



**National Network  
For Safe Communities  
at JOHN JAY COLLEGE**

# **Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy in the Group Violence Intervention**

# National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC)

**NNSC** is a partnership between action researchers at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and public safety stakeholders in cities around the United States and the world.

Together we focus on implementing proven strategic interventions to reduce violence and improve public safety, minimize arrest and incarceration, strengthen communities, and improve relationships between law enforcement and the communities it serves.

# NNSC's Core Principles

1. Do no harm
2. Strengthen communities' capacity to prevent violence
- 3. Enhance legitimacy**
4. Offer help to those who want it
5. Get deterrence right
6. Use enforcement strategically

# Police Legitimacy

**Police legitimacy** is the perception of the community that the actions of law enforcement are appropriate and allowable.

When police are perceived as legitimate, they are more likely to have community support and community members are more likely to comply with law enforcement.

# Community Narrative

- The police don't care about our communities. They could stop the violence, but they don't.
- They're against us – they like locking up our community.

# Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to the way that police and other legal authorities interact with the public and how the characteristics of those interactions shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and actual crime rates.

Four principles:

- 1) Respect (treating people with dignity)
- 2) Voice (giving citizens voice during encounters)
- 3) Neutrality (in decision making)
- 4) Trustworthiness (in motives)

# Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice

When police enacts these principles, community members are more likely to

- have **trust and confidence** in the police as honest, unbiased, benevolent, and lawful
- feel obligated to **follow the law** and the dictates of legal authorities
- knowing that they share a common set of interests and values with the police
- feel encouraged to cooperate with criminal investigations and share helpful information

**Acting with procedural justice enhances police legitimacy**

# PJ and PL and Serious Violence

Perceptions of police legitimacy are lowest in the communities most directly affected by serious violence.

Community anger, suspicion, and silence misunderstood by law enforcement as **tolerance for crime** and violence

# Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and NNSC's Group Violence Intervention (GVI)

GVI **reduces violence quickly and dramatically** by engaging with the small number of street groups that are responsible for a majority of violence in America's most vulnerable communities.

This framework allows for a **strategic focus** on those **driving violence** and is an explicit break from past strategies that have **harmed** communities, especially communities of color.

# Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice, and NNSC's Group Violence Intervention (GVI)

Police legitimacy is the belief that authorities have the right to dictate proper behavior. It's the standing of authorities in the eyes of the community.

- Driven by perceptions of fairness, equity, and respect
- Directly linked to increased or reduced levels of violence
  - “Stop snitching”
  - Call the cops or pick up a gun?
- GVI treats offenders respectfully, as responsible human beings

# GVI Strategic Framework

Direct, sustained engagement with core offenders by a partnership standing and acting together:

- Community leaders
- Social service providers
- Law enforcement

Explicit focus on homicide and serious violence

Core elements:

- Moral engagement
- Sincere offer of help
- Prior notice of swift, certain, legitimate consequences for violence

# GVI Operational Components

## Strategic law enforcement messaging

### Call-In

A **face to face meeting** between law enforcement, community figures, social service providers, and group-members.

### Custom Notifications

A method for communities, law enforcement and service providers to deliver personalized information **directly** to specific people, with very little notice.

### Exigent Customs

Delivered to an impact player on **each side of dispute** with an anti-retaliation message.

# Using Procedural Justice to Enhance Police Legitimacy in GVI

- **Intelligence gathering**
- Strategic enforcement
- Direct communication
- Day to day operations

# Why Does GVI Focus on Hot People?

- GVI is about **focusing the efforts** of the PD on the few **“hot”** people whose groups are causing violence in our city and not on places or **“hotspots”** where they live
- Work is done on the ground to **determine who the group members are** and to track incidents. If a group is the **most violent** or the **first to shoot someone**, they become the focus of law enforcement efforts.

# Group Audits and Shooting Reviews

**Group Audits** and **Shooting Reviews** are operational, frontline meetings to discuss groups in the city driving violence, and individuals that are part of those groups and to review all incidents of serious violence.

- Typically even the best existing data can't be combined to provide a clear picture of violence dynamics.
- Homicide investigations are about individual cases—not patterns.
- Non-fatal shootings do not typically receive the same level of attention as homicides.
- Formal gang definitions can obscure group dynamics.
- Formal databases do not include critical information.

# Where is Procedural Justice Present in Intelligence Gathering?

**Neutrality:** Focusing on hot people is evidence-based, **removing an opportunity for potential bias** in place-based enforcement.

**Trustworthiness:** Law Enforcement is able to **clearly explain** their motives for focusing on a certain few people.

# Using Procedural Justice to Enhance Police Legitimacy in GVI

- Intelligence gathering
- **Strategic enforcement**
- Direct communication
- Day to day operations

# Enforcement Actions

Law enforcement is tough medicine. The idea is that we want to use the minimum sanctions necessary to get the desired result (reducing violence)

Because a lot of information is gathered on who is driving violence, enforcement can be limited to those individuals. GVI's approach to violence reduction does not focus on places. Strategic enforcement on those who are causing violence is supported by communities.

Communities want the violence to stop.

# Enforcement Actions

Enforcement actions are conducted against a group or groups that have **broken the communities' moral code** against violence.

- Most often, enforcement actions are conducted against a group that has either **committed the first homicide after a call-in**, or become **the most violent group in the city**.
- These actions focus on all the members of the group who **self-select** through their violent actions.

# Where is Procedural Justice in Enforcement Actions?

**Opportunities** to enhance procedural justice and legitimacy by **maintaining transparency through communication** with the community.

**Communication** to ensure that groups that are focused on understand that they have **self-selected**.

**Commitment** to using the **lowest level of sanctions** to get results.

# Using Procedural Justice to Enhance Police Legitimacy in GVI

- Intelligence gathering
- Strategic enforcement
- **Direct communication**
- Day to day operations

# Communication

**Opportunities** we have when conducting call-ins and customs notification to enhance PJ/PL

**Acknowledgement** of past harm and recognizing wrongs done to communities of color in order to begin healing

**Building trustworthiness and transparency** by providing prior legal notice of consequences

**Demonstrating and building respect** by engaging community partners and incorporating community feedback into LE efforts.

# Using Procedural Justice to Enhance Police Legitimacy in GVI

**Direct communication**-providing clear and direct communication through call-ins, customs, and support and outreach

**Day to day** operations-engaging with the community through CPRVV, listening sessions and utilizing the community moral voices to share messages.

**Incorporating feedback**-listening to the community and incorporating feedback into daily activities.

# Partnering with Community Members

Over the past several decades, the **over-policing** of minority neighborhoods and **disproportionate rates of incarceration** have contributed to communities' **distrust of police**

- We know that individuals' behavior is influenced by the people around them that they trust and listen to – more so than it is by law enforcement
- By partnering with communities and building relationships it is more likely that individual and behaviors can be influenced.

# Are We Enhancing Our Own Legitimacy?

Are we transparent in our actions to the community?

**Direct Communication** with groups is important for transparency. Do we communicate clearly when we conduct an enforcement?

**Community Engagement** and working within the community as partners is key to being legitimate. Are we building relationships within the community that support our efforts?

# Key Takeaways

- Strategic law enforcement

*Are we focusing on people and not places?*

- Support and Outreach

*Are we making credible offers of help?*

- Community Moral Voice

*Are we allowing the community to be heard and to have a meaningful role in GVI?*

- Sustained communication with groups

*Is our messaging clear, consistent and does it allow them to understand consequences?*

**Questions?**

# Results

**73%**

**reduction in monthly  
average shootings**

New Haven, Connecticut  
Project Longevity<sup>1</sup>

**32%**

**reduction in victimization  
among factions  
represented at call-ins**  
Chicago, Illinois  
Group Violence Reduction Strategy<sup>2</sup>

**32%**

**decrease in group member-  
involved homicides**  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
Group Violence Reduction Strategy<sup>3</sup>

**41.4%**

**reduction in group member-  
involved homicides**

Cincinnati, Ohio  
Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce  
Violence<sup>4</sup>

**27.4%**

**reduction in gang-involved  
shootings among gangs that  
received warnings**

Boston, Massachusetts  
Operation Ceasefire<sup>5</sup>

**50%**

**reduction in violent  
offending among  
notified parolees**  
Chicago, Illinois  
Project Safe Neighborhoods<sup>6</sup>