

De-Policing: A Descension into Policing Mediocracy

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ABSTRACT

Policing is a multi-faceted occupation. Unlike most other occupations which set goals and daily to-do tasks for employees set by a supervisor, policing does not operate in this manner. Because crime is not predictable, nor are other policing responsibilities such as responding to traffic accidents, domestic disputes, on-viewing crimes in progress, observing drug sales, making traffic stops for a multitude of vehicle violations, and many other spontaneous enforcement events, policing is distinctly different. No two days in the lives of police officers are routine as is the case in many other occupations. Policing is unique in this respect. Nevertheless, police officers' response to crime and many other non-crime events determines any given day's success. Expected police officer shift production falls into two basic categories: dispatched calls that are received from the centralized dispatch center which receives calls for police response from the citizens in the policing jurisdiction and what are referred to as "on-view or self-initiated" policing activities that police officers are expected to engage in to stop a crime in progress or generally reduce crime by being pro-active and visible to potential criminals who may think twice about committing crimes knowing the officer or officers will be vigilant in making arrests for those crimes that are not reported. This paper focuses on the non-dispatched, self-initiated responsibilities of police officers since the Ferguson Effect, Black Lives Matter, and Defund the Police Movements.

Keywords: Ferguson Effect, Black Lives Matter, Defund the Police, De-policing

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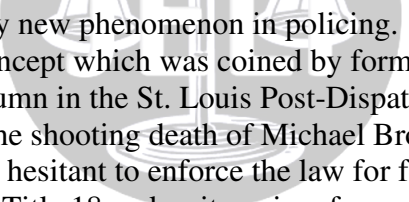
INTRODUCTION

De-policing is a term derived from what is universally referred to as the “Ferguson Effect.” The “Ferguson Effect” is derived from a police shooting in 2014 by a Ferguson, Missouri police officer of a black teenager that touched off protests and riots (Ver Bruggen, 2021). Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department shot and killed Michael Brown, Jr., a black male aged 18. Rather than go into detail, the subsequent investigation by several agencies, to include the FBI, resulted in the exoneration of Officer Wilson. Despite this exoneration, many protest groups, such as Black Lives Matter and others to include social media and other media, decided that the investigative findings were bogus. Since this white police officer shooting of a black suspect incident, every subsequent such event has resulted in all of the following: mass media judgment immediately after the shooting; social media generally condemning the white officer(s); white officers being placed on administrative leave; protests not just in the police officer’s jurisdiction but nationwide; and a call for police reform.

As it would seem so far, this paper is not a complete defense of police officers in the US, rather it is a realistic attempt to understand why perhaps the vast majority of police officers nationally are choosing the option of what is being referred to as de-policing.

What is De-policing

Timeline



De-policing is a relatively new phenomenon in policing. It stems from the now ubiquitous “Ferguson Effect” concept which was coined by former St. Louis, Missouri Police Chief Sam Dotson in a 2014 column in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. In the column, Dotson stated that, after the protests of the shooting death of Michael Brown by Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson, his officers were hesitant to enforce the law for fear of being charged under §242 of Title 18 specifically. §242 of Title 18 makes it a crime for a person acting under the color of any law to willfully deprive a person of a right or privilege protected by the Constitution or law of the U.S. Officer Wilson was not charged, but violent protests continued for several days.

In subsequent years, the Ferguson Effect received more traction. In a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed in 2015, Heather MacDonalD railed against rising crime rates due to agitation against police nationwide. Former FBI Director James Comey in 2016 used the term “viral video effect” in a speech at the University of Chicago Law School which he pointed out the significant increases in homicide rates. Next came the tragic murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. Riots once again consumed many of the largest U.S. cities. However, this tragic incident that anyone watching agreed that Chauvin knowingly murdered Floyd, precipitated the Defund the Police Movement. Many large U.S. city politicians misguidedly decided that this was the solution to the police reform that they had been seeking for decades. It appeared to be intended as a warning to their police agencies to establish the reforms immediately—some good, some bad—or face serious cuts to police budgets. The following are only a few examples:

Speaker Pelosi and President Biden have refused to denounce the “defund the police” movement. Seattle’s mayor has proposed a \$20 million cut to the Seattle police, but a city council member wants a much larger 85 million cut. Los Angeles has proposed a 150 million cut

and LAPD reports a 14% increase in homicides. NY city's Mayor Bill De Blasio has proposed a 1 billion dollar cut to the NYPD and shootings have increased 177%. Minneapolis voted to defund the police and homicides have increased 94% (Martin, 2020).

Chicago PD retirements are up 15% in 2020 over 2019. In NYC, retirements doubled between 2019 in 2020. Police morale in Chicago and other US cities has suffered mightily, and Covid-19 has added to the misery. In Chicago, 1,000 police officers tested positive for Covid-19. When police officers retire early on disability or other retirements, this results in fewer officers paying into retirement funds, which results in underfunded retirement systems. The Portland City council cut 15 million from the police budget in fiscal year 2020-2021 and violent shootings were up 240% from 2019 (Main & Spielman, 2021).

This is only a small sample of defund actions taken by cities throughout the U.S. In 2022 some of these cities fortunately realized the error of their ways and restored much of the defunded monies. The City of Oakland, California was one of these cities (Heilman, 2021).

De-Policing Defined

There are a plethora of definitions of de-policing, and the author will summarize several here. De-policing is defined as "police officers retreating from traditional, self-initiated activities such as traffic stops, on-view walking stops with reasonable suspicion, citizen flag-downs, gang in-progress activity, etc." that is expected of police officers in a crime prevention environment. In this paper the author will explore why this phenomenon is occurring in many of the major cities in the U.S. During the author's tenure as an Oakland, California police officer (1970s and 1980s), officers were expected and were rated by their supervisors on their production in this category. I am sure most police departments during this period rated their officers on their production of self-initiated policing. When you weren't writing police reports in your stationary patrol car, you were expected to be driving around your beat, vigilant for crimes in progress, speeding vehicles that might be stolen, drug dealers selling their addictions, robbers "casing" a convenience store, etc. If you weren't doing this, you were considered a "slacker" by your fellow officers, and non-promotable by your supervising sergeant. How times have changed, and this is the basis for this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rushin and Edwards (2017) conducted a study using 61 police departments which had been subjects of US DOJ 42 U.S.C. §14141 which is the federal law that allows the U.S. Attorney General to seek equitable relief against local police departments engaged in a pattern or practice of unconstitutional misconduct. These formal investigations are public and can last for a year or more. During these investigatory periods, the DOJ puts local police departments under intense public scrutiny (p. 751). If the US DOJ concludes that a local police department is engaged in a pattern of unconstitutional misconduct in violation of §14141, the DOJ will then typically negotiate a settlement with the targeted police department. These settlements are the single most invasive form of external regulation of local police departments and require departments to make sweeping changes to internal oversight measures, officer training, disciplinary procedures and more. These agreements bind departments from 5-10 years and fund the placement of a DOJ receiver and the department to receivership to ensure compliance with the identified violations (p. 752). Not until the department "proves" that it is in compliance with

the DOJ's conditions does the department get approval to no longer be under receivership. As an example, the Oakland, California Police Department has been under federal receivership for nineteen years which clearly exceeds the 5-10 years set by DOJ policy. With a salary of over \$200,000 per year for the receiver, there does not appear to be much incentive to end the receivership.

The basic hypothesis developed by Rushin and Edwards is that de-policing in these 61 departments under federal scrutiny was measurable by the increase in crime after the implementation of the consent decree when compared with the crime rates prior to the implementation of the consent decree. They deployed a difference-in-difference regression analysis using Ordinary Least Squared (OLS) across repeated cross sections. The 61 consent decree agencies (experimental agencies) were matched with 61 non-consent decree agencies (control agencies) on several variables with the most important variable being crime rate changes. Quoting Rushin and Edwards, "We found that the introduction of external regulation via §14141 was associated with a statistically significant increase in the frequency of several crime categories—particularly property crimes. This finding is consistent with claims made by critics that external regulation may, at least initially, make officers less aggressive or less effective" (p. 759). The authors do point out exceptions such as the Pittsburg, Pennsylvania Police Department.

Robert VerBruggen (2021) addresses de-policing and what can be done about it. He cites Radley Balco whose article in the *Washington Post* in which Balco called de-policing theory a "cynical and dangerous argument" that "notoriously aims to shame critics into silence" but besmirches the integrity of conscience police officers." VerBruggen continues by citing many others who have studied this de-policing phenomenon. Devi and Fryer (2020) examined investigations of police departments that were accused of a "pattern and practice of civil rights violations" and found that when these investigations were spurred by viral events or viral cell phone video there was an immediate increase in crime. Cheng and Long (2019) found similar results when there was a decrease in arrests, there was a concomitant increase in homicides. Campbell (2021) learned that Black Lives Matter protests led to a reduction in local police shootings; however, clearance rates for property crime declined, property crime reporting declined, and murders increased—all indicators of de-policing.

Local Jurisdictions Encouraging De-Policing:

Some cities have actually promoted de-policing. Former New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, in his campaign, ran on a platform of scaling back the city's aggressive but highly successful "stop, question, and frisk" policy. Washington State legislators passed a law that increases police officer justification to make an on-view "walking stop" from reasonable suspicion to probable cause. Baltimore's federal consent decree has limited pro-active policing, and ACLU lawsuits have limited pro-active-stop-based policing in Chicago and Milwaukee. Chicago politicians have limited foot pursuits depending on the severity of the crime (Santos, 2021; Liebmann, 2021; Cassel and Fowles, 2018; Jarenwattananon, 2018; & McCann, 2021). Some cities have disbanded their targeted patrols/directed enforcement units (variously named Violent Crime Tactical Units/Gang Task Forces/etc.) which have been extremely successful in removing illegally possessed guns off the streets. The result seems to be the huge spike in gun violence and murders during 2021-2022.

Other pro de-policing maneuvers, such as lenient bail policies or dropping bail altogether for many crimes in favor of release-on-recognizance, send a message to officers that "why arrest except for the most dangerous felonies when the criminal is back on the street in hours."

Brooklyn Center, Minnesota and Berkeley, California have passed a package of police reforms that turns over traffic enforcement to unarmed citizens. Another proposal is to increase the number of redlight cameras and speed detection radar to replace police enforcement. Virginia passed a law that prohibits officers from using “fix-it ticket” violations as a justification for making a traffic stop. A fix-it-ticket citation can now be given only as a secondary citation to a more serious violation such as speeding. This law also includes other de-policing decrees (Crowe, 2021). Is it any wonder that police officers and sheriff’s officers will quickly get the message to do less!

Supervisor Feedback and Support and Police Officer Commitment

Unlike most other occupations, police officer evaluation is more difficult and convoluted (Johnson, 2021). There are three reasons for this. Providing useful feedback is complicated by the fact that the duties of a police officer are so varied that using any single measure is uncertain. Officer response to any given situation can vary and a successful solution can depend on the situation. For example, how does an officer resolve a call to a homeless person screaming and yelling at passersby, but not threatening them? Does he try to talk to the person and calm him down, or does he call for back-up in order to make a psychiatric commitment?

Second, police officers are constantly faced with the conundrum of gathering evidence against criminal offenders while simultaneously protecting the constitutional rights of the offender. Third, police officers are unlike a worker in a construction zone, or an assembly line worker in a factory where the supervisor observes the worker almost constantly. Police officers patrol a geographical area called a beat; therefore, they are not within direct contact with their supervisor (generally a sergeant). Moreover, supervising sergeants have as many as 10 patrol officers to supervise. This means the sergeant has to choose among many dispatched or on-view assignments to observe the officer’s performance. Consequently, field supervisors have little first-hand knowledge of the performance of their officers which “limits their ability to offer constructive feedback on the majority of assignments their officers perform” (Johnson, 2012, para. 6). In addition to the above limitation, line police officers rarely see their command officers (lieutenants and captains) and when they do it is most likely to be a disciplinary situation in which the officer’s supervisor referred him or her. Therefore, it is understandable that line police officers are suspicious of and distant from management overall. This has been documented in numerous studies.

Johnson (2012) used data gathered by Robin Haar (2003) that incorporated a longitudinal analysis of the evolution of police officer attitudes throughout their academy training and socialization process in the field. Haar (2003) surveyed officers when they began their training at a regional police academy in Arizona, at the end of their academy training, at the end of their field training program, and after successfully completing their probationary year with their respective departments. Johnson identified two key organizational-level independent variables: (1) supervisor feedback, and (2) perceived organizational support.

Johnson sought to test two hypotheses:

- (1) Supervisor feedback and perceived organizational support have only a weak influence on the organizational commitment of police patrol officers.
- (2) Supervisor feedback and perceived organizational support have a strong influence on the organizational commitment of police officers

Using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression equations, Johnson developed three models computed with organizational commitment indices as the dependent variable. Model 1 used organizational characteristics as dependent variables (supervisor feedback, perceived organizational support, peer cohesion and agency size). Model 2 used added job characteristics to Model 1 (job variety, job autonomy and job stress). Model 3 added job demographics to Model 2 (male/female, ethnicity, experience, college degree or not, and married or not) ().

Quoting from Johnson, “Consistent with previous literature from other fields, organizational characteristics appear to be more important than job characteristics and employee demographic characteristics in shaping police officer organizational commitment” (discussion and conclusions section). Applying what Johnson learned from his research, de-policing is clearly associated with police officer perceptions of organizational support from the supervising sergeant through the top management. If officers perceive that their supervisors and managers have abandoned them and sided with protest groups and city and county supervisors supporting “defunding the police” movements and passing ordinances and laws that restrict previously accepted police practice, their response is to de-police as we have discussed so far. De-policing puts officers in a protective mode that ensures that they will not be subjected to disciplinary actions for pro-active policing, but simultaneously significantly reduces the one major criticism of policing and that is lack of crime prevention.

Crime prevention should be a prominent goal of law enforcement, but it has never been an emphasis until technology made it more possible. Law enforcement has always been a respond to crime after-the-fact entity. Even the popular law enforcement TV programs, such as Law and Order, emphasize the response to crime after-the fact scenario. But today, technology has changed the lack of crime prevention among departments. Geographical System Information (GIS), for example, has accelerated pro-active policing. However, GIS data requires that police agencies establish pro-active policing units such as “gun task forces and gang task forces” to aggressively go after illegal gun possession and criminal gangs. De-policing results in a de-emphasis or disbandment in these highly effective police strategies.

Nix and Wolfe (2016) investigated the concept of de-policing in a similar fashion as Johnson (2012). They looked at the effects that **organizational justice theory** has on employee morale and efficiency. Studies have shown that there is strong empirical support for the conclusion that employees are more likely to engage in a wide range of beneficial work-related behaviors when they perceive their organization as fair (p. 14). They identified three primary factors to organizational fairness:

1. Employees base their evaluations of supervisors partly on the extent to which they perceive organizational outcomes, such as salary and promotion, as being distributed equally,
2. Second, interactional justice concerns the degree to which employees feel they are treated with respect and politeness by supervisors, and
3. Third, is there procedural fairness? Are decisions clearly explained, unbiased, and allow for employee input (p. 15).

Their study in 2015 explored whether officers’ perceptions of organizational fairness within their agency were associated with their sensitivity to the Ferguson Effect. They surveyed 510 sheriff’s deputies in a large Southeastern County. Their response rate was an astounding 85% which clearly demonstrated how important this phenomenon was to these sheriff’s deputies and most likely to all police agencies in the U.S. They employed a Likert scale of 1=strongly

disagree to 5=strongly agree on three variables: (1) made it more dangerous to be a law enforcement officer, (2) made it less enjoyable to have a career in law enforcement, and (3) made it more difficult for you to be motivated at work. They also surveyed officers' opinions vis-à-vis the Ferguson Effect on their colleagues and on the citizens in their county. However, this paper will not summarize their findings in these important areas of their study (for more detail of their findings in these vital areas see Nix, J. & Wolfe, S.E. [2016, December]. Sensitivity to Ferguson effect: The role of managerial organizational justice. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 47, 12-20).

Nix and Wolfe established four models, but only two will be covered in this study due to limitations of space in this study. Model 1 tested the extent to which respondents felt they had been directly affected by negative publicity stemming from the Ferguson controversy. Model 1 presents the results of a regression OLS model that *regressed less motivation onto organizational justice*. The results showed that deputies who perceived greater organizational justice on the part of their agency and its command staff were less likely to report experiencing reduced motivation due to negative publicity surrounding law enforcement in the six months following Michael Brown's death in Ferguson. In other words, deputies who felt that their supervisors treated them fairly and with respect were less likely to experience reduced motivation from the Ferguson Effect.

In Model 2, the *increased danger* scale was regressed onto organizational justice.

The model accounted for a moderate amount of variation in this measure of the Ferguson Effect ($R^2 = 0.15$). Organizational justice ($b = -0.07, p < 0.01$) was significantly and negatively associated with a belief among respondents that law enforcement has become more dangerous in the post-Ferguson era. Here again, organizational justice on the part of supervisors seemed to protect deputies from the negative consequences of the Ferguson Effect (Results Section, para 2).

The importance of organizational justice within police agencies cannot be overstated.

We often hear about justice for citizens, justice for those on trial, procedural justice, justice for all, etc. However, we rarely consider that police officers also need justice, and that justice comes from within the police organization and that it is labeled organizational justice. It manifests itself when the officers' supervisors and command officers demonstrate that an officer is innocent until proven guilty, rather than holding a press conference after a shooting or use of force incident and intimating that cell phone video does seem to incriminate to some extent. Another incriminating practice it seems is placing officers on administrative leave after a shooting. In the business world, when a prominent employee is placed on leave, it usually means that the investigation has been completed and more disciplinary action will follow. This was the case with Chris Cuomo and CNN. Cuomo was placed on "leave" and then fired because CNN knew up front that Cuomo was protecting his brother's sexual misconduct. In the case of police officers, after a shooting, they are immediately placed on administrative leave before any investigation has begun. Because we have been conditioned by the media into believing that being placed on leave constitutes guilt, we naturally believe the same is true of police officers being placed on academic leave. So, if exonerated, the public believes the police agency ignored incriminating evidence to "take care of one of their own." This is an example of an unintended lack of organizational justice; nevertheless, just as damaging to the officer as any blatant or extant organizational injustice.

FINDINGS

The literature review data clearly indicates that policing is at critical juncture in the U.S. There have been periods in the 20th and 21st century during which policing faced serious challenges to its support from both politicians and citizens. There was the Wickersham Commission in January 1931 that examined policing post-Prohibition. The commission found widespread corruption in many police agencies nationwide. Recommendations were made most of which were never implemented. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967) once again addressed the issue of police excessive use of force and lack of adequate training and hiring of unqualified police officers. The Kerner Commission, also a President Lyndon Johnson creation, looked at the deep divide of the US: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." There have been other commissions and investigations of policing since the Johnson administration, yet nothing has changed. Community-oriented policing and problem solving, which has gotten a foothold throughout policing, has not become the norm as was envisioned by the federal office of Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPS). What does this have to do with de-policing?

Constant investigation into an agency is never good for morale. This is particularly true of police agencies. Police officers are not opposed to change for the better. Without an in-depth study of how officers feel about change and community policing, which is overdue, police officers see change as coming from their leaders. This change has not occurred, rather police officers and their departments continually cling to their past practices which have proven to be a failure in the future of policing. As a result, de-policing will continue, because police leadership most likely will continue along the same trajectory as has been the case for the last 100 years.

Marier and Fridell (2020) in their article "Demonstrations, Demoralization, and De-Policing" article attempt to downplay the existence of de-policing by using LEMAS data of 18,413 surveys from law enforcement officers in 87 U.S. agencies both before and after Ferguson (abstract). A study such as this suffers from many fallacies to include stale data, questions that should have been asked but were not, and data not included. The questionnaires asked mostly "morale" questions. The specific questions pertaining to self-initiated non-enforcement were limited to *foot patrols, meetings with citizen organizations such as neighborhood watch and tickets*. This assessment of non-dispatched, discretionary policing falls pitifully short of accuracy. True examples of self-initiated police activity are as follows:

1. "walking stops of suspicious activity commonly referred to as "stop and frisk,"
2. using COMPSTAT data to conduct targeting, pro-active policing,
3. Intelligence-led Policing from Fusion Centers to interdict terrorists activities, and make targeted vehicle stops to take illegal firearms off the street,
4. community policing where officers receive "tips" to employ problem-oriented policing to solve local crime problems employing crime prevention measures,
5. picking up truants and delivering them to truancy centers,
6. broken windows theory policing that reduces crimes such as vandalism, loitering, public drinking and fare evasion,
7. developing informants who can provide indicia necessary for search warrants,
8. Making welfare checks at assisted living residences and vulnerable businesses.

By no means is the above list exhaustive of the self-initiated activities of police officers which factor into a true measure of de-policing. Nevertheless, it does present a list of typical “discretionary activities” that police departments and citizens have come to expect from police officers. So, by minimizing self-initiated activity to *foot patrols, meetings with citizen organizations such as neighborhood watch and tickets* because these were the activities measured in the convenient LEMAS data and claiming that there was a slight indication of de-policing is completely inaccurate. By their own omission, the authors admit their limitations in their Section 5.3 Study Limitations and Future Research. Unfortunately, Marier and Fridell, do not address all of the limitations to their research which are critical to understanding the extent of de-policing.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Without citing national statistics on reduced self-initiated policing and retirements and resignations, which are clearly available on any internet search, and indicate unprecedented resignations and retirements particularly in the largest police agencies, de-policing, as a result of the unassailable Ferguson Effect, Black Lives Matters, and Defund the Police Movement, has unequivocally contributed to the significant de-policing phenomenon. Imagine you are a police officer in a large or even small police agency, and, due to unprecedented reductions in staffing, you are responding to calls that are, in many cases, dangerous and require a back-up officer by department policy. But the dispatcher is unable to provide you with a fellow officer because staffing is so low that all the other officers have been dispatched to other priority calls or even the priority calls are stranding. Is there any reason for your own safety and well-being that you would self-initiate activity that could possibly put you in harm’s way without the protection of a fellow officer and which is unappreciated by the very public the officers serve? The author believes this previous sentence summarizes the problem to which the only solution is for police supervisors and managers to not “cave” to mass media saturation of the internet with viral cell phone videos and to support officers who have used force as innocent until proven guilty instead of guilty until proven innocent. Several cited articles (Johnson, 2012; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; and Rushin & Edwards, 2017) have shown that there is no substitute for ending de-policing more than a completely supportive department. Finally, there is a clear movement on the part of some states to promote de-policing. Virginia’s law that prohibits officers from using “fix-it ticket” violations as a justification for making a traffic stop and only allowing the officer to issue a ticket and New York City’s ending of “stop and frisk” as justified in the Supreme Court case of *Terry v. Ohio* are two examples. So, if your “boss” tells you to stop doing one part of your job, what is the message that this sends to the employee? The answer is “do less; don’t worry about it.”

The Fourth Estate

There is little room left in this paper to go into detail about the Fourth Estate, but a short section is necessary. What is the definition of the Fourth Estate?

The term fourth estate is used to describe the press. Describing journalists and the news outlets for which they work as members of the fourth estate is an acknowledgement of the influence and status of the influence and status among the greatest powers of a nation (Gill, 2020, p. 1).

An outdated term. Use of the term ‘fourth estate’ to describe the modern media,

though, is somewhat outdated unless it is with irony, given the public's mistrust of journalists and news coverage in general. Only 41% of news consumers said they trust the media in 2019, according to Gallup (Gill, 2020, p. 1).

Police agencies are one of the primary targets of the media in today's journalistic world. Unfortunately, the "mainstream media" has been co-opted by the social media platforms. Facebook, Twitter, etc. allow most anyone with a hatred of police to post most any absurd and false information as they wish without censorship. So, these platforms have become the favorites of disaffected police hate groups to post their "viral videos" from their cell phones that show officers using force to arrest someone without showing the encounter that led up to the arrest. Meanwhile, because the mainstream media must stay competitive, they are "co-opted" into portraying the police as out-of-control rogue cops. Police officers who have admitted to de-policing overwhelmingly say that they "don't want to be circulated on social media, featured on the evening news, or portrayed on any other news outlet."

The balance of power between the fourth estate media and policing is equivalent to a fight between Mike Tyson versus this author, and the outcome is obvious. So, the question is, "Should it be the same with the fourth estate versus policing as certainly is now?" Absolutely not! So here is where the author makes recommendations to somewhat "even the playing field" so-to-speak: Make it easier for police agencies to counter media attacks on policing:

1. Require all media to make retractions of clearly biased and unproven allegations.
2. Not allowing social media to post clearly false and biased information. There needs to be a vetting process before any "viral video" or other questionably factual video or other police action is published. This means hiring a police-experienced expert, such as a former police information officer, to make the decision as to whether to publish the item.
3. Not allowing by law for media outlets to identify officers by name, agency, face, or any other means, unless the officer has been arrested or indicted.
4. Police agencies more aggressively using their websites to counter media attacks and disinformation.
5. City and county attorneys using libel and slander statues to go after the media in civil cases in clearly false accusations against individual officers and law enforcement agencies. Unfortunately, the fourth estate has too many legal protections in this area that Congress needs to change.

In closing, policing has never in its almost 185 years of serving their constituents in the U.S. been under siege by the media as is the case today, and this is one of most pernicious causes to our lack of security and safety in the U.S. today and into the future.

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