

# "Empowering Children to Change the World"

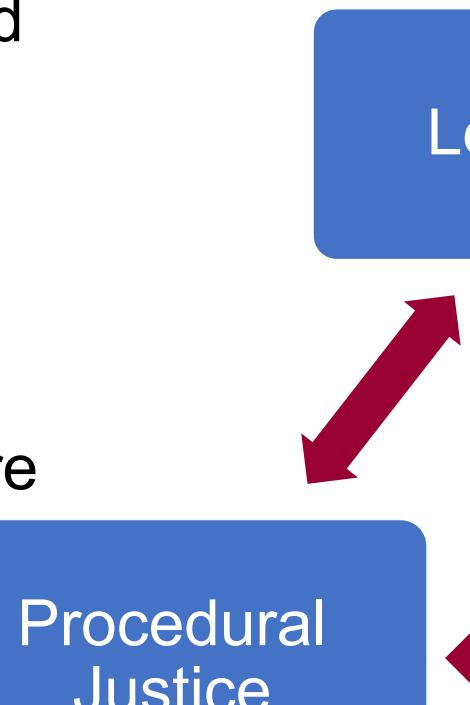
## A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Improving Police-Community Relations

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### INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of law enforcement are critically important for increasing compliance and fighting crime

- Police who treat the public with respect, dignity and fairness foster positive perceptions of law enforcement<sup>1,2</sup>
- People who view the police as legitimate are more likely to voluntarily follow the law<sup>1,3</sup>
- Positive perceptions of the police are linked to more public cooperation such (e.g. reporting crime)<sup>4</sup>



Attitudes and beliefs about police begin to form during childhood<sup>5</sup>

The way children perceive police may set the tone for how they view and interact with police during adulthood<sup>6,7</sup>

Young people tend to hold less favorable views towards law enforcement<sup>8,9</sup>

Determining if early perceptions of law enforcement can be changed is critically important

Negative interactions tend to have more of an impact in shaping perceptions which means increasing positive interactions should be crucial in shaping these perceptions<sup>10,11</sup>

### CURRENT FOCUS

Repeated prosocial exposure to police may foster positive perceptions of law enforcement<sup>12</sup>

The current study explores the impact of juveniles' contact within a structured, in-school setting on their perceptions of law enforcement

### TEAM KIDS 501(c)(3)

**MISSION STATEMENT:**  
To empower our kids to change the world

- TKC brings first responders and Team Kids Coaches into elementary schools
- Kids select a charity to support and work with law enforcement throughout the challenge
- TKC Leadership Team (LT) plans a carnival
- Carnival proceeds go to the charity

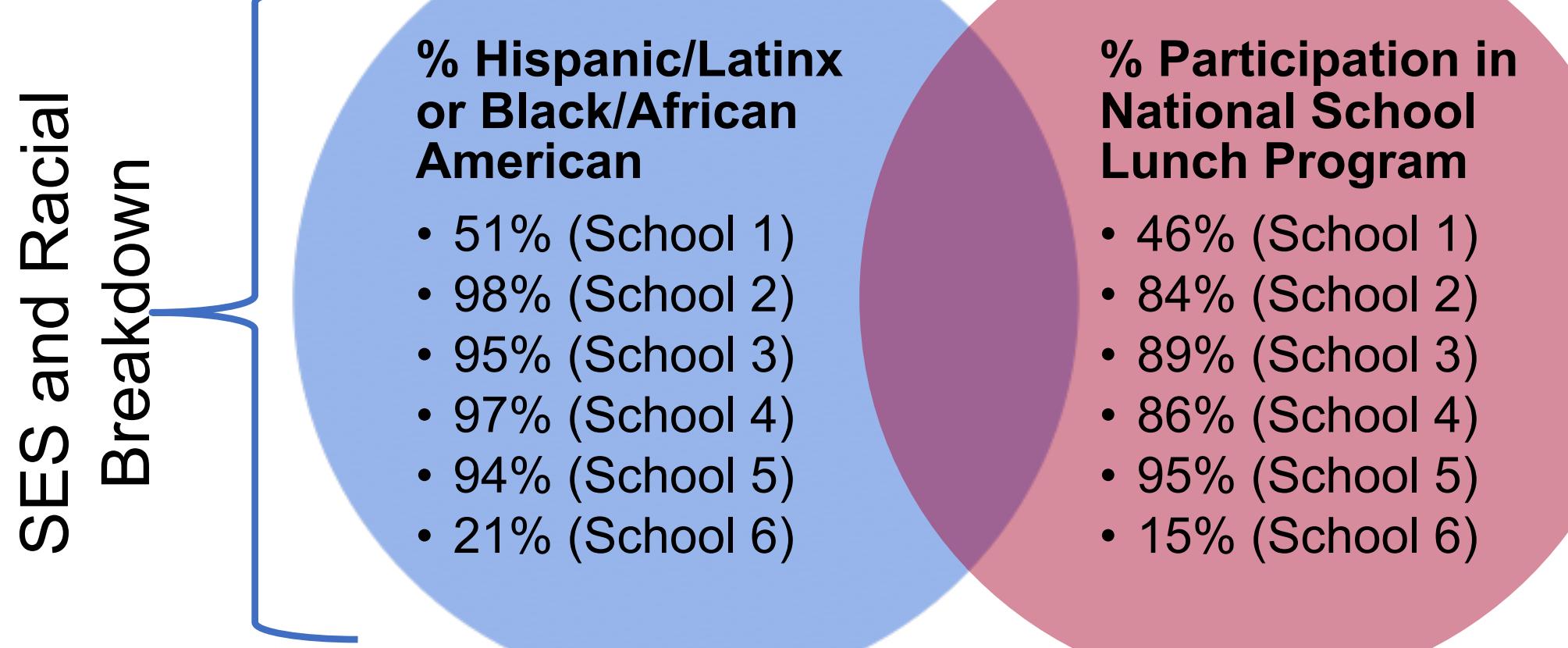
### TEAM KIDS CHALLENGE

School-wide assembly

Four weekly, school-wide "Challenges" to benefit student-chosen charity

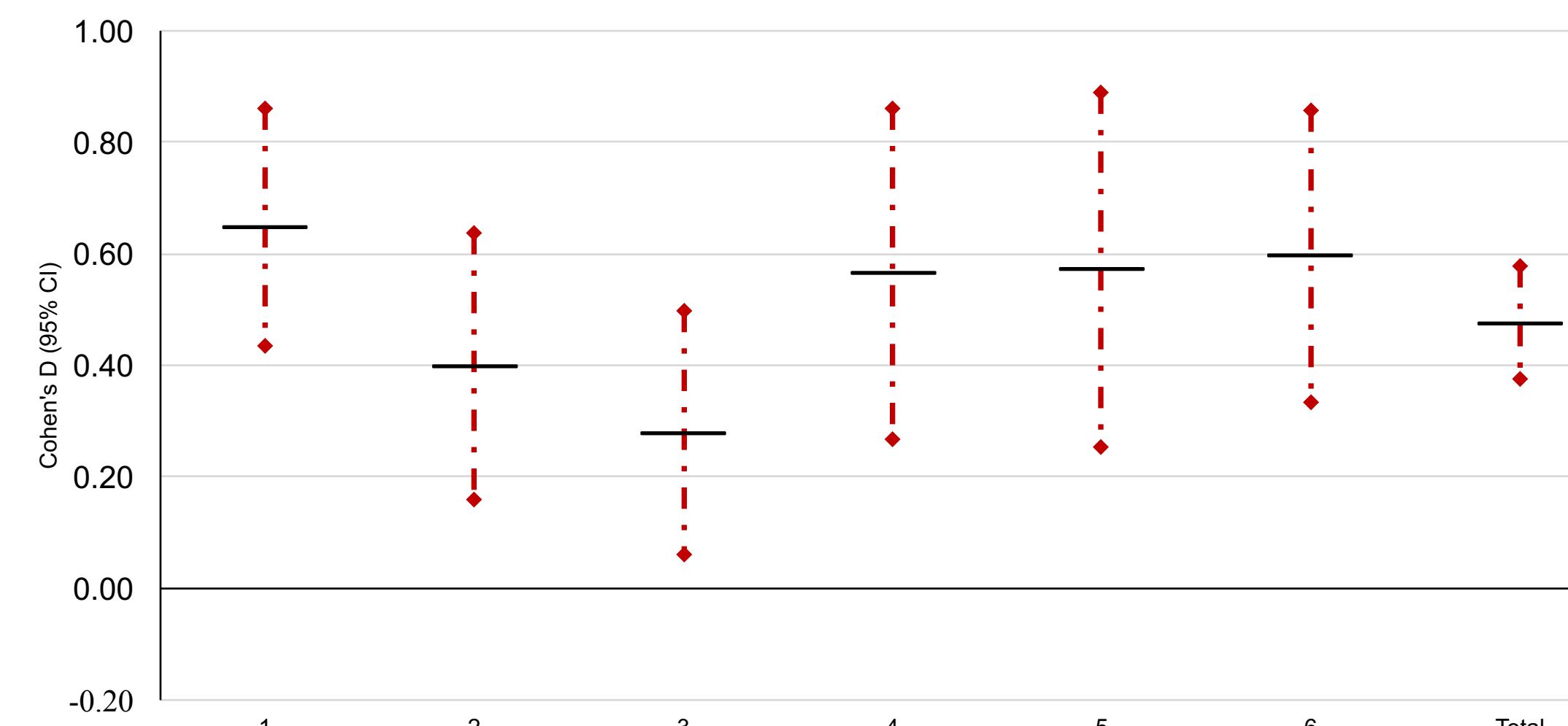
School-wide carnival

### YOUTH SAMPLE

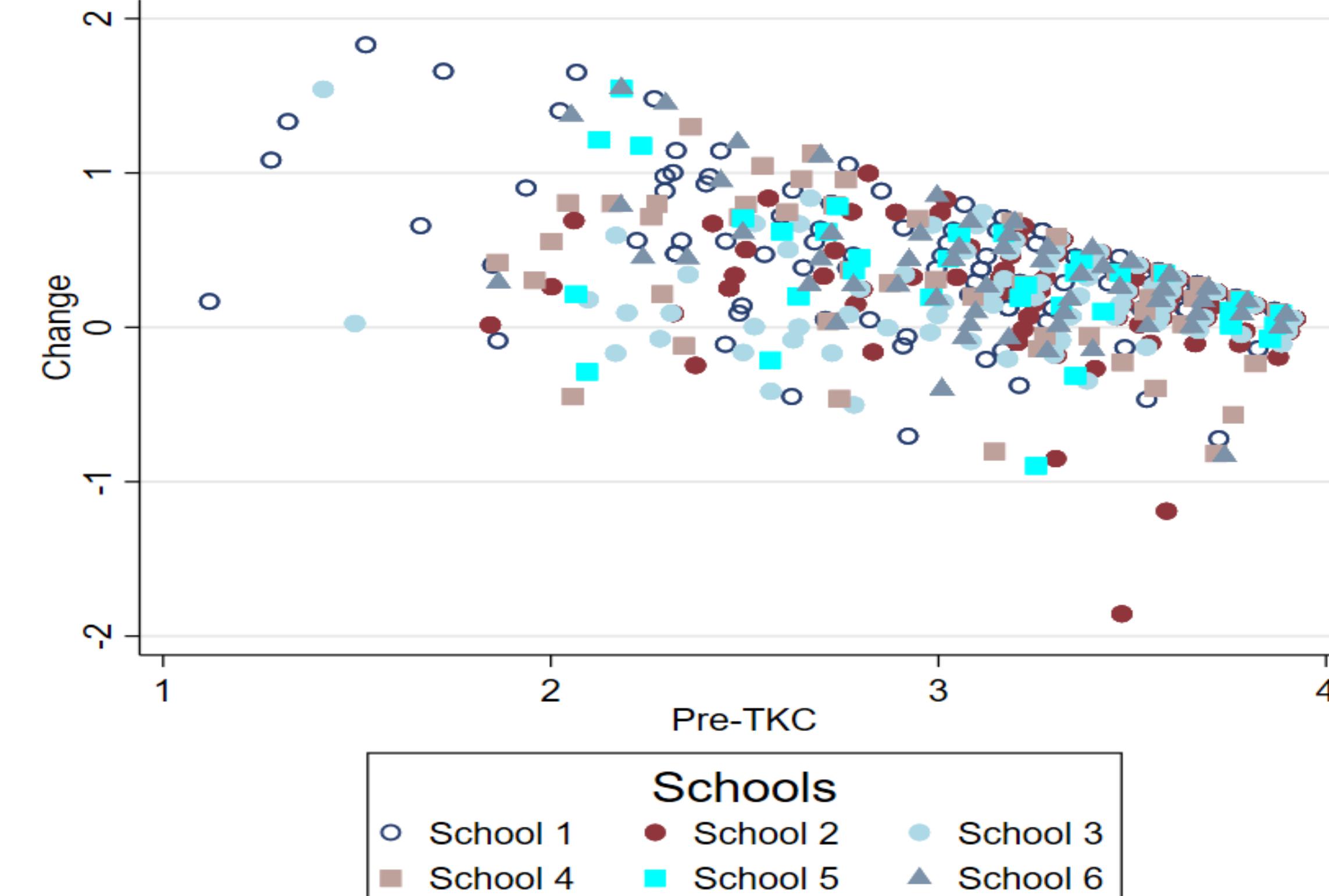


### YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

#### Effect Sizes of Change in Perceptions by School



#### Individual Change in Perceptions



- First Responder Greg\*
- "TK has helped police officers take a different approach. [It] was like a kicker. The program pushed me way ahead in how I think about working with young kids."
- First Responder Larry\*
- "I think Team Kids gave us a way to relate to the kids that **humanizes** us a little bit...and that coincides with our mission to build relationships with the public...It breaks down the walls between us versus them."
- First Responder Burt\*
- "I was impressed when they were voting on where the money should go. They were the ones bringing up the environment, homelessness, and so on. It's pretty powerful, to see that. It's intense."

\*Pseudonyms to ensure anonymity

### RESULTS

#### Youth Sample

- 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Predominantly racial/ethnic minority
- 990 pre/post surveys
- TKC 2016-2018
- L.A. County & Brooklyn, NY

#### First Responder Sample

- Voluntary participation
- 7 pre/post surveys
- 8 in-person interviews
- TKC 2016-2018
- L.A. County & Brooklyn, N.Y.

### DISCUSSION

Schools with higher percentage of students living in poverty and students who are Hispanic/Latinx or Black/African American had worse perceptions of the police

Participation in the Team Kids Challenge

More positive perceptions of law enforcement

First responder participation in TKC resulted in increased job satisfaction and perceptions of the community

#### Youth

Perceptions of police can be changed at young ages, prior to the beginning of the age-crime curve and even in youth from areas with marked history of poor police-community relations

Youth should be provided a voice in decision-making because the effects were stronger when youth felt more involved

#### First Responders

First responders actively want to participate in TKC  
Humanizes and demystifies first responders  
Builds relationships between first responders and the community  
Provides youth with a role model

#### Policy Implications

- Bringing first responders into schools to work collaboratively with youth improves police-community relations
- Youths' perceptions of police officers are still malleable, and as such, procedural justice researchers should be focusing on this age group

#### Research Implications

#### Implications for Policing

- How police officers interact with children matters because it has the potential to influence future compliance with the law and cooperation with the police

#### Strengths of the Study

Large cohort of 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> graders

Predominately Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African American

Significant when examining all data, only matched data, & within each school

### CONCLUSION

Positive encounters might be able to *improve* youths' perceptions of law enforcement

Positive encounters might be able to *improve* law enforcement perceptions of youth

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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