

Black and Blue: How the Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement Addressed Police-Community
Relations and Social Trust with the African American Community

by

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TERMINAL PROJECT

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Dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Harold Eidlin, who I know would be proud of the work I have done. And to my family, for their continued love, support, and encouragement – words cannot express how much it means to me and keeps me going. I love you all.

Lorenzo Collins, a 25-year-old mentally ill man holding a brick; Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old man who ran when he saw police; Roger Owensby Jr., a 29-year-old man buying an energy drink. All three had two things in common: they were African American, and they lost their lives at the hands of the Cincinnati Police Department (“CPD”). While their stories and circumstances differ, it speaks to the mounting friction and fractured relationship between the African American community and the CPD during the period of 1995 to 2001 when fifteen African American men were killed by police. This paper is an accompaniment to the podcast story *Black and Blue* (“podcast”) I created through in-person interviews to include law enforcement and citizens.

The purpose of the podcast¹ is to examine a reform process undertaken in Cincinnati through the reflections of key stakeholders, and how it addressed police-community relations and social trust² between the police and the African American community in a period of crisis. This process of engagement among key players differed from what we know to be the traditional mode of reform – a consent decree stemming from a Department of Justice (“DOJ”) investigation – in that it brought together various entities to work together and decide how to implement reform, creating the Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement³ (“collaborative agreement”). I was inspired to study this process based on its uniqueness in relation to consent decrees and how it inspired dialog between the police and the African American community; two groups pushing away from each other as the result of a deeply embedded identity-based

¹ [Black and Blue: The Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement](#) ; [iTunes](#) ; [RSS Feed](#)

² For purposes of this work, social trust refers to individuals’ “...beliefs about the degree to which...police are honest and care for...members of the communities they police,” as well as thinking “...police officers have benevolent and caring intentions when they deal with the public and make a good faith effort to respond to the needs and concerns of the public (Tyler, 2005, p. 324-25).

³ More material can be found [here](#), see ‘Final Settlement’ for collaborative agreement document.

conflict stemming from longstanding racial bias and discrimination by the CPD. The collaborative agreement also sought to reach a larger audience in order to produce a more meaningful impact. What will follow is a further breakdown and discussion of how I developed this podcast, methods and research utilized, further interpretations, and outcomes for future consideration.

THE PROJECT

The podcast tells a story of how the CDP and Cincinnati's African American community undertook major steps to rebuild relationships and trust through the negotiation of the collaborative agreement. I begin with a brief look at the backdrop to this negotiation. During the period of 1967-2000, the CPD was involved in seventeen investigations, including external issues such as the shooting deaths of African Americans, and internal matters such as hiring and promotional practices of African American officers (Eck & Rothman, 2006). In hopes of mitigating this history of mistreatment, the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio Foundation ("ACLU"), along with the Cincinnati Black United Front ("BUF"), filed a class action lawsuit in March of 2001 alleging that "...the [CPD] had treated African-American citizens differently than other racial groups for more than thirty years" (Rothman, 2006, p. 110). The case was assigned to Judge Susan Dlott⁴, who felt such a case would be better resolved outside the courtroom if it were to produce lasting improvements. She urged the parties to consider the underlying core issues of these conflicts and how they were influencing the gap between the police and citizens. Both sides acknowledged the benefits of having the Fraternal Order of Police ("FOP") and the

⁴ Judge Susan Dlott is a United States District Judge of the US District Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

local union chapter involved. Al Gerhardstein, lead counsel for the BUF, reached out to the Andrus Family Fund (“AFF”), which was “...interested in innovations in community reconciliation, and secured a \$100,000 pledge contingent on Cincinnati matching the funds to underwrite a citywide dialogue on police reform” (Rothman & Land, 2004, p. 36). The AFF recommended Jay Rothman of the ARIA Group to act as lead negotiator. It was stated pointedly that “The ultimate goal of this Agreement [collaborative agreement] is to reduce that friction [between members of the community and the CPD] and foster a safer community where mutual trust and respect is enhanced among citizens and police” (*In re Cincinnati Policing*, p. 3).

My investigation of the collaborative agreement began with a review of secondary sources such as news stories and relevant academic literature. My overall purpose was to examine how the collaborative agreement addressed police-community relations and social trust between the police and the African American community. Over time, I identified main research questions to drive my field inquiry and generate the podcast, which will serve as the main body of work for my master’s project. The questions are: (1) What does the process of engaging and involving stakeholder groups in negotiations for the collaborative agreement look like as a conflict management strategy; (2) How did this process and its implementation influence social trust and police-community relations over the course of 15 years in Cincinnati; and (3) What lessons can be learned from this process that may be transferable to other settings where police-community relations are contested and social trust requires repair?

METHODOLOGY and APPROACH

I decided to focus on key stakeholders, their unique and varied perspectives, bringing their engagement in these negotiations alive through a podcast that features the voices and of people directly involved in the collaborative agreement. That decision led me to travel to Cincinnati to conduct in-person interviews and audio record them. This would allow me to expose their stories and allow their voices to be heard, offering thoughtful and useful information about how such an agreement was reached and what this meant to the players in this high stakes process of conflict management. To provide a well-rounded story in the context of police-community relations and social trust, I focused my interviews on three points of view – including key stakeholder groups as well as those that helped to facilitate and guide the process: (1) Law enforcement personnel; (2) Community members; and (3) Professionals⁵. Working closely with my academic advisor, I drafted interview questions to use that would seek information surrounding my research questions and build the podcast. These questions were divided up into sections based on information I sought from each category – with some overlap – and how they aligned with my research questions. For example, asking both police and community members about current police-community relations.

I decided the best way to disseminate this information would be to present it as a podcast – which allows easy access for listening at one’s own leisure. To provide a more rich insight into the collaborative agreement, sitting down with people face-to-face felt best for developing a connection and bringing about in-depth conversations; this was why I chose to

⁵ Professionals in this case refers to the aforementioned individuals that helped guide the process, and were not a key stakeholder group. This is to build knowledge and understanding of the collaborative agreement itself to contribute to the podcast.

travel to Cincinnati to do fieldwork as opposed to conducting interviews over the phone. The plan was to consolidate the approximately six hours of interviews into a 30 – 45 minute podcast⁶. This offers a unique window into the world of police reform. By hearing directly from the individuals that were involved in the collaborative agreement to share their stories and let them drive understanding, it is more impactful than presenting the information as a traditional academic piece of literature.

I began working towards making contacts with individuals from my three points of view in the Summer of 2016, beginning with some networking through a close friend that eventually lead to Lt. Steve Saunders of the CPD. After making this contact, I began to cold call and email individuals involved from the other categories based on names I had seen through the course of my secondary source research. Taking this approach, I was able to contact Dr. John Eck, Pastor Damon Lynch, Al Gerhardstein, and Professor Jay Rothman. My first conversations with these individuals were to offer context and information about my project and intentions, as well as learn some background about them. I informed them I intended to travel to Cincinnati from Oregon to conduct interviews, and ask if they would be willing to meet with me. This portion of my project was an initial roadblock because with some individuals it took several attempts to connect with – and honestly, cold calling individuals can be intimidating. In addition to this challenge, I was unsure of whether or not these individuals would be willing to talk with me since this process took place about 15 years ago. However, I was determined to make this project a success, and was happy when my persistence paid off in connecting with individuals. Once I had my interview questions completed, I began to plan my trip to Cincinnati to do my

⁶ To edit the audio recordings and create the podcast, I used a free software called 'Audacity.'

fieldwork. I planned on being there for a week, which would allow extra time in case I needed to reschedule; this would also allow me to feel like I wasn't rushing to get my interviews done, thus making me more relaxed when speaking with people. The interviews were supplemented with phone conversations to reach subjects that were not available during my time in Cincinnati – specifically Professor Rothman, who teaches in Israel. Before picking dates and buying a plane ticket, I informed all of the individuals I was going to meet with of my timeframe so we could schedule something ahead of time. For conducting interviews, I rented a digital audio recorder from the University of Oregon (“UO”) Center for Media and Educational Technologies, and practiced with it a few times before leaving to gain some familiarity and understanding.

In most cases, projects of this nature involving ‘human subjects,’ require Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) approval. This deals with things such as how you interact with and protect your subjects, responsibly carrying out research in regards to types of questions, and how data is kept confidential. When I was initially brainstorming my project and approach, I presented it to the UO Research Compliance Services to determine if I would need to seek IRB approval. It was determined that because my project was simply gathering information to tell a story, it did not constitute research. Therefore, I was not required to seek IRB approval. I did however present each individual I interviewed with a consent/release form granting approval of the interview and use of the material. I obtained this form from the UO School of Journalism and Communication.

The timeframe I am focusing on for the podcast spanned a period from the 1990s to present day and gauged opinions over that period, therefore being modeled as a longitudinal

study⁷. As previously mentioned, I initially was unsure if individuals would still be willing to discuss the collaborative agreement with me to begin with. Another potential problem that occurred to me when considering this timeframe was that memories can fade, and I may not get genuine, deep information from participants. I also considered that from their perspective, I was a complete stranger and outsider to the process and to Cincinnati. With this timeframe in mind, interview questions were open-ended and focused on negotiations, inspiration, and framework of the collaborative agreement. The questions were tailored to find out whether and how police-community relations and social trust were affected over the course of 15 years since its implementation. My questions first inquired about the state of police-community relations from the period of 1995-2000, then about current police-community relations to have a comparison. Additionally, I wanted to find out whether or not a process such as this could be used in other communities across the country in need of police reform. I sought to uncover whether and how a process such as this could bring about long-term change and be sustainable many years after it was signed, and after court supervision and independent monitoring was no longer in place. Simply put, after there was no longer the legal obligation to abide by the agreement. To keep track of this, I created an outline for how I envisioned the podcast coming together, and divided it into chapters to maintain focus and cohesion (e.g., current police-community relations, collaborative agreement itself, and lessons learned). Also, I thought including music would help with the flow from section to section – making for a smoother transition. To make this easier on myself, I asked a friend if I could use some of his music⁸,

⁷ “Longitudinal studies focus on long-term effectiveness and satisfaction” and “...are...done...to follow changes in perception...attitudes, and motivation of use” (Usability Body of Knowledge). While I did not follow subjects for a duration of time, interview questions were structured around different time periods to have a comparison.

⁸ See <https://fotogramas.bandcamp.com/music>

avoiding the process of contacting a band to ask permission. For the chapter regarding police-community relations, I included both the community and police perspective to show a compare and contrast about each groups views. The chapter about the collaborative agreement consisted of professionals, and the chapter of lessons learned included thoughts from all perspectives.

Upon completing my interviews, I began the process of listening to and qualitatively⁹ analyzing them to pull out necessary information to build each chapter. When going through the recordings, I was looking for pieces of information that would fit into each chapter, and the ‘theme’ of each chapter. To track this, I took notes that included a brief statement regarding what was said as well as a time-mark so I would know where to come back to extract that clip. Also, I was looking for overlap about certain questions so I did not have repetition, as well as things that only one individual mentioned in relation to the question and chapter. I was also looking for and taking notes of how different pieces would fit together and flow so my own talking would purely be a guiding voice. This would help to enable the participant’s voice and narrative be the focal point of the podcast, allowing for as many perspectives as possible. The biggest challenge I encountered with this process was encapsulating the approximately six hours of audio I had to fit within the time I had allocated for the podcast. I initially thought this would be manageable, but as I listened to and analyzed the recordings, I realized I had collected quite a lot of quality, interesting information that I wanted to include. To overcome this, I elicited feedback from individuals (specifically family and friends) that did not have any

⁹ “...the process of reflective qualitative analysis requires researchers to: (1) organize their raw data...(3) search for meaning through thematic analysis...(4) interpret meaning; and (5) draw conclusions – all the while keeping the bigger picture, i.e. research questions, aims and objectives...clearly in mind” (O’Leary, 2013, p. 300).

connection to this process to ask for recommendations as to what portions to trim. I felt this would act as a sampling of audience members. Also, when listening to the audio after getting feedback, I was keeping in mind the question I had asked, and when the interviewee had made their point and answered the question – I felt this would help to eliminate nonessential comments.

RATIONALE

The truth is that at some point in our lives we will have interactions with the police – whether we want to or not, and whether they are positive or negative encounters. We may not want to interact with police on a regular basis but we as a society depend on them to keep our communities safe. When presenting this topic to a wider audience, I hope the importance of the need for strong police-community relations, trust, and fair and equitable treatment for all is as apparent to them as it is to me.

While these needs are desired by all people living in urban areas, African Americans have not received fair treatment. Aggressive police practices can be related to traffic stops as well as ‘stop-and-frisk,’ both stemming from racial bias.¹⁰ Citing Browning *et al*’s. 1994 study of Cincinnati adults, Brunson & Miller (2006) point out that “...46.6 [%] of blacks described being stopped or watched closely by the police, compared with just 9.6 [%] of whites” (p. 616). Brunson & Miller (2006) – quoting Hemmens & Levin – state that in regards to these practices targeting minorities (specifically African Americans, in this case), “...more aggressive procedures

¹⁰ “Racially biased policing occurs when law enforcement inappropriately considers race or ethnicity in deciding with whom and how to intervene in an enforcement capacity” (Fridell, et al., 2011, p.5).

increase hostility toward the police and among those minority groups who are the primary targets of...proactive policing tactics..." (p. 616). Inevitably, this harms police-community relations and erodes trust between law enforcement and the community. Regardless of intent, these practices affect citizens' perceptions of the police, as demonstrated Brunson and Miller (2006): "...regardless of whether police behaviour [*sic*] meets legal standards of appropriateness, African-Americans' perceptions of 'unfair, unjust or otherwise unequal treatment from the police' have serious consequences for police/community relations" (p. 614). This comes partly from what African Americans consider as 'being hassled' – interactions with the police that typically do not result in an arrest.

Perhaps the most high-profile example of this in recent times was seen in Ferguson, Missouri. Currently under a consent decree, the DOJ investigative report stated that in regards to racial bias and discrimination, Ferguson's practices and policies "...are borne disproportionately by African Americans...due in part to intentional discrimination on the basis of race" (DOJ Report, 2015, p. 4). Stop and frisk practices have become most well known for their use in New York City, initially aimed at an effort by police to get guns off the street – but seems to have evolved to include anything, and disproportionately target African Americans. What's more, most stops do not result in an arrest (Injustices of Stop and Frisk, 2012). One notable example of this is Eric Garner – an African American man stopped in NYC for selling cigarettes on the sidewalk. While on the ground Mr. Garner was placed in a chokehold – pleading with officers, saying "I can't breathe" – and consequently was killed. There was also the case of Michael Brown, the young African American man shot and killed by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, MO – sparking mass unrest that resulted in the aforementioned consent

decree. Freddie Gray, an African American man in Baltimore, Maryland was denied medical attention and died of a spinal cord injury during transport. In addition to harming relations and trust between police and communities, these practices and incidents drive the two groups further apart, creating deep wounds and identity-based conflicts.

Cincinnati faced similar identity-based conflicts stemming from racial bias and discrimination. However, using a collaborative process it brought together groups that had a shared interest in bringing about fair policing, and created an opportunity for open dialog and communication between groups that normally were adversaries. To achieve reform that improves relations, trust, and ensures fair treatment for all, key players and stakeholders need to be at the table. This is what the collaborative agreement did by setting aside a lawsuit; and at the urging of a judge, try an alternative application. Even if this does not take on a formal approach and official documentation like the collaborative agreement, by bringing the groups together to talk and engage with one another, it will work to build the relationships that will ultimately influence (and hopefully improve) police-community relations and social trust. As I learned from my interviews, these problems did not exclusively harm the African American community. Police practices stemming from racial bias and discrimination created a ripple effect that was felt by the business community in Cincinnati – specifically, the boycott of restaurants and businesses as mentioned by Pastor Lynch. This brought more attention than police shootings and a lawsuit, waking up the community to the need for change.

From my own experiences of working with police departments and doing ride-alongs,¹¹ I have seen firsthand the challenges police encounter every day – both from the known and unknown. It is a dangerous job, and one that is generally thankless. This makes working with the community that much more important to show they are a resource, which is what was seen with the collaborative agreement. There is also an interesting dynamic occurring here in that high-profile police killings are covered in the media ad nauseum. While it is important to shine light on these incidents, this creates a power-differential by putting the police on the defensive, distorting the public's perceptions with a quick rush to judgment. However, looking at this from the other side, news organizations may see extensive coverage as a way to highlight racial disparities in policing, and bring attention to the need for reform. In the short term though, it seems to create a global influence on far-away communities not directly involved, potentially stalling progress in improving police-community relations and social trust.

LINKAGE TO LITERATURE

There were many ideas discussed during the course of my interviews and presented in the podcast that relate back to the literature I have focused on. One of the first issues I revisited was the idea of police accountability and transparency being a preeminent theme behind the driving force for police reform. Walker (2003) suggests requirements to consider when attempting reform: "... reform must (a) reach deep into the police organization...(c) ultimately change, or at least begin to change, the culture of police organizations" (Walker, 2003, p. 3).

¹¹ When completing my undergraduate studies at West Virginia University I did an internship with the Monongalia County Sheriff's Department, consisting predominantly of ride-alongs. At the time of the writing of this paper, I am completing an internship with the University of Oregon Police Department.

This echoes statements presented in the podcast. Specifically, Pastor Lynch's statement that if police start being held accountable and go to jail, maybe there would be a change. While this may be a valid sentiment for holding officers' responsible, I feel police accountability doesn't just solely mean sending someone to jail, but going further back to get ahead of the problem – such as better training with de-escalation tactics, conflict resolution skills, and implicit bias awareness training. Another element of this deals with changing the overall philosophy and 'culture of a police organization' as Walker (2003) states. Dr. Eck brought up the idea that police departments know how to change, but adopting new strategies and procedures that emerge from reform efforts can potentially be seen as a personal affront to those individuals running the department. By getting the department to embrace a change in strategy, department philosophy, overall culture, and promote more effective and fair policing, it will bring about more substantial change than it would by simply weeding out the 'bad apples.' Speaking to transparency, Lt. Saunders told me CPD strives to be transparent in their actions and how they interact with the community. Interestingly enough, I witnessed this firsthand while doing my fieldwork in Cincinnati. There was an officer-involved shooting in which a suspect shot an officer; the officer and his partner returned fire, with all parties surviving. Less than 48 hours after this took place, the department held a press conference to address the event and provide information, as well as take questions from the media. Chief Isaac¹² stated he would have shown the body camera footage of the event during the press conference, but it was under subpoena by the prosecutor's office – it has since been released. I think it is important to consider this issue of transparency from the community perspective, specifically regarding

¹² Colonel Chief Eliot K. Isaac was appointed Police Chief on December 10, 2015 as Cincinnati's 15th police chief.

departments internally handling investigations, as this may present as a lack of transparency. Pastor Lynch told me that while transparency is good and necessary, it [transparency] doesn't matter if they're [police] still doing the same thing [killing African Americans].

Additionally, Walker (2003) discusses police reform in the vein of litigation - which was what started this whole process. As was heard in the podcast, Al Gerhardstein was prepared to pursue litigation after filing the lawsuit, but presented an alternative and put the decision on the court and city. In the podcast, he says that litigation and consent decrees are binary, meaning a lawsuit or consent decree limits the scope of what could be achieved if only plaintiff and defendant – or in the case of a consent decree, the police department and the DOJ – are included. Also, litigation is more zero-sum, meaning there are winners and losers; this is less so the case with negotiations, bringing about more compromise. Negotiations also work to develop positive working relationships¹³ – whereas litigation can be more contentious and adversarial – making it a quality alternative for a conflict of this nature. Building on this, Simmons (2008) says that ‘traditional’ approaches to reform often center on deterrence, imposing monetary punishments on the department, or punishing individuals - which may have been the outcome of the class action lawsuit had it not taken on an alternate route. Simmons (2008) adds that, “These remedies rarely focus on systemic changes within a law enforcement agency to reduce and monitor violations of citizens' rights” (p. 497). Developing positive relationships and bringing about systematic changes were recurring themes, both to improve

¹³ “There is power in developing a good working relationship between the people negotiating. If you understand the other side and they understand you...if there is clear, two-way communication with good listening...if people problems are dealt with directly on their merits, not by demanding or offering concessions on substance, negotiations are likely to be smoother and more successful for both parties. The better your working relationship, the better able each of you is to influence the other” (Fisher, et al., 2011, p. 183).

police-community relations and build trust. One of the continued differences that has drawn me to studying this process – particularly in comparison to traditional reform – was the element of public participation. Simmons (2008) states that, “Scholars have long argued that participation in the development of policies enhances the political legitimacy of the resulting policy and that those affected by government decisions should have the opportunity to present their views and force policy-makers to consider their perspective” (p. 520). This inclusion of the public enabled them [the citizens] to have their voice heard and be empowered, as well as help to forge more wide-reaching resolutions in their community. This was done in part by Rothman’s (1997) ‘action evaluation’¹⁴ approach to conflict resolution, which he notes as being very goal-oriented. In regards to a collaborative path, Rothman (2006) states that:

“The decision to pursue a collaborative approach, a form of...[Alternative Dispute Resolution], for a public policy dilemma was not unprecedented. Collaborative processes have grown in popularity...and have been applied increasingly to complex social issues in which ‘[g]etting...stakeholders together to explore...concerns in a constructive way allows...for a solution they all can accept and averts...potential for escalation of the conflict.’ What was unprecedented in the Cincinnati case was the application of participatory and collaborative procedures to such a large-scale dilemma, namely the nature and future of police-community relations in the context of mutual mistrust and animosity. Moreover, what made it particularly distinctive...was the way it was rooted in and conditioned by the court context” (p. 110).

As a conflict management strategy, the collaborative agreement joined groups that normally would not work together – specifically the police and the citizens – to build relationships in hopes of fostering trust and improving police-community relations. This was done with the creation of stakeholder groups. There was an advisory group that was formed to elicit feedback from the public, and examined past studies regarding tensions between police

¹⁴ “Action-evaluation begins with a systematic and broad-based collection of the types of goals of...stakeholders involved in a conflict resolution initiative. In particular, what outcomes are sought by participants, interveners and funders? Do they overlap in all ways or clash in some? Why are these goals important to those who hold them? What are the stakeholders’ theories of practice and their assumptions about conflict? What are the general and specific motivations for involvement in conflict resolution and in a particular initiative?” (p. 125)

and the community to come up with eight stakeholder groups: African-American citizens; city employees; police and their families; white citizens; business, foundation, and education leaders; religious and social service leaders; youth; and other minorities (Rothman, 2006, p. 114).

Rothman (2006) states that what the collaborative agreement did in the realm of alternative dispute resolution (“ADR”) was somewhat unusual, because “Even if not addressing...conflicts from the past, viewing possible solutions from...views of distinct identity groups did invest the collaborative with a depth of commitment to eliciting narratives and aspirations based on people’s group experiences with each other” (p. 114-15). With feedback from many different groups about what they saw as solutions, it differed from what ADR practices typically seek to do – find common ground among individuals based on shared interests. Taking on a future-oriented dynamic, there were early challenges regarding the African American community feeling the issue of race was glossed over, and as Professor Rothman stated in the podcast, created an initial obstacle. Tint (2010) states that, “Asking people to look to the future when they are oriented to the past can elicit resistance, strengthen that orientation, and cause deeper entrenchment in the conflict” (p. 395). This obstacle was overcome by asking the parties to consider goals. Specifically, goals for a *future* where police-community relations [and social trust] were enriched. Had Professor Rothman not presented that option, it may have kept the parties far apart, stalling progress, and returning to the courtroom. By agreeing to work towards improving future relations, the parties were able to work together to create the consensus goals of the collaborative agreement.

OUTCOMES (What did I find out/discover?)

Before conducting my fieldwork, my knowledge of the collaborative agreement was based on secondary sources. Having the opportunity to speak with individuals directly involved was tremendously enlightening, providing information and perspectives to broaden my understanding of the collaborative agreement. This uniquely complimented my secondary sources, and offered a deeper look into the perspectives of key players. One thing in particular that stood out to me that I had not previously encountered was the impact that strong local community leadership had on this process. I also learned this was an essential element to consider for making this process adaptable to other communities.

In regards to my first research question of ‘What does the process of engaging and involving stakeholder groups...look like as a conflict management strategy,’ I learned from Professor Rothman that one of the key elements was a future oriented strategy – one that started by looking back to examine what the conflicts were, as well as the source(s). However, Professor Rothman said that initially the parties refused, and it haunted them in regards to the aforementioned issue of the African American community feeling race was being overlooked. Also, through what Professor Rothman calls ‘systematic collaborative visioning,’ there was a way to unearth people’s wants and how they envisioned achievement through storytelling. Rothman (2014) states his own work has centered around “...helping groups build intragroup consensus about their goals as a bridge for inter-group agreement with other groups through...visioning and planning process. It includes surfacing deep differences between group members, fostering overarching agreement within them. Afterwards, groups join to bridge between...respective internal agreements and...plan collective action” (p. 110). This was

demonstrated in the podcast with the example of youth desiring a future where the police respected them because in the past, they had not. I was intrigued by this process, one that in the context of such a tense identity-based conflict joined groups together to share ideas. This expanded my own experiences of conflict resolution strategies learned through my coursework, and allowed me to see this strategy effectively applied to a profound identity-based conflict. It seemed the ability to move forward with this as a starting point was due in part to the strategy being able to “...help ingroups [*sic*] safely surface their emotional concerns about outgroups, internally and separately, even if never fully ‘resolved’...to forge a constructive path for practical cooperation with outgroups” (p. 113).

Moving to the second question, I sought to learn whether and how this process influenced social trust and police-community relations over the course of 15 years in Cincinnati, and learned quickly that the answer – and impacts – were not clear cut. I saw the information I gathered as supporting the notion of the collaborative agreement improving police-community relations and trust. As I conducted my fieldwork, I learned these issues were a continuous effort over the course of the 15 years since its implementation, and it took some time to gain ground. All individuals I interviewed seemed to express similar sentiments that relations and trust are better now than they were in the 1990s, but were in no way perfect and there was still work to do. Pastor Lynch elaborated in the podcast to say relations were probably also better than they were in the 1950s and 60s. The police perspective, as demonstrated by Col. Bailey, was that the CPD had a high level of support from the community [specifically the African American community in this case], and relations had improved. Most notably when he states that in the past, police would go into neighborhoods and get ‘rocked and bottled’, but can now work with

the community. I feel this may be fluid however, given external messages and influence from the national level on local attitudes and feelings towards law enforcement. As previously mentioned, this creates an interesting dynamic with police departments contending with global outrage while pushing stronger police-community relations in their community.

Thirdly, I wanted to know what lessons could be learned from this process that could be transferable to other communities where police-community relations and social trust require repair. Most lessons were positive and some were cautionary. In the big picture, a positive lesson was that there appeared to be progress in how the collaborative agreement improved police-community relations and social trust between the CPD and the African American community. While of course not perfect, the police and community were able to foster safe communities by working together. I was not surprised by this, because I have learned through the course of my studies that conflict resolution is an ongoing, long-term process. In terms of this ongoing nature, it was interesting to hear Lt. Saunders that trust is something that must be earned, and is done by building relationships through informal things such as attending community meetings. I felt another positive was the design of the process. According to Professor Rothman, its systematic nature – working to effectively gather data, organize it into clusters, and analyze it – could ostensibly be plugged in elsewhere (with some adaptability of course). As he stated in the podcast, this process could work in other cities, but requires knowledge and commitment, as well as top-down, middle-out, and bottom-up support and participation. He said this was why he felt it had not worked in Seattle, because the lack of strong top-down sponsorship from the police administration like there was in Cincinnati with the union being a key player and supporter – as well as the support of a federal judge. Aside

from improving police-community relations and social trust, this was a big piece of what I sought to learn regarding how to approach police reform.

This process also showed an effective way of hearing from and engaging the community by giving them a voice and a seat at the table, leading to the lesson of the need for strong community leadership – both to start the process, as well as sustain it in the long term (e.g., key players still at the table more than a decade after the collaborative agreement was signed). I was coming to the realization a problem might be that individual's contributions may have initially been voluntary or on behalf of an organization they were no longer affiliated with, and had moved on (e.g., Pastor Lynch no longer being the president of the BUF). It was heard from Professor Rothman in the podcast this was an issue – one that influenced his work moving forward to build local capacity so the community is not dependent on an outside entity. I did however learn that some key players and stakeholder groups are meeting to revisit and re-tool the collaborative through an advisory group. Lt. Saunders summed this up as a reflection of the collaborative agreement now to evaluate what has and has not been successful – or is no longer relevant – that can be taken out or improved on, and how it can be adapted to changes in technology and policing (e.g., body cams). Another item that emerged while talking with Col. Bailey was that the public's perception of the role and the expectations of police departments have changed over the years, and that as police you have to mitigate social problems you did not create. Meaning you need to change your approach to be in sync with what the community wants and needs, and embrace changes that come from this type of process.

Another lesson pertains to the involvement of the DOJ. While they offer valuable insight, the investigations and subsequent agreements (consent decrees and memorandum of

agreement) only address policies and procedures. As stated in the podcast, Dr. Eck said communities that put the DOJ role as the primary one do so at their own risk – in that they do not speak to strategy to promote fair and equitable treatment by the police, or influence strategy and philosophy to create safer communities. While it may bring about short-term change, it will not amount to long-term changes.

One cautionary lesson that emerged was what Pastor Lynch expressed in the podcast regarding gentrification and culture shift in the Over-the-Rhine (“OTR”) neighborhood. This was quite a revelation to me, as I had previously not considered it as a consequence. I stayed in OTR when doing my fieldwork, and could see the ongoing construction and hear from locals about how it had changed over the years, but without any personal connection to Cincinnati I didn’t see it as being abnormal. Cincinnati is a majority African American city, and many lower income African Americans resided in OTR. When the collaborative agreement was signed, there was an effort to revitalize OTR, consequently pushing out the African Americans community. This brought in high-priced condos, upscale restaurants and bars, and specialty shops. OTR was where Mr. Thomas was killed, and where the rebellion took place. Pastor Lynch said that if there was ever to be unrest again, it would not be in OTR because “...we’re all gone.” This was supported by Dr. Eck, who said the city won, but the people driving lost. While overall the collaborative agreement was a positive I think it’s important to consider this element and the people that live in potentially high-crime areas that are law abiding citizens.

Additionally, it was interesting that turnover in administrative roles (e.g., chief, mayor) over the course of the 15 years since the signing of the collaborative agreement was addressed sparingly. Col. Bailey did however state in the podcast that he and the chief feel strongly about

re-committing to the basic tenets of the collaborative agreement, and that they are still just as valid now as in 2002. This was refreshing to hear, because when I first began my research it was unclear whether or not this document was still wholly relevant and alive in Cincinnati. I was glad to learn core principles still seemed to be present, in that the basic tenets are ingrained in the culture and philosophy of the CPD. While the collaborative agreement may not be referred to on a regular basis, it seems to have made an impact on the day-to-day operation of the CPD, shifting the culture from strictly arrests to a problem-solving approach. The most notable shift (or lingering principle) may be the focus on problem-oriented policing, doing away with ‘sweeps’ and indicting entire neighborhoods. This may have been best summed up by Lt. Saunders when he said, “We can’t arrest our way out of problems.”

Another interesting thing I learned from my fieldwork was the African American community as a stakeholder group was not all that reluctant to participate. I had envisioned this being a challenge due to their level of distrust of the police based on past experiences. However, I learned that because of work by community leaders (Pastor Lynch), the African American community was ready and willing to participate. It was the police that were reluctant and an initial roadblock. With a deeply rooted identity-based conflict at play, the police chief said that if the process was about conflict resolution and mediation, they wanted no part of it – they would just be blamed. Professor Rothman suggested to the parties that if you “...turn over the coin of conflict, on the other side you have goals.” He said if they were not willing to address the conflict itself, what about searching for goal(s) of a future where the police and community work better together? (Reverting back to the *future* and *goal* oriented strategy). The chief realized this is what they were there for, to create a future-oriented strategy to bring

the police and the community closer together, while repairing relations and trust.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH OR PRACTICE/FUTURE DIRECTIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

One of the first lessons I can take from these interviews (and subsequent work) has shown me how complex this process was, and how groundbreaking it was in bringing about reform that addressed police-community relations and social trust – a piece that is missing from consent decrees. A key component I heard several people say is that you: (1) Need ‘buy-in’ from everyone, including the community; and (2) Strong community leadership has to already be in play for this to take off and be able to work. (And if these people fade away after X number of years after the document isn’t legally binding anymore, the whole thing has the potential to fade into the background). Like Professor Rothman said, the three elements of top-down, middle-out, and bottom-up need to align for this process to be successful. Especially since he also said that after being there for nine months, when the monitoring team took over and he left, community input diminished.

After conducting these interviews and creating the podcast, there were some lingering questions for how to move forward with a process such as police reform. More specifically, police-community relations and social trust with the African American community, such as:

- 1) How can the field of conflict resolution help to make this adaptable and implement this process in other communities and police departments across the country?
 - (a) How can conflict resolution practitioners work to change the media’s coverage and influence over the narrative of police-community relations and social trust?
- 2) What can be done to ensure sustainability and long-term success and effectiveness with a process like this once it is signed, and once the court oversight (monitoring) ends?
- 3) As conflict resolution practitioners, how do we get community members and activists to continue to contribute and engage? (i.e., How do we maintain strong leadership/community engagement once court oversight and monitoring are done - essentially, once this is no longer the legal obligation to adhere to it - and continues to happen?).

- 4) In the big picture, how does the collaborative agreement relate to, and influence police reform in general, on a larger scale?
 - (a) How can awareness be increased about the usefulness of a process like what was used in Cincinnati? Specifically to address reform in the context of police-community relations and social trust.
- 5) How can the CPD (and police community overall, in the grand scheme of things) ensure these core principles are kept relevant in everyday work after the term of oversight concludes?
- 6) Do we back up even further and install some of the ideas and principles in police training (in the academy)?
- 7) As conflict resolution practitioners, how do we have this continue to be a 'living document' so many years later to ensure its relevance and adherence to the basic tenets and goals when the legal obligation is gone?
- 8) How applicable is a process like the collaborative agreement to police reform where race is not at the forefront? (i.e., can this process only work when there are deep, identity based conflicts at play, such as race?)

My hope with this project is that it will be a good way to succinctly share with a large audience the intent and basics of the collaborative agreement as it relates to police-community relations and social trust – both in the big picture and specifically with the African American community. I want to share this and provide people with a snapshot of what the collaborative agreement looked like systematically, and what it worked towards. It is my desire this body of work will contribute to the field of police reform and be something that will shine light on how the basic philosophy and inspirations of the collaborative agreement can be utilized elsewhere. After completing these interviews, I recognize this may not be a direct cut and paste process to other communities looking to change the dynamic of their police department and improve police-community relations and social trust; but the system (and its basic guiding principles and ideas) as designed by Professor Rothman can be used as a framework. Also, it is clear to me that certain factors need to be taken into account when looking at this as a blueprint. Specifically, according to Col. Bailey, history is important; you could go into another city with this process and try to help with reform, but would most likely fail as you must consider the

history and the existing relationships. That being said, I think the basics of the collaborative agreement can be used as inspiration moving forward when looking to reform.

In sum, police reform is not an easy issue to tackle, especially with the presence of deep divides in the community resulting from long-simmering identity-based conflicts. When I set out, I had a desire to find out if this process could pick up where consent decrees and lawsuits leave off. Moreover, to explicitly address issues beyond a legal framework that handles policy and procedural issues and improve relations and trust through open and constructive dialog. Through my work with this process, podcast, and subsequent paper, I learned that it suggests an alternative strategy of negotiating and collaborating instead of battling in the courtroom. With the inclusion of key players and stakeholders, this comprehensive strategy worked to achieve reform that in the long-term, had the possibility of improving police-community relations and establishing social trust between police and the communities they serve – specifically the African American community. I feel that if cities want the results of police reform to reach the entire population and bring about wholesale change while generating safe communities, they would be wise to include those groups in the process and look to the collaborative agreement for inspiration and guidance.

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