

# What the Durham Police Department Can Do to **Enhance Safety** and **Earn Trust**



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# Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of an academic study I conducted for my dissertation while a Ph.D. Candidate at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy. I recruited participants and conducted two-hour qualitative interviews of young Black men living in Durham's neighborhoods facing among the highest levels of economic distress and police contact. I ended the interviews in March 2020, at the outbreak of the COVID pandemic.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to examine how these young men assessed police and policing, and what kinds of reforms, if any, might be desired. The report contains five sections:

1. An introduction that summarizes the research methods and provides an overview of the participants' upbringing as context to the report's results;
2. Findings and policy recommendations regarding participants' criteria for judging how well Durham police are doing;
3. Findings and policy recommendations regarding participants' ideal attributes and behaviors of officers that would help officers to carry out participants' aspirations for policing;
4. Findings and policy recommendations regarding participants' standards for building and maintaining trust; and
5. A conclusion that synthesizes the findings and recommendations leading into the closing argument participants make about what they wish to achieve with these desired reforms and why it matters.

## KEY ARGUMENT:

I find that participants are principally concerned with the unpredictable nature of policing. **Their reforms center on forging a police force that is predictable and reliable**, and whose actions reflect a government contract they are owed as American citizens and, more importantly, human beings. Findings enrich our theoretical understanding of what this population believes would need to change to ensure their communities both are and feel safe.

# SECTION 1.

## Introduction

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"It takes respect to get respect. Just respect me. I mean, first of all, you can call me by my last name... Don't call me out my name. Don't call me whatever you think I am. Don't do that. At the same time, you want me to call you 'Officer such and such'...You want me to say, 'Yes, Sir,' and all that, but you can't call me by at least my last name? You can't say, 'Mr.' or 'Sir?' No, you talking out the side of your neck.... Nine times [out of ] 10, we're trying to get back home to our kids. We're just trying to get through the day. Now, if I go out, or something like that and 12 stops me, I'm either worried about will I get shot? Am I going to make it home? A, all the way to Z, it's going to be something. What's going to get taken from me? It's just somethin'.

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**Kevin, 21**

"There gotta be some line of communication. A dialogue has to start, has to commence. 'Cause if you don't got that, you don't really got anything. You just got officers that feel like they know what our best interests are and just know us, but they don't. So, it gotta be some give and take as far as talking and communicating. And, if we can get that, I mean, a lot can happen. But, getting to that point is already a uphill battle in itself...we're people, just like the people you're trying to get back home to. We're also that to somebody as well."

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**Carlos, 30**

"I think that police officers almost have to have a—not necessarily nurturing aspect, but kind of like a—sense of safety about them. Because you should feel safe around police officers, you know? I don't necessarily know how to put that in a word, but I think that you should definitely just feel safe around police officers."

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**Joseph, 20**

"Things ain't easy. Sometimes, [toughness is] needed and other times, it's not. But, they should be able to recognize the times where they need to be a tough cop, or whether they need to be a concerned, generous cop, you know? They need to be able to differentiate."

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**Jay, 31**

During 2019, in the midst of my interviews, Black males comprised the largest share of civilian homicide victims in the United States\* at almost 50% of the 13,927 total.<sup>1</sup> Irrespective of race, ethnicity, or gender, the 20-24 and 25-29 age cohorts contained the largest share of victims. For Black victims, nearly 40% fell into just these two age cohorts.<sup>2</sup> Black males—particularly teenagers and young men in economically distressed communities—also face the highest risk of being killed by police of any American demographic, with an estimated peak risk 2.8 times that of White men between the ages 25-29. This latter disparity is particularly notable given that peak mortality risk for all groups occurs between ages 20-35 when it comes to officer-involved deaths<sup>3</sup>. Among women, Blacks and

Native Americans face the highest risk of being killed by police, although women’s risk is estimated to be about 20 times lower than men’s.<sup>4</sup>

These grim figures confront Durham, North Carolina as well. During this same year in 2019, there were 40 civilian-caused homicides (See Table 1 below). Eighty percent (80%) of victims were Black, and 70% of the total were Black boys or men. Fifty percent of non-Black victims fell into just two age groups, 18-24 and 25-29 years old, while that was true for nearly 63% of Black victims.<sup>5</sup> A 2023 report by Cook and Vila notes another 156 victims survived a shooting in Durham during that same period, the vast majority of whom were Black males.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1.** Durham Homicides in 2019

Counts Tabulated from Data Source: Bull City Homicide								
Race	Gender		Age Cohorts					Totals
	Female	Male	Under 18	18-24	25-29	30-35	36+	
Black	4	28	4	13	7	3	5	32
Hispanic	1	4	0	3	1	0	1	5
Other/Unknown	0	3	0	0	0	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>40</b>

Finally, Black boys and men also comprised 62% of all people (16 of 26) who died in officer-involved incidents in Durham between 2003-2019, as shown in Table 2 on the next page.<sup>7</sup>

\* Black men suffered from both a higher rate of victimhood and had the highest absolute numbers of any demographic, including White men—7,484 vs. 5,787 in 2019. Black women had lower absolute numbers compared to White women but higher rates of victimhood—1,035 vs. 1,759.

**Table 2.** Officer-Involved Fatalities of Durham Residents from 2003–2019

Counts Tabulated from Data Source: Fatal Encounters								
Race	Gender		Age Cohorts					Totals
	Female	Male	Under 18	18-24	25-29	30-35	36+	
Black	0	16	2	5	4	4	1	16
Hispanic	0	4	2	0	0	1	1	4
White	3	3	1	1	0	0	4	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>

While young Black men are the most exposed group in the United States to these extreme safety threats, they also bear the brunt of more common dangers at the hands of police, such as verbal and physical abuse.<sup>8</sup> As Gau and Brunson write (2015), police in high-crime neighborhoods have been shown to be more likely to profile minorities, use greater force, and commit serious misconduct.<sup>9,10</sup> It is unsurprising, then, that researchers have also found those living in such neighborhoods to be “negatively disposed” toward

police. But, as relatively few researchers have found when examining Black people’s perceptions of the police, the situation is far, far more complicated.

I will describe my study to understand how young Black men in Durham, NC’s most heavily policed communities assess how well the police are doing and their desired reforms. I will also share policy recommendations for the Durham Police Department based on those interviews.

## 1.1 Brief Note on Previous Research on Police–Community Relations

Scholars across academic disciplines have devoted a great deal of attention to policing. In the United States, policing style varies dramatically for young Black men living in areas of concentrated disadvantage. Racial profiling against African Americans has been widely documented.<sup>12,13,14,15</sup> In majority-minority communities challenged by poverty, policymakers pass punitive restrictions and use law enforcement selectively to raise revenue for government coffers.<sup>16</sup>

**Negative Effects of Harmful Policing:** Harmful policing leads to anxiety and other mental and physical consequences—both on those who directly experience it<sup>17</sup> and on others who witness or experience it vicariously.<sup>18,19</sup> These negative

encounters with police can accumulate and lead to perceptions of injustice as well as internalized fear and stress.<sup>20</sup> This worsens overall relations between the police and Black communities and lowers trust, respect, and confidence in law enforcement.<sup>21,22</sup>

**How Policing is Placed:** Uneven treatment is made more efficient with neighborhood segregation.<sup>23,24</sup> Police misconduct occurs in areas that are concentrated geographically and where multiple layers of economic, social, and political vulnerability manifest.<sup>25,26,27</sup> Legal scholars Grunwald and Rappaport find in their study of 98,000 Florida law enforcement officers that poorly resourced communities are at particular risk of acquiring dangerous officers. “Wanderers” who were fired in their recent positions for serious misconduct and moral

character violations often land at smaller agencies in communities with fewer resources and slightly larger populations of color,<sup>28</sup> and they are more than twice as likely to be fired again than rookies or veterans who have never been fired.<sup>29</sup>

**Police Solicitation of Community Input:** Some police departments have recognized their need for community support to do their jobs successfully.<sup>30</sup> After all, police depend on members of the community to report crime, cooperate with investigations, and bring offenders to justice by testifying in court cases.<sup>31,32,33</sup> Support from the electorate may also be needed when officials must go to voters to approve increased revenue for officer salaries and benefits; new offices, equipment, and/or vehicles; or even increase the number of sworn personnel. Nearly one-third of police departments surveyed by the U.S. Department of Justice reported that they conduct community surveys to gauge satisfaction, and half of agencies with at least 100 officers have surveyed their communities with questions about safety, bias, confidence, and performance. However, the most economically and politically privileged groups tend to participate in both surveys and in-person meetings held by departments rather than those who would benefit the most from any improvement in police service delivery.<sup>34</sup>

**Broader Applicability to Other Locales:**

In addition to data from national surveys, this report cites research findings from studies conducted in

diverse municipalities, both large and small as well as Southern and Northern—such as Ferguson and St. Louis, MO; Chicago, IL; Philadelphia, PA; and New York City, NY.

The Urban Institute conducted a survey in 2017 in “high-crime, heavily policed neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage” in Birmingham, AL; Minneapolis, MN; Pittsburgh, PA; Fort Worth, TX; Gary, IN; and Stockton, CA. Their findings show across-the-board concerns regarding legitimacy and bias and an insufficient community orientation by departments. Notably, residents showed a “strong belief in the law and willingness to partner with the police.”<sup>35</sup> This same desire to engage police as partners while improving policing service delivery and heightening accountability for misconduct was borne out in a joint report by PolicyLink and the Advancement Project examining communities that include San Diego, San Jose, and Santa Ana, CA; Boston, MA; Seattle, WA; Pueblo County and Albuquerque, NM; New Haven and Stamford, CT; Atlantic City, NJ; Portland, OR; and Houston, TX.<sup>36</sup> Both reports resonate deeply with the findings of this study and underscore its broader applicability. Clearly, many Americans share the challenges that confront these participants. The grievances they articulate echo those of countless others. And the policy solutions offered in this report can diffuse easily elsewhere.

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## 1.2 Purpose of This Study

This study centers on the voices of 18-29 year-old African American men living in communities suffering from high crime, high poverty, and high police contact in order to understand how they make sense of and assess policing with the goal of offering tailored policy recommendations to the Durham Police Department (DPD). I ask what these young men confronted by crime and intensive policing need to be and feel safe. I ask them how they judge whether officers are doing a good job and how they respond when officers and agencies fail to meet their expectations. Their answers form the basis of this brief’s policy recommendations.

In some cases, participants make direct suggestions as to a policy that should exist. In others, I intuit a policy that could feasibly lead to the desired outcomes that participants express. This expertise and intuition is based on my years of knowledge and experience as a bureaucrat in local government monitoring police and sheriff internal affairs investigations as well as observing local and national trainings for law enforcement officers on a variety of topics.



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## 1.3 Research Design

I conducted 21 in-person interviews from December 2018 through January 2019 and from November 2019 to March of 2020\* to examine how Black men in the most heavily policed neighborhoods in Durham judge its police department and officers, understanding there would likely be lessons for similarly situated agencies and communities far beyond Durham's borders. I suspended interviews in March of 2020 due to COVID.

**Research Site:** At the time of my study, Durham's total population was 38.9% non-Hispanic White, 38.7% non-Hispanic Black or African American, 13.8% Hispanic, 5.3% Asian, and 3% Other and Multi-racial.<sup>37</sup> I used municipal and U.S. Census Bureau data to identify and rank neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of young Black men.<sup>†</sup> Poverty rates across the research target area ranged from 43.8% to 55.7%—more than twice Durham's African American poverty rate (23.5%), three times the City of Durham's overall poverty rate (18.5%), and about four times the national poverty rate of 14%.<sup>38,39</sup> Many of these "chronically distressed communities"<sup>40</sup> lay within a surveillance area for a DPD initiative called "Operation Bull's Eye," which ran officially from 2007 to at least 2011.<sup>41</sup> Here, officers saturated a 2-square mile area with additional officers conducting more frequent rounds, stops, and searches of drivers and pedestrians with the goal of driving down gun violations, such as "shots fired," as well as disproportionately high violent gun crime rates.<sup>42,43</sup> Heightened complaints from community groups of racial profiling between 2014-2015 led to the Durham Police Department announcing its abandonment of the program. Leaders also promised to change stop-and-search protocols and begin training on biased policing.<sup>44,45</sup> Subsequent turnover in police leadership has not quelled calls for improvement.

**Recruitment:** I conducted on-the-ground recruitment in order to ensure participants lived in or near my area of interest, or that they heavily frequented the neighborhoods (usually for social reasons like visiting family or friends). I recruited through posting flyers in the neighborhood, scouting pick-up basketball sites, and through word-of-mouth from participants (snowball sampling technique). As advertised on my flyers, I paid each participant \$50 in cash at the end of the interview.

**Interviews:** I conducted each interview one-on-one in a private room in a publicly accessible facility in the heart of my recruitment area. The interviews were designed to take about two hours, which I advertised clearly on the flyers. I also told recruits about the interview duration upfront to make sure they had accurate expectations and would plan accordingly. I set compensation at \$50, which I believed would signal respect and gratitude for people's time, but was not high enough to motivate an uninterested person to participate. I invited men to discuss their experiences and share their opinions, whether positive, negative, or neutral. The interviews were confidential and averaged 2 hours and 11 minutes. I asked 33 open-ended questions and concluded with a brief survey at the end for a total of about 50 questions. Men were generally surprised that they were able to talk for two hours but often expressed relief and gratitude that they were able to recount their experiences, their honest opinions about what the Durham Police Department is getting right, and how it can improve.

\* In the intervening months, I conducted in-depth interviews for a related project in London, UK.

† Via phone and e-mail correspondence with Ms. Laura Woods, Senior Planner, Durham City-County Planning Department.

## 1.4 Who Are the Research Participants?

**Table 3.** Research Participant Profile

### DEMOGRAPHICS

**Age** – Mean: **24.5** years old

**Education** – Median: **12th grade** education

**Religion** – **76%** Christian, **24%** Unsure

**Occupations** – **86%** Most Frequent:  
Construction at **29%**

**Fatherhood** – **52%** 0 children  
**24%** 1 child  
**24%** 2-4 children

### FAMILY COMPOSITION

**38%** – Raised by single moms.

**62%** – Raised in full or part by father and/  
or stepfather with mom, or as single parent.

**52%** – Also lived for some period with non-parent  
or in foster care.

### LEGAL ENTANGLEMENT & EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

**66%** – Arrested at some point **34%** Never arrested

**52%** – Convicted **48%** Never convicted

**33%** – Shot at least once **67%** Never shot

**57%** – Witnessed a stabbing,  
shooting, or murder.



**Demographics:** My target recruitment age was 18-29 years old. The actual interviewees ranged from 20-31 years old with an average age of 24.5 years. Most men had graduated from high school though the education range was eighth grade to a bachelor's degree. No men had parents or grandparents who were immigrants. Eighty-six percent (86%) reported jobs across the private, public, and non-profit sectors.\* Though participants reported a wide range of occupations, including customer service, masonry, packaging and transportation, house painting, and janitorial services, the modal occupation was construction at 29%. Four participants lived in a home that they or their family member owns with another participant in the process of renting to own; the remaining 16 participants rented their homes.

On average, participants lived in a household of three people, including themselves. In terms of fatherhood, the range for participants having children was zero to four, with most (52%) having no children, roughly another quarter (24%) having one child, and the remaining quarter having 2-4 children. The typical participant's first experience with police occurred just shy of his thirteenth birthday but ranges from five years old to 22.

**Upbringing:** Participants' mother's education ranged from eighth grade to a master's degree with two-thirds having attained a high school diploma or post-secondary education.\* Thirty-eight percent were raised by a single mother throughout their lives. Four participants were raised by both biological parents under the same roof throughout adolescence. Fully 62% were raised by their mothers and fathers completely or prior to separation, their mothers and stepfathers, or their fathers as a single parent. Slightly more than half of participants experienced volatility within the household and its composition. Thus, 52% of interviewees had an extended living arrangement at some point in their lives with grandparents, parents' friends, neighbors, and/or foster care. Volatility was

due to parental drug addiction, premature death due to homicide and/or chronic disease, intimate partner violence, incarceration, sudden disability, eviction, and socioeconomic struggles.

**Exposure to Violence and Criminal Justice System:**

The sample's diversity is also evident in its exposure to violence and encounters with the criminal justice system. Participants estimated they had had as few as two interactions and as many as 100 with police, though those at the higher end attributed the intense contact to their status as known drug dealers. Two-thirds had been arrested at some point in their lives, though slightly more than half had ever been convicted of a crime (52%). Seventy-one percent had been a victim of a crime and slightly over half had been a victim of a violent crime, such as being stabbed or robbed at gunpoint. Over one-third (38%) had been shot at least once, and 57% had witnessed a stabbing, shooting, or murder.

Three participants reported having no negative experiences with police, and three reported having no positive experiences. Most of the remaining report more than one negative experience and certainly more negative experiences than positive experiences. At least 29% of participants shared a story in which an officer pointed a gun at them, 43% said they have been injured by an officer, and 38% say they had a relationship with someone who was killed by a police officer in Durham or another jurisdiction.

Whether reflecting on rebellious times in their adolescence when they wrestled with anger, insecurity, and recklessness, or whether discussing relatively recent behavior, participants relayed detailed accounts of their interactions with police, even when unfavorable to themselves. Those who largely avoided danger by focusing on sports, school, work, and home life also experienced a range of interactions with police that led to complex views.

\* The other 14% was composed of one participant who reported receiving disability payments from a permanent disability due to multiple gunshots and two who reported working as professional drug dealers.

\* This excludes three mothers whose educational attainment was unknown by the participant.

## SECTION 2.

# How Are Police Judged?

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"They could stop shooting Black men for one. And I just think that race should not be an issue when it comes to police officers. The law should see no color."

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**Travis, 24**

"[Police should be] stopping crimes, murders, and keeping peace. Not, damn, pulling up, harassing people for no reason. That's not what you're supposed to do; that's not what you're here for. That's not what taxpayers pay your salary for."

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**Jay, 31**

"I can't say, goddamn, stop the killing. I mean, that's the only thing I can think of. I can't say, like, just stop the killing. Stop ni—as from dyin' and stop shootin' us."

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**Jordan, 24**

"I would say if they protect the younger people and the older people, I'll give them an A. The younger, the kids. That's the ones who need it right now, you know? There's a whole generation coming right behind me, so they're gonna need guidance. Because right now, it's some. But it's not enough."

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**Elijah, 27**

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## 2.1. Themes for How Police Are Judged

I asked three interview questions about how civilians evaluate police:

- 1.** How could police increase your confidence in their ability to do a good job?
- 2.** How do you judge whether police are doing a good job? What would police have to do in order to get an “A” in your book?
- 3.** If you had a magic wand and could make a perfect interaction happen between an officer and a civilian, what would you do? You can choose any scenario.

The top five themes were (1) “Stop Harming and Threatening Us,” (2) “Be Part of the Community,” (3) “Protect Us from Criminal Threats,” (4) “Mediate and Problem-Solve,” and (5) “Do What’s Right.” Below, is a breakdown of each theme.

### THEME #1 – “Stop Harming & Threatening Us”

This theme looms large in participants’ minds because of their firsthand experiences and those they have witnessed, as well as identifying with Black men hurt or killed by police in the media. In a survey question at the end of interview, 19 of 21 responded that they “related” to African Americans shown in the media killed by police officers, selecting either “a little,” “a lot,” or—the most common answer (13)— “that could easily be me.” Participants’ concerns about officer bias and proactive aggression, constantly refreshed by unceasing media stories, means participants largely consider each interaction to be fraught—each interaction potentially inflicting a corrosive effect on confidence in police and causing damage to the relationship.

In terms of the racial bias so many participants highlight, several describe their interactions not as ones in which implicit bias was likely operating, but ones in which explicit bias was operating. Descriptions specify hostility, name-calling, racial epithets, and other sexualized vile language. Participants see racial bias and excessive aggression similarly: they believe the department should improve its screening of applicants for relevant personality traits and behaviors, that training should include much more realistic scenarios that force officers to work through their fear (until they overcome it), and that other officers are key to correcting poor officer behavior in the moment and holding them accountable afterward.

Finally, many participants believe there is no accountability for officers’ decisions to shoot. Perceptions are reinforced by examples they share of departmental insensitivity, such as allowing officers involved in shootings to continue working on the same beat or allowing/encouraging officers to disband peaceful vigils.



## THEME #2 – “Be Part of the Community”

Though some elements driving this theme sound basic, such as expectations of courtesy and officers putting greater effort into their work, their importance should not be underestimated. Consistent with principles of procedural justice or “rightful policing,”<sup>46,47</sup> participants value respectful dialogue precisely because it is so easy to do in their eyes and because they feel such treatment is their right as a human being.

Participants’ desires for more foot patrols and engagement goes beyond how many departments conceptualize community policing. Certainly, some participants reflect fondly on instances when they received stickers from officers as children or when they have observed officers playing basketball with other children. But several participants call for a systematic approach to officers becoming more embedded in the community for the purposes of truly serving it and caring for it as stewards. They simply do not believe it is possible to protect a community without becoming personally invested—particularly invested in its children.

Participants largely see officers as underutilized in their capacity to act as moral authorities and positive role models. As such, they call for a radical increase in opportunities for officers to become embedded in the community so that police can “actually” protect and serve. In their view, these increased opportunities for interaction are/should be reserved for non-enforcement activities, such as getting to know people and the community, assisting with community betterment projects, holding fun and educational gatherings with adults and children, and developing sustained positive relationships with children and teenagers through play and activity.

## THEME #3 – “Protect Us from Criminal Threats”

Here, the call for police effectiveness could not be more piercing. That so many feel they, their loved ones, or their communities are under siege is evident in their exasperation that police too often respond in an untimely manner or after-the-fact, wrongly allocate resources to enforcing petty violations that constitute harassment, and, worst of all, threaten their lives instead of saving them. Several participants urge police to solve more cases, viewing it as a core component of police work.

Participants share one notable frustration with current crime-fighting efforts. In the instances in which participants had called or spoken with police and shared what they knew about a crime that had been committed against them, all report they never received any follow-up communication regarding their case. Furthermore, they suspect nothing had been done, because of what they perceive as lackluster officer effort during the initial meeting, incredulity on the officer’s part that the participant did not have more information (assuming they were withholding), or because the participant assumed the officer would have called if they had found the suspect. Even in one case in which the participant was shot, he learned of his assailant’s identity through a relative who found the suspect because he had been bragging. The relative later learned he had been arrested. However, due to the lack of officer communication, the participant was not sure if the person was arrested for shooting him or for some other crime.

Police should avoid generalizations regarding “snitching.” It is true that some participants concede they would never give police information or only give partial information in serious cases, even if or when investigators aggressively sought it. But this philosophy is far from universal. In what may come as a surprise, over three-quarters of participants (16 of 21) said they **would call** police, **had called** police, and/or **had already provided information** to investigators regarding a crime.

## THEME #4 – “Mediate and Problem-Solve”

This theme offers a portrait of officers engaged in the daily work of peacekeeping between families, neighbors, friends, and strangers. Instead of high-speed chases and dramatic hostage situations, participants go straight to routine exchanges when they envision successful officer interactions. They are also acutely aware of officers’ ability to use their discretion, something they would like to be used to solve problems rather than exacerbate them.

Participants believe it is realistic for officers to use their discretion to calm parties down, seek and create understanding, mediate disputes, and facilitate problem-solving, because they have either witnessed the behavior or benefitted from it firsthand. They believe some officers do this naturally but that it must also be prioritized by a department through training and reinforcement of these values.

## THEME #5 – “Do What’s Right”

This theme outlines expectations of lawfulness and fairness. As the vast majority of participants believe there should be police, and that police should protect and serve, participants want officers to strike a balance. Overenthusiastic law enforcers that lead participants to feel like they are targets raise just as much concern as disengaged law enforcers that leave participants feeling like targets to criminals. Participants value officers with a sensibility of fairness, seeing these officers as the most likely to “just do their jobs.”

As enforcers of the law, participants expect officers to follow policies, laws, and protocols. They expect officers not to behave as if they were “above the law,” and they want officers and the department to hold other officers accountable. Moreover, they see effective law enforcement as crucial to maintaining order and protecting society, wanting officers who refuse to fulfill their duties weeded out and wanting officers who view community members as enemy combatants to be removed.

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## 2.2. First Set of Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations below seek to minimize the unpredictability participants described as plaguing the relationship between DPD and their communities. They include hiring policies that select better-suited officers, setting standards that clarify departmental values and aims, training that prepares officers to consistently meet community expectations, and accountability that ensures quality control.

- **R1.** Conduct deeper background investigations, psychological testing, and other screening of applicants to weed out those with unresolved anger issues, machismo, and racial and class bias (including internalized racial bias).
- **R2.** Hire more selectively, prioritizing candidates with a record of critical thinking, problem-solving, and customer service.
- **R3.** Deepen academy and continuing education offerings that promote calm (and tactical) approaches to potentially threatening situations. Enhance trainings so that they more closely simulate the field to help officers confront and manage their own fear.
- **R4.** Provide advanced communication training that strengthens skills in active listening, mediation, de-escalation, and decision-making to equip officers to serve as effective and versatile interveners who can influence others.
- **R5.** Establish stronger departmental norms for officers to be courteous and humane. Impose or strengthen and enforce “Duty to Intervene” policies and provide bystander training so officers meaningfully intervene when their colleagues overstep professional (or legal) boundaries.
- **R6.** Clarify and limit behaviors regarding touching, unholstering, and pointing weapons through policy and subsequent training. Mandate that officers file reports for unholstering and pointing their weapons and implement an automatic review by the supervisor. There should be an audit process in which an official higher than the officer’s supervisor or outside the chain of command reviews body camera footage of an incident.<sup>48</sup>
- **R7.** Request external (independent) investigators for officer-involved shootings. But at the very least, re-assign the officer to a different area regardless of “guilt,” and do not obstruct community members’ efforts to hold a vigil.
- **R8.** All officers assigned to patrol this police district should spend one shift per week fulfilling a community service need in accordance with the officer’s passion and/or skillset. A coordinator should liaise between officers, community organizations, and community members to arrange the match.
- **R9.** Investigators should pursue leads vigorously, regardless of whether detectives suspect stakeholders will cooperate (since they cannot know ahead of time who will and won’t).
- **R10.** Fully explain the investigative process in the initial conversation with a victim or witness and then follow through with new information.
- **R11.** Regularly and impartially audit body cam footage to ensure officers are behaving lawfully as a matter of course.
- **R12.** Impose stronger disciplinary penalties, including termination, for violating policies, violating the law, and for abusing civilians’ rights.



## SECTION 3.

# What is The Ideal Behavioral Profile of a Police Officer?

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"I also feel like integrity [is important]. Just because the police officer has so much power in certain situations where he can make a decision where it wouldn't even be noticed by anyone else, but it would have such a huge impact on the person that the decision's being made [on]. In those certain type of situations, the decision is ultimately leaning on the officer's own integrity and his own morals, and his own viewpoint or perspective. So, I think that integrity is huge for a police officer... And, definitely honesty as well."

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**Joseph, 20**

"Composure, holding their composure [is important]. Not too many cops try to hold their anger. I think that's just something it should take to be a cop. I think all cops should have anger management assessments. The cop can get angry and, yeah, forget all his morals, and boom."

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**Marcus, 25**

"Set a example, talking to young kids in the neighborhood, and just trying to explain to them how to, you know, go about things the right way."

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**Otis, 20**

"...Somebody that's from the [hood]—that's made it to becoming a officer and that's patrolling [that same hood]—man, he wanna see them kids live. He wants to see these kids not accidentally get shot. He want to see that child that's up there that's dunking, that's six feet only in goddamn 6th grade, 7th grade, dunking. Go see him go to the NBA, you feel me? He want to see kids like that make it. He want to see motherfuckers that's actually working and trying to get out of the station they're on, get better jobs and do better. He wants to see them get better and do better and receive better, you feel me? Don't put a motherfucker there that don't give a fuck, man. Because they don't give a fuck."

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**Anthony, 22**

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## 3.1 Themes for the Ideal Officer

I asked the following questions to understand the traits, behaviors, and values participants found important in officers:

- 1.** Are there any personality traits you think are especially useful for officers to have where you live? Like what?
- 2.** What behaviors do you think are important for officers?
- 3.** Are there any values, morals, ethics, or standards you think are important for officers to have?

Five themes emerged as the most desired characteristics for officers. Participants want officers who are (1) just, (2) communicative, (3) invested, (4) composed, and (5) discerning and adaptive in their decision-making. In participants' selection of a workforce, they choose officers who have a strong moral compass, the ability to relate to all kinds of people, who care about the community, are self-possessed in their approach, and who respond appropriately in their interactions. One might read these qualities and wonder: "Who wouldn't agree with these?" Indeed, participants frequently pointed out that their desires were "common sense" and "basic." Yet, they demanded the qualities because they had, all too often, found the qualities lacking in their interactions.

### THEME #1 – "Officers Who are Just"

Participants express a strong desire for officers who are honest and fair inasmuch as they treat people equally. They also call for officers to be lawful and transparent, discussing their belief that officers should adhere to constitutional and orderly processes. Participants speak forcefully about their rights of citizenship and expect officers to uphold them.

### THEME #2 – "Officers Who Are Communicative"

Given participants' inclination to see officers as a force for mediation and problem-solving, it is not surprising that interviewees state a strong preference for officers to be skilled communicators. Four robust subcategories drive this theme: officers being (1) sociable—generously exercising the gift of gab, (2) respectful and affording people dignity, (3) open-minded and not rushing to judgment, and (4) seeking to relate to people and understand them and their circumstances.

Participants do not assume that having a shared race or ethnicity translates into an officer understanding the local culture. They say the department should make a greater effort to hire from the community. Yet, since they recognize there's not a high enough supply of locals wanting to be police officers right now, they want DPD to at least make sure officers take the time to learn their new environment and gain competency in the people, places, and customs.

### **THEME #3 – “Officers Who Are Invested”**

This theme emerges because participants believe being an officer is difficult—plainly stating not everyone can or should be police officers. Seeing police work as a calling, many believe officers ought to have a passion for their work. They view a strong work ethic and heart for people as necessary to fuel the self-sacrifice required to do the job well. Participants call for officers to bring positive attitudes to work allowing them to engage in a friendly and patient manner while being protective of the community.

Participants also envision officers as strong positive role models who care about the lives of those they are hired to protect—who believe their lives have worth and cheer on their success. Participants want officers who are compassionate and kind, caring, and community-oriented, because that is the type of person they believe is capable of serving and protecting them, their family members, friends, and neighbors. They believe traits like compassion will also inoculate officers from their inclinations to over-react when civilians are in the wrong and make people’s already precarious situations worse. They want officers who recognize the myriad challenges their communities face and partner with them to navigate and overcome obstacles.

### **THEME #4 – “Officers Who Are Composed”**

The vast majority of participants place vital importance on officers’ ability to manage their emotions. Participants want officers to manage their own fear and aggression, so they can be clear-headed and calm in their interactions.

Though participants expect officers to feel some level of fear, they also believe officers must have more courage than the average person, both so that they can engage offenders and so they do not over-react in ways that unnecessarily harm people. Several participants complain about having witnessed or experienced police aggression. They also stress the importance of officers maintaining healthy boundaries between home and work, not taking personal problems out on civilians. They believe officers who can regulate themselves are better able to encourage others to de-escalate, so that peace and order can be restored.

### **THEME #5 – “Officers Who Are Discerning & Adaptive”**

In keeping with their belief that being an officer is difficult, many participants express that discernment and adaptability are critical to holding important principles in balance. For example, they want officers who are both caring and firm, who can show empathy but not be overpowered. In this context, discernment is described as officers who are smart and think critically, who can distinguish what matters from what does not, and who recognize what tools are needed to respond appropriately to a situation.

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## 3.2. Second Set of Policy Recommendations

While participants lament officers abusing the singular power and discretion they have, they simultaneously support officers having the power to make constructive decisions in solving problems and keeping the community safe. Their ideal behavioral officer profile reveals a portrait of a professional who is the best of the best when it comes to thinking, acting collaboratively, and making difficult decisions. It is a person whose sound judgment is rooted in understanding, a caring and firm leader worthy of following, a just and knowledgeable enforcer of the rules who is also committed to the greater good.

The following policy recommendations aim to help Durham and other police departments first select candidates on their record of having demonstrated that they are just, communicative, invested, composed, and discerning and adaptive. Next, recommendations target recruitment, training, commendations, and promotions, ensuring that these behavioral ideals are pulled through an officer's entire career, and pulled through the entire department from the bottom up.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **R1.** Hiring leaders should make transparent the process by which applications and resumes are reviewed, the questions that are asked and how answers are scored. An updated or new rubric should be created to standardize how applications and resumes will be read, evaluated, and scored based on the addition of these behavioral ideals criteria (just, communicative, invested, composed, and discerning and adaptive). There should be clear guidelines about how these criteria will be weighed relative to existing categories.
- **R2.** Departments should use a variety of evaluative tools to bring out candidates' abilities on these new criteria, including the following:
  - experience from a person's employment, volunteer, and academic record;
  - answers to new application questions that ask candidates to specify examples of when they demonstrated these behavioral ideals in their past;
  - answers to short essay questions about behavioral ideals (even if it comes after the initial hiring phase and during the second hiring phase); and
  - answers to interview questions that include related scenarios in which the candidate must "walk the interviewers" through their logic.
- **R3.** The "psychological exam" used by departmental psychologists and others to administer assessments for officer fitness should be fully reviewed in accordance with the behavioral ideals. The expert panel should be widened to include culturally competent psychologists, psychiatrists, and other relevant experts who have experience operationalizing these specific behavioral ideals (or similar characteristics) in assessment form. The department should account for a training, testing, and refinement period.
- **R4.** Hiring leaders should review marketing and training materials to determine whether their current recruitment efforts are consistent with these behavioral ideals and make changes where appropriate.
- **R5.** Relatedly, recruiters should be included early in the review process to identify all the points of departmental cultural inconsistency with these behavioral ideals, discuss them honestly, and begin rewriting recruitment language, pitches, and answers to prospective candidates' questions.
- **R6.** Academy and other departmental training leaders should review training protocols and role-playing scenarios, as well as academy exam materials to assess consistency with these behavioral ideals. The Department should modify the curriculum and testing materials as necessary, ensuring that trainers are involved in the change process.

- **R7.** The Department should convene leaders involved in the commendations process. It should review evaluative criteria and make them consistent with behavioral ideals, strengthen and clarify any language on nomination forms as well as communications inviting nominations. Furthermore, the Department should aggressively promote the winners of commendations as examples of cultural values and give meaningful prizes to winners (based on an officer survey about incentives, so the department has updated information about the range and types of incentives their officers find appealing).
- **R8.** The Department should complete a full review of the promotions process. At each stage of promotion, it should examine the eligibility criteria and rubrics used to score for consistency with behavioral ideals, and make changes accordingly. Complete an audit of the modified promotional guidelines using actual promotion case files from the previous five years. Discuss lessons learned and make any necessary refinements to the guidelines.

## SECTION 4.

# What Can Officers Do to Increase Trust?

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"There was one officer that killed my friend, Kidd, one of my best friends. Before he got killed, there were two other officers there, and it was just fine. As soon as he pulled up, it all went to hell. And [that officer] was known for that...When the other two officers were there, it was just a conversation. As soon as he pulled up, it got aggressive. Then next thing you know, he shot homeboy in the back of the head...They posted his autopsy report that showed that he was shot in the back of the head. I just felt like the other officers could have done something and prevented it. They had the situation under control. Why you let somebody else come up and turn the whole situation different? Yeah, I think it's just a personal choice certain officers need to make. Their asses don't need to be on the force. Like, find you something else to do. Make room for some people that actually are a help."

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### Malik, 28

"An officer come to court and take the stand on me. Y'all supposed to be adults and everything like that, but as soon as you get on the stand, and then the judge asks what happened, you sit there, and this is literally what you do. 'Hmm! Let me see. Ummmm,' Then you start making a whole bunch of kid noises, (demonstrates officer slurping and continues) like, 'blup, blup, blup,' and then you want to start basically talking like you're a professional?! You're playing with my life now. You're just sitting there playing with me, like I'm not in shackles, or like I'm not facing time. You're just sitting there playing with my life, like it don't mean nothing. There's no trust whatsoever. None. I just looked at my lawyer, I said, 'Are you serious?! This is really what's going on?! Y'all brought me here for this, just for y'all to play with my life?' I said, 'Bro, that's not okay, that's not okay at all.' So, I don't trust them."

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### Kevin, 21

"To build trust in somebody, you gotta have that time and that effort. And, to gain trust with somebody, they've got to open up, too. You can't just try to grab trust from them. You've got to kind of open up, too. You can't have someone trying to pull it, and you're pulling back. So, you've got to give a little bit to open that trust. It's going to be hard for [the officer] to gain trust, because you don't know him, and he don't know you. If you keep trying, keep trying, sometimes it don't work just like that. (Snaps finger.) It takes time. So, you've got to have that time and that patience to earn that trust, and you've got to be willing to open up to let somebody gain that trust. It might take a while for them to gain trust, but it can happen. Over time, it can happen."

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### Elijah, 27

"Go drop flowers off at some of these people's graves or something like that. Act like a human being. They want us to look at them like, "Oh, yeah, we're cops." But you're still a human being. You want us to treat you like human beings; act like you're a human being. It's just like being a cop and being a human is just like being a mother, because you never stop being a mother. Regardless, your kids grow up, they die, you're still a mother at the end of the day, regardless of where you work or what you do for a living. At the end of the day, you're a mother, and police officers should know, at the end of the day, you're still a human being. You ain't no better than nobody out here. You're human just like I am, you bleed just like I do, and you get up and go to work just like I do. What makes you think you're any better than me?"

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### Marcus, 25

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## 4.1. Themes for Building Officer Trust

The following questions focus on how participants conceptualize trust:

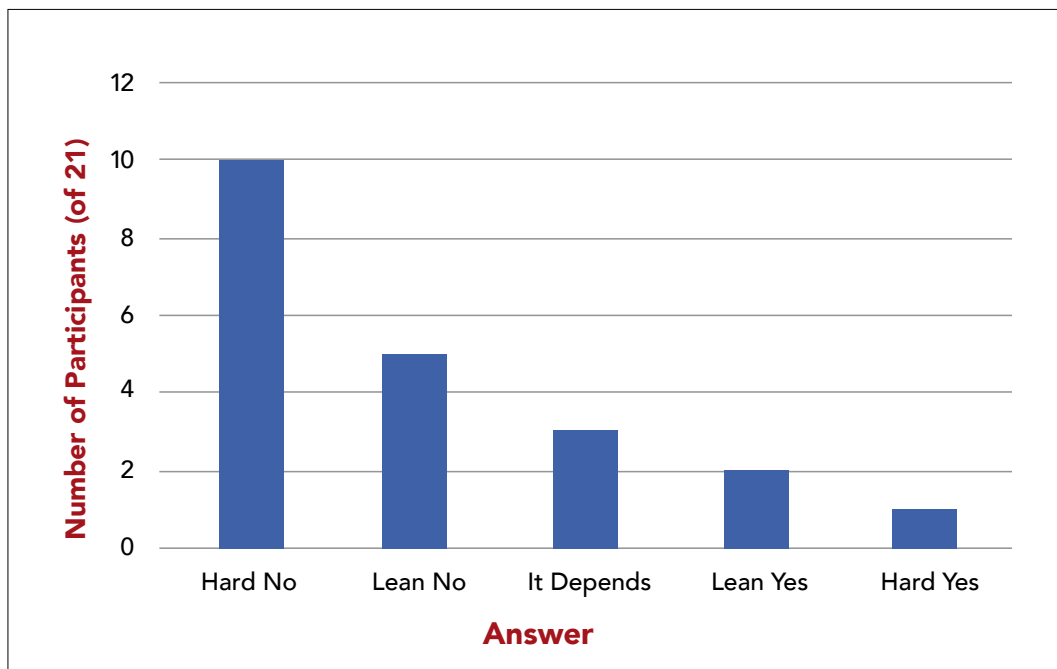
- 1.** There's a lot of debate about whether police are trustworthy. Do you trust police?
- 2.** Why or why not?
- 3.** What can officers do to increase the trust people would place in them?

I ask whether participants trust officers, their reasons for why or why not, how to improve trust, and (later) the existence and nature of any personal ties to law enforcement. Participants convey a range of viewpoints on whether participants trust police from a hard “No” to a hard “Yes” with nuanced rationales that lead to categories in between. Those nuances carry forth in their answers as to why they trust or do not trust. They believe that what they want is so self-evident—so commonsense—that police already do it for White folks. Paraphrasing Travis’s quote in Section 2 that “the law should see no color,” participants convey “Just do that same thing for us too, and we’ll be good.”

An important finding is that most participants are willing to extend some level of trust to officers who do what is required to earn it—who predictably or consistently hold themselves and other officers accountable to standards of integrity, who are humble and fair-minded, bring peace to situations, and assume responsibility for the community as stewards. A surprising finding is that most participants know at least one member of law enforcement personally. The nature of these relationships varies but raise questions about one potential reason for nuance in participants’ perspectives.

Participants’ answers to whether they trust police—in keeping with their previous nuanced answers—fall into five categories: Hard No (10), Lean No (5), It Depends (3), Lean Yes (2), and Hard Yes (1). The largest category, unsurprisingly, is “Hard No.” These participants state in no uncertain terms that they do not trust police officers. They offer no exceptions to their lack of trust, and they express no willingness to trust officers in the future. What may be surprising, however, is that an overall minority of participants report this total lack of trust, while a majority reports some levels of trust or a willingness to trust under certain conditions (11 of 21 participants). Figure 1, “Do You Trust Police?” shows participants’ answers to the Trust question out of 21 total cases.

**Figure 1. Do You Trust Police?**



“Lean No” means that the participant adopts a general stance of withholding trust but either makes an exception with a certain officer or officers they know, or would make an exception under particular circumstances. The category “It Depends” reflects a greater degree of willingness to extend trust based on context. There is still suspicion towards officers, but these participants are prone to evaluating each officer or situation individually before making a judgment. In the “Lean Yes” category, these participants are prone to trusting police officers but still have reservations due to concerns about potentially being harmed by them. They desire to trust fully but cannot bring themselves to completely set aside anxiety.

**Reasons for Trusting Police:** All three Hard Yes and Lean Yes respondents share positive formative experiences with police officers at some point during the interview, which may have contributed to their high levels of trust. These vivid, positive experiences with police officers beginning at a young age could have helped anchor these participants’ trust at higher levels than expected for this demographic, and indeed at the highest levels of their cohort. Most significantly, however, a critical mass agrees on one answer for

when they would be willing to trust an officer: **because the officer earned it**. Similarly, some participants **do not** trust police, because they say officers must earn their trust just like any other stranger.

## REASONS FOR NOT TRUSTING POLICE

Participants use three frames to answer why they do not trust police. Irrespective of the frame, they are concerned that trusting police may bring harm to them.

**Self-Reflective Frame:** First, participants look inward, often using “I” statements. They refer to internal reasons, such as their personal history with trusting people generally. Most participants explain their reasoning as protecting their own safety and well-being. Several share their visceral sensations when they see or interact with officers, understanding these as gut-based cues to keep them safe. The implication here is that these men would have to ignore or override physical sensations warning them of possible danger, which they are clearly reluctant to do.



They also reflect on their general pre-disposition to not trusting people and what it takes for them to give trust. The most cited reason for mistrust is that participants don't trust anyone they do not know. It is not so much that participants are making a special effort to distrust police; it is that they are not willing to make a special effort to trust police. The revelation that the participants most distrustful of police are distrustful of most people, generally, is meaningful. Though some men concede they will never trust police, a slight majority implies that officers who take the time to earn trust before the moment it is needed might achieve deeper levels of trust from them and others in their communities.

**Structural Frame:** Second, participants reflect on the structural conditions that compromise an officer's trustworthiness. Here, they identify departmental or cultural factors that shape officer decision-making through incentives and disincentives. In this structural frame, participants cannot trust police officers who are wholly insulated from the communities they claim to protect and serve through actions that favor officers or appear to set them apart from the same rules to which all civilians are held to account. Officers not understanding and/or constantly denigrating the culture of the community, only showing up when something bad has happened, and not being reassigned or corrected after numerous complaints are all reasons that lead participants to describe policing as disconnected and unaccountable.

Several participants lamented times when good officers failed to correct their fellow officers' behavior. If good police officers allow bad policing to flourish, then those officers cannot be trusted to protect and serve either. If a policing institution knows some of its officers are causing harm and does not change its policies or excise the offenders, then it cannot be trusted. Participants using this structural frame believe a lack of departmental accountability permits poor policing techniques and bad police officers to continue unabated. Participants argue that, logically, this unaccountable police environment will naturally produce untrustworthy officers.

**Officer Behavior Frame:** Finally, participants consider direct behaviors by the officers themselves that render them untrustworthy: those that are **Violative** of participants' rights and ideals and those that **Endanger** them.

Officer dishonesty, predetermination of the participant's guilt, and cruelty all violate participants' moral sensibilities. These violations of their rights and ideals are something that would earn the distrust of anyone they encountered but provoke a particular distaste when committed by those wielding society's greatest power and authority. Participants believe officers should enforce the law and be bound by it themselves. They believe that being legalistic does not make one a good cop, but that being a good person will likely aid an officer in carrying out democratic principles. Dishonesty includes officers lying to and/or tricking people to get what they want, being hypocritical by ticketing and arresting people for infractions they flout, and engaging in personal affairs while on the clock. Manufacturing evidence also violates participants' principles and sense of their rights of citizenship. Conversely, participants also felt violated by officers who take action against them without supporting evidence.

Participants resent being or feeling labeled by officers because of their race, gender, age, class, hairstyle, clothing preferences, or the neighborhood they grew up in. Quite often, they believe such prejudgments lead to hasty suspicions of their criminality and more aggressive officer behavior. Many cite being prejudged as contributing to their distrust of officers.

Cruel behavior also violates participants' sensibilities, contributing to their distrust. Name-calling, purposely picking people up and dropping them off in rival territory, and divulging the name of a complainant were examples. One severe example of cruel behavior involved officers breaking up a vigil for a friend and neighbor who had been killed by a police officer. In another severe example captured in Kevin's quote earlier, he described the officer as "playing with my life" while testifying against him on serious charges: In his estimation, the officer seemed unprepared for court and even cavalier on the stand.

In terms of endangering behaviors, the threat of bodily harm looms large for these participants. They have all seen some amount of video footage showing aggressive or deadly behavior they worry may someday happen to someone in their orbit or them. Additionally, participants describe witnessing and/or interacting with officers who always assume a posture of aggression or who are quick to verbally threaten force before assessing the situation. Some discuss officers injuring them or hurting or killing their family members and/or friends. Their lived and vicarious

experiences with police harm make these threats far more credible.

Officer over-aggression is completely at odds with winning trust. It is not that these participants want officers to lose to criminals. They do not; they want officers to be safe. It is that they want officers to recognize when they are safe. And they want officers to stop viewing so many situations as win-lose, which necessarily places participants on the losing side.

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## 4.2 How Police Can Increase Trust

Participants' recommendations for how police can increase trust coalesce around three themes. They want police to humble themselves. They also want police to re-orient themselves as "peace-bringers" who understand their duty to bring peace to situations and build peaceful communities. Finally, they want officers and agencies to be community stewards, promoting community cohesion while exemplifying moral leadership.

**Humility:** Participants cite humility as a way to increase trust. Participants view humility as a powerful countermeasure to officers placing themselves on a pedestal and refusing to see civilians' humanity. Being humble means officers agree to earn trust by working hard to build relationships versus relying on their uniforms or badges to gain trust. By showing their own humanity (as opposed to acting like robots) and genuinely apologizing for wrongdoing, officers can inspire community members to let their guards down, too. Participants call for reciprocity as a gesture of goodwill. Just as they want officers to lead by example, they want officers to earn trust to get trust, and to **give** trust in order to get trust.

**Peace-bringers:** Participants want police to prevent harm from happening. At a minimum, bringing peace to a situation requires officers to not disturb it by profiling and harassing people. Furthermore, participants want officers to be expert de-escalators—

using communication to calm environments, increase understanding, and resolve problems before they end in violence. Finally, bringing peace requires stopping and preventing civilian homicides. Participants say police would have to dramatically reduce the number of crime victims to gain trust. The inability to protect children as victims of gun and other violence is cited as a barrier to trust. Some participants attribute this insufficient protection to a lack of concern and effort on the part of the police department.

**Community Stewards:** Overwhelmingly, participants aspire to having police officers serve as community stewards with a strong ethical core who take responsibility for helping and caring for the community. They view providing security as a commitment to the community's well-being and development, calling for officers who are actively engaged and involved in community life and who sometimes take the lead by bringing everyone together. Participants believe this deep engagement will inspire the community's trust, because it demonstrates a genuine commitment to serving and protecting. Some participants also view police as often taking from the community (through fines, fees, and incarceration). Their suggestions for community engagement tend to be framed as "giving back to the community." Thus, their ideas span fundraisers to meet specific needs, get-togethers, block parties, and even parades.

Stewardship reveals whether officers are genuinely well-intentioned because pure motives would have to be sustained over long periods of time. Participants do not rely on occupation, societal position, or words to signal trustworthiness. Participants largely want the opportunity to observe for themselves whether

people, including police officers, are doing the right things for the right reasons. In other words, they will be able to determine if police do good because they **are** good, and their desire to serve and protect the community are sincere.

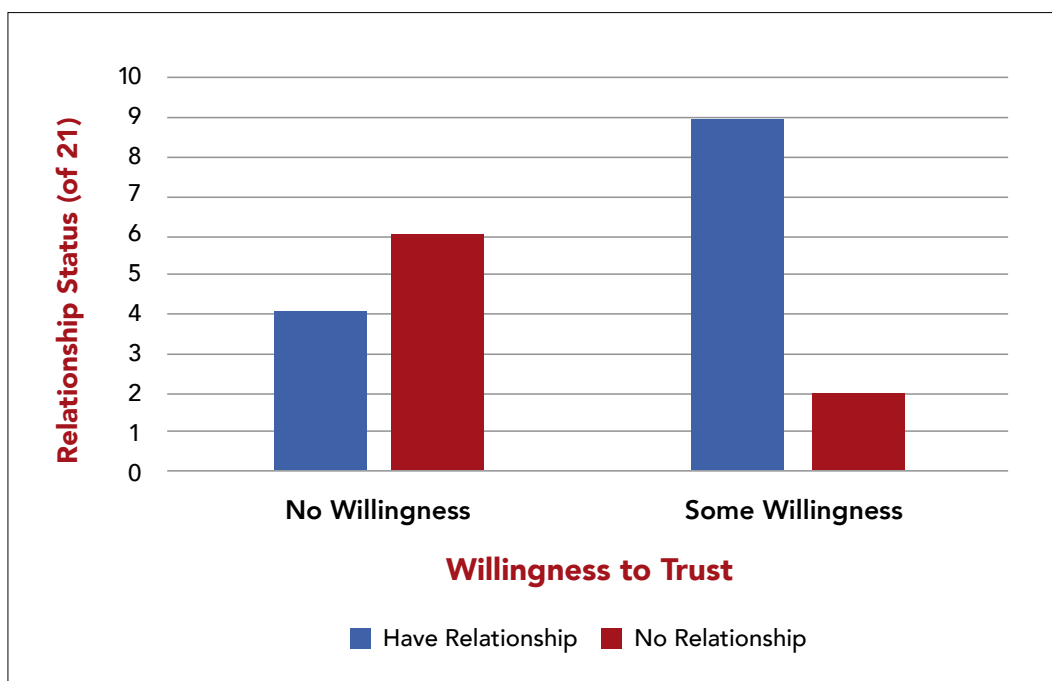
## 4.3 Set Three of Policy Recommendations

The most important reason participants who extend any trust do so is because they say police have earned that trust, meaning they have made the effort and time to prove they are committed to the participant's and/or their community's well-being.

While having a tie to an officer or two is not sufficient for trusting them broadly, it is notable that those who are willing to trust tend to have relationships more than those who are not, as can be seen below in Figure 2. Perhaps, this is one reason why we observe so much nuance and variation in participants' views

and feelings regarding police. Perhaps it is also one reason they collectively paint such a vivid picture of what a police force could be—a vision borne not of imagination but of exemplars. Though I did not specifically ask this question, it is notable that four participants volunteered they had considered becoming a police officer as youth or adults. Given the desire for police to be knowledgeable of the local area and widespread interest in a closer relationship to police, there appears to be an opening for more robust pipelining and recruitment in these communities, despite tensions.

**Figure 2.** Relationship with Officer & Willingness to Trust



The central takeaway is that police agencies and individual officers must earn trust one person at a time. And trust earned by one officer will not transfer easily or necessarily to a new, unknown officer. The following are recommendations for Durham Police Department and other policymakers:

- **R1.** Hiring leaders should examine how the Durham Police Department defines, regards, and weighs subjective—and often consequential—characteristics such as “toughness” or “strength,” “readiness,” “weakness,” “kindness,” etc. throughout the application process, including in its psychological evaluations. They should determine which qualities being emphasized or privileged in the hiring process are at odds with trust-building and align their vetting processes with the goal of having officers capable of building trust.
- **R2.** In recognition of the challenge DPD has faced in hiring qualified candidates, it should consider increasing starting pay. Hiring locally should be prioritized and incentivized.
- **R3.** Training leaders should examine the extent to which honesty, fairness, and dignity are set out as expectations in academy training when interacting with the public. Rather than a compliance model in which recruits are taught to do what the law allows (such as giving a pretext for a traffic stop or lying to suspects to trick them into giving up information), the department should aim for the highest ethical standards in how it guides officers to act.
- **R4.** The Department should immediately cease any surveillance programs in Black neighborhoods in which residents (particularly those standing or sitting outside) are largely treated as potential suspects.
- **R5.** The Department should reallocate officers away from proactive enforcement of low-level crimes to primarily respond to calls; solve crimes; or engage in partnership with community to prevent serious crime, restore peace, fellowship, or help meet basic needs.
- **R6.** The Department should minimize the number of rookies assigned to areas with strained relations. Rather, skilled veterans should be assigned, tying incentives to bonuses and/or promotion for successful service.
- **R7.** The Department must increase accountability measures and improve how it communicates on misconduct allegations and discipline:
  - a. Officers should be re-assigned from communities that have requested their removal (in areas with historically tense community-police relations). Though officers might have a right to their job under the law, or though there may be insufficient evidence in certain cases to sustain community complaints, communities should not have officers they deem harmful and dangerous imposed upon them by the state. The Department should create a mechanism that would allow communities to have officers removed from their area.
  - b. The Department should be consistent in its communication to the public in officer-involved shootings or deaths. They should not withhold information about the involved officer(s) pending investigation while making defensive (or offensive) statements about the civilian, especially their criminal history, speculations about links to gangs, or their alleged character.
  - c. The Department should apologize when it harms a member of the community as should its officers when on the scene. Concerns about future lawsuits often discourage much-needed apologies, which are crucial for building trust.
  - d. Even when officers’ actions are justified, the Department should communicate and explain policies, procedures, or decisions that may upset community members, preferably beforehand when reactions are foreseeable.

# SECTION 5.

## Conclusion

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"Say if you grow up in a neighborhood. A guy that knows the city knows the different gangs here in certain neighborhoods...You know a lot of people... If you hire somebody that grew up in that city, they'll know. They have experiences from there, you know? They've been through it. They know the areas. They know what people think or what people going through...so it would be better to hire people that been in that city or in certain communities for a while."

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**Elijah, 27**

"I feel like you being a police officer, people 'posed to look up to you anyway. You feel me? They 'posed to be all that. That's how people really look at them. Like, you are a man and a badge, and that means something."

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**Jordan, 24**

"I'd make the United States more of a democracy, for real. 'Cause we're not. We're not really a democracy. We really ain't got as much say-so as people think, honestly. People don't notice it. We just think we do because they show us the bad in other countries, and we think we got more freedom. Because they don't show the good. It's just like when they show us overseas, they show the good over here and they don't show the bad over here. You see what I'm saying? Make us more of a democracy, 'cause we're not. That's just the title we got, but we're not a democracy though."

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**Anthony, 22**

"I would tell [politicians to] more so hear the letter, not the law of what's being said. And try to understand people's feelings, not just what they're saying. What comes out of their mouth is ultimately influenced by how they feel. So, if you can understand how someone feels, then you're more so to meet their expectations. Not just do what they tell you to do. To say it in other words, when you understand how someone feels, you're more so to not necessarily make the same mistake again...If they understand how we feel when they're reading the analysis and not just see what we're saying—but see *in* what we are saying, like how we feel—it would help them make better decisions about how to accommodate what we're saying."

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**Joseph, 20**

Though this cohort of 21 young Black men selected from a physical area of roughly two square miles contain wide-ranging beliefs and hold deeply nuanced opinions, they see themselves as everyday men, very much representative of Americans... if not humanity. While accounting for the challenging circumstances of their surroundings, they do not believe their needs and wants, their concerns and aspirations are anything but normal, natural, and universal.

Stop Harming and Threatening Us, Be Part of the Community, Protect Us from Criminal Threats, Mediate and Problem-Solve, and Do What's Right comprise a strategy for raising the chances officers will have a positive versus negative impact. Whether it's boosting the numbers of pleasant encounters, removing more criminal elements from the streets and neighborhoods, increasing the number of peaceful resolutions to disputes, or minimizing unlawful and unethical decisions, participants' lay out a roadmap to police reliably protecting and serving them.

In terms of participants' vision of an ideal police officer, they share their desired personality traits, behaviors, and values. Interestingly, their strategy for smoothing unpredictability is not to restrict discretion but rather for departments to select higher quality officers with superior judgment who use their discretion wisely. Preferring nimble officers to robotic ones, participants call for protectors who are just, communicative, invested, and composed professionals. They believe these qualities will equip officers to more predictably balance their freedom and safety, which they say they have had to sacrifice all too often.

Finally, we see the consequences of unpredictability manifest in low trust levels. Though most participants are willing to extend some level of trust to police officers, a critical mass shares that they do not trust anyone who has not proven themselves trustworthy. The challenge for police is two-fold. The first is changing the structural mechanisms that increase trustworthiness such as intervening when rogue officers overstep and holding officers accountable for misconduct; resolving that officers will bring peace to situations rather than dominate them; and partnering with community as stewards committed to community

members' individual and collective success. The second is building relationships one at a time with a humble demeanor and fair decision-making. By taking these steps at the departmental and individual officer levels, police will demonstrate they can be trusted, as participants are better able to predict officer actions will lead to desirable—or at least reasonable—outcomes.

Twenty-seven policy recommendations propose guidelines for aligning the department's recruitment, hiring, training, commendations, promotions, and disciplinary processes with the participants' assessment criteria, desired officer attributes, and suggestions for trust-building. The purpose of the recommendations is to forge a tighter connection between participants' expectations of officers and the outcomes they are getting. The following is a synopsis of their target outcomes:

- hiring policies that select more even-tempered, less biased officers with a record of problem-solving and service;
- clear departmental standards that promote the value of human life and dignity, and emphasize service and community partnership;
- training that equips officers to manage their own emotions and safely resolve disputes;
- accountability that ensures departmental integrity, including imposing penalties, better communication with community members, and apologies when appropriate;
- committing officers systematically to serve weekly shifts in the community for the purposes of giving back and investing in relationships and community success;
- enhancing criminal investigations for homicide and attempted homicide as well as follow-up with victims and witnesses; and
- providing communities a mechanism to remove consent for officers who have lost their trust and confidence.

To these participants, anyone would want a safe place to live and play, not overrun by gangs, child predators, murderers, and hardcore drug pushers. To them, anybody would want to enjoy the right to be innocent until proven guilty, to be able to walk the streets and gather with friends without being accosted by the government, and a right to life and well-being when interacting with law enforcement. What is not covered by their rights as citizens should be covered by human rights, they reason. In their exasperation, we hear a call for predictable, reliable police service—something

they believe they are entitled to as their American birthright. In the problems and solutions they enumerate throughout their interviews, their blueprint for quality control emerges.

As critical as it is to mine the wisdom of Durham's most under-appreciated residents for its application to Durham's law enforcement practices, at least hundreds—if not thousands—of jurisdictions across the country would also be well-served by participants' insights and calls for action.

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- <sup>47</sup> Meares and Tyler, "Policing: A Model for the Twenty-first Century," 168.
- <sup>48</sup> Ajenai Clemmons, "What All Law Enforcement Agencies Can Do, Beginning Today," *Medium* (July 9, 2020), <https://medium.com/@asclemmons/what-all-law-enforcement-agencies-can-do-beginning-today-6fe43c70165e?sk=38ca6af4b1cf116814f6853d3c0efa18>



