



PRINCIPLED POLICING:

A Path to Building Better Police-Community Relations

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Principled Policing: A Path to Building Better Police-Community Relations

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

California Department of Justice

California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training

Oakland Police Department

Stockton Police Department

California Partnership for Safe Communities

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Executive Summary *

Law enforcement agencies around the country are attempting to improve relations with the communities they serve—particularly communities of color. One solution agencies are trying is to offer training courses to their sworn staff. Yet the effects of these courses are unclear.

SPARQ had the opportunity to evaluate one promising training: *Principled Policing*—a daylong course that consists of five modules that aim to improve public and police safety by building trust between them. The

first four modules focus on procedural justice, and the fifth focuses on implicit bias. Understanding how implicit bias works could help sworn staff more readily apply procedural justice principles in the field.

To evaluate *Principled Policing*, SPARQ collected and analyzed survey data from 135 course graduates—police executives and law enforcement officials at a variety of ranks—before and after they received the training.

Recommendations

Individual psychological changes alone rarely drive the larger changes both police officers and communities seek. To support training programs and improve police-community relations, agencies should:

- Get buy-in at the top
- Give trainers high-quality instruction
- Measure the effects of trainings
- Help staff apply the training
- Examine procedural justice in your own department
- Tailor trainings to local communities
- Invite members of the community and media to learn more about policing

Our evaluation suggests the *Principled Policing* course:

- Improves participants' understanding of procedural justice and implicit bias;
- Deepens participants' understanding of how race can affect policing;
- Strengthens participants' belief that relations between the police and the community can improve; and
- Increases participants' confidence that they personally can make a difference in police-community relations.

In addition, police executives and trainers who completed *Principled Policing*:

- Gave the course high ratings—between “very good” and “excellent”;
- Believed the course can increase trust and decrease police-community tensions;
- Perceived many ways to improve relations with the community; and
- Were enthusiastic about taking personal initiative and reaching out to the community.

Overview of the Training and Evaluation

Background

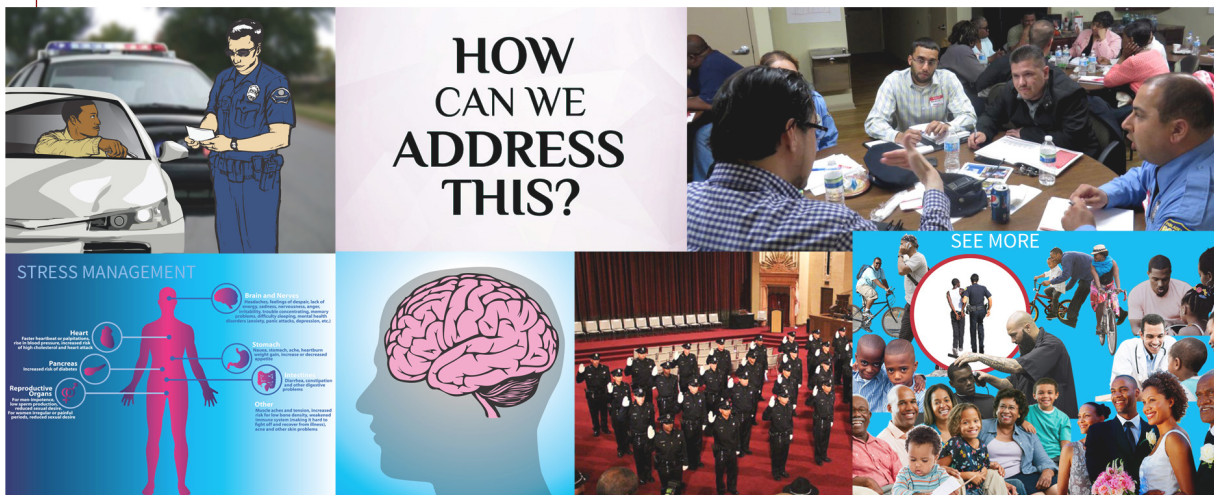
Police-community tensions are at a historic high. To address these tensions, law enforcement executives and community leaders alike have called for action, including new trainings on procedural justice and implicit bias that aim to improve relations with the community. Yet few studies have explored whether such trainings can effectively improve those relations.

How SPARQ Evaluated Principled Policing

SPARQ had the opportunity to evaluate the *Principled Policing* course that law enforcement agencies across the state of California are adopting. *Principled Policing* is the only training course on procedural justice and implicit bias certified by

the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST). SPARQ, POST, the California Department of Justice, the Stockton and Oakland Police Departments, and the California Partnership for Safe Communities formed a partnership to design the course.

SPARQ evaluated the *Principled Policing* course with two groups of participants: police executives and would-be trainers enrolled in a train-the-trainer program. Participants took a survey before the training (Time 1) and a similar survey after the training (Time 2). SPARQ researchers then compared participants' responses at Time 2 to their responses at Time 1 to see if their beliefs and attitudes had changed.



Images from the implicit bias module of the Principled Policing training

Overview of the Training and Evaluation

Principled Policing Modules

- The interactive nature of legitimacy, procedural justice, implicit bias and goals in policing
- Expectations and legitimacy
- Procedural justice
- Historical and generational effects of policing
- Implicit bias

IMPLICIT BIAS

Thoughts and feelings about social groups that can influence people's perceptions, decisions, and actions without awareness

TENETS OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

Voice (Listen)
Neutrality (Be fair)
Respect (Treat people with dignity)
Trustworthiness (Try to do what's best for people)

Evaluation Participants

Executives. In November of 2015, the California Department of Justice offered the *Principled Policing* course to a group of police executives as part of then-Attorney General Kamala D. Harris's commitment to identifying and supporting initiatives that build police-community trust. These law enforcement leaders represented 28 agencies across the state of California. They took the *Principled Policing* course either in Sacramento ($N = 26$) or Los Angeles ($N = 29$).

EXECUTIVES

One Day

***** 28 Agencies



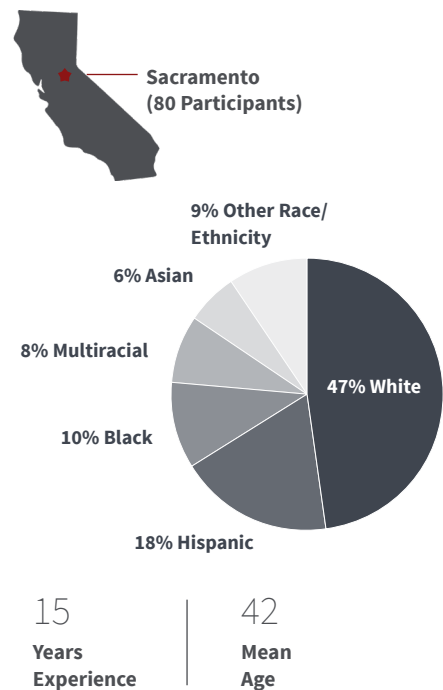
Trainers. To make the training available throughout the state, POST convened a series of courses where law enforcement officials learned how to deliver the *Principled Policing* training to their own departments. These “train-the-trainer” courses took place over two days. On the first day, participants received the training. On the second day, participants learned how to deliver the training themselves.

POST held three train-the-trainer courses: in September 2016, October 2016, and March 2017. Our evaluation consists of the 80 trainers who completed the course during this initial rollout, 80% of whom were male.

The racial/ethnic composition of the trainer sample was 47% White, 18% Hispanic, 10% Black, 8% Multiracial, 6% Asian, and 9% Other race/ethnicity. On average, trainers had 15 years of experience in law enforcement, and the mean age was 42.

TRAINERS

Two Day



Measures of Training Effectiveness

Both police executives and trainers took a pre-training survey (Time 1) and a post-training survey (Time 2). Police executives took their Time 2 survey immediately after the one-day *Principled Policing* course, while trainers took their Time 2 survey after their second day of instruction. Police executives' and trainers' surveys were similar but not identical, so some results pertain to one group but not the other.

Overview of the Training and Evaluation

The survey questions assessed:

Participants' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about police-community relations, including the intractability of police-community conflict;

Possible solutions for improving relations; and

General evaluations of the course, including its usefulness and its ability to influence police-community relations.

What Can Trainings Change?

SPARQ's research suggests that police-community tensions arise from many sources, including: individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and actions; cultural norms and practices; institutions' policies and procedures; and the particular history of police-community relations. By targeting individuals' beliefs, attitudes,

and desired actions, the *Principled Policing* training might produce the first steps on the path toward better police-community relations.

Expected Effects of Principled Policing Training



Results

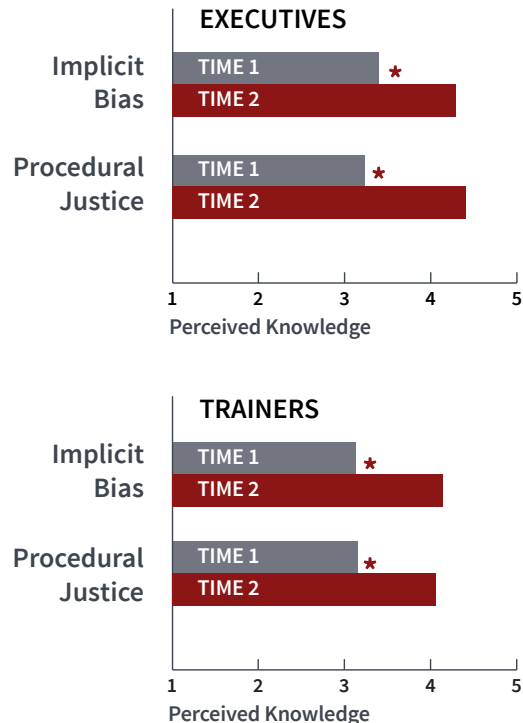
Principled Policing Changed Participants' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Attitudes

Knowledge of Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias

After taking the training, both police executives and trainers reported increased understanding of procedural justice and implicit bias.

“We would benefit from increased knowledge about procedural justice and implicit bias. Ongoing training is a key strategy to strengthen community relations.”

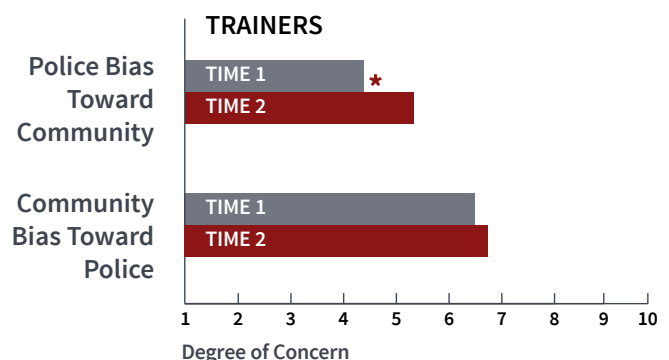
-Training Participant



Awareness That Bias Can Threaten Community Relations

Prior to the course, trainers were more concerned about the community's bias toward the police than police bias toward the community. After the training, however, trainers' concern about police bias toward the community rose by nearly 20%.

After the training, trainers also recognized that the race of community members could influence police officers' sympathy toward them as well as general judgment and decision-making.

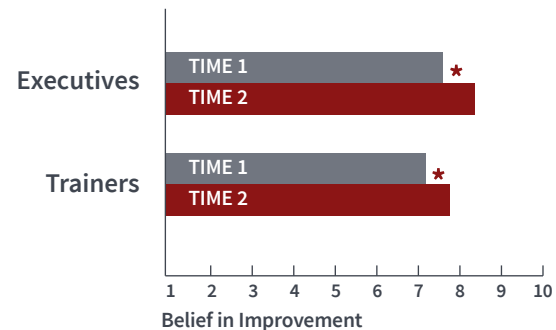


Statistically significant increases from Time 1 to Time 2 are denoted by “*”

Results

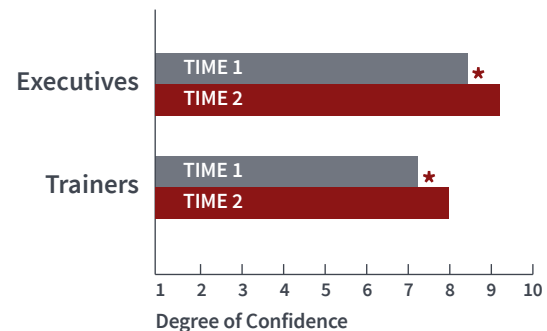
Beliefs That Police-Community Relations Can Improve

The training increased participants' beliefs that relations between the police and the community can get better.



Confidence That Police Can Personally Make a Difference

The training helped police executives and trainers see that they have the ability to improve police-community relations and help build trust between the police and the community.



Room for Improvement

On a measure completed at the end of the training, both executives and trainers expressed that the ideal police-community relationship would be much closer than it is now.

Current Relationship



Possible Relationship



Trainers suggest ways to improve police-community relations:

“Getting out into the communities and out of patrol vehicles.”

“Transparency. Sharing important statistics with the community, such as information regarding use of force incidents and how complaints from the public are handled.”

Results

Solutions to Police-Community Tensions

Trainers Weigh In on Factors That Influence Relations

When asked how various factors could influence relations between the police and the community, trainers overwhelmingly ranked their own actions as having the most positive potential impact. Trainers were also optimistic about initiatives that involved the community. They were less confident that government involvement at the local, state, or federal levels would bring about positive change. Notably, trainers saw activists and the media as forces that could hurt police-community relations.



How could the media help improve police-community relations? Trainers weigh in...

“More transparency into media-driven issues that the public at large perceives as negatives within the policing community.”

“Better media relations and the media understanding what it takes to be an officer.”

“Less one-sided and negative reporting from the media.”

Police Executives Want to Make a Difference

Police executives evaluated various ways that leaders could improve police-community relations. They were optimistic about a wide range of strategies, particularly:

- Encouraging sworn staff to treat other people as they would be treated;
- Reminding sworn staff of the values and ideals that led them to enter the policing profession; and
- Reminding sworn staff that what they do today will have an impact on future generations.



Results

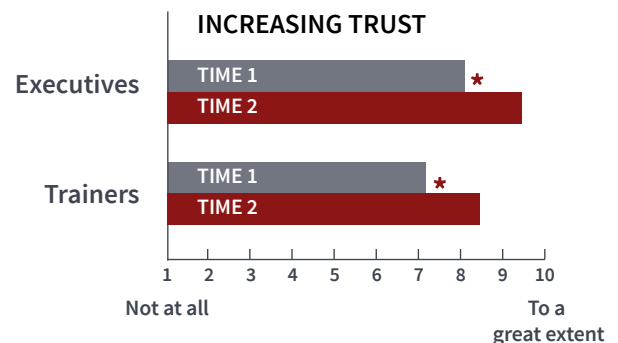
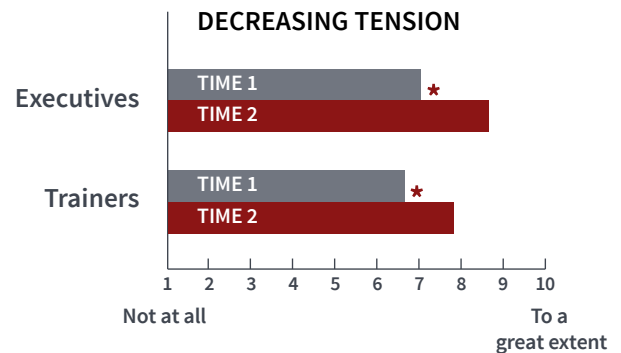
Police Executives and Trainers Find Principled Policing Valuable

Participants Believe Principled Policing Can Improve Police-Community Relations

Both police executives and trainers believed that the *Principled Policing* course could help decrease tension and increase trust between the police and the communities they serve.

After taking the *Principled Policing* course, trainers felt more confident that the training could improve police-community relations.

Trainers felt it was important to train their own agencies on procedural justice and implicit bias. Taking the train-the-trainer course strengthened their ratings by more than 10%.



Participants Rate the Training Favorably

Police executives and trainers evaluated the training favorably. Every police executive and 87% of trainers rated the course as "Very Good" or "Excellent," and both groups expressed confidence that the course would be useful to their agencies.

EXECUTIVES



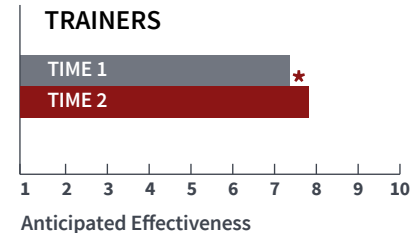
TRAINERS



Results

Trainers Believe They Can Be Effective

Even at Time 1, trainers were confident that they could be effective at delivering the *Principled Policing* training to their own departments. This confidence increased after completing the train-the-trainer course. Overall, trainers said they felt well-prepared.



What do trainers think their departments stand to gain from Principled Policing?

- “ A better understanding of the community’s view of law enforcement officers.
- “ An increased awareness of inherent obstacles in a community and how to deal with them. This increases safety and eventually increases morale.
- “ A greater number of people coming to understand the biases that peace officers have and how to deal with these biases in connection to who we serve.
- “ Demonstrate to the community/media/activists that my organization IS concerned for them and respects their views.

* Statistically significant increases from Time 1 to Time 2 are denoted by “*”

Conclusions and

Recommendations ★

Conclusions

The *Principled Policing* course has the potential to scale to more than 600 agencies across California. This initial evaluation suggests that the course can be an effective part of efforts to reduce police-community tensions. After completing the *Principled Policing* course, police executives and trainers showed changes in knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes that are likely necessary for improving police-community relations. Most importantly, police executives and trainers gained confidence that they themselves could be significant agents of change.

Although this evaluation did not measure behavioral outcomes or societal impacts, many of the individual psychological outcomes we measured are likely necessary to initiate and sustain lasting reductions in police-community tensions. The *Principled Policing* training alone,

however, is likely insufficient to drive wide-ranging change. To that end, law enforcement agencies will need not only to offer trainings that change individual knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, but also to change institutional norms, policies, and practices to reflect and reinforce individual changes.

“Leadership in each agency needs to believe in the role of community impact and implementing it with the line staff. These trainings are great for a short period of time, but the work only sustains if the leadership team believes in it and practices it as well.

-Training Participant

Recommendations

Based on our evaluation, SPARQ offers the following recommendations to agencies seeking to implement these kinds of trainings to improve police-community relations:

- **Get buy-in at the top.** Sworn staff will be more receptive to procedural justice and implicit bias trainings if they see support from department leadership. Leaders need to communicate how the trainings have the potential to help sworn staff in their own roles, improve the department, and strengthen the department's relationship with the community.
- **Give trainers high-quality instruction.** The POST train-the-trainer course showed that intensive instruction and support can help trainers feel more prepared. Equipping trainers with extensive background knowledge will help the trainings roll out smoothly. To ensure fidelity of implementation, develop detailed protocols for trainers to follow, provide tips for building rapport with the audience, and offer guidelines for skillfully navigating difficult conversations. Create a space for trainers to discuss what's working – and not working – and offer platforms to submit feedback to continually improve the curriculum.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Measure the effects of trainings.** As SPARQ outlined in this report, trainings have near-term psychological outcomes that can pave the way for long-term changes. To understand whether a training is effective, agencies need to measure both near-term and long-term outcomes. To measure near-term changes, distribute surveys before and after trainings. To measure long-term changes, set metrics that define success and partner with researchers to evaluate them.
- **Help sworn staff apply the training.** In-class trainings can give police officers knowledge and tools to improve interactions with community members, but departments need to help them put these principles into practice.
- **Examine procedural justice in your own department.** Procedural justice is not just important in the field; it is also important in your own department. Explore whether sworn staff feel that they have the voice, neutrality, respect, and trust for them to do their jobs well.
- **Tailor trainings to local communities.** The *Principled Policing* training connects the history of race relations in the United States to current relations between the police and communities of color. Training developers may need to adapt the material to reflect the unique needs and histories of different departments and communities.
- **Invite members of the community and media to learn more about policing.** Our participants emphasized the importance of helping community members understand policing procedures. They were optimistic about community outreach efforts as a tool for improving relations. They also stressed how the media shape police-community relations. Inviting members of the community and media to learn more about policing could reduce misunderstandings and improve trust in both directions.



Participants

Agencies Represented in the Police Executive Sample

Berkeley Police Department
California Department of Justice
California Highway Patrol
El Cerrito Police Department
Elk Grove Police Department
Fremont Police Department
Fresno Police Department
Indio Police Department
Lassen County Sheriff's Department
Long Beach Police Department
Los Angeles Airport Police Department
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Los Angeles Police Department
Modesto Police Department
Newport Beach Police Department
Orange County Sheriff's Department
Oxnard Police Department
Rancho Cordova Police Department
Richmond Police Department
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
Sacramento Police Department
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
San Diego County District Attorney's Office
San Diego Police Department
San Francisco Police Department
San Jose Police Department
Simi Valley Police Department
Ventura Police Department

Agencies Represented in the POST Train-the-Trainer Sample

Albany Police Department
Berkeley Police Department
Butte County Sheriff's Office
California Highway Patrol
Chino Police Department
Chula Vista Police Department
El Cerrito Police Department
Elk Grove Police Department
Indio Police Department
Irvine Police Department
Lassen County Sheriff's Department
Los Angeles Police Department
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Martinez Police Department
Modesto Police Department
Monterey Police Department
Oregon State Police
Oxnard Police Department
Richmond Police Department
Sacramento Police Department
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
San Francisco Police Department
San Francisco Sheriff's Department
San Pablo Police Department
Santa Barbara Police Department
Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office