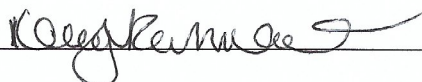

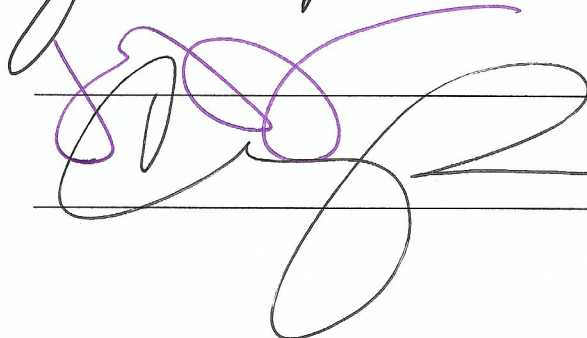


Perceptions of Community-Police Relations and Police Legitimacy in Williamsport

Presented to the faculty of Lycoming College in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for Departmental Honors in  
The Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology

by  
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April 26, 2022

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1 May 2022

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## Table of Contents

<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<i>IMPORTANCE OF POLICE LEGITIMACY AND COMMUNITY-POLICE RELATIONS</i> .....	5
<i>CURRENT STANDING OF POLICE LEGITIMACY IN AMERICA</i> .....	6
<i>POLICE PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY-POLICE RELATIONS</i> .....	7
<i>COMMUNITY-POLICE RELATIONS IN SMALL, RURAL AREAS</i> .....	8
<i>STRATEGIES USED TO IMPROVE POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS</i> .....	9
<i>LIMITATIONS OF PRIOR RESEARCH</i> .....	10
<b>PROCEDURAL JUSTICE THEORY</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF STUDY</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>DATA AND METHODS</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<i>WILLIAMSPORT RESIDENT SURVEY</i> .....	15
<i>Method</i> .....	15
<i>Survey Design</i> .....	16
<i>WILLIAMSPORT POLICE SURVEY</i> .....	17
<i>Method</i> .....	17
<i>Survey Design</i> .....	18
<i>PERCEPTIONS OF POLICING SCALE</i> .....	19
<i>PERCEPTIONS OF POLICING AND RACE RELATIONS SCALE</i> .....	19
<b>ANALYSES AND RESULTS</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<i>DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS</i> .....	21
<i>Williamsport Resident Survey Sample</i> .....	21
<i>Williamsport Police Survey Sample</i> .....	22
<i>RESULTS</i> .....	22
<b>DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<i>LIMITATIONS</i> .....	30
<i>RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH</i> .....	31
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>TABLES</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>FIGURES</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>52</b>
APPENDIX A: WILLIAMSPORT RESIDENT SURVEY .....	52
APPENDIX B: WILLIAMSPORT POLICE SURVEY .....	58

## **Introduction**

In 2020, for the first time in 20 years, the percentage of American citizens who report having a lot of confidence in the police dropped below 50 percent (Lowery, Crabtree, Gramlich & Walsh, 2020). While most of the existing criminal justice research on policing focuses on police agencies in large, metropolitan cities, it is important to understand the relationship between police and residents in smaller areas since many police departments in America are located in these jurisdictions (Weisner, Otto & Adams, 2020). Police in small, rural areas face unique challenges and issues that police officers in large, urban areas do not as a result of scarce resources, inferior technology, and smaller budgets (Weisner et al., 2020). In addition, the growing atmosphere of tension, mistrust, and lack of respect between local law enforcement agencies and small communities has become increasingly hard to ignore. This research explores community and police perceptions on aspects of community-police relations and police legitimacy within Williamsport, a city in central Pennsylvania, by surveying both Williamsport residents and Williamsport police. The specific question this study explores is whether there are differences between community and police perceptions of police legitimacy and police-community relationships in Williamsport. This study adds to the literature by comparing the survey responses of both residents and police officers in a small city. Overall, the study found that the police and the community have similar perceptions of policing. However, they have significantly different perceptions of procedural justice, legitimacy, and the current state of policing and race relations in Williamsport. In addition to this, the study found that low-income and minority residents have significantly different perceptions of policing and policing and race relations in Williamsport than middle- to high-income residents. Findings are used to identify

aspects of the relationship between the community and police that can be improved and contribute to a deeper understanding of this relationship in smaller communities.

This paper first discusses the relevant literature related to the topic, then moves onto a discussion about procedural justice theory. An overview of the study is presented prior to a specific description of the research question and hypotheses tested as part of this research. Next, the data and methods for both surveys are explained. Then, the analyses and results are described. Finally, the findings are discussed, and recommendations are provided to both the Williamsport Bureau of Police and the Williamsport community. The limitations for the study and recommendations for future research are also addressed.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Importance of Police Legitimacy and Community-Police Relations***

The success of police departments is largely dependent upon police legitimacy and a positive relationship with the community, in which individuals are willing to cooperate with the police (Noppe, Verhage, & Van Damme, 2017). Police officers rely on members of the community to provide information about crime occurring in their areas, as well as work with police to develop solutions to problems related to crime and disorder in their neighborhoods (United States Department of Justice, 2015). Police agencies that have strong relationships and partnerships within the community have greater police legitimacy (United States Department of Justice, 2015). Police legitimacy refers to the public's trust, acceptance, and respect for police (Noppe et al., 2017). Police legitimacy also involves the community's perception of fairness in policing (Noppe et al., 2017).

In a study on community policing and police legitimacy, Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo and Rand (2019) highlight the relationship between nonenforcement-related interactions between the

police and community members on police legitimacy and community-police relationships. Peyton and colleagues (2019) note that a single brief positive interaction between a police officer and a resident in the community can enhance the trust and legitimacy that residents have toward police for up to 21 days after the interaction. Improving police legitimacy increases community members' willingness to cooperate with police, ultimately increasing public safety (Peyton et al., 2019). In addition to this, residents of the community who have a positive, nonenforcement interaction with the police report increased satisfaction with police service and decreased fear of crime and victimization (Peyton et al., 2019). When police lack legitimacy, community residents are less likely to cooperate with police investigations and call police if they witness a crime occurring, which complicates police work (Peyton et al., 2019). Further, interactions between residents and the police become more likely to escalate into altercations that lead to injury or death, putting officers' safety at risk and adding more damage to the community-police relationship (Peyton et al., 2019).

### ***Current Standing of Police Legitimacy in America***

Blanks (2020) points to the recent protests against police brutality, where chants of "defund the police" can be heard, as a sign of the degradation of police legitimacy in America. In 2020, only 48 percent of Americans said they have a great deal of confidence in the police (Lowery et al., 2020). When asked to reflect on their interactions with police officers over the last 12 months, 79 percent of white Americans said their encounter was positive overall compared to only 59 percent of black Americans who describe encounters with police as "positive" (Lowery et al., 2020). Two-thirds of Americans believe that the police treat black people less fairly than white people; 91 percent of black adults in the U.S. hold this opinion (Lowery et al., 2020). Lowery and colleagues (2020) asked survey respondents whether police

funding in their area should stay the same, be increased, or be decreased. In response, 42 percent of U.S. adults favored keeping spending on policing at current levels, 31 percent favored increasing police funding and 25 percent favored cutting spending (Lowery et al., 2020); this finding was not broken down by race.

Similar to the results explored in Lowery et al.'s (2020) study, a 2019 Pew Research Center survey provided further evidence that there are disparities in how black and white Americans view police in their own communities. The survey found that black Americans are significantly less likely than whites to report that police in their community do an "excellent" or "good" job in regard to using the appropriate amount of force, treating racial groups equally, and holding officers responsible when misconduct occurs (DeSilver, Lipka & Fahmy, 2020). In addition, while most people surveyed reported that black people are treated less fairly than white people, both in dealing with law enforcement and the entire criminal justice system, black men are more likely than black women to report being unfairly stopped by the police (DeSilver et al., 2020).

### ***Police Perspectives of Community-Police Relations***

Until recently, research has focused solely on police legitimacy from citizens' perspectives and neglected the police perspectives of police-community interactions (Nix, 2017). In 2017, Pew Research Center published a report aimed at examining attitudes and experiences of American police by surveying a sample of almost 8,000 police officers from departments with at least 100 officers nationally (Morin, Parker, Stepler, & Mercer, 2017). This study indicates that the public and the police have expressed sharply contrasting views regarding aspects of policing, particularly views on the size of the police force, the primary role of police and perceived physical safety of the occupation (Morin et al., 2017). However, the study found that



the public and the police have similar opinions with respect to supporting body cameras, certain gun law reforms, and marijuana decriminalization or legalization (Morin et al., 2017).

Gau and Paoline (2019) aim to further analyze police officers' self-assessed legitimacy by measuring two types of police self-legitimacy: self-identification and external legitimacy. Self-identification refers to police officers' inwardly focused measurement of self-legitimacy, or a belief that police demonstrate higher standards of morality and law-abiding behaviors than others in society, while external legitimacy is the belief among police about how the public views them (Gau & Paoline, 2019). This study calculated police self-identification legitimacy and external legitimacy by surveying approximately 200 police officers employed by a medium-sized police agency in Florida (Gau & Paoline, 2019). The results of this study indicate that police officers' beliefs regarding their external legitimacy are inconsistent with how they feel residents of the community perceive them and evaluate their effectiveness (Gau & Paoline, 2019). Further, police officers reported feeling confident in their authority and character, despite reporting that they feel citizens view them with uncertainty or doubt (Gau & Paoline, 2019).

### ***Community-Police Relations in Small, Rural Areas***

Though criminal justice studies conducted in urban areas produce valuable information, there is limited research examining community-police relationships and policing issues in small, rural areas (Weisner et al., 2020). Romesburg (2005) defined small and rural police agencies as those employing fewer than 50 officers or serving populations of less than 50,000. Using this definition, approximately 90 percent of police departments can be considered small and/or rural (Romesburg, 2005). Research shows that rural police departments are often less ethnically diverse than urban police departments, and urban police officers have more formal education than police officers in rural areas (Weisner et al., 2020). Rural police departments are more likely

to function with fewer resources and lower staffing levels, but citizens' views of law enforcement are similar or slightly more favorable in rural than urban areas (Lopez-Medina, 2017; Weisner et al., 2020). In rural areas, existing research shows that slightly more residents have trust in the police's ability to protect them from crime and believe that police treat racial groups equally (Weisner et al., 2020).

Lopez-Medina (2017) developed and distributed a community survey questionnaire to residents across three small rural townships in central Pennsylvania's Old Lycoming Township Police Department's (OLTPD) service area. The goal of his survey was to understand community attitudes towards the police, as well as assess the effectiveness of OLTPD's community policing efforts (Lopez-Medina, 2017). He found that most survey respondents viewed the police favorably, but they expressed reservations about the transparency of the police (Lopez-Medina, 2017). This research supported the finding that residents in small, rural areas have more favorable views towards law enforcement than those in large, urban cities. This study adds that 95 percent of survey respondents in these areas were not fearful of being stopped or questioned by police (Lopez-Medina, 2017). Instead, residents were more likely to be fearful of crime occurring in their neighborhoods or illicit drug selling and use (Lopez-Medina, 2017).

### ***Strategies Used to Improve Police-Community Relations***

Various strategies are used by police departments to improve police-community relationships. Recommendations put forth by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2015 include acknowledging the negative or unjust experiences that racial minorities have been subject to by police and addressing them by establishing policies, such as the "duty to intervene," which requires police to intervene if another officer is engaging in misconduct. Transparency and accountability are also vital to promoting positive police-community relationships. The DOJ

recommends that police agencies should publish their policies (i.e., use of force, community complaints, etc.) on their websites, as well as release information to the public in a timely manner regarding any critical incidents. This helps combat the notion that police purposefully withhold information from the community. It is important for the police to be visible in their communities and interact with residents outside of enforcement contexts to reduce bias from both community residents and officers. Finally, they suggest that police departments promote diversity of their police force by maintaining fair, transparent recruitment and promotion processes.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) published a list of tips to promote positive communication and partnerships between law enforcement officers and the communities they work to protect (2018). For executive and command-level police officers, the IACP recommends developing relationships with the community through the use of social media outlets (i.e., publicizing positive interactions, gathering community feedback, etc.) (2018). They also recommend using strategies like community meetings, bicycle and foot patrol, and programs like Coffee with a Cop or Neighborhood Watch to encourage more dialogue between police and residents (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2018). For frontline officers, the IACP suggests they get out of their patrol vehicle to engage in community events, treat everyone with respect, volunteer to serve as mentors or coaches for at-risk youth, participate in training opportunities, and give verbal warnings to lower-level offenders in order to build trust (2018).

### ***Limitations of Prior Research***

This area of research offers great insight into the importance of police legitimacy in community-police relationships, as well as the current decline in police legitimacy in America. On a national scale, there is evidence that the public and police have different views regarding

aspects of policing. However, small, rural police departments are different than the large, urban police departments that are typically studied. One major limitation of criminal justice research on this topic is the lack of studies conducted in small, rural areas (Weisner et al., 2020). Though Lopez-Medina's study was conducted in a small, rural area, 99 percent of respondents identified as white (2017). Thus, the perspectives of non-white residents on police-community relationships in these areas remain largely unexplored and unknown. In addition to this, prior studies focus on either police or community residents' perceptions of community-police relationships and police legitimacy, but not both. Further, it is difficult to draw conclusions about community-police relationships without understanding or comparing the perceptions of both police officers and community residents in a given area. The current study is the first study to focus on both police and community residents' perceptions of the community-police relationship within a small city situated in a rural county.

### **Procedural Justice Theory**

Procedural justice theory argues that the fairness of the treatment and processes used by authorities against citizens is the fundamental force that shapes public behavior and attitudes toward authorities and the system (Tyler, 2003). Further, most citizens value the fairness of procedures used by authorities to produce an outcome more than the actual outcome (Nix et al., 2015). According to Tyler (2008), there are four principles of procedural justice: voice, neutrality, respect, and trust. The voice principle refers to allowing people to tell their side of the story prior to a decision being made about how to handle the issue (Tyler, 2008). The principle of neutrality refers to whether legal rules are applied consistently "across people and over cases" (Tyler, 2008, p. 30). The principle of respect, which includes respect for individuals and their rights, is vital to ensuring that individuals feel valued and important to society, and that they will

be taken seriously (Tyler, 2008). The principle of trust incorporates the public's evaluation of the sincerity, honesty, transparency, and interests of authorities (Tyler, 2008). Procedural justice theory argues that residents' perceived legitimacy and trustworthiness of the police can be improved by increasing procedurally just interactions (Nix et al., 2015).

One policy implication of procedural justice theory is procedurally just policing, which is different than traditional enforcement-focused. Enforcement-focused policing assumes that compliance is gained when formal punishment or negative consequences are emphasized (based in deterrence theory) (National Initiative for Building Community Trust & Justice, n.d.). However, research shows that procedurally just policing is more effective at producing a law-abiding community than enforcement policing (National Initiative for Building Community Trust & Justice, n.d.). Procedurally just policing highlights the shared values of police and communities in order to encourage a voluntary, collaborative response from residents (National Initiative for Building Community Trust & Justice, n.d.). When residents feel like they are being treated as equals with a stake in ensuring the safety of their neighborhood, they are more likely to view police as legitimate, which improves the safety of communities and offices (National Initiative for Building Community Trust & Justice, n.d.).

### **Overview of Study**

The city of Williamsport, located in the rural area of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, is home to approximately 28,000 residents (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Recently, the Williamsport Police Department (WPD) has been the target of frequent criticism and complaints regarding use of excessive force. On September 23, 2020, protestors in Williamsport gathered in front of Williamsport City Hall where they spoke out against police brutality and racial oppression (Crossley, 2020). This protest came following the announcement of the lack of

charges against police officers who shot and killed Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky (Crossley, 2020). This is not the first time there has been a protest against police brutality in the city; other protests occurred on September 6, 2018 (Maroney, 2018), June 5, 2020 (Crossley, 2020) and August 2, 2020 (Reinhard, 2020). In June 2020, a Change.org petition circulated around social media, accusing two Williamsport police officers of using excessive force, harassing citizens without probable cause, and conducting searches without warrants (Snook, 2020). This petition gained over 1,200 signatures, including several comments detailing individuals' negative experiences with Williamsport police officers (Snook, 2020). There is an undeniable sense of distrust and unease between some Williamsport residents and police.

Though Williamsport police officers have been targeted more frequently with complaints and criticisms in recent years, there is minimal information available regarding their perceptions of these incidents, as well as the community-police relationship in Williamsport. After meeting with the Mayor of Williamsport and the Chief of the Williamsport Bureau of Police, an exploratory focus group was conducted in September of 2021 to learn more about the Williamsport police and their perceptions of the community-police relationship. For this exploratory research, purposive sampling was used. The participants of the focus group included four officers of different ranks and backgrounds employed by the Williamsport Bureau of Police; their experience ranged from 9 months to 28 years on the job. Participants were asked five open-ended questions related to aspects of the community-police relationship in Williamsport.

The focus group participants agreed that the Williamsport police have a positive relationship with more than half of the Williamsport community, but that there is a considerable disparity in their relations with residents living in middle and upper-class areas of the city compared to the lower-income areas of the city. When asked about the extent of community

policing in Williamsport, participants stated that the department struggles to engage in community policing due to staffing issues and a lack of resources/funds. The participants expressed significant concern about the negative media and news portrayals of police; they were particularly frustrated about the public jumping to conclusions and blaming the police in situations where force is used by officers.

The purpose of the current study is to explore differences between community and police perceptions of police legitimacy and police-community relationships in Williamsport. Differences may indicate a disconnect in effective communication between the community and the Williamsport Police Department, which should be addressed in order to improve community-police relationships and promote police legitimacy in Williamsport. Two cross-sectional surveys were administered as part of this study: one survey designed for residents of Williamsport, and a second survey designed for police officers employed by the Williamsport Bureau of Police. The two surveys are compared in order to examine whether responses differ. Both surveys were approved by Williamsport Mayor Derek Slaughter, Williamsport Police Chief Justin Snyder, and the Lycoming College Institutional Review Board.

### **Research Question and Hypotheses**

This study specifically examines similarities and differences between community and police perceptions of policing and community-police relations in Williamsport. The following hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 1: Minority and low-income residents have more negative perceptions of policing in Williamsport than white and middle- to high-income residents.

Hypothesis 2: Minority and low-income residents have more negative perceptions of race and policing in Williamsport than white and middle- to high-income residents.

Hypothesis 3: Williamsport police officers have stronger perceptions of procedural justice than Williamsport residents.

Hypothesis 4: Williamsport police officers have more positive perceptions of policing in Williamsport than Williamsport residents.

Hypothesis 5: Williamsport residents have more negative perceptions of policing and race relations than Williamsport police officers.

## **Data and Methods**

### ***Williamsport Resident Survey***

The Williamsport resident survey expanded on the community survey that Lopez-Medina administered to two townships in Old Lycoming about the OLTPD (2017). There are several noteworthy differences between the OLTPD and the WBP. The OLTPD serves a much less diverse population than WBP officers (Lopez-Medina, 2017). In addition to this, the OLTPD is significantly smaller than WBP, employing only 8 full-time sworn officers (Old Lycoming Township, 2020). The purpose of the Williamsport resident survey was to evaluate residents' perceptions of policing in Williamsport and aspects of community-police relations.

### **Method.**

The target population for this survey was Williamsport residents. For this study, convenience sampling was used, in which respondents were selected to take the survey based on their convenience and availability to expedite data collection. The researcher, along with eight students in a criminal justice research methods course at Lycoming College, distributed the survey to residents of Williamsport over the age of 18 at various locations throughout the city. The research assistants followed a script while distributing the survey, which included a screening question to ensure that the survey was only being completed by permanent residents of



Williamsport. Survey locations included Williamsport Area School District sporting events, Lycoming College basketball games, community events, the bus station, and downtown Williamsport. These locations were selected because they generally attract large, diverse crowds comprised of mostly Williamsport residents.

Survey responses were collected over the course of six weeks from December 2021 through January 2022. Williamsport residents' responses were compiled through three different methods: (1) using iPads, which were loaned from Lycoming College, to submit responses electronically through the SurveyMonkey Anywhere app, (2) scanning a QR code with their phones to access the link to the survey and submit responses electronically through the SurveyMonkey website, and (3) recording their responses with a pen on a paper copy of the survey. Responses were anonymous and confidential, and no identifying information was collected. Candy was offered as an incentive to residents who completed the survey. A total of 137 Williamsport residents completed the survey.

### **Survey Design.**

The Williamsport resident survey consisted of 34 questions and took about ten minutes to complete. Residents were asked to give informed consent before starting the survey. Survey questions were grouped into five sections. First, residents were asked about their level of interaction with the Williamsport police in the past month. Next, residents were asked about their perceptions of the Williamsport Bureau of Police as an entire department. Survey items in this section focused on understanding residents' perceptions of effectiveness of the police department, by asking participants to rate their opinions about statements such as, "The WBP does a good job of communicating with residents," on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree; none of the time* to 5 = *strongly agree; all of the time*). The third group of

survey items was directed at understanding residents' perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy in Williamsport with 5-point Likert-scale responses (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The next section discussed policing and race relations, in which participants were asked to record their opinions about statements related to the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Questions about policing and race relations were asked in order to understand how these high-profile incidents and national responses influence the opinion of residents in small cities. An open-ended question was asked in order to capture any comments or concerns that the resident wanted to share about policing in Williamsport. Demographic characteristics were also compiled. Descriptive statistics from the Williamsport resident survey can be found in Table 1.

### ***Williamsport Police Survey***

The Williamsport police survey expanded on the Williamsport resident survey in order to gain further insight about police officers' perceptions of policing in Williamsport. Further, the Williamsport police survey was designed to be used in combination with the Williamsport community survey in order to compare police and community perceptions of policing and community-police relations in Williamsport. Specifically, this study compares community and police responses to variables including procedural justice, perceptions of policing in Williamsport, and perceptions of policing and race relations.

### **Method.**

The target population for this survey was officers employed by the Williamsport Bureau of Police (WBP). According to the City of Williamsport (2018), the WBP is budgeted for 52 police officers and four additional civilian personnel. Currently, there are 44 police officers

employed by the WBP. The researcher was granted the email addresses of all police officers employed by the department and sent an email to the officers including a link to the electronic survey. Williamsport police officers had three weeks to complete the survey, and the researcher sent three follow-up emails to remind officers of the survey deadline. A total of 16 officers completed the survey (participation rate = 35.56 percent); their responses were submitted and recorded electronically via Google Forms. Responses were anonymous and confidential; no identifying information was collected nor linked to participants' responses.

### **Survey Design.**

The Williamsport police survey included 26 questions and took less than ten minutes to complete. Officers were asked to give informed consent before completing the survey. An additional statement was added to clarify that officers' responses to the survey questions would have no effect on their employment. The police survey was divided into six different sections. First, officers were asked questions related to their level of interaction with Williamsport residents in the past month, with mostly "yes" or "no" responses. Similar to the resident survey, the second set of questions asked officers about their perceptions of the Williamsport Bureau of Police, as an entire department, with response categories on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree; none of the time* to 5 = *strongly agree; all of the time*). The third section of the police survey was almost identical to the survey items related to procedural justice in the resident survey, except the wording was tailored to speak to police officers. Next, officers were asked to rate their opinions on survey items related to residents' perceptions of police legitimacy in Williamsport using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Officers were asked the exact same questions as residents about policing and race relations, with the same response categories, in order to understand the perceptions of officers regarding the deaths of

people of color during encounters with police and how these incidents have affected their department. Similar to the Williamsport resident survey, a general open-ended question was asked about any additional comments and concerns related to community-police relations or policing in Williamsport. Demographic characteristics, including gender, age range, and education level, were also compiled. Descriptive statistics for the Williamsport police survey can be found in Table 2.

### ***Perceptions of Policing Scale***

To measure perceptions of policing in Williamsport, the researcher created and combined two scales: a procedural justice scale, and a legitimacy scale. The procedural justice scale variable was measured by calculating the average of responses to four survey items related to perceptions of the (1) fairness, (2) trustworthiness, (3) respectfulness, and (4) approachability of Williamsport police officers. Survey items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Scores of 1 indicate weak perceptions of procedural justice, while scores of 5 indicate strong perceptions of procedural justice. The legitimacy scale was created in a similar way to calculate the average of responses to four survey items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The legitimacy scale incorporated perceptions about whether residents would (1) work with WBP to address safety concerns in their neighborhood, (2) call WBP if they witnessed a crime occurring, (3) work with WBP to identify a suspect, and (4) feel comfortable talking with the Williamsport police. Procedural justice and legitimacy were measured for both Williamsport residents and Williamsport police.

### ***Perceptions of Policing and Race Relations Scale***

Perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport was calculated by measuring the average of participants' responses to four survey items about statements related to changes

that may have happened as a result of high-profile incidents involving the police and people of color in recent years. These survey items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The statements included residents' perceptions about whether (1) policing in Williamsport has become more dangerous for officers, (2) Williamsport officers are less willing to stop and question people who seem suspicious, (3) Williamsport officers have been more reluctant to use force when appropriate, and (4) interactions between Williamsport police and people of color have become more tense. Since these items are negatively worded, they were reverse coded in order to stay consistent with the meaning of the scales (i.e., scores of 1 indicate negative perceptions and scores of 5 indicate positive perceptions).

### **Analyses and Results**

Electronic survey responses from the Williamsport resident survey were exported from Survey Monkey into an excel file. The responses from the paper surveys were manually entered into the same excel file by the researcher. After all of the community responses were recorded, the excel file was imported into the SPSS statistical program. A similar process was completed for the Williamsport police survey; electronic survey responses from the Williamsport police survey were exported from Google Forms into an excel file and then transferred into SPSS. Once the data was in SPSS, categorical survey response variables were recoded into numbers and all negatively worded survey items were reverse coded. To compare community and police perceptions, a new spreadsheet was created in SPSS in order to merge the community and police responses for select survey items and variables into one document. In this new spreadsheet, an additional variable was created to distinguish the police survey responses from the resident survey responses.

## *Descriptive Statistics*

### **Williamsport Resident Survey Sample.**

The sample of Williamsport residents was 51 percent male, 46 percent female, and 3 percent non-binary. Age was evenly distributed across response categories; over half of participants were between the ages of 18 and 44. The racial breakdown was representative with that of Williamsport, with 70 percent of the sample made up of whites, followed by 19 percent black, and 6 percent multiracial. Less than five participants identified as Asian or Native Alaskan/American Indian (See Table 1). (Williamsport's population is approximately 80 percent white, followed by 13 percent black and 4 percent multiracial (United States Census Bureau, 2021)). The median annual household income of survey participants was between \$40,001 and \$60,000. This was slightly higher than the median annual household income in Williamsport, which was about \$41,000 in 2020 (United States Census Bureau, 2021).

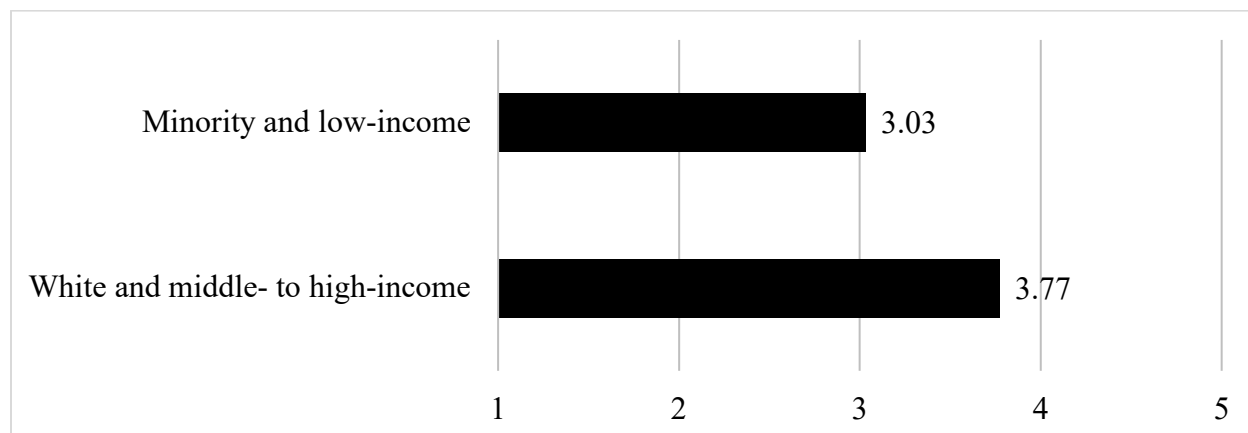
Over three quarters (76 percent) of respondents reported having lived in Williamsport for 11 years or longer. About 64 percent of participants knew a Williamsport police officer by name, but only one third of the sample reported following the WBP on any social media. Most participants did not report having frequent interactions with Williamsport police officers in the past month ( $\bar{x} = 1.84$ ). However, those that did interact with Williamsport police had somewhat positive interactions. Over half (58 percent) of participants had not observed an interaction between a Williamsport police officer and resident in the past month. The vast majority of participants had not seen officers interact with local business owners or employees nor attend community events/meetings in the past month (81 percent and 80 percent, respectively).

### **Williamsport Police Survey Sample.**

Williamsport police survey participants were overwhelmingly male (82 percent). Two out of the four female officers employed by the WBP completed the survey. Participants were fairly young; 62 percent were between the ages of 25-34. Most officers had either a college degree or some college (50 percent and 44 percent, respectively); only one officer reported having a GED or high school diploma. Almost 70 percent of the sample had been employed at WBP for over 11 years, 25 percent had between 5 and 10 years of employment with WBP, and one officer had 1 to 4 years with WBP. All participants reported having talked to residents of Williamsport while in uniform in the past month. Specifically, 81 percent of officers said they had talked to local business owners or employees (in uniform) in the past month. About a quarter of officers had attended a community meeting or community event in the past month (See Table 2).

### ***Results***

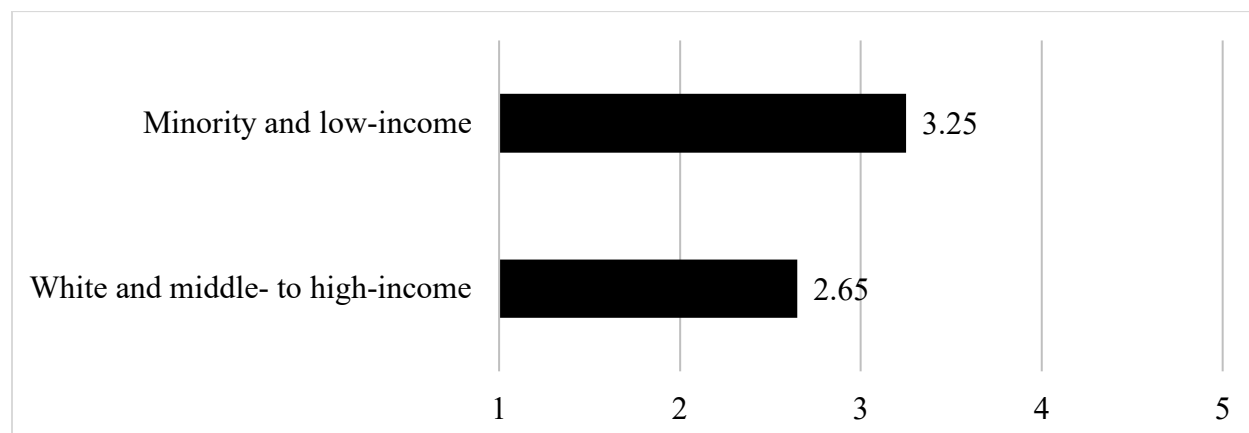
Overall, Williamsport residents had relatively positive perceptions of policing in Williamsport ( $\bar{x} = 3.53$ ) To test Hypothesis 1, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of policing in Williamsport between minority and low-income residents (annual household income of \$40,000 or less) and white and middle- to high-income residents (annual household income of more than \$40,000). There was a significant difference in perceptions of policing in Williamsport between minority and low-income residents ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ) and white and middle- to high-income residents ( $\bar{x} = 3.77, t = 2.46, p < 0.05$ ) (See Figure 1). On average, white and middle to high-income residents had significantly more positive perceptions of policing in Williamsport than minority and low-income residents.

**Figure 1. Perceptions of Policing in Williamsport**

On average, residents' perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport were rather neutral ( $\bar{x} = 2.85$ ). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport between minority and low-income residents and white and middle- to high-income residents (Hypothesis 2). There was a significant difference in perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport between minority and low-income residents ( $\bar{x} = 3.25$ ) and white and middle- to high-income residents ( $\bar{x} = 2.65$ ,  $t = -2.95$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) (see Figure 2). On average, white and middle to high-income residents had significantly more negative perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport than minority and low-income residents.

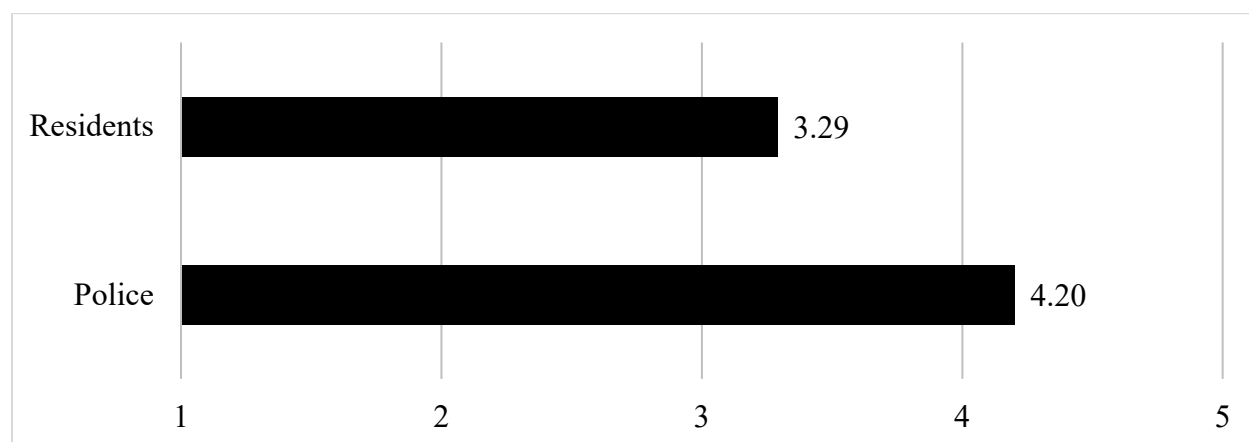


**Figure 2. Perceptions of Policing and Race Relations in Williamsport**



Hypothesis 3 was analyzed using an independent samples t-test to compare the perceptions of procedural justice between Williamsport residents and Williamsport police officers. There was a significant difference in perceptions of procedural justice between Williamsport residents ( $\bar{x} = 3.29$ ) and Williamsport police officers ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$ ,  $t = 6.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (see Figure 3). On average, Williamsport police officers reported significantly stronger perceptions of procedural justice than residents.

**Figure 3. Perceptions of Procedural Justice**



Another independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of policing in Williamsport between Williamsport residents and Williamsport police officers (Hypothesis 4). There was not a statistically significant difference in perceptions of policing in Williamsport

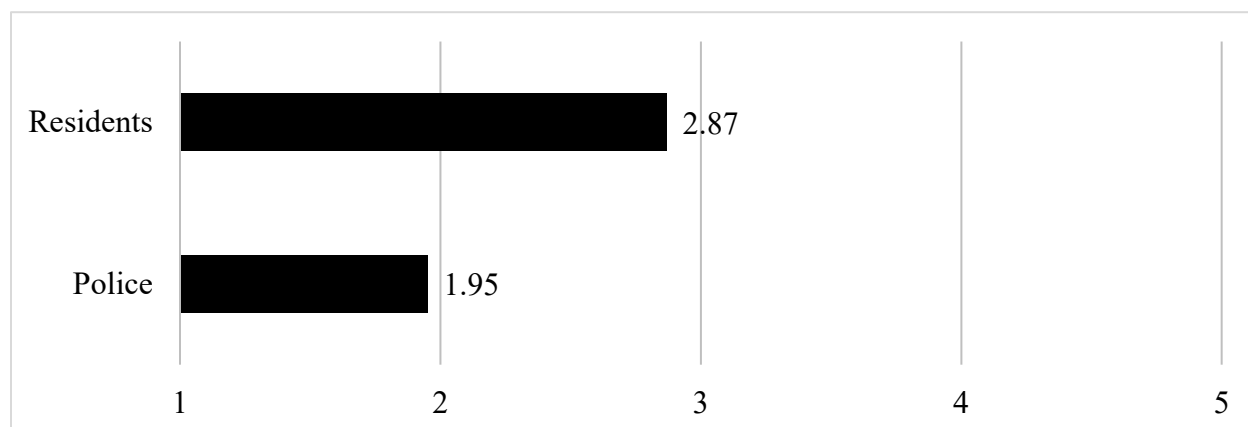
between Williamsport residents ( $\bar{x} = 3.53$ ) and Williamsport police officers ( $\bar{x} = 3.56$ ,  $t = .103$ ,  $p = 0.92$ ) (see Figure 4). Further, Williamsport residents and Williamsport police officers have similar perceptions of policing in Williamsport.

**Figure 4. Perceptions of Policing in Williamsport**



An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport between police officers and the community (Hypothesis 5). There was a significant difference in perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport between Williamsport residents ( $\bar{x} = 2.87$ ) and Williamsport police officers ( $\bar{x} = 1.95$ ,  $t = -4.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (See Figure 5). On average, police officers had significantly more negative perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport than residents.

**Figure 5. Perceptions of Policing and Race Relations in Williamsport**



At the end of each survey, there was a place for participants to leave any comments or concerns. 29 residents left open-ended comments, with both negative and positive feedback about policing in Williamsport. There were several prominent themes throughout residents' responses, including a call for the police and the community to collaborate, frustration with over-policing petty crimes, and a request for information about the mental health and de-escalation training that WBP officers receive. One resident commented, "The police and the community must come together to discuss, troubleshoot, and come up with viable solutions to our local issues." Six police officers left open-ended comments. These comments were largely focused on expressing their frustration with residents, the media, and a lack of resources. One officer commented, "...WBP needs more equipment with EMPHASIS on vehicles and other resources--perhaps a REAL POLICE DEPARTMENT BUILDING. WBP runs on minimum manpower constantly, which has a snowball effect on Officer(s) well-being," (emphasis in original) highlighting the lack of resources available to smaller, local police departments.

## **Discussion**

For the most part, the survey results aligned with the prior research on community-police relations that was conducted in larger cities with large police departments. However, the findings also highlighted some differences between small city police departments compared to the prior research conducted on large police departments. There was evidence to support Hypothesis 1; minority and low-income residents of Williamsport had more negative perceptions of policing in Williamsport than white and middle- to high-income residents. Another group within the sample that had more negative perceptions of policing in Williamsport was black men. Specifically, black men between the ages of 18-34 had more negative perceptions of policing in Williamsport compared to the overall sample. This aligns with the research conducted by Lowery et al. (2020)

and DeSilver et al. (2020), where they found that black Americans are more likely to report that black people are treated less fairly than white people by police. This is usually attributed to the higher rates of enforcement interaction between black people and the police, but that was not the case for this sample. On average, black men between the ages of 18 and 34 reported having less interactions with the police than the average number of interactions for the entire sample ( $\bar{x}$  = 0.78 and  $\bar{x}$  = 1.84, respectively). There was also a correlation between age and perceptions of policing in Williamsport. Residents between the ages of 35-65+ have more positive perceptions of policing in Williamsport than residents between the ages of 18-34. This could be due to the increased use of social media by younger generations compared to older adults, as images, videos, and articles about police brutality or police misconduct in Williamsport seem to gain more traction on social media compared to newspapers and local news channels.

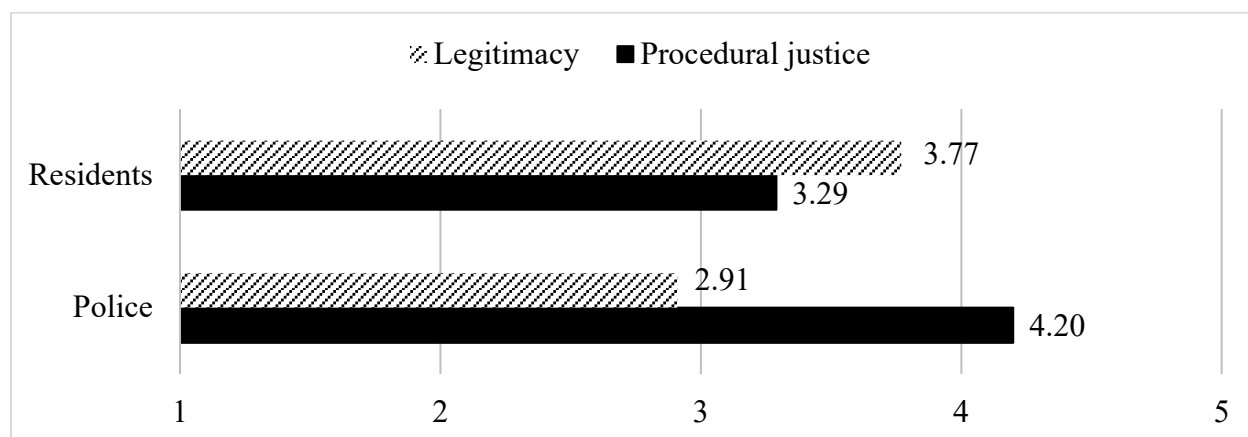
Hypotheses 2 was not supported, but the results were statistically significant in the opposite direction. White and middle- to high-income residents of Williamsport had more negative perceptions of policing and race relations in Williamsport compared to minority and low-income residents. One question in the policing and race relations section of the survey (which was not incorporated into the measurement of the policing and race relations dependent variable) was “Do you think the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years are isolated incidents or reflective of larger issues within policing as an institution?” This question was adapted from the survey in the Behind the Badge report (Morin et al., 2017). About half (48 percent) of white and middle- to high-income residents said isolated incidents, while minority and low-income residents were more likely to say reflective of larger issues (69 percent). So, although white and middle- to high-income residents of Williamsport thought that high-profile incidents involving use of force by police against people of color have caused

policing and race relations to become more negative, they were less likely to perceive these incidents as reflective of larger issues within policing compared to low-income and minority residents. Since low income and minority residents are likely to say that high profile incidents of use of force by police against people of color are reflective of larger issues within policing, it makes sense that they may not perceive these incidents to have a particularly negative impact on policing and race relations. Further, low income and minority residents may perceive policing and race relations to be unchanging over time.

There was evidence to support Hypothesis 3; Williamsport police officers had stronger perceptions of procedural justice than residents, which aligns with the literature examining police perceptions of community-police relationships conducted by Morin et al. (2017) and Gau and Paoline (2019). Prior research found that “officers rated themselves highly in terms of ethical and moral merit, while they were more ambivalent about how positively they believe the public perceives them” (Gau & Paoline, 2019, p. 292). Gau and Paoline (2019) reported that officers overestimate their ethical and moral standards in order to legitimize their own authority.

The statistical evidence did not support Hypothesis 4; Williamsport residents and Williamsport police officers have similar overall perceptions of policing. However, it is noteworthy to discuss where resident and police perceptions diverge. Although police had stronger perceptions of procedural justice than residents, police had much weaker perceptions of residents’ perceived legitimacy compared to residents’ perceived legitimacy (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Perceptions of Legitimacy and Procedural Justice**



Hypothesis 5 was not supported by evidence; however, the results were statistically significant. Williamsport police officers were significantly more likely to report that policing and race relations in Williamsport have worsened. However, in response to the survey question, “Do you think the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years are isolated incidents or reflective of larger issues within policing as an institution?”, officers were much more likely to answer “isolated incidents” than residents (100 percent and 41 percent, respectively). Since Williamsport police are more likely to perceive the high-profile deaths of people of color during encounters with police as isolated incidents, they may feel that the recent media attention on police brutality has led to a strong, negative impact on policing and race relations in Williamsport. On the other hand, since 59 percent of Williamsport residents said these high-profile incidents were reflective of larger issues within policing, residents may view the deaths of people of color as an inherent feature of policing rather than an atypical occurrence. Further, residents may feel as though policing and race relations have not worsened, but rather remained the same over time.

There were two additional survey items that generated responses from police officers and residents that were significantly different. First, police officers generally disagreed with the statement “Residents understand the risks and challenges that officers face on the job” ( $\bar{x} = 1.56$ ). On the other hand, residents generally felt neutral or had some level of agreement toward the statement “I understand the risks and challenges that officers face on the job” ( $\bar{x} = 3.57, t = -10.56, p < .001$ ). This is consistent with prior research, which found that the largest disparity in survey responses was responses to whether the public understands the risks that officers face (83 percent of the public say they do, but almost 90 percent of police say they do not) (Morin et al., 2017). Following this, Williamsport police officers strongly disagreed with the statement “WBP has an adequate number of officers to combat crime in the Williamsport” ( $\bar{x} = 1.19$ ), while residents felt neutral about this statement ( $\bar{x} = 2.69, t = -8.59, p < .01$ ).

Overall, Williamsport residents have somewhat positive perceptions of police in Williamsport. However, minority and low-income residents, as well as younger residents, have weaker perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy. This is consistent with prior research on community-police relations in larger cities with larger police departments. After comparing the community and police survey responses, it is evident that residents of Williamsport have stronger perceptions of police legitimacy than Williamsport police think they do. In addition to this, both police officers and white and middle to high-income residents were more likely to report that high-profile incidents involving the police and people of color have negatively impacted policing and race relations in Williamsport than minority and low-income residents.

### ***Limitations***

This study adds insight into the community-police relations in smaller cities by using survey data to compare police and community perceptions in a small city located in a rural area

for the first time. Although the empirical findings reported are valuable, it is important to highlight some of the limitations with the study. Since convenience sampling was used, this study could not guarantee a representative sample of Williamsport residents nor Williamsport police officers. This is a limitation because people who feel more strongly about policing and community-police relations in Williamsport may be more inclined to participate. Further, responses may reflect more extreme values or opinions within the target population. Another limitation is that both surveys had relatively small sample sizes, which could limit the generalizability of the results from the study. The use of convenience sampling and small sample sizes were due to time constraints and a lack of resources necessary to obtain a larger sample size. This study is also limited in the sense that community residents' perceptions of police are largely based on their personal interactions with police, and it is not possible to control for these interactions in the current study. In addition to this, there were several questions that the researcher was not able to ask. For example, the researcher could not ask respondents about their own criminal behavior or criminal record due to Institutional Review Board restrictions. This is a limitation because individuals with criminal records may be more likely to report having negative interactions with police officers. For the police survey, the researcher could not ask about officers' race because there is only one black officer employed by WBP. Further, asking Williamsport police officers about race would have eroded anonymity and confidentiality. Despite these limitations, this study still offers valuable findings about community-police relations in a small city.

### ***Recommendations and Future Research***

This research can provide several recommendations for the Williamsport community, the Williamsport Bureau of Police, and future research. Since procedurally just policing focuses on



the shared values and beliefs of officers and residents, recommendations are put forth with consideration to the shared values in Williamsport. Several residents and police officers of Williamsport commented that the media has a negative impact on police-community relations. To address this, the WBP should develop relationships with local media outlets and utilize social media to promote the positive portrayal of Williamsport police officers (International Associations of Chiefs of Police, 2018). The predominant local media outlets that cover Williamsport news include PennLive.com, NorthcentralPA.com, On the PULSE News, and the Williamsport Sun Gazette. Second, a large number of respondents reported not seeing police officers at local businesses or community events/meetings within the past month. Increasing non-enforcement interactions between the police and citizens can significantly improve community-police relations (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2018; Peyton et al., 2019). Community stakeholders and mentors should be encouraged to participate in programs that increase community trust, such as citizen police academies, Neighborhood Watch, and National Night Out initiatives (International Associations of Chiefs of Police, 2018). Community stakeholders and local law enforcement leaders should work together to establish a time and space for transparent discussions to take place between WBP and residents, particularly about community concerns with criminal activity, police activity, or to convey information about department policies, trainings, and events (United States Department of Justice, 2015).

The negative experiences that minorities have been subjected to by police should be acknowledged and addressed, in order to improve trust and repair relations (United States Department of Justice, 2015). This can be done through acknowledging the history of policing, as well as establishing duty to intervene policies and using favorable discretion (International Associations of Chiefs of Police, 2018). It is important to note the history of Williamsport when

working to improve the negative perceptions of minority and low-income residents. In the 1990s, the city of Williamsport was referred to as “Miracle City” because of the substance abuse rehabilitation facilities and social services offered to those seeking help, which resulted in “the influx,” where thousands of recovering people, many of whom were black, came and settled in Williamsport (Treadwell, 1992). However, these newcomers faced hostility by the Williamsport community, and there was a clearly racist aspect to the aggression (Treadwell, 1992). As the black population in Williamsport increased, there were threatening fliers posted on telephone poles to advertise meetings of the Ku Klux Klan and residents’ misguided fear over increased crime (Hinds, 1991; Treadwell, 1992). At one point, a \$350,000 state grant intended to construct housing for low-income families went unused because members of City Council feared that low-income housing would “draw more street people from the inner cities” (Treadwell, 1992; para. 22). This cannot be ignored as the trauma faced by “the influx people” has been passed down through generations. This history has generated a mutual sense of distrust and unease between city officials (including city council and police officers) and low-income and minority residents of Williamsport. The result of this is longstanding resentments from both sides, which inhibits police legitimacy and police-community relations. This history must be acknowledged and addressed to move forward and strengthen community-police relations to improve policing in Williamsport. In addition to this, procedurally just policing should be utilized in order to enhance procedural justice and legitimacy for marginalized groups within Williamsport.

Additional research should be conducted on the dynamics of community-police relations in small cities with police agencies, especially considering these type of agencies employs the majority of police officers in the United States. Future studies should include larger sample sizes for both surveys to obtain a sample that is more representative of the target population, yielding

more accurate and reliable data. Random sampling should be utilized, when possible. Another recommendation for future research is to include more ratio-level variables and open-ended questions on both surveys. For example, future surveys could ask residents to state the exact number of years they have lived in the community and ask police to provide the exact number of years that they have been employed with the department (instead of using categorical response variables). Ratio-level variables are more suitable for a wide variety of tests used to conduct statistical analyses, and open-ended survey questions allow for greater insight into residents' rationale or explanation behind their perceptions.

### **Conclusion**

The rapid deterioration of police legitimacy and community-police relations in the United States has received growing attention by scholars, media outlets, communities, and police departments. Particularly, the research demonstrating the importance of legitimacy and community-police relationships in improving the safety of communities raises pressing concerns about the current state of police legitimacy in America. The research on this topic is largely focused on examining residents' perceptions of community-police relationships and police legitimacy in large police departments serving big cities across the United States, instead of small, municipal police departments that employ the majority of officers in the country. By surveying both community residents and police officers of Williamsport, this study adds invaluable insight regarding both perspectives of the current standing of community-police relationships and police legitimacy in area with a small police department with a small, yet diverse, service population.

This study found that the national trend of weakening police legitimacy and community-police relations is relevant to small cities with small police departments, particularly for low-

income and minority residents and young, black men. In Williamsport, it is important to acknowledge the local history that created the mutual sense of distrust between police officers and low-income, minority residents. Moving forward, the historical forces of racial inequality in Williamsport must be acknowledged and addressed by both leaders within the community and the Williamsport Bureau of Police so that trust and collaboration can be built between the police and the community. In order to promote the safety of both residents and police officers, policing must be improved in a way that strengthens perceptions of legitimacy and procedural justice, especially by those who are disfavored.

Despite the differences between community and police perceptions of policing, the strong points of policing and the community-police relationship in Williamsport must be recognized and commended. Overall, residents' perceptions of policing and community-police relations in Williamsport were more positive than police officers projected. Residents are generally willing to work with Williamsport police officers, and there are several opportunities for collaboration between the police and community that can help build trust, understanding, and enhance the safety and well-being of both the Williamsport community and Williamsport police officers.

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## Tables

**Table 1. Williamsport Community Survey Responses (n = 136)**

Variable	N	%
<b>Level of Interaction with Williamsport Police</b>		
How long have you lived in Williamsport?		
<i>Less than one year</i>	8	5.93%
<i>1-4 years</i>	17	12.59%
<i>5-10 years</i>	8	5.93%
<i>11+ years</i>	102	75.56%
Do you know any Williamsport police officers by name?		
<i>Yes</i>	86	63.70%
<i>No</i>	49	36.30%
Do you follow the Williamsport Bureau of Police on any social media?		
<i>Yes</i>	45	33.33%
<i>No</i>	90	66.67%
	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Range</b>
How many times have you interacted with a Williamsport police officer in the past month?	1.84 (2.11)	0 – 10
Overall, have these interactions been positive or negative?	3.65 (1.46)	1 – 5
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
In the past month, have you seen a uniformed police officer talk to residents of Williamsport?		
<i>Yes</i>	57	42.22%
<i>No</i>	78	57.78%
In the past month, have you seen a uniformed police officer talk to local business owners or employees?		
<i>Yes</i>	25	18.66%
<i>No</i>	109	81.34%
In the past month, have you seen a uniform police officer attend a community event or meeting?		
<i>Yes</i>	27	20.00%
<i>No</i>	108	80.00%

**Table 1. Williamsport Community Survey Responses (n = 136)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Survey Questions About the Williamsport Bureau of Police</b>		
There are not enough police officers to combat crime in Williamsport.	3.31	1.15
Crime is increasing in Williamsport.	3.66	1.02
The Williamsport Bureau of Police does not do a good job communicating with residents.	3.02	1.17
The Williamsport Bureau of Police does a good job of protecting the community against crime.	3.26	1.10
The Williamsport Bureau of Police is engaging in community policing.	3.00	1.05
<b>Survey Questions about Williamsport Police Officers</b>		
Williamsport police officers are trustworthy.	3.29	1.26
Williamsport police officers are fair and objective.	3.23	1.17
Williamsport police officers are not approachable.	2.72	1.30
Williamsport police officers are respectful.	3.35	1.15
I feel comfortable talking with the police.	3.53	1.40
I do not understand the risks and challenges that Williamsport police officers face on the job.	2.43	1.29
I would voluntarily work with the Williamsport Bureau of Police to address safety concerns in my neighborhood.	3.51	1.19
I would not call the Williamsport Bureau of Police if I witnessed a crime occurring.	1.95	1.20
I would not work with the Williamsport Bureau of Police to identify a person who committed a crime in my neighborhood.	2.00	1.24

**Table 1. Williamsport Community Survey Responses (n = 136)**

Variable	N	%
<b>Survey Questions about Race and Policing</b>		
Do you think the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years are isolated incidents or reflective of larger issues within policing as an institution?		
<i>Isolated incidents</i>	50	40.98%
<i>Reflective of larger issues within policing</i>	72	59.02%
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Policing in Williamsport has become more dangerous for officers.	3.44	1.12
Williamsport police officers are less willing to stop and question people who seem suspicious.	2.48	1.10
Interactions between police and people of color in Williamsport have become more tense.	3.66	0.96
Officers have become more reluctant to use force when it is appropriate.	2.89	1.12
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
What is your gender identity?		
<i>Male</i>	62	51.24%
<i>Female</i>	55	45.45%
<i>Non-binary</i>	4	3.31%
What is your current age range?		
<i>18-24</i>	21	17.50%
<i>25-34</i>	31	25.83%
<i>35-44</i>	22	18.33%
<i>45-54</i>	21	17.50%
<i>55-64</i>	10	8.33%
<i>65+</i>	15	12.50%

<b>Table 1. Williamsport Community Survey Responses (n = 136)</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>		
What is your race?		
<i>American Indian or Alaska Native</i>	3	2.54%
<i>Asian</i>	2	1.69%
<i>Black</i>	23	19.49%
<i>Multiracial</i>	7	5.93%
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	0	0.00%
<i>White</i>	83	70.34%
Please specify your ethnicity.		
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	9	7.96%
<i>Not Hispanic or Latino</i>	104	92.04%
What is the highest level of education you have completed?		
<i>No high school diploma</i>	6	5.04%
<i>High school diploma or GED; Some college</i>	47	39.50%
<i>College Degree</i>	36	30.25%
<i>Graduate Degree</i>	30	25.21%
What is your annual household income?		
<i>Under \$20,000</i>	13	11.30%
<i>\$20,001 to \$40,000</i>	25	21.74%
<i>\$40,001 to \$60,000</i>	17	14.78%
<i>\$60,001 to \$80,000</i>	18	15.65%
<i>\$80,001 to \$100,000</i>	15	13.04%
<i>Over \$100,001</i>	27	23.48%
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Procedural Justice Scale		
<i>Trust</i>	3.29	0.99
<i>Fairness and Objectiveness</i>	3.29	1.26
<i>Approachability (recoded)</i>	3.23	1.17
<i>Respectfulness</i>	3.28	1.30
Legitimacy Scale		
<i>Work with WBP to address safety concerns</i>	3.35	1.15
<i>Call WBP if witness to a crime occurring</i>	3.77	0.95
<i>Work with WBP to identify a suspect</i>	3.51	1.19
<i>Feel comfortable talking with police</i>	4.04	1.20
	4.00	1.25
	3.53	1.40

<b>Table 1. Williamsport Community Survey Responses (n = 136)</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Perceptions of Race and Policing in Williamsport Scale	3.12	0.69
<i>Policing has become more dangerous for officers</i>	3.44	1.12
<i>Officers are less likely to stop suspicious individuals</i>	2.48	1.10
<i>Interactions between police and people of color have become more tense</i>	3.66	0.96
<i>Officers have been more reluctant to use force when appropriate.</i>	2.89	1.12
Perceptions of Policing in Williamsport Scale	3.53	0.89
<i>Procedural Justice</i>	3.29	0.99
<i>Legitimacy</i>	3.77	0.95

**Table 2. Williamsport Police Survey Responses (n = 16)**

Variable	N	%
<b>Level of Interaction with Williamsport Residents</b>		
How long have you been employed by the WBP?		
<i>Less than one year</i>	0	0.00%
<i>1-4 years</i>	1	6.25%
<i>5-10 years</i>	11	68.75%
<i>11+ years</i>	4	25.00%
In the past month, have you (in uniform) talked to residents of Williamsport?		
<i>Yes</i>	16	100.00%
<i>No</i>	0	0.00%
In the past month, have you (in uniform) talked to local business owners or employees?		
<i>Yes</i>	13	81.25%
<i>No</i>	3	18.75%
In the past month, have you (in uniform) attended a community meeting or event?		
<i>Yes</i>	4	25.00%
<i>No</i>	12	75.00%
In the past month, have you (in uniform) facilitated or attended a meeting specifically about crime or crime prevention?		
<i>Yes</i>	4	25.00%
<i>No</i>	12	75.00%
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Survey Questions About the Williamsport Bureau of Police</b>		
The WBP does not have an adequate number of police officers to combat crime in Williamsport.	4.81	0.40
The Williamsport Bureau of Police does not do a good job communicating with residents.	2.50	0.89
The Williamsport Bureau of Police does a good job of protecting the community against crime.	3.87	0.72
The Williamsport Bureau of Police is engaging in community policing.	2.81	1.38

**Table 2. Williamsport Police Survey Responses (n = 16)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Survey Questions about Job as a Williamsport Police Officer</b>		
It is important to gain the trust of residents as part of my job.	4.25	0.93
It is important to be fair and objective during interactions with Williamsport residents.	4.94	0.25
It is not important to be approachable while working in Williamsport.	2.56	1.37
It is important to be respectful during interactions with Williamsport residents	4.19	0.83
<b>Survey Questions about Williamsport Residents</b>		
Williamsport residents feel comfortable talking with the police.	3.44	0.73
Williamsport residents do not understand the risks and challenges that Williamsport police officers face on the job.	4.44	0.81
Williamsport residents would voluntarily work with the Williamsport Bureau of Police to address safety concerns in their neighborhood.	2.38	0.81
Williamsport residents would not call the Williamsport Bureau of Police if they witnessed a crime being committed.	2.81	0.91
Most Williamsport residents would work with Williamsport police officers to identify a person who committed a crime in their neighborhood	2.63	1.36

<b>Table 2. Williamsport Police Survey Responses (n = 16)</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Survey Questions about Race and Policing</b>		
Do you think the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years are isolated incidents or reflective of larger issues within policing as an institution?		
<i>Isolated incidents</i>	16	100.00%
<i>Reflective of larger issues within policing</i>	0	0.00%
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Policing in Williamsport has become more dangerous for officers.	4.56	0.63
Officers have become less willing to stop and question people who seem suspicious.	3.81	0.98
Interactions between police and people of color in Williamsport have become more tense.	3.81	0.98
Officers have become more reluctant to use force when it is appropriate.	4.00	1.10
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Demographic Features</b>		
What is your gender identity?		
<i>Male</i>	14	87.50%
<i>Female</i>	2	12.50%
<i>Non-binary</i>	0	0.00%
What is your current age range?		
<i>18-24</i>	0	0.00%
<i>25-34</i>	10	62.50%
<i>35-44</i>	3	18.75%
<i>45-54</i>	3	18.75%
<i>55-64</i>	0	0.00%
<i>65+</i>	0	0.00%
What is the highest level of education you have completed?		
<i>No high school diploma</i>	0	0.00%
<i>High school diploma or GED</i>	1	6.25%
<i>Some college</i>	7	43.75%
<i>College degree</i>	8	50.00%

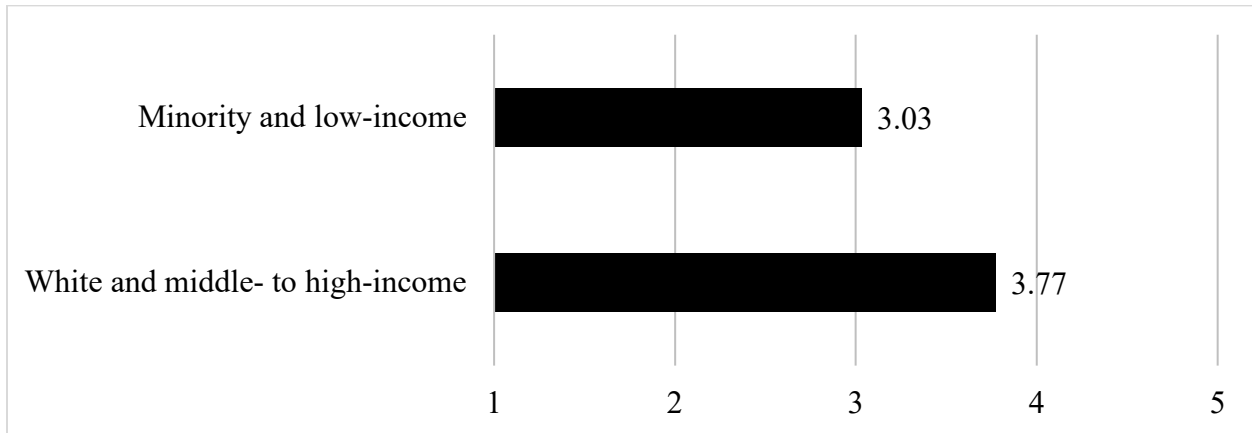


<b>Table 2. Williamsport Police Survey Responses (n = 16)</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Procedural Justice Scale	4.20	0.49
<i>Trust</i>	4.25	0.93
<i>Fairness and Objectiveness</i>	4.94	0.25
<i>Approachability</i>	3.44	1.36
<i>Respectfulness</i>	4.19	0.83
Legitimacy Scale	2.91	0.71
<i>Work with WBP to address safety concerns</i>	2.38	0.81
<i>Call WBP if witness to a crime occurring</i>	3.19	0.91
<i>Work with WBP to identify a suspect</i>	2.63	1.36
<i>Feel comfortable talking with police</i>	3.44	0.73
Perceptions of Race and Policing in Williamsport Scale	4.05	0.72
<i>Officers have become more concerned about their safety.</i>	4.56	0.63
<i>Officers are less likely to stop suspicious individuals</i>	3.81	0.98
<i>Interactions between police and people of color have become more tense</i>	3.81	0.98
<i>Officers have been more reluctant to use force when appropriate.</i>	4.00	1.09
Perceptions of Policing in Williamsport Scale	3.56	0.43
<i>Procedural Justice</i>	4.20	0.49
<i>Legitimacy</i>	2.91	0.71

## Figures

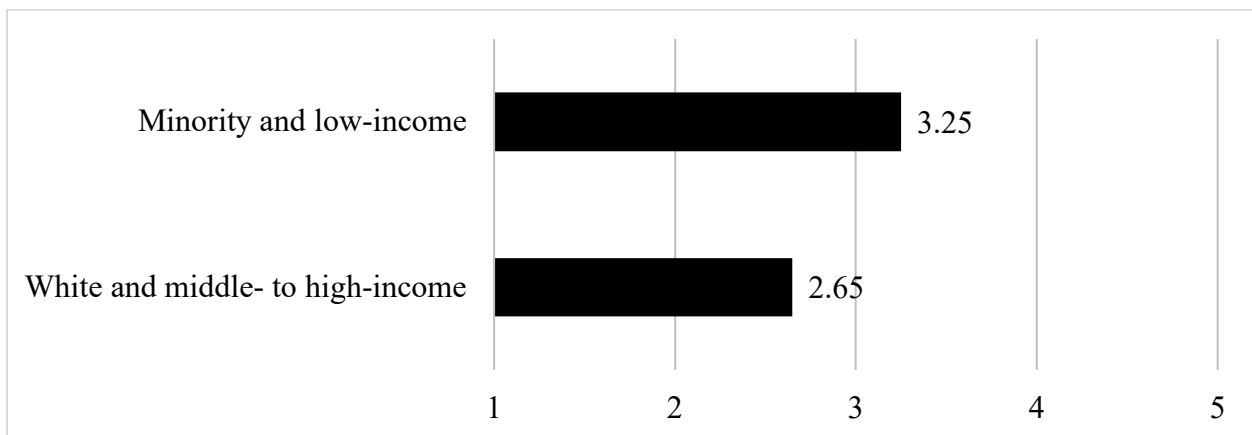
**Figure 1.**

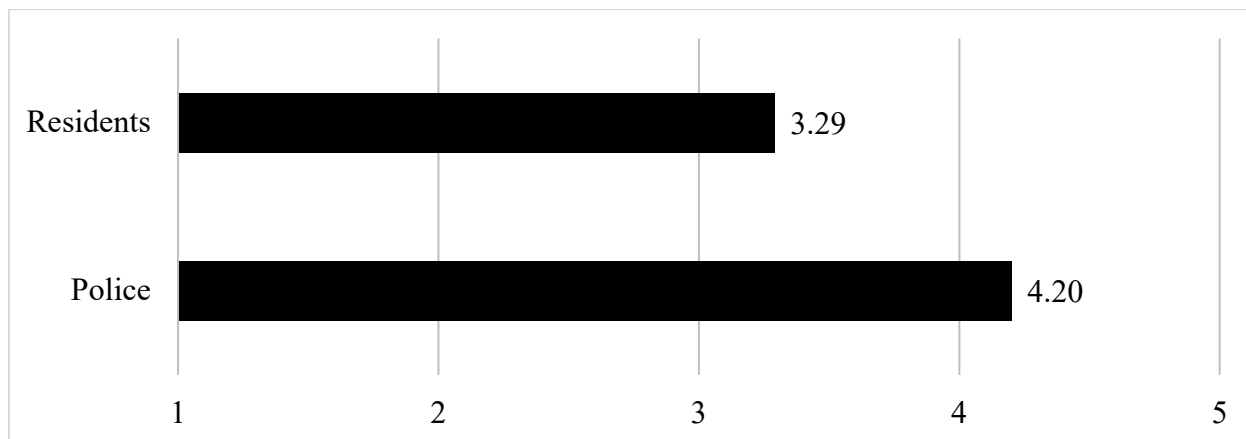
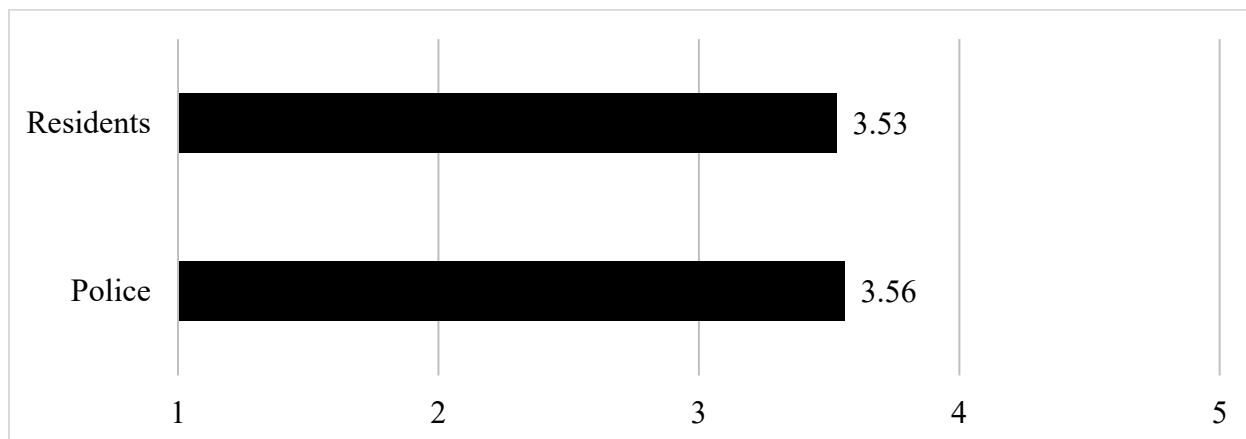
*Perceptions of Policing in Williamsport*



**Figure 2.**

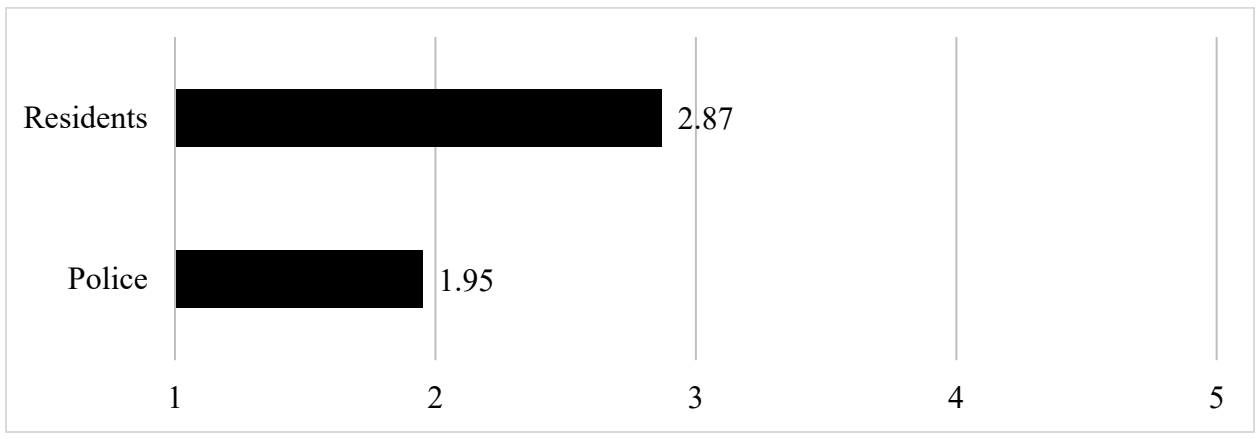
*Perceptions of Policing and Race Relations in Williamsport*



**Figure 3.***Perceptions of Procedural Justice***Figure 4.***Perceptions of Policing in Williamsport*

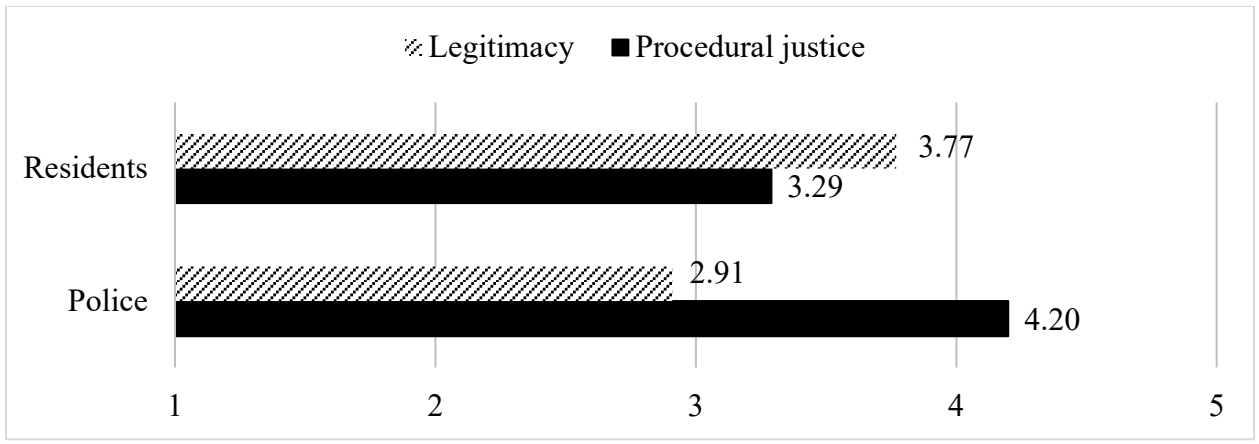
**Figure 5.**

*Perceptions of Policing and Race Relations in Williamsport*



**Figure 6.**

*Perceptions of Legitimacy and Procedural Justice*



## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Williamsport Resident Survey**

#### **I. Description of the Survey**

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be asked a series of questions about your view of the Williamsport police department, Williamsport police officers, and the community-police relationship in Williamsport. The purpose of this survey is to gain insight regarding the community-police relationship from the perspective of Williamsport community members. The information produced through this survey may be used by the Williamsport Bureau of Police to identify aspects of the relationship between the community and police that can be improved. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

#### **II. Risks and Inconveniences**

There is a possibility that some of the topics covered in the survey may make you feel uncomfortable. This rarely happens, but if you do feel uncomfortable, you can do any of the following: you can choose not to answer certain questions, you can take a break and continue later, or you can choose to not complete the survey.

#### **III. Benefits**

This study was not designed to benefit you directly, however, what we learn from the study may help us to better understand the community-police relationship in Williamsport and identify aspects that can be improved to benefit the city.

#### **IV. Informed Consent**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. By agreeing to answer the survey questions, you are giving your consent to participate.

#### **V. Anonymity and Confidentiality**

To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you such as your name, email address, or IP address. Your responses to the survey will be recorded and stored in a password protected electronic format. The researcher can write about the results of the study, but your identity will not be associated with your responses.

**VI. Researcher Information**

Francesca Patetta, a student from Lycoming College's Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, is conducting the survey. She can be contacted at [patfran@lycoming.edu](mailto:patfran@lycoming.edu). Her faculty supervisor for this project is Dr. Kerry Richmond, the chair of the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology. Dr. Richmond can be reached at [richmond@lycoming.edu](mailto:richmond@lycoming.edu).

**VII. Lycoming College Institutional Review Board**

This survey was approved by Lycoming College's Institutional Review Board. If you have questions related to the IRB at Lycoming College, please contact the chair of the IRB, Dr. Tina Norton, at [norton@lycoming.edu](mailto:norton@lycoming.edu).

**Level of Interaction with Williamsport Police**

1. How long have you lived in Williamsport?

- Less than one year  
 1-5 years  
 6-10 years  
 11+ years

2. Do you know any Williamsport police officers by name?

- Yes  
 No

3. Do you follow the Williamsport Bureau of Police on any social media?

- Yes  
 No

4. How many times have you interacted with a Williamsport police officer in the past month?

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |     |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
|   | 0                        | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7                        | 8                        | 9                        | 10                       |     |
| 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10+ |

5. Overall, have these interactions been positive or negative?

- |                 |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Mostly negative | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | Mostly positive |
|                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                 |

6. In the past month, have you seen a uniformed police officer:

	Yes	No
talk to residents of Williamsport?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
talk to local business owners or employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
attend a community event or meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Survey Questions about the Williamsport Bureau of Police (as an Entire Department)**

1. There are not enough police officers to combat crime in Williamsport.  
 Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree  
                                                 

2. Crime is increasing in Williamsport.  
 Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree  
                                                 

3. The Williamsport Bureau of Police does not do a good job communicating with residents.  
 None of the time    1    2    3    4    5    All of the time  
                                                 

4. The Williamsport Bureau of Police does a good job of protecting the community against crime.  
 None of the time    1    2    3    4    5    All of the time  
                                                 

5. The Williamsport Bureau of Police is engaging in community policing.  
 Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

### Survey Questions about Williamsport Police Officers

1. Williamsport police officers are trustworthy.

None of the time	1	2	3	4	5	All of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2. Williamsport police officers are fair and objective.

None of the time	1	2	3	4	5	All of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Williamsport police officers are not approachable.

None of the time	1	2	3	4	5	All of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. Williamsport police officers are respectful.

None of the time	1	2	3	4	5	All of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

5. I feel comfortable talking with the police.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6. I do not understand the risks and challenges that Williamsport police officers face on the job.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

7. I would voluntarily work with the Williamsport Bureau of Police to address safety concerns in my neighborhood.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

8. I would not call the Williamsport Bureau of Police if I witnessed a crime occurring.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



9. I would not work with the Williamsport Bureau of Police if I witnessed a crime occurring.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

**Policing and Race Relations**

1. Do you think the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years are isolated incidents or reflective of larger issues within policing as an institution?

- Isolated incidents
- Reflective of larger issues within policing

2. Here is a list of things that may have happened in some police departments as a result of high-profile incidents involving the police and people of color. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree that this is the case for Williamsport police officers.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Policing in Williamsport has become more dangerous for officers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Williamsport police officers are less willing to stop and question people who seem suspicious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officers have been more reluctant to use force when it is appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interactions between police and people of color in Williamsport have become more tense.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments and Concerns**

Is there anything else you would like to share about your perception of policing and the community-police relationship in Williamsport?

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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate your time in offering input on the community-police relationship in Williamsport. The final section of this survey will ask you a few questions regarding your demographics.**

1. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary

2. What is your current age range?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

3. What is your race?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black
- Multiracial
- Pacific Islander
- White

4. Please specify your ethnicity.

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No High School Diploma
- High School Diploma/GED; Some College
- College Degree
- Graduate Degree

6. What is your annual household income?

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,001 to \$40,000
- \$40,001 to \$60,000
- \$60,001 to \$80,000
- \$80,001 to \$100,000
- Over \$100,001

## **Appendix B: Williamsport Police Survey**

### **I. Description of the Survey**

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will be asked a series of questions about your view of the Williamsport police department, your job as a Williamsport police officer, and your perception of the community-police relationship in Williamsport. The purpose of this survey is to gain insight regarding the community-police relationship from the perspective of Williamsport police officers. The information produced through this survey may be used by the Williamsport Bureau of Police to identify aspects of the relationship between the community and police that can be improved. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

### **II. Risks and Inconveniences**

There is a possibility that some of the topics covered in the survey may make you feel uncomfortable. This rarely happens, but if you do feel uncomfortable, you can do any of the following: you can choose not to answer certain questions, you can take a break and continue later, or you can choose to not complete the survey.

### **III. Benefits**

This study was not designed to benefit you directly, however, what we learn from the study may help us to better understand the community-police relationship in Williamsport and identify aspects that can be improved to benefit the Williamsport Bureau of Police as well as the city of Williamsport.

### **IV. Informed Consent**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences. By agreeing to answer the survey questions, you are giving your consent to participate.

### **V. Anonymity and Confidentiality**

To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you such as your name, email address, or IP address. Your responses to the survey will be recorded and stored in a password protected electronic format. The researcher can write about the results of the study, but your identity will not be associated with your responses. Your responses to the survey questions will have no effect on your employment.

**VI. Researcher Information**

Francesca Patetta, a student from Lycoming College's Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, is conducting the survey. She can be contacted at patfran@lycoming.edu. Her faculty supervisor for this project is Dr. Kerry Richmond, the chair of the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology. Dr. Richmond can be reached at richmond@lycoming.edu.

**VII. Lycoming College Institutional Review Board**

This survey was approved by Lycoming College's Institutional Review Board. If you have questions related to the IRB at Lycoming College, please contact the chair of the IRB, Dr. Tina Norton, at norton@lycoming.edu.

**Level of Interaction with Williamsport Residents**

1. How long have you been employed by the Williamsport Bureau of Police?

- Less than one year
- 2-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 11+ years

2. In the past month, have you (in uniform):

	Yes	No
talked to residents of Williamsport?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
talked to local business owners or employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
attended a community event or meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
facilitated or attended a meeting specifically about crime or crime prevention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Survey Questions about the Williamsport Bureau of Police (as an Entire Department)**

1. The Williamsport Bureau of Police does not have an adequate number of officers to combat crime in Williamsport.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2. The Williamsport Bureau of Police does not do a good job communicating with residents.

None of the time	1	2	3	4	5	All of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. The Williamsport Bureau of Police does a good job of protecting the community against crime.

None of the time	1	2	3	4	5	All of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. The Williamsport Bureau of Police is engaging in community policing.

Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Survey Questions About Williamsport Residents**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Williamsport residents feel comfortable talking with the police.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Williamsport residents do not understand the risks and challenges that Williamsport police face on the job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Williamsport residents would voluntarily work with Williamsport police officers to address safety concerns in their neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most Williamsport residents would not call the Williamsport Bureau of Police if they witnessed a crime being committed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most Williamsport residents would work with Williamsport police officers to identify a person who committed a crime in their neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Survey Questions About Your Job as a Williamsport Police Officer**

1. It is important to gain the trust of Williamsport residents as part of my job.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

2. It is important to be fair and objective during interactions with Williamsport citizens.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

3. It is important to be approachable while working in Williamsport.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

4. It is important to be respectful during interactions with Williamsport citizens.

Strongly disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly agree

**Policing and Race Relations**

1. Do you think the deaths of people of color during encounters with police in recent years are isolated incidents or reflective of larger issues within policing as an institution?

- Isolated incidents
- Reflective of larger issues within policing

2. Here is a list of things that may have happened in some police departments as a result of high-profile incidents involving the police and people of color. For each, indicate whether you agree or disagree that this is the case for Williamsport police officers.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree

Policing in Williamsport has become more dangerous for officers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Williamsport police officers are less willing to stop and question people who seem suspicious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Officers have been more reluctant to use force when it is appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interactions between police and people of color in Williamsport have become more tense.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments and Concerns**

Is there anything else you would like to share about your perception of policing and the community-police relationship in Williamsport?

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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate your time in offering input on the community-police relationship in Williamsport. The final section of this survey will ask you a few questions regarding your demographics.**

1. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary

2. What is your current age range?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No High School Diploma
- High School Diploma or GED Some College
- College Degree