
SUMMARY

This book summarizes a nine-month study conducted by RAND for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD, also hereafter referred to as the Department). The City of Los Angeles entered into a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. The objective of this book is to provide analyses and recommendations to assist the LAPD in meeting the requirements outlined in paragraph 133 of this decree, ultimately enabling the LAPD to better serve the interests of the people of Los Angeles through improved training in five critical areas. These areas are use of force, search and seizure, arrest procedures, community policing, and diversity awareness.

Early in our investigation, it became apparent that many of the Department's training problems share a common foundation. Even though the problems encompass many varied topics and training challenges, they are systemic in nature and require a unified approach to change. We recommend that the LAPD clearly and consistently communicate expectations for appropriate LAPD officer behavior. Many officers conduct themselves in a manner that community and Department norms would deem appropriate. Others do not. We suggest that the first essential step to improving police training is to establish and communicate a common foundation for police performance—a redefined professionalism.

Police professionalism as described herein refers to a very specific and widely recognized construct. It is distinct from the notion of police professionalism that was prevalent in 1950s and 1960s policing. The police professionalism that we posit instead is Samuel Hunting-

ton's (1957) far wider ranging three-tiered approach based on the tenets of corporateness, responsibility, and expertise.

Not everyone accepts that police can attain professional status. However, many, the authors among them, find evidence to support a more positive perspective. Los Angeles Chief of Police William J. Bratton concurs, plainly stating that he "resents the concept that policing is not a profession."¹

The Huntington concept of professionalism provides the basis for communicating the meaning of service as a police officer in the City of Los Angeles. Other organizational and leadership philosophies fit within this concept to include ethics-based, integrity-centric community policing. Competency-based training is also related to these endeavors. Professionalism accepts that personnel cannot be trained for every event, but they must be prepared to handle any eventuality, to think on their feet, and to react with appropriate legal, moral, and ethical behavior. The authors realize that advancing a notion of a redefined professionalism may unsettle some who see the old professional era of policing as a failed model. Nevertheless, we trust that most will understand that what is presented herein is a much needed new start and potentially very effective means of molding a force that will serve the people of Los Angeles well.

The governing concept of this new professionalism will provide an important underpinning for correction of weaknesses within the LAPD training realm. One overarching and five primary recommendations form the basis for addressing these shortcomings. Each is complemented by numerous additional and more detailed supporting recommendations. Appendix M provides a consolidated listing of all such recommendations for ease of reference.

The following is our overarching recommendation:

The Los Angeles Police Department should adopt a concept of police professionalism that incorporates the tenets of corporateness, responsibility, and expertise as the mechanism for guiding the development and execution of its training, to include training

¹William Bratton, interview with Barbara R. Panitch and Russell W. Glenn, Los Angeles, Calif., February 13, 2003.

in the areas of use of force, search and seizure, arrest, community policing, and diversity awareness.

The five primary recommendations are

- Establish an LAPD lessons-learned program.
- Introduce and maintain consistently high quality throughout every aspect of LAPD training.
- Restructure the LAPD Training Group to allow the centralization of planning; instructor qualification, evaluation, and learning retention; and more efficient use of resources.
- Integrate elements of community-oriented policing (also called “community policing”) and diversity awareness training models throughout LAPD training.
- Develop training on use of force, search and seizure, and arrest procedures that meets current standards of excellence.

This study employed a combination of data collection methods including a review of LAPD and other departments’ written course documents, Department policies, and protocols; observation of instructional sessions; focus groups with police department personnel; interviews with police managers, elected officials, and community members; a case study survey of best practices in the field of policing, both domestic and international; and literature reviews in the areas of adult and police education, policing, use of force, search and seizure, arrest, community policing, and diversity.

Though the five primary areas of study were listed as separate entities in the consent decree, they are in practice not discrete areas of training any more than they are discriminate parts of service on the streets. The five subject areas constitute a core set of competencies that an ethical and effective police officer will regularly employ in concert. We address them accordingly within this book. The days of mandating a given number of hours on community policing, use of force, or other topic areas of concern are past. Such artificial “stove-piping,” where naturally intertwined topics are handled separately, runs counter to common sense, policing reality, and effective service to society as the client. The new police professionalism requires a greater training sophistication just as it demands greater sophistica-

tion of understanding from city government personnel overseeing law enforcement activities, police leaders, and officers on the street.

Conducting training founded on police professionalism is of value only if LAPD's senior leadership stands behind and champions the concept. Department leaders with whom the authors came in contact during the conduct of this study unhesitatingly demonstrated willingness in this regard. There is much reason to believe that a department already proficient in many ways can improve yet further with such leaders at the top and training that promotes the pursuit of professionalism throughout the force.