

Effective Police Interactions with Youth: Training Evaluation

Full Report

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CENTER FOR APPLIED RESEARCH IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

EFFECTIVE POLICE INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH

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The Center for Applied Research in Human Development is a joint venture between the department of Human Development and Family Studies, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Cooperative Extension System in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Center provides assistance to state and community-based agencies in the development, delivery, and evaluation of human service programs. The primary focus is on promoting high quality educational programming and evaluation for programs that promote child, youth, and family development. Recent advances in theory and research are applied in the planning and implementation of all Center initiatives. The Center also provides hands on opportunities for students to learn practical research and evaluation skills in a variety of human service, prevention, and community education programs. *The Center for Applied Research in Human Development is the recipient of the 2006 Outreach Recognition Award granted by the University of Connecticut, Office of the Provost, as an “Outstanding Example of a Programmatic University Resource.”*

Effective Police Interactions with Youth is the final report based on data collected for the evaluation of the “Effective Police Interactions with Youth” project. The views, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily express the viewpoint of the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) published a study entitled *A Reassessment of Minority Overrepresentation in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System*¹ to examine the extent of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in the state. DMC is a national term that refers to the problem of unequal treatment of White and minority juveniles in the juvenile justice system. The JJAC study focused on overrepresentation of minority youth in the system and disparate handling of minority youth at key decision points. To address study findings at the earliest police decision points, the JJAC created a task group, comprised of primarily police personnel, to look into issues that would affect police handling of juveniles prior to written police incident reports. A key issue that was identified by the task group was that many patrol officers, as opposed to youth officers, lack the knowledge they need to differentiate problematic adolescent behavior from typical adolescent behavior and the practical skills to de-escalate situations involving agitated or defiant youth. The task group further concluded that patrol officers should be taught to interact more effectively with all young people, regardless of their race or background, rather than simply focusing on diversity training.

THE “EFFECTIVE POLICE INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH” PROJECT

The “Effective Police Interactions with Youth” training program is designed to address this gap in knowledge and skills among patrol officers. The training purpose is to reduce the likelihood that interactions between police officers and young people will have negative outcomes and/or result in police action, particularly for minority youth. The goals of the training program are:

- Increase patrol officer awareness of disproportionate minority contact (DMC);
- Increase patrol officer knowledge of youth behavior and strategies for interacting effectively with youth;
- Improve police attitudes toward young people;
- Increase the likelihood that police/youth interactions will have positive outcomes for youth; and
- Increase the likelihood that youth will respond positively toward police officers.

The training program is designed for delivery by certified police trainers in a classroom setting. Trainers use a variety of instructional techniques including slide presentations, video clips, class discussions, small group activities, and individual activities. This creates an interactive

environment that builds on participants' existing knowledge and provides opportunities for them to share and learn from each other.

The training was offered in Connecticut in March and April of 2007, following two rounds of pilot testing in the latter part of 2006. A total of 21 one-day training sessions were offered. This report summarizes the results of an evaluation study that assessed the effectiveness of this new training curriculum. The evaluation was conducted by the Center for Applied Research in Human Development (CARHD) at the University of Connecticut.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report consists of several parts. The first part provides a description of (a) the research design used to evaluate the "Effective Police Interactions with Youth" project, (b) the measurement tool designed to assess patrol officers' knowledge, attitudes, and satisfaction with the training, (c) data collection procedures, (d) training and control groups, and (e) data analysis strategies.

The second part of the report details the results of the evaluation, including (a) changes in participating patrol officers' knowledge over time, (b) changes in participating patrol officers' attitudes over time, (c) comparisons between the training group and the control group, (d) subgroup comparisons among patrol officers who completed the training, and (e) participating patrol officers' satisfaction with the training.

The third part of the report contains a summary and recommendations for future evaluations.

PART I: STUDY DESIGN

STUDY DESIGN

This project used an experimental design to assess changes in patrol officers' knowledge and attitudes towards youth following a one-day training program. A total of 468 officers from various police departments throughout the State of Connecticut were selected to participate in this evaluation project. Thirty-three local police departments in Connecticut volunteered to participate in the training and evaluation component of the "Effective Police Interactions with Youth" training program. They each submitted lists of patrol officers for training who were randomly assigned to be in either the training or control group. The two groups were then compared with respect to knowledge and attitudes regarding typical adolescent behavior, police-youth interactions, and DMC. Knowledge and attitudes were measured using a questionnaire that was specifically designed for the purpose of this evaluation. The training group received the questionnaire on 3 occasions—once immediately before the training, once immediately after the training, and then 5 to 7 months after the training. The control group received the questionnaire twice—once during the pre-training period and again during the 5 to 7 month follow-up period. Based on the available data, the CARHD evaluation team was able to examine the following aspects of the "Effective Police Interactions with Youth" project:

- ◆ Immediate and long-term changes in the knowledge of patrol officers who received the training.
- ◆ Immediate and long-term changes in the attitudes of patrol officers who received the training.
- ◆ Comparison of patrol officers who participated in the training (i.e., training group) and those who did not (i.e., control group) with respect to changes in knowledge.
- ◆ Comparison of patrol officers who participated in the training (i.e., training group) and those who did not (i.e., control group) with respect to changes in attitudes.
- ◆ Subgroup comparisons within the training group.
- ◆ Patrol officers' satisfaction with the training sessions.

MEASUREMENT

POLICE QUESTIONNAIRE. The pre-test version of the Police Questionnaire contains 7 demographic questions, including name, department, gender, age, race/ethnicity, years of police experience, and years of experience as a youth officer. Additionally, it contains 19 multiple-choice and true-and-false questions designed to measure patrol officers' knowledge and 7 questions designed to measure their attitudes regarding youth and police-youth interactions. Among the 19 knowledge questions, 5 assess knowledge about equal treatment of diverse youth in the juvenile justice system, 7 assess knowledge about adolescent

development, and 7 assess knowledge about successful strategies for police interacting with youth. Attitude questions are measured on a 10-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 10 indicating strong agreement. A copy of the pre-test version of the Police Questionnaire is available in Appendix A.

The post-test version of the Police Questionnaire contains 2 demographic questions, as well as the 19 knowledge items and 7 attitude items. These items are identical to the items included on the pre-test version of the questionnaire. Additionally, the post-test questionnaire contains 5 items aimed at evaluating the quality of the workshop and participants' satisfaction with it. Two of these items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale and 3 are open-ended. A copy of the post-test version of the Police Questionnaire is available in Appendix B.

The follow-up version of the Police Questionnaire closely parallels the pre-test version. It consists of 2 demographic questions, the 19 knowledge questions, and 7 attitude questions.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE POLICE QUESTIONNAIRE. Four members of the research team attended one training session and carefully read and re-read the instructor's manual for the "Effective Police Interactions with Youth" training program. Based on their knowledge of the curriculum, team members constructed an initial pool of 89 multiple-choice and true-and-false questions designed to measure patrol officers' knowledge of 3 topics covered in the training curriculum. Of these, there were 36 questions about equal treatment of minority youth (topic 1), 25 questions about adolescent development (topic 2), and 28 questions about effective police-youth interactions (topic 3). From the initial pool, team members selected 25 items that best covered each of the 3 major topics.

Additionally, team members developed 8 questions about patrol officers' attitudes regarding youth and police-youth interactions. The questionnaire was then sent to the program developers, who made a few wording changes in items and response choices.

Pilot Test I. The first version of the questionnaire was pilot tested in a sample of 17 training participants. It was administered immediately before and immediately after the training. Following data collection, each knowledge item was examined in terms of response variability. Items with little ($n = 5$) and no ($n = 2$) variability were highlighted to be changed or dropped from the questionnaire.

To test the utility of the pilot questionnaire as a measure of change, knowledge items were summed and converted to a total score based upon the percentage of items answered correctly. Participants' pre-test and post-test scores were compared using a paired-sample t -test. Results indicated that the average post-test score was significantly higher than the average pre-test score ($M = 77\%$ vs. $M = 63\%$, $t = -5.9$, $p < 0.001$).

Additionally, average pre-test and post-test scores on each of the attitude items were compared. Results indicated that participants' average scores increased on all attitude items.

However, differences between pre-test and post-test were statistically significant on 4 of the 8 items.

Based on these findings, it was concluded that the questionnaire had good potential as a measure of change but that additional development was needed. Seven knowledge questions and/or response choices with little or no variability were modified, 11 items were eliminated, and 7 new items were added based upon feedback provided by training participants to the program developers. One attitude item was dropped from the questionnaire. Finally, 3 closed-ended and 3 open-ended questions were added to the post-test questionnaire to assess participants' reactions to the training.

Pilot Test II. The second version of the questionnaire was tested in a sample of 28 training participants. As with the initial pilot test, the questionnaire was administered immediately before and immediately after the training. Subsequent data analyses indicated that all *knowledge* items had adequate variability.

Pre- and post-test knowledge questions were summed and converted to total scores based upon the percentage of items answered correctly. Participants' pre-test and post-test scores were compared using a paired-sample *t*-test. Results indicated that the average post-test score ($M = 76\%$) was significantly higher than the average pre-test score ($M = 46\%$, $t = -11.6$, $p < .001$).

Average pre-test and post-test scores on each of the attitude items also were compared. Post-test scores were significantly higher for 5 out of 7 attitude items ($p < .005$). These results led to a conclusion that the questionnaire was an effective measure of change.

Following the second pilot test, the program developers suggested that 3 knowledge items be dropped and 1 new knowledge item be added. Therefore, the final version of the questionnaire included 19 knowledge items and 7 attitude items. The post-test version also included 5 *satisfaction* items.

DATA COLLECTION

Training program developers administered the pre- and post-test versions of the Police Questionnaire to all training groups immediately before each training session and immediately after each training session. During this time period, the pre-test version of the Police Questionnaire was mailed to each participating police department for members of the control group to complete. The follow-up version of the Police Questionnaire was administered 5 to 7 months after the training sessions ended. Questionnaires were sent to each participating police department, completed by members of both the training and control groups, and returned to the program developer via mail.

In summary, the 3 waves of data collection included the following:

- ◆ Pre-test questionnaires that measured knowledge and attitudes administered to training and control groups.
- ◆ Post-test questionnaires that measured knowledge, attitudes, and *satisfaction* administered to the training group immediately after the training was completed.
- ◆ Follow-up questionnaires that measured knowledge and attitudes administered to training and control groups 5 to 7 months after the training was completed.

PARTICIPANTS

TRAINING GROUP. All two hundred ninety-nine (299) patrol officers who attended the training completed pre- and post-test questionnaires. Of these, 128 officers completed the follow-up questionnaire. Within the training group, there were 257 men (86%) and 41 women (13.7%). Participants ranged in age from 22 to 64, with an average age of 36.2 years. In terms of ethnic breakdown, there were 25 African American officers (8.5%), 241 White non-Hispanic s (82%), 23 Latino/a Americans (7.8%), and 1 Asian American (.3%). Four officers (1.4%) did not specify any single ethnic background and 5 (1.7%) did not respond to this question. In terms of years of experience as patrol officer, 41 had fewer than 2 years (13.8%), 67 had between 2 and 5 years of experience (22.5%), 73 had between 5 and 10 years (24.5%), 85 between 10 and 20 years (28.5%), and 32 more than 20 years of experience (10.7%). One officer did not indicate his/her years of experience on the force. In terms of years of experience as a youth officer, 258 had no experience (88.4%), 6 had less than 6 months of experience (2.1%), 4 had between 6 and 12 months of experience (1.4%), 7 had between 1 and 2 years of experience (2.4%), 3 had between 2 and 3 years of experience (1.0%) and 14 had more than 3 years of experience (4.8%). Seven officers (2.3%) did not indicate their years of experience as a youth officer. Participating patrol officers' characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Training Group Characteristics

	<i>n</i>	%
Sex		
Female	41	13.7
Male	257	86.0
Ethnicity		
African American	25	8.5
White non-Hispanic	241	82.0
Latino/a American	23	7.8
Asian American	1	.3
Years of experience		
< 2 years	41	13.8
2-5 years	67	22.5

	<i>n</i>	%
5-10 years	73	24.5
10-20 Ears	85	28.5
> 20 years	32	10.7
Years of experience as youth officer		
No experience	258	88.4
0 - 6 months	6	2.1
6 -12 months	4	1.4
1 – 2 years	7	2.4
2 – 3 years	3	1.0
> 3 years	14	4.8

CONTROL GROUP. A total of 169 patrol officers completed pre-tests. Of these, 109 completed the follow-up questionnaire. The control group was comprised of 20 women (11.8%) and 149 men (88.2%). Participants ranged in age from 20 to 56, with the average age of 34.5 years. In terms of ethnic background, there were 9 African Americans (5.3%), 151 White non-Hispanic s (89.3%), 5 Latino/a Americans (3.0%), 1 Asian American (.6%), and 1 Native American (.6%). Two participants (1.2%) did not indicate any one ethnic category. In terms of years of experience on the police force, 27 had less than 2 years of experience (16.0%), 42 had between 2 and 5 years of experience (24.9%), 45 had between 5 and 10 years (26.6%), 43 between 10 and 20 years (25.4%), and 12 more than 20 years (7.1). In terms of years of experience as a youth officer, an overwhelming majority of 159 officers (95.2%) had no experience; 5 officers (3.0%) had more than 3 years of experience, whereas the remaining few officers had less than 3 years of experience. Two officers did not indicate their years of experience as a youth officer. Characteristics of the control group are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Control Group Characteristics

	<i>n</i>	%
Sex		
Female	20	11.8
Male	149	88.2
Ethnicity		
African American	9	5.3
White non-Hispanic	151	89.3
Latino/a American	5	3.0
Asian American	1	0.6
Native American	1	0.6
Years of experience		
< 2 years	27	16.0
2-5 years	42	24.9

	<i>n</i>	%
5-10 years	45	26.6
10-21 Ears	43	25.4
> 20 years	12	7.1
Years of experience as youth officer		
No experience	159	95.2
0 - 6 months	0	0.0
6 -12 months	1	0.6
1 – 2 years	1	0.6
2 – 3 years	1	0.6
> 3 years	5	3.0

Although patrol officers were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, there were some statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of patrol officers' age, ethnicity, and years of experience working with youth. Specifically, officers' average age was higher in the treatment group ($M = 36.2$, $SD = 8.8$) than in the comparison group ($M = 34.5$, $SD = 7.5$), ($t(459) = 2.0$, $p = .04$). The percentage of White non-Hispanics was greater in the comparison group (89.3%) than in the training group (82.0%), ($\chi^2(1, 463) = 4.5$, $p = .034$). The percentage of officers with no experience as youth officer was greater in the comparison group (95.2%) than in the training group (88.4%), ($\chi^2(1, 459) = 6.00$, $p = .014$). There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups with respect to gender or years of experience as a patrol officer.

PART II: RESULTS

CHANGES IN PARTICIPANTS' KNOWLEDGE

PARTICIPANTS' PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST KNOWLEDGE SCORES. The first comparison examines changes in the pre-test and post-test knowledge scores for 299 officers who completed the training workshop.

A statistically significant increase ($t(298) = -37.75, p < .001$) in patrol officers' knowledge scores was found. As shown in Table 3, patrol officers who participated in the training increased their average knowledge score from 46% correct on the pre-test to 77% correct at the completion of training.

Table 3

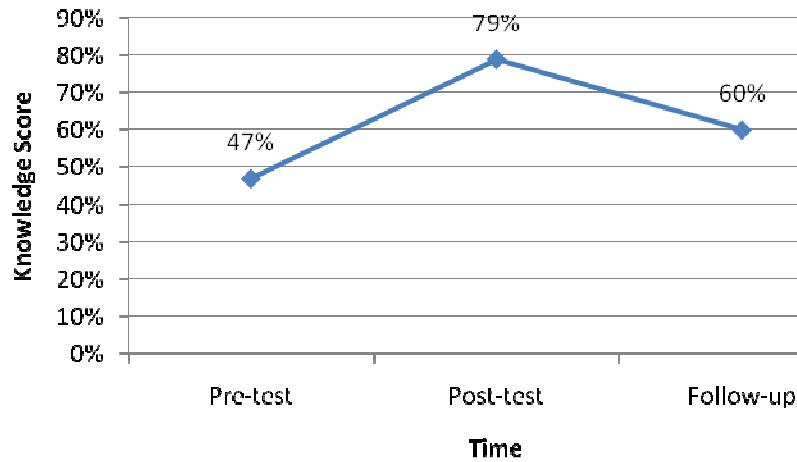
Comparing Pre- and Post-Test Knowledge Items for the Training Group (n = 299)

	Average Score Pre-Test	Average Score Post-Test
Knowledge (Pre vs. Post)	46%	77%

PARTICIPANTS' PRE-TEST, POST-TEST, AND FOLLOW-UP KNOWLEDGE SCORES. This next comparison examines changes in knowledge scores for the subset of 128 officers in the training group who completed all 3 survey questionnaires.

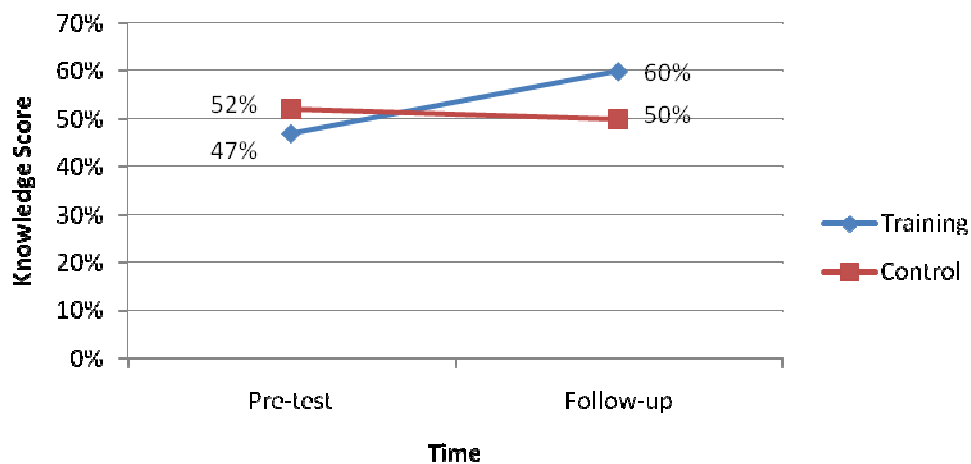
Repeated measures analyses on the knowledge measure for patrol officers in the training group revealed a statistically significant main effect for knowledge over time ($F(2, 254) = 349.83, p < .001$). Patrol officers who completed the training showed statistically significant changes in their knowledge of adolescent development, police-youth interactions, and DMC across the 3 time periods. Post hoc analyses revealed a statistically significant increase in knowledge from the pre-test ($M = 47\%, SD = 11$) to the post-test ($M = 79\%, SD = .13$) followed by a statistically significant decrease in knowledge between the post-test and follow-up ($M = 60\%, SD = .15$). However, the increase in knowledge between the pre-test and follow-up remained statistically significant. At follow-up, patrol officers still reported more knowledge of adolescent development, police-youth interactions, and DMC than they did before they received the training (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Knowledge Scores Over Time



COMPARISONS BETWEEN TRAINING AND CONTROL GROUP CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE PRE-TEST TO FOLLOW-UP. A statistically significant interaction effect between group and time ($F(1,235) = 79.68, p < .001$) indicated that the training group showed a statistically significant increase in knowledge while the control group remained essentially unchanged. This result is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2.
 Training vs. Control Group: *Knowledge Scores Over Time*



CHANGES IN PARTICIPANTS' ATTITUDES

PARTICIPANTS' PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST ATTITUDE SCORES. Patrol officers' scores on the 7 attitude questions prior to and directly after training are summarized in Table 4. Statistically significant changes were found for all 7 attitude items. All 6 positively worded attitude questions showed positive increases while the 1 negatively worded attitude item showed a decrease as expected.

Table 4

Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Attitude Items for the Training Group (n = 299)

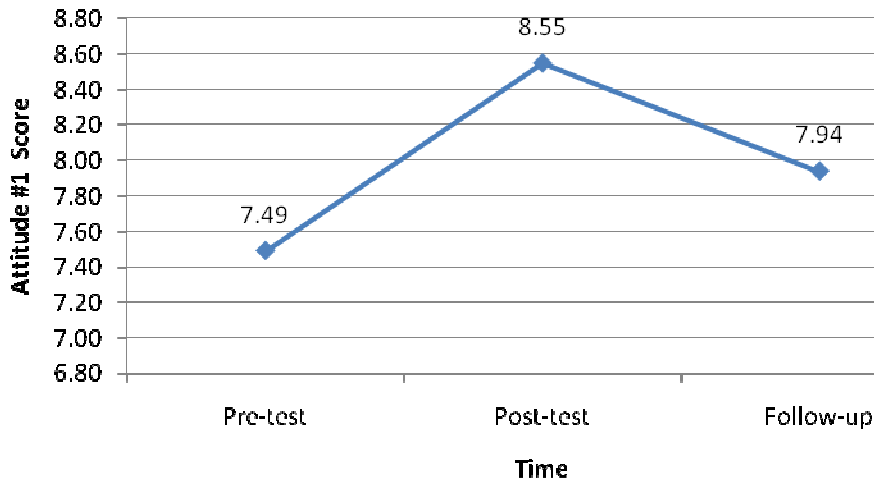
Item	Pre Mean	Post Mean	t value	p
1. Young people are positive assets to my community.	7.44	8.56	-13.01	< .001
2. It is important for police officers to build relationships with youth.	9.00	9.29	-4.87	< .001
3. As a patrol officer, I can help eliminate unequal treatment of minority youth.	7.43	8.31	-8.13	< .001
4. Interactions between patrol officers and youth have little impact on the lives of youth.	2.78	2.37	2.82	< .05
5. I have the skills necessary for interacting effectively with youth.	7.35	8.65	-13.32	< .001
6. I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don't know.	7.90	8.78	-11.49	< .001
7. Patrol officers can have a positive impact on the lives of youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities.	7.64	8.54	-7.82	< .001

* Scores ranged from 1-10, with 10 indicating strong agreement.

PARTICIPANTS' PRE-TEST, POST-TEST, AND FOLLOW-UP ATTITUDE SCORES. Repeated measures analyses were used to assess the changes in participating patrol officers' attitudes towards youth across the 3 data collection periods.

Attitude #1—“Young people are positive assets to my community.” A statistically significant main effect for time was found ($F(2, 248) = 34.95, p < .001$). There was a statistically significant increase from pre-test ($M = 7.49, SD = 1.74$) to post-test ($M = 8.55, SD = 1.32$), followed by a statistically significant decrease from post-test to follow-up ($M = 7.94, SD = 1.50$). However, a significant increase from pre-test to follow-up remained. In other words, positive endorsement of this item was higher 5 to 7 months after the training than before the training (Figure 3).

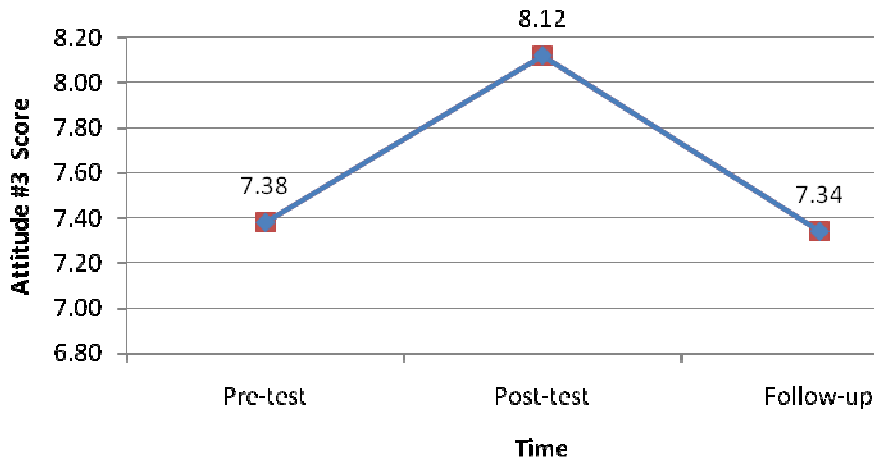
Figure 3.
 "Young people are positive assets to my community."



Attitude #2—“It is important for police officers to build relationships with youth.” There were no statistically significant changes over time in scores on attitude #2 for the 128 patrol officers who completed the Police Questionnaire at each data collection period.

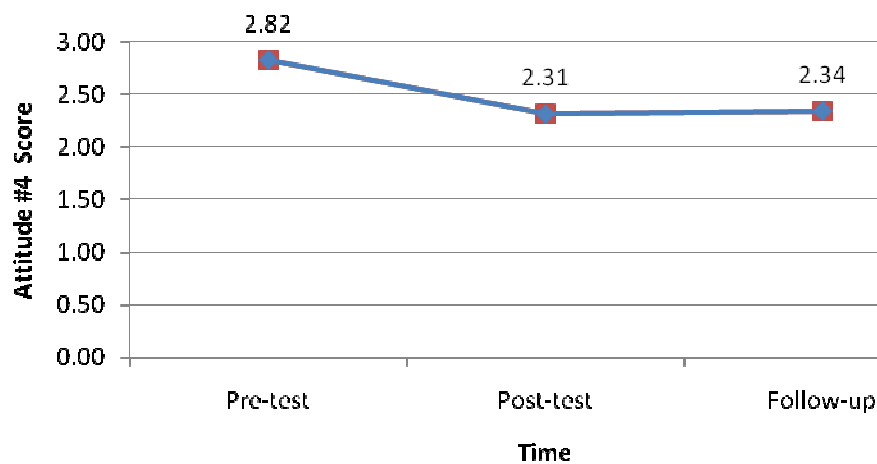
Attitude #3—“As a patrol officer, I can help eliminate unequal treatment of minority youth.” Using the Huynh-Feldt correction, repeated measures analyses revealed a statistically significant main effect for time ($F(1.8, 224.6) = 11.65, p < .001$). There was a statistically significant increase from pre-test ($M = 7.38, SD = 1.90$) to post-test ($M = 8.12, SD = 1.67$), followed by a statistically significant decrease from post-test to follow-up ($M = 7.34, SD = 2.17$). The positive change immediately following training was not retained over time since the pre-test and follow-up scores were not significantly different (Figure 4).

Figure 4.
 "As a patrol officer, I can help eliminate unequal treatment of minority youth."



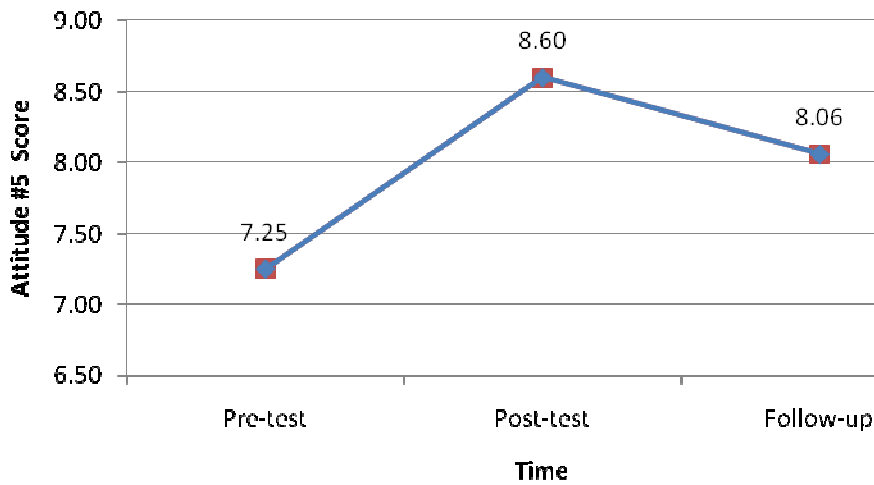
Attitude #4—“Interactions between patrol officers and youth have little impact on the lives of youth.” A statistically significant main effect for time was found ($F(2, 248) = 4.12, p < .017$). There was a statistically significant decrease between the pre-test ($M = 2.82, SD = 2.02$) and the post-test ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.94$), followed by a slight and non-significant increase from post-test to follow-up ($M = 2.34, SD = 1.61$). However, the decrease in scores between pre-test and follow-up remained statistically significant indicating that participants retained the belief that interactions between patrol officers and youth can have a positive impact on youths’ lives 5 to 7 months after the training (Figure 5).

Figure 5.
“Interactions between patrol officers and youth have little impact on the lives of youth.”



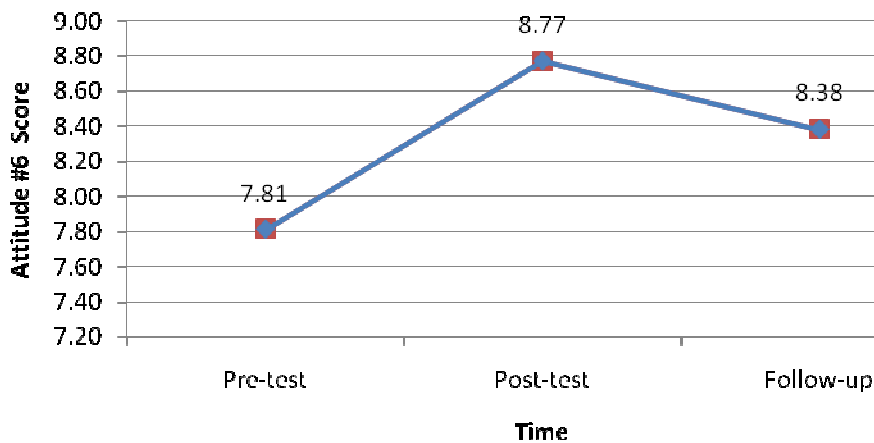
Attitude #5—“I have the skills necessary for interacting with youth.” Again, a statistically significant main effect for time was found ($F(2,248) = 50.572, p < .001$). There was a statistically significant increase from pre-test ($M = 7.25, SD = 1.73$) to post-test ($M = 8.60, SD = 1.71$), followed by a statistically significant decrease from post-test to follow-up ($M = 8.06, SD = 1.36$). However, as was the case for several other attitude items, there remained a positive increase in scores between pre-test and follow-up. Patrol officers who completed the training continued to report greater confidence about their skills in interacting with youth 5 to 7 months after the training than immediately before the training (Figure 6).

Figure 6.
"I have the skills necessary for interacting with youth."



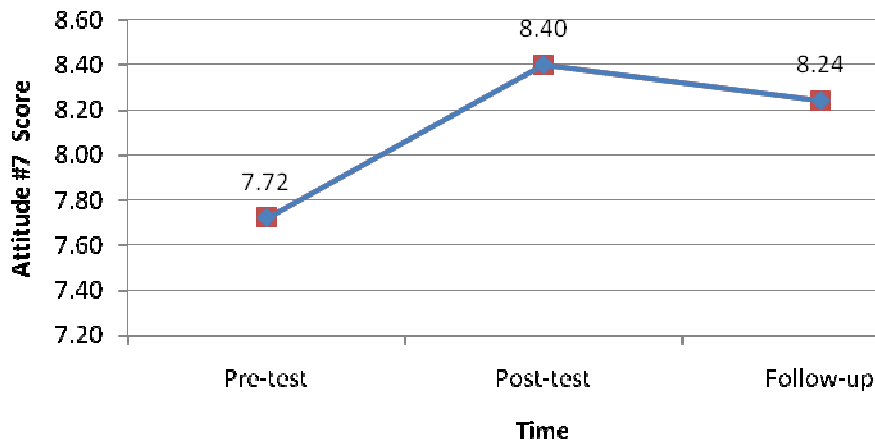
Attitude #6—*"I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don't know."* Again, repeated measures analyses revealed a statistically significant main effect for time ($F(2, 248) = 29.23, p < .001$). There was a statistically significant increase in scores from pre-test ($M = 7.81, SD = 1.58$) to post-test ($M = 8.77, SD = 1.51$), followed by a statistically significant decrease from post-test to follow-up ($M = 8.38, SD = 1.44$). However, the increase from pre-test to follow-up remained significant. Patrol officers who completed the training continued to report feeling more comfortable starting conversations with youth 5 to 7 months after the training than immediately before the training (Figure 7).

Figure 7.
"I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don't know."



Attitude #7—“Patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities.” A statistically significant main effect over time was found ($F(2, 244) = 11.55, p < .001$). There was a significant increase in attitude score from pre-test ($M = 7.72, SD = 1.85$) to post test ($M = 8.40, SD = 1.61$), followed by a non-significant decrease from post-test to follow-up ($M = 8.24, SD = 1.43$). The increase in scores pre-test to follow-up also remained significant. Directly after completing the training, participants endorsed the view that they can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their other duties and they retained this view 5 to 7 months following the training (Figure 8).

Figure 8.
“Patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities.”

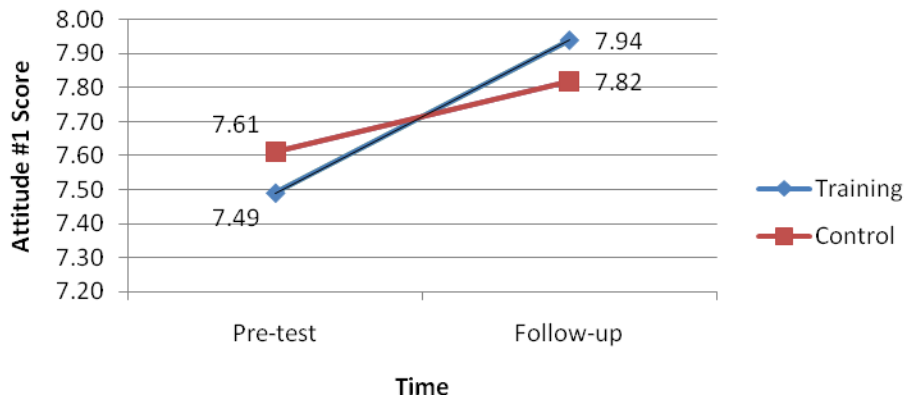


COMPARISONS BETWEEN TRAINING AND CONTROL GROUP CHANGES IN ATTITUDES PRE-TEST TO FOLLOW-UP. Repeated measures analyses also were conducted to contrast attitude scores of training group participants with those in the control group. It was expected that police officers who participated in the training would show more changes in their attitudes than members of the control group who did not complete the training.

Comparisons between the training group and control group participants on the attitude items produced several statistically significant and some non-significant findings. Results for attitudes # 1, 5, 6, and 7 were statistically significant and are reported below. The results for attitudes # 2, 3, and 4 were not statistically significant and are not reported below.

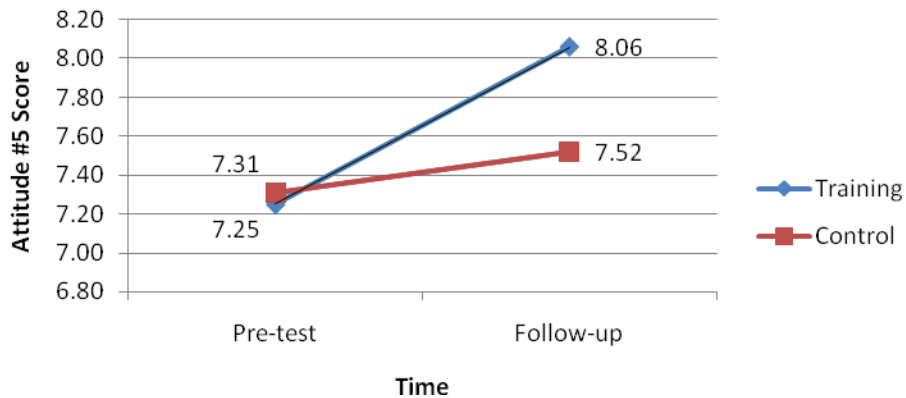
Attitude #1—“Young people are positive assets to my community.” Repeated measures analyses revealed a statistically significant main effect for time ($F(1, 231) = 11.41, p < .001$). Officers in both the training and control groups significantly increased their scores on this item from pre-test to follow-up. This result is depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9.
 Training vs. Control Group: "Young people are positive assets to my community."



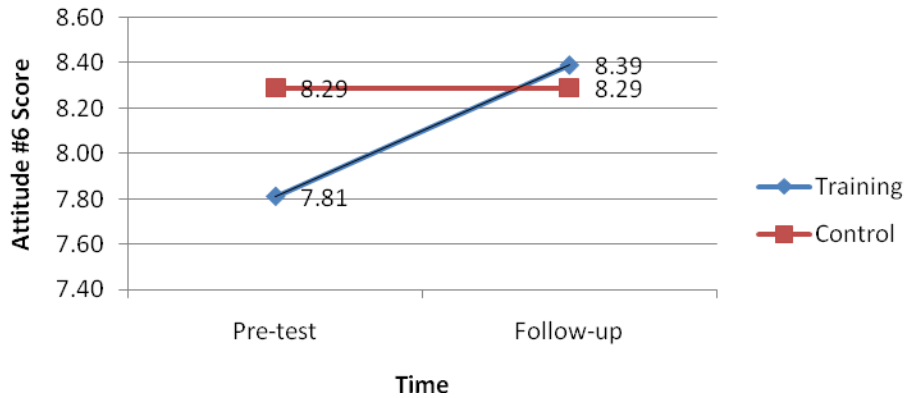
Attitude #5—“I have the skills necessary for interacting with youth.” A significant interaction between group membership and time ($F(1, 231) = 7.57, p < .006$) indicated that the training group showed a significantly greater increase in this attitude than the control group. This result is depicted in Figure 10.

Figure 10.
 Training vs. Control Group: "I have the skills necessary for interacting with youth."



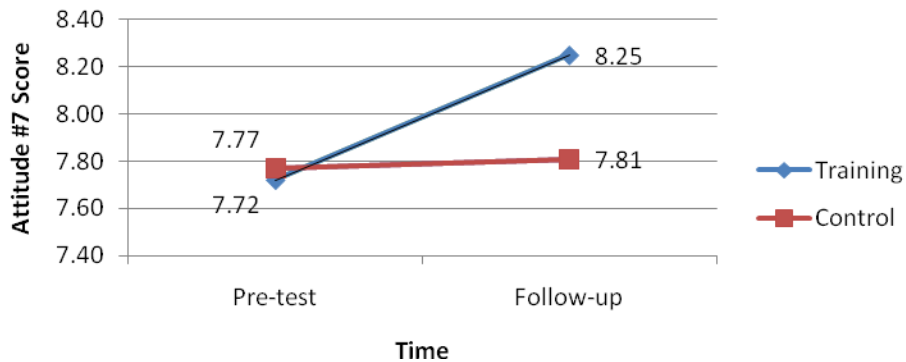
Attitude #6—“I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don’t know.” A statistically significant interaction between time and group membership ($F(1, 231) = 7.89, p < .005$) indicated that the training group’s scores on this item increased significantly more than the control group’s scores. Surprisingly, however, patrol officers in the control group scored significantly higher on this item at the pre-test than did officers in the training group (Figure 11).

Figure 11.
 Training vs. Control Group: "I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don't know."



Attitude #7—“Patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities.” A statistically significant interaction between time and group membership ($F(1, 228) = 4.75, p < .03$) indicated that the training group showed a significantly greater increase on this attitude than the control group that remained essentially unchanged. This result is summarized in Figure 12.

Figure 12.
 Training vs. Control Group: "Patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities."



SUBGROUP COMPARISONS AMONG PATROL OFFICERS WHO COMPLETED THE TRAINING

Additional repeated measures analyses were conducted to examine whether characteristics such as patrol officers' age, years of experience on the police force, years of experience as a youth officer or a school resource officer, gender, and ethnicity were related to changes in participants' knowledge and attitude scores. None of these factors were found to be significantly related to changes in participants' knowledge or attitudes. This may be because the sample is homogeneous in some important aspects. That is, almost the entire sample consists of participants who are male (86%) and White non-Hispanic (82%), and who report no experience working as a youth officer (88%).

PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Patrol officers were asked the degree to which they found the training interesting and useful. Scores ranged from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating *very interesting* or *very useful* and 1 indicating *not at all interesting* or *not at all useful*. Overall, patrol officers found the training useful and interesting. Mean scores are reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Post-Test Satisfaction Items for the Training Group (n = 299)

Item	Mean
1. How interesting was the training program?	4.25
2. How useful do you think the training program will be to you in performing your duties?	4.23

* Scores ranged from 1-5, with 5 indicating highest satisfaction.

Additionally, 3 open-ended questions were used to obtain feedback regarding the training. These included: (1) What did you like most about the training? (2) What did you like least about the training? and (3) What specific changes would you make to improve the training program? Participating patrol officers' responses to these questions are provided in Appendix C. Frequencies of specific responses within each of the 3 open-ended questions are provided in Tables 6 through 8.

Table 6

“What did you like most about the training?”

Comment	#
Enjoyed class interaction and discussion	70
Highly qualified and knowledgeable instructors who had relevant experience	43
Video clips were good	34
Advice/tips on dealing with and relating to youth in various situations	15
Food	12
Effective presentation material	11
Enjoyed materials and content	8
Informative	7
New perspectives on youth	6
Enjoyed different class exercises and activities	4
Candy	4
Good mix of video and audio	3
The discussion of bias amongst police officers	3
Statistics and data	3
Power point	3
Gained a better understanding of youth behavior	3
Information presented in succinct segments making retention easier	3
Role plays	3
Team-teaching	3

Table 7

“What did you dislike about the training?”

Comment	#
Nothing	27
Too long	9
Statistics	8
Role plays	5
Too repetitive	4
Too much time spent on minority/racial issues	3
Uncomfortable chairs/room temperature/room	3
Class didn't apply to anything I am doing as a patrol officer	3
It's only one day	3
Too much information for 8 hours	3
Need more background on the studies used	3
Class slowed while covering statistics	3

Table 8

“What specific changes would you make to improve the training?”

Comment	#
Nothing	23
More video clips	12
Bring some youth to the training to speak and participate	12
Make the training longer (go into families, services needs, youth in crisis)	8
Cut time in some areas and shorten the program	3
Give more creative ways to work and interact with youth	3
Shorten segment on statistics	3
More role plays	3

PART III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the evaluation support the value of the “Effective Police Interactions with Youth” training program in enhancing police officers’ knowledge about DMC, adolescent development, and effective strategies for interacting with youth. The effects of the training on participants’ knowledge in these areas remained significant 5 to 7 months after the training had been completed. This is in contrast to members of the control group who showed little change in their knowledge over this time period.

A similar result was found for several of the attitudes toward working with youth that were assessed in the evaluation. Most notably, participants in the training were significantly more likely than police officers in the control group to report feeling increased comfort in starting conversations with youth they don’t know, confidence in having the skills necessary for interacting with youth, and commitment to the idea that patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their other enforcement activities.

The training program appeared to be equally effective in working with police officers of differing ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds, years of experience on the police force, or years of experience as a youth or school resource officer. That is, the results did not differ for police officers of differing backgrounds. However, because the training group was relatively homogeneous on several important factors such as gender (86% male), ethnicity (82% White), and years of experience working as a youth officer (88% had no experience), a firm conclusion on this point is not possible.

Overall, participants in the training gave the program high marks for being useful and interesting. The most liked aspects of the program included class interaction and discussion, qualified and knowledgeable instructors, informative video clips and other tips on dealing with youth. The least liked aspects of the training included the length of the program, presentation of statistical information regarding DMC, and repetitiveness. Participants also offered suggestions for improving the training program. More specifically, they noted that additional video clips, opportunities to interact with youth during the training, and an expansion of the length and content of the curriculum would improve the training.

Finally, given the training program’s success in influencing police officers’ knowledge and attitudes regarding adolescents’, police-youth interactions, and disproportionate minority contact, it may be a useful resource for police departments in others states. However, because some of the program’s content related to DMC is specific to Connecticut, it would likely have to be modified to accurately represent actual rates of DMC and juvenile justice responses in these states.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EVALUATIONS

It also should be noted that the primary effects of the training were specific to police officers' knowledge about DMC, adolescent development, effective strategies for interacting with youth and attitudes toward working with youth. The evaluation did not take into account police officers' actual *behaviors* with youth. That is, we cannot make any conclusion as to whether or not police officers who completed the training actually behave differently with the youth they encounter in the course of their day-to-day enforcement duties. It can be argued that changes in knowledge and attitudes are precursors to behavior change. However, direct assessment of police officers interactions with youth would be required to reach a definitive conclusion in this regard.

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APPENDIX A

EFFECTIVE POLICE INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE, PRE-TEST

Name: _____

Department: _____

Gender: ___ Male ___ Female

Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity (check one): ___ Black, non-Hispanic ___ Hispanic

 ___ White, non-Hispanic ___ Asian

 ___ Native American ___ Other

Years of Police Experience:

___ Fewer than 2 years

___ 2 – 5 years

___ 5 – 10 years

___ 10 – 20 years

___ More than 20 years

Years of Experience as a Youth Officer or a School Resource Officer:

___ No experience

___ 0-6 months

___ 6 months – 1 year

___ 1-2 years

___ 2-3 years

___ More than 3 years

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the questions below. Circle **ONE** response choice for each question.

1. It may be difficult to tell the age of an adolescent by looking at him or her. A good strategy for police to use when approaching youth is to:
 - a. Start by asking them their age.
 - b. Go by their size and height.
 - c. Assume that they are younger than they appear.
 - d. Assume that they are older than they appear.

2. What part of your communication has the greatest effect on what youth actually hear when you interact with them?
 - a. The words you say.
 - b. Body language (facial expression, posture, eye contact, gestures).
 - c. Tone of voice (tone, pace, pitch, volume).
 - d. They are all equally important.

3. Which group of youth is **most** likely to play on a sports team?
 - a. Black youth.
 - b. Hispanic youth.
 - c. White youth.
 - d. Black and Hispanic youth.
 - e. They all play on sports teams about equally.

4. Which group of youth is the **most** likely to have carried a weapon in the past 30 days?
 - a. Black youth.
 - b. Hispanic youth.
 - c. White youth.
 - d. Black and Hispanic youth.
 - e. They all carried weapons about equally.

5. There are many differences in the way adults and adolescents think and react. Which of the following statements is **false**?
 - a. Adolescents are better able than adults to weigh consequences.
 - b. Adolescents are more likely than adults to interpret facial expressions as angry.
 - c. Adults are less likely to be influenced by peers when making decisions.
 - d. Adolescents are more likely than adults to revert to childish behavior when distressed.

6. According to national research, which of the following factors contributes to more juvenile justice system contact for minority youth:
 - a. The tendency of minority youth to commit crimes more frequently than white youth.
 - b. The tendency of minority youth to commit more violent crimes than white youth.
 - c. Police policies and practices such as staffing levels and patrol locations.
 - d. A and B.
 - e. All of the above.

7. Which of the following statements is likely to make the situation **worse** rather than better when dealing with youth?
 - a. "I'm just doing my job."
 - b. "You need to calm down."
 - c. "I know you don't want to hear this, but..."
 - d. "I need to see your hands so I know you don't have a weapon."

8. Which of the following effects of drinking alcohol is greater for adolescents than for adults?
 - a. Motor skill impairment.
 - b. Intoxication.
 - c. Learning and memory impairment.
 - d. Sedation.
 - e. All of the above.

9. Which of the following statements is true of adolescent decision-making?
 - a. Adolescents take longer than adults to make decisions in stressful situations.
 - b. Adolescents tend to focus on long-term payoffs when making decisions.
 - c. Adolescents process information faster than adults in dangerous situations.
 - d. Emotions have less impact on adolescent than on adult decision-making.

10. Boys are more likely than girls to do which of the following?
 - a. Escalate faster, once becoming aggressive.
 - b. Hold a grudge.
 - c. Get into a physical fight.
 - d. Ostracize peers.

11. Which of the following statements about youth culture is **false**?
- a. Youth culture provides adolescents with a sense of physical and emotional safety.
 - b. Youth culture provides youth with a creative outlet but serves no developmental purpose.
 - c. Youth culture is a coping mechanism that helps youth handle the stresses of growing up.
12. R.R.I. stands for which of the following?
- a. Racial Response Information.
 - b. Relative Rate Index.
 - c. Release Report Investigation.
 - d. I have never heard of this acronym.
13. Which of the following statements is **not** a benefit of improved police/youth relations?
- a. More investigative information from youth.
 - b. Better youth attitudes toward police.
 - c. More system involvement for youth.
 - d. Increased community support for police departments.
14. Adolescent behaviors such as pacing, fidgeting, and mouthing off are generally signs of:
- a. Guilt.
 - b. Distress.
 - c. Disrespect.
15. Which of the following statements about disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system (DMC) is **false**:
- a. DMC is a national problem.
 - b. Evidence of DMC has been found in police, court, and corrections components of the system.
 - c. In Connecticut, police officers transported minority and white juveniles to detention at similar rates regardless of the type of offense.
16. When communicating with family members, officers should speak to the youth's mother first since she probably has primary child-rearing responsibility.

True or False

17. Letting youth “vent” in non-dangerous situations involves all of the following **except**:

- a. Expecting some disrespect.
- b. Gently touching the youth’s arm to show you are concerned.
- c. Separating distressed youth from peers.
- d. Giving youth time to think.

18. All of the following are typical of adolescents **except**:

- a. They have less ability to calm themselves down.
- b. They may act based upon impulse with little or no advance planning.
- c. They tend to believe that bad things “can’t happen to me.”
- d. They need less sleep than younger children and adults.

19. Youth surveys have identified many youth suggestions for how officers can improve police/youth relations. Which of the following is **not** one of those suggestions?

- a. Fund more D.A.R.E. programs.
- b. Be more approachable and get out into the community more.
- c. Tell youth why you are arresting them and what will happen next.
- d. Explain to youth who witness an arrest why you are arresting the person.

INSTRUCTIONS: On a scale from 1 to 10, please circle the number that BEST reflects your opinions about the following statements.

1. Young people are positive assets to my community.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree									Strongly agree

2. It is important for police officers to build relationships with youth.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree									Strongly agree

3. As a patrol officer, I can help eliminate unequal treatment of minority youth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

4. Interactions between patrol officers and youth have little impact on the lives of youth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

5. I have the skills necessary for interacting effectively with youth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

6. I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don't know.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

7. Patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

Enjoy your training day!

APPENDIX B

EFFECTIVE POLICE INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE, POST-TEST

Name: _____

Department: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the questions below. Circle **ONE** response choice for each question.

1. It may be difficult to tell the age of an adolescent by looking at him or her. A good strategy for police to use when approaching youth is to:
 - a. Start by asking them their age.
 - b. Go by their size and height.
 - c. Assume that they are younger than they appear.
 - d. Assume that they are older than they appear.

2. What part of your communication has the greatest effect on what youth actually hear when you interact with them?
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6. According to national research, which of the following factors contributes to more juvenile justice system contact for minority youth:
- The tendency of minority youth to commit crimes more frequently than white youth.
 - The tendency of minority youth to commit more violent crimes than white youth.
 - Police policies and practices such as staffing levels and patrol locations.
 - A and B.
 - All of the above.
7. Which of the following statements is likely to make the situation **worse** rather than better when dealing with youth?
- "I'm just doing my job."
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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3. As a patrol officer, I can help eliminate unequal treatment of minority youth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

4. Interactions between patrol officers and youth have little impact on the lives of youth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

5. I have the skills necessary for interacting effectively with youth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

6. I feel comfortable starting a conversation with youth that I don't know.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

7. Patrol officers can have a positive impact on youth without taking time away from their enforcement activities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly
disagree

Strongly
agree

INSTRUCTIONS: We are interested in your overall assessment of the training program. The following questions ask about your reactions to the program. Please circle the number below each question that BEST describes your reaction.

A. Overall Assessment

1. How interesting was the training program?

Very	Reasonably	Somewhat	Not Too	Not At All
Interesting	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting	Interesting
5	4	3	2	1

2. How useful you think the training program will be to you in performing your duties?

Very	Reasonably	Somewhat	Not Too	Not At All
Useful	Useful	Useful	Useful	Useful
5	4	3	2	1

B. General Comments

1. What did you like the most about the training program?

2. What did you dislike the most about the training program?

3. What specific changes would you make to improve the training program?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

APPENDIX C

- SELECT RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS -

WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE PROGRAM?

- Frequent group activities, interaction between instructors and group, types of group activities, use of videos
- Team-teaching
- I like how the class got involved and was able to participate. It's interesting listening to other towns'/cities' ideas
- Everything
- The video clips in the presentation helped to ?? interest
- Interacting with other departments. Speaking aloud. Working with groups.
- Very good class. Great training aids and presentation.
- Good interactions and thoughts of fellow officers.
- Good use of material, equipment
- Instructors were very entertaining; very organized
- The interaction between everyone was helpful
- Jaami and Sam did a great job
- The program was fun intervention and informative. The instructors did an excellent job!
- The way you guys got up working together as a class in 1st couple of hours of class. How knowledgeable you guys were. Thank you for your time!!!
- Role play
- The examples the instructors gave and the resources, very approachable about studies, gave great break times
- The belief that it is important to find alternative avenues in dealing with youth and crime, other than arresting them or otherwise introducing them to the court system.
- It was very practical and an honest assessment of how officers react with youth. Interesting to see real officers feedback in the videos.
- Videos & group exercises
- The instructors were very good; the presentation & class interaction were excellent.
- Interaction with other officers and their comments.
- The interaction!
- The interaction with officers from other departments.
- Instructors and course of instruction well prepared and informative
- Advice on dealing w/ youth in various situations--ways to improve relations.
- Training aids.
- Group work/practical
- It did provide some useful information

- The videos
- Movies, slides
- Group work.
- Student involvement, good instructors
- It suggested alternate ways in dealing with youth other than the traditional methods.
- The instructors made the course interesting.
- Instructors.
- Keys on how to talk and interact with youths better and the way youths understand things
- it was an interactive experience
- The interactive and cooperative training
- Very informative numbers
- A good mix of video & audio
- Better outlook on how to deal with today's youth
- Group as a whole had a lot of experience--different ideas/points of view; taught by experienced officers; local video/statistics
- The videos, role-playing, group work.
- Interaction w/ class--exercises
- Interactive class.
- The presented material and the breaking off into groups.
- Good presentation, well taught
- I was surprised with some of the facts/data presented. The numbers were less than I expected. The program was presented well!
- Instructors.
- Interactions with the other officers and instructors
- Info was useful, food was great
- Instructors were knowledgeable, helpful, and provided adequate breaks
- Ability to relate to everyday patrol
- Instructors were very good. Small class size. Food.
- Taught about first impression, judgment. Don't judge people until you meet or talk with them.
- How to deal with youth.
- The instructors were informative & entertaining.
- Good class
- Everything, activities awesome.
- Suggestions on how to deal better with groups of youth together. How to talk with them.
- New ideas for dealing with youth.
- Group work & interactions
- Opened my eyes to how youth see/think about the police and how I could better approach them.

- Class participation. Food.
- The day was broken up very well & flowed nice. Also, it was an informative, laid-back day. The activities were good.
- Group interactions to illustrate points; good supportive videos; interesting and helpful information.
- Different perspectives on how to interact with a group of youth and seeing the positive/negative outcomes as a result of police interactions
- Interaction
- Group assignments
- Interaction kept it interesting, lunch
- As a supervisor, it was a good refresher course for me, on how to get back to basics with the youth.
- Good flow of the program/work put together.

WHAT DID YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE TRAINING?

- Nothing
- Nothing
- Videos could be a little more realistic
- Nothing
- Temperature in room
- Location of class, too far
- N/A
- I'm not extremely interested in the role playing
- It was good
- All good
- I liked everything
- I don't know, nothing really
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Started out very dry, but became more interesting
- None
- No coffee at the last break :)
- Too many stats
- Statistics.
- Too many stats--not applicable
- Coming here after working 3rd
- Testing
- Too long
- Tended to be repetitive in certain areas
- Lunch

- Nothing
- Nothing
- That it was jammed into an 8 hour class
- Most in class were well aware of concepts taught--should focus on officers who need the skill
- Some of the material was dry, but obviously needed.
- Some generalized statements--allowing youth to vent (not in front of peers).
- 1/2 day spent on minority issues.
- N/A
- Nothing stands out
- Focused on minority relationships.
- Having everything on site. I felt like I was trapped in the room.
- Liked everything
- Statistical data was a little dry but instructors kept it interesting, food was excellent
- Role play seemed like a waste of time
- Nothing to dislike, interesting course
- Nothing.
- Nothing
- Did not go over options available in case it is youth in crisis.
- After just coming out of the Academy, I have an aversion to Power Point.
- It was all pretty good. No complaints.
- None
- NA
- NA
- None
- I could not relate the "DMC" with my department or community. Excellent info for the patrol officer.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING?

- More videos.
- None
- Nothing
- The program could be used at the high school ??? for high school students to ??? understanding of police
- Handouts
- Have a couple of youths present to interact with in class.
- More videos of interactions
- Nothing
- None
- Every law enforcement must take this class

- N/A
- N/A
- Nothing
- N/A
- It would be nice to have a local youth come in person and share a few brief thoughts to the audience
- Nothing
- None come to mind.
- None
- Can't think of any. Thanks to Pat and his assistant. Very knowledgeable and professional!
- More hands-on situational participation. Involve youth in the training if possible.
- More time.
- N/A
- There should be more interaction
- None
- Give more examples of how to interact in a realistic setting.
- More movies.
- Nothing
- Don't use DWC a long time without spelling it again. We tend to forget.
- Spread it out into a few days and have youth be in the same class so we understand them and they can understand us.
- More role-playing to practice techniques.
- Elaborate more on venting youth.
- Cover minority issues but not as much time spent on an issue. A lot of factors figure into issue that would not be covered in a class.
- None at this time.
- More videos.
- Nothing. The length of the presentation was good and the information was applicable to all officers. Very good training! It acted as a good refresher to youth interaction and also gave me new information for future use. Suggest others to take this!
- When asking questions, just explain what you're looking for a little better, be more specific
- None
- Bigger room
- Nothing
- Less statistics, more on actually how to talk to the kids, what sets them off, what doesn't
- More video on situations. Some departments might not deal a lot with youth on the streets. More video on how to act and what to say constructively.
- Nothing.
- Nothing

- Maybe some brief description of how to use MySpace as investigative tool--I have no idea.
- None.
- None
- NA
- Include something for supervisors.
- Do some role-playing.