

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

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Five Police Departments Building Trust and Collaboration

Innovations in Policing Clinic
Yale Law School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Full Case

by
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Trust and Collaboration in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Jamil Jivani, in collaboration with members of Yale Law School's Innovations in Policing Clinic

Introduction

Milwaukee is home to a long history of distrust between the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) and the city's minority communities. This case study focuses on improvements made to police–community relations in Milwaukee over the past decade, with particular emphasis on the leadership of Chief Edward A. Flynn (2008–present). Clinic researchers identify the following as key transformations to policing in Milwaukee that have built trust and collaboration between MPD and community members:

- Chief Flynn has played a key role in police–community relations through his crisis management and collaboration building. In managing crises, Chief Flynn has maintained a visible role among community groups to ensure transparency and accountability in addressing community concerns. He has also made use of crime data to provide explanations for controversial programs that have garnered community support. In building collaboration, Chief Flynn has developed personal relationships with community leaders with citywide influence and credibility that can serve as a bridge between him and minority communities.
- MPD has embraced a philosophy of dispersed leadership. This philosophy has improved department morale by encouraging leadership among MPD officers in a self-reflective values-based organizational culture, making use of education programs like the Leadership in Police Organizations model. This philosophy has also empowered district captains to have more autonomy and responsibility in setting police strategies in their districts, including community engagement and increased foot patrol. Community members report these changes have led to increased collaboration between residents and police officers, in addition to improved local knowledge of MPD officers.
- The Milwaukee Commission on Police–Community Relations (MCPCR), composed of representatives from different ethnic and faith communities, was established by the Department of Justice (DOJ) Community Relations Service (CRS) as part of a 2003-2005 mediation process between MPD and the city's community leaders. Members of MCPCR during the mediation process commented that MCPCR facilitated unprecedented dialogue between MPD and community leaders. MCPCR continues to hold meetings with a diverse range of community members and MPD representatives. Collaboration remains a central theme in MCPCR and has formalized meetings to discuss police–community relations.
- The Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission (FPC) has undergone a series of reforms since 2007 that have expanded its administrative capacity and autonomy in overseeing and investigating the city's citizen complaint process. Citizen complaints are now received electronically and in-person, as well as through desig-

nated community organizations that offer legal assistance to complainants. Community and police leaders have great confidence in the citizen complaint process to respond to community concerns and gauge community perceptions of policing in Milwaukee.

While these transformations do not address all community concerns, on the aggregate they have produced a redemptive narrative in Milwaukee in which community and police leaders report significant improvements have been made to police–community relations in the city. This case study offers important lessons into how these transformations can nurture greater trust and collaboration between police and community leaders in other cities. This case study also highlights how these transformations can lead to further improvements to police–community relations in Milwaukee. The following is a list of some of the key lessons learned in Milwaukee for building trust and collaboration between police and disadvantaged communities:

- Make police leaders visible and accessible to community organizations and residents.
- Communicate policing strategies with community partners.
- Develop a more transparent, autonomous, and efficient citizen complaint process.
- Mediation processes can hit a reset button to normalize police–community collaboration.
- Change organizational culture within the department to achieve officer buy-in.

Traffic Stops: An Introduction to Milwaukee

In late 2011 MPD was in the midst of controversy surrounding its traffic stops program, which saturates high crime areas of the city with police officers and police vehicles. Criticisms of the program emerged in response to a 2011 *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* study that highlighted racial disparities in traffic stops. In a city like Milwaukee, with a long history of distrust between police and minority communities, such criticism of MPD is not unique; however, during the controversy James Hall, President of the Milwaukee NAACP, issued a statement of confidence in the department’s efforts to respond to service needs while avoiding racial profiling.¹ The NAACP, an organization that has had an often-adversarial relationship with MPD for much of its history, had now become a partner standing alongside the department in a moment of controversy and public scrutiny.

The statement of confidence from NAACP is a historic moment in policing in Milwaukee and signifies how much policing in the city has changed over the past decade. This report will explain how MPD has turned adversaries into allies and will also explore some of

¹ James H. Hall of Milwaukee’s NAACP Branch, A balance between traffic stops and safety, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Dec 8, 2011, www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/a-balance-between-traffic-stops-and-safety-lt3bv8r-135282513.html (last accessed Feb. 2, 2012).

Milwaukee's key transformations that have improved police–community relations in the city. A focus of this report will be distilling some key principles to building trust and collaboration between police and community organizations. To capture Milwaukee's transformations through this report, Yale Law School's Innovations in Policing Clinic interviewed a variety of MPD officers and community leaders from December 2011 to March 2012, including a site visit to Milwaukee in January 2012. This report discusses Milwaukee's transformations with an emphasis on the commentary of those in Milwaukee who are engaged with and affected by efforts to build trust and collaboration between police and the city's minority communities.

The report is organized as follows. Part II provides some historical background to the problem of distrust between MPD and Milwaukee's minority communities. Part III discusses the establishment of MCPCR and its current role in policing in Milwaukee. Part IV looks at the recent reforms to FPC and the importance of the citizen complaint process in police–community relations. Part V analyzes the role of Chief Flynn in building collaborative relationships between MPD and community leaders. Part VI looks at the transformations made within the department, such as the increased use of data and empowering of district captains. Part VII will serve as a conclusion to this report by outlining important lessons that can be gleaned from this study of Milwaukee.

Background to Milwaukee's Crisis of Distrust

Milwaukee County, which includes the city of Milwaukee and its surrounding area, has a total population of 947,735 residents with the following racial demographics: 60.6% white, 26.8% African-American, 13.3% Hispanic or Latino, 3.4% Asian, and 0.7% Native American.² Within Milwaukee's diverse population exists deep racial divisions and disparities. In 2011, Milwaukee was named the most segregated metropolitan area in the United States based on U.S. Census data.³ Statistics from 2005-2009 indicate Milwaukee is the most segregated metropolitan area between black and white residential communities and is ranked as the seventh most segregated between Hispanic and white residential communities.⁴ U.S. Census data from 2010 also reveal that 90% of the black residents in Milwaukee's city center are concentrated in the north side of the city center.⁵ Additionally, Milwaukee has a higher disparity in unemployment of working-age black and white males than any other city in the United States.⁶ These racial disparities in Milwaukee occur alongside the disproportionate representation of racial minorities in Wisconsin's criminal justice system, with African-Americans comprising 6% of the state's population

² Milwaukee County: Quick Facts, U.S. Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55/55079.html> (last visited Feb. 2, 2012).

³ Mike Lowe, Milwaukee earns dubious distinction of most segregated city in America, Chicago Tribune, www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/witi-20110331-segregated-city,0,6920627.story (last visited Feb. 2, 2012).

⁴ New Racial Segregation Measures for States and Large Metropolitan Areas: Analysis of the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Social Science Data Analysis Network, <http://censuscope.org/ACS/Segregation.html> (last visited Feb. 2, 2012).

⁵ Lowe, *supra* note 2.

⁶ Mark Levine, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, Race and Male Employment in the Wake of the Great Recession: Black Male Employment Rates in Milwaukee And the Nation's Largest Metro Areas 2010 19 (Jan. 2012).

but 45% of its incarcerated persons, and Hispanics comprising 4% of the state's population but 8% of its incarcerated persons.⁷

The statistics provided above are important to understanding the prevalence of race in the lives of many Milwaukeeans today. These statistics also reflect long-standing racial divisions and disparities in the city that are echoed in Milwaukee's history of policing. For decades, police–community relations in Milwaukee have been marked by distrust between MPD and Milwaukee's minority communities. This distrust can be attributed to a lack of collaboration between MPD and community members, as well as high-profile controversies.

Milwaukee's crisis of distrust can be traced back to the mid-Twentieth Century when large numbers of African-Americans began migrating to Milwaukee. Under the leadership of Chief Harold Breier from 1964 to 1984, MPD developed a contentious relationship with minorities by opposing integration efforts, abusing and racially profiling black residents, and neglecting to protect participants in the city's local civil rights movements. Civil rights activist and Catholic community leader Father Carl Diedrichs recalls having to take a stand against police officers for interfering in the integration of his church in the 1960s.⁸ Chief Breier's unilateral approach to policing and his disregard for community opinions exacerbated racial tensions in the city. Community leaders in Milwaukee remember this era of policing as racist, oppressive, and violent.⁹

Chief Breier was the last of Milwaukee's police chiefs to enjoy lifetime tenure and the political immunity that came with such privilege. This era of policing in Milwaukee, the first that many minority communities experienced in the city, left a lasting effect on police–community relations that continues to influence how older community leaders perceive policing in the city. The legacy of distrust and lack of collaboration from this era continued to persist within the department after Chief Breier's departure in 1984 and received national attention in the early 1990s under the leadership of Chief Philip Arreola, the department's first and only Hispanic police chief. Following the arrest of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, the department was accused of mishandling the case due to racism and homophobia. African-American elected officials claimed the failure of Milwaukee police officers to help one of Dahmer's victims, a 14 year old Laotian boy, reflected a history of “mass victimization of the community” and insensitivity to minority residents' needs.¹⁰ In light of these claims, then-police officer Sgt. Leonard Wells explained “if you're poor,

⁷ Spencer Coggs and Noble Wray, Commission on Reducing Racial Disparities in the Wisconsin Justice System, Office of Justice Assistance, Final Report February 2008.

⁸ Interview with Father Carl Diedrichs, Pastor at All Saints Church in Milwaukee (Mar. 1, 2012).

⁹ Interview with R.L. McNeely, Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Jan. 18, 2012), and Interview with Barbara Becker, Vice President, Milwaukee NAACP (Jan. 18, 2012).

¹⁰ Williams Celis, *Scrutiny of Police Sought in Milwaukee*, New York Times, July 28 1991, www.nytimes.com/1991/07/28/us/scrutiny-of-police-sought-in-milwaukee.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm (last accessed Feb 2. 2012).

black, Hispanic, gay, or lesbian then in the eyes of many on the Milwaukee Police Department you are engaging in deviant behavior.”¹¹ Community organizer Susan Boekhouas claimed “the department has a very unpleasant history. It was completely closed to the community. Now, we’re looking for some fundamental changes, some lasting changes.”¹²

Despite these calls for change in police–community relations, distrust and a lack of community partnership continued into the 1990s and early 2000s. Assistant Chief of Police James C. Harpole, who was a police officer under Chief Arreola, explains that the crack epidemic of the early 1990s made community policing challenging: “[Milwaukee] went from a very quiet city to a very violent city. And it was to me almost overnight. It became so busy for the police [that] we didn’t have time to interact for the community. We were running from call to call to call.”¹³ Moreover, Chief Arthur Jones, whose tenure lasted from 1996 to 2003, is described by community leaders and officers as being unwilling to work with community organizations and implemented a top-down, unilateral policing strategy.¹⁴ Community organizer Matt Nelson claims this period saw the relationship between police and communities continuously strained due to harassment and excessive use of force claims.¹⁵ This strained relationship was made worse by the 2002 shooting death of Larry Jenkins, an unarmed 32-year-old black male, who was shot seven times by MPD officer Jon Bartlett.¹⁶ Bartlett was not fired after the shooting, inspiring community activists to encourage reforms to Milwaukee’s civilian complaint process and greater sensitivity to complaints about excessive use of force.¹⁷

Perhaps the most influential moment for many Milwaukee residents in discussing police–community relations today is the near-fatal beating of Frank Jude in 2004. The beating of Jude occurred at a party by a group of off-duty officers who suspected he stole a police officer’s wallet from the party. Among the group of officers charged with the assault was MPD officer Jon Bartlett. Bartlett’s involvement in the beating of Jude fueled discontent with the MPD’s handling of the Jenkins murder, with people believing that the department’s failure to adequately discipline or fire Bartlett for the Jenkins shooting enabled him to attack another black male.¹⁸ Although Chief Nannette Hegerty disciplined the officers involved in the beating, negative opinions of the department were fueled by the acquittal of Bartlett and two other officers in a 2006 state trial.¹⁹ Many residents interpreted

¹¹ Don Terry, *Serial Murder Case Exposes Deep Milwaukee Tensions*, *New York Times*, Aug 2 1991, www.nytimes.com/1991/08/02/us/serial-murder-case-exposes-deep-milwaukee-tensions.html?page-wanted=all&src=pm (last accessed Feb 2, 2012).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Interview with James Harpole, Assistant Chief of Police/Chief of Patrol, Milwaukee Police Department (Jan. 17, 2012).

¹⁴ Interview with Ryan McNichol, police officer, Milwaukee Police Department (Jan. 19, 2012).

¹⁵ Interview with Matt Nelson, former leader, Milwaukee Police Accountability Coalition (Oct. 21, 2011).

¹⁶ Marie Rohde, *Slain man’s mom must pay legal fees*, Oct. 6 2008, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/32467209.html (last accessed Feb 2, 2012).

¹⁷ Nelson, *supra* note 14.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ Four officers involved in the Frank Jude beating went on to be sentenced to prison in a federal trial.

this acquittal in state courts as the police department protecting abusive officers. The incident increased distrust and highlighted a gulf between MPD and community leaders.²⁰ Zach Komes, President of the Milwaukee Youth Council, comments that the beating of Jude continues to influence how the youth of Milwaukee perceive police, demonstrating the generational impact of the incident.²¹

Admittedly, this has been a simplified and incomplete account of the crisis of distrust in Milwaukee. An entire report could be written on this section alone. Nonetheless, Chief Brier's tenure as head of MPD, the Jeffrey Dahmer controversy, incidents of excessive use of violence, and the leadership styles of past chiefs are historical moments that provide important background information to some key challenges facing police–community relations in Milwaukee today. In particular, this brief historical background on Milwaukee highlights a lack of collaboration in police–community relations as a primary cause of distrust.

Normalizing Police–Community Collaboration

By the early 2000s, Milwaukee's crisis of distrust had been ongoing for decades. Contentious police–community relations and a lack of collaboration had been normalized, with community organizations continuing to promote a vision of policing with greater community participation. A significant change was needed to shake things up and have MPD and community organizations alike change their expectations of policing in Milwaukee. This significant change came in the form of a 2003 mediation process facilitated by the DOJ CRS. CRS targeted Milwaukee as a city of interest following a series of media reports about the shooting of unarmed black men by police officers.²² CRS conciliation services launched a mediation process between MPD and community leaders with the intent of fostering dialogue and improving police–community relations in the city. To bring community leaders together in a unified front, CRS established the MCPCR in December 2003. MCPCR was composed of more than 20 representatives from various ethnic and faith communities across the city. These representatives were selected informally through community contacts. The mediation process occurred over the span of nearly a year and a half and consisted of several meetings between MCPCR and police leaders, including Chief Hegerty. Eventually, these meetings culminated in a mediation agreement in May 2005.²³

The May 2005 mediation agreement formalized MCPCR and several of its constituent committees, as well as the future participation of MPD in MCPCR activities.²⁴ The mission of MCPCR, as expressed in the mediation agreement, is “to improve public/police relations in the City of Milwaukee by encouraging frank communication between the parties and by professionally addressing issues that have historically been sources of concern

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Interview with Zach Komes, President, Milwaukee Youth Council (Mar. 7, 2012).

²² Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, 2005 Annual Report 14 (2005).

²³ Id.

²⁴ Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice, Mediation Agreement between the Milwaukee Police Department and the Milwaukee Commission on Police Community Relations (2005).

for the public and [MPD].”²⁵ In addition to continuing to facilitate dialogue between MPD and community leaders through MCPCR, the mediation agreement also established a program to install video equipment in police vehicles, diversity and customer service training for police officers, a use of force policy, and a procedure review process for MPD.²⁶ Further, the agreement gave MCPCR the authority to ask for additional mediation by CRS if a complaint is filed by MCPCR alleging a failure to satisfy the agreement. No such complaint has been filed. Barring any future complaints from MCPCR to CRS, there is no evaluation of the fulfillment or efficacy of MCPCR included in the agreement.²⁷

The mediation process and agreement signified a significant change to police–community relations in the city and one that was necessary to have Milwaukeeans rethink expectations of policing in the city. Steve O’Connell, current Co-Chair of MCPCR and one of its founding members, explains the significance of the mediation process as giving community leaders access to senior police leadership for the first time, helping community organizations build relationships with Chief Hegerty, and giving community leaders inroads into understanding the department.²⁸ In her departure from MPD in 2007, Chief Hegerty discussed MCPCR as one of her most significant accomplishments, noting MCPCR signified a “broker[ing] [of] the confidence and support of the [c]ity’s community leaders.”²⁹ Despite these significant changes, the potential impact of the mediation agreement was compromised by the 2004 beating of Frank Jude and fallout from the incident, which cast a wide shadow over any positive changes to community trust in MPD that may have occurred. The impact of the mediation process on wider police–community relations were limited, though its legacy of changing the expectations of policing in Milwaukee to be more community-based remains.

MCPCR continues to operate with monthly meetings; however, its composition and role in policing in Milwaukee has changed significantly. Since the mediation agreement was signed in 2005, many members have left MCPCR and opted to stop attending its meetings. One of the members who left is Ralph Hollmon, president of the Milwaukee Urban League, who explains that he left MCPCR because it has had less of a purpose since the agreement was signed.³⁰ Steve O’Connell, current co-chair of MCPCR, also notes that the commission has struggled to find an identity in the absence of the clear objective of creating a mediation agreement.³¹ The transition of MPD from the leadership of Chief Hegerty to Chief Flynn has also caused significant changes to MCPCR. Chief Hegerty was an active member of the commission as one of its founding members and continued her involvement until her departure from the department. Chief Flynn, however, has not been as engaged with the commission and has instead appointed other officers to serve as contact persons between the commission and MPD. O’Connell

²⁵ Id. at 2.

²⁶ Id.

²⁷ Id. at 10.

²⁸ O’Connell, *supra* note 21.

²⁹ Nannette Hegerty, Police department met its business goals, *BizTimes Milwaukee*, Nov 19 2007, www.biztimes.com/blogs/milwaukee-biz-blog/authors/nannette-hegerty.

³⁰ Interview with Ralph Hollmon, President, Milwaukee Urban League (Jan. 19, 2012).

³¹ O’Connell, *supra* note 21.

comments “the opportunity to be able to meet with the chief as soon as possible if there was an incident in the community” was one of the most important aspects of the commission under Chief Hegerty’s leadership, and thus, Chief Flynn’s disengagement has weakened MCPCR’s membership and influence.³²

Despite MCPCR’s decline in membership and influence, the commission continues to provide a space for interested community leaders to dialogue with MPD representatives and continues to create opportunities for collaboration. For instance, in autumn 2011 MCPCR organized monthly meetings of its Youth Relations Committee to discuss policing issues specific to Milwaukee youth.³³ Attendance at these meetings varied, ranging from five to seven community leaders and one to three MPD representatives per meeting. MCPCR minutes from these meetings reveal discussions in which community leaders and police officers shared their thoughts on prospective community events and discussed police–community problems, how policing initiatives might offer solutions, and sharing networks and contacts. Much of these discussions were centered around MPD’s burgeoning Students Talking it Over with Police (S.T.O.P.) program, giving community members a chance to offer feedback and learn about one of the department’s new innovations. While the number of participants in these discussions is far fewer than the number of MCPCR members during the mediation process, MCPCR meetings continue to offer important opportunities for collaboration that nurture familiarity and trust. Moreover, it is likely that MCPCR is an organization that will experience peaks and valleys in membership and influence depending on the state of police–community relations at a given time, so its membership today may not be indicative of its future importance.

³² Id.

³³ Youth Relations Committee Meeting Minutes (Oct. 2011 – Jan 2012), Milwaukee Commission on Police–Community Relations, 1-7 (2012).

Fire and Police Commission and Citizen Complaints

Strengthening of FPC and Citizen Complaint Process

The FPC, originally established in 1885, serves as a citizen oversight body for Milwaukee's fire and police departments. FPC is charged with setting big-picture policy for the departments while the fire and police chiefs manage the day-to-day operations of their respective departments. Specific functions of FPC include “establishing recruitment and testing standards for positions in the Fire and Police Departments, hearing appeals by members of either department who have been disciplined by their chief, independently investigating and monitoring citizen complaints, and disciplining employees for misconduct.”³⁴ The commission is composed of seven part-time civilians and one full-time Executive Director, all of whom are confirmed by the Mayor of Milwaukee and the city's Common Council. Current Executive Director of FPC, Michael Tobin, explains commissioners are representatives of the broader Milwaukee community and are selected for their ability to represent all communities in Milwaukee, not particular constituent groups.³⁵ The current commission is made up of former members of law enforcement, university professors and administrators, and a member of Milwaukee's ethnic media community.³⁶

FPC's current set of responsibilities are the results of reforms inspired by advocacy and criticism of its citizen complaint process over the past decade. In the mid-2000s, community organizations like the Milwaukee Police Accountability Coalition (MPAC) began advocating for changes to the civilian complaint process, claiming it was ineffective in addressing the concerns of citizens who had complaints against police for racial profiling and excessive use of force.³⁷ MPAC's calls for a more efficient and community-based citizen review process were echoed in a 2006 report by the Police Assessment Resource Center (PARC), which concluded Milwaukee's citizen review process was “badly broken.”³⁸ The PARC report explained that despite the authority granted to FPC to oversee all aspects of Milwaukee policing, the commission did not have the resources or staff to ensure the citizen complaint process was effectively or efficiently administered. PARC also noted a lack of community confidence in FPC and that most complaints were being filed with MPD directly.³⁹ A 2007 Prism Technical study of FPC found that the citizen complaint process at the time affected police–community relations by leaving complainants with a “feeling that police act—and are treated as though—they are above the law.”⁴⁰

³⁴ Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, Brochure (2012).

³⁵ Interview with Michael Tobin, Executive Director, Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission (Jan. 16, 2012).

³⁶ Id.

³⁷ Nelson, *supra* note 14.

³⁸ Richard Jerome, Police Assessment Resource Center, Promoting Police Accountability in Milwaukee: Strengthening the Fire and Police Commission 1 (June 2006).

³⁹ Id. at 46.

⁴⁰ Prism Technical Management, Milwaukee Police Department Citizen Complaint Process 27 (2007).

In 2007, FPC underwent a series of changes to improve the independence, efficacy, and efficiency of the citizen complaint process. FPC's administrative merger with the city's Department of Employee Relations (DER) came to an end, giving FPC staff greater capacity to focus on policing issues in the city.⁴¹ Further, in January 2007 the Milwaukee Common Council enacted the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances Chapter 314. This ordinance charged FPC with specific responsibilities in overseeing the police commission, including conducting policy reviews, overseeing internal investigations through audits, overseeing the citizen complaint process, and identifying systemic problems and opportunities for improvement.⁴² These specific responsibilities were a marked difference from the broader mandate FPC staff had during its merger with DER.

Additional changes to FPC since 2007 include revisions to the citizen complaint process to allow for independent FPC investigations and mediations and the hiring of FPC's first civilian crime analyst. FPC has also expanded its capacity to receive complaints by making complaint forms available by phone, mail, fax, email, the FPC website, and a variety of community organizations.⁴³ FPC has made complaint forms available at more than 15 community organizations across Milwaukee, most notably at the House of Peace Community Center, NAACP, and Spanish Center offices where legal assistance is provided to complainants at set hours throughout the week. Decentralizing the complaint process has created more opportunities for citizens to file complaints with organizations they may find more accessible or transparent. In sum, it is easier to file a citizen complaint in Milwaukee today than ever before.

Citizen Complaints as a Community Satisfaction Indicator

Representation of Milwaukee's various communities by FPC is based partially on its open public meetings where all community members are invited to participate. However, attendance at the commission's public meetings is nominal.⁴⁴ Community feedback is also gathered through the informal interactions that commission members and staff have with other residents of Milwaukee. FPC's primary method of gauging community opinions and perceptions of MPD is citizen complaints. FPC treats citizen complaints as an indicator of community satisfaction, as exemplified in the Fire and Police Commission 2010 Annual Report: "A total of 253 citizen complaints were filed with the FPC in 2010, a 20.7% decrease from 2009. The decline in citizen complaints filed with the FPC is likely indicative of an increase in citizens' confidence and trust in the public safety departments."⁴⁵ Statistics indicate that citizen complaints have declined by a total of 44.8% from 2007 to 2011, which is used by FPC and MPD as evidence of improved police–community relations.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, 125th Anniversary Report: A Model for Citizen Oversight 15 (2010).

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ Tobin, *supra* note 40.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, 2010 Annual Report 32 (2010).

⁴⁶ Milwaukee Police Department, Traffic/Subject Stops Presentation, November 2011.

The fact that complaints are increasingly easy for citizens to file directly with FPC or through community organizations lends credibility to the use of citizen complaint statistics as a community satisfaction indicator. In addition to providing due process for complainants, the citizen complaint process also improves police–community relations in the city by giving citizens confidence that police officers will be held accountable for their actions like other citizens. Wisconsin’s Commission on Reducing Racial Disparities highlighted the importance of such accountability in its 2008 final report, which notes concerns about police accountability as a prevalent theme in its public hearings in Milwaukee.⁴⁷ Partnering with community organizations to file complaints has also given the citizen complaint process more credibility among community members, since community organizations now have greater familiarity with and participation in the process.

Citizen complaint statistics as a community satisfaction indicator have been integral to MPD’s traffic stops program. The traffic stops program was subject to a great deal of controversy in late 2011 due to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel study that highlighted racial disparities in which drivers were stopped by MPD officers and made accusations of racial profiling. MPD used citizen complaints statistics to counter these accusations of racial profiling and demonstrate to media and community organizations that the traffic stops program is responsive to the needs and wants of Milwaukee’s residents. Under the traffic stops program, traffic stops in Milwaukee have increased from 44,770 total stops in 2007 to 153,028 total stops in 2011. This significant increase in traffic stops has been accompanied by a 44.8% decrease in citizen complaints. Chief Flynn argues these statistics indicate community satisfaction with the program and credits this satisfaction with the discretion officers are using to issue warnings over minor traffic violations rather than using citations or arrests. Varying from district to district, 60% to 80% of traffic stops from January to October 2011 resulted in warnings. Jaquelyn Heath, editor of the Milwaukee Times Weekly, attributes the lack of complaints about the traffic stops program to dissatisfaction with violence in these neighborhoods and people being open to efforts that can improve safety.⁴⁸ NAACP Vice President Barbara Becker notes that the organization has not received a high number of complaints about the traffic stop program, which factored into its decision to support MPD’s efforts.⁴⁹ Ralph Hollmon discusses how he has interpreted the absence of citizen complaints:

“One of the things the chief did say is ‘we’re going to saturate these high crime areas’—high crime areas tend to be the heart of the African-American community. Many of us, including myself, were very nervous and apprehensive because that’s a volatile mix. You have an African-American community that’s high in poverty and gang activity and young African-American men who are aggressive. And then you’re going to have all these officers going in there. That’s going to be a recipe for disaster; we’re going to have all kind of complaints—shootings, police brutality, all kind of stuff. Didn’t happen, and we were pleasantly surprised. A lot of that comes from the leadership conveying to the rank and file how they

⁴⁷ Coggs, *supra* note 7.

⁴⁸ Interview with Jaquelyn Heath, Editor, Milwaukee Times Weekly (African-American newspaper) (Jan. 19, 2012).

⁴⁹ Becker, *supra* note 9.

want them to conduct themselves when they're on the street interacting with the community."⁵⁰

Certainly, there are inherent limitations to a citizen complaint process that will ensure it is not an infallible measurement of community satisfaction. One important limitation to this measurement of community satisfaction is that the citizen complaint process is extremely individualized, requiring individual complainants to report individual incidents. Group complaints like the 2010 complaint by Concerned African-American Mothers (CAAM) do not get accounted for in the current citizen complaint process. CAAM's complaint was submitted by a group of African-American mothers from different districts in Milwaukee who shared specific and unspecific accounts of what they believed to be racial profiling. Among the unspecific issues raised in the complaint is the traffic stops program; CAAM complained about the stopping of black drivers in their neighborhoods. One of the mothers of CAAM included in the complaint, Dafi Malik, explains their experience working within the current citizen complaint process:

“When we went in originally and filed the complaint, the police investigator interviewed us and I think they were sympathetic and could understand the validity of the complaint, but I got the feeling that not much was going to be done. The way we walked out of there was, ‘here, you guys all go back and file individual complaints.’ ... I just wanted them to maybe take a look at policy or procedure and see if there's a way they could adjust the way they have always done things to create a better atmosphere between the community and the police department.”⁵¹

Malik's experience demonstrates how the current citizen complaint process may miss concerns in the community because of its individualized nature. CAAM's effort to make a meta-complaint about a pattern of incidents and strategies used by MPD did not wind up being divided into a series of individual complaints and thus cannot be measured by the citizen complaint statistics.

For the sake of efficiency and consistency, it may be important for the FPC's citizen complaint process to retain its individualized nature; however, the limitations of citizen complaints as an indicator of community satisfaction highlight the need for further nuance in gathering community opinions. FPC Executive Director Michael Tobin comments that the ideal way of measuring community satisfaction would be to administer a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative community satisfaction survey, but this is not viable with current resources. Given the number of policies and procedures that fall under FPC's purview, it is unlikely the organization will have the resources required to further measure community satisfaction. Nonetheless, in conversations with members of FPC and MPD, as well as community leaders, it is clear that citizen complaints have become a placeholder for community confidence and trust. For FPC and MPD, it is a sign that they're doing their job well; for some community leaders, it is a sign that progress has been made. This is a marked difference from the past when the citizen complaint process was seen as so ineffective that it could not be relied on to reveal anything substantive. It

⁵⁰ Hollmon, *supra* note 35.

⁵¹ Interview with Dafi Malik, member of Concerned African-American Mothers (Mar. 1, 2012).

is a mark of progress that citizen complaints are being discussed in such a way now, but it also underscores how valuable a strong citizen complaint process can be in establishing credibility with some community leaders.

The Role of the Chief in Collaboration

In discussing police–community relations in Milwaukee, references to MPD are very chief-centric. Historically, chiefs have been closely associated with policing eras in the city as figureheads and symbols. This trend is partially explained by MPD’s history of unilateral policing, with chiefs resisting calls for community collaboration and yielding a great deal of power over policing in the city. In the current era of policing in Milwaukee, the chief continues to be representative of MPD. Chief Flynn’s interactions with community leaders, then, are critical to police–community relations. Chief Flynn announced his agenda of building trust and collaboration upon entering MPD in 2008 in his Oath of Office Ceremony remarks:

“To the community, I promise an open, accountable, accessible police department responsive to your concerns. It is my hope that, someday, support for the department will be uniformly strong across every neighborhood and from every sector of society. I hope someday that all of our communities will be willing to suspend judgment when there is a critical incident until all the facts are in. But I recognize that we are not there yet. This police department and all its communities have a history, and that history has not always been positive. We will work to learn from that history and not be held hostage to it. We will work to earn your trust. Reducing crime, fear, and disorder in your neighborhood while treating you with dignity and respect will be our down payment on earning that trust.”⁵²

Chief Flynn began carrying out his agenda by establishing his presence in Milwaukee as a visible leader. Ralph Hollmon, President of the Milwaukee Urban League, recalls Chief Flynn was “willing to have a two-way dialogue to meet with him at the department and meet with other officers. He was also willing to come into the community....[T]hat was significant, that he was visible [and] he was out and interacting with people. And not just once here and there, not just on special occasions, but on many occasions.”⁵³ Jaquelyn Heath, editor of the Milwaukee Times Weekly, says that Chief Flynn has been consistent and visible in the public eye during positive and negative incidents with commendable professionalism.⁵⁴ She believes his commitment to Milwaukee signifies a love and care for the city that she appreciates. Heath pinpoints Milwaukee’s annual Juneteenth Celebration, which commemorates the end of slavery in the United States, as where Chief Flynn has earned a lot of community confidence. Milwaukee’s Juneteenth Celebration has historically been associated with youth violence but has been violence-free for the past two years due to effective policing. Chief Flynn also considers Juneteenth a source of pride for the department: “I sure as hell notice the reaction every time I go to Juneteenth and

⁵² Edward A. Flynn, Oath of Office Ceremony Remarks, Jan. 7, 2008, City of Milwaukee.

⁵³ Hollmon, *supra* note 30.

⁵⁴ Heath, *supra* note 48.

my cops walking down the street are greeted by people patting them on the shoulder and shaking their hand. They are better received than they were just a few years ago.”⁵⁵

Relationship Building

In his role as the public face of MPD, Chief Flynn has differed from his predecessor Chief Hegerty in how he builds relationships with community organizations. While Chief Hegerty built relationships with community organizations through MCPCR, Chief Flynn has opted out of MCPCR and has not included it in his personal strategy for community engagement. Instead, Chief Flynn appoints other officers to attend MCPCR meetings. Chief Flynn’s approach has been to build direct relationships with a few community organizations in the city, such as the NAACP and the Urban League. Chief Flynn provides an account of his decision to disengage with MCPCR: “I prefer, generally speaking, to not work with folks who are representatives. I’d rather work with people themselves.... There is no need to set up a separate committee to discuss community issues; now we talk about community issues in the community.”⁵⁶

Chief Flynn’s decision to go directly to community organizations as part of MPD’s style of relationship-building has detracted from MCPCR’s function as a bridge between MPD and community organizations. The advantages of this approach are visibility, public crisis management, and taking an assertive role in police–community relations. One of the consequences of this approach is that it creates a two-tier system of community organizations; the first tier being those organizations the chief is able to build a direct relationship with, and the second tier being those organizations the chief does not have a direct relationship with. These tiers are not necessarily intentional, because the chief has a finite capacity to work with community leaders and can only build relationships with a limited number of groups. MCPCR, on the other hand, casts a wider net and can include many more groups. Steve O’Connell, Co-Chair of MCPCR, explains how these two tiers have affected MCPCR:

“Right away after Flynn arrived there was a serious incident in the Hmong community. It blew up in everyone’s face because Flynn refused to meet with the Hmong MCPCR representatives; the three co-chairs tried to meet with the chief. He had command staff at the meeting and explained how things were going to work. Since then, the Hmong community has not been at the table; efforts are under way to bring a representative to the table. The Hmong community was split on the whole issue because the chief decided to work with the community on the southside of Milwaukee, which left out the community on the other side of town.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Tom Bamberger, Street Smarts, Jan. 23, 2012, Inside Milwaukee Magazine, www.insidemilwaukee.com/Article/1232012-StreetSmarts (last accessed April 5, 2012).

⁵⁶ Interview with Edward A. Flynn, Chief of Police, Milwaukee Police Department (Mar. 7, 2012).

⁵⁷ Interview with Steve O’Connell, former Executive Director of Sherman Park Community Association and current Chair of Milwaukee Commission on Police–Community Relations (Mar. 7, 2012).

For groups like MCPCR and others who do not have direct access to Chief Flynn, there is a feeling of discontent because the pendulum of power among community organizations does not swing in their favour. CAAM has also articulated its discontent with its relationship with Chief Flynn, claiming he has not been responsive to their concerns. However, for organizations like the Milwaukee Urban League and NAACP, which Chief Flynn has built strong relationships with through their respective presidents, collaboration is very strong. Chief Flynn offers the following as an explanation for what has made his relationships with NAACP and the Urban League distinct from other groups:

“I’m interested in connecting with people that I see as having citywide stature and a more strategic perspective about the issues of concern to them. I need a reality test.... I also need to know that when I hear something from them I know it’s real, okay, this isn’t somebody’s political chess move, this is a real thing. This enables us to calibrate more carefully our strategies and tactics.”⁵⁸

Chief Flynn’s explanation reveals how he has prioritized relationship building. In part, Chief Flynn has chosen to work closely with NAACP and the Urban League because of their influence and prominence in Milwaukee. They are also national organizations with national resources. Additionally, Chief Flynn’s explanation highlights that he values organizations he sees as being long-term partners in establishing policing strategies, as opposed to groups that may be more focused on airing grievances. One characteristic that distinguishes groups such as NAACP and the Urban League from groups such as CAAM and MCPCR is that the former lead large constituent groups and provide a wide array of services, whereas the latter have narrower memberships and are born out of discontent with police. Dr. Thomas Lifvendahl, member of MPRC and Adjunct Professor at Cardinal Stritch University, offers a critique of this approach to relationship-building, claiming it leaves some community groups feeling silenced. According to Dr. Lifvendahl, Chief Flynn’s approach is “tone deaf” because he “doesn’t seem to get it, that the mere act of intensively listening and trying to understand what the other person is saying, in and of itself, bridges the gap between you and that group.”⁵⁹

Importantly, MPD is not closed off to MCPCR, CAAM, or any other community organizations wanting to collaborate with the department; they are just not granted direct regular access to the chief. The two-tier system of relationship-building appears destined to leave some community groups discontent, but it is unclear whether any community concerns are being unheard by the department because of this. Indeed, the empowerment of district commanders means that MPD’s decision-making is shared among a larger group of officers, allowing for community groups to meaningfully collaborate with local leaders. Moreover, Chief Flynn does prioritize meeting with other organizations when different communities need to be engaged, such as the Milwaukee Youth Council to discuss youth issues.

Crisis Management

⁵⁸ Flynn, *supra* note 93.

⁵⁹ Lefvindahl, *supra* note 77.

Chief Flynn has also grown community confidence in MPD with his crisis management. Barbara Becker, Vice President of the Milwaukee NAACP, has commended Flynn for working with community members to address concerns that emerged in the summer of 2011 after violence broke out at the Wisconsin State Fair that was portrayed in news outlets as African-American youth attacking white patrons of the fair.⁶⁰ According to Becker, Flynn’s call to meet with leaders in minority communities following the incident, his explanation that state police were involved not local police, and his commitment to working with community leaders to set a strategy of policing subsequent summer events is unprecedented.⁶¹ Professor R.L. McNeely notes that in Chief Flynn’s press conference with community leaders to discuss the incident, he displayed a nuanced understanding of the situation: “It’s very clear that he’s read a great deal of literature. He’s not your typical police chief. He understands some of these sociological explanations for criminal activity. Meaning, he understands the roles that single-parent family homes and etcetera play in the production in some of this violence.” Becker acknowledges the absence of similar situations throughout the summer built good will between community leaders and Chief Flynn.⁶² Zach Komes of the Milwaukee Youth Council notes that Chief Flynn met with the council to discuss the Wisconsin State Fair events and that Chief Flynn’s outreach at that time won over many members as a sign of goodwill.⁶³

Another instance of Chief Flynn’s crisis management building goodwill with community leaders is his handling of the shooting of two police officers in June 2009. Two officers were engaged in a stop of an 18 year-old African-American male and shot in the process “with absolutely no provocation” according to Mayor Tom Barrett.⁶⁴ Chief Flynn recognized that the handling of the incident tested the department’s discipline and resolve as it quickly arrested a suspect. Ralph Hollmon explains how Chief Flynn’s response was positive for police–community relations:

“If that incident had happened under the Chief Brier administration, when the officers caught that young man, I just shudder to think about what would happen to him. Under this new leadership, where professionalism and treating people with dignity and respect—even criminals—is now the way the department is going to operate, that young man was apprehended the way he’s supposed to be apprehended. I even called the chief to ... thank and commend him for that because in the good ol’ days that young man never would have made it to the police station.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ On August 5, 2011 at the Wisconsin State Fair, a series of fights broke out among black youths. The violence became out of control and groups of white fair patrons and their vehicles were attacked. Thirty-one arrests were made, mostly for disorderly conduct, and eleven people were injured, including seven police officers.

Don Walker, State Fair Melees produce 11 injuries 31 arrests, Aug 5 2011, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/126828998.html (last accessed Apr. 3, 2012).

⁶¹ Becker, *supra* note 9.

⁶² McNeely, *supra* note 9.

⁶³ Komes, *supra* note 21.

⁶⁴ WISN-TV, Police Chief Identifies 2 Officers Shot on South Side, June 9, 2009, www.wisn.com/r/19705512/detail.html (last accessed Feb. 2, 2012).

⁶⁵ Hollmon, *supra* note 30.

Another potential crisis in Milwaukee police–community relations emerged with the highly publicized criticisms of Milwaukee’s traffic stops program for its disparate impact on Milwaukee’s black and Latino communities, alleged to be a strategy of racial profiling. Chief Flynn used crime data to make a presentation to community leaders to explain that the saturation of police in particular neighborhoods is based directly on crime data, not race. MPD’s relationship with NAACP was especially helpful in managing this crisis, as the department and its use of data was supported by the organization during the traffic stops controversy. President of the Milwaukee NAACP, James Hall, commented on the use of data in developing this strategy:

“[The NAACP Milwaukee Branch] recently attended the briefing by Chief Edward Flynn and heard his detailed explanation of the methodology used by the Milwaukee Police Department.... To the extent that the traffic stops as part of a larger effort to police high-crime areas reduce crime and enhance the safety and stability of neighborhoods, this allows families to thrive. This tips the balance in favor of tolerating this approach for the greater good of the community, so long as racial profiling and disparity in treatment of drivers are not a part of this program.”⁶⁶

The significance of NAACP’s support of the traffic stops program cannot be overstated. First, Hall’s statement reflects how much progress has been made in Milwaukee, where an organization with a long history of dissatisfaction with MPD is now giving the department the benefit of the doubt. Second, the value of using data is underscored in Hall’s statement, as Chief Flynn’s presentation of the traffic stops program was satisfactory in explaining that crime data not race is the foundation of the traffic stops program. Third, Hall’s statement of confidence balanced out the prominent criticism coming out of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel report on the program, including a scathing op-ed by Chris Ahmuty, Executive Director of the Wisconsin American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). This example shows the value of long-term partnership and trust with a community organization in managing crises.

A Department in Transformation

At the time of Chief Flynn’s arrival to MPD, he aimed to lead significant changes to policing in Milwaukee both inside and outside of the department. The tenure of Chief Flynn’s predecessor, Chief Hegerty, serves as an example of how efforts to improve police–community relations does not always lead to improved internal dynamics within a police department. While community leaders report that Chief Hegerty improved her standing with community organizations through her involvement in MCPCR and firing officers involved in the 2004 beating of Frank Jude, they also note that she was not seen as committed to her fellow officers by many in the department.⁶⁷ Current MPD officer James McNichol also notes that Chief Hegerty did not have a close relationship with

⁶⁶ James H. Hall of Milwaukee’s NAACP Branch, A balance between traffic stops and safety, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Dec. 8, 2011, www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/a-balance-between-traffic-stops-and-safety-lt3bv8r-135282513.html (last accessed Feb. 2, 2012).

⁶⁷ Hollmon, *supra* note 30; O’Connell, *supra* note 21.

many in the department during her tenure as chief and often behaved as an outsider.⁶⁸ Chief Flynn has struck a balance in appealing to those inside and outside of the department, investing in his fellow officers to obtain their buy-in to his vision of policing that is also improving police–community relations and the capacity of other officers to build collaborative relationships with community members. Chief Flynn conceived of it as his job to create a dynamic with his officers that would be favorable to police–community relations: “at some level, coppers treat the community the way they’re treated by their management. To the extent officers feel their work is respected and they’re treated fairly has an impact on how they engage with the community.”⁶⁹

Leadership Development

Among the changes made within MPD under Chief Flynn, one of the most critical to this case study is the practice of dispersed leadership. According to Chief Flynn, dispersed leadership begins with the creation of a self-reflective, value-based culture, in which police officers are required to think about the ideals of their profession.⁷⁰ In recognition of the difficult, intense, and quick decisions police officers make regularly, Chief Flynn believes a value-based as opposed to a rule-based culture provides the framework for officers to exercise leadership in making the right choices.⁷¹ This transformation toward a value-based culture is best articulated in the department’s core values: competence, courage, integrity, leadership, respect, and restraint. These values, which are detailed in MPD’s Code of Conduct co-written by FPC and MPD in 2010,⁷² are meant to provide a framework of decision-making for officers to be held accountable to and hold one another accountable to as well.

In addition to establishing norms within the department by requiring that officers be familiar with these values and that each police leader’s office have a framed copy of these values, MPD has used these values to articulate an approach to discipline within the department. This approach to discipline can be simply stated as officers are disciplined when they willfully fail to comply with the values outlined in the code of conduct, but they will receive a different response, such as training, from the department for making a mistake. This distinction may seem negligible or obvious, but Chief Flynn believes the distinction between willful misconduct and committing an error has not been commonly practiced in MPD’s past and can prevent a culture of secrecy that emerges out of officers seeing errors and willful misconduct treated the same way by management.⁷³ The distinction between error and purposely violating the department’s core values is meant to send a message of accountability between officers and encourage them to address potential misconduct between one another before a violation of the values and subsequent disciplinary action occur.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ McNichol, *supra* note 13.

⁶⁹ Flynn, *supra* note 1.

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² Milwaukee Police Department, Code of Conduct (2010).

⁷³ Flynn, *supra* note 1.

⁷⁴ *Id.*

The development of a value-based culture and the department's fourth core value, leadership, reflect Chief Flynn's overarching strategy of developing leadership within the department and having all officers see themselves as leaders in part of a larger social agency. This approach to policing is rooted in the Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO) model, an educational program developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police over the past decade. Central to LPO is the idea of dispersed leadership that "replaces the belief that leadership is reserved for senior officers with the idea that everyone in the organization is expected and trained to be a leader."⁷⁵ LPO training is offered across the United States, and dozens of MPD officers have completed this three-week program of leadership development. The LPO model focuses on "motivation, satisfaction, and performance of subordinates, peers, or supervisors. In essence, the leader's role is to influence human behavior to raise or maintain high levels of motivation, satisfaction, and performance to meet organizational goals."⁷⁶ The introduction of such training to the department is credited with institutionalizing Chief Flynn's emphasis on leadership from every officer and has prepared supervisors and leaders within the department to lead subordinate officers effectively toward embracing the department's value-based culture and policing strategies.⁷⁷

The philosophy of dispersed leadership is markedly different from the approach to police leadership from past chiefs in Milwaukee like Chief Jones and Chief Hegerty, who are described as being hierarchical and top-down in their leadership styles.⁷⁸ Not only were officers not encouraged to make important decision in the past and be held accountable for their decision-making processes, but decision-making outside of specified rules and guidelines was actively discouraged under previous chiefs. Officer James McNichol explains that a rule- and hierarchy-driven environment works to lower department morale by stifling creativity and leadership. Officer McNichol offers as an example former Chief Jones' strong emphasis on officers wearing their uniform hat whenever they were outside of a police vehicle, illustrating how leadership prioritized rules over values in the past. McNichol also commented on how the current encouragement of leadership in MPD promotes entrepreneurial thinking and a more satisfying workplace, where officers feel empowered to speak to community members and residents about important issues.

One of the assumptions behind MPD's shift to a value-based culture that encourages leadership is that police officers will be more thoughtful and responsible and thus interact with community members with greater positivity and less negative incidents. It is virtually impossible to draw a direct connection between these transformations and improvements, or lack thereof, to police-community relations and a substantive decline in alleged

⁷⁵ Lieutenant Sean E. Moriarity of Delaware State Police, The Leadership in Police Organizations Program in the Delaware State Police: Recommendations for Law Enforcement Leadership Development, The Police Chief Magazine, May 2009, www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display_arch&article_id=1792&issue_id=52009#15.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Interview with Assistant Chief Harpole and Deputy Commander Hudson, Jan. 17, 2012. Assistant Chief Harpole is a life-long resident of Milwaukee, member of MPD for 27 years, and head of the Neighborhood Policing Bureau. Deputy Commander Hudson serves as Inspector of Police of the Neighborhood Policing Bureau.

⁷⁸ McNichol, *supra* note 13; Harpole, *supra* note 12.

police misconduct over the past four years. However, one of the primary contributions of these changes led by Chief Flynn is that it sent a message to MPD officers that a new era in policing had begun and that the chief is willing to invest in his fellow officers as part of his efforts to improve police–community relations. By promoting officers who embrace the new organizational culture in MPD, Chief Flynn believes he is successfully institutionalizing this emphasis on leadership.

Unleashing the District Captains

Chief Flynn’s focus on dispersed leadership has been integral to another key reform he has led in the department: creating a geography-driven approach to crime reduction by empowering district captains. Chief Flynn has given district captains greater responsibility in setting their own crime reduction strategies, engaging with communities, and managing the officers they oversee. Assistant Chief Harpole, former captain of District Three, has described this as “unleashing the district commander” by giving them the authority and autonomy to employ creative and innovative strategies in their districts.⁷⁹ Deputy Commander Hudson, former captain of District Five, explains that this sharing of leadership empowered her to develop her own community engagement strategy of working with local churches and youth.⁸⁰ Because district captains are at the forefront of police–community relations by being the highest ranking officer assigned to a particular set of neighborhoods and communities, the empowerment of district captains has made community organizations feel better connected to decision-making in the department. The empowerment of district captains has been central to improving police–community relations because it also allows for specific responses to the specific concerns of community members. Steve O’Connell of MCPCR considers the empowering of district captains as the most significant change to policing in Milwaukee under Chief Flynn’s leadership:

“The one really important change has come in the command staff—the captains in the districts are making decisions about deployment. They are also held accountable for how they use their resources. The placement of ADAs, probation and parole personnel, and domestic violence counselors in the different districts has been a huge change. They all have detectives at their disposal at the districts. They are no longer ‘called from downtown,’ as they used to say.”⁸¹

The unleashing of district captains and geography-focused approach to policing has also led to an increase in foot patrol. Increased foot patrol was employed at the very beginning of Chief Flynn’s arrival to Milwaukee based on insight from district commanders about how the department could introduce a quick intervention to reduce crime.⁸² Since then, the number of foot patrol officers has increased and many officers have been moved from specialized units and detective positions to neighborhood beats.⁸³ Foot patrol has been

⁷⁹ Harpole, *supra* note 12.

⁸⁰ Interview with Edith Hudson, Deputy Commander, Milwaukee Police Department (Jan. 16, 2012).

⁸¹ O’Connell, *supra* note 21.

⁸² John Dobberstein, Milwaukee PD increase foot patrol to combat crime, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Jan. 17, 2008, www.policeone.com/patrol-issues/articles/1651346-Milwaukee-PD-increase-foot-patrol-to-combat-crime/.

⁸³ Interview with Sergeant Rochelle Gawin, Jan. 18, 2012. Sergeant Gawin is stationed in District 5.

recognized by DOJ as a strategy that reaps benefits in the form of “community goodwill and improved relationships between the police and community.”⁸⁴ Chief Flynn echoes this sentiment and also explains that it benefits the officers themselves: “cop on foot, cop on a bicycle talks to the regular people in the neighborhood.... It’s as good for the health of my officers as it is for the perceptions of safety for citizens. But it also creates some informal connections.... [W]hen that officer gets back in the car, he’s waving at people he knows. People aren’t just [the] object of 911 calls.”⁸⁵ One of the primary results of the increase in foot patrol has been increased visibility of officers by community members. Jaquelyn Heath claims that this increased visibility has helped some officers gain a positive status among some residents in Milwaukee.⁸⁶ Dr. Thomas Lifvendahl of MCPCR notes that since 2008 “district captains have increasingly become more knowledgeable before taking over a district. Many have served in the district as patrol officers or supervisors, and the level of street knowledge demonstrated is deep.”⁸⁷ Foot patrol appears to contribute to educating a stronger generation of district captains.

Perhaps the best example of how expectations of district captains have evolved is found in MPD’s weekly CompStat meetings.⁸⁸ Every Wednesday, alternating groups of two district captains present their crime rates to the rest of the department’s top leadership. Their crime rates and patterns are compared to data from the same time period of the previous year to assess whether effective crime reduction is occurring. Crime rates are also analyzed to determine if any patterns or trends are developing. The presenting district captains are expected to have explanations for why crime rates are going up or down or why patterns are emerging. District captains are also expected to present their strategies for responding to any issues identified and gather feedback from other top leaders in the department to develop their crime reduction strategies. In these meetings, deference is paid to district captains in setting a strategy for crime reduction, but these captains are also held accountable to the group for the results of their strategies.

The introduction of CompStat meetings is made possible by another key reform in MPD: data-driven policing and the introduction of new technologies. Chief Flynn’s version of data-driven policing involves tracking data about crime and focusing on lowering crime rates. This is markedly different from past strategies, where captains were expected to meet arrest quotas or assessed based on response times.⁸⁹ This focus on crime reduction is propelled by an internal system of data tracking that sends crime rate reports to top leaders in the department via email every morning. This data is the subject of crime stats meetings between senior MPD leaders. These meetings occur three times a week and are

⁸⁴ Department of Justice’s Community Oriented Policing Services, Foot Patrols: Crime Analysis and Community Engagement to Further the Commitment to Community Policing, Community Policing Dispatch Newsletter, Feb. 2009, www.cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/February_2009/foot_patrol.htm.

⁸⁵ Flynn, *supra* note 1.

⁸⁶ Heath, *supra* note 48.

⁸⁷ Interview with Thomas Lifvendahl, Adjunct Professor at Cardinal Stritch University and member of Milwaukee Commission on Police–Community Relations (Mar. 7, 2012).

⁸⁸ CompStat meeting, Milwaukee Police Department (Jan. 18, 2012).

⁸⁹ Harpole, *supra* note 12.

where strategies are discussed for addressing crime in the city and priorities are established for the coming days.⁹⁰

The reforms within MPD led by Chief Flynn have changed the day-to-day operations of the department. Creating a value-based culture, dispersing leadership, empowering district captains, using data to prioritize crime reduction, and increasing foot patrol have transformed MPD and improved police–community relations in so far as they have made the department better suited for collaborative relationships with community leaders.

Lessons learned in Building Trust and Collaboration in Milwaukee

- *Make police leaders visible and accessible to community organizations and residents.*

The visibility and accessibility of police leaders has been a fundamental part of improving police–community relations in Milwaukee. Dating back to the inception of MCPCR, community leaders report that access to the chief and other senior MPD leaders was critical to gaining the buy-in of community leaders. Chief Flynn’s visibility has been key to gaining community confidence in the department’s commitment to collaborating with residents and community organizations. His visibility has also made him effective as a crisis manager because he has a consistent presence in good and bad times as someone committed to policing in Milwaukee. Chief Flynn’s accessibility has also been key to his valuable relationships with NAACP and the Urban League. For organizations that do not have regular access to Chief Flynn, making district commanders accessible has been critical to collaborating with other community organizations concerned with local policing issues.

- *Communicate policing strategies with community partners.*

It is helpful to treat community partners as if they are entitled to communication from the department. Developing policing strategies based on crime data or other information is fundamental to ensuring that community partners can understand the department’s strategies, including its intentions and goals. Consistent communication with community partners also builds familiarity with the department’s strategies over long periods of time and ensures they have adequate information to assess a program or policy, as opposed to being swayed by media or other perspectives. MPD’s experience with NAACP and the Urban League demonstrate the value of long-term communication in having community partners stand by a department in moments of controversy.

- *Develop a more transparent, autonomous, and efficient citizen complaint process.*

⁹⁰ Crime Stats meeting, Milwaukee Police Department (Jan. 17, 2012).

Citizen complaint processes are important to ensuring that police officers do not operate above the law and that residents view the police as accountable and fair. A citizen complaint process that is autonomous and efficient enough to promise a comprehensive investigation and decision brings credibility to policing. Citizen complaint processes can also be made more transparent and reliable by partnering with community organizations, especially in cities such as in Milwaukee, where over a dozen community organizations receive citizen complaints and three offer legal services. This transparency, combined with electronic and in-person submissions, makes the complaint process accessible enough to serve as a community satisfaction indicator. Citizen complaints as a community satisfaction indicator have salience among community leaders and are a cost-effective way of gathering community opinions.

- ***Mediation processes can hit a reset button to normalize police–community collaboration.***

In a city where police–community relations are weak or nonexistent, as Milwaukee’s has been for much of its history, a mediation process can be helpful in building new norms of collaboration and trust. The mediation between MPD and MCPCR shows that a mediation process can facilitate important conversations about policing and have a lasting impact in the relationships it creates between community and police leaders. A mediation process also provides an opportunity for community and police leaders to discuss values and norms and agree to uphold them, giving a department a clear path toward building trust.

- ***Change organizational culture within the department to achieve officer buy-in.***

A fundamental lesson in achieving officer buy-in to new police–community relations strategies is accompanying community engagement with larger organizational culture changes. A focus on building trust and collaboration will be bolstered by investing in officers and preparing them for how their job must change to achieve better police–community relations. In Milwaukee, the philosophy of dispersed leadership is an investment in officers that asks them to look at themselves and their job differently, while also looking at communities differently. Rewriting the Department Code of Conduct, empowering of district captains, and implementing LPO education prove to be successful in shifting organizational culture at MPD.

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