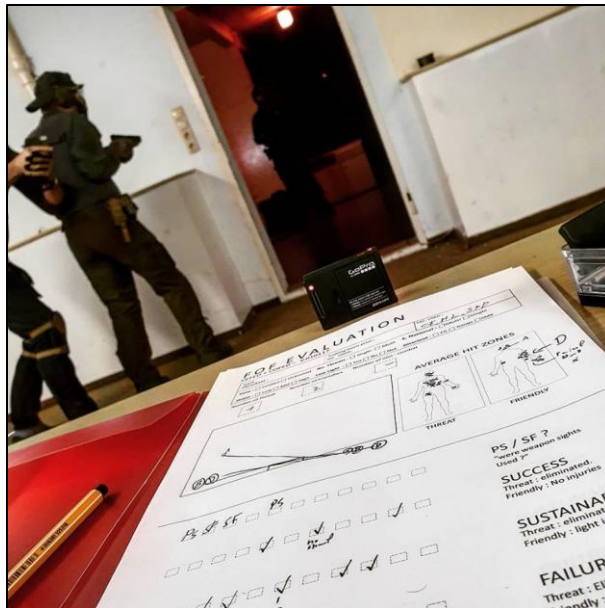
4: Students are filmed and assessed during a training scenario.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, tactical performance is influenced by numerous factors. The employment of different tactics and techniques can modify performance, as can factors like fatigue and stress. In order to understand these factors and their interplay, we aim to create an educational framework. We implore researchers to become involved in our hosted sessions, both online and in-person. Please contact us if you are interested in this opportunity via **contact.project.gecko@gmail.com**.