ORIGINAL PAPER

Working to Improve Youth-Police Interactions: A Pilot Evaluation of a Program for Young People

Rebecca L. Fix[1] · Monique Jindal[2] · Adam D. Fine[3]

Abstract

In addition to training law enforcement personnel in strategies to promote positive youth-police interactions, equipping youth with similar knowledge is critical in ensuring safe and effective youth-police encounters. The classroom-based Juvenile Justice Curriculum was designed to equip young people with knowledge about the law and their rights and to empower them to have safer interactions with police. In the current study, we conducted the first evaluation of Strategies for Youth's nationally recognized classroom-based intervention. Cross-sectional data were collected from 155 youth (M age = 15.3; 43% White, 23% Black; 61% boys) after they completed the Juvenile Justice Curriculum. Results from our study indicated young people learned new information regarding what leads to arrest and multiple ways they might consider changing their behaviors when interacting with police. Young people's negative experiences with police officers were significantly associated with reduced views that police respect them and reports that they respect police, and with increased views of police as ethnoracially biased after completing the program. Altogether, our pilot program evaluation of this program demonstrated increased awareness of what constitutes illegal behavior, program engagement, and learned strategies to improve future interactions with police. Findings highlight the importance of policy makers supporting programming like the Juvenile Justice Curriculum as one means of preventing juvenile legal system involvement. While the onus to ensure safe and effective interactions with police should not be on young people, empowering young people to understand the law and their rights may help improve the social climate surrounding community responses to police and police interactions.

Keywords Law enforcement · Adolescent · Intervention · Evaluation · Universal prevention

---

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

Springer

Young people aged 12–25 experience high rates of surveillance and contact by the police. In 2018 alone, more than 10 million (23.7% of) U.S. young people age 12–21 experienced a police encounter, the majority of which were initiated by police (Harrell & Davis, 2020). The average age of first contact with police is 12 (Geller & Fagan, 2019). Still, these experiences can occur as early as age 8, especially for Black young people who tend to experience a preponderance of contact and force when interacting with police compared to their White counterparts (Cohen & Piquero, 2008). Data from Fatal Encounters found that the risk of being killed by the police was 3.2 to 3.5 times higher for Black men and boys compared to White men and boys (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). Similar trends are seen in experiences of violence during police contact with Black people being 5 times as likely to experience injury (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). Relatedly, a summary of data from the Bureau Justice of Statistics demonstrated that young people aged 16–29 and those who identified as Black were more likely to experience use of force or threat during police encounters (Eith, 2011).

Beyond loss of life and physical injury, there is a growing body of evidence supporting the inverse relationship between police contact and the overall health and well-being of young people. A recent systematic review contends that police contact should be considered a critical determinant of health (Jindal, 2021) given it is theorized to function as a unique type of childhood trauma (for a theoretical framework on this perspective, see DeVylder et al. (2020)). More specifically, exposure to police has been linked to poor mental health consequences ranging from anxiety (Geller, 2014) and depression (Turney, 2020). General strain theory (Agnew, 1992, 2005) is useful here as it views delinquency as a way of coping with distress produced by experiencing strain. Specifically, experiencing negative events (e.g., bias, discrimination, procedurally unjust treatment) may generate emotional distress, which may in turn cause youth to engage in delinquency or other maladaptive behaviors as a way of alleviating that distress (see Burt et al., 2012). Indeed, police contact has also been associated with adoption of maladaptive coping mechanisms (Graham, 2014) as well as impaired future orientation (Kendrick, 2007) and risk-taking behaviors including substance use (Nordberg, 2018) and sexual risk behaviors (Garcia, 2015). Outside of the health context, academic outcomes (Fine et al., 2022; Legewie, 2019) and future involvement with the criminal legal system have been related to childhood police encounters, as well (Fine, 2020).

This growing evidence alongside widely publicized violent encounters with police have reignited public discourse regarding the impact of such police encounters and a demand for associated interventions (American Public Health Association, 2018). Solutions-oriented approaches exist at multiple and often co-existing levels as highlighted in Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model (1979), including the macro- (policy, organizational), meso- (community) and micro-level (individual). Macro-level solutions may include policy reform regarding limits to use of force with young people, body camera use, funding availability or proactive policing practices, whereas micro-level solutions may include training for police, young people or both simultaneously (DeVylder, 2021). To date, micro-level solutions have largely targeted police officers and have shown trainings in procedural justice can impact use of force (Owens, 2018; Wood, 2020), and trainings in de-escalation (Mehari, 2021) and behaviors specific to young people (LaMotte, 2010) can improve knowledge and

attitudes toward youth. However, educational programs with similar goals directed towards young people are less common. Theoretically, it is critical to educate not only the people in positions of power but to also empower those vulnerable to harm with knowledge and skills that can help promote their safety. As Burt and colleagues (2012) argued through leveraging strain perspectives (Agnew, 1992, 2005), preparation for biased treatment can reduce its effects on problematic behavioral outcomes. This framework is the backbone of an intervention developed by Strategies for Youth, which, as explained later, takes a conjoint approach: training police officers on best practices for policing youth and supporting young people through programming that educates them on vital information.

The strategy of equipping young people with knowledge and skills that allow them to live safely in society while experiencing improved well-being is known as positive youth development (Pittman & Zeldin, 1993). This approach has been used successfully in other areas such as prevention and treatment of youth risky sexual behavior (Gavin, 2010), diabetes (Toussaint, 2011), obesity (Millstein & Sallis, 2011), and smoking (Holden, 2004). While such programs may improve individual knowledge within a specific area, prior approaches have gone even further to show improvements in self-determination, resilience, positive identity formation, and belief in the future (Catalano, 2004). Adolescence marks a time of rapid neurophysiological and social development (Steinberg, 2007, 2017), and these changes ultimately increase irrational and risky behavior, some of which may be illegal (Steinberg & Scott, 2003; Shulman, 2016) and warrant police officer involvement. The present application involves direct conflict between children and adolescents and armed adult authority figures, whereas the others (e.g., sexual behavior, smoking, obesity) do not. In sum, emphasizing ways to promote safety during youth-police encounters is important for preventing related adverse outcomes.

Equipping young people with knowledge about their development, the law, and strategies to prevent illegal risky behavior might be one way to curtail disproportionately high rates of young people's negative police encounters. Unfortunately, this strategy alone does not address the fact that Black, Latine, and Indigenous young people (in particular) are likely to experience greater contact compared with White young people regardless of their behaviors.

One way that interventions can present a more equitable approach is to equip young people with knowledge about how to navigate the interactions when they occur, regardless of their preceding illicit behavior (or lack thereof). Aligned with strain theory, such preparation may mitigate the effects of experiencing strain on maladaptive coping through problem behaviors (see Burt et al., 2012). In addition, educating police personnel in tandem with programs focused on educating young people can help remove the onus placed on young people of ensuring safety during police encounters (yet recognizes young people must be educated given the state of affairs in youth-police interactions).

Although little is known regarding empowering young people with knowledge and skills to combat the potential detrimental consequences of police contact, there are some examples which are being used throughout the nation. One program – Bridging the Gap, sponsored by the FBI, entails having youth and police interact through playing basketball and increasing knowledge that is non-specific to the law (Castro,

2018). This program is largely under-evaluated and the only evaluation of outcomes to date did not demonstrate very robust outcomes (e.g., somewhat increasing respect for police officers; Castro, 2018). Moreover, one concerning outcome from this work was that a large proportion of participating young people who reportedly disagreed with the statement, "I am intimidated by law enforcement officers" at baseline felt neutral or agreed with the statement after completing the program. These findings suggest that participating police may not have had a dedicated training to address effective police-youth interactions or understand adolescence as a unique developmental stage. It also may suggest (but data are limited) that educating young people on the roles of police officers and the law could impact youth-police interactions and young people's perceptions of police officers.

Another such example is Strategies for Youth's program, which we refer to as their Juvenile Justice Curriculum (JJC). This program focuses on increasing young people's knowledge regarding legal/illegal behaviors and possible consequences, the downstream impact of consequences such as arrest, as well as navigating interactions between young people and police. Importantly, the implementation of JJC is also often accompanied by a dedicated training for police on policing youth and ethnoracial equity in policing youth, *Policing the Teen Brain*. More details on JJC can be found in the Implementation subsection within the below Method section and more details on *Policing the Teen Brain* can be found on the Strategies for Youth website (Strategies for Youth, 2021). While JJC has been implemented in 20 states over 10 years, this young people-directed approach has yet to be evaluated. Our team completed the first evaluation of JJC; there were two overarching research questions for this study.

1) What are young people's opinions regarding behaviors associated with arrest and interaction strategies with police officers after completing Juvenile Justice Curriculum? We hypothesized that young people would describe feeling more confident in their interactions with police yet remain concerned about police brutality based on findings from Fix et al. (2022).

2) Which individual- and school-level factors are associated with young people's perceptions of police after completing the intervention? We hypothesized that ethnoracial identity of young people, and their school's ethnoracial composition would significantly impact police perceptions such that individuals who identified as Black, Latine, or multiracial/multiethnic, and schools with proportionally more Black and Latine students would be associated with more negative police experiences and therefore more negative associations of police (Fix et al., 2021).

3) With whom and what information would the young people share about intervention content? This research question was exploratory and we conceptualized this question as a proxy for relevance of content, such that if they expressed higher rates of willingness to share (especially with peers) they thought the content was useful/appreciated the program.

4) Among participating young people, what were the main strengths and weaknesses of the Juvenile Justice Curriculum? We explored young people's perceptions of JJC strengths and weaknesses to achieving the intended outcomes of the intervention.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 155 young people[1] aged 11–19 ($M=15.1$, $SD=1.8$) who completed surveys after finishing the Strategies for Youth – Juvenile Justice Curriculum (JJC) classroom-based intervention. Participating young people from 26 schools/classrooms within four different U.S. states (Indiana (61.9%), Kentucky (9.7%), Massachusetts (23.9%), Ohio (4.5%)) had completed the JJC intervention in one of their middle or high school classrooms between 2017 and 2019. Most participants (61%) identified as boys; 43% identified their rate as White and 23% as Black. For more detailed descriptive information about participating young people, please see Table 1.

There were two key reasons schools or school districts individually requested that the JJC intervention be implemented. First, they were in locations where Strategies for Youth was providing a *Policing the Teen Brain* training, which is theorized to be most effective when implemented in tandem with JJC. Second, they learned about the JJC and requested the program be implemented at their site. Even within classrooms where the intervention was provided, some students did not attend all sessions (e.g., were sick, skipped school, did not want to participate), or participated in sessions but did not provide data after completing the JJC. Legal guardians were aware that their children were participating in the program and notified based on school-specific policies. Young people were provided with paper surveys at immediate post-JJC intervention. Young people were told that surveys were voluntary; data were initially collected for internal program evaluation purposes and not for research purposes. De-identified data were shared with the research team. IRB approval was obtained from the first author's institution to work with these de-identified cross-sectional data.
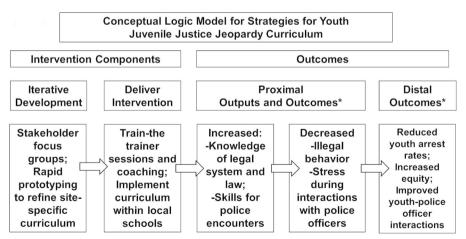
Table 1 Descriptive Characteristics of Participating Youth Post-Juvenile Justice Curriculum (N=155)	Characteristic	M (SD)
	Age (Years)	15.3 (2.0)
		%
	Race – White	43.2
	Race – Black	23.0
	Race – Other	17.3
	Ethnicity – Latine	16.5
	Gender - Boy	61.3
Note. JJJ=Juvenile Justice Curriculum	Gender - Girl	37.3
	Gender - Non-binary	1.3

[1] 408 young people began the JJC program; 155 individuals completed the survey post-JJC. Participants who did not complete the survey either did not want to complete the survey or were absent on the day that surveys were completed. The reasoning for individual participants who did not complete surveys is unknown.

Intervention

The Juvenile Justice Jeopardy Curriculum (JJC) was developed as a Tier 3 or primary prevention intervention, meaning it is provided universally to youths regardless of their risk level. The JJC was designed to be implemented in tandem with three other interventions to comprehensively improve interactions between police and young people. These three other interventions include: (1) a training for police agencies with content specific to policing adolescents (i.e., Policing the Teen Brain), (2) policy innovation specific to policing, and (3) helping police agencies identify local community organizations with whom they could partner to connect young people and their families with relevant prevention and intervention services (Strategies for Youth, 2021).

Please see Fig. 1 for an overview of the JJC logic model. A three-pronged approach is used to develop a site-specific curriculum (e.g., legal ages vary between jurisdictions, other laws or policies vary between sites) and ensure standardization and sustainability of the program. First, there is a site assessment where the organization (Strategies for Youth) meets with key stakeholders including school personnel, families, youth, police personnel, and community leaders to identify local needs and issues. They also review arrest data for youth and police department's standard operating procedures when the Policing the Teen Brain training will be implemented on site. Second, curriculum content is drafted by the organization and shared with the key stakeholders who are asked to provide feedback on potential content. This process is iterative and concludes only after all parties reach a consensus about the content. Lastly, fidelity and standardization in implementation of the JJC program is maintained through a train-the-trainer model. Namely, Strategies for Youth visits a jurisdiction and conducts training sessions for prospective JJC leaders until they demonstrate mastery. There is then a piloting of the JJC in which future leaders

Conceptual Logic Model for Strategies for Youth Juvenile Justice Jeopardy Curriculum

Intervention Components		Outcomes		
Iterative Development	Deliver Intervention	Proximal Outputs and Outcomes*		Distal Outcomes*
Stakeholder focus groups; Rapid prototyping to refine site-specific curriculum	Train-the trainer sessions and coaching; Implement curriculum within local schools	Increased: -Knowledge of legal system and law; -Skills for police encounters	Decreased -Illegal behavior -Stress during interactions with police officers	Reduced youth arrest rates; Increased equity; Improved youth-police officer interactions

*Note: To meet the intended outputs and outcomes, Strategies for Youth designed the youth-focused Curriculum to be implemented in tandem with *Policing the Teen Brain*, an intervention targeting police perceptions of youths and skills in policing youth safely and in a developmentally-appropriate manner.

Fig. 1 Conceptual Logic Model for Strategies for Youth's Juvenile Justice Jeopardy Curriculum

observe the pilot games and are then observed in their own implementation. Ongoing coaching and consultation is provided to JJC leaders as needed.

JJC has four foci: (1) increase knowledge about what is legal or illegal, (2) help young people understand the legal consequences of their actions, (3) increase knowledge about the impact of arrests and court records, and (4) help young people navigate peer and police officer interactions. There are three primary components used to provide this information to young people in JJC: didactics, role plays, and a juvenile justice jeopardy game. Didactics cover knowledge about the law, including an "at what age" exercise which focuses on teaching young people about legal age laws, and best practices in safely interacting with police. Content is customized through research on the local law and input from stakeholders who are familiar with a given jurisdiction's laws and policies.

Role plays are used to model what a typical youth-police encounter might look like. During role plays, young people are asked to play the role of a police officer, while a school resource officer (SRO) or a local patrol officer (who join the JJC for this portion of programming and stay for an additional 30–60 min to field questions) plays the role of an adolescent. Participants switch places and role play several scenarios. Lastly, JJC includes a juvenile justice jeopardy game during which young people divide into two teams and compete to answer questions about their local law, interactions with police, interactions with peers, and consequences of legal system involvement. This game is used to promote discussion, introduce new concepts ("Is it legal to videotape police?"), and test content covered in the curriculum – particularly content encouraging young people to synthesize what they learned ("You are pointing a BB gun at your friend on a street corner. Police see you. If you don't drop the BB gun and keep your hands visible, what could happen?").

Participants typically complete the JJC in a middle or high school during regular classroom hours (Strategies for Youth, 2021). The JJC often is implemented across multiple sessions, though the jeopardy game alone can be played in just 90 min. Because JJC takes place during a normal middle or high school class time, the curriculum can be implemented in any class. JJC can also be implemented in community organizations. Facilitators include either a member from the Strategies for Youth people team or an individual who has been trained by their team and who works in the local school district, often a local attorney or school social worker. The organization leading the trainings uses a train-the-trainer approach to ensure the JJC can be implemented for multiple cohorts over time.

Program Implementation

The JJC was provided over three weekly sessions during the course of a month. Sessions were provided between 2017 and 2018. Session quality was maintained through three means: (1) observation of program implementation until mastery was demonstrated, (2) program leaders were instructed to use a checklist to promote fidelity provided by Strategies for Youth, and (3) ongoing coaching sessions were provided by the Strategies for Youth site trainer to keep skills and implementation fidelity in place. Implementation quality was not assessed. Sessions associated with the current study were delivered by six different individuals.

Measures

Study Covariates

Demographics

Young people were asked to report three key demographic characteristics: their age, ethnoracial identity, and gender identity. Ethnoracial identity was measured using a single item that included four categories: White, Black, other, and Latine. Participants were only able to select one of the provided options – those who selected 'other' and wrote in two or more ethnoracial identities were classified as biracial/multiracial. Gender identity was measured as boy, girl, or other (non-binary). Young people also wrote in the name of their school on the form.

Positive and Negative Experiences with Police

Young people were asked to write a brief description of each a positive experience with police and a negative experience with police. Some young people were unable to describe a positive experience, unable to describe a negative experience, or had no history of police encounters to date (see *redacted* for more detailed information). For the current study, we coded whether young people had only a positive experience, only a negative experience, both a positive and a negative experience, or no experience with police. Having both a positive and negative experience with police was the referent category.

Learning about Police Interactions

Young people were asked where they learned how to interact with police. We included learning about police interactions from caregivers (79.4%) and teachers (45.5%) as controls in the current study because those were among the two most frequently reported responses.

School Characteristics

Similar to *redacted for peer review*, we used GreatSchools to obtain key school-level information. We first obtained school-level student ethnoracial composition, including the percentage of students identified as: Latine (*Range*=1–87%), Black (*Range*=1–84%), Asian (*Range*=0–43%), Multiracial/ethnic (*Range*=0–16%), Native North American (*Range*=0-1.0%), and White (*Range*=4–96%). We also included percentage of students from a low-income household (*Range*=1-98%). Lasty, we calculated suspension and chronic school absence disparity ratios for Latine (*Range*=0.02–3.31) and Black (*Range*=0.06–2.89) students. Disparity ratios were calculated by dividing the number of young people with suspensions or chronic absences from a specified ethnoracial group by the school population for that ethnoracial group and divided that ratio by the non-Latine or White ratio (Fix et al., 2021; Girvan et al., 2019).

Study Outcomes from JJC

Knowledge and Understanding About Behaviors that could Lead to Arrest

To evaluate what behavior young people learned could lead to arrest they were asked, "What is one action that you learned could lead to being arrested?". Young people's responses were coded into nine different categories which are discussed in the Results section below and displayed in Table 2 with further detail).

Strategies to Improve Youth-Police Interactions

Young people were asked questions about how to better interact with police and about their beliefs regarding what could lead to arrest. To gauge what types of strategies young people had learned to improve police encounters, they were asked, "Please share one way you can better interact with police?". Young people provided brief written responses which were coded inductively into six separate categories: (1) communicate more, (2) respect the police, (3) change my behavior to be less threatening, (4) avoid the police, (5) be polite when talking to police, and (6) 'I don't know'. See Table 3 for more information.

Likelihood of Disseminating Knowledge Attained

Young people were also asked questions about whether and how information from JJC should be more widely disseminated. They were first asked with whom they will share content from the JJC curriculum, and then asked a follow-up question about

Table 2 Young Peoples' Understanding about Behaviors That Could Lead to Arrest

Code	(n) %	Example statements and number of times repeated statements were used
Behavior that could be misinterpreted	22.2 (30)	"not cooperating" (n=3); "resisting arrest" (n=3); "attitude" (n=2); "not listening" (n=2); "disrespect" (n=2); "making jokes"; "lying"; "arguing"
Substance use, possession	14.1 (19)	"drugs" (n=3); "selling drugs"; "bring [sic] drugs to school"; "having weed"
Running from police	12.6 (17)	"running" (n=12); "running for no reason"; "running from the police"
Friend illegal behavior	12.6 (17)	"being in a stolen car" (n=2); "riding in a car that's been stolen but you had no idea"; "being around the wrong people"; "Buying something that was stolen"; "being at a party with alcohol or weed"
Aggression, battery	5.9 (8)	"Battery" (n=2); "assault" (n=2); "fighting"; "being forceful"
Other illegal behavior	5.9 (8)	"trespassing"; "robbery"; "being 17 and having sex with a 15 year old"; "1st degree robbery with BB gun"
Weapon possession	5.2 (7)	"posting pictures of a gun"; "not putting down your weapons"; "Bringing a weapon to school"
Touching a police officer	3.7 (5)	"touching a cop"; "pushing a police officer"; "pulling away from a copy"
Threatening someone	2.2 (3)	"threaten people"; "threat"

Note. 8% of participants provided a response that could not be categorized

Table 3 Strategies to Improve Interactions between Young People and Police

Code	% (n)	Example statements and number of times repeated statements were used
Change My Behavior	30.3 (33)	"Cooperate" (n=5); "move slowly"; "talk nicely"/"be nice" (n=5); "stay calm" (n=4); "do what they tell me to do" (n=3); "Less suspicious" (n=2); "not giving attitude" (n=2); "lower my voice"
Be Respectful	29.4 (32)	"be respectful" (n=12); "respect" (n=7); "respect them" (n=2); "show respect"
Be Polite	14.7 (16)	"be polite" (n=10); "being polite and cooperative"; "be polite and courteous"
Communicate More	11.0 (12)	"talk" (n=2); "Say hi"; "listen to police"; "communicate with them"
Avoid Police	8.3 (9)	"stay away from them" (n=2); "avoid them always, no matter what"
I Don't Know How/Other	5.5 (6)	"I don't know" (n=3); "Ftp"

what information they would share. Both questions were fill-in-the-blank. Second, they were asked who else should learn JJC content besides students/young people, and were provided with options (i.e., all young people, police officers, caregivers, clergy, school staff, professionals who work with young people, school administrative staff, everyone) and asked to select all that apply.

Perceptions of Police

Young people were asked five Likert-style (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree) questions about perceptions and beliefs about police on the post-JJC survey. These questions were: "I will avoid situations that might get me ticketed or arrested" ($M=3.54$, $SD=0.64$), "Police officers are just like everyone else" ($M=2.98$, $SD=0.90$), "I usually feel respected by police officers" ($M=2.79$, $SD=0.94$), "I should be respectful toward school police" ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.73$), and "Most police officers are biased or unfair" ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.99$). Each item was individually examined, with higher scores indicating more agreement with the statement.

Strengths and Weaknesses of JJC

To measure what young people viewed as strengths and weaknesses of JJC, they were asked to write down one thing they liked about JJC and one thing they would change about JJC, respectively. We coded reported strengths into four categories: (1) the game mechanic of the program, (2) the JJC content, (3) that programming was enjoyable, and (4) other positive aspects of JJC. Responses about program weaknesses were also coded into four categories: (1) nothing, (2) aspects of the game, (3) the difficulty of content, and (4) other negative comments. Young people were also asked to respond to a single item about the novelty of JJC content to gauge how much of the included content was new for them.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were coded using inductive methodology. Three members of our team reviewed a subset of transcripts, met to discuss emerging themes, and the first author (*redacted for peer review*) developed a codebook following these discussions. The coding team met to review the coding system. Next, all team members coded a separate subset of written responses using the codebook. Our team achieved coding overlap (interrater reliability) at or above 87% between each of the rater pairs at our first meeting. Transcripts were then divided up between team members and coded independently. The first author (*redacted for peer review*) reviewed half of the codes to ensure coding consistency.

We ran multilevel OLS models (with data nested at the classroom/school-level) to test for associations between individual- and school-level characteristics on perceptions of police and beliefs about police. For referent groups, we used boys (for gender) and White (for ethnoracial identity). We also included the two most common types of sources of information from which young people learn about how to interact with police officers: caregivers and teachers. For school characteristics, White population proportion was used as the reference group for student population make-up.

Results

Understanding About Behaviors Associated with Arrest

After completing JJC, young people were asked about an action they learned could lead to arrest. Nine categories of behaviors emerged (see Table 2). Behaviors that could be misinterpreted by police and ultimately lead to arrest was the most described (by 22% of participating young people). Young people whose responses were coded as behaviors that could be misinterpreted made statements like, "making sudden movements" or "not giving your name." More examples of such responses and responses to other categories are provided in Table 2. Remaining categories, in order of frequency with which they were used, included: substance use or possession, running from police, a friend's illegal behavior, aggression or battery, other illegal behavior, weapon possession, touching a police officer, threatening someone. Responses describing how a friend or peer's behavior could result in a young person's arrest included being with a peer who possessed a weapon, who possessed a substance, or who possessed stolen items. Some young people reported other types of illegal behavior which included illegal sexual behavior like sexting and age of consent laws. 8% of young people provided an answer to this question that was unable to be categorized, such as "none," "nothing I didn't know," and "anything."

Likelihood of Disseminating Knowledge from the JJC

Young people were asked with whom (if anyone) they might share content they learned in JJC. Half (51%) indicated they would share something learned in JJC with family members; most such responses included immediate family members. A

further 22% of young people said they would share what they learned with friends, while 16% indicated they would share content with "everyone" or someone filling another role in the young person's life. Finally, 17% of young people reported they would share the information learned in JJC with "no one" ($n=12$) or "nobody" ($n=4$).

Young people were then asked to write about what information they would share. 29% of young people wrote about how they would share strategies for more effectively interacting with police officers. For example, one 16-year-old Black boy wrote that he would tell his family, "we learned about strategies and what you have to do when you are arrested." A 14-year-old Black girl indicated her intent to caution "people around me" by saying, "be careful with who you hang around" to them.

Approximately 10% (9.9%) of young people's responses within this category also read as if the young people were afraid of police but wanted to use new information to equip their loved ones with knowledge to improve their safety. For example, one 15-year-old Latino said they would share with their siblings, "Is to don't run [sic] if they come up to you and ask your name." Similarly, a 15-year-old Latina said they would share with their cousin "to not run from police." Another 19-year-old Latina wrote that she wanted to tell her mom "to change the way she interacts with police." Perhaps also suggesting fear of police and fear of long-term consequences from interactions with police, multiple young people wrote about providing advice to others in the interest of helping them avoid being arrested (e.g., "don't be part of the system," "How to stay out of trouble," "how not to get arrested"). Latine and Black young people were proportionally more likely to make these types of statements in their written responses, meaning there was a greater likelihood that a Latine or Black young person would make this statement based on their representation in our sample compared with participating White young people.

Over a quarter (26%) of young people reported something to the effect of what they learned in JJC generally. "That I didn't know as much as I thought" wrote a 12-year-old White boy. A 14-year-old Black boy indicated he planned to talk with his parents about how he, "learned something new and I feel I can make life changes." One 17-year-old White girl also appeared eager to share information from JJC with her parents, saying, "I will tell them about everything that I learned." 21% of young people described how they would share a specific legal fact with someone; one 12-year-old Black girl planned to share with her mother, "At 18 you go to adult court, even if you are in high school" and another Black girl wrote, "I would tell [my friends] how to interact with the police." A Hispanic boy planned to tell his friends, "Be careful wit [sic] prescription drugs" and a White girl intended to let her mom know "Male police officers can pat frisk females." A 14-year-old boy who identified his ethnoracial identity as other wrote, "a lot. Hanging out with people who take risks can get you in trouble, even if you aren't doing risky stuff." One response that did not fit into any of the emergent categories (amounting to 6% of responses) is exemplified by a statement from a 16-year-old White boy who wanted to share with "My children in the future not to make the mistakes I have," suggesting the JJC inspired him to feel hope in their capacity to change outcomes for others.

Strategies to Improve Youth-Police Interactions

There were six categories that emerged from young people's responses about ways they can better interact with police following JJC (see Table 3). Approximately 30% of young people described feeling the need to change their own behavior to improve encounters. Most such statements placed the perceived onus of young people's safety during their interactions with police on the young people themselves, with young people writing things like, "become relaxed and cooperative" and "react better." 29% of young people named the need to be respectful to police to improve interactions with them. Similarly, 15% of young people wrote about the perceived importance of being polite to have more positive interactions with police. A small percentage of young people wrote about the continued feeling that they needed to avoid police (8%) or did not see a strategy that could be used to affect change in interactions between young people and police (6%).

Table 4 Multilevel Models Examining Factors Associated with Youth Perceptions of Police at Post JJC

	I will avoid police	Police respect me	Police are relatable	I respect SROs	Police are biased
	β(SE)	β(SE)	β(SE)	β(SE)	β(SE)
Individual Factors					
Age	0.003 (0.06)	−0.10 (0.07)	−0.10 (0.09)	0.04 (0.06)	0.10 (0.09)
Gender (Girl)	−0.11 (0.17)	−0.29 (0.23)	**−0.66 (0.28)**[*]	−0.17 (0.19)	0.19 (0.29)
Black Race	−0.46 (0.23)[^]	**−0.76 (0.32)**[*]	−0.34 (0.39)	−0.45 (0.25)	−0.22 (0.40)
Other Race	−0.36 (0.21)	−0.32 (0.28)	−0.39 (0.35)	**−0.53 (0.22)**[*]	−0.09 (0.36)
Latine Ethnicity	−0.29 (0.30)	0.04 (0.35)	0.22 (0.44)	0.19 (0.31)	−0.61 (0.49)
Only Positive Exp	0.37 (0.22)	**0.76 (0.29)**[*]	0.59 (0.36)	0.27 (0.23)	−0.13 (0.37)
Only Negative Exp	−0.06 (0.14)	**−0.33 (0.16)**[*]	−0.20 (0.19)	**−0.30 (0.15)**[*]	**0.61 (0.21)**[**]
No Exp with Police	0.41 (0.32)	**0.98 (0.40)**[*]	**1.32 (0.49)**[*]	0.41 (0.34)	−0.20 (0.51)
Taught by Parents	−0.41 (0.23)	−0.15 (0.27)	−0.56 (0.33)	**−0.63 (0.25)**[*]	−0.11 (0.34)
Taught by Teachers	**0.42 (0.17)**[*]	**0.62 (0.21)**[**]	−0.15 (0.26)	0.24 (0.18)	−0.26 (0.27)
School Factors					
Hispanic Students %	−0.17 (1.11)	-2.05 (1.27)	2.24 (1.57)	−0.86 (1.16)	**4.36 (1.64)**[*]
Black Students %	0.54 (0.59)	**1.38 (0.68)**[*]	−0.82 (0.84)	0.55 (0.64)	−0.96 (1.20)
Asian Students %	0.32(1.45)	1.21 (1.87)	4.14 (2.32)	-2.02 (1.63)	-1.37 (2.39)
Multiracial Students %	4.4 (4.64)	-2.35 (7.54)	8.87 (9.35)	1.78 (5.11)	8.43 (9.61)
Low SES Students %	**-1.93 (0.83)**[*]	-1.70 (1.07)	**-3.33 (1.32)**[*]	−0.82 (0.91)	0.28 (1.62)
DS Black	−0.01 (0.05)	0.07 (0.09)	0.17 (0.11)	0.04 (0.06)	−0.01 (0.12)
DS Latine	0.03 (0.06)	**−0.23 (0.11)**[*]	**−0.31 (0.14)**[*]	−0.003 (0.06)	0.11 (0.14)
DA Black	**−0.25 (0.12)**[*]	−0.09 (0.14)	−0.26 (0.18)	−0.25 (0.13)	0.09 (0.18)
DA Latin	−0.02 (0.16)	0.15 (0.19)	−0.01 (0.24)	0.18 (0.17)	0.05 (0.25)
Adjusted R²	0.29	0.54	0.37	0.35	0.31

Note. ^ = $p = .050$; * = $p < .050$; ** = $p < .010$. Bolded text reflects statistically significant associations. DA = disproportionate chronic absence rate; DS = disproportionate suspension rate; Exp = experiences with police; Relatable = just like everyone else; SROs = school resource officers

Perceptions of Police

A series of multilevel models were run to examine associations of individual- and school-level factors with perceptions of police following JJC. For more comprehensive information on these models and results, see Table 4. Among individual factors, when young people only had a negative self-described experience with a police officer (in comparison with self-described both positive and negative experiences)), there were significant associations with: reduced feelings that police respect adolescents (B = -0.33, CI [-0.65, -0.02], p = .039), reduced feelings of respect toward school resource officers (B = -0.30, CI [-0.60, -0.01], p = .041), and increased perceptions of police officers as biased (B = 0.61, CI [0.19, 1.03], p = .005). Having only negative experiences with police was not significantly associated with avoiding police or finding police relatable relative to having both positive and negative experiences. Having no prior experience with police officers in comparison with self-described experiences that were mixed (both positive and negative) was significantly associated with more feelings that police are respectful (B = 0.98, CI [0.18, 1.78], p = .039) and that police are relatable (B = 1.32, CI [0.32, 2.31], p = .011). There was not a significant association of having no experiences with police and avoidance of police, respecting school resource officers, or believing police are biased. Having only positive experiences with police was significantly associated with increased feelings that police respect the young person in comparison with self-described experiences that were mixed (B = 0.98, CI [0.18, 1.78], p = .018), but was not significantly associated with avoidance of police, feelings that police are relatable, respecting police in schools, or that police are biased. At the school-level, being in a school with a greater preponderance of suspended Latine students was significantly associated with both less feelings that police respect young people (B = -0.23, CI [-0.45, -0.01], p = .042) and that police are relatable (B = -0.31, CI [-0.59, -0.04], p = .028).

JJC Strengths and Weaknesses

An overview of young people's brief written statements concerning strengths and weaknesses of JJC is provided in Table 5. The most common category of strengths (37%) included young people indicating that learning the content of JJC was enjoyable (e.g., "learning new information", "it was interesting"). About one-fifth of young people wrote statements suggesting that they enjoyed participating in JJC (e.g., "that is was fun", "it was motivating to me"). The juvenile justice jeopardy game – which is central to JJC – was named in 17% of young people's responses. Remaining responses included enjoying role playing with a school resource officer or local patrol officer, enjoying the video clips that were used in JJC, and saying that they did not like anything about JJC (11%).

When asked about weaknesses or areas for improvement, half of young people said they would not change anything. Though the juvenile justice jeopardy game was appreciated by many, 32% of respondents provided comments specific to modifying the game, including increasing question difficulty levels and subject content, adding or removing some of the content (e.g., "make some of the questions harder", "add more questions"), and altering the structure of how the juvenile justice jeopardy

Table 5 Barriers and Facilitators of Juvenile Justice Curriculum

What is one thing you liked?	% (n)	Examples of responses (n used if multiple youth wrote the same response)
Liked Learning the Content	36.8 (49)	"learning" (n=4); "it was interesting" (n=2); "what I learned" (n=2); "fun and true facts"; "I learned new things" (n=2); "I like everything in jeopardy"; "It was fun and educational"; "learning more about the law"; "Stuff people should know"
Enjoyed the Program Overall	19.6 (26)	"it was fun" (n=7); "it was different, something new; "wasn't boring"; "Fun stuff"; "interactive"
Liked the Game	16.5 (22)	"the game" (n=4); "its like jeopardy"; "collaborating"; "the teams"
Nothing	11.3 (15)	"nothing" (n=5); "not sure" (n=2); "I don't know" (n=2)
Liked Something Else	10.5 (14)	"candy" (n=3); "it went fast"; "[staff name]"; "the interesting videos"; "they help young people"
Liked Role Playing	3.0 (4)	"I found some of the scenarios common"; "it was based on real life things"
What Would You Change?		
Nothing	50.0 (66)	"Nothing" (n=49); "none" (n=4); "I don't know" (n=5)
The Game	31.8 (42)	"make some of the questions harder" (n=11); "add more questions" (n=5); "the answers" (n=4); "teacher picking questions for us" (n=3); "give background on the questions"; "more categories to choose" (n=3)
Other	12.9 (17)	"the long talks"; "stop pointing out how privileged cops are"; "music"; "I would behave"; "More interaction"
Timing (Longer, Shorter)	5.3 (7)	"the amount of time it took"; "how late it started"; "make it go faster"; "the time"; "longer time limits"; "make it longer"

game is conducted. There were also a few (5%) comments specific to lengthening or truncating the amount of time allocated to the JJC overall.

Participants were also asked how much of the content in the JJC was new to them. Many reported very little was new (40.0%), 29.7% reported some was new, 20.7% reported most of it was new, and 9.7% indicated it was all new to them.

Discussion

In the United States, police officers are charged with protecting and serving the community. However, a growing body of literature suggests that when young people engage with police, the contact can negatively influence young people. The reality is that police encounters typically undermine positive development (Fine et al., 2021) and police contact has been linked to poor mental health (Geller, 2014; Turney, 2020), maladaptive coping mechanisms (Graham, 2014; Nordberg, 2018), and even increased delinquency (Del Toro et al., 2019). By equipping young people with knowledge about the law and best practices in safely interacting with police (provided in tandem with programing directed at policing personnel), programs like the JJC aim to empower young people to improve their own individualized experiences and to promote systemic change. Our study evaluated the JJC, finding that overall,

young people appreciated this program including the format, but that they saw room for improvement.

Young People's Legal Knowledge and Awareness

While knowledge about the law will not deter all illegal behavior, it is safe to assume it can dissuade some amount or type of illegal behavior. Educating young people about the law and providing them with a unique skillset for youth-police encounters reflects a risk and strengths-based protective factor approach (e.g., that problems can be prevented by mitgating the prevalence and influence of the causal risk and through promotion of protective factors experienced in multiple contexts). Knowledge-based interventions such as JJC have the potential to dissuade some amounts or types of illegal behavior through increased protective factors (knowledge, skills) and decreased risk (avoiding some people or situations).

All youth are vulnerable to making mistakes and bad decisions, particularly when first engaging in complex behaviors governed by complex rules and norms. For example, they may be sexting and not realize they could be legally charged and end up on a sex offender registry. Or they could witness their peers engaging in illegal behavior without realizing they could also be charged. Yet an intervention like JJC (even when paired with a police-specific training) is likely not sufficient to promote positive and equitable youth-police interactions in isolation. Given that much of human behavior is automatic and not deliberate, interventions for youth and police alike must further address automatic, natural, and non-conscious behaviors (Marteau et al., 2012). For example, interventions may target and modify existing associations like through counterconditioning (Calanchini et al., 2021). Coupled with such types of intervention, after receiving education about the law, these youth could make a more informed decision.

In tandem with programming toward more effective, safe, and positive youth-police interactions, policy reform is needed to support and maintain gains from these interventions. Of course, both must be directed by the community; that is, programming and policy reform must be welcomed and championed by the community itself (for a discussion, Fine et al., 2021). Policies across systems and communities harmed by structural racism (e.g., educational, housing, justice) reify ethnoracial discrimination and colorism and interfere with attempts toward ethnoracial equity and justice (Bailey et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2019). In recognizing that individual biases and threat perceptions can significantly influence individual-level behavior and resultant outcomes for large segments of the Black population in the U.S., public policy change will likely be the pivotal driving force for change. Put another way, we need to enact policies that will promote ethnoracial equity in arrests, incarceration, and other points of contact in the legal system. And reduce unnecessary use of force during community-police interactions.

Our study findings make an incremental addition to the paucity of literature on young people's legal awareness. This body of work is often framed within the legal socialization literature and situated within the broader capacity approach to compliance (Van Rooij and Fine, 2021). The capacity approach poses a challenging question: how can we expect individuals to abide by the law if they simply do not know

it is the law? While lacking knowledge of what is illegal does not excuse breaking the law, it is a very real concern considering young people often are uninformed and therefore display limited understanding of legal processes and rights, especially concerning Miranda warnings, sex offender registrations, and underage sexting (Cleary & Najdowski, 2019; Vidal et al., 2017; Zelle et al., 2015). Though the onus to ensure safe and effective interactions with police should not be placed entirely on youth, equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they need to combat and avoid the potential detrimental consequences of police contact can empower them. Increasing knowledge about the law among trusted adults with whom youth interact (e.g., caregiver, educators, religious leaders) may be another strategy for promoting such knowledge among youth (e.g., Fix et al., 2023).

Our study focused what young people learned from JJC about which behaviors could lead to arrest. Study findings illuminated that one-in-five young people may have been unaware that behaviors like disrespect, being uncooperative, and lying could lead to arrest. Moreover, one-in-seven learned that drug-related behaviors, such as simple possession of drugs or having drugs at school, could lead to an arrest. Further, a good number of young people became aware that simply running from police could lead to an arrest, and others learned that a friend's behavior could lead to their own arrest. That is, many young people did not know that being in a stolen car, being at a party where substances were being consumed illegally, or buying stolen property could lead to their own arrest. These findings indicate that, consistent with previous demonstrations of young people's widespread misunderstandings of legal consequences for behaviors like sexting (Cleary & Najdowski, 2019), their overall legal knowledge may be limited. Moreover, observed findings may actually be underestimates as participants might have learned more than one behavior that would lead to arrest but were not identified using the current collection method. Interventions should be developed to teach young people about what is – and what is not – illegal in order to keep them from inadvertently breaking the law (Van Rooij and Fine, 2021). Moreover, it remains important to consider whether and how educating young people on the law empowers them to promote improved interactions between police and young people at individual and systemic levels.

The Onus of Safety Falls onto Young People

We also observed young people recognizing that the onus is placed on them to remain safe during police encounters. Approximately 30% of young people described feeling the need to change their behavior, and an additional 55% felt they needed to be more respectful, polite, and communicative when engaging with police. Altogether, most adolescents believed it would be important to control both their behavior and how they communicate with police. Yet at the same time, approximately 8% believed nothing would help and thought it wiser to avoid police entirely. It is also important to highlight how young people putting the onus on themselves highlights an area for growth in JJC and related programming. Moreover, some young people described feeling helpless and the need to avoid police altogether. While these reactions are a reflection of reality, curricula like the JJC should perhaps respond to this remaining need with a review about what police officers are learning in the PTB training

to emphasize that the onus should not be on young people but on police officers. Additionally, these valid concerns should be directly named and openly discussed in future curricula.

In light of young people's lived reality, where Black, Indigenous, and Latine people disproportionately experience unfair, unjust, and biased police contact (Shedd, 2015; Zeiders et al., 2021), it is unsurprising that many caregivers with Black, Indigenous, and Latine children prepare their children for police bias – and often in unique ways compared with White caregivers (April et al., 2022; Fine & Del Toro, 2022). Primarily, this socialization practice includes "the Talk" about the police, during which caregivers explain to their children how they should behave when interacting with police (DiAquoi, 2018; Sewell et al., 2016).

While it is important that young people learn about ethnoracial and skin color bias in policing practices, the Talk typically still places the onus entirely on young people to control themselves, their behavior, and their emotions when interfacing with officers (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). Though our study did not assess the extent to which young people experience the Talk, our study findings resonate deeply with such research work. Future work should consider how to more seamlessly integrate Strategies for Youth's JJC with their policing intervention to not only empower youth to take control when they can but to ensure capacity building among police, those wielding power, to effectively improve interactions.

Young People's Perceptions of Police

Our results indicated that Black young people, as compared with White young people, felt less respected by police, and young people in schools with higher percentages of Black young people also reported feeling less respected by police. Moreover, young people's prior experiences mattered; young people with negative prior experiences reported feeling less respected by police and perceived police as more biased. Such findings align with the procedural justice framework and indicate that how police treat young people can impact young people's views of them. This partially supports the Strategies for Youth approach, which aims to simultaneously educate and provide skills-based training to police and youth in an effort to promote safer and more positive youth-police interactions (Strategies for Youth, 2021). Such findings have implications for the legal socialization literature. Legal socialization is the process through which individuals develop their relationship with the law and its enforcers (Cohn & White, 1990; Tyler & Trinkner, 2018). The dominant perspective within this literature is the procedural justice framework which suggests that when police are seen as fair, respectful, impartial, and unbiased, people are more likely to perceive them as procedurally just (Lind & Tyler, 1988), and this procedural justice enhances their legitimacy (Tyler & Trinkner, 2018). Our study emphasizes how it might be possible to modify young people's views of police, and that they are quite nuanced. For example, in our sample, we observed differences in valence of young people's police experiences on different perceptions of police (that they are biased, that they respect youth) such that negative only or positive only experiences did not have directly opposing influences of perceptions of police. There is also a need for future research work to more deeply interrogate whether and how prior perceptions

of police influence acceptability and impact of the JJC so that interventions like JJC can more directly target these beliefs and address associated problems during interactions between young people and police.

Strengthening JJC and Related Curricula

Finally, there are implications for the administration of the JJC. As this program is provided to young people across the United States with regularity, our findings are vital for future implementations. Most notably, when asked what they thought about the program, most young people indicated that they found the content interesting, and that they found the overall program fun and enjoyable. Moreover, when asked about weaknesses with the JJC program, approximately 50% of young people reported they wouldn't change anything, despite the fact that the surveys were completely anonymous.

Recommendations for improvement were predominantly associated with the Juvenile Justice Jeopardy game. On one hand, one-in-six young people reported that it was their favorite part of the JJC, yet about one-in-three indicated that it could be improved, including making questions harder, adding more topics, and contextualizing the answers. Moverover, many young people reported already knowing much of the content in JJC overall (and in the Juvenile Justice Jeopardy game in particular). Coupled with participant reports that newer and more challenging content should be added to the curriculum, this finding suggests more direct input is needed from young people to ensure that the curriculum is meeting their needs. Iterative refinement of core content through focus group discussions would also help ensure that programming is presented in an engaging manner.

Limitations

Interpretation of our study's findings must be considered in light of several limitations including methods of data collection and sample selected. First, there were limitations of our use of a posttest only design and measurement design. The posttest design makes it difficult to truly identify the effectiveness of the intervention without a control group or pre-test measures. Moreover, the research team was unable to match young people's responses over time, and young people were not randomly assigned to treatment or control (i.e., all participants completed JJC). As such, the design precludes assessing any stability or decay effects and we cannot make any causal claims. We were also unable to assess the impact of other potentially co-occurring programs such as curricula targeting development of social and emotional skills on participant outcomes. The results from the current study, especially the young people's free-response questions, however, can be used to inform which domains future studies should assess using standardized measures.

We also were limited in which aspects of intervention feasibility this study assessed, which could be expanded upon (for additional feasibility protocols see Gadke et al., 2021). To build on and replicate these findings, future studies should be designed to both measure and account for attrition, measurement invariance, and other methodological considerations.

Further, we were underpowered to assess for differences in program effects by age, ethnoracial identity, or gender identity. And, despite the geographic diversity among young people, we were underpowered to assess for any regional differences (within four different U.S. states) in study results. Cluster-randomized controlled trials with balancing would be necessary to uncover geographic or regional differences. In follow-up research work, use of data collection and participant recruitment methods to ensure higher rates of participation in evaluation research work is warranted, such as compensating participants for their time (Abdelazeem et al., 2022).

Additionally, the measurement design could be changed to better facilitate evaluation in the future. For example, in asking about single or individual positive and negative experiences with police or content learned, the evaluation likely missed deeper trends in past experiences or knowledge gained from JJC. In addition, while the methodology provided a fairly rich description of young people's experiences and the impacts of the program, future studies would benefit from using more standardized scales and measures or by triangulating data. More robust qualitative methods might further provide a deeper understanding of reactions to the intervention, including cultural appropriateness, content, and delivery could be beneficial methods for use in future work.

Future Directions

Future research could build upon our findings that suggest programs such as the JJC may help young people attain knowledge regarding the inner workings of the juvenile legal system and how to interact within it, as well as encourage downstream knowledge sharing with friends and family. To improve upon feasibility assessment in future research, more rigorous data collection and design procedures could be particularly beneficial (Gadke et al., 2021). Follow-up studies might further examine the impact of such educational programs for young people. Research could use experimental designs in conjunction with standardized measures such as perceptions of police, frequency of contact with police, and degree of intrusion within police encounters, as these variables are frequently associated with reductions in mental and physical well-being and academic achievement of young people. Such outcomes can also be interrogated on both individual and community levels to explore the impact of knowledge sharing following participation.

Studies exploring the preliminary outcomes of an educational intervention should ideally be conducted within the context of a multi-level intervention (i.e., education of police, education of young people) with the capacity to longitudinally evaluate outcomes at each level. In addition, further inquiry into how young people, caregivers, and school personnel perceive JJC – including where the onus is placed – could provide useful contextual information for current findings and help identify community members' preferred intervention targets. Contextual information about the environment in which the intervention is delivered could also be integrated into future evaluation. For example, examination of the safety and respect within the school environment and the feasibility and effects of the JJC intervention. Future research should also incorporate an RCT design that at a minimum includes pre-post test data, but ideally that also includes follow-up data.

Finally, as with any program, it is certainly plausible that the effects would be more pronounced among particular: (a) general demographic groups (e.g., younger adolescents); or (b) sampling groups (e.g., groups that have higher levels of baseline trust and relationships with police officers). That is, as adolescents of different ages have different psychological and cognitive needs, interventions may be particularly effective – or ineffective – at different stages of development (see Onrust et al., 2016). Moreover, the dynamics within the participant group may matter (see Hennessy and Tanner-Smith, 2015; Yeager et al., 2015). Future studies should consider designing implementation protocols and surveys that can address these questions. Such research designs should follow best practices, for example CONSORT guidelines or similar guidelines named within the EQUATOR Network.

Conclusion

Our study provides preliminary evidence that educational interventions targeting young people may be one step toward more safe and effective police-youth interactions. The evaluated intervention – JJC – is a promising approach but needs more in-depth evaluation and refinement through guidance from young people to be most efficacious. Our research demonstrated young people reported learning new information regarding what leads to arrest as well as multiple strategies to use when interacting with police officers. Acquisition of this knowledge is crucial for a young person to navigate such high-stakes interactions, especially during this sensitive period of development. Young people's reported willingness to alter their own behaviors may also suggest that gaining knowledge can influence motivation which ultimately may impact their actions. Participating young people also reported their desire to share information learned from the JJC with their family and friends which may corroborate the pertinence of the material to their lives and the potential for downstream and vicarious impact of such an intervention. Lastly, young people reported enjoying the intervention.

The JJC is unique in that it is coupled with an intervention for local police officers. While the onus of safe and effective youth-police interactions cannot and should not be placed soley on young people, young people must understand the law and their rights. Empowerment resulting from that knowledge may help shape the landscape of youth-police contact moving forward. Continued evaluation of the JJC and its direct and indirect impact on youth-police contact and young people's overall well-being will help inform how policymakers should support multi-pronged efforts to mitigate the detrimental consequences of police contact to young people.

Declarations

References

Abdelazeem, B., Abbas, K. S., Amin, M. A., El-Shahat, N. A., Malik, B., Kalantary, A., & Eltobgy, M. (2022). The effectiveness of incentives for research participation: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *PLoS One*, *17*(4), e0267534.

Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, *30*(1), 47–88.

Agnew, R. (2005). *Pressured into crime: An overview of general strain theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

American Public Health Association (2018). Addressing law enforcement violence as a public health issue. *Policy*, (201811).

April, K., Cole, L. M., & Goldstein, N. E. (2022). Let's "talk" about the police: The role of race and police legitimacy attitudes in the legal socialization of youth. *Current Psychology*, 1–16.

Bailey, Z. D., Krieger, N., Agénor, M., Graves, J., Linos, N., & Bassett, M. T. (2017). Structural racism and health inequities in the USA: Evidence and interventions. *The Lancet*, *389*, 1453–1463.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burt, C. H., Simons, R. L., & Gibbons, F. X. (2012). Racial discrimination, ethnic-racial socialization, and crime: A micro-sociological model of risk and resilience. *American Sociological Review*, *77*(4), 648–677.

Calanchini, J., Lai, C. K., & Klauer, K. C. (2021). Reducing implicit racial preferences: III. A process-level examination of changes in implicit preferences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *121*(4), 796–805.

Castro, J. (2018). Step by Step: Bridging the Gap between Law Enforcement and Youth. *Unpublished Dissertation*

Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *591*(1), 98–124.

Cleary, H. M., & Najdowski, C. J. (2019). *Awareness of Sex Offender Registration Policies and Self-Reported sexual Offending in a community sample of adolescents* (pp. 1–14). Sexuality Research and Social Policy.

Cohen, M. A., & Piquero, A. R. (2008). Costs and benefits of a targeted intervention program for youthful offenders: The YouthBuild USA offender project. *Social Science Research Network*, *1154055*.

Cohn, E. S., & White, S. O. (1990). *Legal socialization: A study of norms and rules*. Springer-Verlag.

Del Toro, J., Lloyd, T., Buchanan, K. S., Robins, S. J., Bencharit, L. Z., Smiedt, M. G., & Goff, P. A. (2019). The criminogenic and psychological effects of police stops on adolescent black and Latino boys. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 116(17), 8261–8268.

DeVylder, J., Fedina, L., & Link, B. (2020). Impact of police violence on mental health: A theoretical framework. *American Journal of Public Health*, *110*(11), 1704–1710.

DeVylder, J. E., Anglin, D. M., Bowleg, L., Fedina, L., & Link, B. G. (2021). Police violence and public health. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, *18*.

DiAquoi, R. (2018). Critical race life course perspective theory: A framework for understanding racism over the life course. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *31*(1), 36–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2017.1379622.

Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *116*(34), 16793–16798.

Eith, C. A., & Durose, M. R. (2011). *Contacts between police and the public, 2008*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Fine, A. D., & Del Toro, J. (2022). Adolescents' views of defunding the police, abolishing the police, and "The talk. *Journal of Community Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22810.

Fine, A., Simmons, C., Cavanagh, C., Rowan, Z., & Cauffman, E. (2020). Implications of youths' perceptions of police bias and the code of the street for violent offending. *Psychology of Violence*, *10*(5), 473.

Fine, A., Padilla, K., & Tapp, J. (2021). Can working collaboratively with law enforcement on community service promote positive youth development? *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal*, *22*(7), 1739–1759.

Fine, A., Del Toro, J., & Orosco, C. (2022). Consequences of fearing police: Associations with Youths' Mental Health and Felt Obligation to Obey both the Law and School Rules. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2022.101934.

Fix, R. L., Schaeffer, C. M., Bohnenkamp, J. H., & Hoover, S. (2021). Understanding racially disproportionate suspension practices in elementary, middle, and high schools. *School Psychology Review*. https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2021.1881819.

Fix, R. L., Jackson, D. B., & Jindal, M. (2022). Examining the nuance in adolescents' police encounters: Positive, negative, or both? *Journal of Community Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22913.

Fix, R. L., Pan, A., & Hong, K. (2023). *Ethnicity, race, and from where youth learn about police meaningfully influences self-reported experiences with police*. Unpublished manuscript under review.

Gadke, D. L., Kratochwill, T. R., & Gettinger, M. (2021). Incorporating feasibility protocols in intervention research. *Journal of School Psychology*, *84*, 1–18.

Garcia, J., Parker, C., Parker, R. G., Wilson, P. A., Philbin, M. M., & Hirsch, J. S. (2015). You're really gonna kick us all out?" Sustaining safe spaces for community-based HIV prevention and control among black men who have sex with men. *PLoS One*, *10*(10), e0141326.

Gavin, L. E., Catalano, R. F., David-Ferdon, C., Gloppen, K. M., & Markham, C. M. (2010). A review of positive youth development programs that promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *46*(3), S75–S91.

Geller, A., & Fagan, J. (2019). Police contact and the legal socialization of urban teens. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, *5*(1), 26–49.

Geller, A., Fagan, J., Tyler, T., & Link, B. G. (2014). Aggressive policing and the mental health of young urban men. *American Journal of Public Health*, *104*(12), 2321–2327.

Girvan, E. J., McIntosh, K., & Smolkowski, K. (2019). Tail, tusk, and trunk: What different metrics reveal about racial disproportionality in school discipline. *Educational Psychologist*, *54*(1), 40–59.

Graham, L. F. (2014). Navigating community institutions: Black transgender women's experiences in schools, the criminal justice system, and churches. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *11*(4), 274–287.

Harrell, E., & Davis, E. (2020). Contacts between police and the public, 2018–statistical tables. *Bureau of Justice Statics Report NCJ*, *255730*.

Hennessy, E. A., & Tanner-Smith, E. E. (2015). Effectiveness of brief school-based interventions for adolescents: A meta-analysis of alcohol use prevention programs. *Prevention Science*, *16*(3), 463–474.

Holden, D. J., Messeri, P., Evans, W. D., Crankshaw, E., & Ben-Davies, M. (2004). Conceptualizing youth empowerment within tobacco control. *Health Education & Behavior*, *31*(5), 548–563.

Jindal, M., Mistry, K. B., Trent, M., McRae, A., & Thornton, R. L. (2021). Police exposures and the health and well-being of black youth in the US: A systematic review. *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Kendrick, L., Anderson, N. L. R., & Moore, B. (2007). Perceptions of depression among young african american men. *Family & Community Health*, *30*(1), 63–73.

LaMotte, V., Ouellette, K., Sanderson, J., Anderson, S. A., Kosutic, I., Griggs, J., & Garcia, M. (2010). Effective police interactions with youth: A program evaluation. *Police Quarterly*, *13*(2), 161–179.

Legewie, J., Farley, C., & Stewart, K. (2019). *Aggressive policing and academic outcomes: Examining the impact of police surges in NYC students' home neighborhoods. Policy brief*. Research Alliance for New York City Schools.

Lind, E. A., & Tyler, T. (1988). The social psychology of procedural justice. *Plenum Press*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2115-4.

Marteau, T. M., Hollands, G. J., & Fletcher, P. C. (2012). Changing human behavior to prevent disease: The importance of targeting automatic processes. *Science*, *337*(6101), 1492–1495.

Mehari, K. R., Rodgers, C. R., Blanton, M. A., & Turner, L. A. (2021). Evaluation of a police training on de-escalation with trauma-exposed youth. *International Journal of Law Crime and Justice*, *66*, 100491.

Millstein, R. A., & Sallis, J. F. (2011). Youth advocacy for obesity prevention: The next wave of social change for health. *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, *1*(3), 497–505.

Nordberg, A., Twis, M. K., Stevens, M. A., & Hatcher, S. S. (2018). Precarity and structural racism in black youth encounters with police. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *35*(5), 511–518.

Onrust, S. A., Otten, R., Lammers, J., & Smit, F. (2016). School-based programmes to reduce and prevent substance use in different age groups: What works for whom? Systematic review and meta-regression analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *44*, 45–59.

Owens, E., Weisburd, D., Amendola, K. L., & Alpert, G. P. (2018). Can you build a better cop? Experimental evidence on supervision, training, and policing in the community. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *17*(1), 41–87.

Pittman, K. J., & Zeldin, S. (1993). *From deterrence to development: Putting programs for young african-american males in perspective*. Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development.

Sewell, W., Horsford, C. E., Coleman, K., & Watkins, C. S. (2016). Vile vigilance: An integrated theoretical framework for understanding the state of Black surveillance. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *26*(3–4), 287–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1127735.

Shedd, C. (2015). *Unequal city: Race, schools, and perceptions of injustice*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Shulman, E. P., Harden, K. P., Chein, J. M., & Steinberg, L. (2016). The development of impulse control and sensation-seeking in adolescence: Independent or interdependent processes? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *26*(1), 37–44.

Steinberg, L. (2007). Risk taking in adolescence: New perspectives from brain and behavioral science. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *16*(2), 55–59.

Steinberg, L. (2017). Adolescent brain science and juvenile justice policymaking. *Psychology Public Policy and Law*, *23*(4), 410.

Steinberg, L., & Scott, E. S. (2003). Less guilty by reason of adolescence: Developmental immaturity, diminished responsibility, and the juvenile death penalty. *American Psychologist*, *58*(12), 1009.

Strategies for Youth (2021). https://strategiesforyouth.org/services/tools-youth-communities/.

Toussaint, D. W., Villagrana, M., Mora-Torres, H., de Leon, M., & Haughey, M. H. (2011). Personal stories: Voices of latino youth health advocates in a diabetes prevention initiative. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research Education and Action*, *5*(3), 313–316.

Turney, K. (2020). Depressive symptoms among adolescents exposed to personal and vicarious police contact. *Society and Mental Health*, 2156869320923095.

Tyler, T. R., & Trinkner, R. (2018). *Why children follow rules: Legal socialization and the development of legitimacy*. Oxford University Press.

van Rooij, B., & Fine, A. (2021). *The behavioral code: The Hidden Ways the Law makes us better or worse*. Beacon Press.

Vidal, S., Cleary, H., Woolard, J., & Michel, J. (2017). Adolescents' legal socialization: Effects of interrogation and Miranda knowledge on legitimacy, cynicism, and procedural justice. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, *15*(4), 419–440.

Whitaker, T. R., & Snell, C. L. (2016). Parenting while powerless: Consequences of "the talk. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *26*(3–4), 303–309. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1127736.

Williams, D. R., Lawrence, J. A., & Davis, B. A. (2019). Racism and health: Evidence and needed research. *Annual Review of Public Health*, *40*, 105–125.

Wood, G., Tyler, T. R., & Papachristos, A. V. (2020). Procedural justice training reduces police use of force and complaints against officers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *117*(18), 9815–9821.

Yeager, D. S., Fong, C. J., Lee, H. Y., & Espelage, D. L. (2015). Declines in efficacy of anti-bullying programs among older adolescents: Theory and a three-level meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *37*, 36–51.

Zeiders, K. H., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Carbajal, S., & Pech, A. (2021). Police discrimination among Black, Latina/x/o, and White adolescents: Examining frequency and relations to academic functioning. *Journal of Adolescence*, *90*, 91–99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2021.06.0.

Zelle, H., Romaine, C. L. R., & Goldstein, N. E. S. (2015). Juveniles' Miranda comprehension: Understanding, appreciation, and totality of circumstances factors. *Law and Human Behavior*, *39*(3), 281–293. https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000116.

Authors and Affiliations

Rebecca L. Fix[1] · Monique Jindal[2] · Adam D. Fine[3]

✉ Rebecca L. Fix
   rebecca.fix@jhu.edu

[1] Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

[2] Clinical Medicine, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, USA

[3] School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Arizona State University, Tempe, USA