



Boulder Police Department Master Plan & Reimagining Policing Report

Growing Up Boulder & MAYAMOTION Healing
Summary of Findings
Published August 2021

*"Safety is being able to be myself and be confident wherever I am,
regardless of my race, location, or the people around me."*

--ELLOS participant (high school)

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Overview

About Growing Up Boulder & MAYAMOTION Healing

Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is Boulder's child and youth-friendly city initiative established in 2009 as a formal partnership between the City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District, and the University of Colorado; the organization is a nonprofit which operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Colorado Nonprofit Development Center (CNDC). **GUB's mission is to empower young people with opportunities for inclusion, influence, and deliberation on local issues that affect their lives.** Since its inception, GUB has engaged with 6,500 young people on more than 100 projects. In fulfilling its mission, GUB is helping create a generation of civically engaged citizens while promoting equitable and sustainable communities for all.

MAYAMOTION Healing (MMH) is an organization that offers a comprehensive response to the most pressing mental health, social justice, and community issues that we face today. It offers three components of service that are grounded in the concepts of intersectionality¹ and healing-centered engagement². A multilingual, woman-owned practice that promotes a holistic health model, MAYAMOTION Healing's work takes into account the social and political contexts that impact our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health with responsive modalities of healing rooted in culture, spirituality, mental health, and community.

In Growing Up Boulder and MAYAMOTION Healing's collaborative work on "Reimagining Policing" with young people, the adult team continuously returned to one goal: to elevate young people's voices. Throughout our engagements and this report, we have been mindful to not influence young people's responses, and we have done our best to recognize and reduce any of our own biases. At the same time, in keeping with the City of Boulder's Racial Equity works, we have named systems of oppression when our young people experience them. Our promise to Boulder's young people was that we would: 1) offer a brave space in which they might express their opinions and recommendations, 2) help them name their feelings and understand when individual experiences were part of larger systems of oppression, 3) allow them to review and edit reporting about their ideas, 4) share their unfiltered feedback with decision-makers and the community, 5) keep our adult opinions to ourselves, 5) keep them informed about how their feedback would be used, and finally, 6) offer them continued opportunities for participation when available.

¹ *Intersectionality*, n.: the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise. (Oxford Dictionary)

² *Healing Centered Engagement* (HCE) is a strength based that advances a collective view of healing, and re-centers culture as a central feature in well-being. [The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement](#)

About the Police Department Master Plan: Reimagining Policing in Boulder³

REIMAGINE POLICING IN BOULDER.

Words and dialogue are not enough.

It is time for change through action.

Partner with us to reimagine policing.

The Boulder Police Department, in partnership with other city colleagues, is working to make significant changes in the midst of local and national discussions around the need for reform in policing. The master planning process will provide a framework for the department to do a broader and more in-depth examination of community input, use data-driven strategies to review current operations in the context of changing conditions, and determine future policing goals and strategies. A principal aspect of the process will be integration of the city's racial equity work with the Police Master Plan steps. This master plan will be used as the roadmap for creating meaningful changes to public safety in Boulder in the next 3-10 years. An in-depth examination of community needs and utilization of police department resources is currently underway.

GUB and MMH's Youth Engagement Approach

In alignment with Growing Up Boulder's mission to empower Boulder's young people with opportunities for inclusion, influence, and deliberation on local issues that affect their lives, GUB and MAYAMOTION Healing partnered to solicit feedback from a diverse set of young people during the first public engagement window of the Boulder Police Department's Master Plan.

While GUB usually engages with youth directly, given the racially-charged and highly emotional nature of the topic of policing, GUB sought additional expertise for several of its engagements with young people. GUB reached out to and secured the services of MAYAMOTION Healing because of MMH's excellent track record of working with Youth of Color and because of MMH's special attention to supporting young people's psychological health in the process of facilitation.

True reform is not possible without engaging all relevant stakeholders, especially those most impacted by a system. For this reason, GUB and MMH sought the voices of young people who are historically and currently excluded from processes of engagement and/or heavily impacted by the policing system; this



³ The language in this section comes directly from the City of Boulder's website, [Reimagine Policing](#), retrieved on 6/18/21.

includes young people in general, and within the subgroup of young people, children, young people with disabilities (in this case, as described by their parents), youth who are Brown or Black, and young adults who have experienced homelessness. Their honest insights and recommendations have the possibility to offer an updated vision of safety for the entire Boulder community, regardless of age, ability, race, language, culture, gender, and immigration or housing status.

Using the City’s engagement framework topics of Safety, Values, Hopes, and Concerns, GUB and MMH designed and facilitated high-quality, psychologically-based interventions that were both culturally relevant and accessible. The unique process was grounded in three principles: 1) positive youth development, 2) efficient and intentional ethical program delivery, and 3) the centering of wellness of youth, families and community. The approach also integrated knowledge about systems of oppression, power, and privilege, and incorporated therapeutic best practices for impacts of stress and trauma during engagements. Thus, the work aimed to respectfully engage and hear from young people while simultaneously minimizing re-traumatization or tokenization.

Beginning in the fall of 2020, Growing Up Boulder reached out to child- and youth-serving groups to request their involvement in the Police Master Planning process. The goal was to identify a diverse set of participants, co-design the engagements with the organizations and/or the young people they served, and conduct the engagements in the spring of 2021. The GUB team created an “equity matrix” in order to ensure representation from a variety of young people in terms of age, race, ethnicity, ability, and life experience. In the end, all but one youth group chose to participate in the full process. Out Boulder County, which serves LGBTQIA+, initially planned to engage one of their youth groups, but due to unforeseen circumstances, they were unable to participate. In the end, GUB and MMH staff and interns actively worked with 9 groups representing 119 children, youth and young adults, 33 teachers/partners, and 22 parents for **1,615 hours dedicated by the GUB/MMH team, children, youth, young adults, parents and educators to the project.** The engagement groups are described below:

Groups that participated in Reimagining Policing Engagement Window 1

(Listed in descending order by age)

Organization name	Program within organization	Ages of participants	Noteworthy demographics
TGTHR	Tenant Association	18-24	Formerly unhoused young adults
El Centro AMISTAD	ELLOS	12-17	Latinx boys ⁴
Boulder County Public Health	GENERATIONS	12-17	Latinx girls ⁵

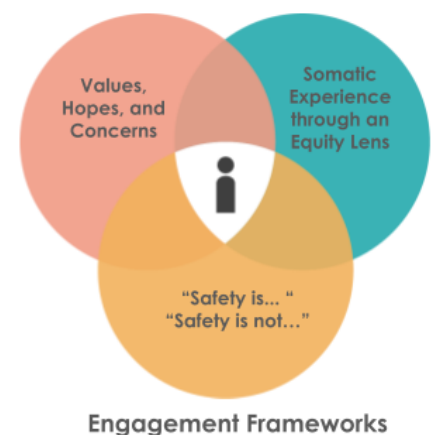
⁴ Boys* refers to gender expansive youth (cis boys, trans boys, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and any boy-identified youth).

⁵ Girls* refers to gender expansive youth (cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and any girl-identified youth).

Boulder High School	Black Student Alliance and Z Club	14-18	Black and Latinx high school girls
Boulder Valley School District	BVSD Youth Equity Council	11-18	Diverse youth dedicated to promoting equity (83% students of color)
City of Boulder	EXPAND	Adults (parents of children and youth)	Caregivers of children and youth with disabilities
I Have a Dream Foundation Boulder County	Youth Council	11-14	Latinx middle school youth
Whittier International Elementary School	Ms. Richardson's 4th grade class	9-10	Elementary school-aged, 33.5% students of color + 36% Free and Reduced Lunch
Boulder Journey School	"Contextual Curriculum Group" at the preschool	Adults (educators and parents)	Preschool educators and parents

The data analyzed in this report originates from engagements with: elementary, middle, and high school students, young adults and EXPAND parents. These engagements included in-person surveys and discussions, brainstorming sessions, student-research and persuasive essays, and share-out event events. Student work samples are embedded throughout this report. Other work samples and project materials are located in the [Appendix](#) of the report. For the complete collection of engagement documents, please contact: info@growingupboulder.org.

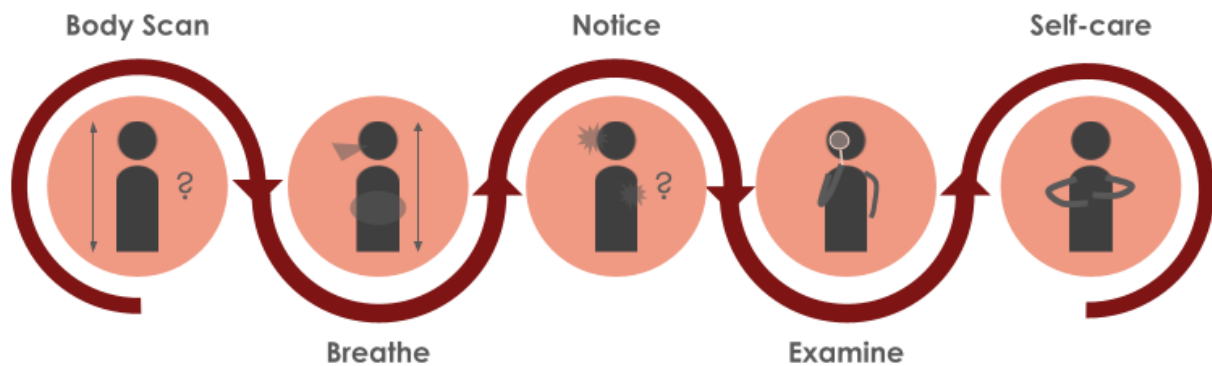
All engagement groups used the framework of "safety is/safety is not" as a launching point for discussion. Young people were also asked about their "values, hopes and concerns" for policing. Not only did these questions offer a broad framework for feedback, but they were consistent with the framing employed by the City of Boulder in the community-at-large. One additional component of feedback from groups that worked with MMH was the inclusion of *somatic experiences*--that is, a description of what participants were feeling in their bodies at the time of discussion--as both a mechanism to gather data for the master plan and as a tool to support participants' mental health. More details about this technique are described below.



Somatic Experience & Equity Lens

In order to center young people’s mental health and wellness throughout the process of hearing their voices, MMH implemented a holistic and intentional practice with youth to examine their somatic experience (how they were feeling in their body and why). “Somatic Experiencing” is a body-centered approach that expands on thoughts and feelings associated with a traumatic experience to include the natural bodily (somatic) responses. Through breathing, visualizations, and body scans, youth shared their voices with a connection to their body and nervous system, and they gained skills and strategies to apply going forward whenever they might feel activated/charged by a situation. These strategies will help them move towards self and community regulating/soothing now and in the future.

In keeping with the somatic processes we used with young people, we invite you, *the reader*, to experience this report holistically. This will allow for an opportunity for you to explore your own experience while also developing strategies of awareness and resilience. Readers are invited to use the following tools while reading this report:



1. Notice how you are feeling in your body now and during your reading (ie. scan the sensations you notice in your body, from head to toe). Where do you feel tension or relaxation? Be curious as to why this is so.
2. Take big belly breaths as you continue reading. Keep returning to your breath and repeating the body scan throughout reading.
3. Notice when you feel charged or activated. What is the emotion and feeling when activated? (Angry, tense, empowered, joyous etc.)
4. Examine your experience with an equity lens: How is my identity informing my experience? Consider your identity in terms of race, power, privilege and oppression, and reflect upon your lived experience.
5. How can I take care of myself after reading this report?
Some readers may experience varying degrees of discomfort; we invite you to be present with this feeling within a range that doesn't create distress.
Self and soul care look different across individuals/communities; please take care of yourself in a way that has integrity with your experience.

COVID-19 Accommodations

Due to circumstances regarding COVID-19 in the spring of 2021, GUB and MAYAMOTION Healing conducted all youth focus groups virtually. Groups were conducted in English, Spanish, and Spanglish, depending on the needs and requests of the group.

By the Numbers (All Engagements)⁶

- 180 Total Participants
- 141 Children, Youth, Young Adults, and Parents
 - 119 Children, Youth, and Young Adults
 - 79 Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) students
 - 13 Black Student Alliance and Z Club
 - 66 Youth Equity Council
 - 9 ELLOS & GENERATIONS youth
 - 5 I Have a Dream Foundation youth council participants
 - 6 TGTHR (formerly Attention Homes) residents
 - 20 Whittier Elementary School students
 - 22 Parents
 - 20 Parents of EXPAND program participants
 - 2 Parents at Boulder Journey School
- 25 Facilitators of child, youth, and young adult groups
 - 3 Youth Equity Council (YEC) program leaders
 - 1 BVSD
 - 2 University of Colorado CU Public Achievement staff
 - 1 Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) teachers
 - 1 Boulder High School club mentor for BSA
 - 10 Boulder Journey School teachers
 - 10 Partner groups staff
 - 2 ELLOS & GENERATIONS
 - 3 TGTHR
 - 2 IHDF
 - 3 BSA/Z Club
- 8 City of Boulder staff
 - 1 Communications and Outreach
 - 1 Master Planning
 - 1 EXPAND program
 - 5 Boulder Police Department & Police Master Planning Core Team
- 3 GUB Interns
- 3 GUB and MMH Staff
- **803 hours** GUB/MMH team designing, implementing, analyzing, and reporting on PDMP
- **687 hours** of child, youth, young adults, and parents work on the project
- **67 hours** partner educators' work on the project
- **58 hours** GUB team directly engaging with children, youth, young adults, and parents
- **Total child, youth, young adult, parent, educator and GUB/MMH time on project: 1,615 hours**

⁶ You will notice that in the breakdown of group engagements later in the document, we include information about the race of the adults working directly with young people on this project because the race of the facilitators may impact how comfortable racialized groups of young people feel (or don't feel) in expressing their opinions. Adults are described as "White" or "PoC (People of Color)."

Executive Summary

This next section summarizes the findings of all 9 engagement groups listed above. Our participants expressed many heartfelt opinions about the topic of “Reimagining Policing” in Boulder, demonstrating great care for and strong interest in the subject. They cared about the larger Boulder community, but also, about their local communities, such as their friends, affiliation groups, and families. Students as young as nine years old identified social justice issues and inequalities in policing. Our data revealed several important stories.

First, all ages shared similar views in several components of the framework for the “Reimagining Policing” discussion. They agreed on general principles about what “**safety is**” and what “**safety is not**.” Some examples (this list is *not* exhaustive; please see tables below for more complete summaries) are that **safety is**: physical and emotional wellness, the ability to go anywhere anytime as myself, trust between and amongst community members and police. **Safety is not**: being afraid to be myself in my own community, differential treatment by police due to my identity, police bias and brutality. There was also significant overlap in “**values**” and “**hopes**,” despite differences of age and lived experiences. All ages valued equity, kindness and compassion, health and wellness, family and community, and justice. They hoped for differences to be “expected and embraced,” safe places where no one worries, and a strong sense of goodwill between police and the community. A few students expressed **appreciation** for the Boulder police department, such as police officers’ willingness to risk their lives in the line of duty.

Second, as young people discussed their “**concerns**” and “**recommendations**,” their responses diverged by their age, their identities and their lived experiences. Both the younger and the older groups provided critical perspectives to the process; however, the older the youth were, the more concerned and alarmed they were by the current state of policing in Boulder and in the U.S., and the more opinions they had about how to address policing issues. The older youth more frequently discussed the interplay between policing, race, and systems of oppression. We believe this was due to their more abstract-level of thinking, an increased number of direct interactions with police, and their lived experiences based on the intersection of identities, such as race, immigration status, housing situation, mental health, (dis)ability, and gender. The larger the number of “targeted”⁷ groups a young person belonged to, the more fearful, dissatisfied, and skeptical they were with the current police system in Boulder and the less safe they felt around police. Those who had experienced more negative experiences with policing were more hesitant to speak; however, once they were assured that 1) they were speaking in an emotionally safe and anonymous space [as much as the facilitator could provide], 2) the city would take their ideas seriously, no matter how radical, and if the process resulted in the youth feeling unheard, there would be opportunity for a follow up dialogue with the City of Boulder as to why, and 3) were met with a teachable moment framework to validate their experiences with words and definitions such as ‘racial profiling’ or ‘institutional oppression,’ they enthusiastically contributed their ideas.

⁷ “Target” means members of social identity groups who are discriminated against, marginalized, disenfranchised, oppressed, exploited by an oppressor and oppressor’s system of institutions without identity apart from the target group, and compartmentalized in defined roles. [Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege - MSW@USC](#)

Further, because we know that the City of Boulder and Boulder County have invested in racial equity consulting and protocol, we specifically highlighted the importance of courageous conversations⁸ as a tool that can and should be utilized when engaging in conversations related to race within institutions. The 11-24 year olds who participated in our engagements raised the following **topics most frequently**: 1) police should treat all communities equitably (i.e. PoC, disabled, unhoused) and improve their relationships with targeted groups, 2) concern about police brutality against People of Color and support for Black Lives Matter, and 3) police are corrupt or seem villainous and 4) police shouldn't address all public safety issues (i.e. mental health workers should address mental health issues). In general, most young people wanted to create a new public safety system for the City of Boulder.

Examples of student **concerns** include Black and Brown people feeling targeted by police, fear and distrust of police, police bias and racial profiling, and higher police interactions due to being unhoused. Examples of **recommendations** include: creating an entirely new public safety system; extensive training around bias, racism, and how to work with people with mental and cognitive disabilities; re-establishing trust between the police and community members; and developing a 911-system which triages mental health and other needs outside of policing.

Finally, as mentioned previously, MMH paid special attention to understanding and supporting young people's mental health, cultural and linguistic needs throughout the Reimagining Policing engagements. Young people from historically and currently excluded groups reported strong **somatic (bodily) responses** to policing, including responses like: racing hearts, tightness in chest, and a sense of "fight or flight." Overall, youth expressed **feelings** of fear, panic, anxiety, and rage. Thanks to the healing-centered engagement approach, young people were able to bravely share their intense feelings around policing and expressed a wish to *continue engaging in this charged topic*. **They enthusiastically requested the opportunity to express their views via a future artistic endeavor, such as the creation of murals or performances in our city.** Please contact GUB/MMH if you would like to partner on such a project or have a funding source to support this work.

Next, you will find summaries of young people's responses to each of the categories described above. This data represents the ideas from all groups combined; the detailed data from individual engagements can be found via links in the [Appendix](#).

⁸ COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS is a strategy for systems and organizations to address racial disparities through safe, authentic and effective cross-racial dialogue. [Courageous Conversations - About Us](#)

SAFETY IS/SAFETY IS NOT

"I wish everyone regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, etc. felt safe when police are around, but the truth is we don't."

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

"I am concerned that my safety with the police is at risk, depending on my mental health status."

-- TGTHR resident

"One concern that I have right now is that when I think of safety, I don't think of police anymore."

--Youth Council participant, I Have A Dream Foundation

Safety is...	Safety is not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Physical and emotional wellnessAbility to go anywhere, anytime, not feeling watched, and being comfortable no matter my:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Race (Person of color)Gender identitySexual orientationImmigration statusHousing statusAnd the intersection of any of these identities<i>*young people named these identities, because as members of these communities, they have often felt targeted by the police</i>Being understood and accepted by the Boulder community, and especially the policeMy personal community, my family and my cultureTrust between and amongst community members and police departmentAnti-bias and anti-racist police behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When I'm afraid of being who I am in my communityTargeting or differential treatment due to culture, race, gender, personal identity, age, immigration status, etc...Retribution, use of lethal weapons, and bodily harm/death (by accident or with intent)Police brutalityPolice bias against certain types of peopleExcessive consequences resulting from minor interactions with policeWhen police are presentWhen police have guns and tasers as part of their uniform <i>*this was reported by many young people from historically and currently targeted groups</i>

VALUES

“I think that in an ideal community all members feel safe. Everyone treats everyone exactly the same, and we expect differences.”

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety• Equity and equal treatment• Kindness• Compassion• Health and Wellness (physical and emotional)• Justice• Center mental health and community needs over policing• Community (I feel safe in my community)• Family (I feel safe with my family)• Inclusion and belonging• Respect for all identities and differences among people• Cultural autonomy• A police department that values and practices the above values• Solidarity with Black Lives Matter• Civic engagement

HOPES

“We hope to be able to walk comfortably and freely, with police presence without any form of prejudice or targeting solely based on our race, ethnicity, and/or beliefs.”

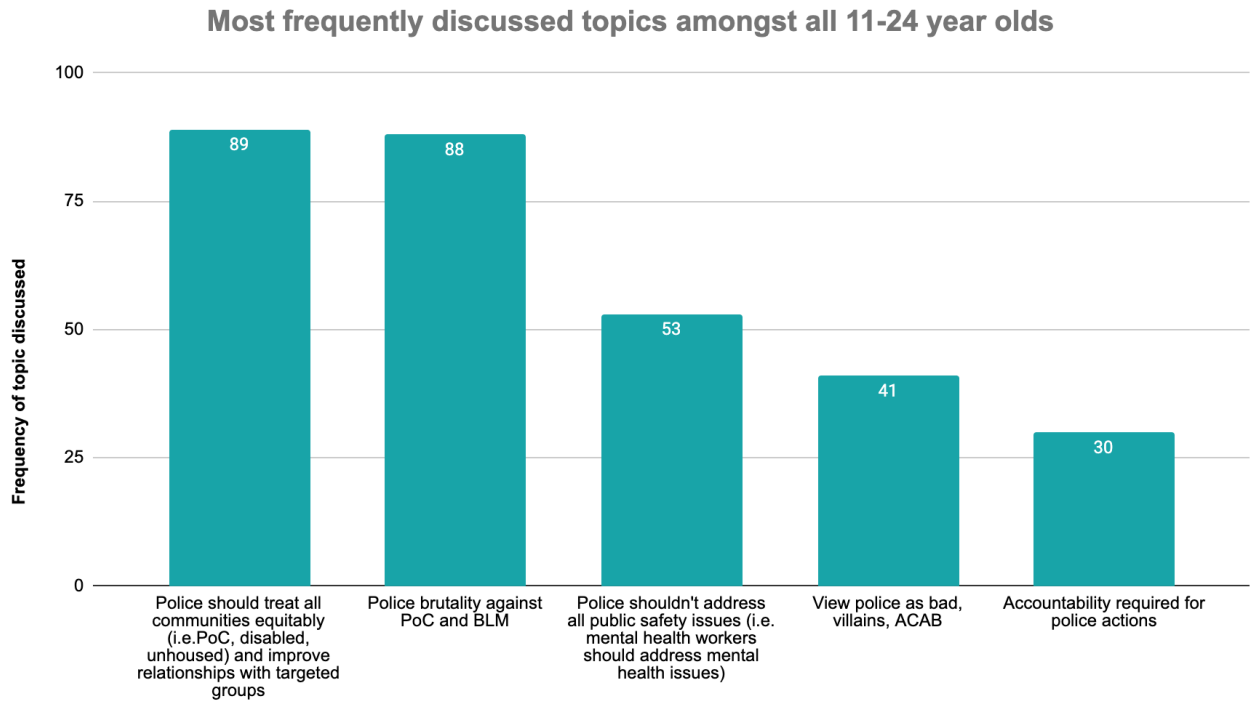
--Black Student Alliance participant, BVSD

“Anyone can feel safe calling police for safety concerns, without worrying about getting deported/interrogated.”

--GENERATIONS participant

Hopes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differences among people expected and embraced• Safe places where no one worries• Strong sense of goodwill between police and community• Every young person trusts police officers• That police have a positive reputation

- People from targeted identities feel safe
- Less racially-biased policing
- Empathetic and well trained police officers
- Ability to walk comfortably and freely with police presence without any form of prejudice or targeting based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, immigration status, or beliefs
- Police adhere to a “Hippocratic Oath” like doctors do
- Anyone can feel safe calling the police with safety concerns, without worrying about getting deported/interrogated
- That police are on “our” side



Most frequently discussed topics by all 11-24 yr olds

CONCERNS

“I feel the need to protect myself from the police due to my race and the sound of my name.”

--ELLOS/GENERATIONS participant

“Whenever my family has interactions with police, I immediately worry about our safety due to our immigration status.”

--Black Student Alliance/Z Club participant, BVSD

“This is not about just a few bad apples, the whole system is rotten.. ”

-- Young person in a GUB/MMH engagement

Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unequal treatment due to race, age, LGBTQ+, immigration and housing status, etc.• Police do not keep me safe• Afraid of police• Guns and tasers as part of the uniform• Fear of losing life with no wrongdoing• Community members with cognitive disabilities will be misunderstood and will be seen as threats• That shootings (of Black and Brown people) keep happening• Being in a group of Black and Brown people is seen by police as suspicious and these groups feel targeted• Black and Brown people being targeted, harmed, and killed by police• People of Color don't feel safe• Police bias/racial profiling• The history of policing is grounded in racism• No hope in reimagining policing (i.e. skepticism that the system will change)• Policing and incarceration will not solve the root issues in our community• Police collaboration with other oppressive/racist systems or institutions like ICE (i.e. my immigration status will inform and negatively affect police interactions)• Fear of higher police interactions due to being unhoused• Lack of accountability for police violence (i.e police won't be charged and/or convicted)• Untrained police officers• Use of intimidation with teens and people of color• Feeling a need to protect oneself from police due to race• Lack of trust in police (i.e that police will treat me differently because of X reason)• Being watched by armed police (even at community events)• Boulder youth feeling targeted and harassed• That policing is always racially charged, regardless of training• There's no justice in the justice system• Mental health issues will be misconstrued as threatening and could result in harm to the community member experiencing them• About the negative reputation of police• More SROs does not equal safer communities• Police are corrupt (bad and villains)

ROLE FOR POLICE

“Stop promoting the role of ‘protector’ and start becoming part of the community and participating in efforts to improve it.”

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

Roles for Police	Roles for Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no role for police--there shouldn't be a police department • Keeping people safe (protecting the public) • Responding to "big" things like mass shootings • Being a trusted member of the community • Being a resource • Being an ally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to school situations (teachers and counselors can de-escalate better--police as last resort) • Mental health professionals to respond to community members in need (mental illness, supporting the unhoused) • Actual resources, like housing, therapy, treatment centers/alternative to incarceration • Non-police officers (and enhanced technologies) manage traffic stops • Enforcing ICE

APPRECIATION

"I appreciate the response to the mass shooting and the willingness to risk their lives in the line of duty to protect our community."

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

Appreciation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That police risk their lives in the line of duty • The response to the mass shooting and the willingness to risk their lives in the line of duty to protect our community • Fast response times to 911 calls • Consistent correct response to vehicular accidents • Consistent correct response when the community is "at hazard" ie. March 22, 2021

SOMATIC RESPONSES/FEELINGS

"When I see a police officer I get really nervous and make sure I have my hood off, hands out my pockets, etc. I feel that police should try to do more stuff with their community to have a better relationship with them."

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

"I don't trust police to protect every person equally. I panic and fear for their safety when I see a Person of Color getting pulled over."

--Youth Council participant, I Have a Dream Foundation

In response to seeing a police officer or hearing the word "police," students reported the following somatic responses and feelings:

Somatic Responses	Feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall: strong somatic response when encountering police• Tightness in my chest• Holding my breath• Racing heart• Flooding in limbs• Flushing in face• Fight/Flight/Freeze/Fawn responses• Out of body• Belly aches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall: fear• Fear of being killed or harmed, overpowered by police• Nervous• Scared• Self-conscious about what I am doing and how I look• Panicked• Triggered• Extreme discomfort• Feeling the need to protect myself from police• Anxious• Anger• Rage• Concern for others

RECOMMENDATIONS

"Tear down the current system and build a whole new one based on today's needs."

--Young person from GUB/MMH engagement

"Greater police awareness of special needs and training to help them work with and be aware of what 'special needs' looks like."

--Parent of EXPAND participant

Overall Recommendations by Young People

1. System-wide changes

- a. Tear down the system and build a whole new one based on today's needs (i.e. dismantle the police department and reallocate resources to community)
- b. Fewer police and more community resources
- c. Triage system for 911 or police calls--not all responses should be handled by police
- d. Create a mental health crisis team
- e. Non-violent interventions (i.e. disarming without violence, no use of deadly force)
- f. End racial profiling
- g. End ageism
- h. End violence against unhoused
- i. Break up police unions. Statistically shows in agencies where police unions are strong, there is a greater case of misconduct. Help on the appeals process and punishment for misconduct is harder. Toxic comradery is lessened.
- j. Create a mental health taskforce

Specific recommendations

2. Trainings, education and dialogues leading to police behavior change

- a. Community members experiencing mental health issues
- b. Neurodiverse communities and/or people with disabilities
- c. Anti-bias training
- d. Anti-racist training
- e. Increased standards at police academy, including ethics training
- f. Ongoing community input for police training curriculum
- g. Learn about the culture of historically targeted groups
- h. De-escalation training
- i. Evaluation for police application of new skills (listed above) and anti-bias with consistency
- j. That police officers take care of their own mental health so as not to harm the community

3. Funding

- a. Stop funding police completely
- b. Give less funding to police (and redistribute to community organizations)

4. Role shifts

- a. Police officers should be seen as community resources and not as authority/power figures
- b. Police officers as allies
- c. Mental health professionals address mental health needs
- d. Subsets of 911 service. To deal with mental episodes or drug overdoses. Specific people for specific circumstances.
- e. Police officers don't carry guns (or fewer guns)--only tasers or pepper spray
- f. Strict rules around gun usage and enforcement, fewer lethal weapons
- g. Police officers extend tools and resources to the community

5. Accountability
 - a. On-duty police officers should wear body cameras at all times
 - b. Monitor and have repercussions for police misconduct
 - c. Repercussions for the false reporting from the public
 - d. Reexamine “reasonable suspicion” procedures and protocols
6. Regain community trust and build positive relationships
 - a. Listen to the community
 - b. Expand community policing
 - c. Equitable community policing--same police presence in communities of color as well as White communities
 - d. Attend community events to get to know people--wear plain clothes to be less intimidating.
 - e. Get input from the public on policing
 - f. Add a police dog program

For a more complete list of recommendations by young people, please see the [Appendix](#). For descriptions of GUB/MMH’s engagement partners and processes, please continue on to the next sections.

MAYAMOTION Healing Engagements & Collaborations

By the Numbers - All MAYAMOTION Engagements

- 32 students (ages 12-24, 30/32 were Youth of Color)
- 14 Adults - Facilitators/Co-facilitators/Observers (10 adults were PoC)
- 1 MMH Staff (PoC)
- 4 Engagements Facilitated by MAYAMOTION Healing
- 8 hours engaging directly with youth

Overall Engagement Description

March - June 2021

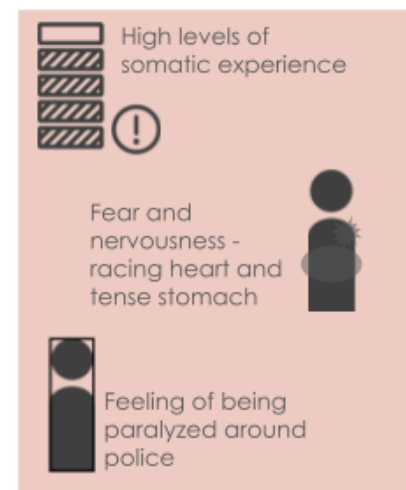
5 Virtual engagements

Over the course of 8 weeks, MAYAMOTION Healing collaborated with GUB staff to engage community stakeholders, including non-profit partners and local youth leaders, to inform the Boulder Police Master Plan. As part of the process, the convening groups included I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder County, TGTHR, Black Student Alliance (BSA), Z Club, El Centro AMISTAD's ELLOS Program, and Boulder County's GENERATIONS Program. Youth focus sessions centered on a goal of identifying how youth define and experience "safety" and the role of policing in the community. These age-appropriate youth focus sessions utilized culturally-grounded mental health practices, including a somatic exploration of the experiences shared. These comprehensive engagements regarding policing and safe communities were discussed while using a racial-equity lens. Each group created Jamboards (virtual flip charts with sticky notes) with their anonymous feedback. Youth were compensated with gift cards for their engagement and leadership.

Summary of Findings

Each group had a unique dialogue of safety and policing, however there were common threads across youth sessions. This included all groups of youth sharing concerns of the current and historical policing practices that include violence and brutality against Communities of Color, specifically Black and Brown communities. Black Lives Matter was identified in each group as a powerful and critical issue, and there was a highly activated somatic response (participants felt emotions strongly in their bodies) as the conversation progressed. Racial profiling and lack of police accountability were voiced repeatedly in each session, as well as concern for safety due to their immigration status. Youth engaged in these powerful conversations with a strong understanding of systems of oppression and institutional racism, which were identified in policing and incarceration.

Some youth expressed hesitancy to share in fear of retaliation to their represented groups or demographic. With this sharing, youth shared personal storytellings of



Somatic Responses

their experience with police that ranged from a spectrum of good, bad, and traumatic experiences with police. For many youth, they had experienced police involvement for their mental health emergencies and felt that it was not an appropriate role of police and safety. Other youth also shared the feeling that police had antagonized youth as they were being questioned, and they also shared an overwhelming experience in which police believed adults more than youth, even in situations in which youth were seeking help and support to be safe. Some youth shared that police can play an important role for safety, and in each group, youth agreed that police should not have a role in many community safety responses rather for more traffic and emergency calls. Each group's overall perception of police and safety shifted slightly depending upon their racial, economic, and mental health lived experiences. Top values expressed by youth include:



Black Student Alliance (BSA) & Z Club

"The hope is that police would be required to have the same standard of ethical practices like that of doctors and abide by a 'Hippocratic Oath' and be held accountable."

—BSA Youth (High School)

By the Numbers

- 13 Youth (all were ages 14-17, PoC and female identified)

- 1 MMH Staff (PoC)
- 3 BSA & Z Club Adults (All White)
- 1.5 hours engagement

Engagement Description

April 19th, 2021

Virtual engagement

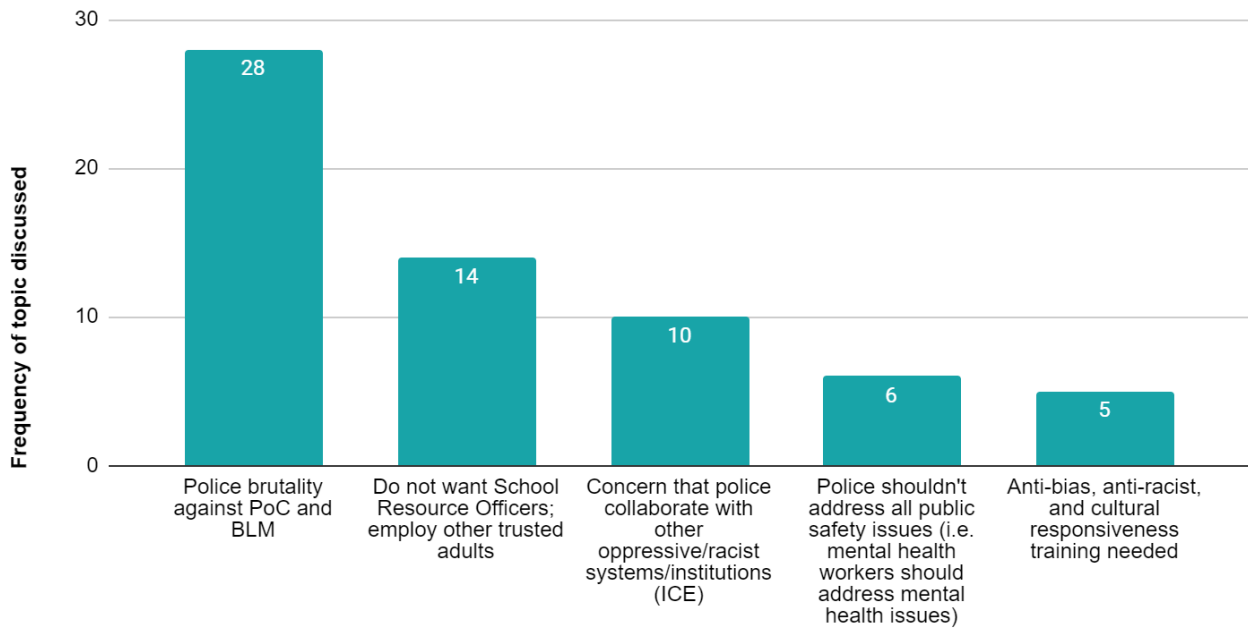
On April 19th, 2021, 2 Black Student Alliance (BSA) youth leaders and 1 Z Club youth leader, all from Boulder High School, facilitated a 1.5 hour focus group for their peers. These young women designed and delivered the workshops themselves, with mentoring and coaching from the GUB/MMH team. The student leaders engaged their BSA and Z Club peers by introducing them to the concept of the Police Master Plan, then facilitating activities and collecting feedback. The participants of the group were engaged throughout the session; activities included responding to the poll of: the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word “police,” and also responding to a Jamboard to collect anonymous feedback on safety and policing.

Summary of Findings

A recurring theme from these youth was their strong perception of fear of the police due to racial profiling and immigration status. They highlighted, “feeling nervous to call police in times when I need help due to fear of police escalating issues or using violence/deadly force in response.” They expressed that training and a balance of power/accountability are important when considering improving the current police system. The group discussed the importance of examining how the violence and murder of George Floyd and others happened, and a desire to prevent the killing of Black and Brown people. When asked to consider solutions to some of their concerns, students suggested the following:



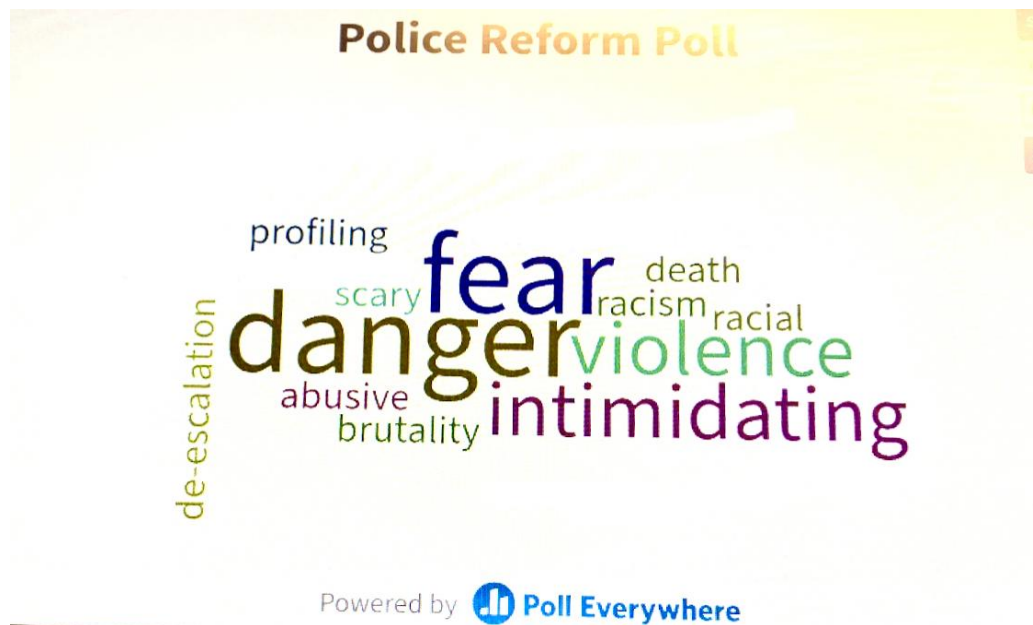
Most frequently discussed topics amongst BSA/Z Club youth



Most frequently discussed topics by Z Club youth

"Empathy to be seen as human beings and not as the 'crime' they are being accused of."

--Black Student Alliance participant, BVSD



Black Student Alliance Poll Everywhere response to question: The first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word "police". Poll Everywhere creates an image of the words, making the words that are repeated multiple times larger.

ELLOS & GENERATIONS Programs

By the Numbers

- 9 Youth total (ages 14-17, all youth of color, 8 male identified and 1 female identified)
- 1 MMH Staff (PoC)
- 1 ELLOS Staff (PoC)
- 1 GENERATIONS Staff (PoC)
- 1.5 hours Engagement

Engagement Description

April 21st, 2021

Virtual engagement

On April 21st, 2021, MMH facilitated a 1.5 hour focus group with ELLOS participants. ELLOS (Engaged Latinx Leaders Offering Social-change) is a program at El Centro Amistad for Latino youth (ages 12-18) which uses a positive youth development approach to address substance use prevention and other factors leading to high school drop-out. On June 17th, 2021 the GENERATIONS engagement was facilitated by a Youth Specialist. GENERATIONS supports youth during their teen years as well as their parents/guardians to prevent school dropout and reduce incidences of unplanned pregnancies through mentorship, self-empowerment tools, and culturally responsive programming. Similar to the work with the Boulder High School clubs, the ELLOS and GENERATIONS groups created a collage of the first word that comes to mind when hearing the word “police” and continued by creating a Jamboard with anonymous feedback on safety and policing.

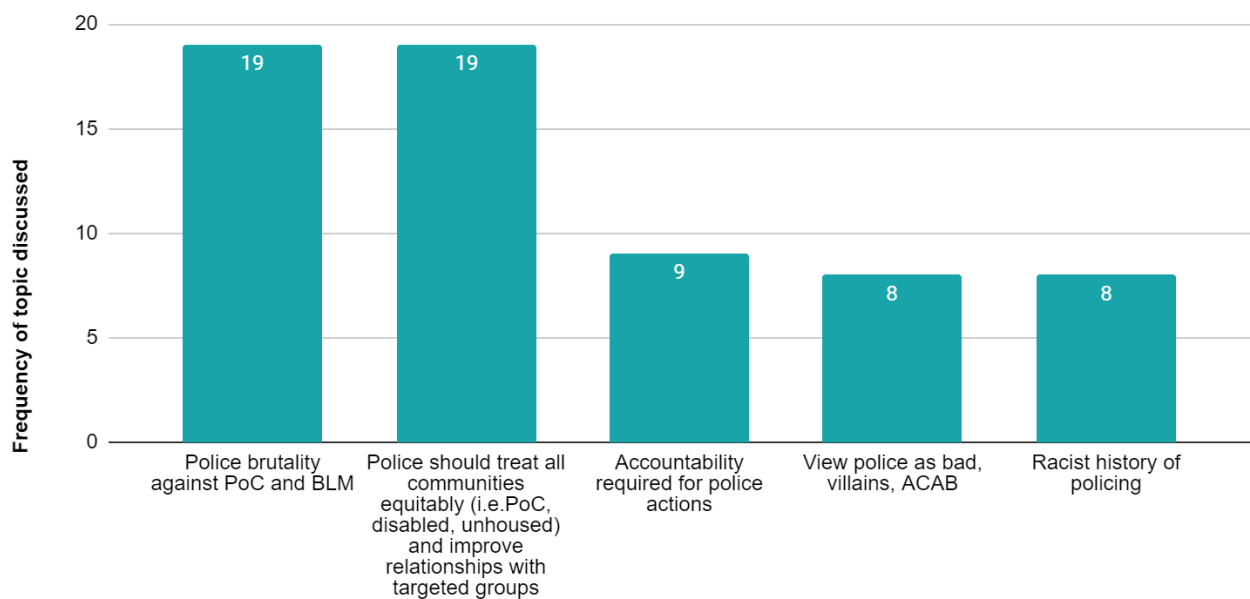
Summary of Findings

A recurring theme from the group was their powerful perception of fear and intimidation of the police. They expressed a strong somatic response and reaction to the topic of “police,” sharing that they felt an adrenaline rush in their body and a rush of fear when there is police presence. The group held the belief that they could be killed by police in an encounter and that the police would be “justified” in their killing, even if they were to say it was a mistake. This group of young people identified having an urge to protect themselves from police in order to stay safe because of their race. Somatic responses were described to feel like a rush in their limbs, hands and chest. Some shared feeling paralyzed in their body around the police.

This group's concerns included the following:



Most frequently discussed topics amongst ELLOS and GENERATIONS youth



Most frequently discussed topics by ELLOS and GENERATIONS youth

I Have a Dream Foundation (IHDF)

By the Numbers

- 5 Youth total (youth ages 12-14, all PoC, all female identified)
- 1 MMH Staff (PoC)
- 2 IHDF Staff (1 PoC and 1 White)
- 1.5 hours engagement

Engagement Description

April 29th, 2021

Virtual engagement

On April 29th, 2021, MAYAMOTION Healing facilitated a 1.5 hour focus group with IHDF participants; participants were middle school students who are part of IHDF's new youth council. The I Have A Dream Foundation is a nonprofit that, "provides individualized social, emotional, and academic support to young people from under-resourced communities from 1st grade all the way through college, along with guaranteed tuition support." Similar to the approach taken with the aforementioned youth groups, IHDF students created a collage of the first word that comes to mind when hearing the word "police" and continued by creating a Jamboard with anonymous feedback on safety and policing.

Summary of Findings

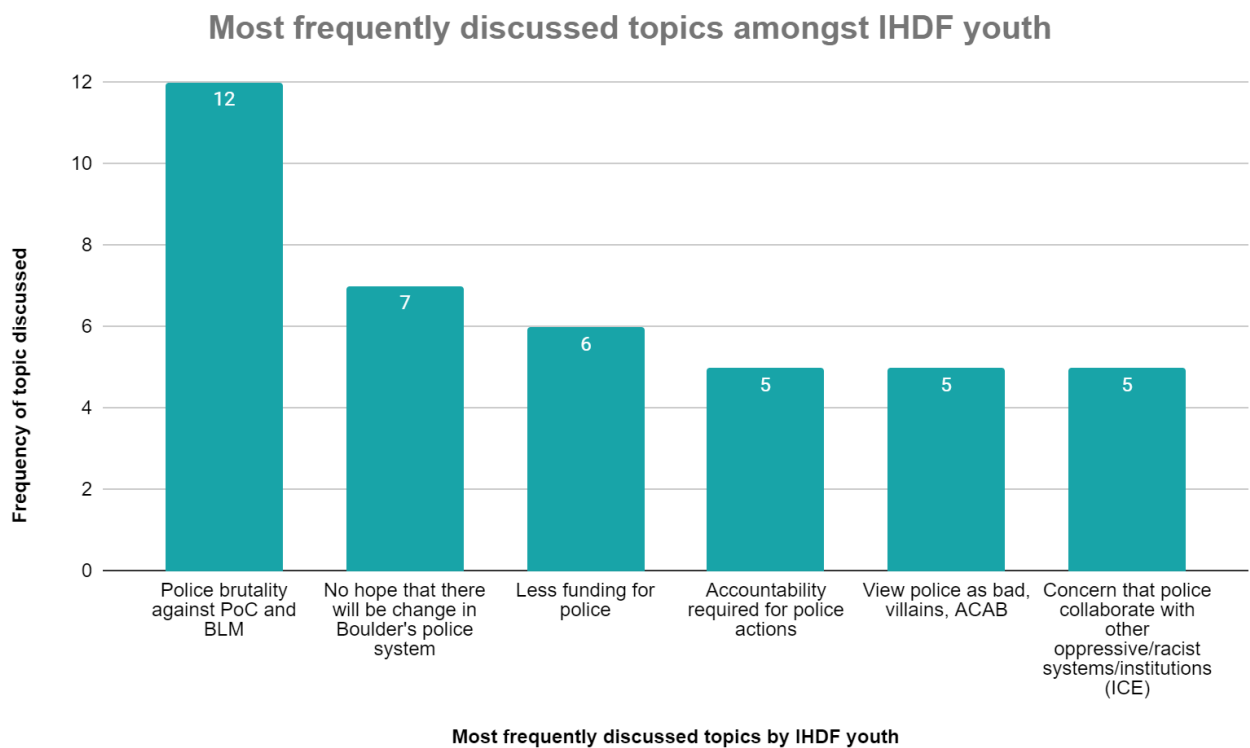
This group was very intimate in their sharing, which reflected a supportive and caring space where all youth participated fully and named how they felt in their bodies. The young women expressed high levels of somatic experience and the facilitator taught them techniques for emotional regulation⁹ as they became activated, similar to those suggested to readers at the beginning of this report. They described feeling fear in the body, which for many meant the stomach feeling tense and the chest/heart racing when discussing experiences with police. Youth identified that their tense stomach offered information and that it was an intuition to be "on guard" when in police presence, especially in traffic situations. They spoke of their Latinx identity, race, and immigration status as informing their fear of police encounters.

"My hope is that when I see a police officer pulling someone over or talking to someone, I wouldn't automatically feel that tightness in my chest or hold my breath. "

-- Youth Council participant, I Have a Dream Foundation

⁹ Emotional regulation refers to the ability to control your emotions rather than letting them control you.

The two following infographics represent the most frequently discussed topics and recurring themes and ideas by I Have a Dream Foundation youth:



"Safety is being able to hear our music, dance, eat our food, and participate in our celebrations."

-- Youth Council participant, I Have a Dream Foundation

TGTHR (Formerly Attention Homes)

By the Numbers

- 5 Young adults total (18-24 years, 3 PoC)
- 4 Female* identified young adults
- 1 Non-binary identified young adult
- 1 MMH Staff (1 PoC)
- 3 TGTHR Staff (1 PoC, 2 White)
- 2.5 hours Engagement

Engagement Description

May 7th, 2021

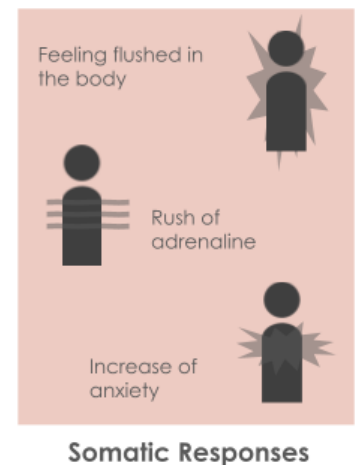
Virtual engagement

On May 7th & August 6th 2021, MAYAMOTION Healing facilitated 2.5 hours of focus groups with TGTHR participants. TGTHR (formerly Attention Homes) is a social movement and non-profit organization working with courageous communities across the country to end youth homelessness. Similar to the approach taken with the aforementioned youth groups, the TGTHR group created a collage of the first word that comes to mind when hearing the word “police” and continued by creating a Jamboard with anonymous feedback on safety and policing.

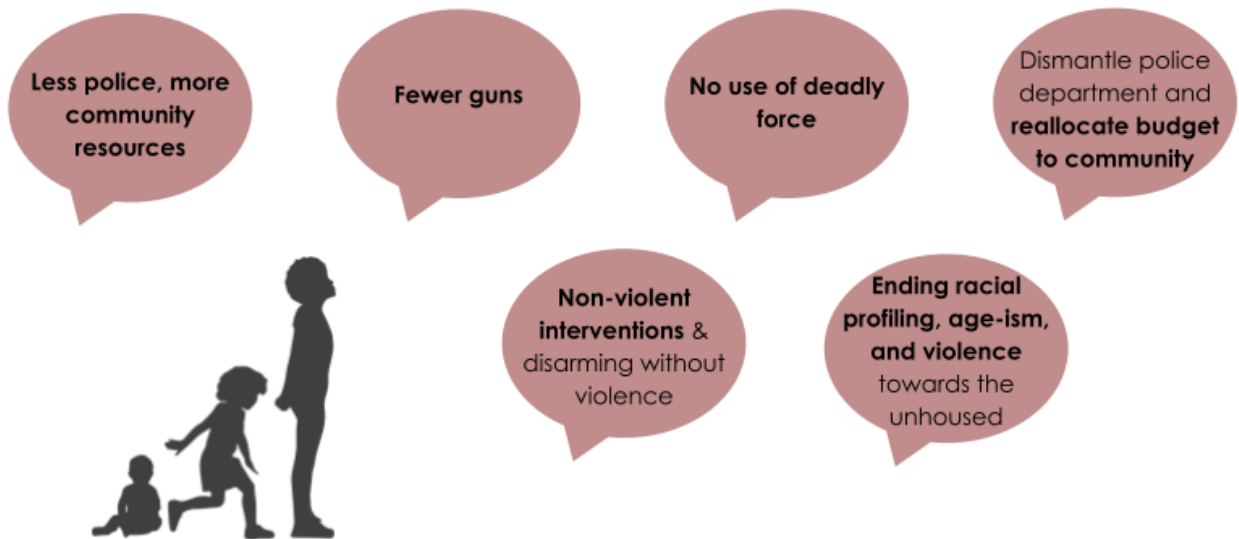
Summary of Findings

Before we even met with TGTHR’s young people, when we asked TGTHR’s adult directors to find out whether their young people would like to offer input to the City’s “Police Master Plan/Reimagining Policing,” there was a swift response: NO. The use of the word “police” versus “safety” triggered this group of young adults, as it did for many of the other groups with whom GUB/MMH worked. They also held the firm belief that nothing would change and that “reimagining” policing is not a concept in which they trust. It was not until we broadened the framing of the discussion to be about safety, assured the youth that they could share any feelings or feedback (there are no “right answers”), and asked them to create a description *themselves* about this focus group for their peers, that a small but deeply engaged group agreed to participate.

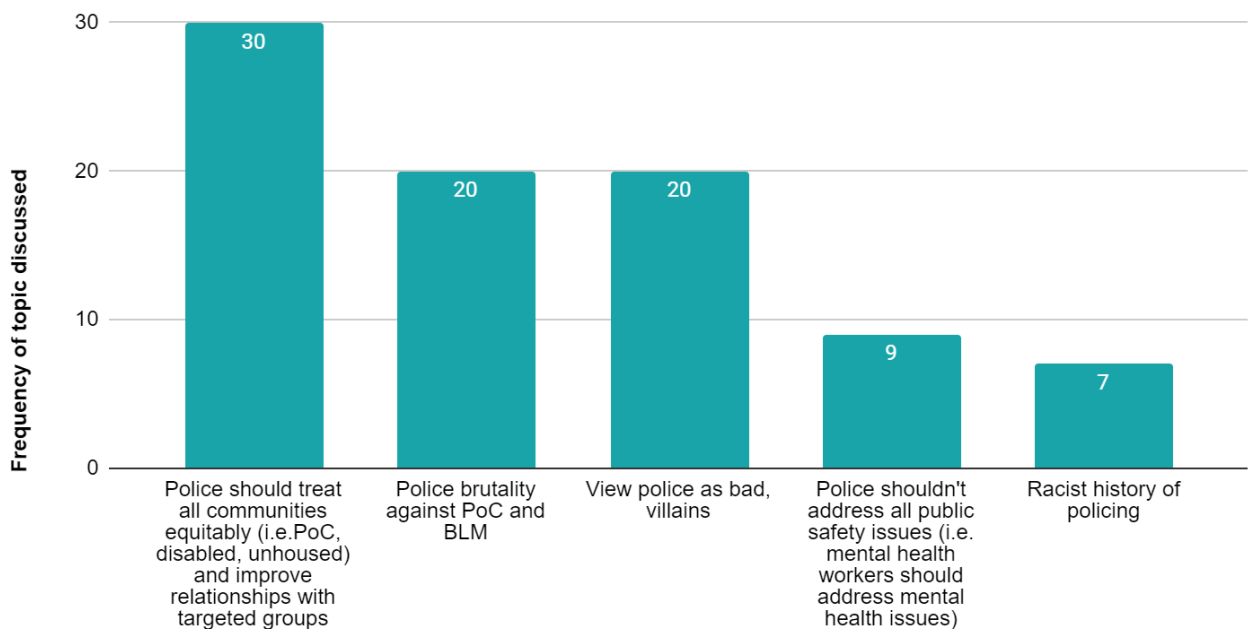
The TGTHR youth had highly informed understandings of systems of oppression, white supremacy, and how these ideas applied to their individual lives. As some youth shared that they believe there can be a positive interaction with police, others shared personal stories of difficult and traumatic interactions. Many participants shared stories of direct and consistently upsetting interactions with police and the incarceration system. The group spoke of a history of negative interactions with police and being profiled for being young and unhoused. The group shared that they have had experiences with law enforcement or witnessed others interactions and it was as if, “the cops were looking for reasons to get



them in trouble." Mental health was a primary concern for youth--they saw poor mental health as a risk for being arrested, jailed, or killed. The group named their somatic experience as feeling flushed in the body, having a rush of adrenaline with police presence, and experiencing an overall increase of anxiety. The following infographic represents what TGTHR residents desire in policing in Boulder:



Most frequently discussed topics amongst TGTHR young adults



Most frequently discussed topics by TGTHR youth

GUB's Engagements & Collaborations

EXPAND Parents

By the Numbers

- 20 parents of young people in the EXPAND program
- 1 EXPAND Program Coordinator
- 2 GUB staff
- 1.5 hours directly engaging parents

Engagement Description

March 2021

Virtual engagement

On March 10, 2021, GUB staff facilitated a 1.5 hour focus group for twenty parents of EXPAND participants to introduce them to, and collect their feedback on, the Boulder Police master plan. Parents responded to topics relating to safety, values, hopes, and concerns.

Summary of Findings

The majority of EXPAND parents expressed urgency for greater awareness, expertise, and training on behalf of the police force in order to interact more effectively with their children who experience developmental, physical, and communication disabilities. Parents further suggested that police officers develop expertise in anti-racism, anti-bias, and diversity and inclusion training. Just as important, however, parents felt that mental health practitioners, not police, have the expertise to interact most effectively with their children. They want the Boulder community to refine what roles police officers have in our city. Finally, programs and resources which bring police officers and the special needs communities together for relationship building, communication, and safety training were highly valued and desired. The following **values** inform the police master plan:

1. Safety from harm
2. Knowledgeable, caring police staff
3. Inclusive model
4. Positive relationships between community and police
5. Programs, resources, and systems that support their children and the special needs community

"I'd like to see the master plan focus on initiatives that create a city where we are all safe to pursue our lives and goals in harmony with one another. So in practice, I think that means figuring out what is an appropriate role for police, promoting anti-racism initiatives, and deliberately fostering inclusion."

—Parent of
EXPAND participant

Youth Equity Council (YEC), Boulder Valley School District (BVSD)

By the Numbers

- 66 youth (6th-12th grades, 31.3% Latino or Hispanic, 20.3% Black, 17.2% White, 15.6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 12.5% two or more races, and 3% Middle Eastern)
- 3 Youth Equity Council program leaders (2 PoC, 1 White)
- 3 hours engaging with youth

Engagement Description

February 2021

1 in-person engagement + 1 virtual engagement

Comprised of middle and high school students, Boulder Valley School District's (BVSD) Youth Equity Council (YEC) offers youth a group in which to address inequities that they experience and allows them to lead the work. Facilitators from the University of Colorado's (CU) Public Achievement Program joined BVSD staff to conduct leadership and youth activism training for YEC members.

The YEC/Public Achievement facilitators/educators presented an overview of the Boulder Police Master Planning process, the youth broke into groups, and they responded to questions about safety and policing. Students recorded their ideas on a Jamboard, then they discussed responses within their groups. The adult facilitators of the groups made the following observations:

Facilitator 1: It [this engagement] was especially meaningful, and at the same time difficult and made more relevant, given the killing of Daunte Wright yesterday. We had the students break into groups and many students reflected on how they can speak better to issues of police violence and policing outside of their community, and they didn't feel they knew as much about the actual roles of police in Boulder. Many acknowledged how they know their definition of safety is not everyone else's and they also wished police understood that reality as well.

I was really grateful for the chance to have this discussion with them today and it was meaningful for our council as a whole I think.

A second facilitator described the following:

There is one particular aspect of the breakout room conversation from this past Monday that continues to ring in my heart and mind this week that I feel is extremely important and will be key to reimagining safety throughout this master plan project over the next two years.

The youth were discussing the importance of building a mental health crisis team who are not police who can respond to mental health calls (similar to the program being piloted currently in Denver). One of our members continued to ask us, "How will that help with traffic stops?" As he talked about learning he can't be in a car with more than one other Black person or in a group of Black people in public, he kept coming back to the importance of talking about how

*we prevent police from murdering Black people at traffic stops. His words made me recall students I've worked with in the past who also have talked about police in Boulder County who've handcuffed their parents in front of them during traffic stops and shared not only their feelings of dehumanization, but also the clear sense of discrimination due to skin color and language, in addition to the fear of deportation. I feel like this young man in YEC knows exactly what a key change in our community safety must be and didn't quite have the words yet to say that **we do not need armed officers dealing with traffic stops and violations in our communities**. I want to make sure this message gets included in our initial round of the work from this past Monday.*

The same facilitator continued with this reflection from her own viewpoint:

*In this moment, as we all deal with this vicious cycle of a harmful policing system, I also think it is important that we talk about the possibilities of **new systems and not just reform**. I believe over the next two years we have the possibility of helping to push forward the national conversation on the need for new systems of public safety by paying particular attention to the need for not just reform, but new and different systems of safety locally in Boulder County.*

Summary of Findings

Middle and high school students from BVSD's YEC group were extremely engaged in the discussion of policing and safety in Boulder. They expressed a strong desire for equitable treatment by police of all groups, noting that this is not how Black and Brown people have been treated. This was both based on their understanding of the current situation in the US, and also, their personal experiences. They also recommended that police not be responsible for traffic stops or addressing mental health issues, as a way to both treat people humanely and also to reduce incidents of harm to community members.

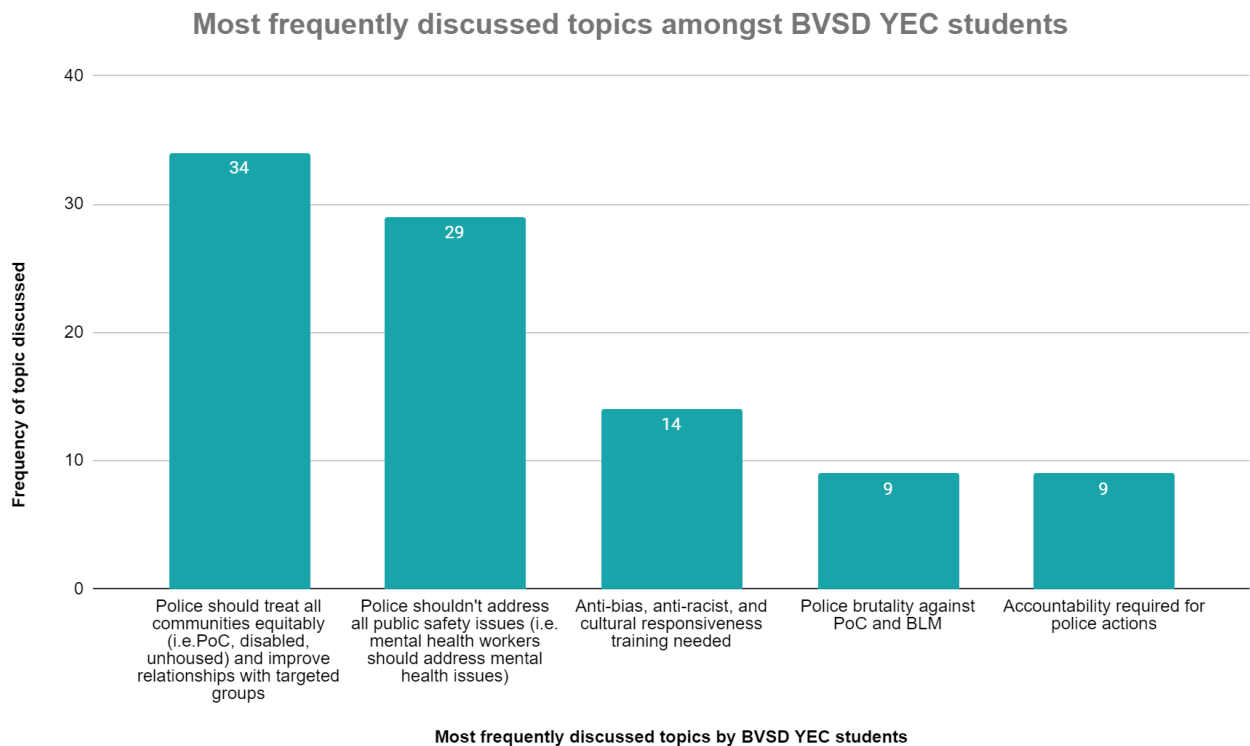
"I think that policing needs to start feeling more like a resource rather than a threat. As a teenager I often feel targeted by police officers who are trying to catch us doing something wrong rather than feeling like I can call the police for help when I am in need."

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

"I've noticed that police are most likely to be roaming communities of color instead of white communities, which doesn't make us feel safe. Instead, it makes us feel suffocated, because it's like they expect something wrong to happen. Police should still be looking out for problems, but everywhere (all communities) instead of focusing on certain communities only."

--Youth Equity Council participant, BVSD

The two following infographics represent the most frequently discussed topics and shared values expressed in the Youth Equity Council group:



Whittier International Elementary School

By the Numbers

- 20 students, ages 9-10 (40% PoC, 60% White)
- 1 4th grade teacher (1 White)
- 2 GUB staff (2 White)
- 16 hours engaging directly with youth



Students prepare for their Share Out event

Engagement Description

March - April 2021

8 Virtual engagements

Over a six-week period, 20 fourth grade students from Whittier International Elementary School and their teacher, Ms. Richards, collaborated with GUB staff to explore reimagine policing efforts in Boulder. Prior to engaging with GUB, students considered aspects of their identity and culture by writing “*I Am/ I Come From*” poetry. Engagement content included an introduction to the Boulder Police Master Plan, Safety is/Safety is Not Thinking Maps, City of Play Activity, Q & A session with Police Chief Herold, Values, Hopes, and Concerns Thinking Maps, Persuasive Essay Writing, and a student-led Share Out Event of ideas and recommendations.

Summary of Findings

“It seems like people have learned the wrong things about Black people. When slavery was happening, we didn’t really count Black people as people. Basically, I think a lot of people have kept that attitude in the back of their minds. Police have the power that normal citizens don’t have. When they carry those old ideas about Black people, things go wrong. We have seen this in the news over and over again. It even happens in Boulder.”

—4th grade student, Whittier International Elementary School

Ms. Richards’ class of nine and ten year olds exhibited a great deal of awareness regarding the Black Lives Matter movement and local and national discussions around the need for reform in policing. Students were deep thinkers and cared about issues that Americans across the age spectrum are discussing today. Due to their developmental stage of preadolescence, the children’s reflections were child-like *and* adult-like in nature. Students expressed the importance of community and family in their analysis of safety; they were adamant about including everyone. Their top three values, hopes, and concerns centered around safety, housing, and equity (in treatment and resources). Students were clear in their belief that people of color are being treated differently than white people and that this was a problem which needed to change. They left a lasting impression on their adult audiences when they voiced their hope that our community could create real change in policing for a better Boulder.

“This inquiry-based project inspired students to think critically, collaborate, problem-solve, and act. I loved involving students with community partners to collaboratively create something important for the benefit of our community. It gave more meaning to teaching and learning, and students learned that their voices are relevant to community initiatives and adult ears.”

--Teacher, Whittier International Elementary School

The engagement summaries below highlight the data collected; click on the (blue) hyperlink activity title to read more information about each activity. Links to additional data can be found in the [Appendix](#).

[I Am/ I Come From Poetry](#)

Students crafted “*I Am/ I Come From*” poetry, where they discussed topics such as identity, culture, and values. Beginning with this foundational work of “who they are” enabled students to address the subsequent and complex questions posed by the Police Master Plan. The lines below (one from each poem) remind us that children, just like the adults in our community, are unique, striving to live a happy life, and worthy of sharing their voices.

*I am from a house of wonder.
I come from magical mountains and beautiful Colorado.
I come from my happy place where I close my eyes and breathe in and out, in and out.
I come from being brave to read out loud to the class.
I come from a country called Mexico and a town called Rio de Medina.
I come from my challenging dyslexia and how to overcome it.
I come from Cactus on the trails and rain that goes up your car window.
I come from riding El Dragon in Mexico, a ride at the fair, making me dizzy and hungry
for Las Gringas, the best quesadillas in Mexico.*

[Safety is/Safety is Not and I Feel Safe When/I Don't Feel Safe When Thinking Maps](#)

Students created 4 whole-class “thinking maps” related to emotional, physical, personal, and community safety. A broad range of topics were identified, including some related to policing and others which are more general in nature.

[City as Play Activity](#)

Students built ideal communities with found objects and then thought about the role of policing in their ideal community. When discussing students’ thoughts and feelings around policing and police officers, most students expressed feeling nervous or scared when they see police officers. This led to deeper discussions where students asked questions such as why police carry weapons that are sometimes used to kill people and why police officers in general don’t look friendly.

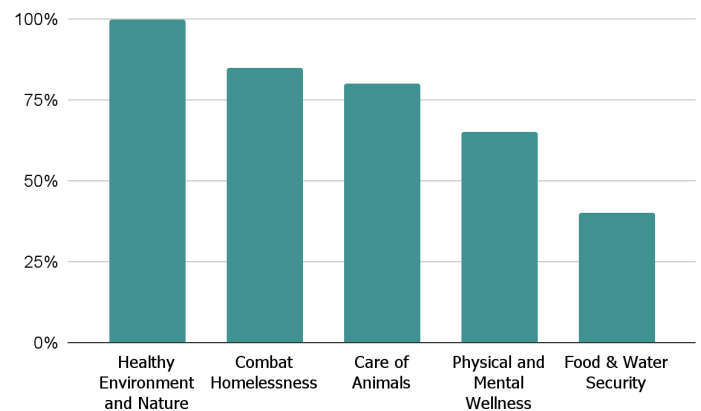


Q & A Session with Police Chief Herold

Police Chief Herold and other city staff members engaged in a 75 minute Q & A session where students asked a broad range of questions to understand the role of officers and policing issues. Questions ranged from “What does a typical day look like?” to “Do police officers have to carry guns and tasers? It scares us.”

Values, Hopes, and Concerns Thinking Maps

The bar graph displays the values (and frequency of those values) that students articulated when completing the “Values, Hopes, and Concerns” homework activity. A summary table describing their hopes and concerns can be found in the [Appendix](#).



Persuasive Essay Writing

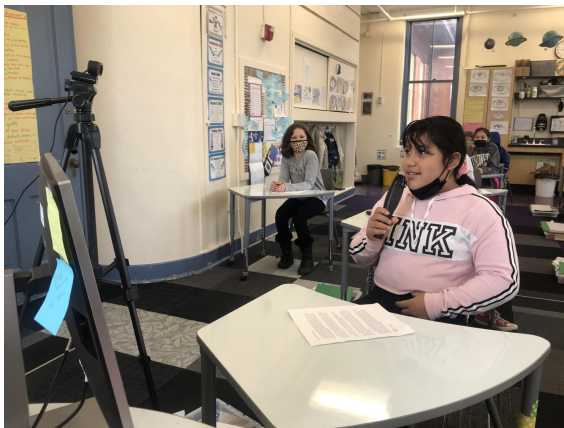
Prior to working with GUB, Whittier students were asked to write to a state government leader about any topic they were passionate or concerned about. After working with GUB, 8 out of 20 students were granted permission to write to Police Chief Herold on topics related to policing in Boulder. The table below represents the policing problems and solutions described in each student essay:

Policing Problems	Policing Solutions
Brown and Black people get blamed for crimes just because of the color of their skin	There should be more education about racism for police officers

People are scared of police officers	Police officers should be assigned to our neighborhoods (community policing)
Racism and unequal treatment	White people and people of color need to be treated the same
Unsafe community	The police department should get a crime sniffing dog
Police bias against people of color Innocent people are wrongly accused or mistreated	There should be more education about racism in the police department
We don't know who our police officers are and they don't know us	There should be a lot more neighborhood policing
Racial discrimination in policing	Police should get more training about racism
Police should stop being racist towards folks of color Stop judging people by the color of their skin Black and latino people of color are getting hurt or killed by police	Change immigration rules so that moms and dads are not arrested and deported Have conversations with the police to stop judging people by their skin color Latinos should be able to cross the American border without having to worry about their safety Colored persons should have better rights to feel safe in their community

"I wouldn't be sad if I was Black because I would love myself no matter what...but I don't understand why others are racist to Black people. Who made that up?"

--4th grader, Whittier International Elementary School



4th grade students present to city staff during their Share Out event.

Boulder Journey School

By the Numbers

- 12 adults (10 teachers and 2 parents discussing the topic of policing in Boulder; all White)
- 1.5 hours dialoguing with master plan material

Engagement Description

Spring 2021

In-house discussion

About Boulder Journey School

Boulder Journey School is a private school that welcomes over 200 children and their families. Students range in age from 8 weeks to 6 years. The school is open 10 hours a day, 5 days a week, 12 months a year.

Approach to Engagement

Given the seriousness of the subject matter, Boulder Journey School teachers and parents engaged in self-reflection around the potential participation in this project with Growing Up Boulder. They asked themselves relevant questions, such as:

- Who was facilitating the project and to whom the feedback was going to be presented?
- Do they have BIPOC voices informing the work? and
- Is it responsible for us to be a part of police reforming ourselves, knowing that reform has rarely worked when implemented by police?

Boulder Journey School also noted that most children in their community likely don't have a lot of experience with policing or in the way it needs to be reformed and wondered if they were the right community to be a part of this project.

In considering their community, BJS talked about facilitating conversations around "safety" as a point of reference for this project, rather than focusing on the "system of policing." They reminded themselves of how important it is for the voices of young children to be represented and how their imagination and creativity were at the forefront of an abolitionist movement.

They wrote:

We considered the timeliness of this conversation surrounding the safety of our communities. The Boulder Journey School [ABAR] group has been guided by solidarity with the BIPOC community surrounding the murder of George Floyd, and this discussion was taking place just days after accountability was placed upon a police officer, while yet more black citizens were being killed by police in this country.

Considering our community, we talked about facilitating conversations around safety as a point of reference for this project, rather than focusing on the system of policing. We gathered ideas about how to work with other educators and children in ECE programs around Boulder, who could help inform this project, providing more voices and perspectives on this topic.

As a group we agreed that we would move forward with the intention of calling ourselves and others in our community to action by asking adults to facilitate and observe children through the lens of these questions posed by GUB:

- Safety--what does this mean to us? What's safe and not safe? Consider physical safety and emotional safety. What does safety feel like? What does it feel like when we're not safe? Where do we feel it? Lived experiences play into this theme and lived experiences vary greatly in every community. ie. What feelings come up for you when you see a police officer in your neighborhood?

As our discussion unfolded we came up with some questions and thoughts of our own to help facilitate our work:

- How do we ask these questions when working with children who are young and nonverbal? Ask parents of young children what they see as safety for their children? Observe what makes children feel uneasy, what strategies are effective for comfort? Do the youngest look to other adults for safety/protection? Does that look like community in a way? How does trust play a role in safety? Can we consider safety in other forms... other languages... When does safety take the form of love? Of help?

As a group, Boulder Journey school agreed that they would move forward with the intention of calling themselves and others in their community (other teachers and parents) to action by asking adults to facilitate and observe children through the lens of safety.

They concluded by inviting their larger community of parents and teachers to engage in this discussion: "Consider taking notes (or videos) as you observe your child engaging in experiences that relate to these questions and share them with the Boulder Journey School group."

Conclusion

What young people said

On the homepage of the website for Boulder Police Department Master Plan or Reimagining Policing project, the City of Boulder states: “Words and dialogue are not enough. It is time for change through action. Partner with us to reimagine policing.” **Boulder’s young people (and parents of youth with disabilities) agree with the City of Boulder’s statement: they want real change!**

During spring of 2021, 119 children, youth, and young adults (plus 20 parents of EXPAND youth participants and 2 parents at Boulder Journey School) in Boulder, CO deeply explored their values, hopes, concerns, and recommendations around safety and policing in Boulder. Across the age spectrum, they expressed that safety looks like “the ability to be your authentic self, in any space, without fearing for your emotional or physical safety.” For many, family and community represented safety. For some, police represented safety. But for the vast majority of young people from targeted identities, policing did not equate with safety; in fact, policing felt like a threat. Those who were in any way “different” from the dominant population--due to mental illness, immigration status, Black or Brown skin, cognitive disability, gender identity, or being unhoused--felt fearful, angry, and disillusioned with policing in Boulder. They were skeptical that the adults in positions of power would implement the changes they professed to seek through the “Reimagining Policing” process. In the case that the adult decision-makers should enact change, our engagement groups offered numerous recommendations, including a safety system that includes mental health workers, investment in community needs (such as culture, housing, and mental health), less police access to and use of lethal force, police who partner with the community instead of punishing them, and a police force well-trained in the areas of racial bias, disability, cultural differences, and homelessness.

Because the topic of safety and policing in the United States is so complex, and because our engagement used unique approaches, we have broken down the rest of our reflections into the following sections: 1) reflections on the engagement process, 2) reflections on young people’s feedback, 3) how institutional racism affects our young people, and 4) next steps: opportunities for success.

Reflections on GUB/MMH Engagement Process

- **Build in equity from the beginning.** The GUB/MMH team embraces the sentiment: “those closest to the problem are those closest to the solution.” Partnering with historically and currently targeted groups was intentional, and centering their perspective and experience provided profound feedback.
- **Include conversations about race and the intersection of identities.** Start as early and as often as possible, returning to the way that systems of oppression impact our experiences of the world.
- **Create brave spaces by starting with respect and maintaining integrity.** The GUB/MMH team led with respect and sought to create brave spaces in which to have courageous conversations. As a result, youth shared highly personal ideas, emotions and authentic

feedback about policing and safety. GUB/MMH returned to the young people with our draft report to ensure that we represented their words correctly and revised it accordingly.

- **Employ culturally grounded and healing practices.** Healing-centered, trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically relevant practices, and a variety of learning and engagement methods demonstrated an inclusive and accessible way of engaging diverse groups and young people.
- **Honor individuals and groups.** GUB/MMH staff values learning the unique group dynamics for each engagement group and then personalizing engagements accordingly to make them as meaningful and successful as possible. We plan with partners in a way that honors each group, and we regard young people as equals and experts of their own lived experience.

Reflections on young people's feedback

- **Moving from institutional punishment to restorative practices.** “See the person, not the crime.” During our engagements, young people repeatedly reminded us of how we can shift our dominant narrative and culture in order to witness each other as in relationship with each other rather than separate from ourselves. There is a call from youth for people in positions of power to invest in the healing of someone who created harm and center them and their needs instead of responding with punishment. Young people and their facilitators discussed how Indigenous peoples have used restorative practices instead of detentions and incarceration to support one's healing and reintegrate them into the community.

How institutional racism affected our young people

Even at a young age, our young people were keenly aware of institutional racism and oppression. The consequences of systems of oppression have affected our young people in the following ways:

- **The impact of racialized culture on mental and physical health.** Youth of color in our engagements shared a spectrum of strong somatic responses and negative mental health experiences when exploring safety and policing, much of which indicated high levels of stress and fear at an early age. The field of public health has documented that when people are racialized¹⁰, people of oppressed races experience worse health outcomes over their lifetime due to toxic stress. Our youth experienced varying degrees of distress and trauma, depending upon their levels of power, privilege and oppressions in our society.
- **Individual experiences connected to the history of institutional racism.** Institutions have played a key role in the creation and perpetuation of structural racism; it is historically documented that policing was built upon a foundation of white supremacy and policing of runaway slaves¹¹. Using a cultural humility framework¹² allowed us to examine how and why these institutions [such as policing] were created and the historical and modern implications of those systems. When young people in our engagement groups shared their fear of being harmed by the police due to their race, culture, or other identifying characteristics, we were

¹⁰ “Racialize” means to make racial in tone or character OR to categorize or divide according to race.

¹¹ This historical fact has been documented by multiple sources; here is a popular media article about it. [Black Lives Matters: Police departments have long history of racism](#)

¹² The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines cultural humility as “a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities.” [3 Things to Know: Cultural Humility | Hogg Foundation](#)

able to help them connect their individual experiences to institutional systems. In all groups, our young people demanded that institutions dismantle racist structures and create systems that promote equity, dignity, and justice.

- **School to prison pipeline.** Young people have wisdom and knowledge about who is targeted, both in school and by police, and what this means for their own identity formation¹³. In response, facilitators helped youth understand how they are already internalizing racist ideologies, either about themselves or about others¹⁴. For example, during the engagement with the ELLOS Program, the group of all Latinx/Brown young men described repeatedly feeling racially profiled in school and by police for their Brown skin and ethnic names. They recognized that these two identities set them up with a disadvantage with authority due to implicit bias and racism. Based on what youth shared, we were able to help young people question these narratives and offer the opportunity to disrupt the link of school punishment and incarceration through an anti-racist approach.

Next steps: opportunities for success

- **Accountability of decision-makers to young people:** Just as our young people demand accountability in the policing system, they demand accountability around what will happen with their input from us, the adult decision-makers. Young people, plenty of whom have previously been let down by adults in positions of power in their lives, are skeptical about whether their ideas will be taken seriously and whether change will really happen. Whether all, some, or none of the young people's ideas are implemented, we adults have a responsibility to dialogue with the young people about why their ideas were or weren't implemented. Their *future* civic engagement depends upon our transparency, deep listening, and action *now*.
- **Help our young people take action:** Multiple groups of youth requested the opportunity to share their ideas with other youth and the larger community. Suggested methods for action included creating a performance (dance, spoken word, other), designing and painting a mural, and hosting a youth summit about Reimagining Policing. We do not currently have the funding to do this, so if you or your organization is interested in supporting such a project, please contact GUB/MMH at info@growingupboulder.org.
- **Representation matters:** In the tender time of young people's identity formation, it is essential that they witness positive and safe representation of their own identities and feel valued and celebrated within the larger community. Youth shared feeling safe when around their community, hearing their language, music and traditions. There is a request to increase opportunities for community safety through the arts and culture as well as PoC in leadership and policy making positions within Boulder County.

Growing Up Boulder, MAYAMOTION Healing, and the young people (and parents) represented in this report appreciate the time and dedication that you, the reader, have taken to consider the findings in this report. Children, youth, young adults, and parents told us that they value kindness, compassion, and respect for all identities. They hope for less police bias, less fear of police, and more systemic

¹³ [Identity formation or development](#) is the complex process by which people come to develop a sense and understanding of themselves within the context of cultural demands and social norms.

¹⁴ [Oxford Clinical Psychology - Racial Disproportionality in the School-to-Prison Pipeline](#)

change. Finally, the authors of this report hope to keep “Reimagining Policing” in impactful ways throughout this master planning process with our young people and our City in Boulder, CO.

Partners and Appreciation

GUB/MMH would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our project partners who generously gave their time to make these engagements possible, especially the children, youth, young adults, and parents with whom we worked. We wish to express our gratitude to our young people who gave of themselves so freely in this work. They took on charged topics and made themselves vulnerable. Thank you to each one of you!

- Boulder Journey School Community
 - Vicki Olsen, School Director
 - Teachers
 - Parents
- Boulder Valley School District
 - Leadership Team
 - Samantha Messier, Assistant Superintendent, Strategic Partnerships and Academic Supports
 - Whittier Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District
 - Liz Richards, 4th grade teacher
 - Sarah Oswick, Principal
 - 4th grade students
 - Youth Equity Council (YEC) Staff
 - Amy Nelson, Coordinator Equity and Partnerships, Southwest Network, and YEC staff
 - YEC students
- Boulder Police Department Staff
 - Carey Weinheimer, Deputy Chief Operations
 - Maris Herold, Chief of Police
- City of Boulder Staff
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 - Sarah Huntley, Community Engagement Manager
 - Aimee Kane, Racial Equity Program Manager
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- GENERATIONS

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- TGTHR (formerly Attention Homes)
 - Megan Bruce, Housing Program Manager
 - Elly Johnson, Director of Programs
 - Cidnee Ray, Transition Specialist
- University of Colorado, Boulder
 - Charla Agnoletti, Director of Public Achievement, CU Engage, School of Education
 - Soraya Latiff, Public Achievement Assistant Director, CU Engage, School of Education

Appendix

Sample engagement materials and other additional data concerning GUB/MMH's approach, are included below. If you would like additional information or if you have any questions, please email us at info@growingupboulder.org & info@mayamotionhealing.com.

Resources: alternate models to traditional policing

- [Ithaca, NY's Department of Community Solutions and Public Safety](#)
- [Eugene, OR's Reimagining Public Safety: CAHOOTS program](#)
- [Denver, CO's Support Team Assisted Response \(STAR\) program](#)
- [Center for Policing Equity](#)

Resources about the MMH model

- [Healing Centered Engagement](#)
- [Outline of engagement structure for "Reimagining Policing"](#)
- [MAYAMOTION Healing Services](#):
 - Individual and Family Therapy
 - Community Engagement & Movement Building
 - Consulting
 - Cultural grounded mental health and somatic programming & resources

Disrupting School to Prison Pipeline

- [MILPA](#)
- [Padres & Jóvenes Unidos](#)
- [Dignity in Schools](#)
- [Willful Defiance](#)

[Boulder Police Oversight Panel](#)

[Boulder's Racial Equity Plan](#)

Engagement Groups

- [BVSD's Black Student Alliance](#)
 - [Jamboard](#)
- [BVSD Youth Equity Council Jamboard](#) (Safety Is/Is Not, Values, Hopes, Concerns, Other)
- Whittier International Elementary School Sample Engagement Materials:
 - [City as Play](#)
 - [I Am/ I Come From Poetry](#)
 - [Safety Thinking Map](#) (whole class map)
 - [Q & A Session](#) (questions and answers)
 - [Value, Hopes, and Concerns Thinking Map](#) (individual student maps)
 - [Persuasive Essays](#)

- ELLOS/GENERATIONS
 - Jamboard
- EXPAND Parents
- I Have a Dream Foundation Youth Council
 - Jamboard
- TGTHR Resident Association
 - Jamboard

Safety Data (All Groups)

Values, Hopes, Concerns, Roles, Appreciation, Feelings, & Recs (All groups)