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Experiences of Law Enforcement Officers in an Emotional and Belief Intelligence Leadership Training: A Consensual Qualitative Report

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence-based leadership training may be beneficial for law enforcement in their personal and professional development. The goal of this study was to qualitatively explore the experiences participants reported as a result of the My Life My Power (MLMP) Tactical Leadership Training (TLT). The MLMP TLT is designed to incorporate emotional-intelligence and belief-intelligence constructs into training delivery of law enforcement professionals with the goal of increasing positive outcomes for law enforcement and the communities they serve. The researchers conducted interviews with seven participants who had completed the MLMP training as part of their professional development. The researchers coded emerging themes from the interviews, including experience-oriented themes and outcome-oriented themes. Evaluation of the MLMP program is provided based on participants' responses. The researchers offer implications for professional development programming for law enforcement working with students and juveniles in community and school settings.

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Effective professional development programs are vital for the preparation of human service professionals. When equipped with relevant knowledge, experiences, and skills, professionals' work is enhanced, and their community benefits. Professional development programs designed to impact professionals' work with youth require close evaluation of process and outcome because of their potentially far-reaching effects. As education and the world of work continue to evolve, it is necessary to examine the effectiveness of existing programs. One such program is the My Life My Power (MLMP) Tactical Leadership Training (TLT). The program prepares educators and law enforcement officers with interpersonal skills to be effective mentors within the communities they serve. TLT also helps prepare participants to deliver the GPS for SUCCESS Program (Authors, 2022; GPS for Success, 2021; Spargo, Mullen, Gutierrez, & Kramer, 2021), a school-based drug prevention program with a focus on life skill promotion.

Both MLMP and the GPS for Success Program emphasize social-emotional learning, including emotional intelligence and personal growth initiative.

Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence (EI), has evolved over time through the development of various models (Ackley, 2016; Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI is an aspect of social intelligence, defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this thinking to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189). EI requires both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills; one must be able to identify, express, and regulate emotions internally while also navigating this process in relationship with others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Grounded in positive psychology, EI bridges cognitive and affective domains, encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 2001). Through these domains, emotionally intelligent individuals navigate social and emotional environments with competence. Subsequently, individuals utilize emotion-based information to plan with flexibility, think creatively, redirect attention, and motivate themselves toward action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The process and factors of EI are relevant for individuals across phases of development, personal and professional settings, and career domains. Scholars have identified EI as a predictor of well-being for adolescents, adults, and older adults (Guerra-Bustamante, León-del-Barco, Yuste-Tosina, López-Ramos, & Mendo-Lázaro, 2019; Rey, Extremera, & Sánchez-Álvarez, 2019). EI is related to effective problem-solving and is closely related to empathy, resilience, and the management of stress (Romosiou, Brouzos, & Vassilopoulos, 2018). In professional settings, EI is linked with job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and increased positive affect (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). Therefore, the implementation of EI in professional training may strengthen individuals’ social competence and enhance interactions within the workplace (Kunannat, 2004). Kunannat (2004) described social competence as “the ability of a person to discern the emotional world of others by using [their] interpersonal skills (such as leadership, assertiveness, and communication) to produce socially desirable and productive outcomes” (p. 492). For individuals in leadership roles, EI is critical for leadership effectiveness (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Leaders with strong EI are motivationally influential for the individuals with whom they serve (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Intentionally incorporating EI into professional development creates optimal benefits for professionals, in addition to their workplace environment, their colleagues, and the individuals they serve.

Emotional Intelligence and Professional Development

EI contributes to enhanced social connections in personal and professional settings (Olawoyin, 2018), and growing research provides evidence to support the benefits of EI in professional training programs (Schutte, Malouff, & Thorsteinsson, 2013; Teding van Berkhout & Malouff, 2016). In a study of police officers in northwestern Greece,

Romosiou et al. (2018) investigated the impact of an intervention grounded in EI; they examined the short and long-term effects of the intervention on police officers' EI, empathy, resilience, and stress-management. In groups, the police officers engaged in experiential activities, processing, and skill-building. Activities included elements of mindfulness, values exploration, and communication skills practice (Romosiou et al., 2018). Immediately following the intervention, police officers completed self-report scales assessing EI, perceived stress, interpersonal reactivity, and resilience. Two years after completion of the intervention, Romosiou et al. (2018) invited participants to share their reflections in an open-ended format regarding the impact of the training. Findings from the study were positive: police officers who engaged in the intervention reported improved EI, empathy, resilience, and stress management immediately following their participation (Romosiou et al., 2018). At the two-year follow-up, police officers continued to report the benefits of the training on their daily work and service (Romosiou et al., 2018).

An Emotional and Belief Intelligence Leadership Training

MLMP created TLT to prepare participants to be effective problem-solvers and leaders through enhanced understanding of their emotions and. TLT occurs in-person or online and lasts one to two days. Participants engage in experiential activities, role plays, and active discussion based on an Emotional Quotient (EQ) based curriculum created by MLMP. EQ is a common measure of EI (Bar-On, 1997). TLT is offered as a general training to support attendees in many facets of their work and is an optional precursor to delivering MLMP's GPS for Success program (Authors, 2022; Spargo et al., 2021). TLT participants can include law enforcement, educators, military, and public health and safety workers. The training experiences are designed to create a shift in participants' emotional reflexivity, increase self-awareness, resilience, and deeper understandings of and relationships with their communities. At the time of this article, no literature evaluates the outcomes of TLT or the experiences of participants.

Purpose of the Current Study

In the current study, we conducted a Consensual Qualitative Research Design (CQR; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997, Hill et al., 2005) to explore the TLT from the perspective of participants who completed the program. CQR is a methodology known for its systematic process, rigor, and trustworthiness. The TLT is a new program for which we sought to understand how attendees experienced the program and their reported outcomes of it. Through investigating the participants' experience completing the training, we can evaluate the methods of change occurring and identify the perceived benefits of the training. The research questions guiding this study include:

1. What are the experiences of individuals who participated in MLMP's TLT?
2. What are the perceived outcomes for individuals who participated in MLMP's TLT?

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through purposeful criterion sampling and included individuals who had completed the training within 12 months prior to study to determine the potential long-term effects the TLT had on the participants. We included a 12-month timeline because it provided us with the opportunity to recruit officers from multiple cohorts and subsequently to develop a richer understanding of the training, regardless of when the participant completed the training. We explored descriptions of participants' experiences in the program through a CQR approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hill et al., 1997, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). Thus, sample size was dependent upon reaching saturation of themes, indicated by a redundancy of findings in response to our research questions (Wertz, 2005). We achieved saturation of themes upon interviews with seven participants. Ages of the participants ranged from 27 to 63 years old ($M = 44.29$); six identified as male and one as female. All participants identified as white and held positions, administrative or community-based, as officers within law enforcement agencies (e.g. community law enforcement officer, school resource officers).

Procedure

Prior to the start of the study, we received approval from the Institutional Review Board at our university. To answer our research questions, our team developed an interview protocol that asked questions about the experience of the training and the outcome; see Appendix for complete protocol. All interviews were completed via Zoom. The researchers recorded each call using the Zoom recording feature. At the conclusion of the interviews, voice recordings were stored on the researcher's secure computer. All voice recordings were transcribed using the Zoom transcription services and checked by research team members. Any identifiable information was removed from the data using false names.

Through the CQR methodology, the individual researchers surveyed the data before coming together to provide a consensus understanding. For this study, the first three authors engaged in the consensus process, intentionally remaining mindful of individual assumptions and biases. Consistent with the CQR analysis process, the research team followed three main steps: (a) identified domains, (b) created core ideas, and (c) conducted cross-analysis (Hill et al., 2005). Using the qualitative data management software Dedoose version 9.0.17 (2021), we identified domains, employed consensus coding with a sample of the transcripts (Hill, 2012), created abstracts for the domains, and coded the remaining transcripts with agreed upon domains. Following this process, authors one and two condensed participant words into summaries, or core ideas, with the intent of remaining as close to participants' words as possible. Authors one and two then examined each domain and examined for cross transcript themes. We engaged in cross analysis, reviewed by the team's internal auditor and developed a master list and summary of the frequency of codes.

Positionality

Due to the objectivity needed during the coding and consensus process, the authors discussed and reflected on their expectations and biases before and during analysis (Hill et al., 1997, 2005). The first, second, and fifth authors identified as White cisgender females, the third author as a White cisgender male, the fourth author as a Black cisgender female. The first author worked as an elementary school counselor for four years and a family clinician for one year; they described a minimal understanding of the police officer occupation, experience, and roles. As a result, the first author was intentional about examining their misunderstandings and biases related to their minimal awareness. The second author worked as a family clinician for one year, has worked with substance abuse clients for two years, and has experience working with correctional counselors in a jail setting. The second author had experience as a participant in state police programming; as a result, they described initial apprehension to working with police officers due to past experiences. The third author worked as a school counselor for two years in alternative education programs and has been working in counselor education as a faculty member and researcher for seven years. The fourth author had previous experience with school program development and described initial excitement and anxiety regarding the process due to their introduction to research. The fifth author had experience working with children and adolescents in various settings; as a novice researcher, she expressed excitement and anxiety about the process of research.

Results

Through the use of CQR methodology, the research team found 21 codes across the transcripts. Per recommendations from Hill et al. (2005), results are grouped according to frequency: general (Table 1), typical (Table 2), and variant (Table 3). The general category refers to codes that refer to all participants, or all but one; typical describes codes that were in all but two, three, or four of the interviews; and variant describes codes that were found in one or two of the interviews. Of the 21 codes, seven of the codes were found in every transcript. This section outlines the seven identified themes that were prevalent in the data across all participants: (a) beginner's mindset, (b) discomfort and vulnerability of experience, (c) emotional intelligence, (d) engaging experience, (e) interpersonal skills, (f) personal growth initiative, and (g) perspective building. The themes are separated into two categories: *experience-oriented themes* and *outcome-oriented themes*. These findings provide insight into the aspects of the MLMP training that most resonated with participants. It is important to note that participants in the study engaged in the TLT at various times and locations; each received the same curriculum of the training but did not necessarily engage in the training together. In our findings, we detail seven of the *general* themes identified across all participant interviews (Table 1). Tables 2 and 3 offer descriptions of typical and variant themes less prevalent across all participants.

Table 1. Frequency table of codes: general.

Code	Frequency	Abstract
Beginner's mindset	7	Participant expresses openness to learning and wiliness to learn new things despite previously held assumptions
Discomfort/ vulnerability	7	Participant's willingness to share and engage in unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable topics or activities
Emotional intelligence	7	Participant's ability to understand emotions from themselves and those around them
Engaging experience	7	The thoughts and reflections participants had regarding the White Belt Training, and the facilitators' ability to draw in the attention of participants
Interpersonal skills	7	Participants developing ways to work with students or others using effective strategies to interact and communicate
Personal growth initiative	7	A person's motivation and willingness to engage in activities that help develop and advance their understanding of self in pursuit of personal and professional development
Perspective building	7	Expansion of perspectives because of the experience
Common goal	6	Participants' articulation of a purpose and intent that is shared within the group
Instructor attunement	6	Perceived ability of the program instructors to understand and respond to the participants
Instructor competence	6	The perceived knowledge, skills, and competency of instructors as reported by participants
Openness to intimacy	6	Participants' willingness to take emotional risks or feeling/ expressing emotions during the training
Optimism about program	6	The viewpoint that the GPS for Success program is positive, effective, and a new approach for youth-based drug prevention
Relationship building	6	The facilitation of cohesion between participants by program facilitators
Transferable skills	6	The techniques or strategies program participants learn and apply in their work outside of the training

Experience-oriented Themes

To respond to our first research question, the research team asked specific questions about the participants' experiences *during* the TLT. Themes that emerged in every interview included: (a) beginner's mindset, (b) discomfort and vulnerability of the experience, and (c) engaging experience.

Beginner's Mindset

Each of the participants identified a main aspect of their TLT experience was that of *beginner's mindset*, or uncertainty, about the training experience. Typically, participants described the course as being something they had never experienced. The participants reported that the training challenged their expectations in both content and in delivery modalities. Participants indicated a level of surprise in reaction to the experience, at times restructuring previously-held expectations or judgments about the training. The following quote provides an example of the participants' experience giving merit to the theme:

And I really didn't know what to expect going in was, you know, I said, I was kinda, you know, my boss told me to put it together. I said, 'Okay, I'll do it', you know, but really didn't know what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised.

The concept of *beginner's mindset* was presented by participants as an elemental piece of the training, often fostering the opportunity for deeper, more meaningful learning.

Table 2. Frequency table of codes: typical.

Code	Frequency	Abstract
Increased confidence	5	Participant reports feeling more confident as a result of the training
Able to share learning	5	Participant describes wanting to share learning with colleagues
Mindfulness	4	Participant describes being aware of feelings in the moment and how they impact decision-making
Values conflict	4	The training was emphasizing values not typically found in the law enforcement profession
Thinking about thinking	3	Participant describes the training inviting them to self-reflect on their thought processes

Table 3. Frequency table of codes: variant.

Code	Frequency	Abstract
Refresher courses	1	Participant described wanting “refresher” courses
Venue	1	Participant described not enjoying the setting of the training

Beginner’s mindset was viewed as an antidote to initial resistance. Upon reflection on engagement, participants indicated that although initial resistance may be present for program participants, *beginner’s mindset* is ultimately accepted as a strength of the process that could transfer beyond the program experience. For example, the following quote from the study highlights this theme:

And the people that go into it open minded like that and you know I participated in several of these, I don’t know, five or six of these courses. Not as a facilitator, but generally we host it and I’ll go in and welcome the folks, and some of these people, the courses that do the best are the ones that are the most hardcore law enforcement, and educators, that look like they, you know, like they’d spit nails. And they act like they don’t want to be there, but within about a half an hour, maybe a little longer, couple, three hours, they’re, they’re highly motivated and participating. So, you know, just go in with an open mind and understand that this is another technique that we think another I guess it would be another, you know, another arrow in your, in your quiver to have a, you know, have something that, in your tool chest that maybe you never thought of.

Commonly, participants emphasized that engaging in the training without preconceptions led to increased benefits. For example, one participant asserted, “I think it’s one of those classes where you’re not going to benefit anything from it if you don’t have an open mind.” According to participants, embracing the *beginner’s mindset* and its resulting emotions enhanced the learning process during the TLT experience.

Discomfort/Vulnerability of the Experience

Similar to experiencing uncertainty around the training experience, participants expressed that a key aspect of the training was the element of *discomfort* or *vulnerability*. *Discomfort* and *vulnerability* appeared as a willingness to share and engage in unfamiliar topics or activities. The process of engaging in unfamiliarity was often described by participants as new territory for them, involving moving outside of their comfort zones. This theme is articulated in the following participant quote:

I guess you say like, uncomfortable sometimes because some of the questions that you had to ask someone that you don't know- which is, which, which was fine; it was just like getting you outside the, outside your comfort zone to really explore like what's kind of out there.

Participants reported the discomfort was an important piece of their learning process. One individual noted, "There were some moments when you had to talk about uncomfortable things. You're not going to move forward in the class unless you do it." Despite the discomfort, participants identified their experiences of *vulnerability* as valuable. Participants indicated *vulnerability* was valuable (a) to their experiences and growth within the training, and (b) in the application of *vulnerability* in their future work with others. An example of this theme is visible in the following participant quote:

This is not one of those classes where you can go and hide. They're gonna encourage you to get out there and really that's necessary if you're going to be a mentor, because you're going to have students and you're going to have people that don't want to talk. So you need to be able to figure out how to get yourself out of that.

By embracing their vulnerability throughout program activities and interactions, participants noted a new awareness of self and others. According to participant reports, vulnerability and discomfort served as mechanisms to enhance participants' learning, increasing their engagement in the experience.

Engaging Experience

Based on participants' responses, the researchers defined *engaging experience* as the thoughts and reflections participants had regarding the training, and the facilitators' ability to draw in the attention of participants. Each of the participants described TLT to be engaging and to require active participation. Participants shared the curriculum was designed to actively engage participants in activities rather than solely lecture. One participant emphasized, "It was activity-based learning to help really cement the ideas in your mind." Often, participants disclosed that active engagement in the training occurred immediately, with participants' involvement encouraged from the onset of the program. For example, one participant said, "You started right away. It's not like a slowly build up to something. It's right away you're jumping into these activities."

Participants shared some surprise in the level of engagement built into the training, both in participants' interactions with each other and in the instructors' facilitation of the activities. A common report from participants was the *engagement* was impactful in the learning process. Participants reported feeling motivated to absorb material as a direct result of the instructors' interactive facilitation style and the structure of the activities. One participant noted following:

I was heavily surprised by the presentation, the knowledge of the individuals who spoke. But also, the passion they show for the subject matter. There was no reading off a script, it was completely interactive, and it actually made you want to learn.

Actively experiencing the program curriculum contributed to participants' motivation to learn and implement program content into their work and personal lives. Subsequently, participants' described outcomes influencing intrapersonal and interpersonal factors in different contexts.

Outcome-oriented Themes

To respond to our second research question, we asked a set of questions pertaining to outcomes perceived by participants in their daily work to understand the longitudinal impact, if at all, the training had on the participants, and if it were successful in meeting its goals. Themes emerging in every interview included: (a) emotional intelligence, (b) interpersonal skills, (c) personal growth initiative, and (d) perspective building.

Emotional Intelligence

Throughout each of the interviews, participants discussed *emotional intelligence*. In conjunction with existing literature, we defined *emotional intelligence* as participants' ability to identify, control, and express their emotions. Participants also framed EI within the context of emotions' roles in relationships and interactions with others. For example, one participant described their enhanced *emotional intelligence* as, "I'm trying to take ownership of how I'm feeling and to identify if I'm having a bad day, I don't need for that to really get out in my communication with other people." Commonly, participants responded that not only was EI a main element of the course teachings, but participants' own EI strengthened as an outcome of their engagement in the program. For example, a participant stated the following:

So I would say that my consistent feelings throughout the class was just a positive environment and just being more positive and aware of your emotions and how you can change them to be a better professional and be a better person in general.

As identified in previous research, *emotional intelligence* is related to empathy (Romosiou et al., 2018) and our findings provide support for this claim. Specifically, participants' responses noted connection in their personal experiences of *emotional intelligence*, often citing increased empathy as an unexpected outcome of their engagement in the TLT, as evidenced in the following participant quote:

I think the course brings out a lot of empathy and trying to realize that life is bigger than just us putting on a uniform, going to work and doing our jobs, like you have to have a sense of compassion, you have to realize that not everything is so black and white and there is a little bit of gray, which is a lot of times hard for cops to see.

With the expansion of their *emotional intelligence*, participants described a nuanced understanding of empathy. Participants noted a strengthened awareness of themselves and their emotional reactions to external stimuli. The incorporation of *emotional intelligence* in the TLT carried interpersonal benefits as well, contributing to participants' skill acquisition for enhanced interactions with others.

Interpersonal Skills

Participants reported the development of *interpersonal skills* as a result of completing the TLT. We defined *interpersonal skills* as participants' development of ways to work with students or others through effective strategies to interact and communicate. Participants explained various opportunities for *interpersonal skill* practice throughout their training experiences. Further, participants described the practice became

transferable to experiences and relationships outside of the training classroom. As an example, the following quote demonstrates this theme:

There were some great techniques in, in probably addressing youth that I probably never used before. And I can relate it, and even my son, he actually took the course as well, and and there was a lot of things that we were able to communicate better because of the communication techniques we picked up in class.

Throughout interview responses, participants indicated that the training provided a framework for *interpersonal skills* that may have been different from participants' previous interactive styles. New ways of interacting with others were offered and explored. As a result, participants reported that they developed ways to positively impact the individuals around them through effective strategies to interact and communicate. The theme can be seen in the following participant quote:

That was something that I really took from it, and that I'm still trying. It's an ongoing process. I'm going to try to be a better listener, better observer, and a better communicator with people that aren't necessarily my peers, maybe another, you know, I could – a bunch of teenagers or, or, or civilians that aren't law enforcement, like educators or teachers or somebody like that.

Participants described reciprocal benefits of *interpersonal skills* for themselves and their work with others. One participant explained, "if you start to build a relationship with those kids, you can implement what was discussed in the training session," and highlighted "the importance of being able to be that positive influence to help them see that they have more choices." According to participants, the *interpersonal skills* participants gained in the TLT contributed to better communication in their relationships and improved their responsiveness to the youth populations they served.

Personal Growth Initiative

In addition to social and interpersonal skills, participants expressed an expanded initiative for personal growth throughout and as a result of the training. *Personal growth initiative* was coined by Robitschek (1998) as individuals' engagement in an intentional process of change toward personal growth or improvement. For the sake of the current study, we defined *personal growth initiative* as a person's motivation and willingness to engage in activities that help develop and advance their understanding of self in pursuit of personal and professional development. One individual described activities including the exploration of vision and mission for life, which provided them with greater motivation toward self-improvement and growth personally and professionally. The experience of this participant is visible in the following quote:

One of the biggest things that come to my recollection are vision building and really establishing a mission for your life, even from down to every day what your daily mission and your daily vision for your day is all the way up to a year and 30 years from now, that's, that's what I pull away from it... So a couple of activities that we did, one that I remember is you and your partner are together and your partner asked, 'What is your vision?' and you have to tell what your vision is. And then you go on from that, you just keep asking, you keep asking, you keep asking. You really, you're really meant to elaborate and help you to focus and refine your ideas.

As a result of their engagement in the training, participants described increased motivation and willingness to engage in activities that help develop and advance their understanding of self in pursuit of personal and professional development. In their responses, participants demonstrated an element of self-reflection upon current or past experiences of *personal growth*. Additionally, participants blended their self-reflection with forward thinking around active engagement for change. Participant responses indicated that the impact of *personal growth initiative* expanded beyond the scope of the training and into life reflection, as suggested by the following quote: “There are some times when I don’t necessarily always have a vision or mission for myself. I’m just kind of ticking the days away. And I need to, I need to focus more on that sometimes.”

The dual processes of expanded visioning and taking action toward growth are hallmarks of *personal growth initiative*. As evidenced in the interviews, participants expressed engagement in both processes as a result of their TLT experiences. One participant explained, “It helped me to look at stuff differently and I took those skills to try to help others with that.” The TLT curriculum offered participants strategies for supporting others’ development of personal growth initiative, while also promoting their own motivation to continue exploring their own personal growth beyond the context of the course.

Perspective Building

Finally, a common theme across all participants’ reports included *perspective building*. The researchers defined *perspective building* as an expansion of perspective, including one’s own and others’ perspectives, as a result of the experience. Participants reported an increased understanding of viewpoints in interactions with others, which helped to widen the scope of their own viewpoints. One participant expressed, “I hope that it’s helped me listen better and be more empathic toward people and their needs and concerns and be able to see that my perspective may not be the right answer.” Further, participants described an increased awareness of how others might experience or view situations depending on their roles, backgrounds, or identities. This theme appeared particularly relevant in participants’ work with students, civilians, or colleagues as noted in the following quote:

Look at it from a different perspective as a law enforcement officer, you’ll be looking at things from a view of a teenager possibly, or a civilian, or a teacher. And be prepared to be put on the spot. There’ll be some role playing exercises there.

Perspective building appeared to have duplicitous effects on participants. Participants reflected that *perspective building* allowed for increased understanding of others, and that the process was applicable personally and professionally. Participants identified *perspective building* as a tool for working with students, they described the ways sharing *perspective building* techniques might benefit the individuals they serve by widening the participants’ understanding of students’ experiences outside of the classroom:

One of the biggest impact[s] when I think of this training, you have to, you know, society makes it feel like these kids are victims, because of the environment they grow up in. And many of them are. And they’re coming from, they come from horrible environments from abuse, to neglect to starvation to crime, you just name it and um, but, but they all have they all have a desire to do good. That’s just a natural innate characteristic and

many of these people were never given the opportunity to see what that looks like, through their own eyes. They always are told, always are told what's good for them. They always you know, hear, of other things [*sic*] that they can do to be better, but this program has an opportunity for them. I mean, has the uh, It's unique in that it lets them see it through their own eyes what that looks like.

Participants of the TLT reported an increased capacity for considering the perspectives of others. As a result, participants described an enriched ability to work with the youth and communities they serve.

Discussion

Through interviews with the participants, the researchers sought to explore the experiences and outcomes of individuals' participation in the MLMP's TLT. The TLT program prepares law enforcement officers with interpersonal skills to be effective mentors within the communities they serve. The focus of the present study was on law enforcement participants' experience with TLT. The research questions guiding the study included: (a) What are the experiences of individuals who participated in MLMP's TLT? and (b) What are the perceived outcomes for individuals who participated in MLMP's TLT? In response to the first research question, we identified that the most common experience-oriented themes included *beginner's mindset, discomfort/vulnerability, and engaging experience*. In response to the second question, we found that participants consistently identified the outcome-oriented themes of *interpersonal skills, perspective building, personal growth initiative, and emotional intelligence*. An unexpected finding was that, in some cases, the participants' responses indicated an overlap between experience and outcome. For instance, *interpersonal skills, perspective building, personal growth, and emotional intelligence* each served as a practice within the training experience as well as an outcome of participation in the training. Participants indicated that much of the experience became directly transferable outcomes in their relationships with others and their environments.

The information gathered in this project will help guide further development and implementation of the MLMP TLT. Findings of this study provide support for the training's approach to experiential learning. Consistently, participants' reports indicated that one of the most valuable aspects of their training was the active and engaging nature of the curriculum. Varying learning modalities reportedly aided in participants' ability to absorb training content and find meaning in personal and professional ways.

Further, the present study's findings emphasize the value of emotional intelligence and its relevance to the learning process. Content that focused on the exploration of emotion, interpersonal skills practice, and self-reflection appeared to resonate with participants. Consistently, participants identified examples of EI both as a process of the training and as an observable outcome in their personal and professional lives. A curriculum emphasis on relational growth and personal growth appears to be both relevant and beneficial for equipping participants with the necessary skills for youth support and community development.

Implications

The findings within the current study provide implications for including EI training into standard police training, especially for law enforcement officers working with juveniles. Our results align with the findings of Herz (2001) and Romosiou et al. (2018) that training programs for police officers help participants develop novel skills when targeting attitudinal and behavioral change. The MLMP TLT led to a participant-described increase in taking perspectives of others, assessing emotions, and communicating effectively with youth and co-workers, all of which describe the participants' reported increase in emotional intelligence. All law enforcement officers are community-oriented and subsequently can benefit from increased emotional intelligence. However, law enforcement who serve school communities (e.g. School Resource Officers) may find the TLT trainings to be particularly applicable to their work with youth of all ages, their families, and school communities.

Further, the findings (i.e. EI, PGI, interpersonal skills, and perspective building) reported by the participants in the current study relate to those reported by Birzer's (2008), who identified the qualities African-Americans deemed trustworthy and important in police officers. Specifically, Birzer's (2008) findings revealed that when officers demonstrated dispositions such as professionalism, empathy, effective communication skills, and a sense of compassion, African-American participants perceived positive relationships with law enforcement. Subsequently, we believe the outcomes of the present study indicate that TLT promoted skills within the participants that may result in positive interactions with the culturally diverse youth they will interact with in the community and other professionals they work alongside.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study is not without limitations. A primary limitation is the limited diversity of the participants. All participants identified as white, and six of the seven individuals identified as male. Due to a lack of diversity in the sample, the perspectives provided were limited in scope. It is unclear whether this lack of representation is indicative of the sampling procedure, or reflective of the greater population of MLMP TLT participants as a whole. A potential area for future research may be to explore the demographics of TLT attendees, multicultural competence of program implementation, power and bias that may exist in interactions, and their impact on participants' experiences. It would be valuable to examine whether the constructs identified in the current study are replicated in a group with increased diversity of identities. Further, the researchers used purposeful criterion sampling procedures for the recruitment of participants. Though purposeful criterion sampling is appropriate in qualitative research, the process inherently creates limitations. Namely, purposive sampling is a form of nonrandom sampling, and findings in the present study are not transferable to all law enforcement officers who complete this training. Additionally, participants in the training were located in the Southeastern region of the US, limiting the representativity of the sample. Outliers may also cause significant threat to qualitative data collection.

A natural limitation of qualitative research is that participants' reports may be impacted by memory, social desirability, or worldview. Therefore, results of the

study are not representative of the broader population. Future research directions may include quantitatively examining the outcomes identified in the present study, such as participants' level of emotional intelligence, personal growth, and interpersonal skills. Researchers should examine the transferability of the indicated benefits of the training on officers' work with students and communities. Future research may also study the impact of these trainings for law enforcement on the communities and different community outcomes (e.g. attitudes towards law enforcement officers, community satisfaction with law enforcement officers). Further, revisiting this study after the TLT has expanded nationally would offer researchers a more representative sample, increasing heterogeneity of the sample .

Finally, the researchers of the present study served as external evaluators of the program. Including a policing scholar in the data interpretation stage would have helped to bridge the understanding of the findings across disciplines. With this in mind, future researchers may choose to examine the TLT training through Participatory Action Research (PAR; Baum et al., 2006), in which community partners are included in the process of research. Through PAR, researchers and participants engage in self-reflective inquiry as a route for examining practices and contexts of social relationships in order to make effective change (Baum et al., 2006). A key element of the PAR process includes community members acting as researchers. Future research teams should consider the inclusion of community law enforcement partners as co-investigators.

Conclusion

The incorporation of EI training in professional development has intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits for individuals across career domains (Romosiou et al., 2018; Schutte et al., 2013; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003; Teding van Berkhout & Malouff, 2016). For police officers in particular, there is evidence that the implementation of leadership curricula grounded in emotional and belief intelligence has specific benefits for officers' empathy, stress, and resilience (Romosiou et al., 2018). The current study's findings provide qualitative support to existing literature on the impact of emotional intelligence training for law enforcement. Participants indicated connections between emotional intelligence and key intrapersonal and interpersonal themes, such as personal growth initiative, perspective building, and interpersonal skills. Consistently, participants reported that the impact of the training was transferable to their personal and professional relationships. As a result, emotional intelligence-based training not only enhances outcomes for law enforcement, but may also have positive impacts on the students and communities for whom officers serve.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Experience of the training

1. What were your general impressions about the training?
2. What were you anticipating the training would be like before attending it?
3. What did you do during the training?
4. Please share any thoughts you had during the training that stand out.
5. Similarly, what feelings or emotions came up while participating in the training?
6. What was the most personally impactful element of the training?
7. Can you share what you learned about yourself during the training?
8. What else can you share about the training experience?
9. If you knew someone that was planning on attending the training, what would you tell them to expect to experience during it?

Outcomes of the training

1. It has been some time since the training. Please share some things that you are doing differently as a result of the training.
2. What immediate changes did you notice after the training?
3. If you had to guess, what long-term changes do you anticipate as a result of the training?
4. What did you learn in this training that would help you be more effective in your role in your current job?
5. You may have answered this already, but can you share how this training has impacted the way you interact with other people?
6. From your perspective, what were the most significant outcomes of this training for you?
7. If you knew someone that was planning on attending the training, what would you tell them to expect as outcomes that result from doing it?
8. What else would you like to share about this training?