



MEMOIRS OF A COMMISSIONER: EXPERIENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR POLICE REFORM

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Abstract

In recent years, the topic of police reform has become commonplace, especially regarding the use of force. However, little is known about the process of reforming police policies and practices. Further, the current literature provides hardly any information on the challenges associated with police reform despite heightened interests more recently to address various shortcomings in law enforcement. The current analysis seeks to fill this gap by providing a first-hand account of efforts by police reform commission immediately following the death of George Floyd at the hands of police. As such, this manuscript details the process of establishing a commission to put forth recommendations, describes notable obstacles to accomplishing its mission, and highlights various perspectives and their influence on the entire process. Additionally, this manuscript offers insight regarding the successful implementation of recommendations resulting from such efforts towards police reform. Finally, this note offers suggestions for both future research and ways to enhance the success of similar committees based on these experiences.

Calls for reform are all too common in the aftermath of police misconduct. Nonetheless, the means by which police reform occurs is less often publicized, perhaps resulting in numerous variations nationwide when such committees are called upon. The goals of this manuscript are to propose a model for police reform, highlight notable experiences observed while participating, and suggest caveats and shortcomings which might be useful to future attempts to organize similar committees. Finally, this essay provides insight into the success of efforts toward police reform and the obstacles associated with implementing recommendations after public interest subsides

Keywords

Law Enforcement, Police, Homicide, Memoirs, Commissioner, Committees

Introduction

Although instances of police brutality are rare, it is not uncommon that such instances are followed by calls for police reform. Such was the case in May of 2020 in the aftermath of George Floyd's death at the hands of a police officer. The nature of this homicide sparked not only a national debate, but also international protest regarding the treatment of citizens during police encounters. In response to public outcry, many jurisdictions proactively responded to calls for reform by reviewing existing policies and procedures in an effort to reassure residents of their commitment to transparency and fairness. These efforts occurred in numerous ways. Some jurisdictions conducted internal investigations of their own personnel using citizen complaints. Others contracted with independent agencies to conduct an objective assessment of policies and practices regarding police. Finally, some municipalities turned to their residents to establish committees for police reform in a collaborative effort to assess policies and prepare proposals regarding best practices moving forward. This community-based police reform approach (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) constitutes the type of police reform described in this manuscript. In this manner, I had the privilege and honor of serving my community at a mid-sized United States city in the West. This manuscript is an opportunity to discuss the challenges and triumphs of that endeavor and to make suggestions for moving forward.

The Commission was convened by the city council in late spring of 2020 with volunteers from the local community and surrounding areas. While there was some controversy among residents concerning the selection of participants, the Commission included a broad range of occupations either living or working in the city and surrounding areas. In the end, the Commission included more than 40 people representing a broad range of

occupational specialties throughout the community. These occupations ranged from lawyers, police officers (both current and retired), judges, teachers, school board administrators, mental health providers, students, pastors, and personnel from various non-profit organizations. In this regard, the Commission represented a vast range of community interests.

The Commission was established with a very limited amount of time to conduct a broad spectrum of tasks. To accomplish these tasks, the full Commission was subdivided into four subcommittees to focus more specifically on areas of concern. Participants for each subcommittee were chosen based on stated interests and occupational specialties. Because much of my expertise and prior research involves the criminal justice system, most notably involving police use of force, naturally I was selected for the subcommittee tasked with assessing training, policies, and procedures of police officers. Other subcommittees were established to address issues of community outreach and development, as well as budgetary matters concerning policing.

Commissioners were allotted roughly four months to devise a list of recommendations that would adequately address the need for police. Early in the process, there was quite a bit of frustration voiced by numerous commissioners that the allotted time frame was insufficient to adequately address concerns related to policing. Keep in mind that the work of the Commission was totally voluntary, and that virtually all Commissioners were employed full-time in various capacities. As such, perhaps due in part to the time constraints imposed, the work of the Commission was largely constrained to evenings, forcing members to sacrifice recreational time with family and friends. Initially, my subcommittee planned to meet once per week for two hours to discuss various topics. It soon became apparent that a lot more meetings would be necessary to address the full range of concerns being considered. As such, our subcommittee decided to meet twice each week for two or more hours to have more discussions before the deadline. In the end, the Commission successfully drafted more than 70 recommendations for reform to the city administrators concerning a range of issues including use of force, police oversight, police culture, and departmental demographics regarding equity in hiring and officer promotions.

Interestingly, while the commission successfully completed the process in four months, implementation of the resulting recommendations has not been met with the same degree of urgency. To date, more than two years since the Commission completed its work, less than 25% of the recommendations have been implemented. It turns out that many of the suggested reforms proffered by the Commission are beyond the scope of the police department's authority. As such, a substantial portion of the recommendations require negotiation with the police union. This point was initially mentioned by one of the commissioners in our subcommittee noting that certain topics (which later became recommendations) were matters that required "meet and confer" between city officials and the police union. Viewed in this regard, it was suggested that reviewing such matters was essentially a waste of time. Thus, despite the sentiments of residents during public commentary, the decision to reform policing in our city is largely beyond the scope of the Commission.

Perhaps this point helps to explain why the topic of defunding became so popular throughout the country. It is possible that American citizens have come to realize that meaningful police reform is always constrained by such complexities like "meet and confer" and have begun to question the utility of reform efforts in general with regards to policing. I will return to a discussion of defunding the police later.

Ambiguities of Reform

It became apparent early in the process that the notion of reform was much different for police officers and civilians. A few days prior to the first meeting, a fellow colleague (and former police officer) requested a meeting with me to discuss my role on the Commission. During the meeting, my colleague noted prior experience with a similar entity convened to discuss avenues toward police reform several years prior. In short, my fellow colleague warned me that officers would be adamantly opposed to any proposed reform efforts, and that the keyword put forth by officers would be "training." Amidst all the hope and excitement harbored by the idea of possibly contributing to positive change, my colleague was essentially predicting the limited success that would result from the efforts of the Commission, and in no uncertain terms suggested that the only "reform" that officers would be willing to entertain is "more training." Despite my colleague's warning, I remained enthusiastic about the process and the opportunity to exchange ideas with community leaders to remedy police violence.

Unfortunately, during the initial meetings, it became clear that each of us had quite different opinions about what constitutes reform. From the outset, it seemed like an uphill fight to simply have a conversation about police reform with regards to use of force and officer accountability. One would assume that the primary reason that the Commission was convened in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd was to address issues related to the use of force or excessive force by police officers. But in those initial meetings, we spent quite a bit of time talking around the problem. Approximately half of our subcommittee's members included current or former police officers who seemed more than happy to discuss matters that were either unrelated to, or at best indirectly related to, use of force. Again, this issue was quite discomfiting given that the Commission was convened seemingly in response to lethal force by police particularly following the murder of George Floyd. For instance, the first few

weeks were spent listening to proposals and entertaining suggestions for removing the burden on police officers in the realm of mental health. This starting point was disheartening for several reasons. First, the jurisdiction for which the Commission serves already had a method in place for addressing the needs of Persons with Mental Illness (PwMIs) called Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs). It is important to note that CITs come in many forms and/or models and were designed to address mental health related concerns that have often plagued law enforcement personnel in recent decades. The logic of CITs is straightforward. In some cases, CITs include police officers that are paired with mental health professionals and can provide support and security especially during life threatening encounters. Similarly, CIT can also take the form of police officers trained extensively in recognizing symptoms of crisis for persons suffering from mental illness and can provide immediate relief hopefully in a manner that does not involve force applications. Viewed in this regard, CITs provide a direct solution to problems experienced by police officers when dealing with PwMIs. Nonetheless, despite the utility of CITs, our first and rather lengthy discussion involved moving away from the CIT model in favor of a different model known as CAHOOTS. Much like CITs, CAHOOTS is a program that has multiple models which can be adapted to fit specific community resources and challenges. Nonetheless, the basic idea of using individuals trained to assist PwMIs is virtually the same in both programs.

Personally, I was not disappointed that there was an attempt to change method/model for responding to calls for service that are mental health related. I do understand that mental health concerns tend to remove officers from their area of expertise thereby compromising their ability to protect and serve in ways likely to be most effective. On the other hand, the question of whether there was a need to change the current method (CIT) of handling mental health concerns was never addressed. In theory, if CITs have been effective within our community as a means of safely addressing mental health related calls for service, then why focus on fixing something that is not broken? In short, our commission never addressed the need to replace CITs based on some measure of ineffectiveness, lack of resources, lack of interest among officers currently trained or serving on CITs, etc. Furthermore, police departments have the authority to make decisions pertaining to the use of CITs (versus CAHOOTS or any other model) without the help or input of the Commission.

In my opinion, the focus on issues like CITs was not just the result of ambiguities or differences regarding how best to reform policing. Rather, it was a direct attempt to avoid the more difficult and controversial discussions of use of force. It seemed to me that members of our subcommittee with a law enforcement background were intent on spending as much time as possible avoiding those issues that are most pertinent to the discussion of use of force. In fact, I commented early on that officers' perspectives seemed to reflect the following three components: divert, deflect, and deny. Stated differently, it seemed that subcommittee members with a history of policing were committed to diverting attention from the real problems involving use of force, deflecting blame for institutional shortcomings, and denying responsibility for failing to hold bad officers accountable for their actions in past instances police misconduct. While this may have been the objective initially, the discussion of use of force would eventually become the overarching focus of the Commission.

Two Opposing Ideologies

What emerged over the course of our meetings were two diametrically perspectives among subcommittee members. On one side were members that seemed to take a rather defensive stance regarding police tactics and procedures. On the other side were those of us, including myself, who were oppositional to current police tactics and procedures. The former group typically suggested that few reforms are needed with regards to use of force, and that most proposals to limit discretion regarding force applications are unnecessary and dangerous. The latter group more frequently supported initiatives aimed at restricting police power and enhancing officer accountability. In the beginning, these ideas were well entrenched with very little agreement between groups. Because of the two opposing viewpoints, meetings would often devolve into highly contentious debates, some of which were borderline disrespectful. During our initial meetings it was difficult to reach a consensus despite eloquent arguments from both sides of the debate. This problem was so pervasive that during one meeting I asked officers to recommend their own proposals for reform regarding use of force. Interestingly, though unsurprisingly, there was complete silence following my suggestion. The opposition that was always so quick to suggest that non-officers "did not understand policing" were ill-equipped and/or unwilling to propose reforms of their own. None of the officers on the subcommittee proffered any suggestions for how to improve use of force policies. In fact, one of the officers, who also held an administrative position with the local police union, managed to vote against every proposal involving use of force or changes in police policy. This point suggests that politics affects and problematizes efforts aimed at achieving a consensus in ways that often seem unreasonable.

However, after a couple of months, some of us began to find common ground on a few contentious issues. One of the retired officers was well-respected among the opposing group, and often proposed common sense solutions to the usual stalemate on contentious topics. This officer was one of the few individuals that was willing to move toward the center on polarizing issues and was instrumental in convincing others of his logic. Such compromise was essential to convincing oppositional members to be less defensive of their perspective and more

open-minded. Eventually, we were able to agree on some of the less controversial recommendations. However, this progress would not have been possible without the leadership, influence, and wisdom of the aforementioned, retired officer.

A Note about Defunding

During the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in 2020, police officers were the target of public outrage. This outrage was perhaps fueled by numerous instances during the previous decade in which civilians were killed at the hands of law enforcement officials for reasons that were not always justifiable. By the time George Floyd was murdered, these sentiments had reached a boiling point nationwide. Protests, and occasionally riots, occurred across the United States and throughout the world in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder at the hands of police officers. The issue of defunding the police began to take hold due in part to frustrations felt by the public regarding inadequate reform efforts with hardly any meaningful change to prevent further atrocities (Dunkle, 2021; Su et al., 2022). To some degree, this change in public sentiments is understandable especially considering the lack of accountability typically accorded to police officers in the aftermath of police misconduct. As such, the decision to either defund or disband police departments across the United States became rallying cry for people protesting excessive force by police.

The logic of defunding is somewhat complex and varied depending on who answers the question. In short, some people propose defunding policing to "punish" police officers assuming that departments might more seriously consider community concerns, particularly with regards to transparency and accountability. More practically, defunding police is rooted in an older concept known as justice reinvestment which proposes a reduction in spending tax dollars on the criminal justice system. Typically, justice reinvestment is referenced in regard to prison reform (Tonry, 2011) but might be similarly applied to law enforcement in this case (Su et al., 2022). After a reduction in spending tax dollars, those savings can then be reinvested into institutions within communities that are better equipped to deter or perhaps insulate people from a life of crime (Fox et al., 2011; Garland, 2007). In theory, funds saved from a decreased reliance on incarceration would result in more money being spent on education, after-school programs, recreational opportunities, drug/alcohol treatment facilities, etc. (Carroll, 2004; Fox et al., 2011; Tonry, 2011; Wozniak, 2020). However, in practice, too often savings resulting from justice reinvestment are not allocated to institutions outside the criminal justice system but instead are reinvested in policing and/or probation to pay for more equipment and personnel to fight crime or supervise offenders (Montiero & Frost, 2015; Wozniak, 2020). Thus, the social problems that contribute to mass incarceration remain unchanged despite any acknowledgement that communities might be better served in other ways, like diverting would-be offenders from the justice system. The more practical proposals for defunding police were perhaps rooted in this idea of justice reinvestment thus proposing to reallocate funds to other community sectors to strengthen communities' ability to address crime informally (Su et al., 2022). By doing so, such efforts would seemingly decrease the need for police, thereby reducing workload, officer stress, and burnout, each of which would presumably reduce police violence.

Despite the practicalities of such theoretical proposals, many of the officers on the subcommittee expressed disappointment and at times utter disgust with sentiments displayed by citizens during public commentary. In response, many officers put forth very eloquent, thoughtful statements in defense of fellow officers and their profession. It became apparent that there was indeed a major disconnect between police officers and the public. In fact, I too was implicated in this disconnect characterized by a general lack of understanding of not only the police profession, but also the genuine concern and love that most officers have for their communities. It is possible that the issue of misconduct is not born from hatred of criminals, but instead when there is a marked imbalance between the love that one has for their community (and/or their profession) versus the amount of care and grace extended to those individuals that are accused of law violations. Stated differently, when officers care too much for their community, but not enough for the well-being of the people they arrest or detain (suspects), then the likelihood for unwarranted police violence may increase, followed by a lack of transparency and a fundamental disregard for accountability.

This experience helped me realize that "we the people" (civilians) must extend the same grace to police officers guilty of misconduct as is displayed by officers tasked with arresting people guilty of law violations (sometimes heinous crimes). We must begin to distinguish between good-faith efforts by officers accidentally/impulsively engaged in excessive force versus those officers that are guilty of excessive force as a matter of malicious conduct (bad-faith). In doing so, we must recognize the complexities of administering the law and the difficulties of making real-time decisions which hinge on life and death. However, this point is not to suggest that accountability, integrity, and transparency are any less important. Instead, it is a practical realization that as human beings, some mistakes by police are simply unavoidable.

I too had to come to terms with whether I supported defunding as a means toward reforming policing. In part, this realization was the product of greater association with police officers as a part of my service to the Commission. On the other hand, this epiphany also resulted from a genuine recognition that the call for defunding

the police (by the public) was born from sheer frustration and negative emotion. In the discipline of criminal justice and/or criminology, it is well-documented that emotional, knee-jerk reactions to crime rarely lead to effective policy choices. Viewed in this regard, it became apparent that calls to defund policing are simply “a bridge too far,” and one that I could not honestly support. Finally, the most important concern I harbored regarding defunding resulted from a practical and perhaps personal nature. Even if one agrees that police officers are rarely held responsible for their actions, or if one agrees that police reforms rarely result in meaningful change thereby justifying defunding, or if one agrees that the expenditures allocated to law enforcement by municipalities are often excessive compared to other institutions like education, defunding is still problematic for one very important reason. In short, police officers have families too. How can we (as a society) ask police officers to respect the lives and families of the people they serve while the public disregards the lives and families of those that serve us?

To me, this argument to defund policing constitutes the epitome of unfairness especially to the extent that defunding is intended to eliminate or replace police officers. My experience with this Commission revealed to me that the answer to police violence cannot be rooted in similarly radical responses by firing all police officers or making their jobs more dangerous through diminished funding. Instead, our response must be timely, multifaceted, incorporating information and knowledge from numerous sources and backgrounds, and well-intended with due consideration for the implications of such policy choices. Lastly, our response to police violence must involve compassion. Healing is made possible only by positive attempts to restore communities using restorative practices. Only then can we put forth the balanced response needed to counter negative sentiments which permeate communities in the aftermath of police violence. Such has been the work of the Commission, made possible in part by its design, incorporating a wide range of perspectives, clarified and refined by open debate and thorough discussions. However, this balance needs to be resident throughout the community and conveyed by police officers as well. It should be noted that such compassion must be expressed by officers themselves with regards to their community. The code of silence that permeates policing is indicative of the disconnect between civilians and law enforcement. Unless officers are more passionate about the fair administration of justice than protecting bad officers engaged in malicious police violence, then police/community relationships are not likely to be restored. In short, not only is the work of police reform multifaceted, but it must be conducted by all parties and stakeholders throughout the community.

Interestingly, calls to defund the police have resulted in quite the opposite effect (Su et al., 2022). Efforts to review policing often indicate shortcomings in training and staffing, both of which require additional funding to remedy (Martin, 2021). The resulting irony shows that issues of police misconduct often result in negative publicity which is advantageously used to justify increases in funding for police agencies. Perhaps future research should examine whether increased funding for more training and resources decreases police misconduct as hypothesized.

Suggestions for Future Reforms and Changes

The success of future efforts to reform policing is largely dependent upon the demographics of such committees. It is important to balance occupational interests as well as political interests as much as possible. In other words, having too many police officers on a committee that is designed to address reforms can be contrary to the work of that body. A committee comprised of too many people that hold unwavering pro-police perspectives or tends to be overly opposed to any attempt to suggest changes can stifle recommendations for reform. On the contrary, and perhaps more importantly, such committees should not be saturated with anti-police perspectives either. Such polarizing perspectives are not likely to result in positive change. However, it should be noted that anti-police perspectives may be less problematic in the long run since the institution of policing has numerous layers of protection. These layers of protection include, though are not limited to, the law (e.g., qualified immunity, etc.), legally binding municipal agreements/contracts, police unions, and politics (Su et al., 2022). Further, the recommendations proffered by the Commission must still be vetted by other committees prior to implementation to decide whether to enact them as police changes. This multistage process of review highlights another layer of protection (or barrier to reform) that reduces the likelihood that unpopular proposals by similar reform commissions will be implemented despite the practicality of such recommendations.

It should be noted that police reform is largely dependent upon support from police officers. It is unlikely that reform efforts will have a meaningful impact if citizens and officers are unable to agree about which reforms to implement. It is somewhat logical that police officers are reluctant to subject themselves to greater scrutiny. However, it seems counterintuitive that officers committed to “good faith” service to the community would be so willing to protect officers that are guilty of blatant misconduct (or using their authority in ways which constitute “bad faith”). Understandably, police officers are typically unwilling to “snitch” on other officers. However, one might argue that the public does not expect officers to snitch. On the contrary, the public rationally expects some degree of transparency from police which is necessary to uphold the public’s trust in law enforcement personnel. It is this form of “closing ranks” that frustrates the public thereby alienating the institution of policing. Such actions only diminish the reputations of good officers who work tirelessly to protect and serve the public in an honorable

manner. If police/community relationships are to be restored, there must be a concerted effort on behalf of police officers (particularly police administrators) to acknowledge the injustices wrought by police violence and to hold those specific officers accountable in ways that amount to more than a mere “slap on the wrist.” Most often, penalties for police misconduct are limited to termination of employment, which can easily be circumvented by finding work in another jurisdiction. Similarly, non-indictments and acquittals are far too common following excessive, seemingly unnecessary force applications. It is this sort of inadequate regulation of police misconduct that tends to infuriate the public resulting in protests and calls for defunding. While many people do not agree that officers should face penalties identical to civilians in every encounter, more severe penalties in response to blatant, malicious misconduct and civil rights violations by police seems practical and warranted. Such is the nature of accountability, a notion which was largely opposed and initially avoided by police officers serving on the Commission. Accountability should not be an issue that divides the police and the public especially since it is police officers that largely hold the public accountable for violations of the law. If the work of police officers is to hold others accountable by enforcing the law, then why are police officers so adamantly opposed to greater accountability for police misconduct? These double standards need to be addressed within police culture. Police administrators would do well to highlight these inconsistencies among personnel, provide training, and encourage discussions to begin the process of cultural reform.

Caveats

One of the unique characteristics of our subcommittee involves the attempt to balance community interests with police concerns. While this equilibrium often resulted in contentious debates, it is important that future efforts toward police reform strive for a similar balance. In doing so, such efforts ensure that officers’ concerns are realized amongst the cacophony of emotionally, sensationalized calls to defund and delegitimize policing. During times of sensationalized police violence, cool heads must prevail, and grace must be extended to police officers in general to guard against sentiments of anger and retribution that are sometimes enmeshed in the public’s protests. This point will ensure that reforms are not too radical.

Shortcomings

The primary shortcoming of the Commission was the aforementioned time constraints. Again, the goals of the Commission constituted a massive undertaking conducted in less than four months. It is only due to the organizational prowess of the Commission chair, and the unwavering, selfless service of a host of commissioners and support staff that these recommendations were made possible. However, many of our initially polarizing positions were overcome in time through building rapport with each other. It is possible that future efforts like this Commission might be even more successful if there is ample time for relationships to fully mature among commissioners, thereby establishing trust and respect for one another, thus enhancing prospects for agreement on contentious issues.

Despite the sacrifices of commissioners, essentially no guarantees nor time constraints were placed on the implementation of proposed recommendations. Over time, the impetus to reform policing can be easily lost as society moves on to more recent or pressing concerns. Recent news reports indicate that only fractions (roughly 20%) of the recommendations have been implemented after roughly two years. Keep in mind community leaders are not obligated to adhere to any of the recommendations put forth by the Commission. Thus, City administrators are at liberty to use the work of the Commission as political capital while also quietly avoiding those recommendations that may be politically damaging. Future committees might press demands for the timely implementation of proposed reforms. In doing so, administrators have an opportunity to enhance public trust through quick, decisive actions.

Another shortcoming of the Commission involves the high saturation of police professionals within the subcommittee tasked with reviewing police policies and tactics. This sort of occupational saturation made it rather difficult to achieve consensus on any issues that threatened to limit officers’ discretion or increase accountability for misconduct. Viewed in this regard, occupational saturation potentially limited efforts toward reform. In the future, a quota sampling approach might be useful to select and balance participants from various occupations and/or perspectives. Quota sampling of commissioners might ensure that notable, common-sense ideas are not discouraged simply to appease the members of a specific group. No one occupation should be represented by more than 33% of the total population of commissioners. Keep in mind that typically policing has no independent oversight agency. This point suggests that the responsibility of police reform is largely reserved to police officers to fix problems. When problems persist, the public is often called upon to provide recommendations for reform. Thus, if a Commission of volunteers from the community must be convened to address institutional shortcomings, it seems counterintuitive that such a commission would be over-saturated with police officers. This sort of saturation continues to overlook the problem that oversight cannot rely too heavily on the very personnel that are being scrutinized.

Finally, the greatest shortcoming of this Commission is the failed opportunity to address, and potentially limit, meaningful issues regarding use of force. Such issues include more severe penalties for egregious or blatant acts of misconduct. For instance, prior research indicates that violence is often perpetrated against people in handcuffs or who are otherwise significantly restrained (Pitts, 2022). Similarly, prior research has shown that unarmed women and children are often the recipients of force applications, often without provocation.

Interestingly, it is illegal for a parent to punch their child for non-compliance, but it is justifiable for police officers to use physical force (punches and kicks) against a minor child that is resisting or non-compliant. Even worse, force often results from verbal exchanges between officers and suspects. Such force applications would seem to exceed any reasonable (or necessary) threshold for use of force. Stated differently, disrespectful comments alone are rarely a justifiable reason to use physical force. Unfortunately, due in part to time constraints, and perhaps a lack of interest on behalf of some commissioners, these issues were never considered by our subcommittee. One could argue that some recommendations proffered by the Commission address these issues indirectly such as *the prohibition on physical force unless used as a last resort*. Similarly, one of the recommendations *limits the level of force applications as determined by the level of resistance*. While recommendations like these are important, one could argue that they are too ambiguous to address specific concerns like force applications against unarmed children. In the end, the recommendations put forth by the Commission largely focused on the use of deadly force and failed to address more common problems pertaining to excessive force of a non-lethal nature. Hopefully, future efforts at police reform will consider the importance of addressing both lethal and non-lethal police violence.

It was certainly an honor and a privilege to serve on the Commission. Although it was indeed a grand undertaking, the relationships and experiences gained are undeniably unforgettable. It was my greatest honor to serve with so many accomplished, intelligent professionals in this important endeavor at this crucial intersection of our country's history. While the process was very demanding, I would not trade this experience for anything.

Future Research

Numerous considerations for future research should be considered. As it pertains to police reform commissions, future research should examine the success of police reform commissions in general. In this regard, several factors should be explored such as commissions' occupational composition, the elapsed time frame for complete implementation of proposed recommendations, and the percentage of recommendations that are subsequently implemented. Such information would likely be useful to ascertain the extent to which police reform commissions are successful. Additionally, by providing insight into the occupational characteristics of such commissions, future research can further explore whether reform commissions reflect the demographics of their communities. In doing so, such information might illustrate the extent to which police officers are able to influence (or perhaps discourage) efforts toward policy reforms regarding policing.

Future research should also examine the sentiments of police officers in terms of their opposition to police reform. My experience with the Commission reveals unwillingness by police officers to either propose or favor meaningful reforms regarding use of force. Similarly, police officers on the Commission seemed disinterested in greater accountability for officers accused of "bad faith" efforts to administer the law. More research in these areas may prove useful to enhance the success of future commissions for police reform without straining police/community relations in the process. Finally, such research might also lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted process of police reform.

Works Citation

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