

Uncovering Our Police System: A Narrative by Urban/Suburban Youth of Color in a State Based on White Supremacist Ideals

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Courtesy of the Multnomah Youth Commission and Word is Bond, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation through the Center for Social Inclusion (GARE)

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Purpose

- ★ Rise of police brutality
 - Examine youth-police interactions + suggested improvements
 - Involve Youth of Color as population directly affected

Process

- ★ Structure of focus groups:
 - 2-3 note takers
 - 2 youth facilitators from:
 - Word is Bond
 - Youth Against Violence subcommittee

Topics Discussed

- ★ Structure of discussion
 - Discussed community
 - Shared a real-life negative interaction
 - Exchanged suggestions
 - Wrote something youth would like police to know

Populations Involved

- ★ Discussed youth police interactions with:
 - 293 participants
 - Ages of 8-25
 - Identified as People of Color
 - Live in Multnomah County

Involvement of Youth of Color

- ★ Reached ideal demographics by:
 - Making a list of schools and organizations
 - Outreaching to gauge interest in participation

Timeline

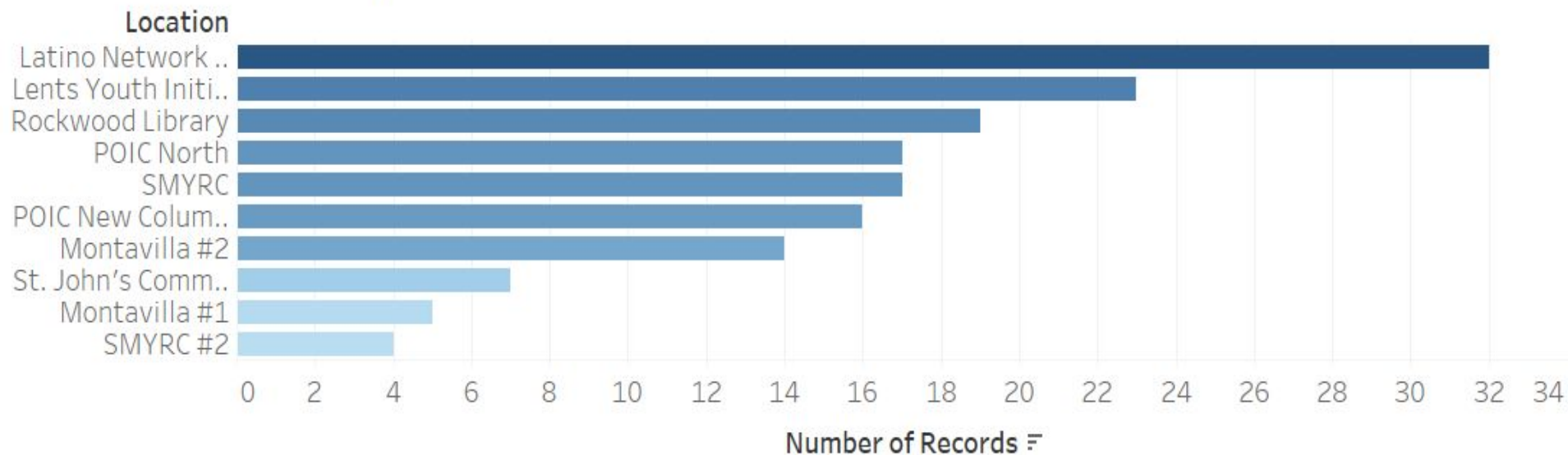
- ★ Jan-Feb: script
- ★ Focus groups: Mar 17th-Jun 17th
- ★ Survey: Jun-Jul

Survey Overview

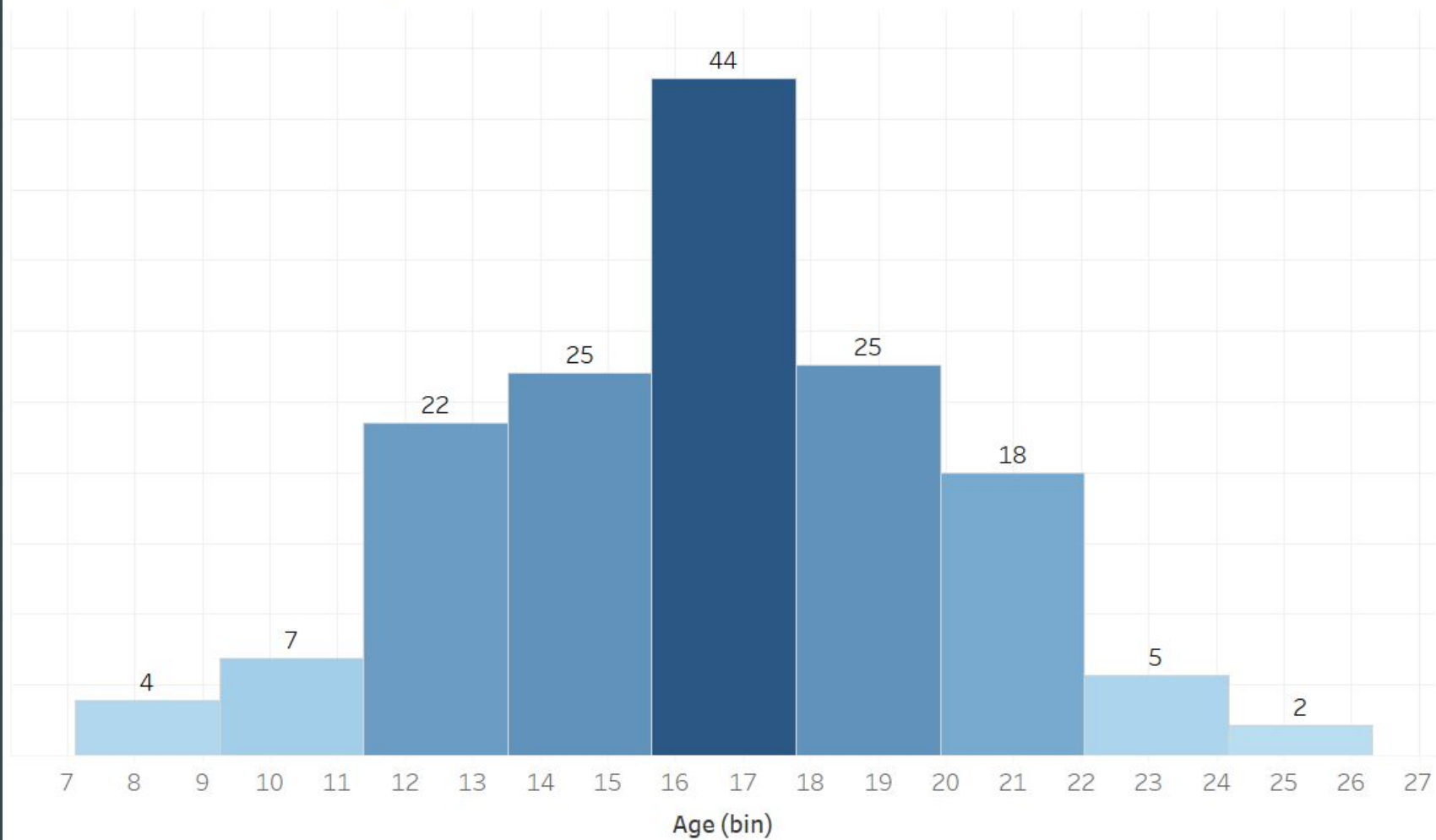
- ★ Conducted a survey:
 - Demographics information
 - 5 sections of script

Quantitative Data

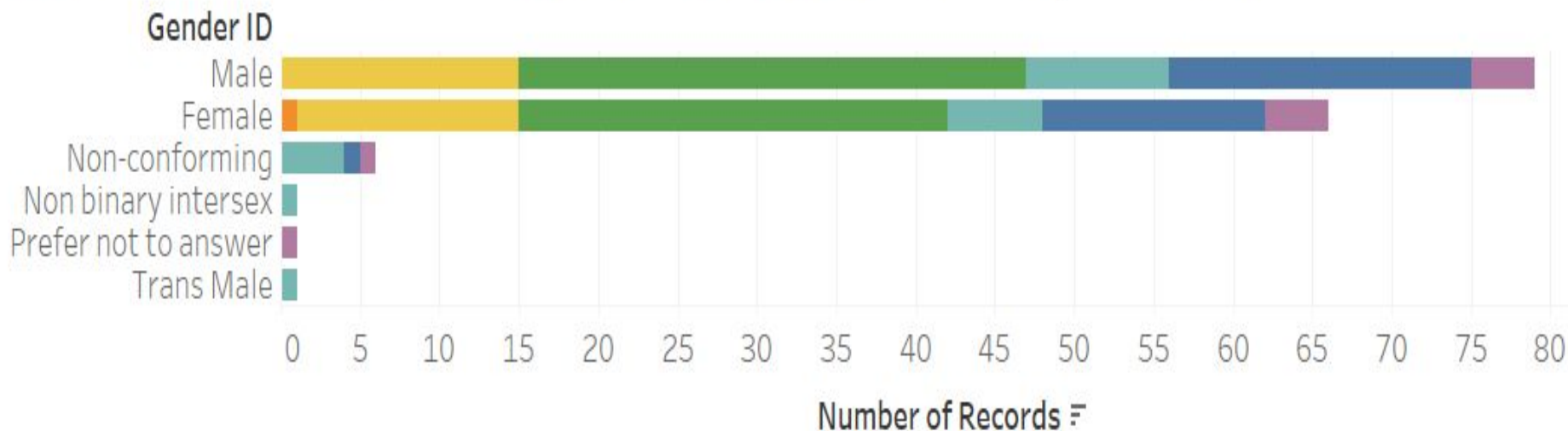
Number of Participants from Each Location



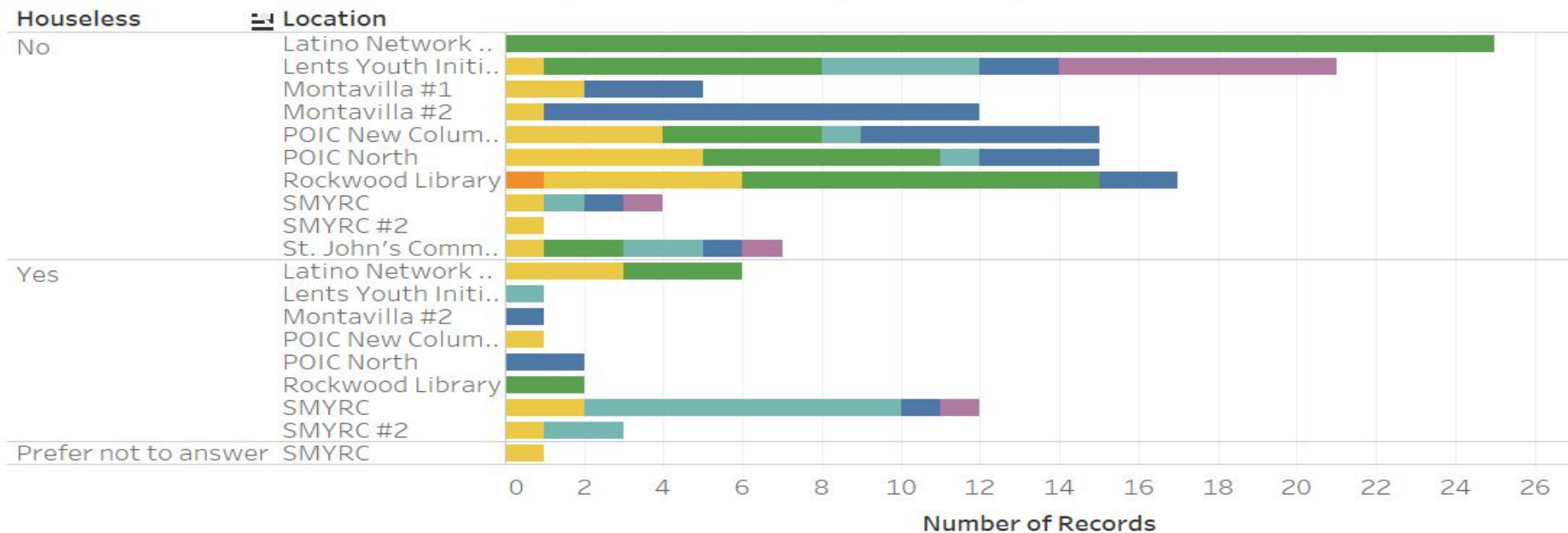
Age Range of Participants



Gender Identities of Participants Compared to Race/Ethnicity



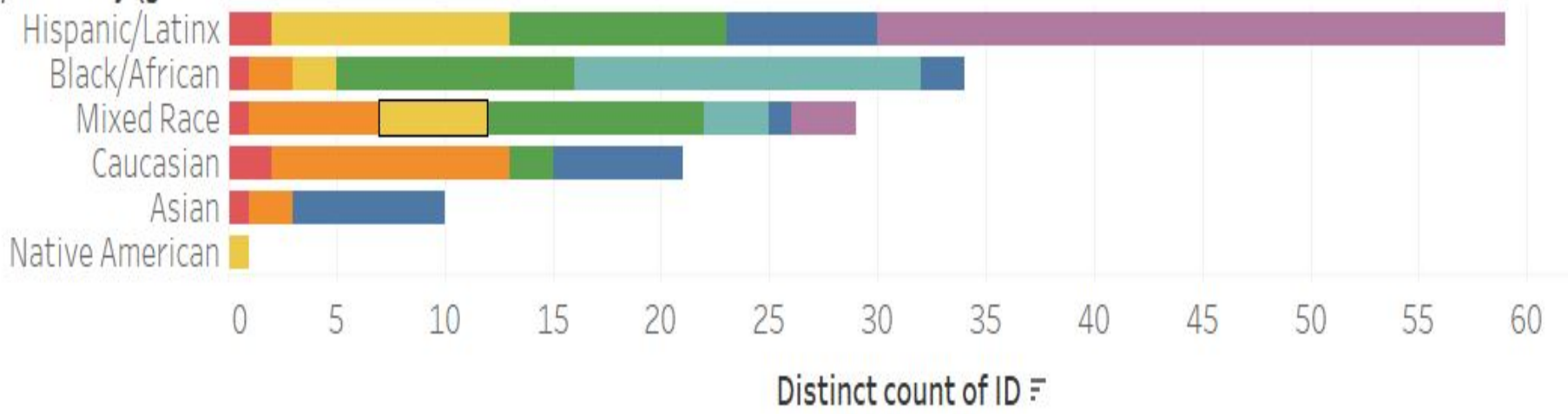
Houselessness Status Compared to Race/Ethnicity



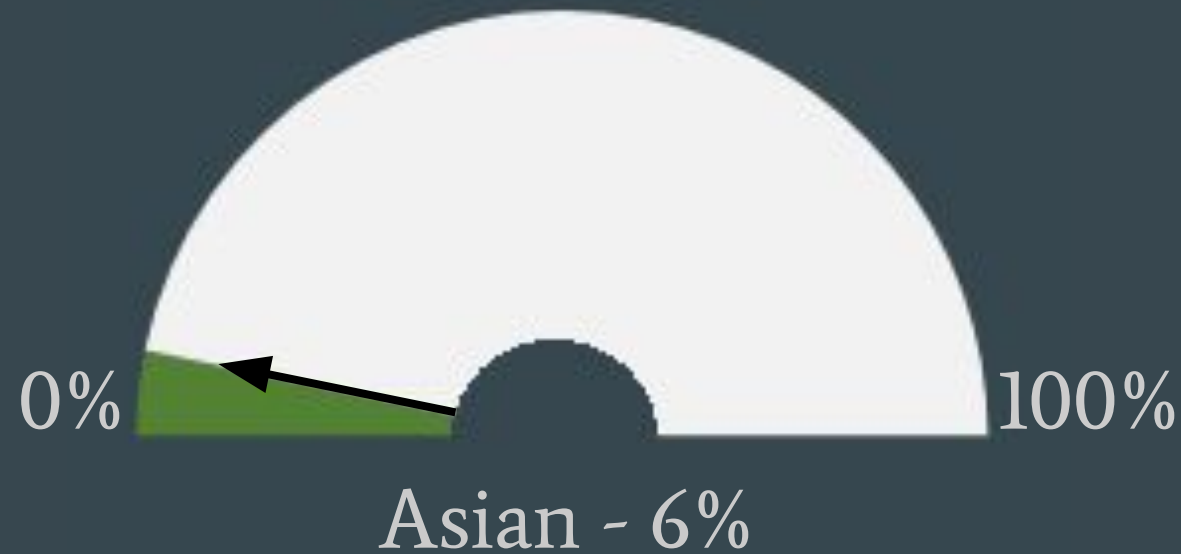
- Location
- Latino Network Summer Academia
 - Lents Youth Initiative
 - Montavilla
 - POIC
 - Rockwood Library
 - SMYRC
 - St. John's Community Center

Race/Ethnicity of Participants Compared to Location

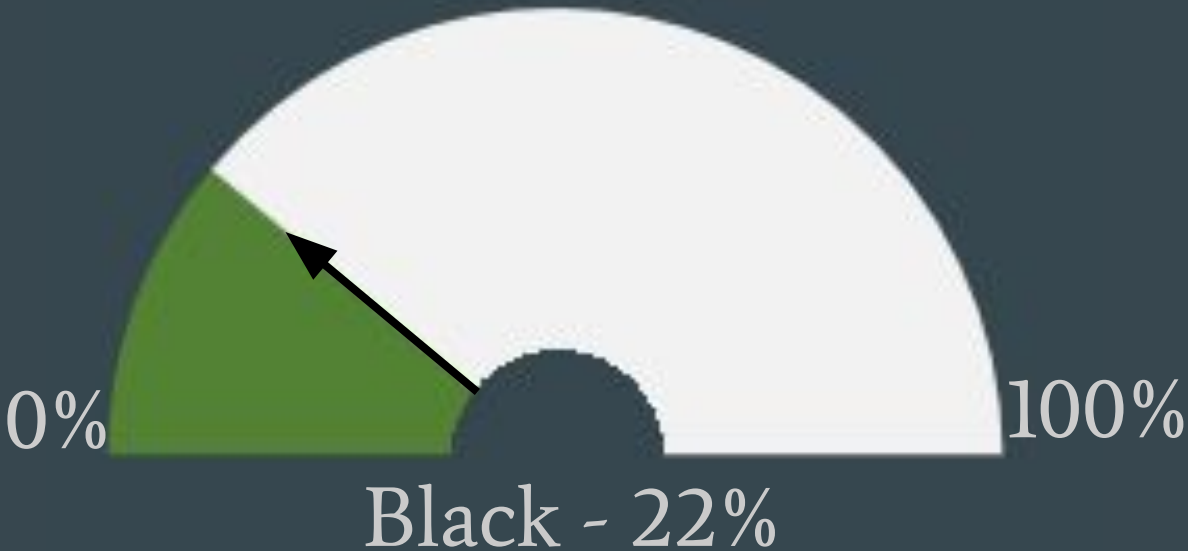
Race/Ethnicity (grou..



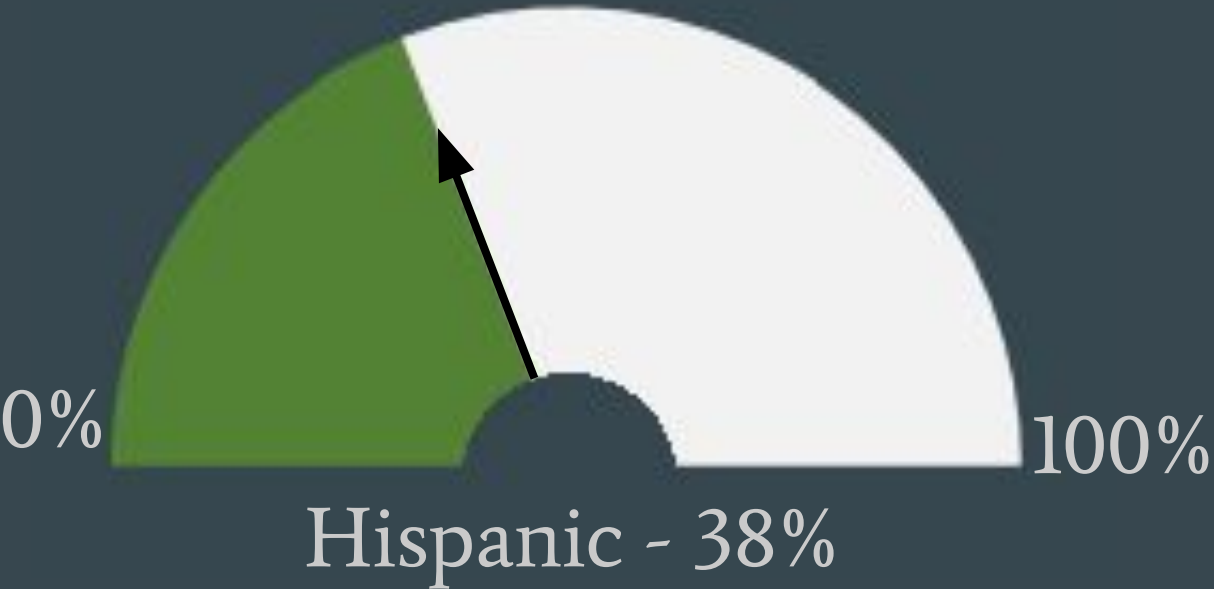
Racial Demographics



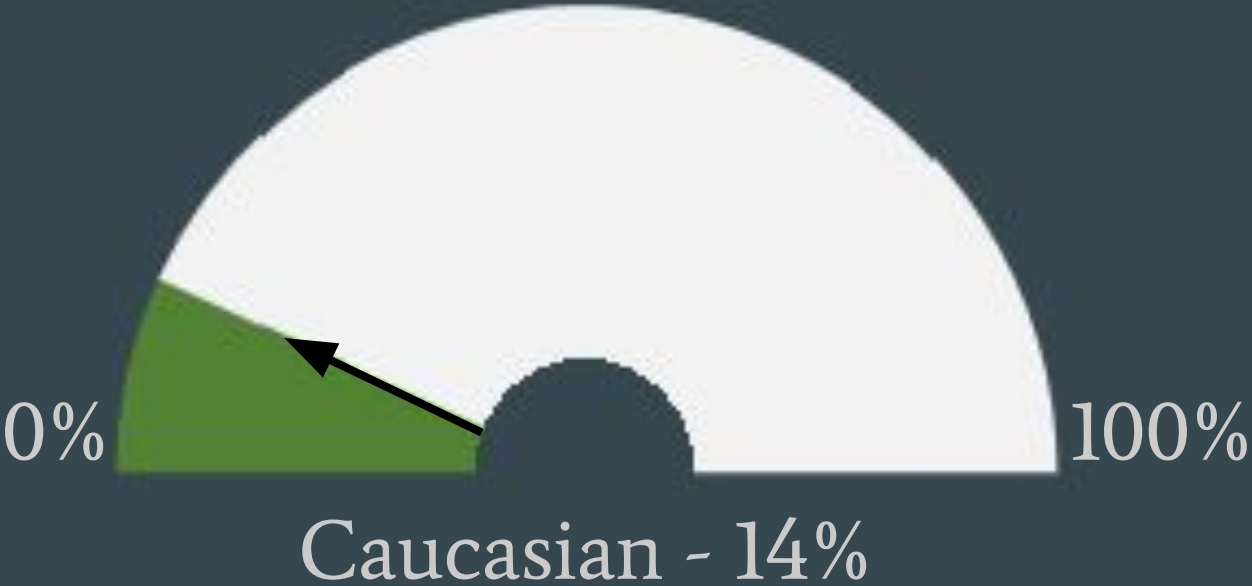
Racial Demographics



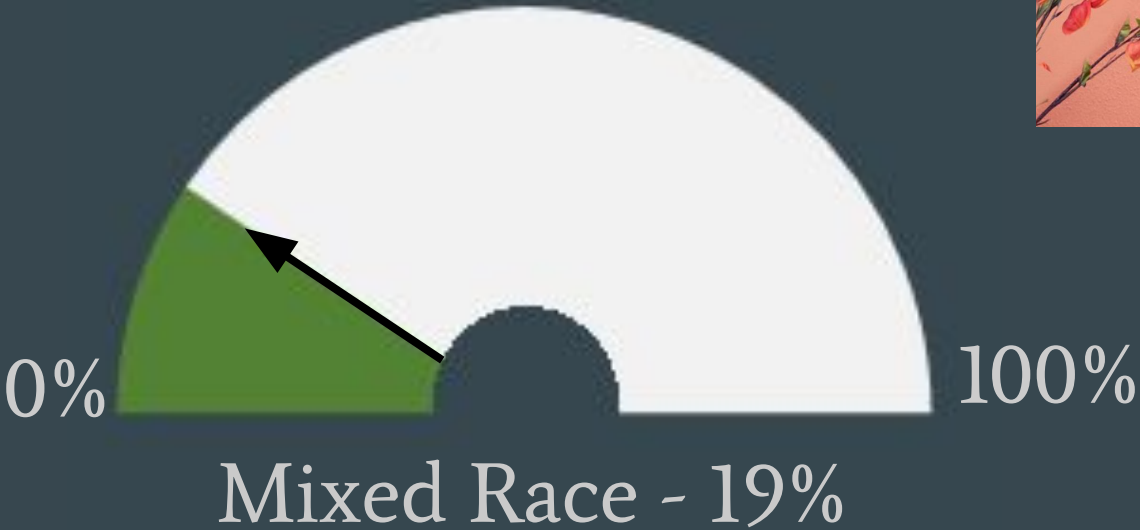
Racial Demographics



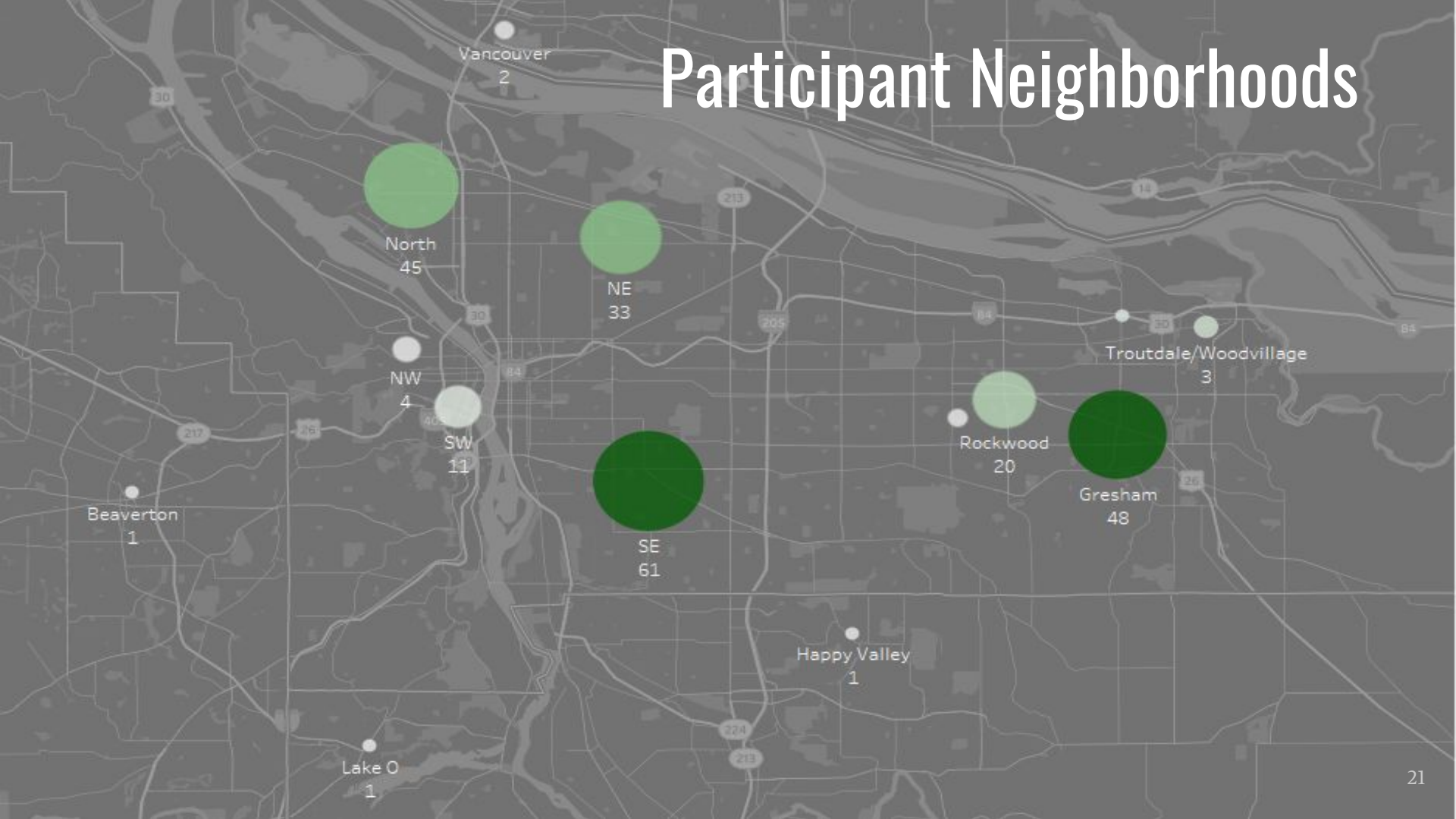
Racial Demographics



Racial Demographics

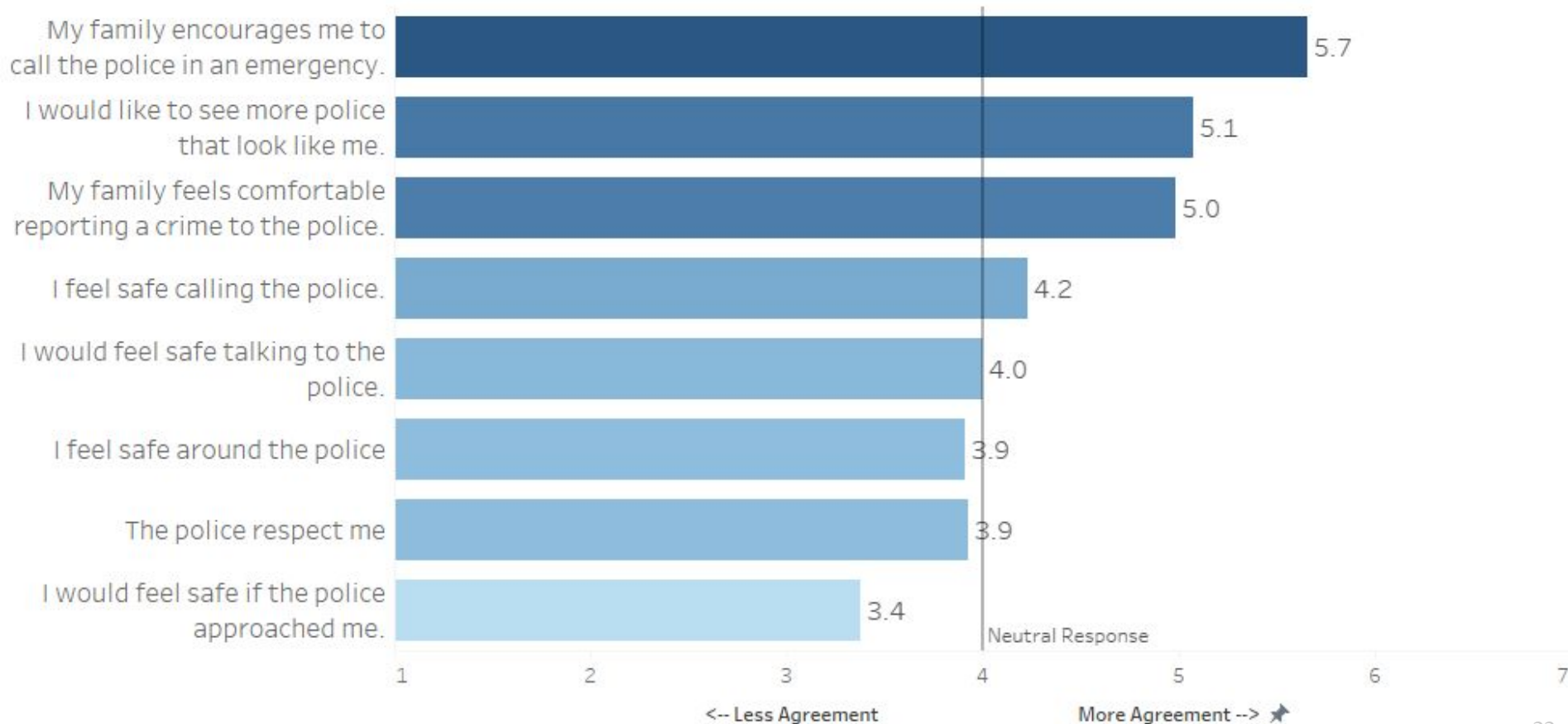


Participant Neighborhoods



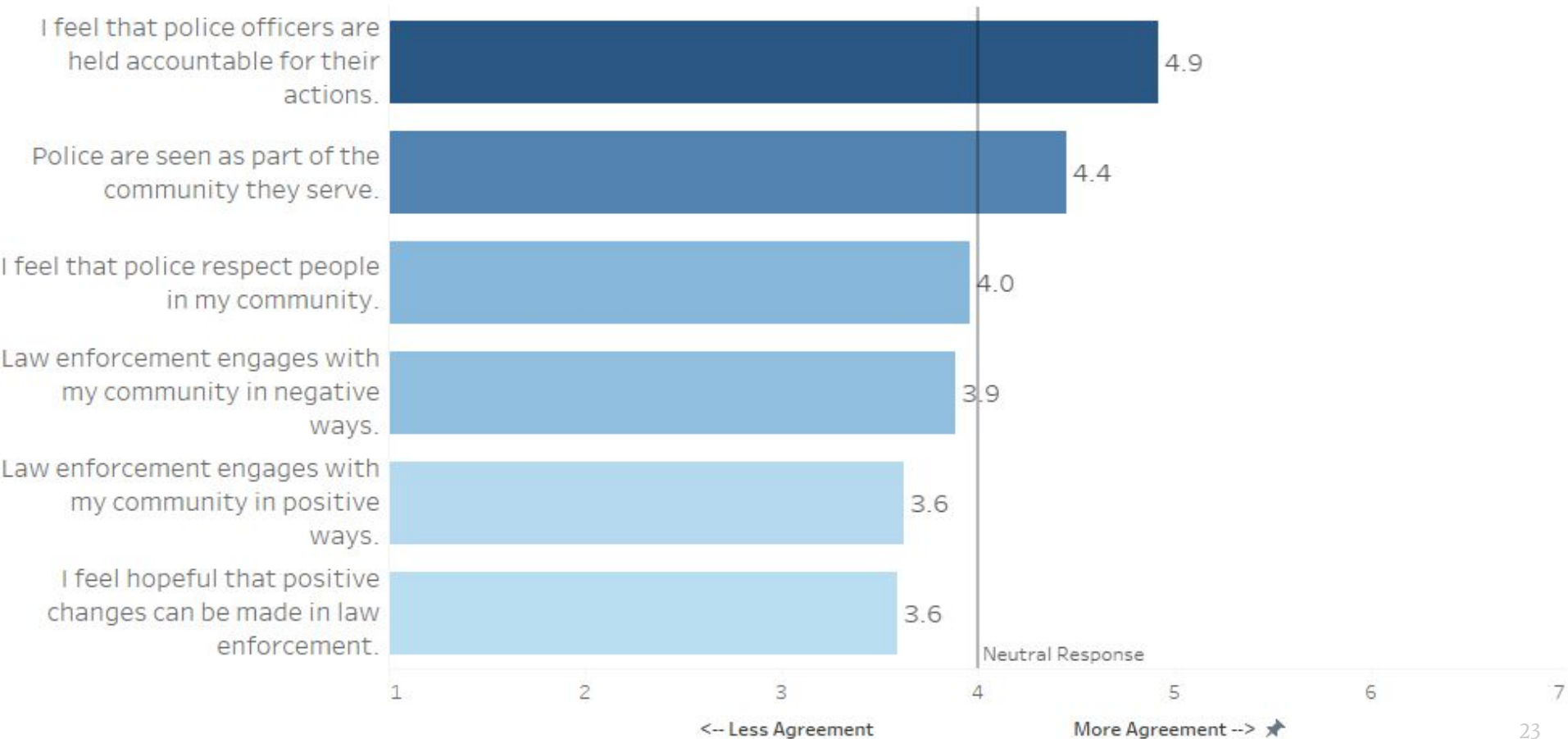
Interacting with Police

Average response by question



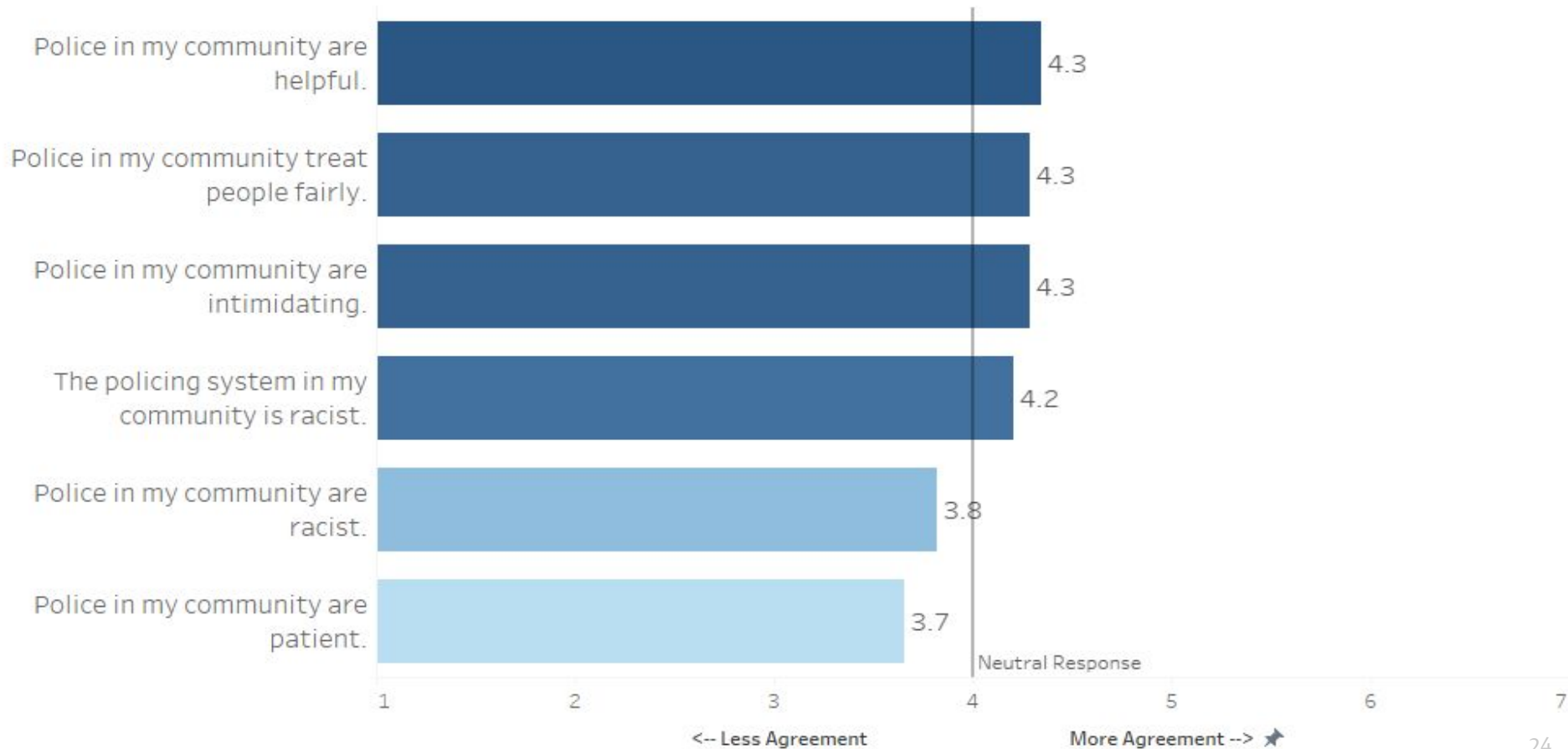
Police and Community

Average response by question



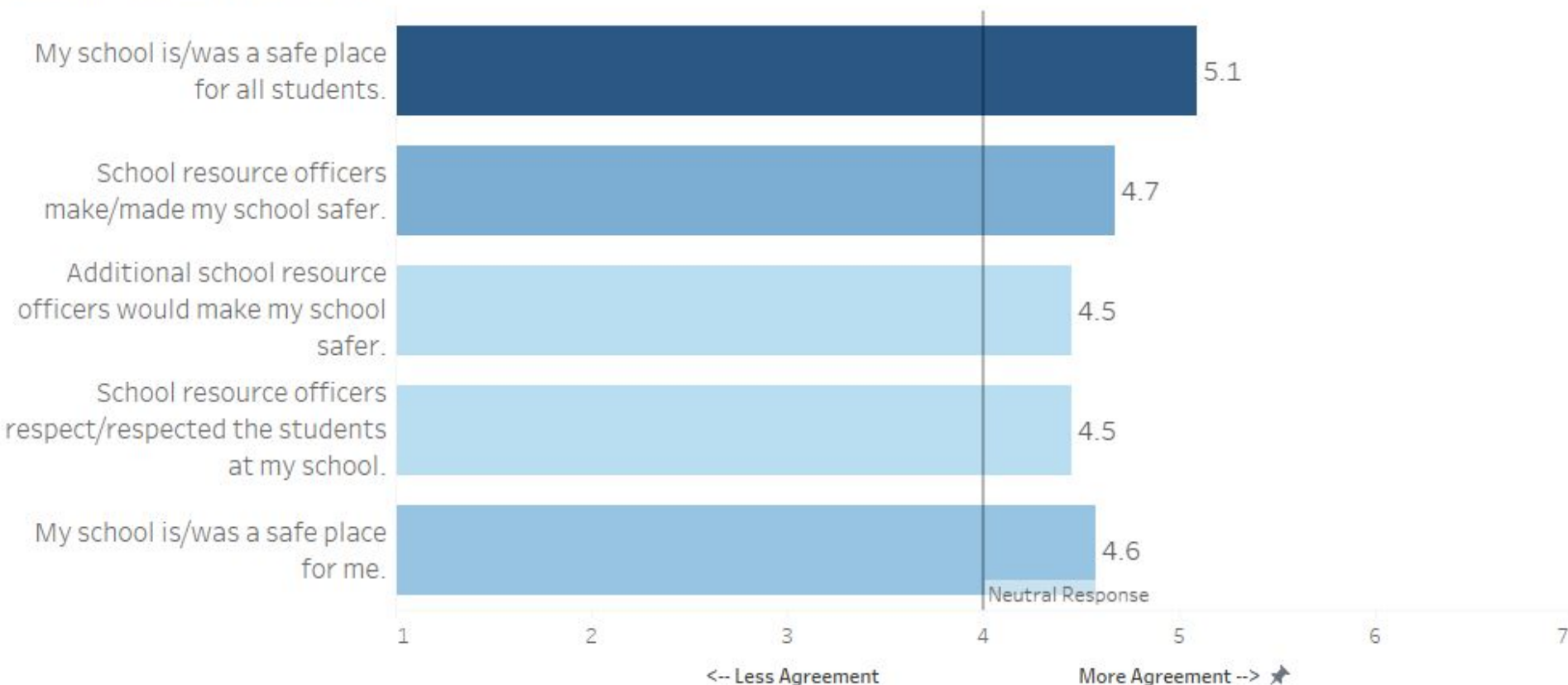
Police Behaviors and Attitudes

Average response by question



Police and Schools

Average response by question



Top Three Things Police Could Do to Make Relationships Better



Other Ideas

- ★ “Stop being racist.”
- ★ “Police should know people fear them and to cautious of all actions & things they say.”
- ★ “Police should stop murdering innocent Black people.”
- ★ “Held to same standards as common man.”
- ★ “Police should not be racist.”

Other Ideas

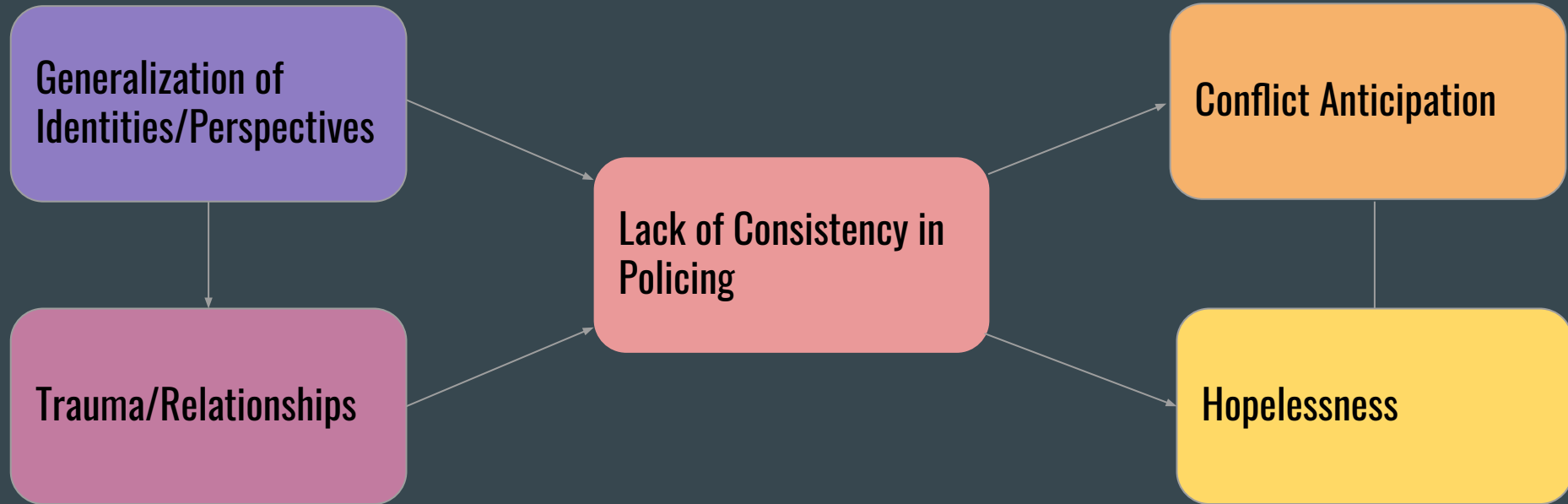
- ★ “Police should be punished if done something wrong.”
- ★ “Not be police in the first place.”
- ★ “Police should be disarmed/defunded and reallocate money to systems that disenfranchise people.”
- ★ “Not intimidate non threatening people.”

Other Ideas

- ★ “Police should be abolished.”
- ★ “Police should take responsibility for their actions.”
- ★ “Shouldn't be hired if prejudice against any races and should be fired if killing innocent people.”

Qualitative Data

Theoretical Model



Theme 1 Emerges

- ★ Emerged when:
 - Youth discussed generalizations made about identities
 - Making assumptions thought to cause police to act more aggressively

Theme 1: Generalization of Perspectives/Identities

Codes Associated

- ★ Identifying youth as growing and maturing at their age
- ★ Assumptions
- ★ Profiling
- ★ Role in media
- ★ White privilege or lack of accepting privilege

Theme 1: Generalization of Perspectives/Identities

Codes Associated

- ★ National news/politics
- ★ Police's perception of community
- ★ See police as negative and/or racist
- ★ Police being aggressive, judgmental, overprotective and hostile

Theme 1: Generalization of Perspectives/Identities

Codes Associated

- ★ Police are generalized and grouped as one instead of as individuals
- ★ Don't take youth/youth concerns seriously

Theme 1 Quotes

- ★ “When you look at the news you mostly see Latinos or Black males or people of color. They describe them...describe their race. And then when they see something with a white person, they don't describe them. Like they are better than people of color even when they commit crimes.”

Theme 1 Quotes

- ★ “How come when people is like, how come when they are trying to get away they shoot at them and other people they don’t? I saw this guy and he was naked, I mean, naked and he was running at the police with a knife. They didn’t shoot him. They don’t do that for other people. That says your life doesn’t matter as much as other peoples life. There are people that get shot trying to move away.”

Theme 1 Quotes

- ★ “It be situations when they shoot someone and they blame us...they are scared of us. They really think that someone in their right mind is gonna attack the police after all that has happened.”

Theme 1 Quotes

- ★ “I don’t know the backstory. I saw the video and it was inappropriate regardless of that she may have done. If they wanted to restrain her they could have restrained her but they didn’t have to body slam her. The size of the policeman vs her size. He didn’t have to do that.”

Theme 1 Quotes

- ★ “It’s a really long process on both sides. It tends to be the POC that read a lot of stuff on the media about when a white police officer kills someone of color. Then they get this stereotype that all police officers are the same, and sometimes that’s not true. For example the police officers I’ve talked to have all been pretty cool, have never really done anything and have always been helpful.”

Theme 2 Emerges

- ★ Emerged when:
 - Assumptions caused trauma to occur
 - Led youth of color to become afraid and police to grow frustrated with youth of color
 - Affects further relations

Theme 2: Trauma/Relationships

Codes Associated

- ★ Afraid or intimidated by police
- ★ Abuse of power
- ★ Asserting power
- ★ Role in media
- ★ Police as community members
- ★ Jurisdictional differences

Theme 2: Trauma/Relationships

Codes Associated

- ★ White privilege
- ★ Informal relationships
- ★ National news/politics
- ★ Police being helpful, faithful and reliable
- ★ Frequency of police presence
- ★ Role of the police in the community

Theme 2: Trauma/Relationships

Codes Associated

- ★ Police not being helpful and overreacting
- ★ Police's perception of community
- ★ Negative interactions
- ★ Police being aggressive, judgemental, overprotective and hostile
- ★ Discussion about how to interact with the police
- ★ Could see oneself in the same situation

Theme 2 Quotes

- ★ “What happened to me and my mother, we were just driving down the street and we were turning and the house was right here and we noticed that the police was just staring at us and asked us is this your car and my mom answered yeah. Then she went to grab the papers and I noticed that his hand was on his gun so I told him “hey sir don’t do anything” and she gave him the papers that was evidence that we had just bought the car. That just goes to show that you can assume anything he asked for the papers and the papers were in the glove box and she could have got shot. I’m outside looking at him and I was watching his every move and I had to say “hey stop it you asked for the papers.”

Theme 2 Quotes

- ★ “But with the mall thing. You’re found guilty before innocent...because of our skin color or what they think they see without the evidence. We guilty before we innocent. If anything we looking for evidence to show we innocent.”

Theme 2 Quotes

- ★ “Understand that having an interaction with the police can be scary or stressful. And a lot of people haven’t really had interactions with the police. I ran a yellow light. Asked why he pulled over. Said it was red. But it was yellow. Back and forth..are you arguing with me..are you trying to get a ticket. Police need a power check. They shouldn’t use their power to manipulate and intimidate people.”⁴⁷

Theme 2 Quotes

- ★ “I do agree. I feel like although we don’t like the police, they have to come around. We would rather not interact with them as we might attract them by doing certain things or acting certain ways.”

Theme 2 Quotes

- ★ “They racially profile, for instance, I’m driving me and the homies and I turn the blinker on, they start following you already know. I was by the house and pulled up to where we live...they told my mom and dad. We had bottles in the car but they said they are checking for guns, there are asshole cops and cool cops, the Hispanic cop was cool but the white cop was an asshole, he pulled me over for not using my blinker...it was crazy, they be looking for a reason to mess with you.”

Theme 3 Emerges

- ★ Emerged as we realized the correlation between theme 1 and theme 2:
 - Interactions perceived to be inconsistent between white people and the police versus youth of color and the police

Theme 3: Lack of Consistency in Policing

Codes Associated

- ★ Abuse of power
- ★ Reporting negative interactions
- ★ Jurisdictional differences
- ★ Role of the police in the media
- ★ Police as community members
- ★ Informal relationships

Theme 3: Lack of Consistency in Policing

Codes Associated

- ★ Positive, negative and neutral interactions
- ★ National news
- ★ Frequency of police presence
- ★ Lack of trust in the police
- ★ Dislike the police
- ★ Avoid interacting with the police

Theme 3 Quotes

- ★ “A few weeks ago, it was my friend’s birthday party. It was all Latino people and some Black people...everyone was drunk. They barely went far when they were pulled over...They needed someone to pick them up...I had a license, it was me and one other Black guy, I was driving and the police are there waiting with them. When I get there the police are asking me a bunch of questions like I did something wrong. I wasn’t drunk I was there to pick them up.”

Theme 3 Quotes

- ★ “White neighborhoods don’t see the police, went to Gresham and they are always there...”
- ★ “Either we killing each other or they be killing us...it’s rare to see an office beating up a white person.”

Theme 3 Quotes

- ★ “That’s their whole system to keep Black people down. They pushed us out from NE and now they are trying to put us in the system.”
- ★ “White parents aren’t teaching their kids how not to get shot by the police. When I first started driving, my parents told me not to get out my license, you gotta have it out before they get to the car.”

Theme 3 Quotes

- ★ “A lot of white people don’t get as much treatment as colored people. They have a difference experience. White people see police as helping the community but colored people are scared, especially undocumented immigrants are scared about what they have seen or heard about.”

Theme 4 Emerges

- ★ Emerged when:
 - Noticed that the inconsistency in policing resulted in distrust within communities of color
 - Assumptions leads to the hopelessness when discussing change

Theme 4: Conflict Anticipation/Hopelessness

Codes Associated

- ★ Afraid or intimidated by the police
- ★ Report negative interactions
- ★ Role of the police in the media
- ★ Asserting power
- ★ Jurisdictional differences
- ★ National news/politics

Theme 4: Conflict Anticipation/Helplessness

Codes Associated

- ★ Police not being helpful or overreacting
- ★ Frequency of police presence
- ★ Lack of trust
- ★ Avoid interacting with the police
- ★ Discussion about how to interact with the police

Theme 4: Conflict Anticipation/Hopelessness

Codes Associated

- ★ Would react by getting in a physical altercation with the police or yelling at them
- ★ Assume good intentions
- ★ Positive and negative interactions
- ★ Role of the police in the community

Theme 4 Quotes

- ★ “Getting pulled over. It was my dad, my other brother and a friend. My dad was driving and the officer was judging us and we were in the car listening to music and my dad had a car that was associated with people who do bad things. He asked the police officer why he was pulled over. Officer said that people in that car are involved in a lot of bad things. He pulled us over to check us and judge why we were driving. If you got someone driving an old car something that a lot of people that are African American had and hear the description of a car being stolen and you seen the white dude in the newer car, even though that car is stolen, the officer assumed it was my dad who stole because the officer was going for the Black dude.”

Theme 4 Quotes

- ★ “I’m sitting in the back my friend is driving but why would you ask for my ID if I’m sitting in the back. I don’t know if that’s on my record. I didn’t know the reason. My phone fell on the ground. I’m not even gonna pick it up, not gonna give them a reason. We sat there for an hour with the lights on and just my hands on my legs.”

Theme 4 Quotes

- ★ “Quanice had his hands up, there was a big debate on whether police should be held accountable. It should not be debated. If it’s vice versa, there’s no debate.”
- ★ “They don’t get any time for killing somebody. They leave people in the streets. They don’t get fired or anything, they just get paid leave.”

Theme 4 Quotes

- ★ “Understand that having an interaction with the police can be scary or stressful. And a lot of people haven’t really had interactions with the police. I ran a yellow light. Asked why he pulled over. Said it was red. But it was yellow. Back and forth..are you arguing with me..are you trying to get a ticket. Police need a power check. They shouldn’t use their power to manipulate and intimidate people.”

Policy Recommendations

- ★ Increase the amount of informal relationships present between youth of color and the police
- ★ Increase attendance of law enforcement at community events and activities
- ★ Build an increased sense of respect for communities of color among police officers

Policy Recommendations

- ★ Build curriculum for police officers surrounding culturally responsive practices and trauma informed care when interacting with populations largely composed of people of color
- ★ Build new accountability standards for holding police officers accountable for their interactions with communities of color

Policy Recommendations

- ★ Assume good intentions on both the part of police officers and communities of color in general
- ★ Integrate perspectives of youth of color (those largely impacted by police brutality) in the processes to improve relationships and bridge the gap between communities of color and law enforcement to build hopefulness among community members

Reflection

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Think about one way that you can inform or impact yourself, your department or law enforcement to make a change and better these interactions.

Resources Available to Further Educate Yourself

- *Arresting Power* (movie discussing negative interactions historically between communities of color and law enforcement in Portland)
- *Do the Right Thing* (movie about Brooklyn's racial tension and a tragedy that occurs in that neighborhood)
- *13th* (documentary on the history behind why America's prisons are filled with Black people and POC)

Resources Available to Further Educate Yourself

- *So You Wanna Talk About Race* (book that examines race in America)
- “Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment” (article that details the gentrification in Albina and the history behind that)

Resources Available to Further Educate Yourself

- *Best Practices in Community Conscious Policing: A Reflection on Law Enforcement Community Building Workshops* (discusses the best way to police by involving the community)
- *Malcolm X* (uncovers race in the civil rights era and the brutality experienced by Black people)

Resources Available to Further Educate Yourself

- *Fruitvale Station* (follows the story of Oscar Grant, a Black man killed by the police at the Fruitvale Station)
- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (a book calling to fix America's broken justice system)

Resources Available to Further Educate Yourself

- *Democracy in Black* (follows the state of Black America at the point in time many believed we were living in “post-racial America”)