



Institute for Society and
Social Justice Research

Procedural Justice and Police Training in Scotland: Results of a Trial Project

Dr Annette Robertson, GCU

Professor Lesley McMillan, GCU

Professor Jon Godwin, GCU

Professor Ross Deuchar, UWS

The S.P.A.C.E. Trial



- The SPACE Trial was funded by SIPR and the Scottish Government and modelled on the Chicago Quality Interaction Programme (Rosenbaum and Lawrence, 2013)
- The aim was to test the impact of introducing procedural justice training to probationers at the Scottish Police College.
- The main hypothesis was that probationers exposed to SPACE training would exhibit greater awareness of procedural justice concepts and their application to police work.
- This awareness would be reflected in their attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural intentions

Project Design



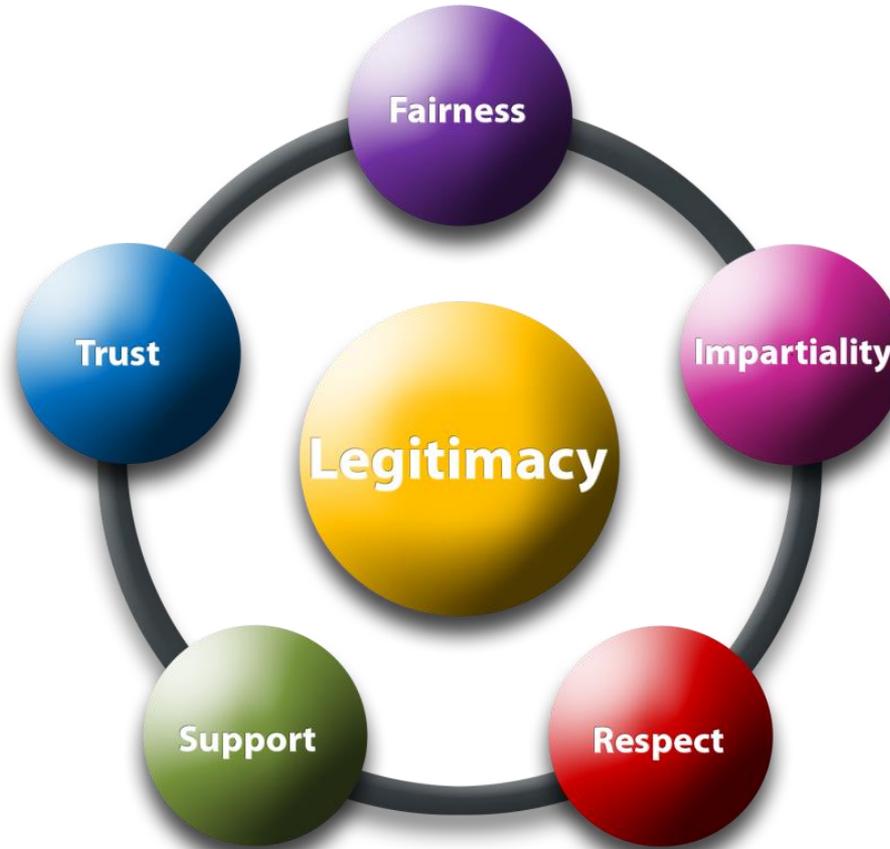
The SPACE Trial drew on aspects of similar work on procedural justice and police training (e.g. Schuck, and Rosenbaum, 2011; Rosenbaum and Lawrence, 2013; Skogan, 2013), adapted to suit the Scottish policing environment.

It was originally conceived as an RCT, but became a cohort study using two district groups: a Control and an Intervention Group

Additional inputs covered:

- The key principles of procedural justice and their relevance to policing (concepts, strengths, weaknesses, challenges)
- The key skills involved in delivering procedurally-just policing (communication skills, empathy and understanding; and active listening)
- Key issues/areas (ethnic and cultural diversity; sexual crime; domestic violence; road policing)
- Key groups (young people; victims of crime; more deprived communities).

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Evaluation



Data Collection Tools

1. Main Surveys (preliminary and follow-up) comprising 24 statements, (adapted from Rosenbaum and Lawrence, 2013 and Skogan, 2013) with which probationers were asked to indicate the extent they agree:
 - 8 'communication' statements
 - 4 'fairness' statements
 - 4 'trust' statements
 - 4 'voice' statements
 - 4 'respect' statements
2. Additional scenario surveys (three different short surveys)
3. Observations/scoring of role-play exercises
4. Focus groups
5. Training evaluation (for intervention group only)

Results: Main Survey

Positive Results (all Intervention Group)

- 'I know how to resolve conflict between people' (2p = 0.001)
- 'I feel confident when using my communication skills' (2p < 0.001)
- 'I am good at reading other people's emotions' (2p = 0.001)
- 'I know how to use nonverbal cues to communicate my feelings to others' (2p < 0.001)

Negative Results (both Control and Intervention Group)

- 'Officers should at all times treat people they encounter with dignity and respect' (2p < 0.001) (Control and Intervention Groups)
- 'People should be treated with respect, regardless of their attitude' (2p < 0.001) (Intervention Group only)

Additional Scenarios



Neither group demonstrated an overall greater or lesser awareness of procedural justice issues and their general attitudes, perceptions and behavioural intentions were similar in many respects.

The context of encounters with the public appeared significant for some:

- When dealing with an offender (e.g. traffic stop) there was a tendency towards reporting the use of procedures as a means to an end rather than demonstrating procedurally-just approaches.
- When dealing with young people, greater focus appeared to be placed on communication and dialogue, and positive engagement.
- When dealing with victims of crime there were mixed views about whether it was appropriate to apologise, empathise, or sympathise with victims.

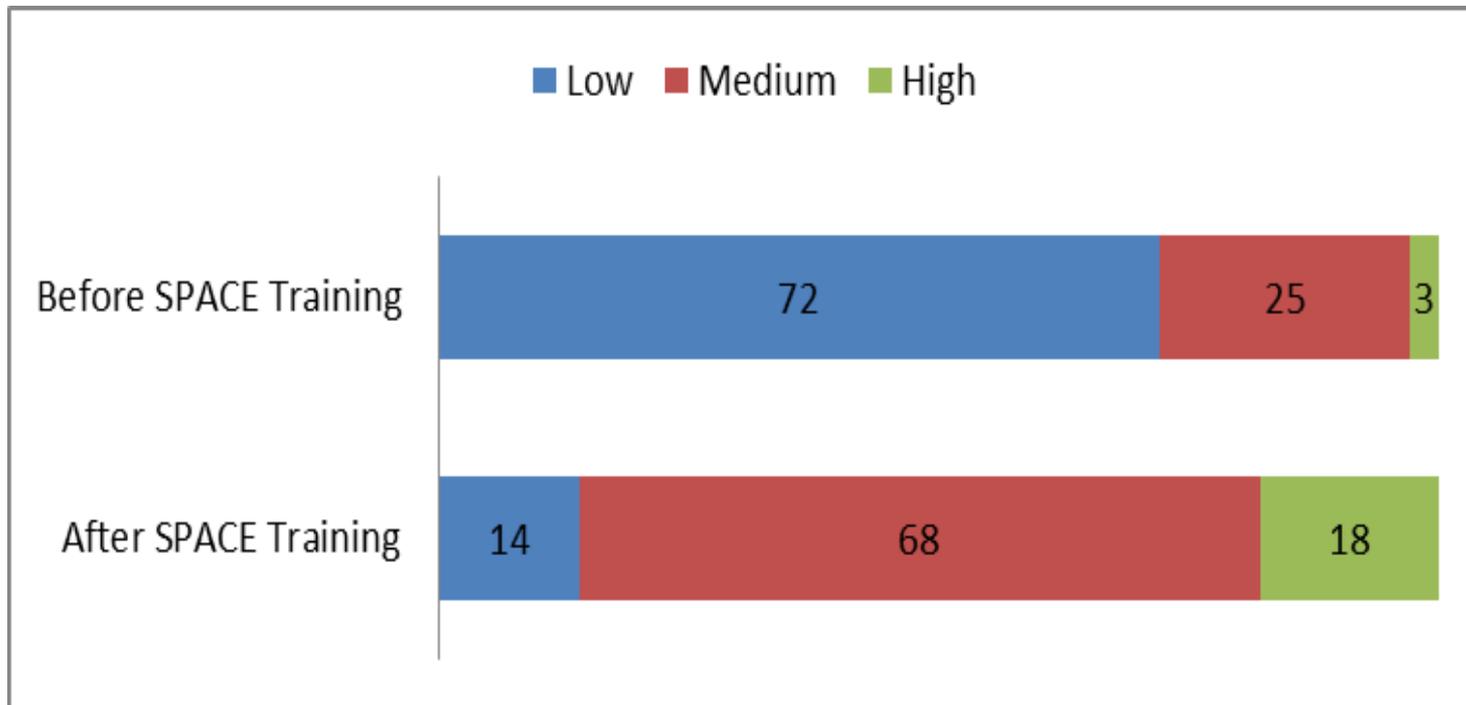
Observations

Observations of role-playing exercises suggested a consistent pattern whereby members of the intervention group were more likely to score 'good' than the control group, who were more likely to score fair/average' across a range of measures:

- Verbal communication
- Empathy/sympathy
- Active listening
- Professional intentions/motives

Although the results suggested the training delivered did improve probationers' performance, none of these results was statistically significant.

Knowledge of Procedural Justice



Key Skills and Approaches

Do you have a better understanding of:	Yes
The use of empathy in police work	83%
The role of active listening in police work	80%
What police legitimacy is and why it's important	78%
Using procedural justice approaches to develop positive relationships with young people in the community	69%
What procedural justice is and how it applies to general policing	66%
Why procedural justice is for everyone the police may come into contact with	65%
Using procedural justice approaches with victims of sensitive crimes	64%

Behavioural Intentions



☐ 28% reported it was likely or very likely that they would use the knowledge and skills covered in SPACE sessions in their work as a police officer, compared to 39% who said it was unlikely or not very likely.

☐ 9% reported that they thought SPACE training would make a difference to the way they did their job, compared with 57% who reported it would make little to no difference.

Overall Findings

- The survey results were relatively favourable over a range of measures for both groups (suggesting no serious underlying attitudinal issues)
- Although probationers professed familiarity with the concept of procedural justice and proficiency in the associated skills and competencies, this was not always evident from the survey responses, role-play exercises, and contributions to focus groups.
- The results indicate that both the standard training and additional specific training can have an impact on probationers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes, but not always in a positive way.
- There was some evidence of a more procedure-driven approach at the expense of procedurally-just approaches.