



A Mixed Methods Study of Perspective-Taking, Empathy, and Trust in Police and Youth

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A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF PERSPECTIVE-TAKING, EMPATHY, AND TRUST
IN POLICE AND YOUTH

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
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Abstract

The population mental health effects of negative interactions between U.S. police and urban youth of color are becoming increasingly evident. One such effect is bidirectional distrust, which reduces policing effectiveness and increases stress in both groups. Myriad police-youth dialogue programs exist to address distrust, but most fail to engage community members in their development. Further, most programs merely measure their impact on crime and psychological risk instead of promoting positive psychosocial well-being.

The main objective of this dissertation is to illustrate through three mixed methods studies the implementation and impact of a pilot police-youth dialogue program, which applied narrative-based perspective-taking to increase empathy and trust in a sample of police and urban youth (n=78) in low-resource areas of Alameda County, CA.

The first study describes how stakeholder interview data (n=21), a community-academic partnership, and ethnographic observation informed the development and implementation of the intervention. Thematic analysis of interviews revealed lessons for implementation including the essentialness of community-buy in, police partners dedicated to community engagement, and ways local politics may impact community willingness to participate.

The second study presents the quantitative findings of a multisite randomized pilot trial, which tested the effect of the 90-minute intervention (n=78) on self-reported trust, empathy, and social prejudice among officers and youth over a 4-week study period. Mixed effects regression models found the treatment group experienced significantly greater decreases in social prejudice ($p=0.02$) and higher satisfaction with local police-community relations ($p=0.04$) when compared

to the control group. On average, treatment and youth subjects rated their study experiences higher than others.

The third study uses Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to examine the discursive patterns of a subset of youth and police participants (n=36) to understand differential changes in empathy and trust. We found that control group sessions modeled after traditional police-youth dialogue sessions positioned participants to reproduce top-down hierarchical dynamics, whereas treatment group sessions positioned participants to be more trusting, vulnerable, and equitable.

This is the first study of its kind to use experimental methods to test the mental health impact of storytelling in this population. Limitations and implications of this work are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is inextricably linked to the most prominent contemporary political and social movements within which social science research is practiced. One such movement comprises efforts to address longstanding, bidirectional distrust between U.S. law enforcement officials and communities of color. The distrust is cyclical and bidirectional, which has led to intergenerational transfers of harmful misperceptions and conduct norms among police and youth. This distrust has surfaced questions about the transparency, accountability, and fairness of law enforcement practices, which have been tied to numerous adverse public health outcomes including community trauma, stress, injury, and death. Urban youth of color from low-resource communities are particularly at risk given their increased likelihood for police contact and toxic stress. Leading researchers, activists, and policymakers have called for more proactive efforts to build police-community trust, but current policy and research responses neglect psychosocial health in their focus on police procedural accountability. Further, public health research on this topic is scant and focuses almost exclusively on factors that induce psychological *risk* instead of prosocial factors that influence interpersonal exchanges.

The impetus for this study came from my interest in building trust and improving the quality of interactions between distant out-groups as a means of improving both groups' psychological well-being. As this work will detail, there are established connections between (dis)trust, empathy, and health. The capacity to have positive interpersonal relationships – characterized by trust, empathy, affection, and intimacy – is recognized as one of the six primary dimensions of positive well-being and optimal functioning. Yet empathy and trust are understudied in public health and positive psychology literature. I wondered if prosocial tools such as

storytelling and perspective-taking might be useful tools for building empathy, trust, and eventually repairing direct and vicarious harms shared by police and youth.

The enclosed dissertation research attempts to address the gaps and test the hypotheses outlined above by examining the quantitative and qualitative effects of a novel perspective-taking intervention on the positive mental health outcomes of police and urban adolescents in low-resource areas of Alameda County, CA. We developed an academic-community partnership with multiple local stakeholders from diverse sectors to inform this work. Our intervention design incorporated structured and enhanced activities into traditional police-youth dialogue programs, which have been widely adopted in major municipalities across the country to “reduce tension” and “repair trust” between officers and teens through dialogue. We used an experimental study design (with a control group) and repeated measures to test the associations between an enhanced dialogue session perspective-taking, empathy, and trust over a four-week study period; and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to explore the qualitative effects evident in participant narratives. I grounded my work in community-based participatory research, the intergroup contact theory, and principles of restorative practice.

Finally, this work is situated in a national climate of sweeping systems-level police reforms and growing interest in population resilience. By responding to calls for more expansive exploration of police-youth trust, I attempt to complicate the limited contemporary understanding of individual-level contributors to trust. I argue that researchers must not assume that trust will automatically materialize once systems are operating with less bias. Instead, I propose using expressive tools from social psychology, public health, neuroscience, restorative justice, and narrative therapy to test the impact of interpersonal-level prosocial factors that might enable positive psychosocial processes, invite cultural humility, and shape trust for police and youth.

CHAPTER 1

**Implementation and lessons learned from a pilot perspective-taking initiative addressing
police-youth distrust**

ABSTRACT

Background: Myriad police-youth dialogue programs have been introduced in major cities to counter distrust between U.S. police and communities of color. However, most existing programs lack input from community and public health partners, empirically-sound prosocial activities, and evaluations of the long-term, bidirectional impact on psychosocial predictors of trust.

Objectives: This article discusses lessons learned from the design and pilot of a trust-building, police-youth perspective-taking intervention guided by an academic-community partnership in low-resource areas of Alameda County, CA. We will describe how the multi-sector partnership informed the intervention's development, core components, and community needs assessment.

Methods: Harvard public health researchers partnered with a Sheriff's Office and community-based organizations to develop a research advisory board, select appropriate theoretical frameworks, and refine the intervention study and recruitment designs. Approximately 21 stakeholder interviews were conducted to assess community readiness, needs, and implementation preferences.

Lessons Learned: Analysis of stakeholder interviews revealed four key lessons learned including the need for: (1) community buy-in of session aims; (2) police partners dedicated to community engagement; (3) systems change as parallel aim; and (4) attention to ways local history, social factors and policing practices impact willingness to participate – all of which may impact future police-youth trust-building efforts.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there have been myriad efforts to address longstanding distrust between U.S. law enforcement officials and urban youth of color¹⁻⁵. The distrust is fueled by publicized police killings of unarmed, young black people and their infrequent prosecution, which have surfaced questions about the transparency, accountability, and fairness of law enforcement practices⁶⁻⁷. These social factors' associations with community trauma exposure, spillover mental health effects⁸, violence⁹, willingness to report and respond to crime¹⁰, and other factors that complicate violence prevention efforts are well established. They often precipitate adverse health outcomes including death, injury, stress, and trauma symptoms, which disproportionately impact communities of color and other historically disenfranchised groups^{5,11-14}. Youth of color from under-resourced communities are particularly at risk for these outcomes given their increased likelihood for police contact¹³, toxic stress¹⁵, their increased likelihood to distrust police⁵, and their critical period of moral, cognitive, and biological development¹⁶.

Leading researchers, activists, and policymakers – including President Obama's 2015 Task Force on 21st Century Policing – have called for more proactive reforms that build police-community trust, acknowledge harmful biases, and engage communities in policy development^{6,17}. One recommendation of the Task Force's 2015 report was the promotion of “programs that take a comprehensive and inclusive look at community-based initiatives” that address core issues such as “health” and “safety”¹⁷. However, there are very few empirical studies on the impact of community-based, -engaged, or participatory research initiatives involving police with the aim of improving bidirectional trust sentiments and public mental health.

In response to these calls for action, research initiatives and programs have been launched throughout the country to increase police-youth trust and develop community alternatives to

policing¹⁷⁻¹⁹. Police-youth dialogue programs are one such reformist initiative that have been launched in Boston, Baltimore, New York, and other major municipalities to “reduce tension” or “repair trust” between officers and teens through one or more shared meals and honest conversations about stereotyping, unconscious bias, and community safety concerns²⁰. The programs are associated with gains in youth knowledge of police procedures²⁰ improved youth perceptions of police²¹, reductions in crime²², and increased police willingness to have non-enforcement interactions with youth in the future²³.

Though existing police-youth dialogue initiatives show promise, we know little about the ways they engage communities systematically, and even less about their short- or long-term impact on positive mental health. A field scan and literature review revealed that existing programs neglect reporting on psychosocial health outcomes in their focus on police procedural accountability. Many programs employ a didactic officer-as-teacher model, lack a reproducible structure, don’t have community oversight, and don’t measure the long-term impact of their programs on cognitive and affective factors such as empathy. Furthermore, public health research on the topic is scant^{2, 24} and focuses almost exclusively on factors that induce psychological *risk* instead of prosocial factors that promote positive interpersonal exchange²⁵. Finally, we also know intergroup trust is a key element to policing effectiveness and democratic processes, but few youth-dialogue programs have measured their impact on trust’s known cognitive mediating factors: perceived ability, empathy, and benevolence²⁶⁻²⁷.

This paper describes the efforts of an academic-community partnership to develop and pilot police-youth intervention designed to address some of these unmet needs in police-youth dialogue programs with a public health lens. We will discuss how the multi-sector partnership informed the intervention’s development, core components, and community needs assessment lessons learned

from the design and pilot this intervention, describe. Quantitative and qualitative findings will be presented elsewhere. The intervention, called The Trade Project (named for the story exchange process that defines the intervention), is a prosocial, structured initiative that aimed to add structure to police-youth dialogue sessions and enhance the quality of interactions between a sample of officers and teens (ages 13-17) over 4 weeks through the use of restorative circles, writing exercises and perspective-taking, which are hypothesized to increase intergroup trust.

Investigators piloted the initiative in the Eden Area, a low-resource and unincorporated region in southern Alameda County, CA with a Sheriff's Office dedicated to community policing approaches that target the root drivers of poverty and crime. The Trade Project was designed to build on the relationship-centered community-oriented policing efforts introduced by the Sheriff's Office and to enhance existing perspective-taking and storytelling interventions with empirically sound measures, a reproducible program structure, and insights from restorative justice. The partnership – between the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, the San Lorenzo Unified School District, and other community-based organizations – guided all aspects of the intervention process.

In this article, we will illustrate the factors that acted as barriers and facilitators to The Trade Project's feasibility. Specifically, **we aim to** (1) describe the intervention setting, components and theoretical framework; (2) detail how the academic-community partnership shaped the intervention's design and implementation; and (3) illustrate the ways local sociopolitical context, media, and community perceptions impacted pilot procedures at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels of influence.

1. INTERVENTION SETTING & COMPONENTS

1.1 Research Setting

The Trade Project was piloted between June and October of 2018 in the Eden Area of Alameda County, an underserved urban region comprising 4 neighborhoods – Ashland, Cherryland, San Lorenzo, and Hayward Acres – and is 10+ miles south of Oakland. The 25-square-mile area is the fastest growing, most population-dense unincorporated region in the county and includes 60,000+ residents, the majority of whom – for the first time in the area’s history – are people of color²⁸. Since 2010, there have been substantial decreases in the percentage of white residents and increases in the percentage of Latino (44%), Black (12%), and Asian (17%), and foreign-born (33%) residents²⁹. The area’s “unincorporated” designation means its neighborhoods are not recognized as cities, and thus, are completely reliant on county officials to provide municipal and social services²⁸. However, municipal-level services and new investments in this area have been stagnant for decades, which has weakened the local infrastructure and reduced equitable livability in the areas, which has concentrated economic disadvantage and limited recreational opportunities for residents^{28,31}. Those factors have contributed to the area becoming a countywide hotspot for unemployment, poverty, crime, and mental health emergencies³⁰⁻³¹.

To respond to these disparities, county agencies and community partners have collaborated on several initiatives to prevent crime, refurbish vacant lots, strengthen community engagement, empower residents to participate in the political process, and spark a new era of economic investment in the unincorporated areas³². The Sheriff’s Office has been chief among these partners having invested millions of dollars in grants, awards, and agency funds since 2005 to support creative placemaking and relationship-centered policing through community festivals, youth sports, the development of the area’s first youth center, public murals, “Talk with a Cop” gatherings, and staff salaries for its Youth and Family Service Bureau, which includes 20 behavioral and mental health practitioners and 21 sworn officers³¹. The Sheriff’s Office’s model

of public safety reflects an agency belief that the root drivers of crime are socioeconomic, not pathological, which has propelled it as a leader in the justice system reform movement³⁰⁻³².

However, despite a decade-and-a-half of innovative and proactive Sheriff's Office programming, distrust and fear of law enforcement remain a concern for many local residents, especially youth of color. In Spring 2018, tensions in the area escalated when county supervisors suggested the Sheriff's Office manage the area's only youth center, thereby replacing county health officials who currently run operations³². Months of protests, petitions, and community meetings revealed a divide between residents who support the Sheriff's Office efforts and those who want an end to policing in its current form³². Furthermore, the Sheriff's Office introduced its model of community policing internally in 2018, and at the time of this study, its principles and aims had not been communicated to the public nor adopted by 98% of officers in the agency who follow traditional police training standards.

1.2 Recruitment

The primary research investigator spent two months in the Eden Area before data collection attending community meetings, officer musters, conducting ethnographic observation, and building relationships with key stakeholders. Participants were recruited after investigators initiated formal and informal agreements with the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO), several community-based organizations, and the San Lorenzo Unified School District. The study team circulated promotional posters at mixed income housing developments, community centers, and businesses. We also encouraged community partners to spread the word about the study through direct outreach, social media, and local parents' groups. Investigators conducted recruitment presentations at meetings of parents, teachers, officers, and youth for 8 weeks before data collection began. Officers were recruited through referral and direct targeting from the ACSO,

following recruitment presentations at weekly meetings. Youth were recruited by referral of teachers, parents, community leaders, or their peers (respondent-driven sampling). Prospective participants were screened for eligibility by study staff and enrolled in person or by phone. Youth submitted signed permission forms from guardians before accessing the baseline survey.

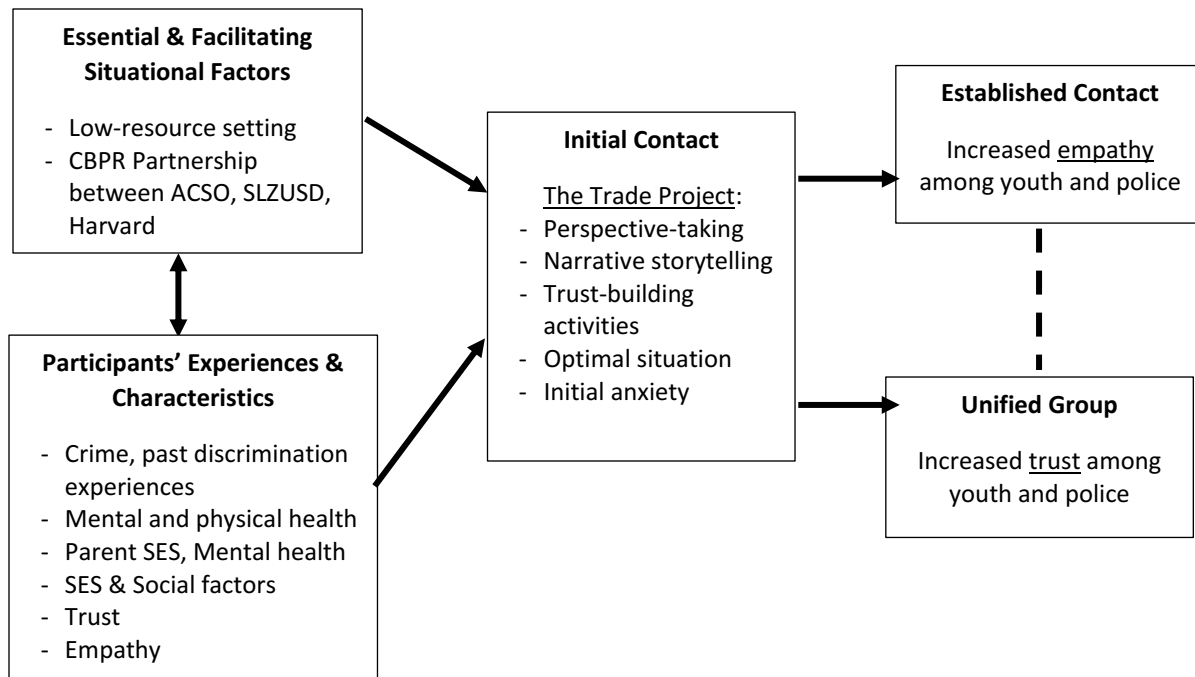
1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

The selection of The Trade Project's treatment workshop components was guided by three theoretical approaches: (1) Community-based participatory research, (2) restorative justice, and (3) the Intergroup Contact Theory. These frameworks are sets of interrelated ideas that explain the science of intergroup relations, guided the scientific implementation of the intervention according to clearly articulated principles, and helped investigators unearth patterns in observations.

Specifically, *Community-Based Participatory Research* (CBPR) -- a partnership approach to health disparities research that equitably involves community members, practitioners, and academic researchers in all aspects of the research process, enabling them to contribute expertise and share ownership -- guided study design, implementation, and dissemination strategies. Its core tenets emphasize a commitment to build on existing community assets, foster co-learning and capacity-building, and to balance research in a manner that is mutually beneficial³³. *Restorative justice* is an approach grounded in repairing the harm caused by crime or conflict by responding to four needs: information, truth-telling, empowerment and restitution/vindication³⁴. This approach encourages the use of listening circles, talking pieces, and group agreements, which all help participants address the needs and obligations created by conflict in an equitable, non-punitive way. The *Intergroup Contact Theory* is a practical extension of psychologist Gordon Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954), which has been heralded by social psychologists as the most influential and specific strategy for crafting positive intergroup contact in ways that reduce prejudice and

inform policy³⁵⁻³⁶. This theory enhances Allport’s hypothesis by enumerating empirically sound processes that operate within the four conditions of optimal intergroup contact: (i) equal group status within situations; (ii) common goals; (iii) intergroup cooperation; (iv) authority support³⁶ – all of which guided the conceptualization of our study’s behavioral inferences. See **Figure 1.1** for a model outlining intervention activities as they apply to this theory.

Figure 1.1 *Conceptual Model of The Trade Project’s Intergroup Contact Theory of Change*



In addition to these approaches, the intervention was informed by direct resource-sharing between Harvard investigators and experts in placemaking for equity, restorative justice, perspective-taking interventions, arts initiatives for police and youth, and police racial bias training. These experts included representatives from PolicyLink, Art180, Performing Statistics, Cambridge Health Alliance, Narrative 4, StoryCenter, and Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth.

1.4 Intervention Components

The Trade Project comprised two types of workshops – a treatment and control condition – the impact of which were compared in a longitudinal randomized controlled trial study design. Trust and empathy were assessed at three timepoints -- before the workshop, immediately post-workshop, and four weeks after each workshop -- using a 10-minute electronic survey. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index³⁷ provided the measures of cognitive and affective empathy. Ten items validated by criminal justice research provided the measures of trust. The quantitative and qualitative findings of this study will be described elsewhere. In total, 11 workshops took place at schools, community centers, and libraries between July and October 2018 with officers (n=41) and youth (n=38). Youth (ages 13-17) were paid \$50 for their participation, and sheriff's deputies were given permission to attend sessions on-duty.

Control Condition: The 90-minute control workshop was designed to simulate standard youth-police dialogue sessions, which aim to reduce tension by breaking down barriers through open dialogue. In each control session, a group of 3-6 youth sat in a restorative circle with 3-6 uniformed officers and a research facilitator trained in restorative circle practices. Participants used nicknames throughout to protect their confidentiality on audio recordings of the group discussion. To counter the power imbalance in the setting, participants were asked to use a “talking piece” when they wanted to speak and were invited to write their own “group agreements,” by which every participant had to abide. The group then viewed an excerpt of a 2018 PBS documentary on policing in the U.S. and discussed how what they saw related to their own experiences, biases, and perceptions. Discussions followed a structured question guide. Like existing police-youth dialogue programs across the country, the control workshop relied on verbal dialogue only.

Treatment Condition: The 90-minute treatment workshop was designed to build empathy and trust using structured and evidence-based storytelling and perspective-taking methods. In each

treatment session, participants wrote down and used nicknames throughout to protect their confidentiality on audio recordings. The session comprised a group of 3-6 youth seated in a restorative circle with 3-6 uniformed officers and a research facilitator trained in restorative circle practices. As in the control condition to counter the power imbalance in the setting, participants were asked to use a “talking piece” when they wanted to speak and were invited to write their own “group agreements.” Participants were then asked to participate in trust-building ice-breakers: (1) share their “personal theme song” and (2) name one quality or skill in which they had expertise. The facilitator then asked them to spend 15 minutes writing personal narratives about times in their lives when they felt misunderstood using four structured prompts. After completing the expressive writing exercise, the facilitator modeled “the trade process” – a five-step perspective-taking process between pairs of officers and youth guided by a script. The facilitator then paired youth and officers in dyads (and sometimes triads) wherein a youth partner would read aloud the written story of an officer as if it happened to her, and vice versa.

The trade process script included: **(1)** an ask [*“Do you want to trade?”*], **(2)** an agreement [*handshake, verbal yes, etc.*], **(3)** reflection [*reading silently your partner’s story as if it happened to you*], **(4)** sharing [*reading aloud your partner’s story as if it happened to you*], and **(5)** a debrief [*dyadic discussions about the process*]. Participants listening to their stories being read aloud by their assigned partners were only allowed to say, “Thank you” in response to the reading. After the perspective-taking activity, all participants returned to the circle for a large-group discussion of their experiences. The facilitator used a structured question guide, which encouraged participants to reflect on their feelings and their hopes for local public safety in their community.

Our **central hypothesis** is that creating changes in self-reported cognitive empathy (perspective-taking) can lead to changes in interpersonal and institutional trust over time for both

police and youth. More specifically, we argue that by enhancing the quality of one police-youth interaction to include components that promote empathy – prosocial storytelling, written narratives, and perspective-taking exercises – trust and empathy sentiments will increase more steeply than for youth exposed to traditional police-youth dialogue sessions.

Our reliance on these narrative- and relationship-centered intervention components rests on scientific evidence that they improve mental and physical health³⁸, reduce prejudice³⁹, increase empathy¹⁶, decrease stereotyping⁴⁰, improve self-concept⁴¹, bolster commitment to social change⁴², facilitate intergroup dialogue³⁹, and decrease post-traumatic stress symptoms⁴³. This hypothesis situates the research in contemporary social learning contexts with its use of strategies underutilized by researchers hoping to address the psychosocial residuals of institutional racism and community violence. The research also makes novel inferences about the probable impact that narrative-centered perspective-taking interventions can have on other individual, dyadic, and community positive mental health outcomes – a focused exploration of the multilevel predictors, drivers, and outcomes of mental health status.

1.4 Academic-Community Partnership

The Trade Project was developed, piloted, and implemented through a community-engaged partnership between researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Graduate School of Education, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO), the San Lorenzo Unified School District, the county Health Care Service Agency's Center for Healthy Schools and Communities, and other community-based organizations. Investigators tested the intervention components with youth, officers, and researchers three times before introducing it to the community. After gaining ethical approval from the Harvard Institutional Review Board, researchers signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the ACSO, wherein senior sworn officers

agreed to support the recruitment and participation of up to 50 officers. The Sheriff's Office generously provided workspace and invited investigators to brief officers on study activities throughout the research period. The Harvard research team conducted ethnographic observation in community spaces, attended local gatherings, and worked with the Sheriff's Office nonprofit activities league to identify key community members and organizations to help inform the intervention and support youth recruitment. The School District allowed investigators to recruit from and host workshops at its high schools. The Health Care Services Agency recruited youth and allowed us to host two sessions at the REACH youth center.

One to two representatives from each agency (n=8) agreed to serve on the project's Community Advisory Board (CAB). CAB members were invited to inform the (1) Youth recruitment strategy and safety protocol; (2) Study procedures and materials; and (3) Results dissemination strategy. The CAB connected investigators to parents' groups, local gyms, community leaders, churches, and housing developments to describe the research and recruit youth participants. They also facilitated a small pilot of the intervention with a small sample of officers and youth who reviewed consent forms, survey language, and workshop procedures before they were finalized. Each CAB member also agreed to help organize a small townhall meeting and/or community gathering where the preliminary results of the research could be shared with different audiences. Finally, CAB members agreed to participate in stakeholder interviews and recommend other community members or leaders to be interviewed.

2. COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERVENTION

Given the study rationale and methods, investigators used a combination of methods to assess community readiness for The Trade Project, to better understand resident perceptions of local police-community relations, and to explore their ideas about barriers and facilitators to

increasing police-community trust. These methods included seven months of ethnographic observation at community meetings, protests, and gatherings before, throughout, and after the research period; 21 key stakeholder interviews with politicians, school officials, residents, and members of law enforcement; and six meetings with CAB members. Interviews with stakeholders and gatekeepers of the police-youth relationship provided an account of how experiences, beliefs, and attitudes toward trust-building interventions function in the Eden Area and demonstrate how context and discourse are intertwined. Interviews were conducted in person or by phone, followed a six-question semi-structured interview guide, and lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. Deductive thematic analysis and discursive analysis were used to identify common themes and explore how language helps constitute social life⁴⁴. Interrater reliability of major themes was high (Kappa=0.72), and a summary of the findings is highlighted below.

2.1 Perceptions of Local Law Enforcement

At the time of the study, the Eden Area community's sentiment toward the Alameda County Sheriff's Office was mixed, with many praising the local agency for its innovative efforts while expressing discomfort and dissatisfaction with U.S. policing as a system.

"I can say that the most active and engaged police department or unit that I've ever seen is the Alameda County Sheriff's department," remarked a school district leader, a sentiment shared by stakeholders in the faith, health, and community sectors who lauded the agency's efforts to provide sports, recreation, and a "human approach" to community policing. Notably, stakeholders who described themselves as "anti-police" in their younger years said working with the ACSO shifted their politics. A staff member of the ACSO nonprofit agency self-identified as a prison abolitionist, and only agreed to work with ACSO because she believed they want to change the system. *"They were working side-by-side with me to protect my parents and families, so, I've come*

full circle,” a school district executive said of his own shift from distrusting police to partnering with the ACSO.

However, many stakeholders remained cautious and distrusting of the ACSO due to their own salient unfavorable experiences, the agency’s sometimes defensive posture, and its controversial institutional policies. *“You can have these really nice people who seem empathetic and caring, and then you have the architect of Urban Shield as your sheriff,”* said a prominent pastor about the ACSO Sheriff’s controversial Urban Shield program, which comprised an annual training exercise for first responders in Alameda County. When interviewed, one of five County Supervisors who voted to end Urban Shield after it was publicly accused of being militaristic and racist, agreed that she supports ACSO’s Eden Area efforts, but she wished their approach was expanded agency-wide.

The interplay of conflicting interpersonal and institutional trust sentiments directly impacted research activities, particularly when investigators attempted to involve black youth participants and organizational partners who were worried they or their youth might have traumatic interactions with officers during the study. All stakeholders, including representatives from the ACSO and its nonprofit, agreed that there is much more work to do to improve relations between the agency and Eden Area residents. The barriers and solutions they identified are summarized in Section 2.2 and **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Summary of stakeholders' barriers & solutions to community-police distrust

Level of Influence	Barriers	Solutions
System/ Context	• Media Portrayals & Popular Discourse <i>Media narratives; ACSO institutional messages</i> • Sociopolitical Environmental Issues <i>Root drivers of crime; Location</i> • Historical Precedence <i>Institutional racism; community trauma</i>	• Popular Discourse <i>Balanced media portrayals</i> • Sociopolitical Environmental Issues <i>Built environment; address root drivers; community cohesion</i>
Institutional	• ACSO Policies & Practices <i>No systems change; lack of accountability; uniforms/guns; toxic masculinity</i>	• ACSO Policies & Practices <i>Community policing; training; transparency; address institutional racism; consistent service; partnership; more programming</i>
Interpersonal	• Officer Characteristics <i>Low cultural competency; disconnect from community, defensiveness</i> • Community Characteristics <i>Distrust; trauma exposure</i>	• Police-Community Interactions <i>Conversations/dialogue; gatherings</i> • Community Characteristics <i>Distrust; trauma exposure</i>
Intrapersonal	• Community: <i>Noncompliance; trauma experience</i> • Officers: <i>Low de-escalation skills; Few live in the community they patrol</i>	• Community: <i>Compliance; Internal conflict</i> • Officers: <i>Compassion, Spanish fluency, empathy</i>

2.2 Barriers and Solutions to Community-Police Distrust

2.2.1 Barriers to Police-Community Trust

Four major themes surfaced when stakeholders discussed barriers to police-community trust in the Eden Area: (1) Media portrayals and public discourse on the topic; (2) historical precedence; (3) ACSO policies and procedures; and (4) the sociopolitical climate of the Eden Area.

“They’re scared to be around the police because of what’s been going on social media, and on the news,” remarked a black businessowner about Eden Area youth. Imbalanced media portrayals and narratives about U.S. and local police were the most prominent barriers to police-

community trust in the Eden Area, according to stakeholders. Most stakeholders thought news about incidents of excessive police force across the U.S. “mislead” the public into thinking all officers are a threat, fail to show positive police agencies who have better approaches, and encourage distrust of ACSO units, inhibiting their prosocial efforts. Media portrayals of “the police takeover” of the REACH Ashland Youth Center sparked rumors, which, in turn, strained community partnerships the ACSO had spent years building. In addition to media, the ACSO’s public messaging about its stance on excessive policing, justice reform, immigration policies, and the promotion of its own programs isn’t clear or prominent, according to many interviewed. “Honestly, they don’t know how to communicate themselves, and I feel like they have something to hide,” said a teenage stakeholder.

“Until we begin to address the root causes... racism... white privilege... poverty... [they] will continue to percolate,” said a longtime middle school official while interviewed. Stakeholders from all sectors agreed the legacy of institutional racism, community trauma, and other factors related to the history of policing nationally and locally caused residents of color to distrust the ACSO efforts and represent systemic barriers to the change they want to see. *“From what I see, they typically operate in a style that prevents them from acknowledging error,”* a school district leader remarked. *“So, even in terms of something like implicit bias or institutional racism, they come to the table denying that.”* The ACSO representatives interviewed for this study acknowledged the same “root drivers” of crime and distrust as civilian stakeholders and endorsed a model of policing that targets systems-level factors by building social, financial, cultural, and political capital among residents. An ACSO nonprofit leader noted the troubling *“history of peacekeeping in our culture,”* which made her wonder if *“it would be better to throw it all out and start over from scratch.”*

“I don’t feel safe if there are police in the room,” said a community farmer in his 20s. Like other young stakeholders, he also wondered why ACSO officers wear uniforms and guns when attending community events. Numerous ACSO policies and practices like these caused stakeholders to distrust community policing efforts. These flawed practices include the agency’s defensive posture in response to criticism and a number of officer characteristics that set them apart from the community. Remarking on the agency’s defensiveness, a health care services agency leader noted how she wished the agency wouldn’t dismiss residents’ lived experiences as they defended their record: *“Don’t dismiss them and say, ‘We’ve been doing the work, so that’s not us.’”* Other stakeholders within and outside of the Sheriff’s Office criticized the fact that Eden Area officers rarely are Spanish-speaking and rarely live in the community. The Office is said to have a culture of toxic masculinity and lacks recreational programming that resonates with black youth. Alternatively, Sheriff’s Office leaders spoke about the challenge of trying to change internal policies related to traditional policing, which have been entrenched in the agency for decades. *“This is not just with our agency, but in the [policing] industry... police agencies did not believe it was their role to do all these things,”* said the captain of the community policing unit at ACSO.

“You know, people are poor,” said a prominent pastor who has served her mostly low-income, Latino congregation for 13 years. She and all other stakeholders agreed that in order to build community-police trust, more must be done to respond to poverty, anti-immigrant sentiment, and the lack of recreational activities for youth, but they also acknowledged that the problem was too big for the ACSO to tackle on its own. Most incidents ACSO officers respond to in the area are related to poverty, mental illness, and domestic violence.

2.2.2. Solutions for Police-Community Trust

The majority of stakeholders saw actionable ways forward despite existing barriers. Four themes surfaced about ways to improve police-community trust: (1) improve and increase police-community interactions; (2) change ACSO practices and procedures; (3) address the sociopolitical determinants of crime; and (4) uncertainty whether solutions exist.

“Be human beings,” a young community farmer demanded of the ACSO in his interview, echoing stakeholders’ desire for more human and compassionate police-community interactions. Relationship-centered approaches similar to the ACSO’s “Barbershop Forums” and The Trade Project treatment condition, which *“humanize the badge,”* were among *“the best solutions we have”* for disrupting community-police tensions and the legacy of distrust, according to stakeholders. Other solutions they offered to increase positive police-community interactions included more ACSO programming, more opportunities to partner with the Sheriff’s Office, community gatherings, community willingness to comply with police procedures, and officer *“humility,”* which comes alongside deep listening. However, many participants expressed dissatisfaction with relationship-centered approaches. One Sheriff’s Office nonprofit staffer said, *“Something bigger needs to happen... I think we’re to the point where now some other dramatic, drastic thing is what’s going to push over the people who aren’t in favor of law enforcement.”* Others noted that relationship-centered approaches were not enough to shift *“the systemic reality of policing in this country.”*

“When policies are shrouded in mystery, people make up stories about what is and what isn’t,” the health care services stakeholder said, advocating for more transparency in ACSO policies and procedures. She and others want officers to be more vulnerable and compassionate in their interactions with community members, more visible in patrolling the neighborhoods, consistent in their service, and accountable for poor interactions. They wanted ACSO to institute

training for its officers in Spanish fluency, community policing, cultural competency, implicit bias, and de-escalation. They wanted to see the agency change its institutional messaging by embracing the notion that institutional racism exists. Commenting on differences in training for the 20 community-oriented officers and the 980 officers trained in traditional methods, the executive director of the ACSO's nonprofit said, *"Most people don't understand – [most deputies] haven't been trained for anything else. So, what we're doing is not what the majority knows."*

"We're talking years, not minutes, for change to come," said a pastor interviewed for this study, echoing the sentiments of other stakeholders who believed lasting trust requires time, especially following the upheaval over management of the youth center. In addition to time, interview participants said responding to the Eden Area's sociopolitical challenges required a willingness to intervene on the built environment to create spaces where positive interactions can occur, community gatherings, and addressing the root drivers of social disorder. Reflecting on the slow process of change, the captain of the community policing unit said, *"We need to do what we're doing for 20 years."*

"I don't know what I want, I guess," admitted a leader of the school district. Stakeholders discussed feeling uncertain and conflicted about attempting to build community-police trust, suggesting that a bit of distrust may be healthy for holding the ACSO accountable.

3. DISCUSSION & LESSONS LEARNED

The Trade Project was introduced to the Eden Area in an effort to better understand how narrative and perspective-taking might enhance the quality of police-youth interactions in underserved areas to increase trust and its cognitive predictors over time. Ours was an effort completely reliant on an active, engaged, and supportive academic-community partnership, whose

members spent many months promoting and testing this model alongside investigators at a time of heightened tension.

Analysis of the stakeholder interviews and ethnographic observation that took place during the implementation of The Trade Project revealed four valuable lessons for the implementation of police-youth dialogue sessions in underserved areas similar to the Eden Area:

- **Community Buy-In Must Be Earned:** Community-based research cannot be extractive; it must give back meaningfully to participating communities. In the Eden Area, police-youth tensions were just one of many stressors for youth participants, which may have impacted their willingness to participate. The Trade Project paid all youth participants and recruiting teachers, and investigators worked with the Community Advisory Board to advise how the study results can be disseminated and translated in ways that inform policy, share knowledge and celebrate community strengths. Future research may benefit from conducting a needs assessment before staging workshops so that suggested solutions are imbedded into the intervention components.
- **Community-Engaged Police Needed:** Trust-building programs like ours can't be tested unless a baseline amount of trust already exists between law enforcement agencies and community partners. The Alameda County Sheriff's Office had positive and functioning working relationships with all members of the Community Advisory Board and all recruitment partners, which made the research process easier. Despite this advantage, we still encountered several logistical challenges that could have been prevented by more time in the field building relationships, gaining trust with potential collaborators, and preparing adolescents for what to expect in the intervention.

- **Systems Change Must Be End Goal:** Community-oriented policing programs must explicitly and publicly address race, implicit bias, and trauma alongside efforts to enact system changes, a charge echoed by other scholars¹⁰. Most stakeholders were positive, but cautious about the work of the ACSO given what they know about racially biased trends in U.S. policing systems. This signals a need for the inclusion of questions or reflection space within the intervention related to bias and institutional racism. As an Eden Area stakeholder noted, relationship-centered work is “*necessary, but not sufficient*” because it must be conducted alongside active efforts that target upstream determinants.
- **Local Politics Impact Participation:** Researchers working on law enforcement reforms must contend with local politics. At the time of this study, youth in the Eden Area were in the stressful predicament of contending with sometimes contradictory messages from Oakland-based prison abolition advocacy agencies and a reformist Sheriff’s Office. Numerous stakeholders self-identified as proponents of prison abolitionism, and struggled to support The Trade Project, which they considered too reformist because of our partnership with a policing agency.

Although this study was created to respond to conditions unique to the Eden Area, the intervention’s program components and lessons learned might apply to other municipalities with similar demographic profiles, sociopolitical goals, or external events. Our methods of program implementation also might be instructive for organizations aimed at using storytelling and perspective-taking to connect any groups who seem disconnected. The intervention program was considered “*necessary, but not sufficient*”, signaling that public health has an imperative to address the root drivers of social disorder in all its work. However, as public health responds to calls to tackle social justice issues that drive health inequities, our experience shows a balance must be

made between system-level interventions and prosocial programming focused on human connection. Low-resource communities need researchers to be sensitive to their psychosocial needs and design evidence-based programs that promote resiliency and prosocial behaviors. Generations of youth who learn to distrust the agencies meant to serve and protect them may have dangerous implications for civic engagement.

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CHAPTER 2

The effects of a perspective-taking intervention on empathy and trust among youth and police: A pilot study

ABSTRACT

Background: Empathic and restorative practices are associated with enhanced mental health and intergroup trust, but there have been few empirical studies of their long-term impact in interventions with both police and youth of color. A community-academic partnership piloted a prosocial, trust-building intervention to test its 4-week direct effects on self-reported trust and empathy among urban youth and the police.

Methods: Participants (n=78) were urban teens and officers who were randomized to receive a single 90-minute writing and perspective-taking session or a film discussion session. Multi-dimensional measures of trust and empathy were assessed at baseline, post-intervention, and 4 weeks. The impact of the intervention was estimated by between-group differences in change from baseline trust, empathy, and other self-reported measures using mixed effects regression models.

Results & Implications: At baseline, officers reported greater discrimination experiences on-duty vs. off-duty, and local youth experience moderate psychological distress that warrants provider intervention. The perspective-taking intervention was associated with significantly different mean 4-week policing satisfaction ($p=0.04$) and decreased social prejudice ($p=0.02$) between groups. On average, treatment participants and youth participants rated the acceptability of their intervention experiences higher than their counterparts. Police-youth tension is an issue that can negatively impact health at multiple levels, therefore, it requires a multilevel public health response.

1. BACKGROUND

The population mental health effects of direct and indirect negative police-youth interactions are becoming increasingly evident¹. Urban youth of color are disproportionately more likely to interact with, be unfairly stopped and killed by, and hold unfavorable views of U.S. policing agencies when compared to their white or adult counterparts – factors shown to be associated with perceived discrimination, trauma symptoms, and psychological distress²⁻⁴. For police, work-related social isolation and perceived discrimination from community members have been tied to psychological distress on the job, which reduces their ability to empathize and feel mutual respect for community members⁵. The health costs of these negative police-youth interactions are especially concerning given what we know about how critical trust and positive interpersonal relationships are for positive well-being⁶⁻⁷. Furthermore, if we characterize civil unrest as a public health determinant⁸, the association between bidirectional police-youth distrust and reductions in policing effectiveness, public willingness to comply and cooperate, and other aspects of crime response efforts take on a different meaning⁹. However, despite public health's investment in documenting the risks and adverse effects of negative police-youth contacts, the field has done little to propose prosocial responses to combat intergroup distrust at interpersonal levels.

Most recently, we've seen lawmakers, advocates, and the APHA call for initiatives that improve the quality of police-community interactions, which has led law enforcement agencies to endorse institutional-level reforms that include community-oriented policing, procedural justice, community oversight, and research partnerships^{2,10-11}. When executed with a social determinants frame and in partnership with community, these organizational reforms of policies and practices are supported by researchers and thought leaders who favor “upstream” strategies that tackle

structural inequities such as poverty, homelessness, and mental health¹¹⁻¹². The logic of such reforms suggests trust in institutional processes will create improved trust in institutional representatives^{9, 13}. What have received less attention from public health researchers are the first two levels of the Ecological Model for Health Promotion¹⁴ – the intra- and interpersonal-levels – which require simultaneous responses to systems as well as attitudes, behaviors, psychology, and social networks. Though a growing body of research is exploring public cooperation with police and perceived legitimacy in response to organizational shifts, fewer researchers are examining how the quality of police-youth interpersonal interactions in reform environments may shape trust and its many cognitive predictors. Trust is critical for the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, one of the six primary dimensions of positive well-being and optimal functioning⁶.

Moving the needle on youth trust in police is a challenge, particularly for youth of color. Youth distrust and dissatisfaction with U.S. police is normally high, but it has reached its highest levels in decades, especially among urban youth of color^{3, 15}. Substantial psychological research demonstrates that well-intentioned, non-prejudiced people have biases that are unconscious or “implicit,” which have been tied to viewing black people as more dangerous¹⁶ and black children as older and less innocent than white boys the same age¹⁷, facts that help explain their increased likelihood to be stopped, cuffed, and arrested. Furthermore, it is increasingly apparent that trust-building initiatives may need an expanded focus not only on the trust sentiments of youth, but also of the police who serve them¹⁸. Specifically, researchers have stressed the importance of understanding racial minorities’ lower levels of trust in police *and* police officers’ attitudes toward youth in urban communities in order to promote equitable and positive police-minority relations, particularly their psychological experiences resulting from race-based social identity threat and

spillover effects^{4, 18-19}. Psychologists have recommended trust-building programs guided by the tenets of the intergroup contact theory, which bring police and communities together for positive interactions²⁰. Although prior studies show that certain individual and community characteristics are associated with adolescent distrust for police, limited research has investigated the unique and interacting contributions of various socializing factors on both affective and cognitive predictors of those distrust sentiments in both groups.

1.1 Theories of Trust

Trust is a construct that is unclearly measured and conceptualized within and across disciplines⁹. The two most prominent theories about ways trust is operationalized come from criminal justice and social psychology. In **criminal justice**, procedural justice is the gold standard for evaluating trustworthiness, and it is defined by a process-based model where police are seen as legitimate (worthy of their power) if they are successful in three dimensions: (1) interpersonal treatment (conveying respect, dignity, and concern) and (2) decision-making (neutral, consistent, transparent), and (3) respecting the limits of their power (Trinkner et al, 2018). In **social psychology**, the classic trust model tells us that a person's ability (competence and consistency), benevolence (good will, empathy), and integrity (fairness and honesty) lead to trustworthiness, with vulnerability being central to the process^{9, 13, 23}. In this study, we define trust as a psychological state where one is willing to accept vulnerability from another^{9,23}. It is an interpersonal construct that is driven by a combination of cognitive and affective factors including empathy, understanding, and vulnerability^{2,23}. Thus, intervening on the psychosocial contributors to trust requires individual- and interpersonal-level strategies that utilize the wealth of evidence from the fields of psychology and neuroscience²³.

In addition to being an interpersonal construct, trust is also group-based, with individuals more likely to trust people within their group than those outside it²⁴. At the group level, trust decreases when one group fails to recognize and support the self-identity of people outside their group, which creates distance and distrust and promotes fear that groups will be treated differently because of their identity (social identity threat)^{19, 25}. Intergroup trust is known to reduce perceived threat^{24, 26}, which helps explain calls for more interventions that create positive contacts between police and communities^{10, 21}. Allport's **contact theory** (1954) is the most influential and highly cited strategy for building positive intergroup contacts to reduce prejudice between opposing out-groups^{27, 28}. Contemporary researchers have shown that positive intergroup contact is not only one of the most effective ways to reduce social identity threat, prejudice and discrimination, but it is also highly effective at dismantling distrust sentiments^{24, 28-29}. Allport specifies specific situational conditions for intergroup contact including equal group status within a situation, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support from authority figures²⁷. Moreover, Allport tells us that trust is a long pursuit, requiring consistency and reliability of behavior over time, which Pettigrew later confirmed with empirical studies. However, the individual-level contributors to trust are less well understood³.

1.2 The Promise of Perspective-Taking

Promising research is emerging about the benefits of social perspective-taking – activating the cognitive dimension of empathy, the ability to feel what others feel – for alleviating the discriminatory and prejudicial sentiments that are tied to intergroup distrust. Perspective-taking has been shown to mediate the association between positive intergroup contact and anxiety, discriminatory attitudes, and bias³⁰. Gelbach et al (2015) found that social perspective-taking

resolves intergroup conflict, especially if situated in a cooperative setting instead of a competitive setting³¹.

1.3 Testing the Intergroup Contact Theory: Police-Youth Dialogues

One reform strategy that has been widely adopted to intervene on youth-police distrust is the youth-police dialogue session, which aims to reduce tension by breaking down barriers through open dialogue and positive intergroup contact³². Police-youth dialogue programs have proven successful at improving youth perceptions of police, a factor that is essential for an effective criminal justice system⁹. However, the current model for these programs is unstructured, unmeasured, and reliant on police to teach youth how to comply with the law, a practice that reinforces hierarchical power dynamics that have proven harmful³²⁻³³. Narrative 4 is a private agency that uses story exchanges between youth and police in urban areas to create bridges, but empirical analyses of these exchanges have not been published. However, an unpublished study of a Narrative 4 initiative between youth in different Chicago schools found that empathy scores increased immediately following the intervention and were somewhat sustained 10 days later (Personal Communication, Rebecca Frausel, 9/21/2017). One of the only empirically-grounded studies of police-youth dialogue sessions – the Milwaukee-based *Students Talking it Over with Police* (S.T.O.P) program – found that despite the program being effective at changing youth perceptions of police, it was ultimately harmful³⁴. Evaluations found it perpetuated a dominant narrative about police as unquestionable authority figures, which was deemed dangerous by parents, teachers, and students³⁴. For these reasons, S.T.O.P. was abruptly removed from Milwaukee Public Schools after evaluators found it taught students to be “afraid of the police”³⁴.

Among other existing programs, few have integrated tools shown to boost self-concept³⁵, reduce social identity threat³⁵, reduce harm³⁶, influence justice attitudes³⁷, and create intergroup

bonds such as restorative practice, perspective-taking, and expressive narrative writing and storytelling. As communities and generations are caught between cultural spheres of influence, deeply personal stories of people who have experienced intersectional identities can enable others to make sense of their own social suffering³⁸. Furthermore, storytelling can promote attitudinal and behavioral changes due to the increased ability of young people to identify with police and vice versa³⁹.

1.4 The Trade Project: A New Approach to Police-Youth Dialogue Sessions

To address these gaps in current knowledge and practice, we piloted a novel police-youth trust-building intervention – The Trade Project – which incorporated restorative practices, perspective-taking, and narrative-expressive writing as its primary tools of change. Prior research has indicated that single sessions of expressive-writing activities can produce striking long-term effects for groups that have faced discrimination and stereotype threat³⁵. Our **primary research aim** was to determine whether a single session of perspective-taking was directly associated with greater increases in empathy and trust scores from baseline to four weeks in intervention groups compared to control groups. A secondary aim was to examine differences in direct effects of the intervention on changes in 4-week trust and empathy scores in officers compared to teens. Finally, we aimed to explore the acceptability and feasibility of the program on its youth and officer participants. We **hypothesized** that in the presence of systems-level policing reform, our intra- and interpersonal-level intervention will improve the quality of police-youth relations as evidenced by: **(1)** Increased trust and empathy scores at Time 2 for both groups, with steeper increases for the treatment group at Times 2 and 3; **(2)** Similar changes in empathy and trust for officers and youth across the sample; and **(3)** Greater acceptability of the program among treatment participants.

The quantitative methods, results, and implications of this pilot research are discussed here.

2. METHODS

The Trade Project was a multisite, randomized pilot trial of an empathy- and trust-building intervention among urban teenagers and sheriff's officers between June 2018 and October 2018. The primary study outcomes were cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and six dimensions of trust from baseline to 4 weeks post-intervention. Investigators also assessed measures of psychological distress, mutual sympathy, mutual admiration, and the intervention's general acceptability. The study was approved by the Office of Human Research Administration at the Harvard Institutional Review Board. Officer participants completed written informed consents prior to study procedures. Youth participants completed assent forms and submitted signed guardian consent forms prior to study procedures.

2.1 Setting

As trust research and procedural justice theory recommends, interpersonal and intergroup trust interventions should take place in a context where structural reforms of police decision-making processes are present^{9, 12}. For that reason, we partnered with an innovative and award-winning policing agency already undergoing system-level shifts to integrate procedural justice, community-oriented policing, and tackle the social determinants of crime in the low-resource community it serves.

All study procedures took place in the Eden Area of Alameda County, California, which is a mostly Latino and Black unincorporated urban region comprising four neighborhoods: Ashland, Cherryland, San Lorenzo, and Hayward Acres⁴⁰. The fast-growing, population-dense area is approximately 10 miles south of Oakland and faces numerous public health issues associated with low economic investment and limited infrastructure including high unemployment, poverty, crime, vacancy, and mental health emergencies⁴⁰⁻⁴¹. Since 2005, the local policing agency – the Alameda

County Sheriff's Office – has funded and introduced award-winning community engagement programs and placemaking opportunities focused on these systems- and institution-level social determinants of health including youth recreation events, pop-up community festivals, youth sports, the development of the area's first youth center, public murals, "Barbershop Forums" and "Talk with a Cop" gatherings, and staff salaries for its Youth and Family Service Bureau, which includes 20 behavioral and mental health practitioners and 21 sworn officers⁴¹⁻⁴².

2.2 Participants

Participants were teenaged (ages 13 to 18 years) residents of the unincorporated Eden Area and Alameda County Sheriff's officers assigned to the Eden Township Substation. Subjects were recruited using internet postings, personal referrals, community presentations, and respondent-driven sampling after investigators initiated formal and informal agreements with the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO), several community-based organizations, and the San Lorenzo Unified School District. Leading captains and lieutenants at the ACSO made on-duty participation in the research mandatory, though each officer participant voluntarily signed consent forms. Sheriff's officers were excluded if they did not serve the Eden Area. Youth participants were excluded if they were under age 13 or over age 18 and if they failed to submit parent/guardian consent forms prior to workshops.

We selected these criteria to ensure that participants had common points of reference about local sociopolitical conditions and equal opportunities for engagement with the ACSO. We focused on teenaged youth because they are in a dynamic period for psychosocial, prosocial, and moral development of cognitive and affective empathy skills, which directly impact their attitudes about justice and civic engagement^{37, 43}. Youth of color at this age are also more likely to have had negative interactions with and hold unfavorable attitudes toward law enforcement officials,

especially if they have negative perceptions of their neighborhood conditions³. Thus, introducing a trust-building intervention with this population had great potential impact.

2.3 Study Interventions

Following eligibility screening and consent procedures, participants were assigned unique Study ID numbers and underwent self-report assessments for baseline characteristics (e.g., age, race, etc.) and study outcome measures (e.g., trust, empathy) using a 10-minute online Qualtrics survey. Participants were then randomized to condition using concealed color-coded cards, which corresponded to different intervention conditions. Workshops took place during the work/school week at community locations including schools, youth centers, and libraries. Participants completed similar surveys immediately post-workshop (Time 2) and 4 weeks later (Time 3). Youth participants were paid \$25 USD following workshops and another \$25 after completing the Time 3 survey. Officers were given permission to participate on-duty, most in uniform.

2.3.1 Treatment: *Perspective-taking intervention*

Participants randomized to the treatment condition completed one 90-minute in-person workshop session, which was designed to build empathy, social cohesion, and intergroup trust by blending theater games, restorative practices, narrative writing, perspective-taking, and group discussion activities. Activities were also designed to extend and systematize the community engagement work already being done by the ACSO by introducing elements based on the work of leaders in these applied practices. Detailed intervention components are described elsewhere (see **Chapter 1**). Intervention activities were created by the study coordinator (McAdams-Mahmoud) based on prior work, a literature review, and consultation with experts in restorative practices and

police-community engagement. Sessions were facilitated by the study coordinator who was trained in restorative circle practice, perspective-taking, and community-based participatory research.

In each treatment group session, participants wrote down and used nicknames throughout to protect their confidentiality on audio recordings. Each session comprised a group of 3-6 youth seated in a restorative circle with 3-6 uniformed officers. To counter the power imbalance in the setting, participants were asked to use a “talking piece” when they wanted to speak and were invited to write their own “group agreements.” Participants were then asked to take part in trust-building ice-breakers, complete a 15-minute narrative writing exercise about feeling misunderstood, and exchange their narratives in dyads and triads of youth and police. Youth partners read aloud the written story of an officer as if it happened to her, and vice versa. The trade process followed a 5-step script, which included an ask, an agreement, reflection time, sharing, and debriefing. After the perspective-taking activity, all participants returned to the circle for a large-group discussion about their experiences. The facilitator used a structured question guide, which encouraged participants to reflect on their feelings and their hopes for local public safety in their community.

2.3.2 Control: Film screening and discussion

Teens and officers randomized to the control group attended one 90-minute workshop designed to simulate standard youth-police dialogue sessions. Group sizes, the use of nicknames, group agreement processes, and restorative circle practices were similar to the treatment group condition. The group then viewed a 20-minute excerpt of a 2018 PBS documentary on policing in the U.S. (“The Talk: Race in America”) and discussed how what they saw related to their own experiences, biases, and perceptions. Discussions followed a structured question guide. Like other police-youth dialogue programs, the control workshop relied on verbal dialogue only.

2.4 Measures

The baseline survey collected details on gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, race, nativity, and neighborhood safety at day and night, all of which have been associated with evaluations of police². Due to adolescents' limited ability to report family income, we captured parental education and house type as proxies for SES. Given the association between discrimination experiences, justice attitudes, and adverse health^{37, 44}, we assessed a range of discrimination events across a variety of domains using the 9-item Everyday Discrimination Scale ($\alpha = 0.88$), the most widely used discrimination scale in epidemiologic and public health research, which asks participants to indicate how often they experienced day-to-day mistreatment in the past 12 months using four response options ranging from 'never (=1)' to 'often (=4)'⁴⁵. We summed responses for total scores that could range from 0 to 36, and officers were asked to report discrimination experiences on-duty and off-duty. Participants were also asked if they had anyone to confide in, a measure of positive socioemotional health.

2.4.1 Dependent Variables

Cognitive and Affective Empathy were assessed at each time point using two validated and widely used subscales from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index⁴⁶, which is the most often used self-report measure of empathy and is reasonably expected to change over time. The 7-item Empathic Concern subscale ($\alpha = 0.63$, adequate, but not great for a 7-item scale) was used to assess participants' self-described affective empathy capacity – their ability to have sympathy and concern for others; whereas the 7-item Perspective-Taking subscale ($\alpha = 0.75$) was used to assess participants' capacity for cognitive empathy – their ability to take on another's person's point of view. Response options ranged from 'very untrue (=0)' to 'very true (=4).'

Trust was assessed using 10 questions, which represented six dimensions of the construct, identified by factor analysis: General, neighborhood, institutional, contact, public confidence, and satisfaction. Questions were derived from the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey⁴⁷ and the Police Legitimacy Index⁴⁸. General trust was assessed using one question: “In general, would you say that most people can be trusted?” with three response options (‘yes,’ ‘it depends,’ ‘no’). Response options for the five remaining dimensions of trust ranged from ‘not at all (=0)’ to ‘a lot (=3)’. Neighborhood trust was assessed using the average of a two-item measure: “In general, how much do you trust the people in your neighborhood?” and, for officers, “In general, how much do you trust residents of the unincorporated Eden Area?”. Institutional trust was assessed using the average of a two-item measure about the extent to which participants trusted (a) U.S. policing agencies and (b) local police. Only youth participants were asked about Contact Trust (The average of a two-item measure on how many officers they know by name, and how often they had contact with ACSO in 2018) and Legitimacy (The average of two questions: “Do you think police listen to the residents in your neighborhood?”, and “Do you think police make decisions that are good for everyone in your neighborhood?”). Satisfaction was assessed using one question: “Do you think trust between people in this community and local police needs to be stronger?” This item was reverse coded with response options ranging from ‘not at all (=3)’ to ‘a lot (=0).’

Intergroup social prejudice was assessed at each time point using 2 questions adapted from Pettigrew & Meertens (1995), which were originally designed to assess intergroup racial prejudice and later used by Hutchings (2009) in the American National Election Studies survey to predict voting trends: (1) “How often have you felt sympathy for local police?” and (2) “How often have you felt admiration for local police?” Variations of the same questions were posed to police regarding positive emotions toward Eden Area youth. Four response options ranged from ‘very

often (3)’ to ‘never (0)’. Research has found these questions – which represent the positive emotional dimension of social prejudice – are the most important predictors of policy preferences and voting decisions related to racial inequities⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰. Moreover, prejudiced respondents are less likely to report overtly negative feelings about out-groups, yet will report less often feeling admiration or sympathy.

Psychological distress was assessed at each time point using the Kessler-6 nonspecific distress scale⁵¹, a 6-item psychological screening instrument, which has been used widely in national epidemiological surveys with high reliability for estimating serious and moderate mental illness⁵². Responses range from ‘none of the time (=0)’ to ‘all of the time (=4)’, and they are summed to yield a number from 0 and 24. Scores ≥ 13 indicate severe mental distress, whereas scores of ≥ 5 indicate moderate mental distress, both of which warrant mental health intervention⁵².

2.4.2 Process Measures

Acceptability of the intervention was assessed at 4-week follow-up through three questions: (i) Overall rating of intervention experience (response options: ‘poor’ (=0) to ‘very good’ (=4)); (ii) How often they thought about or reflected on the workshop experience (response options: ‘never’ (=0) to ‘always – almost every day’ (=4)); and (iii) Whether participants spoke to anyone about their workshop experience (‘yes’ (1) or ‘no’ (0)). Participants were also asked to write about “one takeaway or lesson” they remembered most from their session.

2.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize baseline participant characteristics. We performed exploratory tests using chi-square analysis and independent samples t-tests to understand the extent of between-group differences.

For our primary aim of between-group differences in measures of empathy and trust, we used mixed effects regression models to examine mean differences between control and treatment group participants for each outcome at each study time point. To determine whether the pattern of change differed significantly between the two groups from time 1 to time 3, we tested the null hypothesis of parallelism by exploring the group x time interaction effect. Our models allowed for inclusion of all study participants while accounting for baseline differences and intragroup correlation, assuming unstructured covariance. Given the study's small sample size, we looked to other studies to estimate an effect size of 0.5 for between-group differences. Utilizing an alpha of 0.05, G-Power software determined the study was modestly powered at 0.68.

For our secondary aim of differential intervention impact on officers and youth, we conducted sub-group analysis to descriptively explore whether there were significant differences in mean trust and empathy scores at each time point for youth randomized to treatment compared to youth randomized to control.

Finally, for our third aim of intervention acceptability, we used descriptive statistics to calculate mean scores for overall session ratings, as well as frequency of reflection, and proportions of those who talked about their experience with others during the study period. Simple thematic analyses were conducted on all write-in data.

All quantitative analyses were performed using Stata version 15.1 (College Station, TX), and statistical tests were two-tailed. Thematic analyses were performed using Dedoose Version 8.0.35, a web application for managing and analyzing qualitative research data.

3. RESULTS

Fig. 2.1 displays the study flow diagram. Of 106 prospective participants who met study inclusion criteria, 80 participants enrolled, and 78 completed survey assessments at each time point. Baseline participant characteristics are presented in **Table 2.1**. In exploratory tests of differences of control-treatment group differences, there were some baseline differences between the 78 participants randomly assigned to control and treatment conditions, so we included baseline measures in all analyses to account for these differences.

Figure 2.1. *Diagram of study flow*

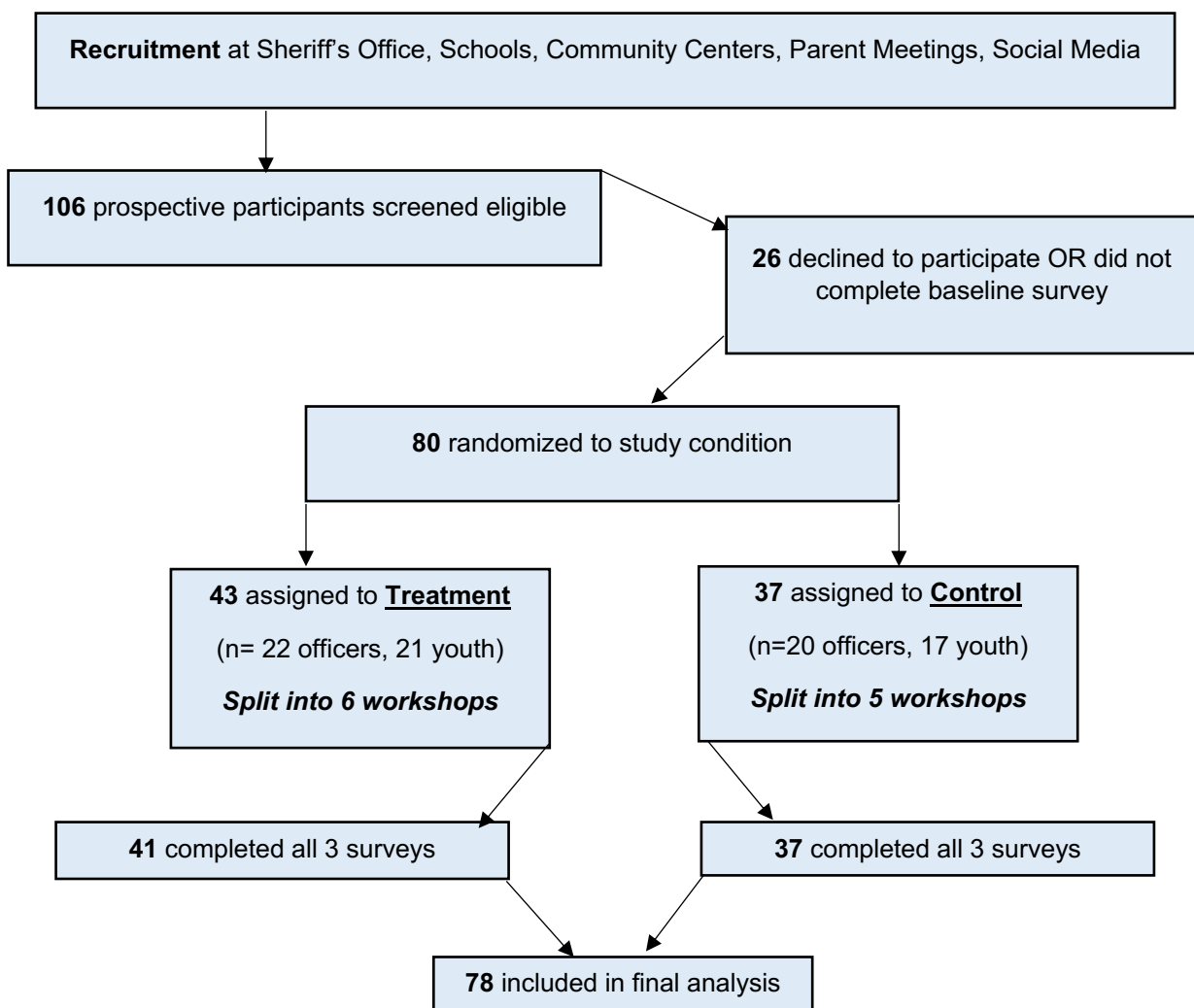


Table 2.1. Characteristics of Study Participants at Baseline (n=78)

Characteristics	CONTROL (n=36)		TREATMENT (n=42)	
	Officers	Teens	Officers	Teens
N	19	17	21	21
Mean Age (SD)	38.26 (4.75)	15.29 (0.92)	37.05 (5.80)	15.67 (1.74)
Female (%)	4 (21.05)	8 (47.06)	1 (4.76)	12 (57.14)
Sexual Minority (%)	1 (5.26)	4 (23.53)	0	7 (33.33)
Race, Ethnicity, Nativity				
White (%)	9 (47.37)	--	7 (33.33)	5 (23.81)
Black or AA (%)	3 (15.79)	7 (41.12)	3 (14.29)	3 (14.29)
Asian or PI (%)	2 (10.52)	--	3 (14.29)	2 (9.52)
Mixed Race (%)	0	7 (41.12)	2 (9.52)	3 (14.28)
Other (%)	5 (26.32)	3 (17.65)	6 (28.57)	8 (38.09)
Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity (%)	7 (36.84)	9 (52.94)	7 (33.33)	14 (66.67)
Born outside U.S. (%)	0	1 (5.88)	0	3 (14.3)
Parent born outside U.S. (%)	6 (31.58)	8 (47.06)	8 (38.09)	13 (61.90)
Socioeconomic Status				
≤ High School	1 (5.26)	17 (100)	2 (9.52)	21 (100)
≥College	18 (94.74)	--	19 (90.48)	--
Parent ≤ High School	6 (31.58)	8 (47.05)	7 (33.33)	10 (47.62)
Parent ≥Some College	13 (68.42)	9 (52.94)	14 (66.67)	11 (52.38)
In single-detached home	16 (84.21)	6 (35.29)	16 (76.19)	13 (61.90)
No. Home Occupants	3.42	5.05	3.80	5.19
Lives in Eden Area	5 (26.32)	17 (100)	6 (28.57)	21 (100)
Psychosocial Health				
Completely or Very	16 (84.21)	5 (29.41)	19 (90.48)	9 (42.86)
Somewhat	3 (15.79)	11 (64.71)	2 (9.52)	10 (47.62)
Not very -or- Not at all	0	1 (5.88)	0	2 (9.52)
30-day Psych. Distress (SD)	3.58 (3.32)	5.82 (4.01)	2.48 (1.91)	5.76 (3.99)
Parent MH Diagnosis	6 (31.58)	4 (23.53)	6 (28.57)	4 (19.05)
Crime & Safety				
Block very/pretty <u>unsafe</u> (day)	0	5 (29.41)	0	4 (19.05)
Block very/pretty <u>unsafe</u> (night)	1 (5.26)	8 (47.05)	0	12 (57.14)
Ever victim of crime or assault	10 (52.6)	6 (35.29)	8 (38.09)	3 (14.29)
Daily discrimination (OFF-Duty)	9.1 (6.46)	14.7 (8.02)	9.6 (5.95)	12.3 (8.69)
Daily discrimination (ON-duty)	18.2 (6.25)	--	19.8 (16.5)	--
Ever unfairly treated by police	--	4 (23.53)	--	4 (19.05)

Baseline Descriptive Results

There were noteworthy baseline differences and similarities between officer and youth participants in this sample. Overall, the mean age for officers was 37.65 years (range: 27 to 48),

and the mean age of youths was 15.5 years (range: 13 to 18). Most officer participants were non-white (60%), male (87.5%), had parents who had some college or more (67.5%), and had an average of 3.6 people living in their households. Most youth participants were non-white (79%), female (52.63%), had parents with some college or more (52.37%), and had an average of 5.2 people living in their households. More youth participants disclosed a sexual minority status (28.94%) when compared to officers (2.5%).

When compared to officers, youth had statistically significantly lower ($p < 0.001$) baseline institutional trust scores (3.12/6 vs. 5.42/6) and empathic concern scores (15.94/28 vs. 20.84/28). Officers reported a higher frequency of perceived daily discrimination experiences on-duty (19.05, Range: 4-29) when compared to youth (13.37, Range: 0-30) or their own off-duty experiences (9.35, Range: 0-26). Officers who gave a reason for their on-duty discrimination experiences were mostly white race (75%), and nearly all attributed their experiences to their occupation, though a few participants listed gender, race, and sexual orientation as reasons for discrimination. Youth had higher baseline psychological distress scores (5.78/24) when compared to officers (2.70/24), indicating that most youth met the cut-off for moderate mental health distress (Prochaska et al, 2012). Youth reported lower life satisfaction when compared to officers, with more than half reporting feeling ‘somewhat,’ ‘not very,’ or ‘not at all’ satisfied with their lives. One-fifth of youth participants reported direct negative interactions with local police, and 29% of them recorded “only a little” or “not at all” for police institutional trust. Replicating the racial trust gap, half of all youth participants (89% of them racial minorities) reported significantly low baseline trust for their neighbors [‘not at all’ or ‘only a little’]. More than half of youth participants felt ‘very’ or ‘pretty unsafe’ in their neighborhoods at night, compared to just 5% of officer participants. A correlation analysis revealed perceptions of neighborhood safety were moderately, negatively and

significantly correlated with lower institutional trust at all time points ($p < 0.001$). Approximately 27.5% of officers in this sample live in the same communities as youth.

4-Week Results

Regarding the primary outcomes, tests of parallelism for the group x time interaction were statistically significant for one of the 8 measures of trust and empathy at 4 weeks: satisfaction with policing (Item: “Do you think trust between people in this community and local police needs to be stronger?” [Reverse Coded: ‘not at all (=3)’, ‘a lot (=0)’]). Treatment group participants significantly increased their score for this item from ‘a lot’ to ‘some’, which suggests they became more content with local police-community trust when compared to their control group counterparts. In the other measures of trust and empathy, the intervention did not cause a significant difference in the pattern of change over time between the two groups (see **Table 2.2**). In general, the overall 4-week differences in empathy and trust change are not explained by sociodemographic, workshop rating, race, gender, number of years on force, or workshop size.

The 90-minute intervention significantly and positively impacted intergroup social prejudice (see **Table 2.3**). Both groups experienced boosts in positive dimensions of social prejudice at Time 2 (which represents decreased social prejudice) directly following their workshop sessions. Control group participants’ gains were steeper than treatment group participant gains at Time 2, and nearly statistically significant ($p = 0.052$). However, officers and teens randomized to the treatment condition experienced statistically significantly higher sustained gains in positive social prejudice for each other at Time 3 when compared to those randomized to the control condition, members of which declined to levels lower than baseline. On a scale from 0 to 6, average group x time interaction for the positive aspect of social prejudice among treatment group participants was 3.27 ($SE = 0.285$), which was 0.65 points higher than baseline ($p = 0.02$),

suggesting that the perspective-taking intervention caused a meaningfully different pattern of change over time for treatment vs. control participants.

Table 2.2 *Average changes in trust and empathy over time for control and treatment groups.*

CONTROL (n=36)			TREATMENT (n=42)	
Empathy Outcomes	Score (SD)	Change from T1	Score (SD)	Change from T1
Perspective-Taking				
Time 1	18.53 (5.39)	--	20.21 (4.12)	--
Time 2	19.33 (4.77)	0.806 (p=0.17)	21.12 (4.32)	0.099 (p=0.90)
Time 3	18.69 (5.55)	0.167 (p=0.81)	20.24 (4.60)	-0.143 (p=0.88)
Empathic Concern				
Time 1	17.58 (4.68)	--	19.79 (4.02)	--
Time 2	18.33 (5.60)	0.75 (p=0.25)	20.43 (3.74)	-0.107 (p=0.90)
Time 3	18.03 (5.40)	0.444 (p=0.44)	20.21 (3.59)	-0.016 (p=0.98)
Trust Outcomes				
Institutional Trust				
Time 1	4.33 (1.66)	--	4.38 (1.72)	--
Time 2	4.64 (1.50)	0.306 (p=0.07)	4.52 (1.58)	-0.163 (p=0.48)
Time 3	4.36 (1.78)	0.028 (p=0.89)	4.76 (1.56)	0.353 (p=0.18)
Satisfaction				
Time 1	0.63 (0.82)	--	0.47 (0.24)	--
Time 2	0.32 (0.65)	-0.306 (p=0.04)*	0.73 (0.59)	0.258 (p=0.21)
Time 3	0.41 (0.22)	-0.222 (p=0.17)	0.91 (0.22)	0.436 (p=0.04)*
Police Contact (youth-only)				
Time 1	0.82 (0.88)	--	0.43 (0.51)	--
Time 2	1.06 (0.90)	0.235 (p=0.33)	0.90 (0.62)	0.241 (p=0.46)
Time 3	1.24 (0.90)	0.412 (p=0.08)	0.86 (0.65)	0.017 (p=0.96)
Legitimacy (youth-only)				
Time 1	2.12 (1.17)	--	2.05 (1.28)	--
Time 2	2.35 (0.86)	0.235 (p=0.39)	2.19 (0.87)	-0.092 (p=0.80)
Time 3	1.94 (1.34)	-0.176 (p=0.58)	2.00 (1.18)	0.129 (p=0.76)
NOTE: Institutional Trust is a combination of trust in U.S. law enforcement agencies and trust in local police.				

Table 2.3. Changes over time in intergroup social prejudice among officers and youth.

	Control		Treatment	
	Score (SE)	Change from T1	Score (SE)	Change from T1
Time 1	2.83 (0.236)	--	2.62 (0.322)	--
Time 2	3.23 (0.204)	0.396 (p=0.05)*	2.65 (0.254)	0.032 (p=0.90)
Time 3	2.49 (0.228)	-0.339 (p=0.14)	3.27 (0.285)	0.649 (p=0.02)*
NOTE: This 2-question item is grounded in research that shows outgroup admiration positively predicts deferential behavior, intergroup learning, and decreased willingness to take political action against the outgroup. Increased admiration is predicted by appraisals of outgroups as warm and legitimate (Sweetman et al, 2012).				

Intervention Acceptability and Lessons Learned

With respect to participant acceptability of the intervention, participants in the treatment condition rated their experiences higher (3.17/4, SD=0.96) than participants in the control condition (2.97/4, SD=0.94). Youth participants rated their experiences higher (3.30/4, SD=0.78) than officer participants (2.83/4, SD=1.03). Youth and officers were equally as likely to talk about The Trade Project to a friend, family member, teacher, or coworker over the four weeks between the workshop and the final survey (~80% of participants talked about the project with someone). About half of participants in both groups reflected on or thought about their experiences 1 or more times per week over the study period.

When reviewing the “lessons learned,” write-in responses included on the 4-week follow-up survey, participants randomized to the control condition had no clear pattern in their responses, commenting about the need to support unity, dialogue, good police-community interactions, and their ability to feel open during the session. However, participants assigned to the treatment condition uniformly commented on the freeing nature of the session structure and the importance of feeling empathy and seeing other people for who they really are. These lessons learned suggest treatment condition activities were more successful at imbedding qualities of optimal intergroup

contact -- equal group status within a situation, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support from authority figures – when compared to the control group condition.

4. DISCUSSION

This is the first study of its kind to use a randomized pilot trial design in mixed groups of youth and police to test the empirical impact of perspective-taking on psychosocial processes that are directly related to police-youth interactions on interpersonal and group levels. Overall, we found that a 90-minute, single-session, in-person narrative writing and perspective-taking intervention grounded in restorative practices was highly rated and associated with greater 4-week increases in policing satisfaction and decreases in intergroup social prejudice between randomized officers and youth. Notably, even the control group condition led to slight shifts in empathy and trust. These main findings suggest that brief interventions that induce vulnerability and honest dialogue can improve the quality of bidirectional interpersonal exchanges between police and urban youth, which have direct implications for multi-level public health interventions aiming to reform policing practices.

These findings support and complicate prior work in police-community trust research. First, they support studies that suggest a trust gap exists for police, especially among youth who feel unsafe in their communities³. Second, this work supports studies that find community-oriented programs increase citizen satisfaction and perceived police legitimacy, but do not impact institutional trust in the presence of neighborhood disorder or negative media reports in other cities, which is relevant in this community given its proximity to Oakland³⁻⁴. Third, it suggests that trust takes time, as the intergroup contact theory purports, which likely means a single session intervention was probably not a large enough dose to move the needle²⁸. This work complicates prior police-community trust research because it shows how distrust sentiments can persist despite

the presence of a Sheriff's Office that has invested in programs grounded in procedural justice such as community partnerships, economic development, and community alternatives to incarceration. Furthermore, our work advances the understudied area of bidirectional trust, not only documenting how much or little communities of color trust police and their experiences with them, but also how much or little police trust the communities they serve. As Shjarback et al (2017) conclude, the fight for equitable police-community relations is a "two-way street" that requires us to find ways to help officers trust communities they serve, and vice versa.

Our findings also contribute to social psychology and public health, fields that support the multilevel application of restorative and prosocial health promotion practices into community policing program components^{11, 21}. In an urban area where proactive policing practices are targeting high-crime, economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, our findings suggest that young residents face an additional burden: adverse mental health, a finding supported by other research⁴. Furthermore, though it is well established that race-based social identity threat can lead to negative outcomes through physiological stress, anxiety, and high blood pressure¹⁹, it is less well understood how police experiences of occupation-based social identity threat may lead to negative psychological outcomes that adversely impact their community interactions. This study provides compelling evidence in support of the existence of social identity stereotype threat in on-duty officers, which they perceive as discriminatory treatment from members of the public. Officers' discriminatory experiences are consistent with the ethnicity density theory, which purports that reports of discrimination are lower when you are in the higher proportion with your group. The health implications of severe and chronic discrimination experiences are well established, and for this reason, they should be taken seriously⁵⁴.

This study also unearths baseline differences in social perceptions and personal characteristics between officers and the youth of color they serve, indicating overlooked opportunities for intervention. On trend with national probability statistics, youth participants were more likely to self-identify as sexual minorities (28.9% vs. 2.5%) and multiracial (26.3% vs. 10%) when compared to officers, both identities that tend to be associated with higher prevalence of poor mental health, bullying, and abuse experiences⁵⁵. Attention to diverse social identities is needed to better understand psychological burden among police and youth.

Finally, this study was innovative in its focus on trust as a psychological process, as opposed to focusing on trust as an indicator of cooperation or other process-related criminology outcomes. Prior to this study, most trust research had focused on attitudes toward police or the public's willingness to comply with law enforcement in urban settings, a focus that overlooked the interpersonal dynamics of encounters between police and youth, particularly police attitudes toward youth⁵⁶. By grounding the treatment group design in intergroup contact theory, we successfully imbedded principles of optimal intergroup contact theory, and demonstrated a structured format for prejudice reduction.

Limitations

Ours was a simple pilot study with noteworthy limitations that impact our ability to interpret, replicate, and scale our study findings. First, our small sample size diminished our statistical power, thereby restricting our ability to fully understand between-group differences. It also increased the likelihood that treatment and control groups would be meaningfully different from one another (internal validity). Additionally, the sample size makes the results less likely to be representative of all youth in the Eden Area, or other communities facing police distrust issues (external validity). An additional contributor to the null results could be the control condition

design, which may have been too powerful of a stimulus than originally intended. Our attempts to incorporate restorative practices into both study conditions may have made them too similar. However, by focusing so heavily on the significance of mean between-group differences could be masking significant and meaningful heterogeneity of change within and between groups.

An additional limitation related to the study's timing and environment. During recruitment, there were significant tensions between Eden Area residents and the ACSO related to rumors of the agency's nonprofit assuming management of the local youth center, which sparked protests, petitions, and tense town hall discussions. Though randomization helped control for selection bias, the sociopolitical environment directly influenced the types of youth who volunteered to take part in the research and may have biased the responses of participants. Similarly, our study took place in one session, instead of over multiple sessions, which goes against recommendations imbedded in the intergroup contact theory that support the idea of consistent contact over time (Pettigrew, 1998; Allport, 1954). Though our study was focused on the quality of interactions, we support future research that tests multiple exposures to perspective-taking and restorative exercises.

Finally, our measures may not have been the best assessments of mutual trust and positive psychological health. The current study focused on self-report and lacked objective measures, which introduced self-report bias. Additionally, the most recent research on trust and police legitimacy conclude that both constructs are multi-dimensional, have been measured in different ways by different practitioners, and have been criticized for various psychometric properties^{9,57}. With those limitations in mind, our selection of measures of institutional trust, procedural justice, and classic trust could have been more robust. Future work may want to explore whether empathy has a mediating effect on trust sentiments.

Implications

Police-youth tension is an issue that can negatively impact health at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels, therefore, it requires a multilevel public health response. The bidirectional distrust emerging from police-youth tension impacts the ability of police and urban youth to engage civically and in preventive health behaviors, which justifies the use of prosocial, upstream interventions like ours that offer structured, relationship-centered alternatives for engagement. Despite its limitations, our study revealed opportunities for future targeted interventions from multiple sectors concerned with policing reforms that increase trust and confidence. That brief exposures to perspective-taking and narrative writing can influence social prejudice echoes findings that interpersonal interactions between racial minorities and police officers are pathways through which trust and mutual empathy can be enhanced while reducing social identity threat¹⁹. These findings suggest police-youth interactions matter for improved community-police relations, which has implications for perceived police legitimacy in the Eden Area and the public's willingness to cooperate with police. Moreover, our results encourage reform-centered agencies such as the ACSO to embrace restorative practices, deep listening, and non-hierarchical exchanges that embrace the bidirectional nature of trust. Beyond our intervention, training on social identity threat may help officers and community members avoid allowing personal biases and misperceptions to interfere with their professional and interpersonal interactions¹⁹. Finally, policing agencies should make investments in programs that provide psychological support resources for local youth and officers in distress and facing daily discrimination due to their social identities²¹.

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CHAPTER 3

Exploring the language of empathy and trust among police and urban youth:

A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

ABSTRACT

Background: It is important to understand differences in the discourses police and urban youth use in their interactions with each other to better explain the ways they approach, negotiate, and position themselves and how that positioning might impact distrust sentiments.

Methods: Participants (n=36) were teenaged residents of the mostly Latino unincorporated Eden Area and Alameda County Sheriff's officers who were randomized to receive a single-session narrative writing and perspective-taking workshop or a film discussion session. During analysis, we used data-driven inductive thematic analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to make sense of the discourses produced during the large group discussions in both study conditions, as well as the expressive writing and dyadic exchange exercises in the treatment workshops.

Results: Control group sessions modeled after traditional police-youth dialogue sessions positioned participants to reproduce traditional social hierarchies and power differentials, whereas treatment group sessions grounded in restorative practices, expressive writing, and perspective-taking positioned participants to be more trusting and engaging in equitable ways. Four discourses emerged that constructed and had implications for direct and imagined police-community interactions including the importance of being seen and heard, visions of the future, constructions of power differentials, and fair vs. biased beliefs about policing.

Implications: Though increased positive contacts between officers and urban youth offer benefits, the quality, content, and spirit of those interactions also matter. To effectively dismantle distrust sentiments, policing agencies already undergoing system-level shifts in policing approaches should consider incorporating narrative writing, perspective-taking, and restorative practices into their youth relationship-building programming.

1. BACKGROUND

A constant challenge for U.S. police agencies is establishing and maintaining public trust and institutional legitimacy^{1,2}. This challenge is particularly acute with urban youth of color who face disproportionately negative and punitive interactions with police³. Public complaints of abuses of power, excessive force, and bias in U.S. policing agencies are longstanding, cyclical, and often tied to racial and social inequalities, which contribute to deaths, injuries, trauma, and psychological stress that overburdens marginalized groups^{2,4}. These inequalities and psychosocial health residuals are well documented and have sparked public and federal calls for criminal justice system reform^{6,7}. This sense of dissatisfaction, also documented as “distrust,” has been linked to a lack of policing effectiveness, youth willingness to cooperate with police, public willingness to comply and cooperate, and other aspects of crime response¹. Thus, the public’s perceptions of police as trustworthy or illegitimate sources of authority are major determinants of social order and public mental health¹.

A growing body of academic research is exploring and documenting the interactions of police and urban youth of color, particularly among qualitative researchers in the criminology and sociology fields⁷. Qualitative research – the interpretive study of texts like interview and focus group transcripts – is often used to explore, describe, compare, and test theoretical models against observed, patterned phenomena⁸. However, there has been limited public health qualitative research that documents the nature of these interactions as they relate to community-engaged prevention, despite the widespread recognition that police bias and violence is a public health issue^{7,9}. An additional limitation of existing qualitative research on this dynamic is its focus on the experiences and perceptions of *either* police (stress, perceptions, or policies) or youth (attitudes toward police, racial and ethnic identity, family influence, etc.) – not both groups interacting. The

rare qualitative studies that have explored police-youth relations with mixed groups of participants have not focused on the psychosocial health outcomes associated with their interactions or prosocial methods of shifting trust¹⁰⁻¹¹. Psychologists have encouraged the development of trust-building programs guided by the tenets of the intergroup contact theory, which promotes positive interactions between out-groups^{12,13}.

One underexplored opportunity for convening and studying the trust sentiments and upstream interactions of mixed groups of police and youth exists in police-youth dialogue sessions, which have been launched in major municipalities throughout the U.S. as a way of resolving misperceptions and addressing longstanding distrust between the two groups¹⁴. However, agencies that convene police and youth for dialogue sessions rarely report on the empirical results of their work using mixed methods, rarely measure the impact of their work over time, and few explore the psychosocial health implications of the convenings. One of the only empirically-grounded studies of police-youth dialogue sessions – the Milwaukee-based *Students Talking it Over with Police* (S.T.O.P) program – was once heralded as highly effective at changing youth perceptions of police, but it was recently abruptly removed from Milwaukee Public Schools after evaluators found it taught students to be “afraid of the police”¹⁵. When the Milwaukee program was evaluated using quantitative and qualitative means to target and evaluate the interpersonal interactions of police and youth, it perpetuated a dominant narrative about police as unquestionable authority figures, which was deemed dangerous by parents, teachers, and students¹⁵.

It is important to understand differences in the discourses police and urban youth use in their interactions to better explain the ways they approach, negotiate, and position themselves and how that positioning might impact trust and mental health on both sides. By ‘discourse,’ we mean written or spoken narratives exchanged between individuals and groups that constitute the way we

see and understand ourselves and the world around us¹⁶. It is increasingly apparent that trust-building initiatives may need an expanded focus not only on the trust discourses of youth, but also of the police who serve them. Researchers have stressed the importance of understanding racial minorities' lower levels of trust in police *and* police officers' attitudes toward youth in urban communities in order to promote equitable and positive police-minority relations, particularly their psychological experiences resulting from race-based social identity threat and spillover effects^{17,18}.

Discourse Analysis

The study of discourse – known as discourse or discursive analysis – is most widely used in the fields of psychology, sociology, and communication studies, and it often assumes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the social, political, and psychological characteristics of language use in conversations, texts, and other forms of communication^{19,20}. Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) is a type of discourse analysis that allows researchers to expose the historical origins of language use and examine contemporary practices, particularly as they replicate institutional patterns of knowledge that govern human subjectivity¹⁹. Foucault theorized about “discursive power,” whereby some socially determined ways of being and knowing become more dominant than others, and they produce legitimate ways of navigating the world, such that systems like racism are upheld by everyday language and ideas as much as they are by intentional actions²¹. This approach is appropriate for studying police-youth interactions because it is concerned with the ways dominant discourses privilege and legitimate existing power relations and social structures, a pursuit that lends itself to social change through the development of counter-discourses¹⁶. Yet, despite its potential for explaining heterogeneous positions within discourses on power, it is rarely used in criminal justice, public health, and other fields invested in studying how policing reforms might improve the wellness of communities.

To better understand the impact of trust-building policing reforms on both urban youth of color and the police who serve them, it is important to understand the types of discourses both groups endorse and challenge, and how those discourses inform and are formed by their direct and imagined interactions. Furthermore, mixed methods studies are needed to triangulate existing qualitative discourses to related quantitative outcomes so that researchers are better able to understand how language is embodied and related to validated measures of trust and its psychosocial predictors such as empathy^{10,22}. This study aims to meet these needs by exploring the discourses that surfaced among a sample of officers and youth in a region at the crossroads of policing reform and anti-police sentiment.

2. OBJECTIVES

This paper aims to explore the following **research question**: *What discourses and conditions are associated with differential changes in empathy and trust for police and urban youth?* Our discursive object (our investigative focus on a topic that was discussed) is police-community interaction²¹.

To address this question, we analyzed transcripts arising from written narratives and group discussions with police and adolescents enrolled in a small mixed-methods pilot randomized trial in northern California. The pilot study sought to understand how police and youth might respond differently after taking part in a group dialogue session about national trends in biased policing compared to a group exercise in storytelling and perspective taking. In **Chapter 2**, we assessed the average group-level differences in continuous measures of empathy, trust, and social prejudice from baseline to 4 weeks comparing control group participants to treatment group participants. Due to low sample size and power, the trial failed to identify significant between-group-level differences in continuous measures of empathy and trust over the 4-week study period; however,

the treatment condition did impact social prejudice and there was meaningful heterogeneity in results *within* both treatment groups.

In this paper, we will use qualitative approaches to complicate the validity of our quantitative findings and achieve the **following aims**:

- 1) To triangulate quantitative results with conversational narrative patterns;
- 2) To compare patterns in discourses and personal characteristics among participants who reported quantitative changes in empathy and trust compared to those who did not; and
- 3) To examine the ways that study conditions positioned participants to take up different discursive actions.

3. METHODS

3.1 Setting

Data for this research come from a study that took place June to October 2018 in the Eden Area, a fast-growing, low-resource urban region in southern Alameda County, CA, which has undergone recent shifts in population demographics and policing reforms. The region is unincorporated, meaning it is completely reliant on county officials to provide municipal and social services. However, municipal-level services and new investments in this area have been stagnant for decades, which has contributed to the area becoming a countywide hotspot for the social determinants of health and crime – unemployment, poverty, vacancy, and mental health emergencies^{23,24}. Since 2004, the local policing agency – the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office – has introduced award-winning community engagement programs to support creative placemaking and relationship-centered policing through community festivals, youth sports, the development of the area’s first youth center, public murals, “Talk with a Cop” gatherings, as well as community behavioral and mental health services. The Sheriff’s Office’s recognizes the root drivers of crime

as socioeconomic, not pathological, which leaders believe make it a leader in the justice system reform movement²⁵.

However, despite a decade-and-a-half of innovative and proactive Sheriff's Office programming, distrust and fear of law enforcement remain a concern for many local residents, especially youth of color²⁴. In Spring 2018, tensions in the area escalated when rumors circulated that the Sheriff's Office would become managers of the area's only youth center and would force out the county health officials who currently run operations. Months of protests, petitions, and community meetings revealed a divide between residents who support the Sheriff's Office efforts and those who want an end to policing in its current form. Additionally, The Eden Area is approximately 10 miles south of Oakland, a city with highly publicized cases of racially biased policing practices²⁶, a stronghold of anti-police activism, and law enforcement leaders who have publicly decried growing anti-police sentiment²⁷.

The historical context of the Eden Area and its proximity to Oakland are central to the interpretation of these data and the use of FDA as a method of analysis. These environmental contexts offer the "regime of truth" (Foucauldian phrase for dominant discourses commonly accepted as true) that produces the data's discourses. Additionally, given the different community roles (officer vs. high school student) and stages of development (adult vs. adolescent) the study participants occupy, this study is an important exemplar of how prosocial interactions might impact notions of power in areas where law enforcement reforms are taking place.

3.2 Overview of Pilot Study

The data for this study come from a larger randomized pilot trial designed to build empathy and trust in a small sample of police and youth of color (n=78). In the larger study, the investigators randomized participants to attend **A)** a 90-minute treatment workshop comprising expressive

writing, dyadic perspective taking between officers and youth, and a group discussion; or **B**) a 90-minute control workshop comprising a film screening about national trends in biased policing and a group discussion. Both types of study workshops featured 20-minute large-group discussions with both youth and police, which were guided by a structured set of questions that assessed participant workshop experiences as well as their thoughts on local public safety. However, the control workshop was designed to simulate standard police-youth dialogue sessions that examine the problem of police-youth distrust using dialogue alone, while the treatment group aimed to use prosocial activities and deep listening to model empathy and directly build trust.

Finally, participants completed three de-identified electronic surveys over a 4-week study period: one after enrolling (Time 1), the second immediately following their workshop (Time 2), and another four weeks after their workshop (Time 3). The surveys assessed a host of sociodemographic information at baseline as well as the main outcomes at each time point: 6 dimensions of trust, 2 dimensions of empathy, 1 measure of social prejudice, and 1 measure of psychological distress.

3.3 Selection of Texts

To accomplish **Aim 1** – the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data sources across the control and treatment conditions – we completed data selection and sorting based on individual participants’ survey results across the three time points. To narrow the sample size, we first looked for participants in control and treatment conditions who reported 4-week change scores that met the following criteria for “high change” set by the study team: Having increased scores on at least three dimensions of trust and/or both dimensions of empathy at Time 3. These changes were purely descriptive, and not examined for statistical significance. Approximately 21 of the 78 original study participants met this arbitrary “high change” cutoff. Though “high change” participants were

found in each study workshop (whether control or treatment), two control workshops and three treatment workshops produced the majority of “high change” participants. It must be noted that the five workshops producing the majority of “high change” participants also included participants who did not meet the “high change” cutoff, providing a natural mechanism for exploring differential changes within and between study conditions.

For **Aim 2** – to better understand the nature of study session conditions that allowed and didn’t allow for changes in empathy, trust, and social prejudice within groups – the research team excluded from analysis sessions where “high change” occurred in less than 2 participants. Thus, we reviewed transcripts from the 5 selected sessions (2 control, 3 treatment). These transcripts represent the experiences of 36 participants (15 control, 21 treatment; 18 officers, 18 youth), which produced 5 large-group discussions and 21 written narratives (see **Table 3.1** for a summary of the participants included in these analyses). Again, because we were interested in the words of participants who experienced “high change” and those who did not, we examined the discourses of *all* participants within each of the 5 selected workshops and between the two study conditions to understand what sociodemographic and narrative patterns might have led to the differences we observed. See **Table 3.2** (Appendix) for a summary of how participants changed on specific dimensions of trust, empathy, and social prejudice over the study period.

Table 3.1 *Characteristics of Qualitative Study Participants* (n=36)

Characteristics	CONTROL (n=15)		TREATMENT (n=21)	
	Officers	Teens	Officers	Teens
N	8	7	10	11
Mean Age (SD)	34.6 (X)	14.86 (X)	39.8 (X)	16.27 (X)
Female	2	1	--	7 (63.64)
Sexual Minority	1	2	--	5 (45.45)
Race, Ethnicity, Nativity				
White (%)	6 (75.00)	--	2 (20.00)	3 (27.27)
Black or AA (%)	--	1 (14.29)	1 (10.00)	2 (18.18)
Asian or PI (%)	1 (12.50)	1 (14.29)	2 (20.00)	--
Mixed Race (%)	--	3 (42.86)	2 (20.00)	--
Other (%)	1 (12.50)	1 (14.29)	2 (20.00)	6 (54.55)
Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity (%)	2 (25.00)	6 (85.71)	2 (20.00)	5 (63.64)
Socioeconomic Status				
Parent ≤ High School	2 (25.00)	4 (57.14)	3 (30.00)	7 (63.63)
Parent ≥ Some College	6 (75.00)	3 (42.86)	7 (70.00)	4 (36.36)
Psych. Distress Moderate/High	2 (25.00)	2 (18.57)	1 (10.00)	7 (63.63)
Ever victim of crime or assault	5 (62.50)	2 (28.57)	4 (40.00)	3 (27.27)
Ever treated unfairly by police	--	1 (14.29)	--	3 (27.27)
Block very/pretty <u>unsafe</u> at night	--	2 (28.57)	--	8 (72.73)
Workshop Experience				
Average No. Words Spoken	1391	315	998	555
Workshop Rating	3.00/4	3.00/4	2.70/4	3.36/4
4-Week Changes in Main Outcomes (N, % participants who changed positively)				
Trust (≥3 Dimensions)	--	1 (14.29)	--	3 (27.27)
Empathy (2 Dimensions)	3 (37.50)	2 (28.57)	5 (50.00)	2 (18.18)
Social Prejudice (2 Dimensions)	2 (25.00)	3 (42.86)	4 (40.00)	5 (45.45)
Psychological Distress	1 (12.50)	--	--	1 (9.10)

To achieve **Aim 3** – an examination of the ways that study conditions positioned participants to take up different discursive actions – we conducted thematic and discursive analysis. See **Section 3.4** for a more thorough explanation of these qualitative analysis methods.

3.4 Qualitative Procedures

During the study, all group sessions were audio-recorded and verbatim transcripts were produced, which were checked against audio recordings for accuracy prior to coding. The first

author regularly kept analytic memos to facilitate research reflexivity²⁸. During analysis, we used data-driven inductive thematic analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to make sense of the discourses produced during the large group discussions in both treatment conditions, as well as the expressive writing and dyadic story exchanges in the treatment sessions.

First, we utilized thematic analysis to code for categories, patterns and themes of discursive constructions across and within groups of transcripts²⁹. Thematic analysis helped us identify the actions that the speakers were taking in the text¹⁶. Taking each text, line-by-line – across approximately 59 pages containing 23,655 words – we asked, “*What is the speaker doing here?*” and assigned a descriptive category for each line. Thus, our categories were inductive (built up from the data) and captured speakers’ verbal actions rather than describing the thematic topics the speakers discussed as they related to police-youth interactions (“what the speaker is doing” vs. “what the speaker is saying”). Each category was defined and added to a codebook, which grew as we repeated the process for every transcript in this subsample. A second coder reviewed the coding framework as a means of establishing inter-coder reliability. This stage of analysis helped us assess the actions the speakers were taking with their statements so that we could make comparisons of categories of actions between officer and youth participants within the same groups, within the same treatment condition, and between treatment conditions to assess similarities and differences in the actions that arose. Throughout the thematic analysis process, we engaged in a cycle of revisiting the data, Foucault’s analytical steps, and the emerging categories to ensure critical reflection of the choices we were making and how, a process that has been argued is even more rigorous than feigning objectivity^{28,30}.

After categories of actions were identified, we completed Willig’s (2013) six steps of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to better understand and compare: (1) the ways

participants' construction of the discursive object (police-youth interactions), (2) types of discourses, (3) action orientation, (4) positioning, (5) practice, and (6) participant subjectivity. The specific codes and results from these analytical steps are summarized in the next section.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Participant Characteristics & General Trends

As **Table 3.1** indicates, this sample subset included 18 officers and 18 youth. Officers and youth were racially and ethnically diverse, though there were more officers of color randomized to the treatment condition and less female youth participants randomized to the control condition in this subsample. Teens in the treatment condition were older than teens in the control condition and had more negative direct experiences with law enforcement officials. Law enforcement officials had very high baseline trust scores in every dimension except for trust for Eden Area residents. On the other hand, youth – especially those who felt unsafe in their neighborhoods at night – had low institutional, legitimacy, contact, and satisfaction trust with local police. Youth were more likely to feel a little or very unsafe walking alone in their neighborhoods at night compared to officers, an indicator that has been linked to trust sentiments². Approximately 56% of youth in this subsample felt unsafe walking alone in their neighborhoods at night (vs. 0 officers); 50% of them had a baseline psychological distress score that met the cutoff for moderate or high (vs. 16.7% officers); and 16.7% had experienced direct neighborhood violence in the past 6 months (vs. 0 officers). These sociodemographic profiles support the findings in **Chapter 2**, which suggest youth felt more stress from their environments compared to officers.

However, there were clear within-group differences for certain outcomes. Nearly all youth participants randomized to the control condition experienced gains in perspective-taking empathy scores (though not significant), compared to just 2 officer and youth participants assigned to the

treatment condition. More participants assigned to the treatment condition experienced positive changes in social prejudice when compared to those in the control condition. Youth assigned to the treatment condition enjoyed their workshop experience more than any other participants. As might be clear, the quantitative data are not sufficient to help us understand the meaning-making process of participants who went on to demonstrate 4-week gains in empathy and trust, thereby justifying the use of discourse analysis.

4.2 Thematic Analysis & Discursive Constructions

Through thematic analysis and the first stage of FDA, we focused on identifying the ways in which police-youth interactions were constructed in the texts, both explicitly and implicitly¹⁶. We categorized participants' actions, including how they judged, questioned, defined, and ranked various ways of being. See **Table 3.3** (next page) for a summary of the 10 themes that emerged in the discussions. There were 75 categories of participants' actions and statements concerning the way they constructed real and imagined police-community interactions.

Table 3.3. Themes arising from thematic analysis, which constructed police-youth interactions

Category	Definition	Sample Quote
Witnessing & Demonstrating Self-Awareness	Actions or feelings that demonstrate or bear witness to an aspect of self-awareness or personal growth resulting from the session	<i>"Now I feel like I can talk to police officers with confidence."</i>
Imbalanced Interactions	Characteristics of participant actions (in or outside group) that lead to power imbalances	<i>"When an officer is giving you directions, that's not the time to try to impose your will on the situation."</i>
Peer-to-Peer Interactions	Actions (in or outside group) that lead to balanced, equitable, or nonhierarchical exchanges	<i>"In my mind, you know, she's an equal to me. Just a member of the community."</i>
Using Distrusting Language	Actions or feelings that connote the presence of DISTRUST between officers and civilians	<i>"It's a hard thing for me because I don't know. You never know if he's going to shoot. And for police, you never know if he has a gun."</i>
Using Trusting Language	Actions or feelings that connote the presence of TRUST between officers and civilians	<i>"I felt comfortable and calm. It was nice to get to talk to an officer and see the other side of the story."</i>
Perceived Bad P-C Relations	Qualities of P-C interactions that are perceived as objectively bad	<i>"Driving through the crowd, I politely waved. Someone... yelled, 'Don't wave at me N-word.'"</i>
Perceived Ambiguous P-C Relations	Qualities of P-C interactions that are perceived as neither good nor bad, or mixed among participants	<i>"It's people's perception, right?... They could say, 'Oh, that's excessive,' when it's really - in reality -it's within our rights."</i>
Perceived Good P-C Relations	Qualities of P-C interactions that are perceived as objectively good	<i>"Not all cops are bad, but some people have bad intentions."</i>
Expectation for Interactions	Participant expectations and hopes for P-C interactions	<i>"Don't be scared to come to us and talk to us. Let's work stuff out together."</i>
Acknowledging Social Factors	Participant actions or feelings that concern external social factors impacting P-C relations	<i>"It's just all around, it's like nothing you can miss. It's hard to miss it especially with social media on the phone."</i>

The 10 primary themes from **Table 3.3** fell into two types of participant performances: “**Ways of Being**” and “**Ways of Knowing**”. The term “Ways of Being” included actions, statements, and descriptions about the ways participants treated each other *during the workshop*. The term “Ways of Knowing” described actions and statements about the ways participants saw police-youth interactions performed *in the world* around them. Participants’ “ways of being” included five themes: “Witnessing & Demonstrating Self-Awareness,” “Imbalanced Interactions,” “Peer-to-Peer Interactions,” “Trusting Language,” and “Distrusting Language”. Within the “ways of knowing” container, there were five themes: “Negative police-community interactions,” “Ambiguous police-community interactions,” “Positive police-community interactions,”

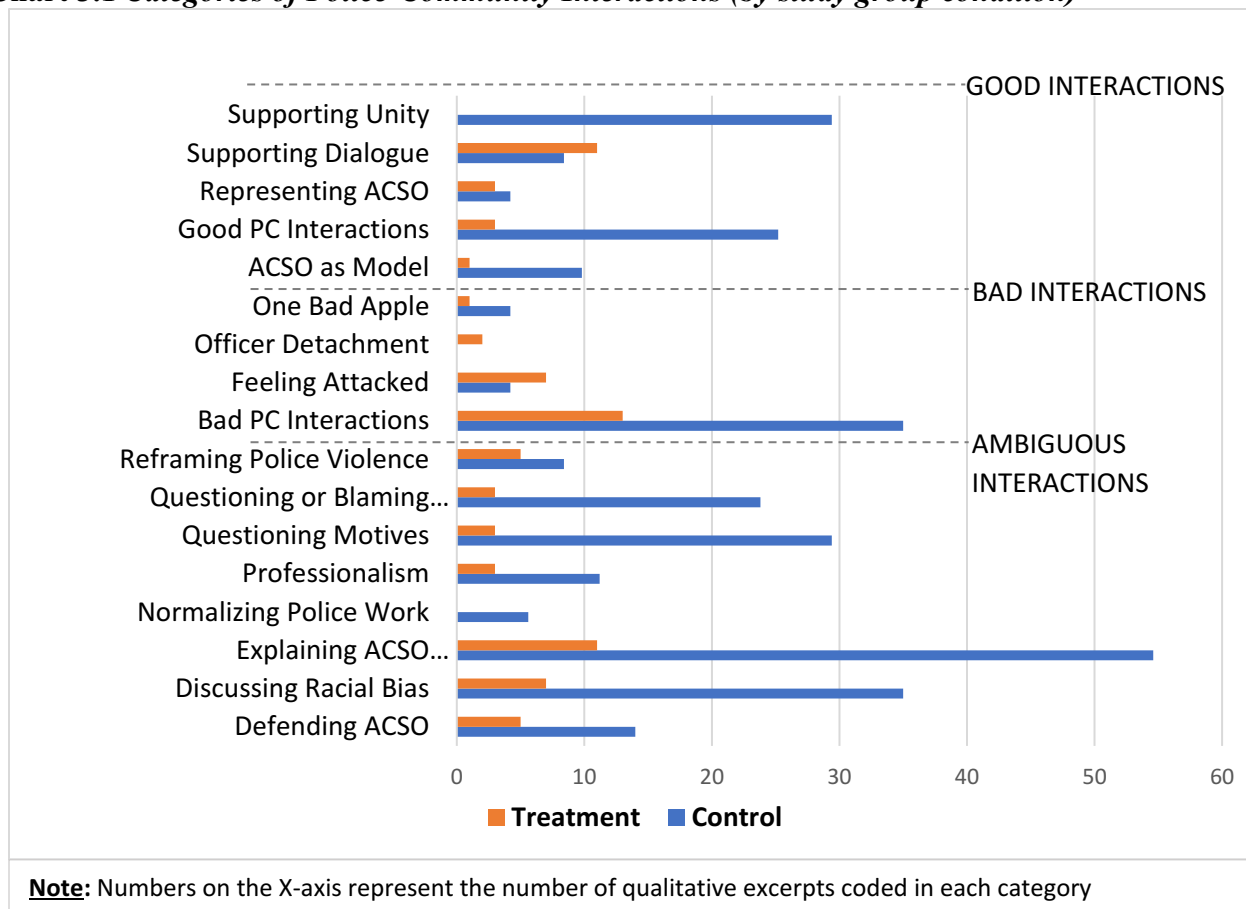
“Acknowledging Social Factors,” and “Listing Expectations for Interactions”. There were three themes of police-community interaction qualities that could be considered objectively “negative,” “ambiguous,” and “positive”.

These themes and categories suggest participants’ constructions of police-community interactions centered more on officers’ personal attributes and the social factors impacting the interactions rather than the interactions themselves. The most frequently occurring categories are highlighted in blue in **Table 3.4** (Appendix) and include “explaining ACSO intent/roles/policies,” “being empathetic,” “discussing racial bias,” “building bridges,” “demonstrating experience,” “judging the session structure,” “embracing race,” and “bad police-community interactions”.

4.3 Different Constructions of Police-Youth Interactions

The second stage of analysis focused on the different ways participants used language to construct “police-community interactions” and how their constructions were situated within larger contexts. To understand how participant roles (officer vs. youth) and study conditions (control vs. treatment) might explain the differences in constructions of the discursive object, we used Dedoose Version 8.0.35, a web application for managing analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed methods research. In both study conditions, police-community interactions were mostly constructed by officers and were seen as either objectively positive, objectively negative, or ambiguous. See **Chart 3.1** for an illustration of the categories within these constructions.

Chart 3.1 Categories of Police-Community Interactions (by study group condition)



When officers addressed positive interactions, they referenced local experiences such as viewing the ACSO as a model policing agency and endorsing greater unity of police and community. On the other hand, examples of negative interactions involved a distancing process, which occurred by officers describing poor behavior of officers in other policing agencies and describing how “one bad apple” can ruin the reputation of well-meaning officers. Two aspects of ambiguous police-community interactions were among the most frequently raised categories across all sessions – “explaining ACSO intent/roles/policies” and “discussing racial bias”. Officers dominated the use of both of these categories. According to a code co-occurrence analysis, officers often explained the intent and policies of ACSO when they were reframing police violence or teaching youth participants about the importance of compliance. They would discuss racial bias in

policing when they were speaking about their own race, highlighting challenges and experiences of their job, describing bad police-community interactions, or illustrating how they want their actions to be seen for what they are not what they seem. In general, descriptions of police-community interactions were raised as a point of defense against potential criticism.

Control group participants spoke about ambiguous and positive qualities of police-community interactions nearly three times more than the treatment group. As we saw in **Table 3.1**, within control group sessions, officer participants dominated the conversations – speaking more than 4 times as much as youth – and mostly explained how the ACSO is different from other departments in its treatment of civilians (“ACSO as model” and “explaining ACSO intent/role/policies”), discussed the difference between professional procedures and being motivated by a racial bias, and described the traits of ideal police-community interaction. Their explanation of ACSO behavior was often raised when they were defending the agency from popular misconceptions, which they problematized by referring to negative examples from Oakland or elsewhere in the nation. This is exemplified in the following statement from a control group officer:

“I know for a fact that we don’t sit there and put our uniform on and go, ‘What group of people can we mess with today?’”

In the treatment workshops, officers spoke less and youth spoke more than their control group counterparts. The most frequent characterizations of police-community interactions were negative and positive: “feeling attacked,” “officer detachment,” and “supporting dialogue.” Treatment officers only raised issues of “feeling attacked” and “officer detachment” during the expressive narrative writing exercise when they were asked to reflect on feeling misunderstood and tried to make sense of police-community tension. They raised “supporting dialogue” when they were requesting trusting interactions with the community (“*Anytime you see one of us... seek*

us out and try to have a conversation because I enjoy doing it”) or advocating for more conversations that allowed community members to see them as “fathers” who have teens.

4.4 Participant Action Orientation, Positioning, and Practice

In the final phases of FDA, we interrogated the ways the themes and categories served the speakers and constructed unique discourses. To determine what larger discourses emerged and what they positioned participants to do within the workshops and in their lived experiences, we asked three questions: *What are implications of the police-youth interactions for the speakers? To what extent do these implications promote one concept over another? What are the possibilities for action and social practices that are enabled by the discursive constructions?*

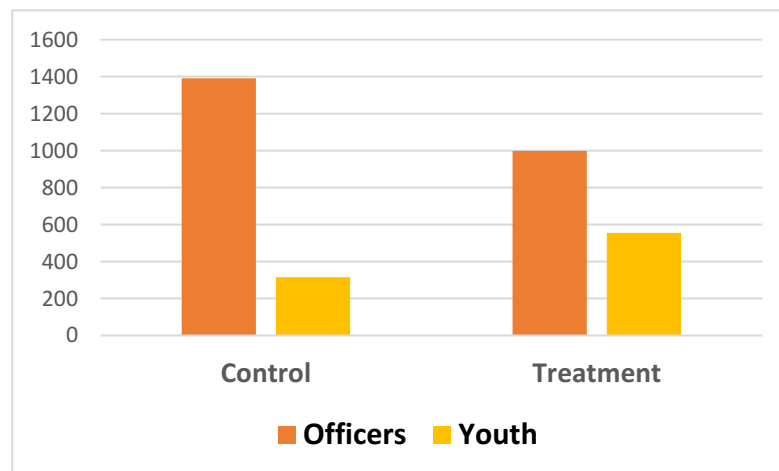
This line of inquiry led us to name and define four overarching discourses, which emerged from the most frequently coded actions and themes participants voiced during the workshops: **“Power Differentials,” “Seen & Heard,” “Hoping for a Change,”** and **“Fair vs. Biased Policing”**. These discourses unified the 75 categories of action statements, and 10 themes, thus illustrating how participants envisioned real and imagined police-youth interactions in the Eden Area. We summarize each discourse below:

- i. **Power Differentials**: Power imbalances are a defining characteristic of traditional police-youth interactions. Within this discourse, our study participants confronted power dynamics they observed between each out-group. Importantly, the study conditions (i.e., control vs. treatment) positioned participants to engage with power differentially, in ways that challenged and supported the dominant hierarchy of police-youth relations. Questions raised when exploring this discourse included: *Who has power over certain domains? Who is feeling powered to act in specific ways?*

Our analysis found the control/film sessions to be associated with power imbalances between officers and youth (i.e., top-down exchanges), while the treatment/storytelling sessions empowered more equitable interactions.

Words Spoken: One example of this power differential is indicated in **Chart 2** (p. 31), which shows how control sessions positioned officers to speak an average of 4 times more words than youth, whereas officers in the treatment sessions spoke only 1.8 times more than youth, and treatment youth spoke more words than control youth. Though workshop size also played a role – sessions with fewer participants allowed for more words to be spoken – the study condition was the most powerful predictor of word count. We interpret this finding as an indicator that youth felt empowered to speak more in the storytelling session when compared to youth in the control condition.

Chart 3.2. Average words spoken by participants in each study group condition



Discussions: Power differentials also arose in the content of the workshop discussions. See **Chart 3** (p. 32) for an illustration of these differentials. The control group sessions were dominated by “**imbalanced interactions**” that put officers on the defense wherein they were teaching and correcting misinformation about policing practices, which led them to justify ambiguous policing practices more than their treatment group counterparts. Control group

officers spent more time describing bad police-community interactions, defending the Sheriff's Office, explaining their intent/role/policies, questioning the motives of others, and questioning/blaming community members when compared to those in the treatment group. This trend can be seen in the following quote from a control group officer whose response to the film discussion led him to teach youth about the importance of compliance:

"Everything we're saying, it all goes back to compliance. A lot of the things we find ourselves getting involved in physically is because people like, they like to be right at the wrong moment. They don't understand there's a time and place to speak your mind and get people to understand where you're coming from. But when an officer is giving you directions, that's not the time to try to impose your will on the situation."

In this way, control workshop conditions positioned officers to justify the dominant social hierarchy wherein they define right and wrong and are more cautious when compared to participants in the treatment condition. Many control group officers questioned the motives of community members and in some cases blamed them for negative encounters using statements like, "*she created the situation*" or "*you never know what you're getting into*". Reminiscent of findings Rothman (2006) found in his qualitative study of police-community conflict in Cincinnati, Ohio, officers in our study expressed an "us vs. them" sentiment, which justified their use of force³¹. Similarly, control group youth responded to similar "lessons" from officers by describing uncertainty about how to behave, as one 14-year-old boy stated:

"It's just like – it's a hard thing for me because I don't know. You never know if he's going to shoot. And for police, you never know if he has a gun, like I said."

On the other side, treatment group participants engaged in discussions that were dominated by "**peer-to-peer interactions**," which they navigated using trusting language and reflecting on the meaning of the session and their own self-concept. Perspective-taking made them spend more time building bridges, expressing gratitude, praising each other, and talking about lessons

learned when compared to the control group, which positioned them to feel more vulnerable, open, safe, and even share personal stories for the first time. An officer illustrated this well:

“Because in my mind, you know, she’s an equal to me. Just a member of a community. And although we’re seen as different when we wear a uniform, we’re just one of you guys when we’re not in uniform.”

Teens in the treatment group described finding common ground and building bridges with officers in ways that made them feel similar, as this 15-year-old girl described:

“But when you take the time to go through this, you can find out that, you know, he has his own struggles, and the he’s just like you, really.”

Officers in both conditions justified the power differentials at play when officers must use force. The following quote from a treatment group officer encapsulates the way officers in both study conditions reframed police violence:

“Using force against people is, unfortunately, a part of our job. If people aren’t doing what we need them to do or if they’re attacking someone or attacking us, we have to take control of that situation. And sometimes that means we have to use certain levels of force. And from the outside looking in, and looking at it, it may look like there’s police brutality or re-categorized as that, when in fact it’s we’re using what force is necessary to try to contain that situation and keep people safe.”

In summary, officers in both conditions justified their authority to a certain extent. However, by using a problem-centered approach to talk about police-youth distrust, control group sessions replicated the imbalanced power dynamics predominant the social order with greater frequency. Conversely, that treatment group sessions’ ability to use empathy to dismantle distrust created a counter-narrative and more balanced, trusting exchanges.

- ii. **Seen & Heard**: Within this discourse, officers and youth described why being seen and heard was important for their work, self-concept, and ability to engage in positive interpersonal contacts. This discourse comprised elements of speech and workshop conditions that rendered participants **visible** and **invisible**. Both control and treatment group participants described experiences that made them feel invisible and distinguished public assumptions from reality.

However, only the treatment group participants were positioned to express what it felt like to be seen by one another during the study session.

To make youth see them for who they are beneath the uniform, control group officers defended and explained the intentions behind police actions and how they overcame public misperceptions. They accomplished this by dismissing assumptions, normalizing their work, and humanizing their choices through phrases such as “*we have to go home, too*” and “*cops are doing good stuff*”. They also called attention to their status as a racial minority and demonstrated their familiarity with the local community, life/work experience and knowledge as evidenced by statements such as, “*I grew up out here,*” and “*I’ve been pulled over more when I’ve been a cop than before I got hired*”. In one case, a control group officer described the community response to his kind policing approach:

“And one of my favorite things to hear after I pull over a person of color – to be straight up, if it’s a Hispanic or an African-American – is, “Wow, you’re pretty cool. How come all the other officers can’t be cool like you?”

To render their perspectives visible, control workshop youth told personal stories about their proximity to bad police-community interactions and trauma. Most teens in control groups had no direct experience with officers, but those who did described trauma exposure in detail, such as a 14-year-old boy who said, “*And it’s more things that I’ve seen, like, people getting shot. I’ve seen that before.*” For the most part, control group youth repeated stories they heard from their parents about perceived police bias.

In general, however, feeling visible was a struggle for control group participants. Instead, they focused on workshop elements that made them feel **invisible**, which they related to media portrayals, negative police-community interactions, and distrusting language, much of which was highlighted in the control group sessions. They tried to bring attention to the fact that cops face discrimination that goes unnoticed. They also distinguished their behavior from “bad”

behavior like racial profiling and brutality by describing the “*one bad apple*” phenomenon, as a female control officer described here:

“There's always gonna be a person that just is horrible at their job -- does things that they're not supposed to do. And I think that goes for law enforcement as well. We have cops out there that have just made a bad name for what we represent, what we put on this uniform for, what we sacrifice our lives for.”

Alternatively, the treatment workshop positioned participants toward **visibility** because it provided each participant a structure for discussing experiences when they were misunderstood and what they wished others knew about who they really are. In their perspective-taking encounters, participants demonstrated self-awareness, used trusting language, and engaged in peer-to-peer interactions such as building bridges and revealing stories about times when they felt attacked or made mistakes (See **Chart 3**). These trends led treatment participants to be 100% more likely to discuss ways their expectations of one another were defied during the study session, suggesting a shift in out-group perceptions took place.

“I just thought this whole exercise was good because I mean we didn't know each other at all prior, and it's like, now you kind of break through some boundaries and break through the ice. And you're sharing some personal stuff and you're talking about it. So, I think it's good... I think I learned was just an appreciation.”

Treatment group youth echoed a similar a shift in their views of police and said the storytelling session defied their expectations, gave them confidence, and made them feel respected, as is illustrated in this quote from a 16-year-old girl:

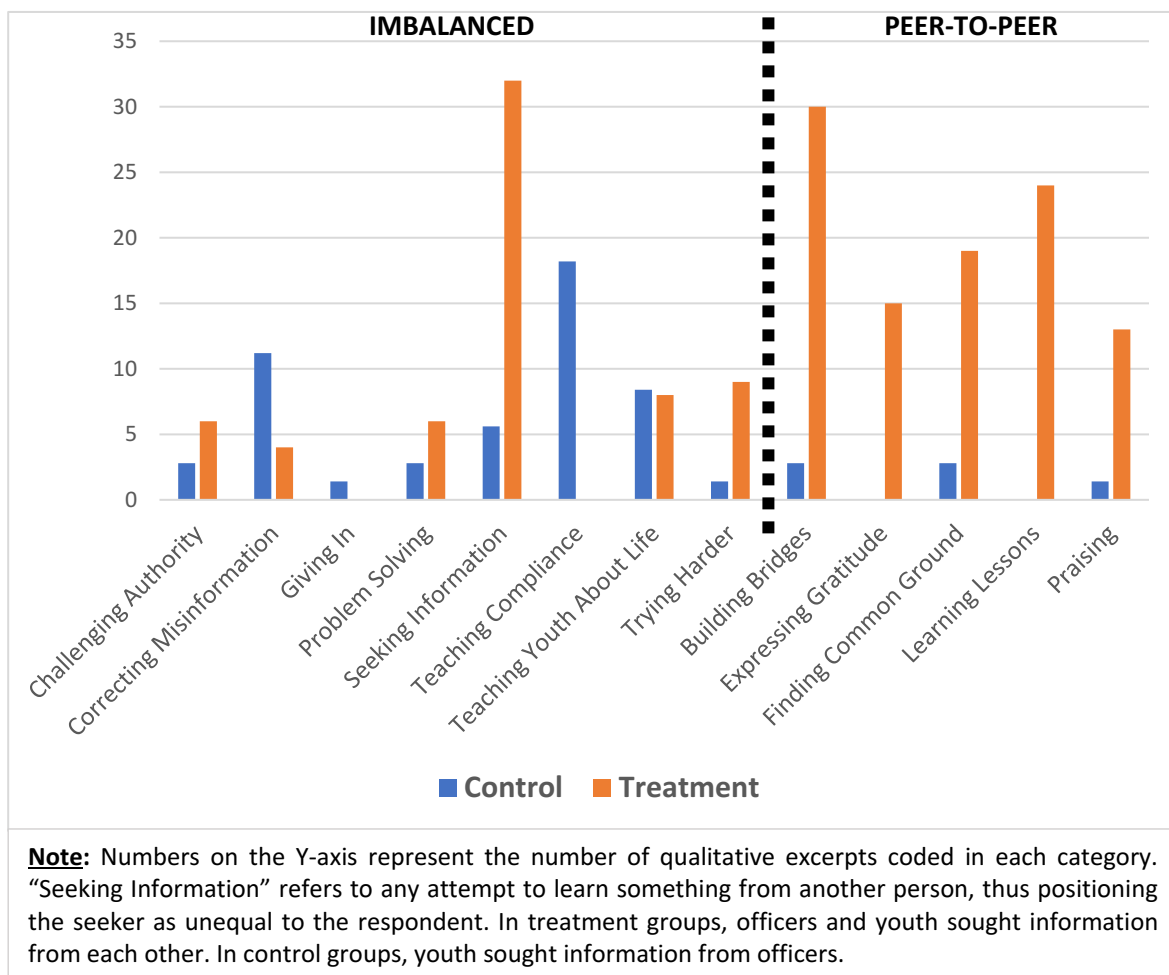
“I actually didn't think that you could actually talk to police officers. Because like before this, I actually felt, like, I don't know... I felt like – no offense to anybody – but people of color... I just felt like we had no respect and that they were higher than us. And then, we're all sitting. So, I felt like now I can talk to police officers with confidence.”

In summary, by seeking to build trust directly through shared understanding and empathic exchange, rather than discussing the general nature of distrust, the storytelling workshops allowed officers and youth to feel seen and heard in ways not felt in traditional police-youth dialogue sessions. Treatment participants used language to suggest empathy – putting

themselves in another person’s shoes – mediated the association between participation and feeling greater trust. A 16-year-old treatment participant captured it best as she put herself in the shoes of the officer attendees:

“You know, it’s a tough job. But I really appreciate the fact that you guys were here. And that even though we’re told like sometimes you have to wait until you’re an adult to hear your voice, or like, to even speak up – adults are still considering listening up to us. As in the past, we were like, always told like, wait the time until you speak. So, that’s what I’ll take the most of: Being heard.”

Chart 3.3. *Types of Workshop Interactions – Imbalanced vs. Peer-to-Peer*



- iii. **Hoping for a Change:** Within this discourse, officers and youth discussed their visions for ideal local police-community interactions -- elements and qualities they valued and those they didn’t. Overall, this sample wanted to see more unity within their community, unity between

police and communities, reflections of good policing in popular discourse, opportunities for honest dialogue, and some policy changes for ACSO.

Officers and youth in both study conditions discussed the pitfalls of negative media portrayals of police, particularly on social media. This made officers feel misunderstood and mischaracterized, and made their job more difficult. Many argued for fairer depictions or their own media channel, as this control group officer describes:

“The media is all over that [bad] stuff right there. Why ain’t they there when all the good stuff is happening as well? You know what I mean? All the good stuff... that law enforcement does for the community. That needs to be on the media as well. Sometimes it is, but 90% of it is not. So, I think there needs to be more positive impacts with the media so that people... That way the community members don't just say, ‘Oh cops are doing bad stuff.’”

For youth, negative media portrayals of police and excessive force also contributed to fear and a feeling of ubiquitous violence, even though few participants had experienced direct negative experiences with local officers. One 14-year-old described this phenomenon:

“...It’s like all around the world every news you see, oh, Black Lives Matter. Every news: a police fallen. It’s just all around, it’s like nothing you can miss. It’s hard to miss it especially with social media on the phone. So, it’s nothing.”

Youth and officers said they wanted more opportunities to engage with young people in the area in positive ways, so they’re not seen as “stormtroopers” who only show up when things go wrong. Additionally, officers said they were tired of seeing “*the same old white people*” show up to all their community events, and youth said they wanted to see more officers at their schools and events, beyond their school resource officers. All participants who discussed their hopes for the future suggested it was a process that included effort from both police and community members, though some officers suggested they felt like they were “trying harder” to build trust than community members.

Participants also had ideas for **policy changes** for the ACSO including:

- Increase the minimum age for deputies from 21 to 25

- Training on white privilege and how to discuss it
- More cultural competency and diversity training

Several treatment group officers said they wanted to see aspects of The Trade Project embedded into their current practices. Many said they felt constrained by some of their policies that made them appear cold, distant, or unrelatable. They said they are often required to “*follow the script*” and are rarely given opportunities to discuss their stressors with community members. One officer expressed his interest in a structured story-sharing activity this way:

“You know, cops are going call-to-call. And kids are in their own world. And the community is in its own world. And the only time where they intersect is on the worst day of somebody’s life... It’s tough to grow organically, but if something like this is blended into the fabric of the job and in the community culture, then yeah it can be beneficial.”

These visions of change echo sentiments and solutions conveyed by key stakeholders in the Eden Area (see **Paper 1**), which suggests external validity of the results. The construction of shared hopes and visions positioned participants to feel open, heard, and safe.

iv. **Fair vs. Biased Policing**: Within this final discourse, police and youth shared their views on the belief systems that guide policing approaches and inform the expectations they set for others. This discourse comprised speech and actions that suggested participants’ outlooks and actions were grounded in beliefs of fairness or inherent bias. Researchers have established that a divergence of such beliefs can reduce individuals’ and communities’ willingness to be vulnerable, which can be a barrier to trust^{1,32}. Here, participant role (e.g., officer vs. youth) was more predictive of belief systems than was study group assignment. One question guided our discursive exploration: *What social structures were reproduced in participant discourses?*

Fair Policing: Officers – mostly those randomized to the control group condition – consistently voiced beliefs in the fairness of legal processes and “equal opportunity for all,”

which they tied to notions of accountability for individuals and communities. In multiple groups, officers stated, *“everyone should be accountable for their own actions,” “If I did something wrong, I can expect to get in trouble for it,”* and *“we’re all level”*. When discussing the possibility that some policing practices are unjust, officers said, *“that’s why we have the court system”*, an endorsement that suggests the U.S. legal system is accessible for all community members and will redress all wrongs. These beliefs are made evident in the following quote, where a Latino control group officer discussed his perspective:

“We have every single opportunity to succeed in this country. That's why it's one of the greatest countries in the world because we have opportunity and we should... We need not make excuses and not be at certain places where we can't be because of the color of our skin.”

As is implied by the previous quote, officers who considered themselves racial or ethnic minorities often explicitly referenced their race, ethnicity, and nativity when discussing issues related to procedural justice in this study (see **Table 3.2**, “Embracing Race”). According to a Dedoose analysis of co-occurrence patterns of coding categories, referencing their race positioned officers to demonstrate their life experiences and discuss similarities with youth participants, thereby providing a bridge for them to teach teens to support their beliefs.

Race-Conscious Bias: Youth participants, however, were skeptical about suggestions that equal opportunities for all had been achieved. Teens in treatment and control group workshops consistently referenced historical racism, national trends that suggest racially biased policing, activism movements such as Black Lives Matter that call for more justice, and anti-police sentiment among their friends who were profiled because of their race or ethnicity. The Eden Area’s proximity to Oakland was also a factor, with many youth noting the well-documented biases in the Oakland Police Department²⁶. Even young people who had no direct negative experience with police implied that race mattered for real and imagined interactions, which is made clear in statements such as:

“Uh, I’m Latino, so every time I walk near cops, I get kinda nervous.”

Youth assigned to different study conditions were positioned to discuss different aspects of perceived biased policing. Treatment group youth were positioned to question and challenge officers about aspects of their policies and practices they found problematic such as the use of force with women and children and police brutality. Youth in the control condition were prompted to discuss what their parents taught them about interacting with police, and most said they were told to treat them with respect and “be calm.” Black and mixed-race youth participants said their parents were told about the possibility for them to experience discriminatory practices from police. For example, a 14-year-old control boy recounted:

“So, I seen it because when I started knowing stuff at a younger age because I had to know – there was no getting out of it or not knowing it because I was a black male, I guess, so I had to know it. I didn’t know why.”

Officers in the treatment condition discussed biased worldviews they encountered on the job. One white male officer said he was discriminated against because of his race when he was a young deputy working in a majority-black detention facility, before sharing his story of persistence and dedication to the needs of urban communities. Other officers – white and non-white – described discrimination experiences they encountered due to their occupation including being called derogatory names (e.g., “*Fake Mexican*,” “*pig*”) and being yelled at (e.g., “*F*** the police*,” “*Hands up, don’t shoot*”) during routine investigations or patrol shifts. Officers attempted to make sense of these incidents, with many concluding that people who yelled hurtful things would be kinder if they got to know them personally.

4.5 Examining Participant Subjectivity

In our final stage of FDA, we focused on subjectivity with the following question: “*What can be felt, thought, and experienced from within various subject positions?*” We found that control group workshop conditions positioned officers to embody the role of teacher and authority figure,

whereas the treatment group workshop positions positioned officers and youth to embody the roles of peers who gained from listening to each other. Though officers in both conditions wanted to teach youth participants, only officers randomized to the treatment condition expressed interest in learning from teens in the room. When we traced the possibilities for action and social practices enabled by the discursive constructions we identified in the text, we saw that treatment group participants expressed an interest in practicing aspects of active listening, empathy, and vulnerability outside the group, whereas control group participants left their sessions without any pronounced indication about how their actions might be shaped by workshop participation. The discursive patterns suggest that police-youth interactions became more nuanced and lateral in the treatment group sessions, compared to the didactic, back-and-forth of the control group sessions.

5. DISCUSSION

In this sample, quantitative findings were not sufficient for explaining participant workshop experiences or shifts in trust, empathy, and social prejudice. Qualitative discourse analysis added a necessary layer of nuance to understanding the barriers, facilitators, and constructions that allow and disallow positive, negative, and ambiguous police-youth interactions. Though the quantitative results did not show a difference between the effect of the two study workshop types, it is clear from the qualitative data that in this sub-sample, the treatment group positioned participants to behave more equitably, more vulnerably, and engage in deep listening; whereas the control group design led to a reproduction of the social hierarchy and put officer participants on the defensive. These results suggest that there are clear social benefits to structuring police-youth interactions in ways that allow for restorative, narrative-based peer-to-peer interactions, instead of relying on problem-centered dialogue to dismantle distrust sentiments between the two groups.

This research supports social psychology studies that have found willingness to be vulnerable is necessary to increase interpersonal and institutional trust, both key factors in the public's willingness to cooperate with police and see law enforcement officials as legitimate¹. When examining the discursive categories that co-occurred with greatest frequency to trusting language, we found participant vulnerability, openness, and a willingness to reveal and reflect on life challenges. Furthermore, our research shows that having problem-centered discussions about police-youth distrust is not productive unless youth's voices are given an equal seat at the discussion table and officers are given the opportunity to let down their guard.

This study also suggests that officers on the frontlines of enacting policing reforms are struggling to respond to negative media portrayals and distrust sentiments with their existing tools. Control group officers in this sample couldn't make sense of the reason actions are taken to intervene trusting behaviors involved a willingness to dismiss hierarchical social roles and see

Limitations

This was a modest analysis of pilot data arising from a small pilot study in a rapidly changing, under-resourced urban area, therefore, these results are not representative of anyone outside the sample. The 36 participants in this subsample represent less than half of the randomized pilot trial respondents who met an arbitrary cut-off for high-change over the 4-week study period. For this reason, study results cannot be generalized across the entire study sample without further analysis of those workshop transcripts. Furthermore, there may have been unintentional effects linked to using the "high change" text selection approach, including overlooking alternative discursive patterns that emerged in other workshop sessions. Additionally, we cannot use FDA to unearth universal truths or generalize findings to the wider Eden Area, California, or other cities undergoing law enforcement reforms. Moreover, this study took place at a tense historical moment

for police-community relations in the Eden Area, so it is not certain that we would achieve the same findings if the study were to be repeated today. What we can say with confidence is that this analysis is an account of the content, organization, and functions of the texts in the sample of data in a particular time period where these notions had great implications for local policy²⁹.

Due to the lengthy FDA analysis process, we were only able to conduct a partial analysis of data within this sample, which prevented us from exploring several emerging findings that warrant further study. For example, we noticed that participant uses of “I” and “We” may have followed patterns that are attached to study group conditions and participant roles.

Conclusions & Implications

This work represents the first study of its kind in a mixed group of police and youth to use FDA and mixed research methods in a public health, psychology and criminal justice context. We successfully structured a storytelling intervention across multiple sites of intervention and found similar effects in treatment group participants. Furthermore, we have shown that brief exposures to storytelling and perspective-taking can have lasting psychosocial impacts on officers and youth. We have also shown that there are limits to what validated measures of trust and empathy can capture, and that other psychosocial outcomes – such as social prejudice, the equity of exchange, and participants’ active listening skills – may be important targets to measure over time. This work also shows the limits of traditional police-youth dialogue sessions and community policing initiatives. The spirit, nuance, and vulnerability within police-youth interactions may be equally or more important than the mere presence of officers at schools and community events. Our findings have implications for policing agencies in Alameda County who are engaged in the police reform movement who are willing to incorporate, incentivize, and measure non-traditional engagement activities into daily policing practices.

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CONCLUSION

This dissertation research has applied a combination of experimental, quantitative and advanced qualitative methods to explore the ways storytelling and perspective-taking directly impact self-reported empathy, trust, and social prejudice among a sample of police and urban youth of color in an area that is undergoing rapid change and policing reforms. This first-of-its-kind study successfully convened an academic-community partnership to use community-engaged, theory-based, and empirically grounded principles to guide the development and implementation of a prosocial trust-building intervention. Though our sample size was small, the emerging evidence suggests that exposure to a brief, 90-minute narrative-based perspective-taking intervention has greater impacts on social prejudice and satisfaction trust at the end of a four-week study period when compared to a traditional police-youth dialogue approach. Furthermore, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis revealed what our quantitative study could not – that the perspective-taking intervention had a nuanced and powerful impact on the language and behaviors of its participants. Skeptical officers and urban youth who were initially distrusting of law enforcement became more vulnerable and equitable in their words, when compared to their counterparts in the control group who reproduced top-down exchanges that typify police-youth interactions.

The implications of this pilot research extend to public health, social psychology, and criminal justice reform. This research joins the growing body of literature that tests the impact of storytelling and perspective-taking as powerful tools for health promotion and health equity in vulnerable populations. It contributes to efforts that explore the multilevel pathways to building trust and establishing legitimacy between police and youth of color as a means of laying the groundwork for effective policing, civic engagement, and related public health programs. The study design promoted psychosocial community health while responding to calls from leading

public health figures and policymakers to introduce more cross-sector collaboration and action-oriented advocacy into the field.

On a macro-level, this research supports and contributes to a growing body of applied, community-based efforts, which aim to leverage the power of narrative and the expressive arts to promote social change and accelerate the fight for equity in policing. These applied efforts can be found in the narrative change work currently underway in communication science and across the private sector. Best-selling author, Jeff Chang, has asserted that cultural shifts precede political change. Similarly, there is growing recognition that shifts in the national discourse on criminal justice reform are partially driven by the beliefs, lived experiences, and narratives of U.S. residents. Therefore, the process of shifting hearts and minds is a form of social justice practice. With this framing, it makes sense to support and explore the impact of initiatives that support the construction of counter-narratives as a means of systems change.

In conclusion, building police-youth trust is a complicated pursuit that cannot only be fought at the system-level of influence. The dynamic, multi-dimensional nature of both empathy and trust as psychological and interpersonal constructs demands dynamic and multilevel responses introduced by collaborative sectors consistently over time. Based on our experiences in this study, we recommend policing agencies already undergoing institution-level procedural justice reform might benefit from more research partnerships and the inclusion of narrative writing, perspective-taking, and restorative practices into their youth programming. Furthermore, to respond to the social determinants of police-community trust, we recommend that law enforcement agencies invest in psychological support resources for officers and local youth, especially those facing socioeconomic distress and discrimination experiences, which threaten health and intergroup relations.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Writing Prompts for Treatment Group Perspective-Taking Activity

1. **Tell us a story about a moment when you felt misunderstood by someone in your community. When did someone get the wrong idea about you?**
 - The person can be a stranger, a friend, a family member, or a visitor you only met once.
 - The story could have happened recently or years ago.
 - The story must be true.
 - BE SPECIFIC: Where does the story take place? How old were you?
2. **How did that moment affect how you felt about yourself at the time?**
3. **What do you wish that person understood about who you really are?**
4. **BONUS:** What song, poem, quote, or other piece of art reminds you of that moment -OR- helps you feel better in moments when you feel misunderstood?

The Trade Process

STEP 1: The Request

- One person asks: **“Do you want to trade?”**
- The partner says: **“Yes.”**

STEP 2: The Agreement

- Shake hands
- Give your story to your partner
- Sit at your assigned table

STEP 3: Reflection

- Read your partner’s story silently to yourself.
- Think about how you would feel if this happened to you.
- When you’re done reading, look up and wait for your partner to meet eyes with you.
 - ***Raise your hand when you’re ready to read aloud your partner’s story***

STEP 4: Listening

- TEEN: **“Are you ready to listen?”**
- OFFICER: **“Yes.”**
- TEEN: Read officer’s story aloud as if it happened to them.
- OFFICER: **“Thank You.”**
- OFFICER: **“Are you ready to listen?”**
- TEEN: **“Yes.”**
- OFFICER: Read teen’s story aloud as if it happened to them.
- TEEN: **“Thank You.”**

STEP 5: Gratitude

- Discuss the stories you wrote and the trade process with your partner.
- Return to the circle when you’re done.

APPENDIX 2

Table 3.3. Summary of differential 4-week changes in quantitative measures of empathy and trust (n=36)

	EMPATHY		TRUST					
	Empathic Concern	Perspective Taking	General Trust	Institution Trust	Policing Legitimacy	Policing Satisfaction	Police Contact	Social Prejudice
CONTROL WORKSHOP 1								
Officer 1	+Change					+Change		
Officer 2	+Change	+Change						+Change
Officer 3								+Change
Youth 1				+Change	+Change		+Change	
Youth 2	+Change	+Change	+Change		+Change			+Change
CONTROL WORKSHOP 2								
Officer 1	+Change					+Change		
Officer 2			+Change	+Change				
Officer 3	+Change							
Officer 4	+Change	+Change		+Change				
Officer 5	+Change	+Change			+Change			
Youth 1		+Change						
Youth 2		+Change						
Youth 3	+Change	+Change		+Change				+Change
Youth 4		+Change						+Change
Youth 5		+Change				+Change		
TREATMENT WORKSHOP 1								
Officer 1	+Change							+Change
Officer 2	+Change	+Change						+Change
Officer 3	+Change	+Change						+Change
Youth 1	+Change	+Change			+Change	+Change	+Change	+Change
TREATMENT WORKSHOP 2								
Officer 1		+Change						
Officer 2	+Change	+Change		+Change		+Change		
Officer 3			+Change					
Youth 1				+Change	+Change	+Change	+Change	+Change
Youth 2				+Change				
Youth 3	+Change		+Change			+Change		+Change
TREATMENT WORKSHOP 3								
Officer 1						+Change		
Officer 2	+Change	+Change		+Change				
Officer 3	+Change	+Change	+Change					+Change
Officer 4				+Change				+Change

NOTE: This table only reflects positive changes in quantitative measures of empathy, trust, and social prejudice. Negative changes are not displayed. Participants highlighted in yellow met the study investigators' criteria for "high change" (positive increase in both dimensions of empathy AND/OR 3+ dimensions of trust). Social prejudice was not an indicator of "high change", but it is included in this analysis given its uneven 4-week increase in the treatment group compared to the control group.

APPENDIX 3

Table 3.4. Topics covered in expressive-writing exercise following prompt: “*Tell us a story about a time in your life when you felt misunderstood.*”

Officer Story Topics	Youth Story Topics
Conflicts with civilians	Conflicts with romantic partners
Conflicts with colleagues	Conflicts with friends
Discrimination from residents	Conflicts with parents
Military training	Conflicts with teachers
Overcoming racial/ethnic prejudice	Overcoming racial/ethnic prejudice