RESEARCH ARTICLE

PRESIDENT'S CRIME COMMISSION: PAST AND FUTURE

The Commission and the Police

Wesley G. Skogan
Northwestern University

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Abstract

The major conclusions advanced in the 1967 report by the U.S. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice under President Johnson are reviewed in this article. Six of the Commission's visions for law enforcement are described, and subsequent changes in the character of American policing are traced. Many of the concerns of the Commission linger until this day. Progress on many fronts has been halting, their impact more muted than reformers had hoped, and the framework of institutions that define law enforcement in the United States has proved remarkably resistant to change.

Keywords

reform, personnel, misconduct, community, race research

The U.S. President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (commonly known as the President's Crime Commission or just "the Commission") summarized its findings and recommendations regarding law enforcement in its report, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (1967b). This summary was backed up by its stand-alone *Task Force Report* (1967a), a 239-page document addressing a wide range of issues in greater detail. Many of the Commission's concerns remain familiar to readers today, and many conclusions of the report echoed those of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which was released in 2015.

The Commission's (1967a, 1967b) many recommendations reflected a mixture of strategic, tactical, and occasionally idiosyncratic concerns. Some were fine-sounding but did not speak to pressing issues and since have received little notice ("involve police in

community planning"). Others were simply stated reflections of deep and wide-ranging political and structural problems in the profession; the perhaps unlikely (to the public) recommendation to "stress ability in promotions" reflected the Commission's harsh indictment of almost every aspect of police management. Municipal efficiency was also important. The Commission detailed the inefficiencies that arose from the decentralization of back-office and behind-the-scenes activities like purchasing, planning, records management, communication and dispatching, crime lab operations, and detention facilities. In this article, I focus on a cluster of the Commission's conclusions that continue to resonate today.

Police–Community Relations

An important cluster of recommendations made by the Commission (1967a, 1967b) were concerned with relations between police and the community. When its main report was published (1967b), this was perhaps the most crucial issue in criminal justice, and it was deeply implicated in the upheaval that was taking place in American society. The worst was yet to come, but in the years immediately prior to the report, there had been major conflagrations in New York City, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, and Los Angeles. As the Crime Commission's report was coming off the press, a new National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was being named, and the first Detroit riot was underway. This new disorders commission's report confirmed that almost every urban riot to that time had been sparked by an abrasive encounter between police and members of the Black community (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). The Crime Commission (1967a) described the relationship between police and "the Negro community" in dire terms, highlighting racial disparities in survey reports of disrespectful treatment and   improper officer conduct. The Commission noted that demographic trends threatened to increase the gap between police and the people in many of the nation's largest cities. Its conclusion was forthright: "Unless . . . the legitimate grievances relating to the police are confronted frankly and effectively, improvement of police-community relations will be impossible" (1967a: 149).

The Commission (1967a, 1967b) called on agencies to form specialized community relations units charged with engaging with the public. To increase communication between the community and top management, the Commission called for advisory committees to be formed representing the views of leaders in minority neighborhoods. It stressed the importance of working community relations issues more deeply into officer training and called for departments to appoint in-house legal advisors, an innovation that was being stoutly resisted around the country.

The Commission also called for the creation of "adequate procedures for full and fair processing of all citizen grievances and complaints about the conduct of any public officer or employee" (1967b: 103), but no sure formula for doing so effectively has yet appeared on the horizon. Researchers since have provided few clear guidelines for moving forward with those recommendations. Complaints against the police have been a focus of police research

for decades. There has been debate between relying on strong internal investigations versus creating professional external bodies, as well as over the role of representative civilian boards versus professionalized examinations of cases. Most recently, there has been discussion of the importance of reviewing *patterns* of cases and making policy recommendations. This is often described as an "auditing" strategy for reform. Identifying the institutional arrangements, however, that are most effective for responding to complaints has proven difficult. For example, Terrill and Ingram (2016) found that cities with an internal affairs investigative unit that had their decisions reviewed by an external civilian oversight agency were more likely to sustain complaints. None of the agencies studied, however, had more than 4.5% of its excessive force allegations sustained, so "more likely" did not mean "very likely."

Recent technical and policy changes aimed at reducing the incidence of unfortunate encounters between police and the public are intriguing. The introduction of dashboard and body-worn cameras *promises* (the final word is still out) to provide a clearer basis for documenting the quality of those interactions and for identifying actionable behaviors on the part of both officers and the public. This is a burgeoning research field requiring a mixture of observational and experimental studies to understand both what people do and what they make of the recording process; for example, will citizens lodge more complaints because they now are documented, will officers make more arrests rather than negotiate informal resolutions to problems because they are now "on tape," and how will the existence of recordings influence ensuing legal maneuvering? Most of these questions remain unanswered as Lum, Koper, Merola, Scherer, and Reioux (2015) showed. The findings of field experiments have been mixed. For example, Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland (2015) found that body-worn cameras reduced the use of force, whereas Ariel et al. (2016) concluded they did not!

At the policy level, the emergence of procedural justice theory as a perspective from which to judge the quality of encounters between police and the public that also recommends ways to improve them has been widely influential. Research findings reveal that positive assessments of the rightfulness and fairness of the treatment they received *could* lead people to be more supportive of the police, more compliant with their requests, and more willing to defer to them in moments of crisis (Mazerolle, Bennett, Davis, Sargeant, and Manning, 2013; Tyler, 2003). There is also evidence that fairness in treatment may be linked to voluntary cooperation with law enforcement, greater willingness to report crimes and provide police with tips, and desire to step forward as witnesses. When they view the police as acting justly, people also come to believe that police have a rightful monopoly over the use of force, thus, reinforcing the legitimacy of the state. Procedural justice also is associated with lower levels of self-reported offending and delinquency and self-reported violent behavior. There is also intriguing but still developing evidence that just treatment by police helps communities build collective efficacy and their own crime-prevention capacity. For a recent review of all of this research, see Chapter 6 of the National Academy of Sciences *Proactive Policing* (2017) report. But as the Academy noted, almost all of this research has been correlational rather than experimental. Nagin and Telep (2017) pointed to several

ways in which incorrect *causal* inferences might be drawn from this body of research, and they recommended caution. More strikingly, Worden and McLean (2017) documented that there is a significant gulf between how people were treated by the police—as assessed by independent observers of in-car video—and what they report later on questionnaires. They concluded that the promises of procedural justice may be a "mirage," with citizens misinterpreting how they were apparently treated, and that researchers need to return to field observations and the analysis of video. None of this seems to have influenced the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), which placed procedural justice at the center of police reform.

Controlling Discretion

A related bundle of concerns discussed in the Commision's (1967b) report involved discretion and its control. The Commission did not discover discretion—that is widely attributed to research on the criminal justice system conducted by the American Bar Foundation and published (LaFave, 1965) as the Commission was beginning its work. As a young research assistant on that project during the 1950s, Herman Goldstein (2008: 17) noted that "an enormous gap had developed between the statutory provisions for dealing with crime and the way in which authority was actually used on the streets and in the courtrooms." That gap was documented in the Foundation's research in a series of field studies. That the existence of discretion and its many implications for policing were openly recognized in the Crime Commission's (1967b) report, however, was still of great importance. It did so in the context of a report documenting the ill-trained, laxly supervised, and poorly led character of policing in that era, and it was not hard to draw the line linking this to chronic police misconduct. The Commission was also forthright in concluding that police behavior on the street was a problem needing fixing, and that the complaints of aggrieved citizens were both real and not being addressed effectively. Thereafter, claims by police that all they did was "100 percent enforcement of the law" and that they always did so in a professional manner were widely discounted.

The management of discretion remains one of the most vexing issues in policing. Most agencies have gone along with the Commission's plea that they develop "policies that give police personnel specific guidance for the common situations require exercise of police discretion" (1967b: 104) and formulate "comprehensive regulations" concerning the use of firearms (1967b: 119), if only to limit their own liability in civil cases. The Supreme Court helped a bit by answering the Commission's request for more clarity regarding police authority to stop and question people; the Court's decision in *Terry v. Ohio* (a 1968 stop-and-frisk case) came the year after the report was issued. Later Court decisions, including restricting the use of fatal force in "fleeing felon" episodes (*Tennessee v Garner*, 1985), would help as well. Ironically, however, some of the most significant innovations in policing go the other way; they recognize, widen, and celebrate the operational independence of individual officers. In identifying problems and working with the community, we expect police to use

good judgment rather than somehow enforce "the letter of the law." Community policing, for example, stresses that workers at the bottom of the organization are closest to the customer and are best positioned to decide how to serve the neighborhoods where they are assigned. Decentralizing, reducing hierarchy, granting officers more independence, and trusting in their professionalism are featured in many of the organizational reforms of choice today, not tightening the management screws to constrain officer discretion.

Even contemporary data on trends, such as the volume of citizen complaints and their resolution, or even the number of police shootings of civilians, however, are scattered and poor. With the exception of a few individual city studies (for example, Fyfe, 1979, on the impact of changes in the fleeing felon rule in New York City), it is impossible to describe the impact of these policy changes in any big-picture way. There continues to be no official, reliable data on the exercise of fatal force that can be used to track national trends, compare cities, or evaluate local initiatives. Instead, researchers and the public are relying on investigations by reporters and "crowd-sourced" databases that rely on assembling local newspaper coverage to identify police shootings of civilians (for an example, see Nix, Campbell, Byers, and Alpert, 2017). How—and why—officers exercise their discretion remains one of the paramount questions in police research. In their report, the National Academy of Science's (2017) anel on proactive policing concluded that there was insufficient evidence to judge whether policing tactics ranging from neighborhood sweeps to clear the streets to stop and frisk and crackdowns on repeat offenders had any effects on racial disparities in arrests, the use of excessive force, or perceptions of police legitimacy among those on the receiving end of all that attention. The issue again was the plausibility of existing research, not the importance of the question.

Staffing

The Commission's (1967b) emphasis on staffing reflected its view of the character of too much of American policing at the time. Officers were not well educated; it praised the requirement that officers have a high school diploma but noted that only −70% of agencies had such a rule. Because of the tradition of promoting leaders from among the local rank and file, many police executives were not well educated either. The Commission saw the limited abilities of many of the police leaders they encountered as one of the deepest problems facing policing. Money corruption, fueled by the burgeoning drug trade in American cities, was considered a significant problem in many places. Hiring "men of better character" was one response to the integrity problem. This involved better applicant screening and imposing educational requirements. Higher top salaries, plus hiring college graduates directly into management roles ("encourage lateral entry" was another recommendation), were proposed by the Commission as solutions to the leadership crisis.

The Commission (1967b) also addressed three additional staffing issues that remain relevant to this day: the more equitable representation of 1) women and 2) racial minorities

among the sworn ranks and 3) better utilization of civilian employees to enhance the technical capacity and professionalism of local departments.

Race

The Commission (1967b) noted the limited representation of "Negroes and other racial minorities" in policing: In 1960, 3.5% of municipal officers were "non-Caucasian," as were 1/5 of 1% of state police. The Commission saw this as a serious community relations problem. It highlighted numerous problems created by this dramatic underrepresentation of African Americans. Some issues were external to police organizations, affecting their relationship with the community, whereas others were internal, affecting attitudes, practices, and even policies within organizations.[1] Externally, the Commission observed that securing the cooperation of Black witnesses and bystanders could prove more difficult for an all-White force; trust in the police could be lower among minority citizens who felt unrepresented; and in some circumstances, Black officers, compared with their White counterparts, could assess and react more effectively to community issues. Internally, the Commission felt that increasing racial diversity could discourage at least overt expressions of racial intolerance by White officers, and it might impact stereotyping and prejudice. As an (extreme) example of the nature of racial issues at the time, the Commission reported that in a third of departments, Negro officers were not free to arrest White offenders; rather, they were to hold them until a White officer could arrive at the scene perhaps to protect the dignity of the suspect.

In the half-century since the release of the report, agencies in all regions of the country have increased minority representation among their officers. Reaves (2012) reported that, in 2008, 84% of police agencies with 500 or more officers and 61% of agencies with 100–499 officers were specifically targeting hiring women and minorities. By 2013, African Americans made up 12% of full-time officers, and Hispanics 13%, roughly their proportions in the national population. African American officers, however, were particularly concentrated in just a few jurisdictions. In the 2013 data, approximately one third of all Black officers were reported to be working in just ten cities; Hispanic officers were a bit more scattered about, but they were also concentrated in a minority of jurisdictions. In their report on a 2013 survey, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Reaves, 2015) documented that in larger cities, racial and ethnic minorities were still underrepresented on the force by an average of 24 percentage points, when employee counts were compared with Census figures for cities. Based on figures that reporters gleaned by contacting agencies, *USA Today* (2016) reported that in cities with more than 100,000 people, the percentage of Black officers was less than half of that in the local population. In an analysis of data from the year before for

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1. The Commission (1967b) paid little attention to the place of Hispanic officers—at the time, that was not a reportable category in most surveys and many administrative data systems, and it was even difficult to decipher the Hispanic fraction of the population in most Census reports.

the 75 largest cities in the nation, Ungar-Sargon in *The New York Times* (2015: para. 6) identified what he described as "an incredibly high overrepresentation of whites" in many police departments.

Gender

The Commission (1967b) was even more forward thinking in its emphasis on recruiting more female officers and in expanding the scope of their duties to match those of their male peers. The Commission used Census occupational data to document that in 1960 only 2.3% of municipal police were women, for a total of slightly more than 5,000 female officers nationwide. After the Commission's report, the entry of women into the ranks became a genuine issue, a subject of widespread discussion and some discord. Into the 1970s, women still did not patrol the streets. They were mainly confined to the lockup as matrons or to the Youth Division, where they babysat for crime victims and assisted with juvenile offenders. An expansion in their numbers and the redefinition of their role to that of full-service police officers was resisted stoutly in many places. At the time, women were seen as "less rational, more irritable, less aggressive, less reliable, weaker physically, possessed unstable emotions, and were generally less qualified than males" (Novak, Brown and Frank, 2011: 567).

As documented by Susan Martin (1982), the eventual integration of women into the profession was the result of lawsuits and the looming settlement costs facing cities if they allowed their agencies to continue to fight rear guard battles against letting women through the door. Appropriately, the main title of Martin's book was *Breaking and Entering*. The share of women in policing had grown to 12% of full-time police officers by 2013 (Reaves, 2015). Now, many departments claim to have embraced gender equality and actively recruit women as members. It is routine that men and women work side by side on patrol (Martin and Jurik, 2007). Twelve percent of full-time officers, however, remains a small fraction of the workforce, and this percentage has not changed in two decades. The limited place of this issue on today's reform agenda may have been signaled by the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) under President Obama. While exhorting departments to hire more minority officers, the Task Force was totally silent on the role of women in policing.

A question for researchers is as follows: What impact does police staffing have on outcomes that matter for society? The race and gender composition of the force might be peripheral to many of them. Powerful social, political, and organizational forces structure the policing profession, including police culture and the law-and-order political environment characterizing many cities, and they are seen by many close observers to transcend the personal identities of officers. Most officers are simply "Blue" rather than "Black" or "White." Findings from research on police encounters with the public and their varied outcomes for both groups indicate that they are extremely situational, strongly (and perhaps mostly) driven by how the civilians involved initially respond, and shaped by the crime context

of the neighborhood in which they occur—which is often risky. Recommending how to improve the quality of encounters, many police researchers would focus first on leadership, the quality of officer training, agency commitment to procedural justice, a greater presence of supervisors in the field, clear and well-enforced use-of-force policies, body cameras, and even access to nonlethal weapons, before they got around officer race and gender.

Civilians

The Commission (1967b) was also enthusiastic about possibilities for the selective civilianization of the labor force. Civilians were described as attractive hires. They could take on back-office recordkeeping tasks not requiring the qualifications of sworn officers. "Meter maids" were already being widely used to enforce parking regulations. More importantly, the Commission also pointed to the need in modern departments for skilled specialists in planning, personnel management, law, science, and technology. The Commission lamented the fact that agencies continued to put up with poor performance in these areas by insisting that everything be done by sworn officers.

The Commission (1967a) reported that, in 1965, 11% of policing jobs were held by civilians, up from 8% in 1960. King (2009) found that this civilian percentage grew to 15% to 20% during the 1970s. The Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2013 (Reaves, 2015) set that fraction at 21% and indicated that there had not been much change in this since the mid-1980s. One factor behind this stabilization may be that, after the Great Recession of the late 2000s, financially struggling cities turned first to civilian layoffs to deal with budget crises (Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2009). Alderden and Skogan (2014) reported that currently things are not well in the world of civilian employees. It is hard to incorporate civilians into police organizations in ways that make full use of their skills and knowledge, and the heads of their units will almost always be sworn members. The low salaries and limited opportunities for promotion and professional advancement that characterize the civilian policing world may not be competitive in the labor market. Being hired because they are cheaper, easier to lay off, and confined to dead-end career paths is not a morale builder. Finally, civilians may find themselves marginal members of their own organizations. Officers can resent seeing them displacing them in desirable (indoor, day-shift, low-stress) jobs, they can fear that civilians cannot be trusted with information they do not want to be made public, and—very importantly—they fear being accountable to and evaluated by civilians. In short, several factors impede the effective incorporation of civilians into the policing workforce, making it difficult for agencies to reap the full advantages of this Commission (1967b) recommendation.

Roles for the Police in Society

In the Commission's (1967b) report, readers can still see the transition of policing from the political to the professional eras. The Commission was haunted by the large number of weakly led, poorly trained, ill-equipped, corrupt, political, and ineffective agencies that

inhabited the policing space of the day. These issues, it lamented, "constitute a burden on the machinery of justice, and are detrimental to the process of achieving a truly professional police service" (Commission, 1967a: 7). At the same time, what the Commission repeatedly described as "the menace of crime" formed part of the political backdrop that led to its formation. Between 1960 and 1967, the year of the report's (1967b) release, the nation's personal crime rate rose by 57%; the robbery component of that measure was up by 70%. As a result, advancing the professional, crime-fighting agenda of the police remained uppermost in the Commission's mind. It called for a host of organizational improvements that could enhance crime control, including better dispatching systems, better crime laboratories, more detectives, improved investigations, better pay, and higher staffing levels.

The Commission (1967b) addressed some of the roles played by the police in addition to crime-fighting, including order maintenance, engagement with the community, and the importance of safeguarding civil liberties. It was not always happy about these extensions of its favored mandate. The Commission lamented the distractions that these constituted. As a result, the Commission noted that, "The existing wide range of patrol responsibility hampers efforts to attract more highly qualified personnel into police service" and argued that tasks like "removing a cat from a roof" lowered the status of the profession (1967a: 121). The Commission viewed domestic violence as a problem for which the police are ill-suited and saw off-loading it on other agencies as a demand management problem. More often, the Commission shrugged in resignation in the face of such diversionary concerns, observing that there frequently was no one else for the public to turn to when addressing social ills.

A brief section of the Commission's (1967a) report was focused on the role that the community could play in law enforcement. According to the Commission, they should be more vigilant and less negligent; warn their children to stay away from strangers; lock their car doors, and not leave keys in the ignition; add outdoor lights; report crimes promptly; and be good Samaritans. A broader view of the community role, and of the "non-crime" concerns that were getting in the way of real police work, emerged only later, in the 1980s.

The 1980s began the era of community policing. Community policing is quite old as "new thinking" about the police goes these days. It may be the only idea in American policing, however, that has legs—community-oriented policing has taken off across the world, reshaping public service in many democracies. Community policing can be described as a set of activities backed up by a few underlying principles. What police departments do under this rubric is highly varied. They report training civilians in citizen police academies, permanently assigning officers to small geographical areas, opening neighborhood storefront offices, patrolling on bicycles, and working with municipal agencies to enforce health and safety regulations. More deeply, however, community policing is defined by three general principles: citizen involvement, problem solving, and organizational decentralization. Public involvement opens police to citizen input concerning the needs of the community and how the police can help meet those needs. It takes seriously the public's definition of its own

problems, which can involve issues like housing abandonment and homelessness as well as garden-variety crimes. Problem-solving policing encourages identifying the situations that produce the need for police assistance, ferreting out the causes that lie behind them, and designing tactics to deal with these causes. Community policing stresses civic involvement in identifying and prioritizing those problems. Finally, decentralization involves devolving authority and responsibility further down the police organizational hierarchy. Departments need to do this to encourage the development of local solutions to locally defined problems, as well as to facilitate decision-making that responds rapidly to local conditions (for more, see Skogan, 2018). Decentralization, therefore, puts new responsibilities on the shoulders of front-line supervisors, sergeants, and others who watch over the activities of working officers. Their job is to translate policy at the top into daily routine. In this now more complex environment, they need to become teachers, coaches, and mentors, as well as disciplinarians (Weisburd, McElroy, and Hardyman, 1988).

None of this would have been recognizable to the Commission in 1967. Community policing, however, proved to be popular with politicians and the general public. As early as 1997, a survey of police departments found that 85% reported they had adopted community policing or were in the process of doing so (Skogan, 2018). The 2013 national survey found that −95% of the departments in cities of more than 250,000 in population that had an official mission statement included a commitment to community policing (Reaves, 2015). The question of whether it works was finally systematically reviewed in a report appearing in 2014 (Gill et al., 2014). That study resulted in mixed conclusions. Across the 25 high-quality evaluations that could be identified for analyses, there was little sign that conventional measures of crime were much impacted by the effort, including in the subset of interventions that included a specific problem-solving component. Survey measures of the extent of social and physical disorder—neighborhood problems that frequently go unrecognized without community input—, however, were positively affected by community-oriented interventions (Gill et al., 2014). Furthermore, the reviewers found evidence that community policing could make a difference when it came to public trust and confidence in the police. Measures of the legitimacy of the police improved in six of the ten studies in which it was assessed. Gill et al. concluded that community policing had clear effects on quality-of-life and "citizen-focused" outcomes that researchers suggest could have longer term effects on crime through their community-building effects, if they could be tracked over time. Gill et al. did not consider possible racial and ethnic differences in these legitimacy-building outcomes, despite the fact that this is among the most significant policing issues of our time. A more recent review by the proactive policing panel seconded these conclusions and called for more research on policing and collective efficacy. Collective efficacy (a combination of trust among residents and the expectation that neighbors will intervene when things go wrong) seems to play an important role in inhibiting urban crime, and it is plausible that community policing could play a role in community-building and spark more neighborhood self-help efforts (National Academy of Sciences, 2017). In some survey

studies, but not all, researchers have found a link between positive views or experiences with police and perceptions of stronger community responses to crime, but the jury is still out on the causal link between the two (Kochel, 2017).

As there has been an explosion of ideas competing for police attention, the policing agenda has grown to encompass problem-oriented policing, procedural justice policing, predictive policing, intelligence-oriented policing, broken-windows policing, zero tolerance policing, level-pulling policing, metrics-driven policing, third-party policing, and hot-spots policing. Anti-terror policing has been added to the list as well. One should sympathize with chiefs trying to sort through these proposals, deciding what is good, and what they can afford to do.

Consolidation

The Commission (1967b) pointed with alarm to the large number of agencies responsible for law enforcement in the United States. Including all federal, state, county, municipal, and special-purpose agencies, the Commission set this number at 40,000. It identified a broad array of problems caused by this confusing overlay of law enforcement organizations. Some were jurisdictional. Geographical barriers between agencies led them to work at cross-purposes while trying to solve the same or similar patterns of crimes. The patchwork of local agreements that had been developed between neighboring agencies did not lead to effective coordination across their boundaries. Especially in metropolitan areas, drug trafficking and organized crime rings usually transcended jurisdictional barriers, and even took positive advantage of them (today terrorism has joined the list). The Commission discussed possibilities for improving officer recruitment and training efforts by consolidating these activities across neighboring jurisdictions. Stepping back, the Commission alluded to the difficulty of attracting potentially effective executives to careers that would mainly be confined to the same small places where they had to begin by pounding a beat. And the Commission noted that the existing system created access points granting control over policy and operations to petty politicians and hoodlums. As in many other areas, however, the Commission confined its final recommendations to tinkering with the established institutional structure of the criminal justice system and did not propose a path to bold reform (Wilson, 1967).

Fast-forwarding to today, the policing world remains just as fragmented, a reflection of its origin in mostly rural eighteenth century America. The unchanging institutional structure of policing remains it's most important obstacle to reform. Estimates of the number of law enforcement agencies vary from telling to telling, but today's total could well be larger rather than smaller than that in 1967. Many of them are small and unable to support the elaborate infrastructures that underlie modern policing. They tend to be underfinanced and to pay their officers poorly, perhaps not demanding much in return. Smaller agencies also seem to be more prone to police violence. In 2015, most fatal police shootings occurred in smaller communities, and proportionally few in major cities, where

they were also declining in frequency. All of this led Sherman (2018: 444) to conclude that "small is dangerous" in policing.

The American response to the myriad of problems created by this system has been to muddle through (see Wilson and Grammich, 2012). In a few places, most notably Los Angeles County, regionalization of policing has been significantly accomplished through small and mid-sized communities contracting for service from the County Sheriff. Consolidated city–county agencies have been formed in some areas that created metropolitan area governments, such as Indianapolis, Indiana, and Charlotte, North Carolina. Expensive staff services, most notably crime laboratories, have been established on a regional basis. There are regional (Kentucky) and statewide (Washington State) training academies that spread the cost of buildings and staff across a large number and continuous flow of recruits, bringing down per-trainee costs. There also has been a proliferation of regional dispatch centers handling 911 calls. These are supported by collections of bilateral contracts signed by the participating agencies. The vision of true consolidation of policing faces a host of practical problems, including how costs, liability in past and future lawsuits, job seniority, and patrol resources will be distributed. At its root, however, it is apparent that the number one obstacle to consolidation is still that local leaders, and probably their constituents, simply do not want to give up control over policing (see Ostrom, 2000).

Openness to Research

A final theme of the Commission's report was the need for research. In the summary, this is how the Commission framed it:

> [A] theme that runs through this entire volume is the extent to which police work is limited by a lack of precise knowledge about crime and the means of controlling it. Almost every chapter demonstrates, indeed documents, the urgent need for research into every aspect of police work, by the police and by scholars working with the police. (1967a: 3)

The Commission would not fathom the volume and level of sophistication of police research in the United States today, as well as the many ways in which it speaks to operational policies. A 2004 report by the National Research Council on policing (Skogan and Frydl, 2004: 20) described the volume of police research conducted since the Commission's (1967b) report and concluded that, "Today there is so much that scholars and police find it difficult to keep up." The sheer volume plus the wide-ranging scope of contemporary police research has in fact created a new enterprise, that of summarizing and synthesizing large bodies of research for practitioners and researchers alike. An early and prominent example of this was a 1997 summary of "what works" in criminal justice (Sherman et al., 1997). Their report was wide-ranging, including summaries of research on police patrols, targeting repeat offenders, and arrest policies for domestic violence. The group also identified an inventory of already popular programs that it judged to be *ineffective*, as well as of what

appeared to work. Sherman et al. introduced a scheme for classifying the methodologies used in evaluations by their general ability to confirm and estimate the magnitude of the *causal* effects of projects and programs. Although research on what works has moved on, what became known as the Maryland Methods Scale continues to be in active use.

More recently, synthesizers have turned to producing tightly reviews that make credible causal claims that something worked. Many, but not all, have been produced under the auspices of the Campbell Collaboration. There have been systematic reviews of research on many of the issues that concerned the Commission. These include racial disparities in arrests (Kochel, Wilson, and Mastrofski, 2011); police shootings of African Americans (Patterson and Swan, 2016); gun carrying (Koper and Mayo-Wilson, 2006); effective police leadership (Pearson-Goff and Harrington, 2013); the impact of police on crime (Telep and Weisburd, 2012); and the legitimacy crisis policing facing policing then and now (Mazerolle et al., 2013). The Commission (1967b) missed other topics that have since risen to the fore and can support their own reviews, including terrorism (Lum, Kennedy, and Sherley, 2006) and victim satisfaction (Laxminarayan, Bosmans, Porter, and Sosa, 2013).[2] There is even a book-length review of reviews (Weisburd, Farrington, and Gill, 2016) and a continually updated summary of what affects what in policing (Lum and Koper, 2017). In turn, systematic reviews play an important role in an active reform movement, one promoting the practice of evidence-based policing (Lum and Koper, 2014).

In short, although another decade of research has accumulated, the 2004 National Research Council summary of the policing scene remains an accurate one:

> [T]he United States has developed a research enterprise that is substantial, empirical, expert and independent of direct governmental, including police, control. But police research in the United States is distinctive in more than its generation of knowledge, extensive though that has been. Research has become part of the institutional practice of American policing. State and local police agencies . . . are the most open bureaucracies in the land, second only, perhaps, to schools. Few other American institutions, public or private, allow outsiders to observe routine operations or share in-house information as freely as the police do. Understanding research and incorporating its insights into policy have become hallmarks of police management in the United States. Facts matter in a way that they didn't a generation ago. Research . . . has made American policing considerably more intelligent and less insular than it was when the president's crime commission reported in 1967. (Skogan and Frydl, 2004: 35)

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2.   But the Commission (1967b) did support the first national survey of victimization and reporting crimes to the police, one in which a vast gulf between police statistics and the experiences of the public was documented.

A Crime Commission for Tomorrow? More than a decade ago, in a report on policing from the National Research Council, Skogan and Frydl (2004) described many of the significant improvements that had taken place in policing in earlier decades. Police were described as more effective in fighting crime, less corrupt, better equipped, less likely to unlawfully shoot people, and vastly more professional and sophisticated about what they are doing. Crime had dropped precipitously, and it was down the most in poor and minority communities. Police were widely credited in playing a role in this historic trend.

Changes that have taken place in policing, however, do not seem to have won them greater public support. Although there is some up-and-down, public ratings of the police have not improved much in 30-plus years. In a 2017 Gallup poll, high respect for the police has dropped since the late 1960s. Years of national turmoil around policing have deepened the divide over confidence that Americans of different races and ages have in the police. Averaged across 2015–2017, Gallup reported that only 30% of African Americans indicated they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police, as contrasted to 61% of Whites. In the past decade, Hispanic support for policing has dropped, most recently below 50%. Support has also dropped among young people, with the apparent stability in national numbers over the most recent decade being contributed mainly by the increased confidence expressed by older Whites (Norman, 2017). Either segments of the population that are most impacted by policing have not noticed all of the positive changes identified by the National Research Council report (Skogan and Frydl, 2004) or there are other things that they think are important as well. One obvious candidate is the upwelling of dramatic coverage of police shootings of civilians in the media. This coverage has been facilitated by the availability of both police- and citizen-produced video, which via television and the Internet provides attention-demanding visual depictions of violent, real-world incidents. There is also a suggestion that the media itself has changed its reporting habits when interpreting such events. In one analysis of print coverage of unfortunate incidents in three cities, researchers concluded that local media have become more analytic and critical in their coverage of them. The editors of hometown newspapers serving these communities frequently drew connections between local and other incidents, they clearly attached blame to the police, and they raised questions about the systemic causes of police misconduct (Lee, Weitzer, and Martinez, 2017). Police may have achieved a great deal on the crime prevention front, but important concerns remain regarding their relationship with the communities they serve.

In May 2015, President Obama received the report of his President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The 21st Century Task Force heard testimony from a host of police researchers and practitioners and considered the body of evidence that it had before it on what the Task Force considered to be the pressing issues of its time. The recommendations made by the Task Force were focused heavily on the legitimacy crisis facing policing, and it called for trust-building between police and the community. The Task Force strongly

endorsed adopting a procedural justice approach to dealing with the public. The Task Force also called for increased civilian oversight over police policy and practice (a topic about which researchers have few useful recommendations) and came down strongly in favor of safe topics like training, education, and officer safety. Parallels between it and the Commission's (1967b) report are many. A great strength of the 2015 report was that the Task Force directed the attention of police and policy makers toward the quality and fairness of policing, and away from just its quantity and crime-fighting effectiveness.

Only time will tell, however, if this renewed call for fairness and quality in policing will change the lived experiences of all Americans. Its legitimacy problems run deep. How police activities activating general and specific deterrence translate into field practices have not much changed. Among the currently celebrated policing innovations on the list presented earlier, many call for crackdowns: broken windows, zero tolerance, hot spots, metrics-driven, and Boston-style level-pulling all place heavy reliance on intensive patrolling and arrests for controlling crime and disorder (Scott, 2009). In a recent report from the National Research Council on the effectiveness of police crime prevention, the authors found a great deal of support for this kind of proactive policing (National Academy of Sciences, 2017). They also warned of the risk that, if poorly managed, they threatened to increase bias and racial disparities in criminal justice, shortchange the importance of studied lawfulness in policing, and undermine the legitimacy of the institution in the eyes of the public. A Crime Commission for Tomorrow should certainly turn to these burning questions in policing.

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Wesley G. Skogan is a professor of political science at the Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University. His research is focused on policing, public involvement in the co-production of safety, program evaluation, fear of crime, and criminal victimization. His most recent book is *Police and Society in Brazil* (2018) co-edited with Vicente Riccio.