

**Real Talk, Real Walk—A Model for the Nation:  
Youth/Police Strategize to Improve RPD's Relationship with Youth**

Working Paper #2011-12

A Collaborative Action Process involving  
Teen Empowerment, Rochester Police Department,  
and Rochester Institute of Technology's Center for Public Safety Initiatives

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## Executive Summary

### *Background*

In 2005, a small, only two full-time staffed community agency originally based out of Boston set out to improve youth-police relations in Rochester, New York. The Center for Teen Empowerment works directly with urban, often troubled, youth employing them to work directly on an issue that affects the community over the course of one year. This particular project is atypical in that it has endured over the past 6 years and continues into the present, with hopes to expand it. Over the course of the project, Teen Empowerment worked closely with both the Rochester Police Department and a local university, Rochester Institute of Technology.

### *Process*

The Youth-Police Unity Project began with a phone call to the local Police Department, asking if there was interest in working with Teen Empowerment to improve the relationship between youth and law enforcement in a City where there appeared to be very fragile relationships between the community and law enforcement. The phone call resulted in a number of pieces rolling out. And over the course of 6 years,

- 1) youth-police core groups were formed in which discussions and relationships were built between youths and officers;
- 2) surveys of youth and surveys of officers were created, implemented, and analyzed;
- 3) a Call to Action occurred through the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council at a local high school;
- 4) a core group of youths and officers met for almost one year, creating a place for understanding and deep dialogue;
- 5) focus groups were conducted with officers in the Department;
- 6) focus groups were conducted with youth from the community;
- 7) a Symposium on the state of youth-police relations was held at another local high school;
- 8) action steps were established by the youth, law enforcement, and community agencies together;
- 9) and, this report is released through a Rochester Police Department-sponsored press conference committing to an annual assessment and update to the community on efforts to improve the state of youth-police relations.

### *Results*

In the following pages, the entire process is discussed at length, sharing key results of the numerous research methodologies utilized. This report not only reveals the results of the

surveys, focus groups, and Symposium action steps, but also exposes the most critical part of the process: engagement with law enforcement. As can be expected in working with any Criminal Justice entity, there were a number of transitions and a matter of personalities that affected the timeline, which can be seen within the report. Some of the key results included:

- Youth do not feel respected by law enforcement
- Law enforcement does not feel respected by youths
- Youth do not call law enforcement when they need help
- School Resource Officers seem to have better connections with the youths and community they serve
- There is not clear agreement on what exactly respect means
- There are cultural barriers, between some officers and youth – such as understandings around youth culture and urban culture
- Perseverance, relationships and honesty are critical to transition successfully toward real change in youth-police relations

### *Recommendations*

There were a number of action steps and recommendations made along the way. The report shares all of them, and even highlights where we are on some of them. The following highlight some of the many recommendations and action steps:

- The impact of peer pressure (a normal part of adolescence) should be studied at greater length in the context of youth's feelings towards law enforcement
- Define respect
- Educate law enforcement on race relations, the effects of concentrated poverty, racism, etc. (currently the officers do not appear to have a historical perspective on race specific to Rochester)
- Find a balance between officer safety and respect
- Annual release of report on the state of youth-police relations in Rochester
- Institutionalizing dialogue sessions with officers and youth based on TE's interactive model
- Youth / TE as part of academy training
- Engaging community agencies at a higher level
- Determining and measuring indicators for improved relations

## Introduction

Teen Empowerment is an organization that was established in Boston with an aim to empower youth through employing them in youth advocacy roles. In 2003, Teen Empowerment (TE) branched out into the Rochester, New York community. At that time the youth organizers identified and prioritized issues young people face in the community around which they wanted to advocate. One of the main issues selected was improving youth-police relations in Rochester. This paper describes the process from the start in 2005 through its current stages. In order to best understand the process, the following will be presented: backgrounds on the various entities involved, explanation of the theory of social change that TE is built upon, timeline of events, a summary description of the events, and the current status of the process including recommendations. TE's youth-police unity project (YPUP) is an important facet to the TE organization and thus, describing the process in the following pages should create improved knowledge.

## Background

### *Teen Empowerment*

The Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc (TE) was founded in 1992 by Stanley Pollack who is currently the Executive Director of all the TE sites. Teen Empowerment has four program sites: two in Boston, MA; one in Somerville, MA; and one in Rochester, NY. At each site, 12 youths aged 14-21 are hired as youth organizers for one year. Their job is to address serious issues in their community by organizing initiatives that involve other youth in creating positive change. Youth organizers are hired for 8-10 hours per week during the school year and 20 hours per week during the summer. Youth organizers and staff members together: "identify those issues they consider most critical in their community, design an action strategy that will involve others in having a positive impact on these issues, and implement the strategy" (retrieved November 2010 from <http://www.teenempowerment.org/programs.html>).

TE brings out the voices of youth and helps them to make positive changes in their community. In 2005, the youth organizers hired by TE in Rochester agreed on the issue of youth-police relations. With their interest in improving youth-police relations, the Youth-Police Unity Project or YPUP was established.

### *Rochester community*

Rochester is a mid-size city with a population of approximately 210,000 and youth ages 24 and younger make up about 40% of the total city population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Rochester sits within Monroe County, a county with a population of 744,000 residents (U.S. Census, 2010 estimate). According to the 2000 Census, Rochester is 39% Black, 13% Latino, 43% White, and 2.3% Asian; while Monroe County (according to 2009 estimates) is 14.8% Black, 6.2% Latino, 74.2% White, and 2.8% Asian. Rochester City School District consistently graduates a little less than 50% of its students in four years. And of those who are graduating only 5% are deemed to be ready for college or work (Democrat & Chronicle, February 12, 2011, *Share data on college readiness*).

There are distinct areas in the City of Rochester which have higher rates of teen pregnancy, concentrated poverty, STD's, childhood obesity, and vacant housing, which are interrelated with higher rates of crime, violence, and criminal justice supervision. Rochester has a violent crime problem in that homicide rates are higher than in many other cities across the

nation; homicide rates in Rochester are three times the national average. Furthermore, those who live in these high crime areas are much more likely to witness shootings, stabbings, robberies, and other traumatic events. Youths in these neighborhoods often view these traumatic events as normal to daily life.

In the work done with the youth, and in the following pages, it is evident that youth-police relations are on shaky ground in Rochester. Law enforcement has difficulty understanding the community they serve and the youths have difficulty navigating the community they live in. This is not a unique issue to Rochester as within many urban areas across the nation tensions exist between law enforcement and the urban, poor, minority communities (cite).

Racism in Rochester came to head in the summer of 1964. This was the era of the Civil Rights Movement across the nation and Rochester was the first city to have race riots. There had been a number of injustices in Rochester based on race in access to decent jobs, housing, and fair treatment by police. Due to this climate, it took one person believing that he had been unfairly attacked by a police dog to incite rioting that lasted for days. The aggressive police tactics used in the community had created a hostile relationship between the residents and the police. This hostile relationship could still by some be considered to exist in present day relations. The National Guard was eventually called in and peace was restored three days after the riot began. Prior to and since the riot, race relations continue to be a source of discord in Rochester. This disconnect has currently manifested itself in how the police treat youths and how the youths treat officers. The history is relevant because today these are neighborhoods with concentrations of both poverty and minorities. These are the same neighborhoods identified as the high crime neighborhoods, which in turn receive targeted response from law enforcement. Thus, law enforcement and these neighborhoods receive disproportionate contact with one another.

### Model for Change

With Teen Empowerment as the driving force behind YPUP, both the Teen Empowerment Model and the Collaborative Change Approach were critical to the process. Below, both of these frameworks are described in detail.

#### *Teen Empowerment Model™*

The Teen Empowerment program is rooted in the Teen Empowerment *Model™*. This model is based on four main beliefs regarding adult and youth behavior with an ongoing emphasis on power. The first belief is that youth feeling powerless can result in attempts to gain power through negative means, such as violence. The second belief is that analysis, decision-making, action, and success together create power. The third belief is that youth have the ability to make real and meaningful change in their schools and communities. In order to make real change youth need access to adequate resources to implement their ideas. It is believed that the most effective form of leadership between youths and adults is facilitative in nature. The final belief is that in both youth and adult group settings, there is a connection between the skillful use of interactive group work methods and the ability of the group to reach consensus and to maximize the amount of productive work they are able to accomplish.

Teen Empowerment uses an interactive approach which includes a plethora of creative icebreakers. These “interactives” (what many people refer to as “icebreakers”) are used in a meaningful way in order to facilitate directed discussion at TE’s meetings. The book, *Moving Beyond Icebreakers: An Innovative Approach to Group Facilitation, Learning, and Action*

(2005, Stanley Pollack), is used in parallel with the TE model. This approach allows for dialogue that humanizes, is honest, keeps people at the table—even when they encounter contention—and moves them toward problem-solving.

*Transitions framework and ARIA-C3 Process: Collaborative Change Approach*

Teen Empowerment used the William Bridges Transitions framework and the ARIA-C3 process in order to guide the Youth-Police Unity Project's process. The Bridges' Transitions Framework is an internal way of looking at how people go through change. The concept is that there are three stages to every transition: endings, neutral zone, and a new beginning. Endings involve letting go of how things used to be, the neutral zone is the chaotic, dynamic stage, and the new beginning is when a new way of doing things emerges. The ARIA-C3<sup>2</sup> is a process that helps to guide collaboration between individuals and groups. This framework supposes that there are three lenses that people view others from, the individual lens (C1), the group lens (C2), and the collective lens (C3). In C1 the individual determines their individual goals and action ideas that are needed for change, then in C2 a consensus is reached within their own stakeholder group, and last in C3 group representatives of all the groups reach an intergroup consensus on the goals and action plans. The Collaborative Change Approach (CCA) then is the combination of these two frameworks. This allows for a change process that is value driven and collaborative, and where both parties can weather the more challenging experiences of change while recognizing the progress being made.

University and Police Involvement

In order to make this project viable, the Rochester Police Department (RPD) needed to be involved from the beginning. Engaging RPD would be a complicated task, but was essential for any major impact to come out of the project. TE recognized a few years into the process that collaboration with an Educational Institution could prove to be beneficial in a number of ways. Some of the benefits included using research to guide the process, use of a University's resources (i.e. technology and students), and a mutual participant in the process.

*RPD description*

At the end of 2008, the Rochester Police Department consisted of 754 sworn police personnel. Of those 754, 76% are white, 11% are Black, 11% are Hispanic, and 1% are Asian, and the remainder recorded as other. Within this group 88% are male and 12% are female. The Rochester Police Department currently operates using East and West Divisions. Prior to East and West, the Department was divided into seven precincts. This change occurred in June 2004. Within RPD there are a number of specific titles that uniquely relate to this paper: Community Prevention Officer, School Resource Officer, and School Safety Officer (non-police). A Community Prevention Officer is an RPD officer who reports to a neighborhood center in the community and works closely with the community, not responding to usual patrol calls. A School Resource officer is an officer stationed in one of the schools within the Rochester City School district. The SROs work closely with the school specifically when there are fights or weapons brought to the school. Lastly, a School Safety Officer is not affiliated with the Police Department, instead they are part of a Security Team through the school district.

### *RIT CPSI description*

Rochester Institute of Technology's Department of Criminal Justice runs the Center for Public Safety Initiatives, which is the organization that worked with TE and RPD on this project. "The Center for Public Safety Initiatives [CPSI] is a unique collaboration between the City of Rochester, the criminal justice agencies of Greater Rochester including the Rochester Police Department and Rochester Institute of Technology. Its purpose is to contribute to criminal justice strategy through research, policy analysis and evaluation. Its educational goals include training graduate and undergraduate students in strategic planning and policy analysis" (Retrieved August 2010 from <http://www.rit.edu/cla/cpsi/>). The Center employs students in conducting local research but also has an interest in getting the students into the community to better understand local issues and how the community perceives them. In this project CPSI assisted TE with survey construction and analysis, facilitation of a youth-police focus group which included the use of personal response devices, transcribing focus group data, written ongoing reports, technical assistance, and overall assistance with the Symposium.

### Timeline of Events

The timeline of events is valuable in order to grasp the length and commitment necessary to make this project work. Appendix 1 includes a compressed timeline, but in the following pages an expanded timeline of events is presented.

The overall plan for YPUP was the formation of a core group of youths and officers to work on youth police relations. At the start, the idea was to engage youth and officers to facilitate discussion around this issue and to then come up with a plan to address it. This plan would include specific action steps and the expectation that the culmination of events would result in a Symposium for youth, police, and community agencies.

To best understand the Rochester process, its roots and lessons come from work done by Teen Empowerment in Boston. Boston TE youth organizers had an interest in addressing the state of youth-police relations. In 2000, Boston TE began work on youth-police relationships and decided to hold a youth-police forum. They invited the Boston PD, however, after several attempts to reach out to the Boston Police Department, there was no response by the Department. The youth organizers decided to move forward on the issue. The media found out about the Department's lack of engagement and published an article in *The Boston Globe* about the forum the day before it was to occur. Boston Police Department then responded by sending officers to participate and at TE's invitation, to speak from the podium in response to youths' speeches about issues between youth and police. Still, due to the Department's lack of involvement in a process leading up to the forum, several officers felt caught off guard and that they were being attacked by the youth participants. While the forum had some concrete outcomes—such as the transfer of a particularly egregious officer—the more global aspirations toward change in youth-police relations were limited and TE's ended credibility within the Boston Police Department was compromised. Learning from this experience, Rochester's TE wanted law enforcement's engagement in the process from the start. For this reason, events transpired much slower, but in the end, have proven much more effective in impacting policy.

## **2005**

In 2005 newly hired youth organizers were recruited to work on issues important to them, including youth-police relations. TE's Director then met with the police chief to discuss the possibilities of involving the Rochester Police Department (RPD) in the process. The Police Chief was interested, but he was on his way out as he was running for City Mayor (elected in November 2005 and appointed mayor January 2006). The Chief connected the Director to the Command staff as well as the School Resource officers (SROs). During February, the TE Director and Program Coordinator asked permission, which was granted, to sit in on roll calls with RPD in order to better understand police culture and in an effort to become more present in the RPD.

Next, the youths met with all the identified command staff and SROs. There were nine officers and ten youths present at the first meeting, which lasted three hours. The planning meeting included goal setting, logistics, and other forms of planning. The Eastside Commander was very interested in this project and really took ownership of it within the Department. He saw the value in engaging youths and officers in dialogue. During this time, in response to a spike in homicides and a need for more officers on the street, RPD released its class early from police academy. The Eastside Commander recognized concerns that the officers would hit the streets without adequate training in effective communication with youth and the community, so he wanted to have TE involved closely. Thus, this Commander offered nearly all of the officers assigned to his patrol division to work with TE on this project. The youth organizers met together to plan for their eventual meeting with the officers. This entire process took a few months and once the officers and youth were ready to meet, multiple groups were held which continued into 2006. This group became the first core group of youths and officers assembled together for this project.

## **2006**

With the Police chief being elected Mayor, 2006 was a major transition year for RPD. Over this one year period the Department went through three different chiefs. Irrespective of what was occurring in the high ranks of the Department, the core group of officers and youth continued to meet. The officers in the group were all from the Eastside patrol division, as there still was no buy-in from the Westside Commander. Though this was not ideal, the TE Director recognized the matter with plans to pursue it eventually, but due to time and personnel constraints, time was better spent working closely with the Eastside officers to support and facilitate the good work being done there. During this time the Eastside Commander became the Deputy Chief of Operations (DCO) which allowed him to then facilitate TE's greater involvement with the RPD. Therefore, TE youth and staff held mini-trainings, called "Dialogues with Youth," for the officers.

With things moving smoothly, recruitment of new officers and youth organizers began as the year was coming to an end with the current group. During this time, a top-down approach was used to recruit the officers. The DCO identified and recruited officers who would be a part of the core group. The identified officers would then be notified that they were to attend the TE dialogues; unfortunately, often they would be informed of this at roll call the vary day the dialogues were to take place. As the officers likely did not understand the role of TE and its



anticipated impact on the policing of neighborhoods they have felt that it was taking time away from them performing their duties.

Assessing this process, it is understood that an officer told to participate in a project of this nature may not have been the most effective way to recruit officers. The officers were not specifically requesting to be a part of this project and eventually this approach created problems. This can be seen in the following situation that occurred during one of the meetings: As TE staff and youth opened the meeting and began to ask for feedback from the officers, the ranking officer in the room informed all of the other officers that no one was to speak except for him; if they had anything to say, it was to go through him first--an announcement, that turned the meeting unproductive. TE moved forward with the meeting, but it proceeded with very little input from any of the officers other than the self-identified mouthpiece for the group. After the meeting came to a close, TE discovered that this officer went back to his peers and badmouthed the entire process, as well as a staff member and youth organizers at the meeting. This setback concerned the director that this one person may destroy TE's already tenuous credibility within the Department. Therefore, he met with the DCO to address the issue. At this time, it was uncovered that this particular officer acts similarly amongst his peers similarly in other community-based meetings as well. The DCO was displeased with what had transpired and informed TE that he would amend the situation. It was taken care of, as the Director of TE received an apology from the disruptive officer and it was agreed that another group would be held with the same officers in order to salvage the relationship. The meeting was held and began to go well, but as is the nature of working with law enforcement, it came to an end within minutes of starting due to a serious hostage situation that the officers had to respond to.

The core group continued to meet during this time and in the summer of 2006 a day-long retreat was held with the original core group.

## **2007**

The critical role of one player was felt in 2007 with his departure from the Police Department. Consequently, towards the end of 2006 and into 2007 there was a hiatus. During this year TE was unable to get in touch with anyone in the Department regarding the project; all the while making phone calls, writing emails, and approaching in person. The original contact at RPD for the project, the DCO, resigned from the Police Department in order to take the position of Director of Safety and Security at the Rochester City School District. Losing this person proved to be a huge stumbling block for TE. It proved that personal relationships and certain personalities are essential to moving this type of project forward. The youth organizers continued to meet and talk about the issue and next steps, but were unable to meet with any officers. However, TE still had its foot in the door as it was able to help with the recruit training during this year.

The period also corresponded with the Department's implementation of a more aggressive "Zero Tolerance" policing style. As a result, there was increased police presence in high crime neighborhoods which resulted in a large number of youths being stopped and searched as well as frequent street corner sweeps. This mandate created a much higher interaction between youths and police. From RPD's end there was a greater need for more officers to carry out this initiative, so new recruits were getting out on the streets working beats that they typically would not be working until they had more experience.

## 2008

Moving through 2007 was challenging and 2008 proved to be another year in which it was difficult to connect with the Police Department. The Executive Deputy Chief was the person to connect with and he did not return any of TE's calls. Regardless of the Mayor and Police chief's buy-in, the project lacked interest by the contact person who was in control of moving action forward on the project. When TE brought this up to the Mayor and Chief, they both continued to direct TE to the Executive Deputy Chief. TE persisted in calling and emailing to no avail; the EDC lacked buy-in for the project. Instead, a different policing mentality had come to the forefront, which proved a disappointment for TE. Thus, another year was slowly passing by without any action taken on this project.

The youth organizers hired for this year decided to empower themselves to move forward; working on the creation, distribution, and analysis of surveys that looked at the state of youth-police relations in Rochester.

In order to create the surveys, the Director got in touch with a TE Rochester Advisory board member, as he was the Director of RIT's Center for Public Safety Initiatives. Dr. Klofas and a Criminal Justice Graduate Student met with TE and over the course of a few weeks the survey was constructed with input from TE, the researchers, and law enforcement. Law enforcement as the original members of the core group were contacted and reviewed the preliminary survey and gave feedback. By the summer of 2008, the surveys were created.

In order to distribute the surveys a contact at the Police department, who was in the role of Community Liaison, assisted with getting the officers to take the survey. In order to get the youth to take the surveys, TE worked closely with the Communications Director and a few counselors in the City School District. Additionally, the youth organizers did street outreach and community events and distributed the surveys that way. An explanation of the survey process follows.

### Survey Distribution and Analysis

#### *Methodology*

There were two separate surveys distributed: one for youths and one for officers. The police survey (Appendix 2) consisted of nineteen questions, fourteen of which were aimed at measuring police officer perceptions of police-community relations. The remaining five gathered information on the survey taker's demographics. The surveys were optional to the officers and an individual's survey was kept confidential. These rendered **264** respondents for the sample, which represented about 70% of RPD's street patrol officers.

The youth surveys (Appendix 3) consisted of sixteen questions. The first thirteen questions asked the respondent about youth-police relations and the final three questions asked the respondent about demographic information. These youth surveys were administered in three different ways. First, surveys were administered by youth members of Teen Empowerment using convenience samples. Youth at various community centers, youth hangouts, and on the street were asked to take the survey. The second type of sampling method for the surveys involved a snowball distribution. Members of Teen Empowerment were given these youth surveys and told to solicit their friends or family to complete them. Third, counselors at the

schools within the RCSD administered the surveys to the students. There was no mechanism put in place to differentiate between these three distribution methods on the completed surveys during coding or analysis. These surveys were completed between August 2008 and December 2008. These solicitations rendered **1636** completed, unduplicated surveys appropriate for analysis.

Both the police and youth surveys used an ordinal rating system, or Likert scale, of 1 to 5 for the majority of questions. Two types of ordinal responses were used in the survey. The first set of responses started at 1=All of the time and continued to 2=Most of the time, 3=Some of the time, 4=Hardly ever, and finished at 5=Never. The second set started at 1=Excellent and continued to 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Fair, and finished at 5=Poor. The response number was listed with the response name to minimize any confusion by the respondent.

## Results

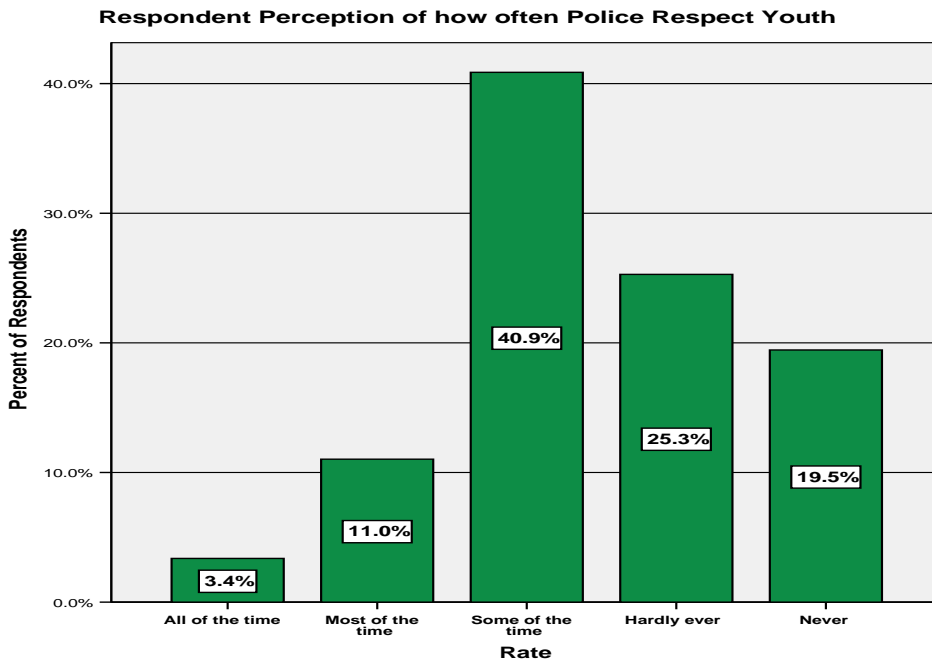
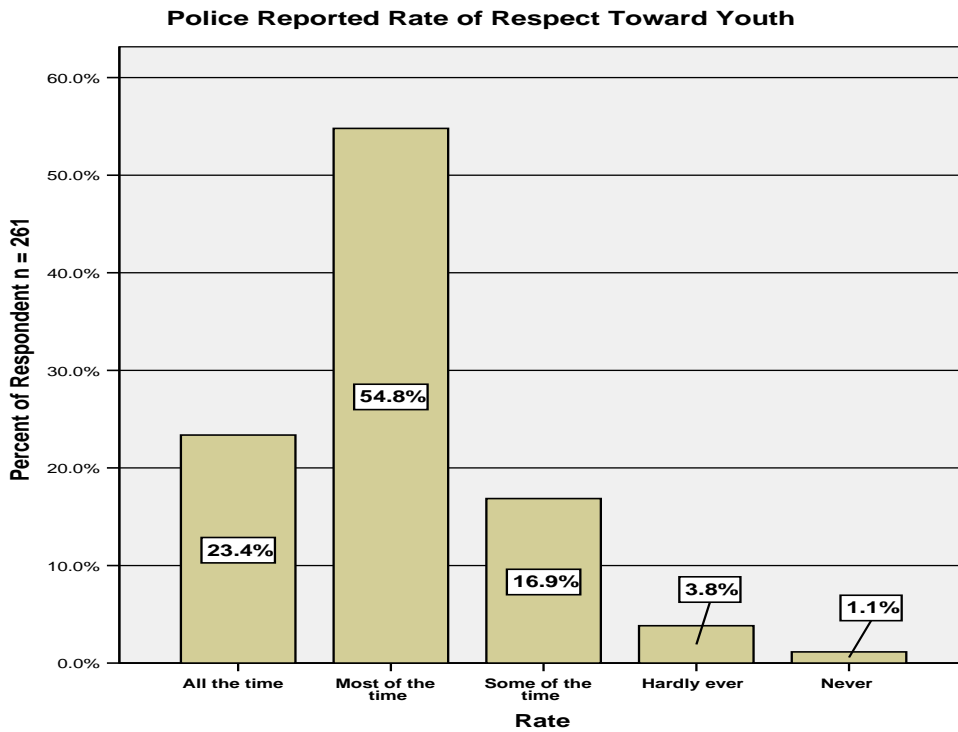
### Demographics

The majority (89%) of police respondents from the RPD were ‘Officers’. The remainder were sergeants, lieutenants, investigators, a school resource officer, and a department chief. The mean number of years served by the respondents was 9.2 with a standard deviation of 6.98 years. Of the sample, 85% stated that they lived outside of the city. Of the 264 respondents, only 155 (60%) completed the section on ethnicity. Of those 155 officers, 65% stated that they were Caucasian, 14% African American, 13% Latino, and 8% ‘other’. The ‘other’ reply consisted of; Asian, Pacific Islander, and other undefined responses. Though not explicit in the data, the responses suggested extreme resistance to this question. In some cases, officers added comments on the question implying that they did not want to answer the question and that it was “none of [our] business” what their race was.

Of the youth sample, 65% stated that they were ages 15-18, 21% stated that they were 13-14, 11% stated that they were 19 and older, and 4.3% stated that they were 12 or under. Of the sample, 63.7% stated that they are African American, 12.3% stated that they are Latino, 6.5% stated that they are Caucasian, 1.6% stated that they are West Indian, and 15.8% stated that they considered themselves another race not listed. To note, of the sample, 33.3% of the youths had been stopped by police in the last six months. Of those stopped, 77.4% felt that the police were not fair. The term ‘fair’ was not defined on the survey. Each respondent was left to define it in their own way. This showed that the core group’s speculation was true that a large number of youth in the City are stopped by the Police; illustrating the significance of this project.

The analysis for these surveys provided some interesting results. The police surveys offered some unique insight and allowed officers to express themselves in a survey that could not be scrutinized by superiors. Similarly, youth were given the rare opportunity to formally express their ideas to improve youth-police relationships in Rochester. The most telling results of the current state of youth-police relations were the survey results regarding respect and trust between officers and youths. The vast majority of officers (95.1%) reported that they respect youth at least ‘some of the time.’ Only about 5% reported that they respect youth ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never.’ Further, 96.2% of officers reported that their fellow officers respect youth at least ‘some of the time’ and that less than 5% respect youth ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never.’ However, when youth were

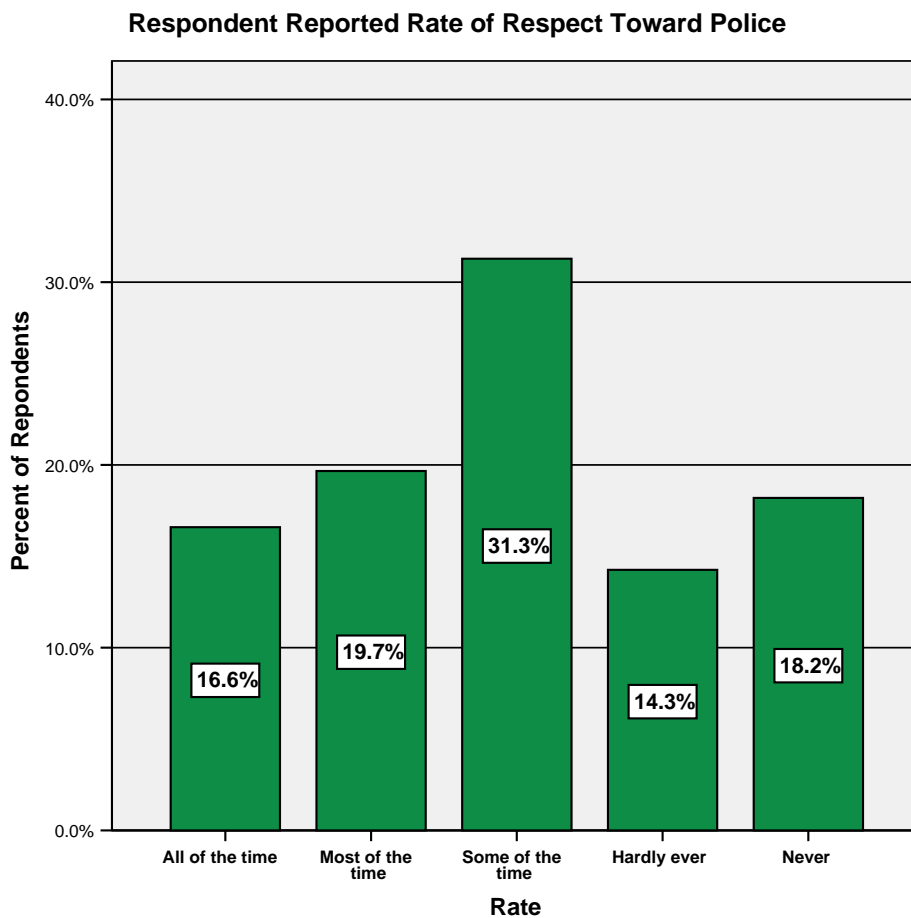
asked how often they feel respected by police, 44.8% of the youth sampled reported that they feel respected ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never.’ See charts below.



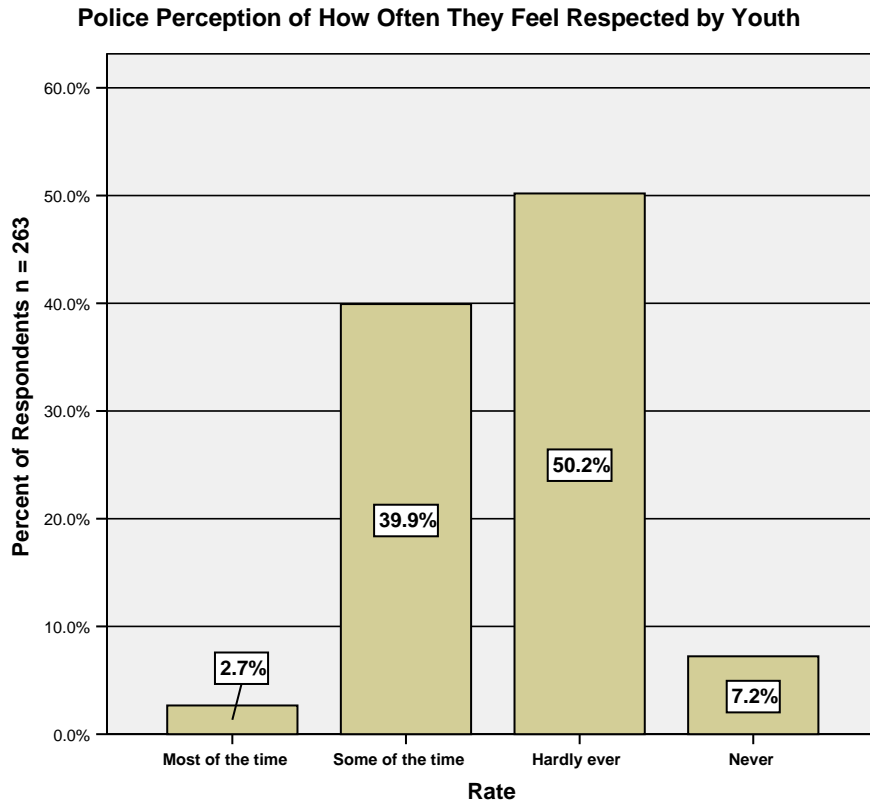
African American youth were less likely to report that police were respectful all of the time, most of the time, or some of the time when compared to both Caucasian and Latino youth. They were also more likely to report that police officers showed respect hardly ever or never.

Statistical analysis<sup>1</sup> shows this relationship to be statistically significant. This raises some critical questions as to treatment and perception of treatment based on race.

Youth reported respect for police as well, but at lower levels than the officers reported respecting youth. Two thirds of the youth respondents (67.6%) reported that they respect the police at least 'some of the time.' Nearly one third reported they respect police 'hardly ever' or 'never.' However when asked how often other youth were respectful toward the police, 64.1% of the sample reported that other youth were respectful 'hardly ever' or 'never.' When asked how often officers feel respected by youth, 57.4% officers reported that they feel respected 'hardly ever' or 'never' by youth. This is more consistent with the youths report about *other* youths attitudes towards officers, but not consistent with the youths reporting about their own respect towards officers. The charts below illustrate the results.



<sup>1</sup> Chi-Square of 19.038 with significance of .001



When comparing across racial groups, specific trends were found. African American youth in general were more likely to report that other youth were less often respectful toward the police. Caucasian youth were more likely to report that other youths were respectful toward the police. These relationships are statistically significant and supported by statistical analysis<sup>2</sup>.

Addressing Neighborhood Issues

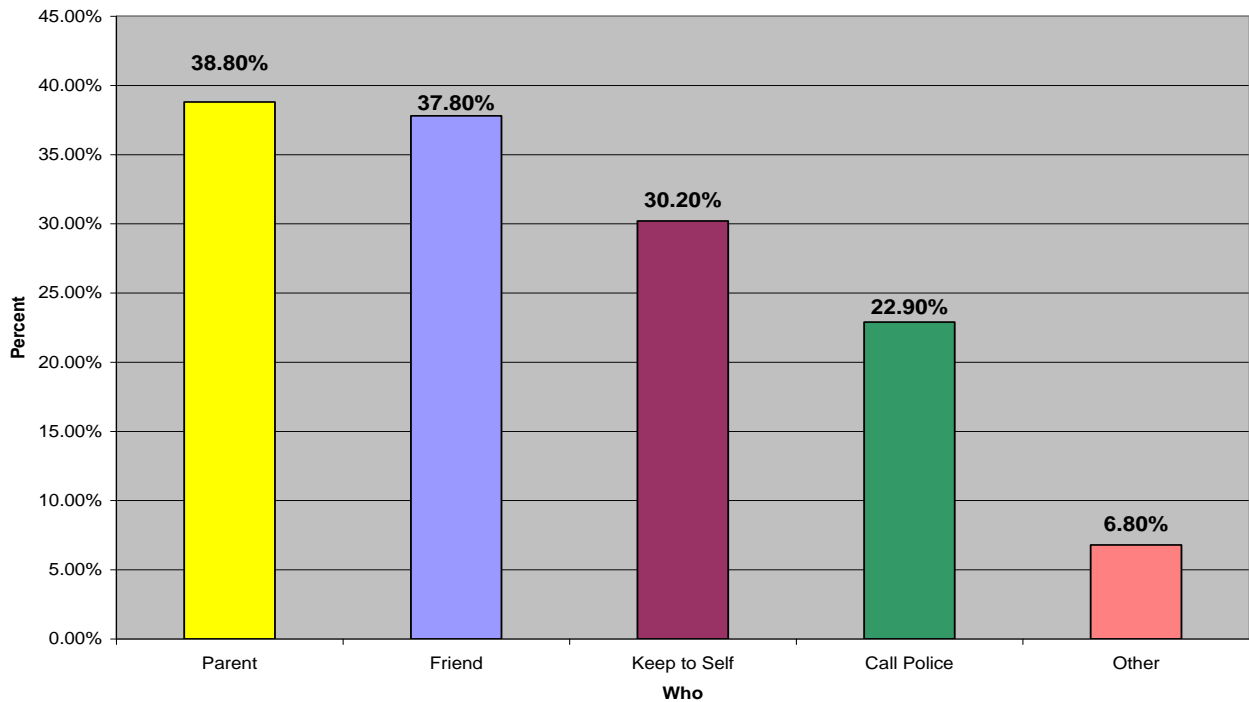
Police felt strongly that they address neighborhood problems adequately. When asked how well they solve community problems, 64.5% of all officers reported ‘excellent’ or ‘good,’ with less than 12% reporting ‘fair or poor.’ However, when the youth were asked how well police were doing at solving community problems, the results were very different than how the police felt they were doing. Contrary to the officers’ response, 13.2% of youth within the sample reported that police are doing ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ while 39.1% of youth reported that police are doing ‘poor.’ Further, youth feel that their neighborhoods often do not work well with the police. Nearly half (48.9%) of the youth reported that their neighborhood ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ works well with the police. Further, when asked how often police thought youth were cooperative, only 5.7% of all police officers in the sample reported that youth were cooperative ‘all’ or ‘most of the time.’

<sup>2</sup> Chi-Square of 19.766 with significance of .001

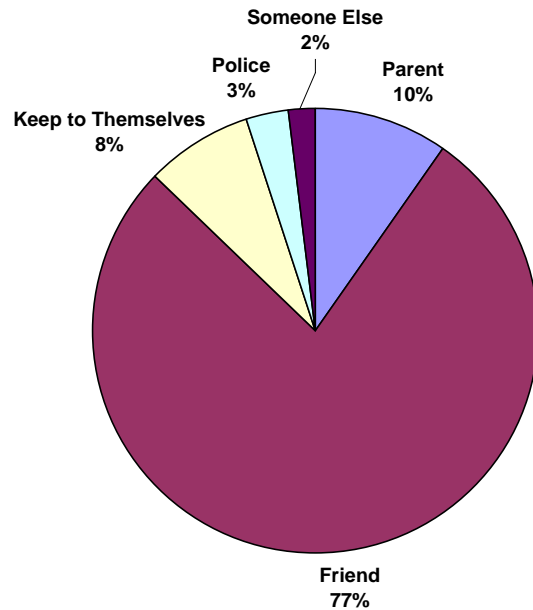
### Call for Help

Officers felt that youth do not call the police for help when there is a problem with crime or violence. There were more consistencies between the youths' and officers' perceptions with this question than many of the other questions. Within the sample, 51.0% of the officers responded that youth called for help some of the time. Another 42.2% of officers responded that youth called the police for help 'hardly ever' or 'never.' The youths reported that 58.4% call the police 'hardly ever' or 'never.' The results of these questions showed that the youths and officers both recognize that youths are not calling the police when there is a problem with crime or violence. The charts below demonstrate the findings.

**Who Youth Would Tell If something Violent Was About to Happen to Them**



Who Police Think Youth Go to First When there is a Crime or Violence Problem



### Police and youth trust

Police and youth often do not often trust each other. When asked how often the police in general trust youth, 11.8% of officers reported that police trust youth ‘all of the time’ or ‘most of the time.’ 35.7% of the youth sample reported that they trust the police ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ when they would typically need police, and another 40% felt that they would trust the police ‘some of the time.’ Police are aware that they are not trusted by youth.

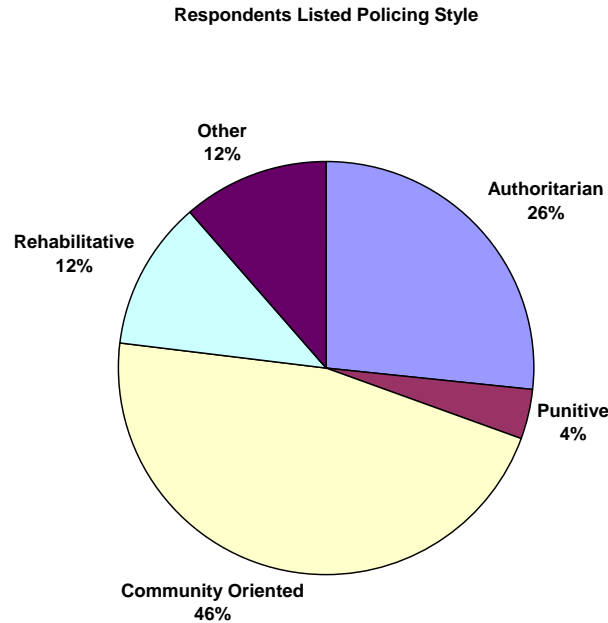
When asked how often youth trust the police, 51.1% report that youth trust the police ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never.’

### Policing style

Policing style was asked in the surveys as well. The most significant findings that come from this report can be seen when the police surveys were broken down by reported policing style and when the youth surveys were broken down by reported race.

Officers that report using ‘authoritative’ or ‘punitive’ policing styles consistently reported giving lower rates of respect and receiving lower rates of respect and trust from youth than officers who use ‘community oriented’ or ‘rehabilitative’ styles of policing. As seen below, about half of the respondents reported community-oriented policing, one quarter reported authoritarian, and the remainder reported rehabilitative or another style.





One question within the survey asked officers to write responses as to “why they chose a certain style of policing.” Responses to this question fell into a wide range and contained some interesting anecdotes. Many of the responses to these questions were short, fragmented, and often difficult to understand. This made any quantification of the data nearly impossible, but their quotes can serve as powerful information that can help future research. They can also offer some vague insight into how some officers feel about policing.

### ***Authoritarian Policing Style***

Officers that listed “Authoritarian” as their policing style and that gave a substantive reason for their style other than “it works” or “it fits” as their reason why generally felt that youth needed to be taught a lesson, controlled with punishment, held personally accountable, or disciplined.

Officers in this group were quoted as saying that “youth lack authority figures in their lives” and that police officers fulfill that role. Some of these officers also stated that “parents do not provide enough discipline” to their children, and held a desire for parents to be held more accountable for the actions and attitudes of their children. Another officer stated that “police are the authority and the city needs law and order.” One officer reasoned “so youth fear engaging in crime.”

### ***Community Oriented Policing Style***

Officers that used a community policing style generally felt that youth and the community should be assisted to better themselves, though some officers stated that they used it because of departmental pressure.

Of those that used it by personal choice, some could relate to the problems of the community. These officers stated that “I live in the city and [I] am aware of the problems,” and “[I] live here

[and] try [to] do things [to] make [it] better,” and “[I] grew up in the city and understand,” or “I grew up in a similar community.”

A few officers stated that the community was a resource and was essential for getting information. One officer stated that “the community is our biggest resource,” and another officer stated that “[the] community helps solve crime [by providing] information.” Another officer wrote that “the community helps [police] officers,” and another that “[using community policing helps get] more information from [the] community.” Two officers went so far as to say that “[police] need community support to be effective,” and “[police] need community support to function.”

Other officers stated a desire to help the community. These officers wrote that they “try to help the community,” or that they “[use community policing to] build better relationships in the community.” They also wrote that they use community policing to “try to improve the lives of people in the community.”

### A closer look: Youth-police Relations

The level of trust between officers and youth is valuable to effectively solve crimes and enable police-directed educational and public service programs. Looking solely at the data presented in the police survey it can be seen that very little trust exists between youth and Rochester police officers.

To more accurately look at this data, it is convenient to collapse the responses into high, neutral, and low rate. The responses, “all of the time” and “most of the time” will represent a high rate of respect. The response “some of the time” will represent a neutral rate of respect. Finally, the responses “hardly ever” and “never” will represent low rates of respect. Using this definition, only 2.7% of officers felt that they received a high rate of respect from youth. Furthermore, 57.4% of officers feel they receive low rates of respect from youth.

Using the same collapsed responses as the respect analysis, in terms of high, neutral, and low levels, only 3.8% of officers reported that youth had a high rate of trust for the police, 45.1% responded that youth were neutral, and 51.1% perceived that youth had a low rate of trust toward police. A similar trend followed with perception of police trust of youth with slightly more positive responses. Of the sample, 11.8% perceived a high rate of police trust in youth, 57.4% perceived a neutral rate, and 30.8% perceived a low rate of trust.

### Differences in Listed Policing Style: Rates of Respect and Trust

When using collapsed responses, statistical analysis<sup>3</sup> shows that the relationship between an officers reported style of policing and the rate at which the officer receives respect from youth is not statistically significant. However, statistical analysis<sup>4</sup> of only those officers reporting rates of respect of ‘some of the time’ and ‘hardly ever or never’ shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between officers who report using different styles of policing and respect from youth. This finding means that, based on this sample, one can conclude that officers who

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<sup>3</sup> Chi-Square of 3.849 with significance of .146

<sup>4</sup> Chi-Square of 3.844 with significance of .050

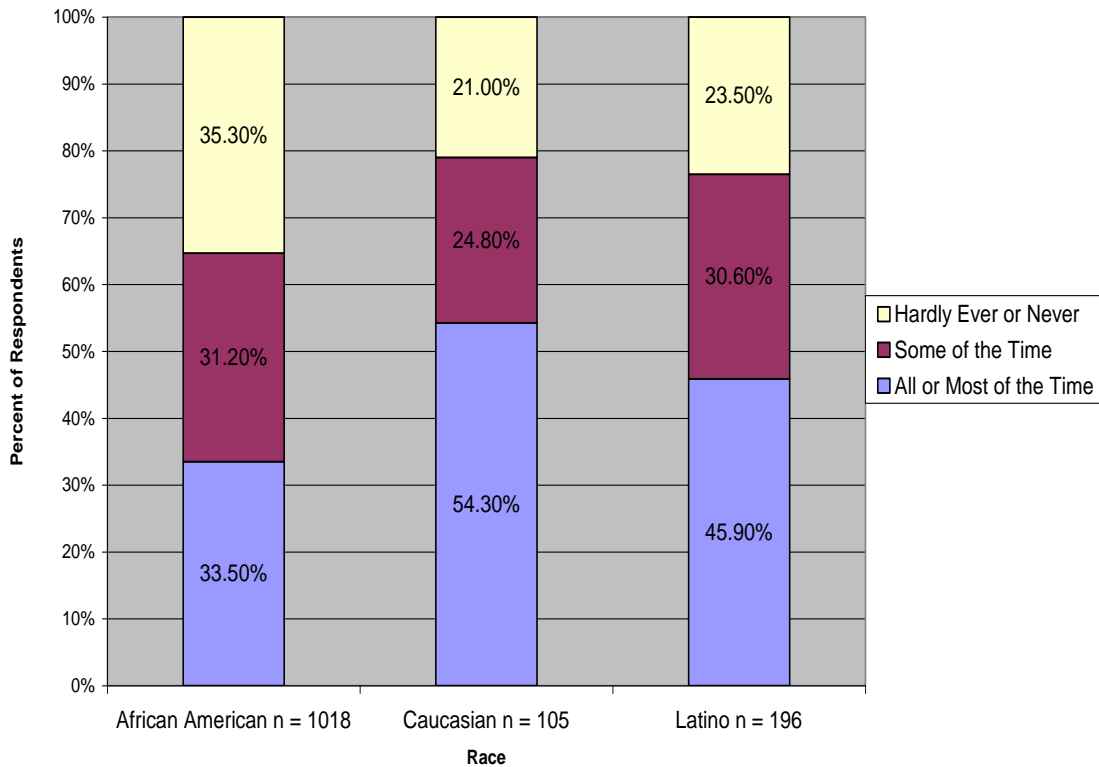
use community oriented or rehabilitative styles of policing are less likely to report low rates of respect from youth.

Similar findings can be seen when looking at police rate of respect toward youth. Of the sample, 88% of community oriented or rehabilitative officers reported high rates of respect toward youth where only 59% of authoritative or punitive style officers reported high rates of respect for youth. Statistical analysis<sup>5</sup> shows this to be a statistically significant relationship.

Race

African Americans were more likely to report low rates of respect and trust for police when compared to Caucasian youth. Latino youth reported rates of trust and respect that fell in between the levels listed by Caucasian and African American youth in the sample. These trends followed for the rates of trust and respect youth felt that they received from officers between each of these racial groups. The chart below illustrates these findings.

**Comparing Rates of Respect Toward Police Officers between African American, Caucasian, and Latino Youth**



Improve Relations

Respondents to this survey were also asked to list ways that youth-police relationships could be improved. Of the 264 police respondents, 136 listed a response, just over half of the sample.

<sup>5</sup> Chi-Square of 26.492 with significance of .000

Forty-nine respondents (36%) in some form or another stated that the parents of these youth are responsible to teach them to respect and cooperate with the police, and the police take little responsibility for building the relationship. Twenty-nine respondents (21.3%) stated that they wanted more positive youth-police activities outside of policing to help build positive relationships. Some officers wanted harsher punishments for the youth or for it to be easier to arrest youth as well as “continue aggressively policing.” Others wanted to enforce curfew to a greater extent [no longer an option as the curfew was declared unconstitutional]. Further others wanted to find a way to show youth that they were friends and not “out to get them,” but couldn’t offer any concrete solutions. The last respondents didn’t want to hold parents entirely responsible but wanted to hold police-parent meetings to discuss problems and solutions to those problems.

### Youth

There are some important findings with the youth surveys that are of note. First, one third of the youth surveyed had been stopped by police in the last six months. Though there is no comparison data available, this number seems high. Questions three and four asked respondents if they had called the police in the past six months and if the police had helped them in the past six months. Of the sample, 17.6% stated that they called the police in the past six months. When asked who the youth would tell if something violent was about to happen to them, nearly 40% would tell a parent, 20% would not tell anyone, and 23% would call the police.

### Summary

Positive relationships between Rochester City police officers and Rochester City youth are imperative to a myriad of social functions in the local community. Compliance with written law and other social norms, police affiliated public service initiatives, and general quality of life are all affected by these relationships. It can be seen in this analysis that youth and police in the City generally have a very negative view of youth-police relationships.

This issue is further compounded with regards to issues of race (African Americans within the sample generally had a more negative view of police) and reported policing style (police officers who reported using an authoritarian or punitive style of policing generally reported lower rates of respect and trust given and received from youth).

The latter is mitigated slightly by the fact that only about one in four officers reported using authoritative or punitive policing styles. However, the fact remains that the majority of the youth within the sample, 38.5% of persons within the city, and a disproportionately high number of persons within high crime areas, are African American. These high crime areas are also areas where police are likely to have a disproportionately high rate of contact with youth, who disproportionately are African American youth. This all accumulates to evidence that negative attitudes toward police are an everyday issue for public safety officials locally in Rochester. This being said, there are a few important items that should be focused on in context to youth-police relationships.

**Recommendations from Survey Analysis:**

- Conduct further research to examine the cause of negative views of police amongst youth, in particular minority youth, in the City.
- Further examination of the effect different policing styles have on gaining the respect, trust, and compliance of youth could greatly benefit public safety officials. This research should include a specified definition of each policing style and determine which behaviors and actions performed by police officers have the greatest effect on gaining the respect, trust, and compliance of youth in Rochester.

Once the results were analyzed, TE staff set up and met with the Deputy Chief of Operations and Administrative Assistant to share results of survey. Unfortunately, again, as is the nature of policing, the DCO got pulled out of the meeting due to a Law Enforcement situation. So, TE left the Administrative Assistant with the results of the survey.

Towards the end of 2008 Teen Empowerment was in the process of an important move to a new building and did not have enough resources to continue to actively pursue this issue within the Police Department. So, there was one final meeting in which officers and the youth organizers met. During the survey creation, implementation, and analysis, the youth coordinators were meeting to prepare to eventually meet with officers in hopes that RPD would finally return phone calls and allow officers to meet with the youths. This happened after the survey results were shared, but unfortunately there was only one meeting between the youths and officers. The idea was originally for this to be the kick-off meeting for the second core group. Officers were no longer able to meet after this first meeting due to more costly overtime hours not being approved for officers to participate. This brought 2008 to a close.

**2009**

After the survey results were analyzed, the next step in the process was the Community Call to Action planned at East High School on May 5, 2009. In January 2009, TE began recruiting a new core group of youth organizers to continue to work on youth-police relations. During this recruitment process, TE was very selective in choosing youths in order to represent important dynamics and perspectives that were present in the community, and to ensure that there would be meaningful, honest conversation around the current state of youth police relations. In other words, youths who had bad experiences with law enforcement, as well as youth leaders who felt civically connected were asked to be a part of the new core group. This resulted in final core group members being a mixture of youth organizers from previous TE groups that had worked on the issue and youth experiencing the process for the first time.

Once the youth-portion of the core group was complete, they met to prepare for police dialogue at some point in the future. During this time the youth organizers were also in touch with the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council members (MYAC) in order to plan for the Call for Action. Some members of MYAC were also members of YPUP. While preparing for the Call for Action, the youth organizers continued to participate in activities planned by TE staff in order

prepare them to eventually meet with officers. For example, one of the agenda items during a meeting included sharing about the first memory youth had of an experience with police. It was thought that the Police Department could return a phone call at any time and the Director of TE wanted to make sure that the youth coordinators were ready to meet with the officers when that occurred. Throughout this time TE staff were consistently reaching out to the Police Department with no response. But then, the Rochester Police Department was forced to come face-to-face with the state of youth-police relations.

On January 31, 2009 RPD Officer Anthony Diponzio was shot while on duty. Arrested and eventually convicted for the shooting was a 15-year-old neighborhood resident. The shooting was viewed as drastic in much of the media in that the officer was shot while walking away from a home after responding to a complaint call; his gun was not drawn. After the shooting there was an outpouring of concern over police-community relations in Rochester illustrated by the number of articles and editorials that were published in the local paper and local news magazines. With the shooting and consequent arrest occurring at this time, the Call to Action gained momentum and interest.

### **Community Call to Action, May 9, 2009**

On May 5, 2009, the Community Call to Action was held at a local high school (East High School). This was put on jointly by the MYAC (which, in addition to YPUP, and neighborhood-based youth organizing, was run by TE from November 2007 through June 2010). The Call to Action included a series of speeches by youths around important issues, such as violence and treatment by police. An Action Plan was released with specific steps to be taken over the next few months in order to better improve youth-police relations in Rochester. One particular youth in a balanced speech also called the RPD to task through questioning their lack of involvement in the TE process. He also drew attention to RPD not returning phone calls and emails that TE had made over the course of the previous year. The Chief and other officers were in the audience. The next day, after the local paper (*Democrat & Chronicle*) published an article about the Call to Action, the Police Department realized what had been revealed at the Call to Action. The Chief immediately reached out to TE. Thus, the Call to Action created a true call to action and the newest phase of YPUP was borne.

First, there was a meeting with the Mayor almost directly after the Call to Action. On May 8, 2009, TE met with the Mayor and discussed next steps.

When the Chief connected with TE after the Call to Action, he included the most recent Deputy Chief of Operations (DCO) in the meeting on May 26. After the initial meeting, there were a series of meetings with the Chief and DCO. At these meetings one of the main points discussed was the logistics of setting up a core group of youths and officers to again work on this project. The DCO had been Commander of the Westside in 2006 when the former DCO had been sending down officers to be a part of the core group. Therefore, the DCO knew firsthand the

experience of being told to be a part of the TE project which one may or may not have an interest in. He understood the importance of peer group influence, was very supportive, and held much confidence in the approach that TE was undertaking. Thus, the DCO wanted to change the officer selection process for the core group.

A new selection process was then created. It was determined that instead, TE and the DCO should reach out to the officers themselves. The DCO decided he would create a core group and invite them to participate. He hand-selected the officers and invited them into a meeting. At the meeting the Director of TE explained the program and presented them with the opportunity to join the project. The selected officers and the DCO were present at this meeting. The DCO's presence and hand selection gave the project credibility amongst the officers. Not one officer declined participation in the project, which made for eight officers: Gary Moxley, Nolan Wengert, Bing Reaves, Jr., Justin Collins, Brandon Ince, Bryant Johnson, Kaela Pitts, Andrea Boffiou who were now part of the YPUP core group. All of these officers remained part of the core group (except for one who went on maternity leave) until it disbanded in 2010 as a new group of youth organizers were coming in to work on a new issue.

TE then had to recommit the youth organizers on the core group. Twelve youth organizers remained and, as is part of TE's model which employs youth to improve their communities, including youth who would not otherwise see themselves participating in positive social change efforts, the youth (like the officers) were paid for their time participating in the project. Thus, the core group consisted of 8 officers and 12 youth for a total of 20 members.

Next, the YPUP really came to fruition. The Chief was very interested in doing a pilot police academy with youth and while TE was more interested in creating youth-police dialogue, it saw this as an opportunity to really connect with the Police Department. The Chief asked TE to recruit youth in August 2009 for the Youth-based Citizens Police Academy (a youth-focused version of its academy designed to give citizens (usually adults) exposure to the training received by police officers). TE recruited a number of youth, but RPD denied half of them due to criminal histories. So, TE had to go back to recruit more for the academy. During this time, numerous meetings of the dialogue-oriented youth-police core group got pushed back due to TE's second wave of recruitment for youths with 'acceptable' background checks to take part in the Academy. In the end, nine youths went through the academy, which lasted eight weeks.

Prior to the youth organizers meeting with the officers to dialogue, the youths met weekly at TE to discuss the entire process and prepare for meeting with and working with the officers. This preparation work was done to facilitate the youth in being open to share their experiences and views and to engaged in conversations that were more respectful and constructive with the officers than not. The TE model encourages this type of preparation work. This was to help the youth understand where they stand and better recognize how to be honest in spite of adults with such power sitting in a circle with them.

The first core group meeting occurred on August 26, 2009 at RPD. It was important that all of the core group meetings took place at RPD for a number of reasons. Two key reasons included: making it as accessible as possible for the officers and TE had to be careful of their reputation within the community where they had recently opened a storefront site for youth, which could have been compromised if officers were seen regularly coming in and out of their building. Their second key reason is important to understand because it illustrates the true state of youth-

police relations present in Rochester neighborhoods. If officers were seen leaving and entering the building then TE would likely lose credibility among youth they were trying to engage in youth-centered initiatives beyond their work with police as they may be labeled as “snitches.”

Shortly after the core groups began meeting, on December 1, 2009, two more officers (Officer Daniel Brochu and Officer Luca Martini) were shot by a 21-year-old community resident while responding to a home invasion robbery. The core group used this event as a catalyst for work and healing.

TE ran all of the meetings except for one which was facilitated by a local university. Relationship-building was crucial at the beginning, so a number of relationship-building exercises were used. Some of the agenda items included go-around warm-up questions or pair discussions, answering questions like:

- (1) Talk about the neighborhood where you grew up, what did you like about it and what would you change.
- (2) If you're a youth—Talk about an adult in your life who treats you with respect and one who does not treat you with respect, OR If you are an adult—Think back to your teenaged years, talk about an adult who treated you with respect and one who did not treat you with respect.
- (3) If you are a youth—what formulated your perception of police in the city, OR if you are a police officer what formulated your perception of youth in the city? If you are neither choose one.
- (4) A 'place' where you feel most at peace & why.

Weekly meetings with the core group occurred over the first several weeks, acting as an orientation for the youth organizers and officers. The youth organizers met once or twice a week separately from the core group in order to debrief from the previous group and then prepare for next group. Throughout the entire core group process, none of the officers dropped off, except for one who left towards the end due to maternity leave. There were a few youth who were lost in the entire process, including one who got another job and one who had a senior project to finish. *See Appendix 4 for examples of meeting agendas.*

### Meeting of the Three

#### Introduction

With the completion of the survey analysis and eight months of biweekly core group meetings done, it was time to engage RIT with the core group. The analyzed surveys were used as the backbone of what served as a first focus group. There was interest in sharing the survey results with all of the core group members. Staff and faculty from the Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI) out of RIT facilitated this particular meeting. Therefore, RIT CPSI staff provided the agenda and were responsible for the technology for this core group meeting. CPSI staff included one professor, one research associate, one student research assistant, and one



grants organizer. The grants organizer is an expert on the use of personal response devices and the student transcribed the conversation during the focus group. The agenda for the meeting included sharing specific survey results relating to respect between officers and youths with the interactive use of clickers.

### Methods

Though the original group that had been meeting over the last eight months included 12 youth and 8 officers, the particular group that met on this date involved 10 youths—two of whom were attending the group for the first time and had not gone through the orientation process, nor the relationship-building activities that led to deeper, more honest discussions—and only four of the core group officers. At this meeting there were two new youth who attended the group for the first time.

The focus group used clickers and included a series of six questions. There were two questions only the youth answered, two only the officers answered, and two that were to be answered by all. The responses for each answer could be: always, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, and never.

The six questions (in order) asked were:

1. youths answer only: I respect law enforcement
2. youths answer only: My friends respect law enforcement
3. youth and police answer: youth respect law enforcement
4. police answer only: I respect youth
5. police answer only: my police colleagues respect youth
6. police and youth answer: police respect youth

### Results

Overall, the youths in the group were very talkative and had a lot of thoughts around youth-police relations. The youths looked closely at issues of respect and feeling respected. The police officers, who were low in numbers, were not very talkative and responded more or less only when prompted by the facilitator.

There were a number of themes that were revealed in the discussion:

(1) One of those themes was the idea of a ‘cultural clash.’ The youth were very aware that many of the officers do not live in the community that they serve. The youth felt that this created a misunderstanding on law enforcement’s side because the officers do not understand what the daily struggles are for the residents of the community.

(2) Regarding respect, one youth made the point that she was raised to not *like* the police, but that she was to always *respect* the police. There was a conversation that then ensued around the idea of respect. Some youth discussed parents and friends talking angrily about police, while others talked about just a general sense of disliking the police in their community, and that being accepted. At least one-third shared specific negative or even traumatizing experiences they or family members had had—often as children.

(3) Peer pressure has an impact on the youth. One youth explained that if one shows disrespect [towards law enforcement] then others will follow. The notion that one's friends' opinions are very important resonated with the youth. Overall, most of youths had friends who talked and acted angry and resentful towards the police.

(4) Policing, as a profession, is seen as disrespectful in and of itself. This was a surprising finding. Law enforcement and youth were in agreement that often times when an officer is simply doing his or her job, this will be seen as disrespectful by some youths. A simple pat down, which is done in order to provide for an officer's safety, can be seen as intrusive and thus, disrespectful. One youth felt that police should communicate with youth to mitigate the perception of disrespect. It was made clear by the officers that they are taught to protect themselves and that their safety is of utmost importance, so they will do what needs to be done for their protection. The officers did not talk of any intentional disrespect towards the youth, but agreed that some of their procedures and protocol could be seen as disrespectful.

### Discussion/Limitations

Unfortunately this dialogue was not as rich with police officer comments as it was with the youth. The youth vastly outnumbered the police officers. Further, in a group such as this, it can be difficult to get the one or two officers to speak up on every topic. The officers who were present appeared to be distracted, with the use of cell phones for texting, and not being active members of the group. The body language of some of the officers showed disengagement, through slouching, lack of eye contact, and fiddling with phones.

The presence of RIT staff and faculty should be addressed as well. RIT coming in as an outside agency has the ability of creating anxiety, curiosity, and other feelings by both the youth and police officers. While the youth have nothing to lose (so to speak) with their comments, the officers are in a significant position of power and authority, with plenty to lose. There may have been some conscious self-censorship occurring with the officers, knowing that comments were being documented by a research institution. This, of course, has negative implications for a focus group that revolves around dialogue and discussion.

There were two new youth in attendance with this focus group, which likely created a new dynamic. Not only was there a larger proportion of youths than police officers, but it was an even larger gap than usual. Additionally, an adult staff member of TE was present at this focus group for the first time. Though she knew all of the youth, she had not met any of the officers before the beginning of this group.

The questions that were asked of the participants were contributive in stimulating conversation and the clickers were instrumental as well. Unfortunately, the nature of this group is to move in and out of the room dependent on phone calls, bathroom breaks, purchase of food, etc, so it might have stifled some conversation as people were likely to miss certain thoughts that were shared. Still, overall this kind of focus group provided for a platform to share thoughts and feelings around police and youth relations in Rochester.

The following are recommendations that came out of this dialogue:

- Share with the community what is proper police procedure
- Police officers and youth should continue to work together to strengthen relationships
- Opportunities to heal from traumatic experiences involving police, constructive dialogue, and positive interaction should be set in place.
- The impact of peer influence should be studied at greater length in the context of youth's feelings towards law enforcement and law enforcement's feelings towards youth
- Include an equal number of youth and officers in the group
- Be mindful and address the outside factors inhibiting conversation (i.e. cell phones, hunger, etc.)
- Determine the impact of RIT staff and faculty's presence and how to reduce the impact for future sessions

### Youth Focus Groups and Police Focus Groups

#### Overview

Next, plans were beginning for the focus groups of youths and officers. This idea is probably the most profitable data collection technique of all the methods used throughout this process. The plan was to have focus groups in order to get candid, honest responses about the state of youth-police relations in Rochester; and that indeed occurred. While the core group of youths and officers continued to meet bi-weekly, plans were being made to begin the separate youth focus groups and law enforcement focus groups. These focus groups followed a strict questionnaire with a designated person who transcribed the comments. The purpose of these focus groups was to deepen understanding of the status of youth-police relations in Rochester through gathering more qualitative data from officers' perspectives as well as youths' perspectives, to stand alongside the quantitative survey results. There was also an opportunity to discuss suggestions for improving youth-police relations in the focus groups—the next step toward collaborative problem-solving and action.

The core group officers recruited participants for the focus groups; TE had no input at this stage beyond guiding a process that helped officers and youth think about who *really* needs to be part of these conversations in order to get the most honest and accurate assessments and impact the most meaningful improvements in on-the-ground youth-police relations. The core group officer who recruited that particular group helped in facilitating the group with the Director of TE, which gave these focus groups even more credibility. The officer's recruitment also allowed for a much wider range of officers participating in the focus groups. For example, one core group officer was able to get the tactical unit to participate in a focus group. TE staff feel that if it were not for the officers recruiting and explaining the process and what TE is about, then many of the

groups that were brought together would not have been. The core officers sat in on the groups and participated in the process. Originally the plan was to have the officers facilitate the groups, but they had not received enough training and it just was not comfortable to the core group officers, so the Director of TE facilitated them. However, the core group officers set up the introduction within the focus groups. The participants were asked to rate the state of police youth relations in Rochester, had discussions around youth respecting police and police respecting youth, and were asked what action steps can be done to create positive, effective change.

RPD, specifically DCO Glenn Hoff helped this process along. The DCO agreed to allow each of the groups to take place and gave the officers time to participate in the groups.

As for youth recruitment, TE specializes in working with at-risk youth, so TE has a number of relationships with local organizations that serve youth. Therefore, the Director and the Development and Collaborations Manager were able to connect with a number of youth agencies in order to gather youth for the focus groups. There was a wide range of youth selected, including youths living in residential living facilities, youths who were connected to leadership councils, and youths who were in a Detention facility. The youth organizers from the core group facilitated the youth focus groups. This was because the youth organizers had been fully trained in facilitating so they were experienced and qualified to facilitate the youth focus groups.

The focus group process proceeded without any major complications from TE's end.

## **2010**

During the end of 2009, the core group continued to meet bi-weekly, with a short break around the holidays. At these meetings they would check in about how the focus groups were going. Next, in January 2010 the core group regrouped and met weekly throughout the month. Around February, the core group started meeting every other week in order to evaluate the focus groups. During this time they were also beginning the planning for the Symposium.

Over the course of four months the focus groups were run. Seventeen youth groups for a total of 175 youth were interviewed and six groups of law enforcement, totaling 55 officers, were interviewed as well. The goals of these focus groups were to determine what the state of youth-police (specifically Rochester Police Department) relations is in Rochester, distinguish where the problems and issues lie, and come up with solutions to improve the relations. The youth and police focus groups were held separately from one another in order to allow for more frank conversation. There was a designated scribe at each focus group and the following summarizes the findings of these focus groups.

### **Focus Group Findings:**

#### Warm-Up question responses

The first exercise asked the participants to rate youth-police relations on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best).

Youth: Of the ten groups of youth that participated, the average score was between a two and three, but rounded up to a three. Every group, with the exception of one, rated the relations

between a two and three, and the one group that did not, rated the relations at a four. There was a significant amount of comments around concerns of race playing a role in how the youth are treated.

Police: The police also rated the relations low, with an average score of three. The scores ranged from two to four for these groups. One consistent point made was the negative psychological impact of dealing with criminal youth regularly and not interacting with the majority of youth who are not involved in criminal behavior.

### Wind Blows with Words

In this exercise specific words were listed before the groups and the participants were asked to share with the group what come to his/her mind when the word is read. The words included: justice, police, job, Rochester, power, voice, respect, trust, and service.

The responses to this exercise yielded a wide range of positive, negative, and neutral comments for both the youth and the police groups. However, one common theme emerged with the groups of youth around the word Rochester. Overall the comments were positive from the youths and some comments included, “the best city in the USA” and “tremendous.”

### Opinion Continuum

This was the bulk of what occurred in the focus groups. For this exercise participants were asked to share their opinion on a statement which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The facilitators then probed the participants in order to gather more detailed information on their opinions. The first section includes a summary of the statements posed to the youths. The second section includes a summary of the statements posed to the officers.

### Youth

*Statement #(1) youth respect police in Rochester:*

(a), (b) I and my friends do:

The responses to this statement were somewhat varied but the vast majority of every group either disagreed or remained neutral. There were a few participants in some of the groups whom agreed with the statement, but they were in the minority.

Negative interactions with law enforcement, respect, racism, and peer influence were common themes in the groups. However, there was a noticeable difference in the youth who were not currently in the custody of their parents having more anger and negative feelings towards law enforcement than those who were in the custody of their parents. Other themes included: negative stories about witnessing law enforcement’s treatment of them or a family member, belief that you have to *earn* respect in order to *get* respect, issues around race and sentiments of racism, and friends trying to impress others by disrespecting police.

(c) youth in general do respect police:

This statement was eliminated after the first several focus groups due to the repetitiveness and loss of momentum and energy, and secondarily, it was not showing any clear patterns. Only six of the groups responded to this statement with inconsistent results among them. Two of the groups were all over the continuum, one of the groups had most participants disagreeing and

strongly disagreeing, one group had participants changing their minds during the discussion, and others did not have an opinion on agreement but discussed the statement. One of the groups shared personal negative stories involving law enforcement. Issues of race came up again with the comments, “can’t depend on police to protect young black male” and “there are some exceptions. Police harass black males but as a black female I don’t get harassed.”

*Statement #(2) police respect youth in Rochester*

(a) respect me and my friends :

The results for this statement were not consistent across the groups. Many groups had responses all over the spectrum, but the majority of the groups that responded ranged from neutral to strongly disagree. It is important to note that two groups were split between strongly agree and strongly disagree. Some of the themes that emerged were issues of respect, fear versus respect, individuality of officers (“there are good cops and bad cops”), feelings of being viewed always as a suspect, and sharing stories about personal experiences. One particular group had a conversation around *no* respect (“leave people alone”; just “don’t care”) versus *disrespect* (“bully”). Again, the notion of having to earn respect came up. It appeared that if the officer treated the youth with respect or if the officer knew the youth (had a positive relationship), then the youth felt more respected. A number of groups talked about feeling as though they are all viewed as suspect by law enforcement explaining, “cops always think we are doing something wrong,” “police are skeptical of us,” and “they approach you like you are already guilty.”

(b) respect youth in general:

Not all of the groups gave their opinion as to whether they agreed or disagreed, but of the few who did, the majority disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement; there were a few responses that were neutral. Just as the previous statements did, this conversation brought out personal negative stories regarding law enforcement by a number of the participants.

Depending upon the length of the conversations above, the following statements were not always completed or fully documented.

*Statement #(3) police are needed in the community:*

Of the five groups who responded to this statement, overwhelmingly there was agreement and strong agreement that police are needed in the community. Discussions in most of the groups were that the police are needed to keep order and to keep people from breaking the law. Other comments were that they help maintain people’s safety and well being in the neighborhoods.

*Statement #(4) Policing style: authoritarian or community-minded:*

Of the six groups that responded to this question, authoritarian was overwhelmingly the most common policing style seen in Rochester. Consistent with previous discussions, a number of individual negative personal stories regarding law enforcement interaction were shared. One participant said the following in supporting his or her feelings of authoritarian style, “the police do not ask you what happened; they act like they know what happened.”

*Statement #(5) Youth police relations can be improved:*

Overall, there was agreement with this statement, though it should be noted that in the majority of the groups there were a few dissidents who were either neutral or disagreed that the relations could be improved. Discussion in many of the groups was about wanting to change and making the effort to change, that it takes the interest of both sides to be effective in changing, the community needs to demand respect, officer training needs to change, youth and police officers need to end their stereotyping, and they need to get to know each other in positive settings.

In some of the focus groups the following questions were asked:

*To what degree are police helpful to the community?*

The majority of the participants in the one group that responded were neutral, explaining that sometimes the police are there when they need them and sometimes they are not.

*To what degree are youth helpful to the police?*

Two groups responded to this question; one group was completely neutral on this and in the other group half were neutral and the other half were split between helpful and not helpful. Some of the comments were that some youth are taught not to like cops by their parents and that some of the youth are not polite. Interestingly, both groups felt that youths are helpful because they commit the crimes which ensure that the police still have a job.

Police

*Statement #(1) youth show me respect in Rochester:*

Of the six groups of officers that responded, the responses were all over the continuum. However, of the groups that included SROs, there was clearly more agreement with this statement than in other groups. Groups without SROs present were either neutral or disagreed with the statement. Two themes emerged: respect and the impact of interacting with the “bad” kids only. Some discussion included concern over how starting off nice (which seemed to be confused with respect) with the youth would backfire so you “have to come at them and let them know who’s boss.” One officer shared the following: that he saw a father and his young child crossing the street, the officer waved hello and one of them gave him the finger in return, which just demonstrates what the officers are dealing with. There were comments that the officers know there are decent kids but that is not who they are dealing with and that these youth don't respect the police. Some of the comments revolved around issues of youth not talking to officers due to fears of being considered snitches. Also, officers are not seen as individuals; instead they are seen as a uniform.

*Statement #(2) youth respect colleagues and RPD:*

Only three groups responded to this statement and the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Similar to the previous question, some of the groups with SROs in them had a few who agreed with the statement. The overall comments were concerns with a lack of positive role models, lack of structure for the youth, and lack of family values (i.e. “adults can encourage negative behavior”). There were institutional concerns such as officers not living in the city and therefore not knowing the community they serve, as well as concerns that the juvenile justice system is failing youth.

*Statement #(3) I respect youth:*

The response to this statement for most of the groups was either agreement or neutrality. One group had no participants in agreement; all were neutral or disagreed. All of the groups held hefty discussions around respect, which indicated that the officers, similar to the youths, feel that respect has to be earned. Comments included: "I respect you if you respect me", "respect goes both ways. If colleagues aren't respected, I can't respect you", "you can't shit talk me and expect me not to shit talk you [back]", "I'm not gonna respect a little animal that slings dope everyday. If you're honest show some ghetto integrity," "respect has to be earned," "you can have a mutual respect even with criminals," and "I always try to respect but if it's a dangerous situation my concern is making people safe."

Some of the participants talked about frustrations with feeling disrespected by youth and others in the community. Some of the comments were: "the kids will spit at officers because they see the men doing it" and the "negative treatment by the community leaves you with a negative view of society." The participants also felt that on the streets the youth have to have a tough facade, but when you get them alone they are nice kids. There appeared to be the issue of peer influence that plays a major role in how the youth treat the officers.

*Statement #(4) my colleagues respect youth:*

The groups tended to be neutral or disagree with this statement. Some common themes that emerged were institutional issues, such as hiring young officers who lack enough life experience, moving away from seven precincts to policing an entire half of a city (East or West) makes it impossible to form relationships, promotions being more important than street patrol, and officers wanting to work easier beats (i.e. Park Ave).

*Statement #(5) Policing style: authoritarian or community-minded:*

The majority of the participants in the groups felt that the style was authoritarian, and some comments were that everything is reactive in the department since the re-organization, there are too many ridiculous complaints, and the administration instills fear in the community. One group discussed that the style depends on your role with the police department, it depends on the situation, officers are trained to think about the worst possible scenarios, and re-organization has reduced crime temporarily, but shut down community policing.

*Statement #(6) I have a positive impact on youth and my community:*

Two groups responded to this and the responses were all over the spectrum. One comment was concern that sometimes the officers do try to have fun playing baseball or other things, but then people look at them like they aren't doing their job; it's a double edged sword. Also comments were made explaining, "how can you help people when they won't help themselves?" and that the officers can only do so much.

*Statement #(7) Can youth-police relations be improved?:*

There was strong agreement in all of the groups that youth-police relations could be improved. The feelings were that it can happen but it will take time, you have to start somewhere, have to change the entire culture of "fuck the police," parents need to be involved in the change, holistic approach, the management of the city is a factor, and the nature of the job is encountering people at their worst. The majority of the groups raised the issue of parenting and that it begins at home.



### Ideastorm

For this exercise participants were asked what they can do, what the community can do and what RPD can do at an Institutional level in order to enact positive change. Additionally, a few of the police groups were asked what the youth can do to create change. The following are the most common steps that emerged in the groups:

#### **Youth:**

What I can do:

- Be more respectful to law enforcement
- Learn my rights
- Get involved in positive programs (i.e. TE)
- Express own opinions in front of peers
- Better inform my peers what it is like to be an officer
- Be a role model to my peers in how to interact with officers
- Stop breaking the law

What the community can do:

- Invite officers to block parties and other community events (BBQs, dance battles)
- Youth-police basketball tournaments
- Meaningful social interactions with law enforcement
- Community needs to organize against violence
- Anti-racism symposium (address racism)
- Stop the violence

What RPD can do:

- Listen more
- Respect youth
- Teach youth relations in academy; race/social justice trainings
- Improve response time to calls
- Attend community events
- Form relationships with the youth
- Live in the city
- Community-minded training

**Police:** What I can do:

- Be patient
- Take the time to talk to youth, develop relationships
- Understand cultural diversity, the community, and race relations better
- Positive interactions on the street
- Communicate better with the community

What the community can do:

- Block parties
- Community can police themselves
- Stop being anti-police
- Let your voice be heard and that action occurs
- Address the bus problem
- Issues with family court need to be addressed
- Get rid of “no snitching” mentality
- Citizen police academy
- Better understand cop culture

What youth can do:

- Take accountability
- Become a leader
- Stop committing crimes

What RPD/institution can do:

- More SROs and CPOs
- Police athletic league
- Make timely decisions, not knee jerk reactions
- Better relationship between administration and officers (i.e. admin take calls for a day, not us vs. them)
- Make areas where police smaller – back to allowing officers to know the community they police
- Focus on building relationships with the community
- Expand police explorer program
- Stop micro management

Additional Discussion from the Groups

In one of the officer groups the question was posed: “where does the lack of respect originate from?” The response was that the officers hear parents say, “fuck the police.” And that officers are stereotyped by sex and race. Much of the lack of respect is seen as coming from broken families with the example that in domestic violence cases the officer arrests the father and then is viewed as a bad person. Another thought was that it stems from the race riots of '64 especially with a predominantly white force working a predominantly black city. Officers also felt that parents and family members train children to dislike the police. From this conversation came the comment that some people will request black officers and some white people request white officers; showing the degree that race plays in the relationship between the community and law enforcement.

It was clear in the discussions that the SROs are much more able to establish relationships with the youth. SROs showed more empathy, sensitivity, and understanding toward youth during the

exercises. Also, the SROs had a much more positive outlook on youth and they also talked about how they are able to have numerous interactions with youth who are doing good things on a day-to-day basis. This insight clearly had an impact on their responses to the exercises. The other officers recognized that if they were able to form relationships with the youth, they would have more positive feelings and attitudes towards the youth.

### Discussion

Within both the youth and police groups, there were a number of common themes/issues that emerged. One of the common themes was respect. Research has shown that “the giving and receiving of respect are important both in regulating group dynamics and influencing personal well being” (Huo and Binning, p.1570, 2008). Yet, respect often means different things to different people; such as giving equal power to everyone, or not insulting someone, or treating someone as one would want to be treated. Even with the varied meanings, respect is a critical concept because when one feels that they have lost their social standing within a group, have been treated in an undignified way, or have been excluded by others they then understand the psychological significance of respect (Huo and Binning, 2008). This plays out in Rochester’s youth-police relations because often the neighborhoods that are policed the most are the ones whose daily lives involve maneuvering through trauma, poverty, violence, and racism. The formulation of a common, even dynamic, definition of respect may prove helpful so as to avoid continued misunderstandings. A number of groups tried to define it, resulting in various definitions, which has been a similar experience with researchers in the field. A general understanding of respect in the context of law enforcement and community would allow for both groups to have a better grasp of the expectations, and when one knows expectations, they then have a reference point with which to judge their interaction. Both the police and youth groups consistently discussed how one needs to earn respect to get it, yet this could be problematic in dealing with people when both parties will not give respect until they receive it, creating a disrespectful interaction simply as a consequence of that thought process. Changing this view so that people are respected at the onset, even if they did commit a crime, may then be an important step in improving youth-police relations.

For both youth and police, the average rating for youth-police relations was 3 out of 10. This is a clear indicator not only of how poor relations are, but also that both groups agree on and recognize the current state of youth-police relations in Rochester. Also, issues of miscommunication and mistrust are clearly something that needs to be addressed by both the officers and the youth together. Further, all of the groups felt that the policing style in Rochester is more authoritarian than community-minded. And police officers who reported using an authoritarian style of policing in the survey generally reported lower rates of respect given and received from youth. Whether this should or could be changed is something to be addressed. Lastly, comments about the City of Rochester were overall positive with the second exercise, which may demonstrate that the youth and officers do have a vested interest in making the community a better place.

One of the unique themes/issues from the youth that emerged was that, overall, youth do not like law enforcement. In every group, personal negative stories about interactions with law enforcement were shared by multiple youth throughout the session. However, it was very clear that for those who had relationships with specific officers, they were more favorable towards that officer. Unfortunately, not many of the youth talked about having positive relationships with

officers. Yet there was an overall agreement that police are needed in the community. The youth acknowledged that there are youth who are up to no good and that the officers do need to apprehend those youth to keep their community safe. In the youth groups, issues around race were discussed constantly; the negative implications of being black in this society came up in nearly every group. Interestingly, there was a lack of strong support that youth-police relations could be improved, which could be a symptom of the sense of hopelessness that many in impoverished communities feel on a daily basis.

Some of the unique themes/issues from the officers that emerged were that there is a clear sense of a lack of respect for adults which then gets translated into disrespecting officers. Discussion of family breakdown (such as a lack of positive role models) was a constant theme and concern of the officers. Officers seemed aware that the majority of youths are doing good things, but that only a small percentage are not doing so well and those are the youth when officers naturally interact with the most. Many of the groups talked about the need to create relationships with youth who are doing well. However, another area of agreement was that typical officers are not able to form relationships with the youth. The SROs are able to form relationships because of the nature of their particular assignment and the difference is very pronounced in how the SROs feel about the youth (more respectful towards them). This is important because the Officers job is to protect and serve everyone, not just those that they have formed relationships with.

Race was not specifically brought up in the officer groups, but thoughts about how people in urban communities live were shared. Some of these comments included, "Keep crime here and not let it push out to the towns we live in" and the "government gives everyone everything." The officers expressed a need to be better educated on certain cultural issues, while other officers felt that some of the officers who did not live in the city were not sensitive to the city's needs.

Officer safety is of utmost importance and supersedes respect, and any other value. This was made very clear by the officers. Management issues in the department play a role in police-youth relations. This was made evident in the groups and there was a lot of discussion around some of the issues. There is a clear divide between officers and administration. Many of the groups believed it would be helpful to have administrators walk in their footsteps for the day. Also relating to administration was the officers' sense of hopelessness in having the ability to form these relationships with youth and community members because of the fact that they work all over the city; while some efforts have been made to assign officers to regular beats, there are no more local precinct offices where they would be much more familiar with the community. Officers felt that this was a major factor in the relationship divide between youth and officers. Lastly, all the groups felt that police-youth relations can be improved. There was agreement that things could certainly get better between law enforcement and the communities they are serving.

### Recommendations

From the analysis of the focus groups, the following are recommendations as to the next steps in this process.

- Define respect
- Get parents and families involved in this process
- Educate law enforcement on race relations, the effects of concentrated poverty, racism, etc (currently the officers do not appear to have a historical perspective on race unique to Rochester)
- Find a balance between officer safety and respect
- Forum needs to be created to form relationships with youth and officers
- Management issues in the Department need to be looked at and addressed in a unique manner
- Needs to be an end to youth having negative personal stories regarding law enforcement

### **2010 continued**

In 2010 while the focus groups were ongoing, planning began for the for *Youth-Police Symposium: Real Talk, Real Walk, Real Change: Transitioning Youth and Police to a New Beginning*. There were a number of planning meetings held with the core group in order to prepare for the Symposium. Real talk, real walk, real change was the name that was brainstormed and decided upon during this planning process.

In order to get the Chief to the Symposium, the Director of TE contacted the Chief's Assistant and put it on his calendar. One of the most crucial issues was getting officers to the Symposium. There was a major issue with overtime for the officers as there was a moratorium on overtime in effect. There was also an issue with the current Mayor not demonstrating buy-in to the Symposium. Though the Mayor was invited to the Symposium, he did not attend.

### Introduction

On May 8, 2010, the Youth-Police Symposium was held at Wilson Foundation Academy. Those in attendance included local youths, police officers, community agency representatives, several public officials and philanthropists. The officers included those from the core group as well as ; with support from Officers Kara Anglin, Korey Brown, Samuel Drayton, and Moses Robinson. The youths and police officers were the active participants throughout the entire Symposium, while the agency representatives were originally asked to sit back and watch until the last part of the agenda. However, this changed in that during the breakout groups in the afternoon, the agency representatives were asked to participate to some extent. This change was decided during the symposium in order to involve the representatives more than originally planned. The Symposium lasted over four hours with a one-hour plenary in the morning which included a teen and police skits, poetry, and speeches. True to TE's style, with using skits and poems and other

creative outlets, officers and youths created and performed these collaboratively for maximum relevance and resonance. The plenary set the context and tone for “real” honest sharing and forward-looking toward solutions. The two-hour session in the afternoon included breaking out into smaller groups to discuss the action steps. At the conclusion of the session each group chose the top five action steps that could be done. The groups then came together at the end of the Symposium for an hour to share the results of the groups. Last, the community agency representatives spoke up to say what their respective agencies could do to put these steps into action.

### Process

There were 27 officers in the audience and an estimated 70 youths were present. There were between 50 and 60 community witnesses as well. All of these data from survey analysis, youth police focus group, and the multiple youth and police focus groups were used to put on the Symposium, with the goal being to collectively come up with action steps to improve youth-police relations in the Rochester Community. .

Prior to sharing the results of the survey from 2008, there was an interactive survey conducted with the audience asking selected questions from the original surveys in order to see how those present responded to the same questions. Personal response devices (clickers) were used to get immediate results to share with the audience and encourage discussion. The questions asked to youth only were: “I respect police” and “other youths respect police.” Respondents could answer always, most of the time, some times, hardly ever, and never for all of the questions. The questions asked to police only were: “I respect youth” and my colleagues respect youth.” Other key results from the surveys were shared at this time. Data from the surveys were shared with the audience.

For the remainder of the morning, youths and officers shared skits, poetry, and speeches with the audience. These art forms intertwined themes of relationships, family, friends, community, and youth-police relations. This was a really important piece to the Symposium because the officers in the core group were crucial to the skits, poetry, and speeches; the youths and officers worked together on all of the pieces. Typically, officers do not open up in front of other officers, community members, and especially youths.

People were then separated into break-out groups to discuss action steps. The action steps that the groups chose from had been compiled from the youth and police focus groups conducted the months prior to the Symposium. In those focus groups participants were asked to share ideas for action steps that would improve youth-police relations. These lists were then presented as four categories in each of the breakout rooms at the Symposium for the group participants to discuss and then choose the top five steps for each category. The categories were: what youth can do, what police can do, what the community can do, and what RPD as an institution can do. The participants were able to choose from about eleven action steps for each category, and each person was able to weigh in on each category. Thus, youth helped prioritize police actions and vice versa.

The groups then reported their rankings to RIT representatives who tabulated the results immediately and shared the combined top five action steps for each category with the audience.

Draft

Prior to these being shared with the audience, community agency representatives spoke out as to what they could contribute to the change.

The top five action steps were ranked from most important to least important (yet still important). There were interesting results in this activity. Regarding what the police officers themselves could do, the ideas were ranked as follows:

- 1) Take the time to talk to youth and develop relationships when possible;
- 2) Be patient (listen and explain more);
- 3) Understand cultural diversity, community dynamics, and race relations better;
- 4) Positive interactions on the street (communicate better with the community);
- 5) Show youth the respect I want.

The top five action steps by the youths that the group prioritized were:

- 1) Be real and don't front. Express my own opinions in front of friends and helping to de-escalate the situation;
- 2) Respect and value myself and the lives of my peers and humanize everyone including officers;
- 3) Be a role model to my peers in how to interact with officers;
- 4) Get involved in positive programs;
- 5) Participate in fun or athletic activities involving officers and 5) take responsibility for my actions were tied for 5<sup>th</sup> ranking.

In response to what RPD can do, the top five actions steps were ranked in the following order:

- 1) Bring back/improve the Police Athletic League and Police Explorer Program with the youth;
- 2) Give officers 2 or more weekly shift hours for volunteering, tutoring, reading, mentoring, coaching or other activities with children and youth;
- 3) Make patrol areas smaller to allow officers to know the community they police;
- 4) Better recruitment and support of officers who come from and know the city;
- 5) Treat victims and witnesses with more sensitivity.

Lastly, what the community can do was examined by the breakout groups. The following were decided as the most important action steps:

- 1) Have youth-police basketball, softball, card game tournaments, etc;
- 2) Invite officers to block parties and other community events and, 2) get rid of the "no snitching" mentality were tied for second most important.
- 4) Meaningful social interactions with law enforcement;
- 5) Stop being anti-police.

After the results were shared, the Symposium came to a close.

### Limitations

The overall operation of the Symposium went as planned. The last part of the Symposium involved the tabulation of data on the spot and took more time than was allotted for in the

schedule, which was fixed by altering the order of the last two parts of the Symposium. Therefore, the community agency representatives spoke up before the rankings had been revealed, which somewhat defeated the purpose. The excitement of using live data during a Symposium is still in its beginning stages and the kinks are being worked out. For future use of live data, there will be more time allotted to tabulate the data. There were other issues with the scheduling in that one of the key facilitators had to leave before the Symposium was completely over, which could imply to some that the event is not as important as previously thought.

The low number of youths in attendance (between one-third and one-half of the focus group participants (70 out of 175) attended) was a limitation. There were issues with transporting some of the youths who had participated in the focus groups because of their residential placements. The expectation had been that all of the youths who participated in the focus groups would be able to attend the Symposium, but this was not able to happen. Hence, there was not as much youth input as had been anticipated.

As this Symposium had a goal of evoking the officers and youths to share their thoughts openly in the groups, it is possible that some ideas or feelings were held back. As with any Symposium involving public service workers, any sign of weakness or concern over the current state of their workplaces can backfire or cause unintended consequences which may have been on the minds of some of the participants.

### Discussion

This Symposium was a critical step closer to making sustainable, necessary change in the relationship between Rochester Police Department and local youths. Input and feedback from youth, police, and community agencies is critical in this process.

The use of current technology is one way to generate interest in a topic and using the clickers was an example of using modern technology to facilitate richer discussion. This kind of immediate feedback discussion could then lead to concrete outcomes. Continuing to use this type of technology and enhancing it with other technologies is something that should continue to be done.

A recurring major theme in the previous focus groups was respect. Defining respect and lack of respect was discussed in great detail in the focus groups. One of the major findings was that respect was defined differently and is subjective. Regardless of the prevalence of discussion on respect in the focus groups, when deciding on action steps, the group members did not choose the explicitly worded action step “be more respectful to law enforcement” as one of the five action steps—though this was implied in the top three action steps. The police officers did list show youth respect, but it ranked fifth out of the top five. This is incompatible with what had been shared in the previous focus groups. It could be that it is too difficult a topic to address in a short time, participants no longer feel it is as important an issue, or it is too sensitive an issue to discuss in a mixed group, among other possibilities.

In the Symposium, race was not consistently addressed to the extent that it was shared in the focus groups leading up the Symposium. Race was discussed at great length in both the youth and officer focus groups, and in two to three of the six symposium small groups. It may be that the range of facilitation skills among the youth and officers limited their willingness to elicit the



discussion. Race is notorious for being a difficult issue that is not talked about candidly and this is another example of that.

Other issues that were discussed in detail during the focus groups but not seriously addressed were the clear distinction between SROs (school resource officers) and CPOs, the sense of family breakdown, and youths' utter dislike for officers. In the separate and parallel focus groups, it was clear SROs and CPOs are much more able to create and sustain relationships with both youths who are doing not so well and youths who are doing well. This was important in the focus groups because SROs and CPOs had much better relationships with the local youths than other officers. In the focus groups, officers were concerned about family breakdown in the lives of many youths. This idea was not specifically addressed in the Symposium, but in at least one of the individual groups it was a dominant topic. Lastly, there were skits and stories shared to personalize officers' and youths' experiences, but the overall sentiment that youths do not like officers was not discussed in any real depth.

In that the major goal of the Symposium was to synthesize the learning from the surveys and focus groups and to identify a core set of action steps to pursue, the ambition of working through some of the most challenging attitudes, experiences and societal issues was beyond the scope of the time allotted.

The following are the recommendations/next steps:

- Meeting with critical RPD staff to discuss the findings
- Follow up with the community agencies on what had been committed to
- Bring together a medium-sized group of youths and officers and discuss in greater depth and honesty the issues that run deep, yet were brushed over at the Symposium
- Recognize the state of race relations in Rochester today and the effects of the this history
- Teen Empowerment collaborate with RPD in the training of officers
  
- Identify the top five action steps for each group and act on them
- Continue action on this project
- Create a set of measures that can effectively track programs on the state of youth-police relations in Rochester over time based on these action steps. Report the results to the community annually. Invest in and support actions that show the most impact.

## **After Symposium 2010**

After the Symposium, there were a number of follow-up meetings. The core group met May 17<sup>th</sup> to evaluate the meeting and discuss next steps; however, issues with the RPD's moratorium on overtime continued. As June approached and preparations for next steps were happening, the officers were no longer allowed to attend the meetings due to overtime concerns. In spite of the overtime issues, there was a core group meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup> in which a few members were able to attend. Next, the Director of TE met with the new DCO and the Sergeant from the core group to share the report and prepare for a press conference. However, the press conference was not executed and the report did not go any further than the meeting, due to logistics, time, and follow-through. The final core group meeting took place July 29<sup>th</sup> and at this time it appeared that there was no way to continue core group meetings due to the moratorium on overtime. There was the intent to have impact surveys completed at this final meeting on the process, but all of the officers and some of the youths were unable to attend, so not many surveys were completed. At this stage, it was time for TE to hire new youth organizers on their new neighborhood-based site, and several of the core group youth had been working on the project for up to five years were aging out of the TE program, thus the core group came to an end.

## **Conclusion**

When reviewing the process used to improve youth-police relations in Rochester, there are both roadblocks and successes. It is imperative to identify and discuss the aforementioned roadblocks and successes. This helps for future projects and processes similar to this one, as well as gaining insight into effective projects between law enforcement and not-for-profit agencies.

The following are three major roadblocks to the entire process:

- 1) The cut in police overtime was and continues to be a major obstacle. This reduction made it very difficult to keep the officers' engagement stable, as without overtime approved, the officers cannot take part in the process without violating union rules. Even for officers who bought into the process, it is neither easy nor reasonable to expect them to use their time outside of work to continue the process. This, essentially, is what made it difficult to continue work on YPUP, as officers were no longer able to attend the meetings, and without their attendance, there is no YPUP. There was an expectation that there would be time to have follow-up meetings and then a final meeting of the core group, but due to officer availability, there was no clear closure on the process. Unfortunately, there was no great clarity on the follow-up steps to be made and by whom, which resulted in an ending that was not reminiscent of the process that the youths and officers actually went through.
- 2) Transitions in the department were an ongoing obstacle. With officers taking on new responsibilities and Command Staff moving around in the Department, creating and sustaining connections were made extremely difficult. One transition that really made an impact was a core group officer's promotion to Sergeant, which gave him less time than previously to work with the core group. The changing Command Staff made it difficult to maintain connections and forced the Program Director of Teen Empowerment to continuously reintroduce the project to the necessary Staff. If there had been more consistency within the Department, then the project may have gotten off of the ground sooner.

3) Adding new youth into the process proved unsuccessful. Youths in the core group had ended their time working with TE (i.e. school obligations, new job) while the project was continuing forward, so new youths needed to be hired on. However, once these youths were hired, it became evident that the trust already formed amongst the core group members was really put to the test. In future groups such as this, new members should be introduced to the group in a different, more effective way, or new members may not come on at all.

Successes:

Taking on a task this magnitude proved to reward with many successes. There are many successes that could be highlighted with this project, but the following are some of the most rewarding:

1) An understanding for youth of what it is like to be an officer in Rochester and officers understanding what it is like to be a youth living in the City of Rochester. This deep understanding, even empathy gained by some members, allowed for the process of change to really take root. With understanding came the clear desire to take action. Some of the actions taken included officers and youths changing their own attitudes towards law enforcement and youths. This really demonstrated the importance of personal relationships in a process of this caliber.

2) Eventually getting buy-in from the Department was a huge victory. There were key people along the way that believed in TE's agenda, but to finally get the support from RPD was a true accomplishment. The buy-in by a law enforcement agency with this kind of organization (young, small, and directly working with at-risk youth) was unprecedented in this community. The access offered by the department to a small organization is a huge success and once the support was earned, much more comprehensive work was completed.

3) The wide range of officers who were identified and eventually chose to be a part of the project was quite an achievement. The diversity of experiences and views of the officers created important confrontations that allowed for the honesty needed. Typically on projects such as this the officers are picked by departments who tend to already have a community-minded attitude. That was not necessarily the case with these officers, though. The same can be said for the youth that were chosen to be part of the core group. The diversity of youths included youth who had been raised to not respect officers, youth who had always respected law enforcement, who had had traumatic experiences involving police when they were children, youth who have been arrested, and youths with no criminal history. In essence, the awareness (insight) that developed (unfolded) was meaningful and multi-faceted due to the wide spectrum of attitudes held by the participants.

4) The patience of Teen Empowerment through this entire process is a huge triumph. TE was lucky to have the same Director on staff for the duration of this project and even at present. With this consistency he was able to have valuable insight as to what the next logical step was to move the process forward, and even, possibly more importantly, when to take a step back.

In conclusion, this six-year process evolved from a simple phone call to the Rochester Police Department to a full-fledged effort to improve youth-police relations, culminating into a

Symposium. The identification of action steps allows for this dynamic process to continue as it was intended from the launch of this project. This report is meant to act as a descriptor of the process with the hope that other communities may see the value in improving youth-police relations and use this as a guide. Further, it is anticipated that the Rochester community will identify with these action steps and take efforts to act on them. As these were created with input from youths, law enforcement, and community agencies, there is clear value in their findings.

Next steps include:

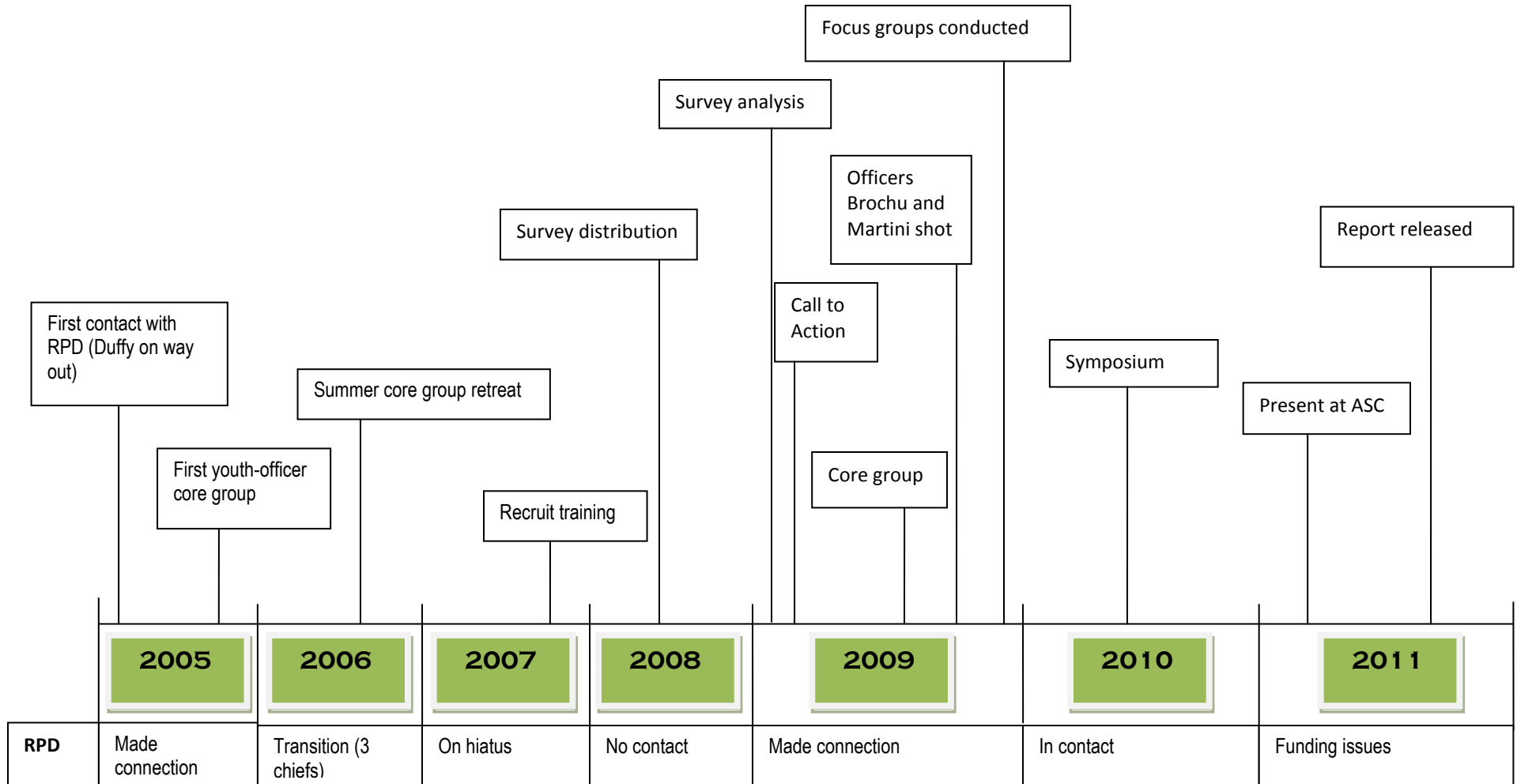
- Annual release of report on the state of youth-police relations in Rochester
- Recruitment of youth organizers for more dialogue
- Institutionalizing TE dialogue sessions with officers - that last several months?
- Youth / TE design and facilitate part of academy training
- Engaging community agencies at a higher level
- Determining and measuring indicators for improved relations
- Action on the top five next steps identified for each group (community, officers, youth, and RPD) and tasks to get complete these action steps.

## References

- Huo, Y.J. and Binning, K.R. (2008). Why the psychological experience of respect matters in Group life: An integrative account. *Social Personality Psychology Compass*, 2, 1570-1585.

Appendix 1

# Youth-Police Unity Project Timeline



Appendix 2 surveys

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Dear Rochester Police Officer,

Attached please find a brief survey that asks questions about youth-police relationships and attitudes in Rochester. This survey was designed by researchers with input from both youth and police and is a part of a study being conducted by the Youth-Police Unity Project. A similar survey of Rochester youth is also being conducted.

Please fill out the attached survey and return. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete.

This survey is completely anonymous and will be kept entirely confidential. Your honest answers are extremely valuable to our effort to better understand the nature of youth-police relationships in Rochester. All survey results will be reported only in the aggregate.

Thank you for helping us with this project.

**Rochester Police Department Questionnaire**

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. All of your answers will be kept confidential and only reported as aggregate data. Do not put your name on this questionnaire. All questionnaires are anonymous. Please think carefully about each question and answer as truthfully as you can. Your answers will not be linked to you individually and the researchers will not make any effort to identify who participated in this project.

**Section I – Police and Community Respect**

1.) **When you contact youth on the street, are they cooperative?**

All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
1	2	3	4	5

2.) **When you contact youth, how often do you think that you are fair in your approach?**

All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
1	2	3	4	5

3.) **When you see other officers in contact with youth, how often do you think that they are fair in their approach?**

All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
1	2	3	4	5

4.) **How much of the time do you think youth call the police for help when they need it?**

All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
1	2	3	4	5

5.) **When there is youth violence, who do you think youth go to first for help (check the best answer)?**

Tell a parent \_\_\_\_      Tell a friend \_\_\_\_      Keep to themselves \_\_\_\_  
Call the police \_\_\_\_      Tell someone else (who?) \_\_\_\_\_

6.) **In general, how much do you feel respected by youth in the city when you contact them?**

All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
1	2	3	4	5

7.) **In general, how much do you feel you respect youth in the city when you are in contact?**

All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Hardly ever	Never
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**Section II – Demographic Information**

15.) **What is your title/rank?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

16.) **What title/rank have you held for most of your career in the department?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

17.) **How many years have you been an officer with the Rochester Police Department?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Circle the best answer:*

18.) **Do you currently reside in the city?**    YES        NO

19.) **What do you consider your racial/ethnic background?**

African American    Caucasian    Latino    West Indian    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Community Youth Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. All of your answers will be kept confidential and only reported as aggregate data. Do not put your name on this questionnaire. All questionnaires are anonymous. Please think carefully about each question and answer as truthfully as you can. Your answers will not be linked to you individually and the researchers will not make any effort to identify who participated in this project.

**Section I – Police and Community Respect**

1.) In the past 6 months, have you been stopped by the police?

Yes \_\_\_ No ✓

2.) If you were stopped, did you feel that the police were fair?

Yes \_\_\_ No ✓

3.) Have you called the police in the past 6-months?

Yes \_\_\_ No ✓

4.) Have the police helped you in the past 6-months?

Yes \_\_\_ No ✓

5.) If you noticed something or knew something violent was about to happen would you...

Tell a parent ✓ Tell a friend \_\_\_ Keep to yourself \_\_\_

Call the police ✓ Tell someone else (who?) \_\_\_\_\_

6.) When you know there is a crime or violence problem, how often do you call the police?

All the time 1      Most of the time 2      Some of the time 3      Hardly ever 4      Never 5

7.) How well do you think the police are in responding to neighborhood problems?

Excellent 1      Good 2      Average 3      Fair 4      Poor 5

8.) In general, do you think that you respect the police...

All the time 1      Most of the time 2      Some of the time 3      Hardly ever 4      Never 5

9.) In general, do you think other kids in the neighborhood respect the police...

All the time 1      Most of the time 2      Some of the time 3      Hardly ever 4      Never 5

10.) In general, do you think police respect youth ...

All the time 1      Most of the time 2      Some of the time 3      Hardly ever 4      Never 5

11.) Do you think that you can trust the police to help you when you need them...

All the time 1      Most of the time 2      Some of the time 3      Hardly ever 4      Never 5

12.) Do you think that your neighborhood works well with the police...

All the time 1      Most of the time 2      Some of the time 3      Hardly ever 4      Never 5

13.) What are your ideas to improve youth and police relations?

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**Section II – Demographic Information**

Please circle the best answer.

14.) What age category are you in?

12 & under      13-14      15-16      17-18      19-20      21+

15.) What do you consider your racial/ethnic background?

African American      Caucasian      Latino      West Indian      Other \_\_\_\_\_

16.) Have you previously taken this survey? YES      NO

## Sample Agendas of Core Group Meetings

Core group agenda for first meeting of officers and youth:

- Concentric conversations
- Fish Bowl:
  - Issues youth face
  - Issues officers face
  - Personal goals
  - Work goals
- Bag toss – this is to: make the right connections, not dropping the beanbags (because that is what happens when fall off radar), and keep the flow going (momentum)
- Pair up youth and officers and discuss a group or team that you were a part of that worked well with one another and one that did not; this was to help to set goals for this project

Example of Core Group Agenda:

- Showed July '64 film
- Pick a word to describe Rochester in the past and Rochester in the present and why
- stand up sit down questions of applies to you – grew up in rural area, suburban area,
- film storm – how does the past influence youth police relations today

\*\*nobody had ever seen the video or heard of it except for one officer

Example of Core Group Agenda: Change and transition.

- A time in your life when you experienced a change, what was it and what was that like for you?
- Line up – without talking, line up by: height, birth date, alphabetical by last name; talk about how quickly find ways to communicate, aren't easy ways to communicate with youth and police – talk about how difficult this is
- Broke into small groups with youth and officers – brought goals back to them from previous meeting and had to prioritize: most important, most doable, most difficult
- facilitator presented on transitions – what I have to let go of, what youth have to let go of, what officers have to let go of
- Stand and deliver – agree, strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree with the statements (examples below):
  - I feel safe in community live or work in
  - RPD officers helpful to youth in the community
  - Youth understand the rules to follow in the community
  - Youth-police relations can change in Rochester.

Appendix 3 continued

Example of Agenda: Planning for Symposium

- Tower of fluff (use spaghetti and marshmallows) - think about an event that moved or inspired you that you've been to; try to build the highest tower; think about strongest foundation, how reinforced is the foundation and that is what the process is about in order to get concrete change
- Spent a lot of time as to what would happen in the symposium
- Share a message that people need to hear and one that you think you could deliver
- Concentric acting – give scenario and act it out; then move to next partner; e.g. two youth talking about police; two officers talking about youth after a fight; two officers talking about stress and challenges of job; youth talking to youth about what symposium is about; officer talking to officer about symposium; youth talking another youth out of fighting downtown; officer talking to officer about fight downtown

Youth agenda when planning for the Symposium:

- If you were chief for a day, what would you do and why.

\*\*Build strong relations and understandings for the youth.