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Depolicing: An Empirical Analysis

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DEPOLICING: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

JACOB TERRELL FOSTER

86 Pages

Depolicing occurs when law enforcement officers disengage from proactive police work. In recent years, the term depolicing has become more popular with many seeing the phenomenon as negative. Prior literature has identified various predictors of such behavior. The current inquiry uses secondary data from a survey to further examine the predictors of depolicing. Respondents consisted of police officers from four different U.S law enforcement agencies. Results indicate that officers who experience higher levels of both public scrutiny and liability concerns are more inclined to depolice. Also, results show that experiencing higher levels of both public scrutiny and liability concerns are significant estimators of higher levels of observed depolicing. Thus, community and external factors appear to be better estimates of depolicing rather than supervisory or individual factors.

KEYWORDS: police, depolicing, proactivity, public scrutiny, liability, organizational fairness, burnout, physical danger, Covid-19, law enforcement

DEPOLICING: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

JACOB TERRELL FOSTER

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Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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DEPOLICING: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Every day, police officers are tasked with resolving conflicts, enforcing laws, and protecting their communities. Some of their responsibilities are conducted through responding to calls for service, whereas others are achieved voluntarily through proactive enforcement. To some degree, law enforcement is given a level of discretion in their daily duties; especially as it pertains to their proactivity (Parks, Mastrofski, DeJong, & Gray, 1999). Given this, some officers may find themselves disengaging from proactive work. An upcoming popular term to describe such behavior has been coined as “depolicing”, which is typically deemed by police officers as an overall negative phenomenon (Oliver, 2019).

The general concept of the depolicing phenomenon is understood as a behavior that occurs when police officers disengage from proactive police work. Though there is not a universal definition of depolicing, as the characteristics of such a phenomenon exist in various pieces of literature. For instance, depolicing has been described as the “Blue Flu” (Ayres, & Ayres, 1981; Braverman, 2020; Skovlund, 2020), as well as shirking (Brehm & Gates, 1999). More recent observations of this behavior have been acknowledged as occurring in response to the events that took place in Ferguson, Missouri after the death of Michael Brown, in which there was a perceived decline in police proactivity and uptick in crime. Some individuals including those that belong to media outlets and law enforcement began to apply the term “Ferguson Effect” to describe such occurrences (Lantigua-Williams, 2016; Lind, 2016; MacDonald, 2016; Wallace, 2018). As a result, many consider this phenomenon to have only begun to occur within recent years. However, this is a slight misconception given that prior literature indicates that police officers have exhibited similar behaviors for years (Muir, 1977; Paoline, 2001). Some have even identified a plethora of reasons for such behavior occurring (Oliver, 2019) that have

not yet been completely examined. This leaves the true frequency of depolicing to not be fully understood. Currently, some findings indicate that this behavior is prevalent, (Brown, 2019; Mourtgos & Adams, 2019; Oliver, 2019, 2017, Pavlicek, 2018) while others found little to no evidence (Chanin & Sheats, 2017; Wallace, White, Gaub, & Todak, 2018).

Prior literature highlights six primary predictors of depolicing. This evidence consists of both qualitative and quantitative findings, many of which are further supported through theoretical explanations. First, research indicates that public scrutiny, primarily caused through media representations, can cause officers to depolice (Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Second, officers are shown to often take the potential liability of their actions into consideration when they conduct their daily duties, causing some to disengage (Nix & Pickett, 2017; Reynolds et al., 2017). Third, a police officer's perception of organizational fairness is also something shown to be a predictor of depolicing (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2019; Reynolds et al., 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2015). Fourth, a career in law enforcement can take a toll on one's mental health which, therefore it causes some officers to experience burnout leading to depolicing (Bandura, 1977; Barker, 1999; Cherian & Jacob, 2013; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Emeriau-Farges, Deschênes, & Dussault, 2018). Fifth, a law enforcement career consists of a level of risk to one's physical safety (White, Darlos, & Shjarback, 2019; Woods, 2019), which may impact depolicing dependent upon officer perceptions of danger. For instance, officers may feel less inclined to engage in use of force (Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018). Finally, some findings indicate a potential drawback from proactive enforcement given the current global health events involving Covid-19 (Buhlis, 2020; Lum, Maupin, & Stoltz, 2020).

Drawing upon a survey of police officers, the current inquiry intends to add to prior literature by further examining depolicing. Specifically, the focus of the inquiry consists of examining the extent at which public scrutiny, liability concerns, organizational unfairness from supervisors, burnout, physical danger, and Covid-19 affect law enforcement's inclination to depolice. Also, there appears to be little to no research that examines how Covid-19 relates to depolicing. Due to this, the current inquiry also seeks to determine how other predictors of depolicing compare to this potential predictor of policing in terms of proactivity.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The general consensus of depolicing is collectively understood to relate to police proactivity (Oliver, 2019). While depolicing has gained more attention in recent years, the behavior was identified decades ago in prior literature (Muir, 1977; Paoline, 2001). Today, there is not a universal understanding of depolicing as several terms have been utilized to describe this phenomenon. This is most likely due to research having identified that there are several predictors for such behavior that largely stem from both theoretical explanations as well as empirical findings (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Bandura, 1977; Barker, 1999; Buhlis, 2020; Braga, Sousa, Coldren, Jr., & Rodriguez, 2018; Cooper, 2003a, 2002b; Emeriau-Farges et al., 2018; Jones & Board, 2020; Katz, 2013; Lum et al., 2020; Muir, 1977; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2019; Paoline, 2001; Pavlicek, 2018; Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Reynolds et al., 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2016, 2015). This chapter further examines depolicing through a review of prior research. First, the history of depolicing will be discussed, followed by the potential predictors of depolicing behavior identified in past literature. The methodology for the current inquiry will then be discussed subsequently.

History of Depolicing

Police Typology Research

Depolicing behavior can first be seen through policing styles and typologies. James Q. Wilson (1968) was one of the first to categorize policing into three different styles: legalistic, service, and watchman. Each style was then primarily comprised of an agency's standards as it pertained to order maintenance, community relations, public service, the need for arrest, enforcing laws, or officer discretion (Hawdon, 2008; Wilson, 1968; Zhao & Hassell, 2005).

Some studies found little support for these styles existing in contemporary policing (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2006; Zhao & Hassell, 2005), though it should be noted that there may not be a distinct style among agencies themselves. In fact, Hawdon (2008) mentions how there could be combinations of styles among both agencies and officers which could be based upon their environment. This suggests that patrol styles could exist more at the individual level.

Policing typology research has further examined personality differences at the individual level (Muir, 1977; Paoline, 2001, 2004; Worden, 1995). One of the more prominent pieces of literature comes from Muir's (1977) *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*. Through qualitative interviews, Muir classified police officers into four different categories: Professional, Enforcer, Reciprocator, and Avoider. The criteria are based upon both two types of perspectives and two types of morality as it pertains to coercion. These intersect to form the four previously mentioned groups. Those with a tragic perspective, professionals and reciprocators, are more sympathetic to citizens, acknowledge citizen backgrounds, and are more likely to view humankind as good. They also acknowledge the importance of understanding emotions. Those with a cynical perspective, enforcers and avoiders, perceive society to only exist between two groups. This perspective can be simplified as them seeing society as good or bad (Hochstedler, 1981), the "strong and the susceptible" (Muir, 1977, p. 175), or us versus them. One officer from Muir (1977) stated, "you become very cynical and tend to lose your sense of what people are and what they feel...A lot of times you just don't care anymore" (p. 176). Those with an integrated morality, professionals and enforcers, are more than willing to justify the use of force and coercion when applicably necessary. On the contrary, those with conflicted morality, reciprocators and avoiders, tend to be reluctant to use force against citizens let alone justify it. Additionally, Paoline (2001) further described avoiders as those "who are just doing their time"

(p. 45). Their outlook on law enforcement is typically negative and they often avoid as much work as possible (Paoline, 2001).

What is important to note from the work of Muir (1977) is the primary criteria for an officer to be classified as an avoider entails disengaging from both proactive and reactive police work. Avoiders tend to be less inclined in engaging in use of force. Hence, the avoider is closely related to what is regarded today as depolicing. While the term “depolicing” was not coined by Muir (1977) or other previously mentioned literature, their research demonstrates how the behavior has existed before contemporary definitions.

The Origins of the Term “Depolicing”

The term “depolicing” can be traced back to Black and Baumgartner’s (1987) article *On Self-Help in Modern Society*. They explained that as our society progresses, citizens become more dependent on the police helping with their everyday problems. Though as police presence would begin to slowly drift away, then citizens will eventually rely less on law enforcement and more on their available resources to settle their disputes and conflicts. This is where society would then depend more upon self-help (see also Oliver, 2019). However, much of this understanding of depolicing derives from theory. Nonetheless, Black and Baumgartner’s (1987) work officially introduced depolicing into the lexicon, despite the behavior being mentioned in prior literature.

Depolicing has also been understood as a way of avoiding the appearance or criticism of racism. For instance, MacDonald (2005) defines depolicing as occurring as, “a result of the intense criticism that accompanied these incidents, many officers backed off of assertive policing” (p. 133). This explanation was primarily derived from reduced proactive policing in the

1990s in response to police coming under fire for alleged practices of racial profiling in Los Angeles following the 1991 Christopher Commission Report. Moreover, Katz (2013) mentions that in the Supreme Court case *United States v. Hare*, a state trooper acknowledged that they often engaged in depolicing (see also Oliver, 2019). He stated that he “would sometimes intentionally refrain from stopping minority motorists who have committed traffic violations in an attempt to avoid being perceived as racist” (Katz, 2013, p. 1422).

Some understandings of depolicing are associated with fear and risk. The basis for most of these include officers’ perceptions of whether they feel uncomfortable with actually being proactive. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI, 2017) in, *The Assailant Study – Mindsets and Behaviors*, mentions this behavior can be caused by the criticism derived from high-profile incidents. Many officers will reduce their proactivity due to feeling “scared and demoralized” and to also “avoid interacting with the community” (p. 4). This highlights that depolicing could be a phenomenon associated with fear.

More recently, in Brown’s (2019) dissertation they explained depolicing as “the practice by which an officer intentionally reduces, or eliminates, proactive police activities, in response to the officer’s perception that discretionary initiatives and interactions with citizens are inherently and unnecessarily risky” (p. 7). Additionally, depolicing has also been described by others as selective enforcement (Worden, 1995), reactive mode (Tizon & Forgrave, 2001), a defense mechanism (Reynolds, Fitzgerald, & Hicks, 2017), passive law enforcement (Tizon & Forgrave, 2001), and doing the bare minimum (Albrecht, 2016). This demonstrates that officers disengaging from their work has not only existed for decades, but that there are many descriptions despite the term’s more recent popularity.

Shirking

The Merriam-Webster dictionary's secondary meaning of 'shirking' is, "to evade the performance of an obligation". Both supervisors and the public typically have certain expectations of officers (Best, 2017). Police are often caught in the middle of these expectations (Best, 2017). Despite this, there are also instances where officers have a high level of discretion as they conduct their daily duties, which also suggests that they have a good amount of control over their level of proactivity (Parks et al., 1999). This is especially true given that some officers have a lot of "down time" during their shift in which they do not have a specific direction or call of service they are focusing on (Parks et al., 1999; Phillips, 2016).

Brehm and Gates (1999) further examined shirking in their book, *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Response to a Demographic Public* through the lens of bureaucrats, such as police. One of their chapters in particular, *Donut Shops and Speed Traps*, examines factors affecting the inclination to work. As the title suggests, the example they give is through the context of two archetypal settings: The officer spending their time at the donut shop and the officer enforcing traffic laws. Their contention is that the reasoning for someone to be hard-working is that they are dedicated (Brehm & Gates, 1999, 1993). Also, through their findings they determined that one's environment has a large impact upon whether one shirks, sabotages, or works (Brehm & Gates, 1999, 1993). In fact, Brehm and Gates (1999) mention there to be four overall factors that affect work behavior that are based upon peers, supervisors, those that they interact with, and individual preferences (Brehm & Gates 1999; Oliver, 2019). Oliver (2019) attributes this to depolicing in that police officers have discretion to choose their behavior. He explains that "Police officers have the discretion to engage in their own preference to pull back and no longer take a proactive policing stance" (Oliver, 2019, p. 47). This is easy for

some officers given that the majority of police agencies have few consistent methods to keep track of officer proactivity let alone a formal policy (Koper, Lum, & Wu, 2020).

Blue Flu

“Blue Flu” is said to occur when officers, sometimes in large numbers, are absent from their work through the use of sick leave or strike (Ayres, & Ayres, 1981; Braverman, 2020; Skovlund, 2020). These actions, which are also generally considered illegal across multiple states (Ayres, & Ayres, 1981; Grim, 2020), usually take place after a sort of seminal event. For instance, after a pay raise rejection, officers in Oklahoma City began to write fewer tickets, were slow to calls of service, and threatened to leave if any officer was suspended due to such behavior (Ayres & Ayres, 1981). Another more recent Example of ‘Blue Flu’ derives from Atlanta, Georgia where there were many officers who called off work or refused to respond to calls after murder charges were filed against officers for the death of Rayshard Brooks (Skovlund, 2020). This specific scenario of “Blue Flu” resulted in consequences. For instance, there was one day which entailed over half of the agency’s sworn officers missing work which caused over 800 calls to be unanswered (Keenan, 2020; Skovlund, 2020). As shown, the premise for occurrences of the ‘Blue Flu’ are typically with a goal in mind, such as arbitration (Oliver, 2019) and at various times in history have expanded the power of police (Grim, 2020). Given this, ‘Blue Flu’ can occur at a wider departmental setting rather than at just the individual level.

Ferguson Effect

The use of the word “depolicing” has become more common after events transpired in Ferguson, Missouri, where Michael Brown, an eighteen-year-old African American male, was fatally shot by police officer Darren Wilson in 2014, causing his death. This led to many citizens,

including members of social movement organizations such as Black Lives Matter, to protest against police brutality. After observing a post-event withdrawal of police activity and what appeared to be an increase in crime rates, St. Louis Police Chief Sam Dotson coined the term ‘Ferguson Effect’ (Lantigua-Williams, 2016; Lind, 2016). This description was primarily due to him and others blaming the spike in crime occurring as being the result of fewer police officers who were proactively deterring crime (Simonds, 2017; Wallace, 2018). Disengagement from proactive police work in combination with a rise in crime was later affirmed by former FBI director, James Comey. He describes the post-Ferguson phenomena as a “chill wind blowing through American law enforcement” (Lind, 2016). Moreover, the ‘Ferguson Effect’ has been mentioned as being seen by some as a “war on cops” (MacDonald, 2016). While some argue that crime rates have increased due to this withdrawal of proactive policing, scholars have mentioned how some of these claims are anecdotal (Oliver, 2019; Shjarback, Pyrooz, Wolfe, & Decker, 2017).

Predictors of Depolicing

Given the broad scope of depolicing, there are multiple predictors of such behavior. The foundation for many of these predictors can be examined through theory but can also be demonstrated through empirical evidence. First, police officers are often faced with public scrutiny. As Cooper (2003a) suggests, this can cause a “see-saw effect” (p. 359). Second, law enforcement officers are also at times faced with the likelihood of liability. This can come in the form of both civil and criminal liability. Due to this, police officers often observe their audience and become more careful of their actions (Best, 2017). Police officers will take into consideration the possible negative consequences to their engagement with citizens possibly leading some to disengage. This has been further shown through empirical evidence (Nix &

Pickett, 2017; Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2017). Third, organizational fairness is another predictor of depolicing (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2019; Reynolds et al., 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2015). If employees feel that they are not treated fairly within the confines of their respective institutions, then they could be more disposed to depolice. Fourth, a career in law enforcement can take a toll on one's mental health (Chopko, 2010; Collins & Gibbs, 2003). Given the nature of policing, employees can at times experience a level of burnout which has shown an empirical link to disengagement from proactive police work (Bandura, 1977; Barker, 1999; Cherian & Jacob, 2013; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Emeriau-Farges, Deschênes, & Dussault, 2018). Fifth, there is also a physical danger aspect of policing. Some research indicates that this risk of physical safety may cause some officers to become reluctant of their force usage (Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018). This is supported through police typology research in that those who were deemed avoiders were typically less likely to be inclined to use force against citizens (Muir, 1977). Sixth, the effects of the recent Covid-19 pandemic have not been fully examined. Though some recent findings indicate that to some degree it could perhaps be correlated to depolicing behavior (Buhlis, 2020; Lum, Maupin, & Stoltz, 2020).

Public Scrutiny

Depolicing behavior impacted by public scrutiny has been one of the most prominent recognized reasons for depolicing. One explanation for this link can be explained through symbiosis theory. Ehrenreich (2002) argued that some members of subordinate groups, while still in their subordinated positions, can at times gain a level of privilege over others within their group. They then use their own privilege to subordinate others (Ehrenreich, 2002). This ultimately causes them to therefore, “resist giving it up” (p. 257). In other words, those within

these positions of privilege are reluctant to lose their achieved positions. This theory was originally rooted within the context of political identity and how groups overlap each other (Cooper, 2003a; Ehrenreich 2002). However, Cooper (2003a), extends the use of this theory to the context of depolicing as they view many police officers as working-class white males who view themselves superior to racial minorities. Therefore, having a “Blue” identity establishes a level of privilege even though being a police officer is still considered working-class (Cooper, 2003a). These white males are then considered a hybrid mixture between both groups. In terms of how this is related to depolicing, this creates a type of “see-saw effect” (Cooper, 2003a, p. 359; Cooper, 2003b,). When officers are asked to get tough on crime, they racially profile citizens but when officers experience public backlash they utilize depolicing as a means of avoidance (Cooper 2003a, Oliver, 2019). This behavior goes back and forth, creating a “see-saw effect” (Cooper, 2003a, 359).

Further Cooper (2003a) adds to the theory with the inclusion of critical cultural theory. Cooper (2003a) explains that depolicing and racial profiling were both collectively caused due to the decision made in *Terry v. Ohio* (1968). This case in particular resulted in what is known as a ‘Terry stop’. A Terry stop allows officers to briefly detain suspects on reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed. Also, they argue that racial profiling authority was given more room after the decision of *Whren v. United States* (1996) which essentially allows police officers to conduct pre-textual stops. Oliver (2019) however, contends that this argument “falls flat” in that not all police are white males. For instance, he mentions how 83 percent of law enforcement officers in Detroit are black (Oliver, 2019).

In terms of depolicing, currently there is limited research examining the relationship between public scrutiny and depolicing. Wolfe and Nix (2016) found that officers who have a

reduced motivation caused by negative media attention were also less likely to want to engage with community partnership. Additionally, other qualitative studies examining officer perceptions have found that public scrutiny can affect officer proactivity (Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018). For instance, when asked how the media plays a role in the hesitation to use force and depolicing one interviewed officer from Pavlicek (2018) answered with, “Yes, media portrayals of law enforcement has impacted my ability to do my job” (p. 178). Moreover, an interviewed officer from Oliver (2019) stated “{Officers} are afraid, not physically afraid, but afraid to have one individual put them to the test, cause them to do something that will put them in spotlight” (p. 87).

Public scrutiny can further be expressed through other forms of media such as the recordings from Body-worn cameras (BWC’s). One of the primary reasons for the implementation of BWC’s is officer accountability (Coudert, Butin, & Métayer, 2015). As this technology became more popular in recent years, many law enforcement agencies have been able to adopt BWC’s. As of 2016, approximately half of United States police agencies were equipped with BWC’s (Hyland, 2018) though this number is expected to increase in the future (Miller, 2019). Unlike recordings conducted by citizens, if an agency has implemented BWC’s then typically the entire call of service will be recorded. Depending on a variety of circumstances, these recordings are sometimes released to various media outlets. Despite this, the overall perceptions that police officers have of BWC’s are generally shown to be positive (Gaub, Choate, Todak, Katz, & White, 2016; Jennings, Fridell, & Lynch, 2014). While some officers from Oliver (2019) indicated that it could potentially cause depolicing, various studies indicate that it does not really have much of an impact on proactive behavior (Gonzales & Cochran,

2017; Grossmith et al., 2015; Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019; Peterson, Yu, La Vigne, & Lawrence, 2018; Wallace et al., 2018).

Some raise concerns whether the inclusion of this technology may negatively affect force usage. Overall, evidence shows that the implementation of cameras to have a negative relationship with use of force (Ariel et al., 2016; Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2015; Braga et al., 2018; Jennings, Fridell, Lynch, Jetelina, & Gonzalez, 2017). One study found that 54.2 percent of command staff respondents felt that the cameras would make officers feel less inclined to use force in incidents where it is deemed necessary (Smykla, Crow, Crichlow, & Snyder, 2016). Also, Jones and Board (2020) found that 38 percent of sampled officers were reluctant to use deadly force due to the events that occurred in Ferguson. Some qualitative findings from Oliver (2019) indicate that it affects officer decision making. One officer in the sample stated, “I have often heard of officers second-guessing themselves in situations where they know they are being watched in fear of making a mistake” (p. 120). While proactivity may not be affected from cameras, these empirical findings did indicate the potential of withdrawal from force usage presumably due to public scrutiny.

As the work of Cooper (2003a, 2000b) suggests, perhaps depolicing is a response to perceived negative attention towards law enforcement. This is shown through law enforcement behavior post high-profile events such as the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in which many protested against law enforcement (Lantigua-Williams, 2016; Lind, 2016; MacDonald, 2016; Simonds, 2017; Wallace et al., 2018). Qualitative findings, such as were found in Oliver (2019), indicate that the media plays a role in causing officers to feel inclined to depolice. Additionally, Oliver (2019) highlighted the potential link between BWC’s and depolicing. This technology is a demonstration of how police can perceive BWC’s as a potential

catalyst for depolicing. More specifically, that police proactivity is not really impacted but rather police officers are potentially less likely to use force (Ariel et al., 2016; Ariel et al., 2015; Braga et al., 2018; Jennings et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2018). Given this prior literature, the link between public scrutiny and depolicing has still not been fully examined. This further raises the question of how much of an effect public scrutiny has on an officer's likelihood to disengage from proactive police work.

Liability Concerns

Another predictor of depolicing is that the actions of officers potentially cause liability concerns (Oliver, 2019). Best (2017) explains that police officers take into consideration both their audience and work-related considerations when interacting with the citizens. Some considerations that officers make could pertain to the liability of their actions as they could potentially result in both citizen complaints and lawsuits (Brown, 2019; Oliver, 2019). If the risk of liability is more apparent, perhaps police officers are less inclined to be proactive. If a police officer does not engage in proactive police work, then they are likely not left in as many situations in which they would be liable for consequences of their actions. In other words, police officers would often acknowledge the risk of proactive behavior.

Empirical evidence indicates that citizen complaints can potentially cause officers to depolice. While citizen complaints can result in public scrutiny, they can also be considered a liability concern for police officers since some officers have hinted that they cause a fear of harsh punishments including being fired (Brown, 2019). There are various pieces of evidence that highlight officer perceptions of citizen complaints and allegations (Nix & Pickett, 2017; Oliver, 2019, 2017; VanBlaricum, 2005). Much of these perceptions are derived from the fear of receiving a complaint. VanBlaricum (2005) discusses that one of the primary reasons for

distressing police officers are complaints. It should be noted that the reasoning for an officer receiving high number of citizen complaints could be due to actively engaging with the public (Terrill & McCluskey, 2002). This is also further shown by a response given by an officer in Oliver (2019)'s was that, "Officers do not want to risk their careers or [be] put through the paperwork and stress that comes along with receiving a complaint" (p. 85) while another officer said, "No citizen contact, no citizen complaints" (p. 86). These qualitative findings indicate that officers acknowledge that they are less likely to have to experience complaints when they disengage.

Similar to the liability caused from citizen complaints, the decisions officers make can also leave them in a position of legal liability which may cause them to feel prone to depolice (Oliver, 2019). VanBlaricum (2005) mentions how investigations and litigations often concern officers. In one study approximately 50 percent of police cadets were concerned about civil liability (Kappeler, 1997, as cited in Vaughn, Cooper, & Carmen, 2001). Moreover, results from Nix and Pickett (2017), indicate that officers are still concerned over being held liable in situations where they are falsely accused. Nix and Pickett (2017) found that officers who perceive recent media coverage of police to be negative were significantly more likely to worry about false allegations made against them. Despite these findings, some research examining the perceptions of civil litigation found contrary results. One study found that while 86.4 percent of police officers believe officers are sued even when acting appropriately, 78.2 percent also indicated that when they stop a citizen, they are not thinking of being sued (Hughes, 2001). Further, Novak, Smith and Frank (2003) found that civil liability did not significantly influence officer behavior. This indicates that whether the fear of civil liability causes depolicing perhaps exists more at the individual level rather than across law enforcement as a collective whole.

Prior research examining officer liability concerns is prevalent (Brown, 2019; Kappeler, 1997, as cited in Vaughn, Cooper, & Carmen, 2001; Nix & Pickett, 2017; Oliver, 2019, 2017; VanBlaricum, 2005). To date, the many of the findings indicating a link between liability concerns and depolicing have been qualitative in nature which leaves scholars to be able to further examine the relationship from a statistical standpoint (Brown, 2019; Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018). As of now, there appears to be a lack of quantitative evidence that supports whether liability concerns cause police officers to disengage. This raises the question of how much of an influence that liability concerns currently have over an officer's tendency to depolice.

Organizational Unfairness

Various studies have examined the effects of organizational fairness on police officers (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2015). There could be many potential reasons as to why an officer experiences unfair treatment. However, Reynolds et al. (2017) found four primary reasons why police officers experience unfair treatment. These four mechanisms included which sanctions, disagreements with supervisors, inability to progress one's career, and how citizen complaints are resolved. From these four reasons mentioned by Reynolds et al. (2017), supervisor treatment appears to be a potential predictor (Oliver, 2019). Prior qualitative findings from Oliver (2019) give further insight into the importance that supervisor behavior can have on depolicing behavior. In fact, some officers put part of the blame of depolicing upon supervisors due to their potential lack of support. Much of this is due to whether supervisors support the decisions that patrol officers make though others hinted at what officers perceived to be organizational injustice or mistreatment. The relationship between supervisor treatment and

depolicing can be further understood through pieces of the cop's code, a guide to police culture (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Reuss-Ianni (1983) defines various aspects of the collective code of street cop culture. The code is derived from collective understandings that patrol officers have with one another while on duty (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). This is also utilized for officer survival as well as them to behave as "one of us" (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, 13). While there are many different codes, only some directly relate to officer proactivity in relation to supervisors. For example, Reuss-Ianni (1983) mentions the code, "Protect your ass" (p. 15). This means that the police organization will not always look out for every officer, and one must make sure to do so for themselves. If an officer makes a mistake, then they will most likely be found out. Therefore, cops must be careful of their actions. Or, as Reuss-Ianni (1983) describes it, "every man for himself" (p. 15). Another code, "Don't make waves" (p. 15) involves officers recommending not to bring any unnecessary attention to oneself as it will increase supervision from the organization (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Additionally, it will bring even more attention to an officer's peers as well (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Finally, "Don't give them too much activity" (p. 15), involves officers suggesting that increased productivity does not benefit officers as much as it used to (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). If an officer is very active, then supervisors will continuously expect the same behavior in the future with which this also increases the activity of an officer's peers. Therefore, creating more work for them as well as risk (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Some prior findings indicate the impact that supervisors can have on officer proactivity. Reynolds et al., (2017) found that approximately 43 percent of responding officers admitted to engaging in what was described as "production deviance" in response to mistreatment. Officers indicated that they reduced their productivity through engaging in non-job-related activities such

as being on their phone, while others indicated that they avoided being on too many calls (Reynolds et al., 2017). When it came to self-protection, 67 percent of officers within this sample exhibited these types of behavior (Reynolds et al., 2017). Some of the ways in which officers involved themselves in such practices was through evading contact with supervisors or the public (Reynolds et al., 2017). Nix and Wolfe (2016) found that the motivation of deputies was less likely to become negatively affected when their supervisors exhibited organizational fairness. Similarly, Wolfe and Nix (2015) found a negative relationship with the confidence officers had in their agency's fairness and their willingness to engage with community members. These past findings have led some researchers to conclude supervisors engaging in more fair and just procedures will essentially produce better and motivated officers (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017).

One of the other ways officers can experience mistreatment is through harassment or discrimination from others within the department. More specifically, whether there is a lack of interactional justice that is perceived. Interactional justice focuses on the perceptions that employees have of their interpersonal interactions that occur at their organization (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Skarlicki & Folger, 1977). A primary example of such actions includes the treatment that supervisors give their subordinates (Adams, 1976; Skarlicki & Folger, 1977). For patrol officers, the most immediate authority figure are their corresponding first-line supervisors, most commonly a sergeant.

Many previous studies are based upon discrimination due to officer demographics (Bolton, 2003; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Dowler, 2005; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Teixeira, 2002). Regarding the treatment of racial minority police officers one study found that African American officers felt more criticized than their peers (Dowler, 2005). Additionally, Bolton (2003) found

evidence that some black officers perceived some of their white peers to treat them lesser as if they were not capable of effective decision making. Other black officers from Bolton (2003) also felt that they were scrutinized more from supervisors than their white counterparts. Moreover, another study found that seven out of twenty racial minority officers expressed a desire of equal treatment indicating a lack thereof (Hassell, 2020). Others even indicated isolation among their peers (Hassell, 2020).

Similar to non-white officers, empirical evidence also highlights discrimination among female police officers as well. Dodge and Pogrebin (2001) concluded that that there still exists a distant relationship between officers of both sexes. Other studies highlight how female officers are sometimes subjected to sexual harassment (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Texeira, 2002). For instance, one sampled woman from Rabe-Hemp (2008) discussed her experience as a police officer and stated, “The Chief had said he would never hire a female. So, he would show up off duty on my calls. At first this irritated me, I don’t need a baby sitter. If I can’t do the job like a man, I will be the first out” (258). This officer in particular experienced discrimination from upper level management. Collectively, these studies do not specifically discuss depolicing, however, these experiences are similar to other research examining officer turnover.

Issues with turnover caused by discrimination seem to primarily occur with racial minorities and women. In fact, previous findings indicate that racial minorities were more likely to have left a career in law enforcement than whites. Haar (2005) found there to be significant differences of dropouts rates of both Native Americans and Hispanics when compared to their white counterparts. Haar (2005) also found that three out of four female officers who voluntarily left their law enforcement career discussed experiences of gender discrimination. Additionally, Gazel (1974) found that black officers would be more willing to leave their employment due to

racial discrimination Given the past findings of discrimination (Bolton, 2003; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Dowler, 2005; Teixeira, 2002; Rabe-Hemp, 2008), it is not much of surprise as to why both racial minority and female officers leave their careers for such reasons. These experiences of discrimination and harassment, which indicates a lack of interactional justice, are shown to potentially cause turnover. Turnover is not a disengagement from proactive policing, but a disengagement from police work in general.

Prior findings have indicated a link between organizational fairness and depolicing (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Reynolds, et al. 2017; Wolfe and Nix et al., 2016). However, the extent to which this affects officer proactivity has not extensively been examined. Further, some prior studies have not controlled for other predictors of depolicing (Nix & Wolfe, 2015; Wolfe & Nix, 2016).

Burnout

There is no dispute that a career in law enforcement can have a psychological toll on officers. Prior research has identified many mental health problems among law enforcement including depression, posttraumatic distress, stress and poor sleep quality caused by excessive workloads, and suicide (Chopko, 2010; Collins & Gibbs, 2003; Komarovskaya et al., 2011; Violanti et al., 2016). The extent at which mental health affects a police officer's level of proactivity has not fully been explored.

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory argues that one's motivation and actions can be based upon the beliefs one has of their efficacy regardless of what is actually true. It is further explained that inefficacy can lead to fearful or avoidance behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1986), but an individual's high determination will positively affect their productivity (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). This theory has recently been applied to the psychological wellbeing of police officers. One

study found that officers who have lower self-efficacy are more likely to be disengaged, anxious, and irritable (Emeriau-Farges et al., 2018). This shows that if an officer is experiencing signs of negative mental health, they are less likely to be inclined to proactively engage. Further, Markos and Sridevi (2010) explained that engaged employees are more likely to proactively seek opportunities outside of what is expected of them. Self-efficacy theory can further be applied to police officer burnout (Shoji et al., 2015). If an individual is experiencing burnout, then their efficacy to achieve desired goals may be diminished (Shoji et al., 2015).

Burnout has been described as “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity” (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, p. 1986). Burnout has been further divided into three dimensions including exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). Moreover, there are also many ways in which police officers experience burnout. Maslach et al., (2001) identified six primary reasons for burnout including excessive workloads, little control over the ability to complete their work, lack of rewards, loss of connection to a workplace community, perceived unfairness, and conflict of values between employee and employer. There are certainly many ways in which these reasonings for burnout can be applied to law enforcement.

The reasons for burnout given by Maslach, et al. (2001) can be further supported from empirical findings. First, officers can experience stress caused by their large workloads, shift schedule, and consistent calls for service (Collins & Gibbs, 2003; Martinussen, Richardsen, & Burke, 2007; Oliver, 2019). Second, regarding the amount of control officers have, one study found that officers not only have little control over available resources needed to complete their work but that low resources was also negatively associated with less engagement (Demerouti, et

al. 2001). Third, officers also may not feel well rewarded for their efforts which in turn causes burnout. For example, a study found that there was a significant positive relationship between an effort-reward imbalance and exhaustion and cynicism as a result of their organizational environment (Violanti et al., 2018). Fourth, officers may feel less of a member of their organizational community if they do not experience positive connections with others (Maslach et al., 2001). This can be shown through negative experiences that are highlighted through harassment and discrimination of certain officer demographics (Bolton, 2003; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Dowler, 2005; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Texeira, 2002). Fifth, previous findings indicate that police officers experience perceived organizational unfairness (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Bolton, 2003). Finally, officers who experience perceived unfairness from their employers can often experience burnout. For instance, Oliver (2019) gives a scenario of when an individual filed a lawsuit against an officer. The officer could feel inclined to fight the suit; however, the department may look to settle the case. This causes conflicting values between both employee and employer if the officer believes that they have not committed any wrongdoing.

It is rather important to understand how and why officers experience burnout as its corresponding consequences can potentially cause officers to want to withdrawal from their work (Barker, 1999, as cited in Oliver, 2019). Empirically, burnout has been shown to affect job performance, intention to quit, commitment to organization, and absenteeism (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Goodman, 1990; Martinussen et al., 2007). However, Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanze-Vergel (2014) shows that burnout and disengagement are more independent of each with burnout being more related to one's health and work engagement being more related to motivation.

As Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory suggests, an individual's motivation can be based upon their beliefs of self-efficacy. Since Shoji et al., (2015) found there to be a relationship between one's efficacy and burnout. They also mention that efficacy and burnout can affect one's motivation to work (Shoji et al., 2015). However, lack of proactivity caused by burnout has previously indicated to have mixed findings (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Goodman, 1990; Martinussen, et al. 2007). This raises the question of whether contemporary officers, who exhibit signs of burnout, are likely to depolice.

Physical danger

There is no question that a career in policing can be potentially dangerous (White et al., 2019; Woods, 2019). In 2018 alone, 55 law enforcement officers died due to felonious incidents, 51 died to accidents, and 58,866 were assaulted with 18,005 being injured (UCR, 2018). Obviously, there is a high level of risk that exists in a law enforcement career. When officers are sent to the training academy, they are taught how to survive hostile situations and observe hypothetical scenarios in which their life can be taken (Stoughton, 2014-2015). Further, they are often taught the great importance of officer safety and how to combat the hostile world they live in and protect it (Stoughton, 2014-2015). This causes them to further perceive a constant threat of danger around them (Stoughton, 2014-2015). Stoughton (2014-2015) further explains that this is what is referred to as the warrior mentality. The warrior mentality alone does not explain the relationship between depolicing and physical danger, however it does highlight fear (Stoughton, 2014-2015), a feeling often associated with depolicing (Oliver, 2019).

Prior typology research mentions a potential link between depolicing behavior and physical danger. Muir (1977) described the experiences of one officer, who was deemed an avoider in particular as, "Success in police work became the job of staying alive, of keeping

aware of possible dangers, of finding ways to fill time with uneventful safe activities, of justifying staying out of harm's way" (p. 34). It was common for some avoiders to justify their avoidance of danger and their lack of desire to want to use force (Muir, 1977). Other avoiders felt less inclined to want to engage with citizens when the scenarios involved civil matters and there was often mentioning of them 'defining out' (Muir, 1977; Paoline, 2001). While the 'avoider' typology is slightly different than modern understandings of depolicing, the lack or inability to want to engage with citizens or use force or coercion is a demonstration of disengaging.

Aside from typology research, there is little research that indicates a relationship between physical danger and depolicing. Qualitative findings from Oliver (2019) indicate that due to prior felonious killings of officers, others feel prone to depolice. For instance, an officer interviewed in Oliver (2019) stated, "there are now cops being killed for wearing a uniform, so why put yourself in harm's way in this kind of climate" (p. 57). Further, another officer from Oliver (2019) said, "why work harder if working harder is going to wind you up in an inquest or dead" (88). Other research indicates that police officers have become more concerned with their physical well-being. One study found that 93 percent of officers have recently become more worried about their safety (Morin, Parker, Stepler, & Mercer, 2017). Moreover, Spano (2003) found that officers who were worried about their safety were less likely to conduct arrests.

Henry (2004) suggests that the potential and reality of danger in policing are not equal and sometimes that danger is overestimated. Despite this, available research indicates that both that there is some level of physical danger that exists, and officers are potentially concerned about their safety (Morin et al., 2017; Oliver, 2019). Given this, officers could feel reluctant to

engage in physical situations in which they perceive could risk their life. Currently, whether there is validity to this relationship is not well known.

Covid-19

Covid-19 could also be a potential predictor of depolicing. Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) has spread globally affecting millions across the world. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that as of December 4th 2020, there were more than 14 million cases in the United States resulting in the deaths of over 270,000 citizens (CDC, 2020). First responders, or in this case police officers, have been at the forefront of this pandemic as their duties still have to be conducted during this time. As of July 6th, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused 503 line-of-duty deaths of law enforcement officers (Fraternal Order of Police).

As the pandemic has developed over the course of this past year, methods of law enforcement have also been changing. For instance, the website “*Police 1*”, recommended that law enforcement reduce their proactivity and encourages prevention strategies instead (Buhlis, 2020). A previous survey of police agencies indicated that by March 3rd 2020, that 91 percent changing how officers respond to calls of service, 73 percent of agencies would limit community policing efforts, and 61 percent would limit proactive stops of citizens (Lum, et al. 2020). Given this information, there is no dispute that the results of Covid-19 have caused law enforcement nationwide to consider changing their policing tactics overall.

As of right now, there is limited research examining how the pandemic has affected law enforcement. More importantly, there seems to be a lack of support for the relationship between the pandemic and depolicing. Some speculate that Covid-19 will affect productivity within law enforcement (Stogner, Miller, & McLean, 2020). As of now, it appears that only qualitative

findings highlight these concerns. A study conducted in the UK found that both stress and perceived risk associated with Covid-19 was apparent among the sampled officers (Camarago, 2021). One officer from Camargo (2021) stated, “It’s not even about you, it’s about what it would do to your family” (p. 7). Another officer further demonstrates this by stating, “I feel a level of guilt because my girlfriend’s got asthma, so she’s at risk” (p. 7) (Camarago, 2021). As Camarago (2021) explained that the guilt had less to do with contracting Covid-19 but whether an officer experienced guilt by spreading it to their loved ones. Regardless of whether similar concerns are widespread, there is little support that there is a relationship between Covid-19 and depolicing.

Experience

Finally, age or experience could be a potential predictor of depolicing. Age is not commonly associated with the depolicing phenomenon. However, it can certainly be a factor to consider when trying to further understand how officer proactivity is affected. Some officers from Oliver (2019) discussed how younger officers are more likely to depolice due to them being more aggressive and proactive which creates a higher risk of receiving a complaint. Despite this, there is a plethora of research that indicates the opposite (Bertolino et al. 2011; Boumans et al., 2011; Ilke, et al. 2012). As it pertains to proactivity, Bertolino et al. (2011) found that the younger participants in their study had more proactive personalities. Results from Boumans et al., (2011) further suggest that this is due to motivational reasons created from career opportunities. Moreover, Ilke et al., (2012) found that the lowered motivation due to age is more likely due to a shift in motives. In other words, as an employee becomes more experienced, they may be motivated to work harder in order to achieve their desired positions. Once these are achieved, they become less motivated. It should be noted that aside from Oliver’s (2019) work,

the samples from each of these studies do not consist of police officers. Therefore, these findings do not provide support that age or experience predict depolicing behavior but rather that it is not uncommon for this behavior to occur among employees in general.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

The current study seeks to expand upon past depolicing research. While the full extent of the depolicing phenomenon has not fully been examined, available evidence seems to be mixed overall (Brown, 2019; Chanin & Sheats, 2017; Gaub, & Todak, 2018; Mourtgos & Adams, 2019; Oliver, 2019, 2017, Pavlicek, 2018; Wallace et al., 2018). Additionally, more recent works have put more of an emphasis on the “Ferguson Effect” rather than depolicing as a whole (Capellan et al., 2020; MacDonald, 2019; Rosenfeld & Wallman, 2019). There also appears to be no studies that have examined how the recent Covid-19 pandemic has affected officer proactivity. As the work of Oliver (2019) suggests, there are many different predictors of depolicing far beyond the scope of just contemporary definitions. As a result, this study seeks to further examine the extent of depolicing through various potential predictors mentioned in prior literature including public scrutiny, liability, organizational justice, burnout, physical danger, and Covid-19. Six research questions comprise these predictors:

1. Are police officers who report higher levels of concern over public scrutiny more likely to depolice?
 - a. H1: As police officers report higher levels of concern over public scrutiny, then they will also report higher levels of depolicing.
2. Are police officers who report higher levels of liability concerns more likely to depolice?
 - a. H2: As police officers report higher levels of liability concerns, then they will also report higher levels of depolicing.
3. Are police officers who report higher levels of organizational unfairness from supervisors more likely to depolice?

- a. H3: As police officers report higher levels of organizational unfairness from supervisors, then they will also report higher levels of depolicing.
4. Are police officers who report higher levels of burnout more likely to depolice?
 - a. H4: As police officers report higher levels of burnout, then they will also report higher levels of depolicing.
5. Are police officers who report higher levels of perceived danger more likely to depolice?
 - a. H5: As police officers experience higher levels of perceived danger, then they will also report higher levels of depolicing.
6. Are police officers who report higher levels of fear of Covid-19 more likely to depolice?
 - a. H6: As police officers report higher levels of fear of Covid-19, then they will also report higher levels of depolicing.

This study used secondary data. Given the health risk associated with Covid-19 in the United States during the time data was collected, the researchers convenience sampled willing police agencies who expressed an interest in participating in a study that focused on police officer retention. Data were primarily collected through an online survey administered to police officers from Vernon Hills, Illinois, Smyrna, Georgia, and Topeka, Kansas through Qualtrics, though in-person surveys were administered to officers from Biloxi, Mississippi.

Aside from basic demographic questions, the survey included over 100 Likert-type scale questions (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree) that assessed the respondent's agreement with an indicator statement regarding respondents' perceptions of their patrol careers. This means that respondents were only allowed to state their level of agreement

with each question and there was no middle ground. This included their thoughts on their agency, career, the physical aspects of their job, public interactions, compensation, both personal and departmental values, personality, and challenges in policing. Additionally, there are questions that ask officers to rate their level of agreement of various aspects of police proactivity. Given the nature of such a survey, many of these questions are related to the topic of depolicing.

Sample

There were no specific agency qualifications other than the organization had to be a municipal law enforcement agency. This means that agency size and officer demographics were not taken into consideration when sampling. The sampled law enforcement agencies included the cities of Biloxi (MS), Vernon Hills (IL), Smyrna (GA), and Topeka (KS). Each of the areas display different characteristics among their respective populations. According to the U.S. Census (2020), Biloxi (MS) is comprised of over 46,000 people. Biloxi (MS) is served by 130 sworn in police officers (UCR, 2018). The primary racial composition of the population is approximately 70 percent white alone, 20.2 percent black or African American alone, and 14.9 percent Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 14.4 percent of the Biloxi (MS) population is in poverty. Vernon Hills (IL) is comprised of over 25,000 people (U.S. Census, 2020) and is served by 43 sworn in police officers (UCR, 2018). The primary racial composition of the population is approximately 65.8 percent white alone, 2.7 percent black or African American alone, and 14.9 percent Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2020). Approximately 6.5 percent of the population is in poverty (U.S. Census, 2020). Smyrna (GA) is comprised of over 56,000 people (U.S. Census, 2020) and served by 91 sworn in police officers (UCR, 2018). The primary racial composition of the population is approximately 48.8 percent white alone, 31.4 percent black or African American alone, and 15.2 percent Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2020). Approximately 9.4

percent of the population is in poverty (U.S. Census, 2020). Topeka (KS) is comprised of over 125,000 people (U.S. Census, 2020) and is served by 267 sworn in police officers. The primary racial composition of the population is approximately 78.4 percent white alone, 10.5 percent black or African American, and 15.4 percent Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2020). Approximately 6.5 percent of the population is in poverty (U.S. Census, 2020).

For agencies who were administered the survey online, the survey was initially given to each agency's upper management through the department listserv or other email addresses. Upon their approval, the link to the online survey, which was administered through Qualtrics, was then distributed to police officers within that respective agency. Officers from Biloxi were administered the survey during roll call or directly to detectives and command staff. The informed consent page that was given to police officers expressed that any or all completion of the survey is voluntary. It was further explained that respondents were permitted to stop at any time. Respondents were offered no compensation for their participation in the survey.

There were a total of 165 respondents shown in the data though four were decidedly removed from the analyses. Three of these removed cases were due to their lack of responses. There would have been little to no benefit in including them in any analysis due to their absence of many of the items used in not only the current analyses but the majority of the survey altogether. Another case was not removed until after the first multiple regression analysis was conducted. The standardized residual minimum was shown to be lower than -3 which indicated a potential outlier. Upon looking at the residual plot, there appeared to be only one case that was lower than -3. When also considering both Cook's distance and DfBetas, there was no further evidence of an outlier. The regression analysis was then conducted without this single case which proved to have different results. Most notably, public scrutiny became statistically

significant (it was not previously). Additionally, other variables that were already significant, displayed greater confidence after this case was removed. When looking at this respondent's answers, they belonged to command staff. They also appeared to express extreme views compared to other non-patrol officers. Due to them belonging to a command staff position there is presumably a low chance that they would depolice given that they operate less on the street compared to other positions. Given the diagnostics of the study, sample size, and the impact this case had on the results, this case appears to be more of a slightly abnormal residual rather than an influential outlier. The case was then decidedly removed from both further and prior analyses. As a result, of the 161 included cases the response rate for Biloxi (MS) was 57.7 percent, Vernon Hills (IL) was 51.2 percent, Smyrna (GA) was 20.9 percent, and Topeka (KS) was 16.9 percent.

Control Variables

There were multiple demographic items included in the survey. First, officers were asked their level of experience in law enforcement. Second, respondents were asked their current rank or positions within their respective agency as well their current shift time. Third, respondents were asked about their relationships with law enforcement which included whether they have been in a long-term relationship with someone in law enforcement and whether they have any immediate family members who have been employed as law enforcement officers. Last, respondents were also asked to indicate their race, gender, whether they have served or are currently serving in the armed services, and their highest level of education. The ranges for these variables are displayed in Table 1.

Independent Variables

Public Scrutiny. Prior literature illustrates that public scrutiny influences the degree to which officers engage in depolicing. It is certainly one of the most consistently hypothesized and supported predictors (Lind, 2016; MacDonald, 2016; Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). The work of Cooper (2003a, 2003b) suggests that as a result of public backlash police engage in depolicing. Examples of media criticisms, such as BWC recordings, potentially create a level of public scrutiny. Though empirical findings of depolicing behavior as a result of BWC are slightly mixed in that public scrutiny could perhaps affect force usage but not as much in the level of proactivity (Ariel et al., 2016; Ariel et al., 2015; Braga et al., 2018; Jennings et al., 2017; Jones & Board, 2020; Lum et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2018; Smykla et al., 2016; Wallace et al., 2018). Given this collective information, three items closely related with public scrutiny were selected to represent it: “I personally fear negative media attention because of my job,” “I am bothered by the way law enforcement as a profession is being portrayed in the news media,” and “I am bothered by the way my department is portrayed in the news media.” These items were then be combined on a measured scale. Each of these items were measured on the same 4-point Likert-type scale with higher values indicating greater concerns about public scrutiny (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). The range for this variable is displayed in Table 1.

Liability Concerns. Various studies have indicated there to be concern among police officers in regard to the liability when interacting with the public (Nix & Pickett, 2017; Pavlicek, 2018; VanBlaricum, 2005). More importantly, Oliver (2019) identifies that this could potentially be the result of a fear of citizen complaints, lawsuits, and lack of organizational support. Given this past research, it is likely that police are faced with the thoughts of allegations and lawsuits.

Due to this, three items were used to measure officer perceptions of their legal liability: “In police work, a person stands a good chance of being sued,” “I am afraid of being sued because of my job,” and “I am apprehensive about potentially having to purchase personal liability insurance.” These items encompass both the legal aspect of liability as well as the potential for liability to occur, such as the existence of citizen complaints. Each item was be combined on a scale. All items were measured on the same 4-point Likert-type scale with higher values indicating greater liability concerns (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). The range for this variable is displayed in Table 1.

Organizational Fairness. Police officers have indicated in prior literature that fairness within an organization can relate to depolicing. As respondents from Oliver (2019) indicated, the blame for depolicing can a lot of times be directed at supervisors. Moreover, additional research has shown a level of support for this claim (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017). For the current study, four items regarding officer perceptions of supervisors are included. The first three encompass how supervisors treat the respondent: “In the past year, I have been in a situation where a direct supervisor addressed me in unprofessional terms”, “In the past year, I have been in a situation where a direct supervisor made derogatory remarks about me”, and “In the past year, I have been in a situation where a direct supervisor was condescending to me.” The third question encompasses whether the respond agrees that their supervisors treat everyone the same in regard to decision making: “My immediate supervisors treat everyone the same when making decisions.” These questions best capture organizational unfairness within agencies. All items were measured with a 4-point Likert (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree) that were also combined on a scale with higher values indicating greater organizational unfairness. The range for this variable is displayed in Table 1.

Burnout. Burnout can often be a result of an officer's workload, shift schedule, and calls of service (Collins & Gibbs, 2003; Martinussen et al., 2007; Oliver, 2019). Several questions in the survey focus on the degree to which an officer's shift schedule has caused negative consequences. The first item assessed whether officers believe they work too many hours: "I feel like I work too many hours most of the time". The second included item asks respondents to question whether their shift schedule causes physical health issues: "The shift schedule I work is detrimental to my physical health." Therefore, it should be able to help indicate whether an officer is experiencing burnout. These questions from the survey best represent employee burnout. Each item will be combined on a scale. All of the mentioned items were measured on the same 4-point Likert-type scale with higher values indicating greater levels of burnout (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). The range for this variable is displayed in Table 1.

Physical Danger. A career in law enforcement causes a risk of physical safety for officers (White et al., 2019; Woods, 2019; UCR, 2018). Some research identifies that police officers have become more worried about their safety (Morin et al., 2017). As Muir (1977) suggests, "avoiders", the policing typology that highly relates to depolicing, often are reluctant to engage in police use of force. Additionally, qualitative research has shown that officers are both hesitant to use force in today's environment (Pavlicek, 2018) and also fear being killed in the line of duty (Oliver, 2019). Anecdotally, this shows that to some degree, depolicing appears to be apparent. However, there appears to be little quantitative support for the link between physical danger and depolicing. To examine the relationship between physical danger and depolicing, three questions are utilized. The first items measure the respondents' agreeability with the level of perceived danger they have of their external work environment: "My job is a lot more dangerous than other

kinds of jobs”. The other two included items focus on other officer injuries: “In my job, a person stands a good chance of getting hurt.” and “A lot of people I work with get physically injured in the line of duty.” All items were combined on a scale. Each of these items were measured with a 4-point Likert with higher values indicating higher perceived physical danger (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). The range for this variable is displayed in Table 1.

Covid-19. As previous literature mentioned, many agencies have indicated that they will modify how law enforcement will respond to the current pandemic with many indicating that they plane on limiting proactive stops (Lum et al., 2020). While law enforcement indicates a change, this does not necessarily measure proactivity at the individual level. The survey data being used for this study asked respondents to discuss their level of agreeability with their perceptions of Covid-19 and how it affected their work. To examine depolicing as it relates to officer concern of Covid-19, three questions were used to measure concerns over Covid-19. The selected questions focus on how Covid-19 has affected both the respondent’s physical health and whether it has made their job difficult. Fear of Covid-19 were measured by the following statements: “I have felt that my health was in danger while at work during the Covid-19 pandemic,” and “I feel uneasy about responding to calls because of Covid-19.” These two items will then be combined on a scale. Another item was included that focused respondent’s level of agreeability in whether their work has changed due to Covid-19: “The restrictions forced upon the agency in which I work because of Covid-19 have made it difficult to do my job.” Collectively, these three items were used to capture perceptions of Covid-19. Each item was combined on a scale. Consistent with other independent variables, all items were measured with a 4-point Likert with higher values indicating greater concerns over Covid-19 (1 = strongly

agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). The range for this variable is displayed in Table 1.

Dependent Variables

Two dependent variables measuring depolicing behavior and perceptions of other officers were included in the analyses. All items are measured on the same 4-point Likert-type scale as are each of the independent variables (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree). There are four indicators used to measure depolicing: “I try to be proactive in my duties as a law enforcement officer,” “In today’s environment, I am hesitant to perform an arrest,” “In today’s environment, it is in my best interest to avoid proactive searches of vehicles,” and “In today’s environment, it is in my best interest to avoid proactive searches of persons.” The first item focuses on the respondents’ general proactivity while the other items concentrate proactive behavior including arrests and searches. The observed depolicing variable is also measured with four items: “I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work for fear of lawsuits”, I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work for fear of negative media attention”, “I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work as a result of nationwide protests against police”, and “I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work over fear of local protests.” The ranges for these variables are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Range</i>
Exp. (Years)	
Patrol Rank	0-1
Day Shift	0-1
Smyrna, GA	0-1
Topeka, KS	0-1
Vernon Hills, IL	0-1

(Table Continues)

Table 1, Continued

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Range</i>
Non-White	0-1
Female	0-1
Education	1-6
Armed Service	0-1
LE Relationship	0-1
LE Family	0-1
Public Scrutiny	3-12
Liability Concerns	3-12
Org. Unfairness	4-16
Burnout	2-8
Physical Danger	3-12
Covid-19	2-8
<i>Dependent Variables</i>	
Depolicing	4-16
Observed Depolicing	4-16

Analytic Strategy

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version IBM SPSS 25. The data were examined at the univariate, bivariate, and multivariate levels. For the multivariate analysis of the data, ordinary least squares regression (OLS) was conducted. This is a suitable method given that both dependent variables are continuous. The significance was tested at a 95% confidence interval. This type of multivariate method is appropriate as it addresses the following research questions: (1) Are police officers who report higher levels of concern over public scrutiny more likely to depolice?; (2) Are police officers who report higher levels of liability concerns more likely to depolice?; (3) Are police officers who report higher levels of organizational unfairness from supervisors more likely to depolice?; (4) Are police officers who report higher levels of burnout more likely to depolice?; (5) Are police officers who report higher levels of perceived danger more likely to depolice?; (6) Are police officers who report higher levels of fear of Covid-19 more likely to depolice?

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the current inquiry are presented. First, descriptive results are shown, which give a general understanding of the sample's dispersion across varying demographics. Table 2 presents both statistical frequencies and percentages of each control variable while Table 3 displays both the mean and standard deviation for every variable within the models. Scale analyses were then conducted for each of the six predictor variables and both dependent variables. The scale analyses are displayed in Tables 4 through 11. Each of the scales are comprised of two to four items and show their corresponding Cronbach's alpha value. Next, bivariate analyses of each of the independent variables and the dependent variables are shown in Tables 12 through 19 which includes results from independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlations. Finally, results from the multivariate analyses are shown in Tables 20 and 21. These analyses were conducted to explain the relationship between the continuous "Depolicing" and "Observed Depolicing" variables and each independent variable.

Univariate Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The sample is comprised of 161 sworn police officers from four different police departments (Smyrna, GA, Topeka, KS, Vernon Hills, IL, and Biloxi, MS). Results indicated that almost half (46.6%) of officers derived from Biloxi with the second highest being from Topeka (28%) followed by Vernon Hills (13.7%) and Smyrna (11.8%). Out of these officers, 74 (46%) were ranked at the patrol level while others varied across other ranks. Most of these officers did not work a typical day shift. In fact, 86 (54.4%) worked during nights, 12-hour shifts, or their schedule varied. Years of experience fluctuated across the sample with the average years of law enforcement experience being approximately 14 years.

The sample was predominantly white (87.3%) and male (87.3%). There were only 20 officers who indicated they were not white alone and 20 who indicated that they were female. Most of these officers have attained higher education. Results indicated that 62 (38.5%) that their highest achieved education was a bachelor's degree. In fact, the majority of the sample indicated they have obtained more than a high school education. Findings show that 33 (20.5%) had some college, 31 (19.3%) with an associate degree, and 21 (13%) with more than a bachelor's degree. Only 14 officers (8.7%) had the equivalent of a high school education. There were 43 officers (26.7%) who indicated that they are a member of the armed services. Additionally, many of these officers are affiliated with other law enforcement officers. There were 23 officers (14.3%) who indicated that they have had been married to or in a long-term committed relationship with another law enforcement officer. Moreover, 87 (54.4%) of officers indicated that they have had an immediate family member in law enforcement.

Table 2: Sample Demographics

Variables	N	%	Total
<i>Experience (Years)</i>			161
0-5	35	21.7	
6-10	31	19.3	
11-15	20	12.4	
16-20	33	20.5	
20+	42	26.1	
<i>Rank</i>			161
Patrol/Entry Level	74	46.0	
Other	87	54.0	
<i>Shift</i>			158
Day	72	45.6	
Other	86	54.4	
<i>Agency</i>			161
Smyrna, GA	19	11.8	
Topeka, KS	45	28.0	
Vernon Hills, IL	22	13.7	
Biloxi, MS*	75	46.6	
<i>Race</i>			157
Non-White	20	12.7	

(Table Continues)

Table 2, Continued

Race			
White	137	87.3	
Sex			158
Female	20	12.7	
Male	138	87.3	
Education			161
HS/GED	14	8.7	
Some College	33	20.5	
Associate's	31	19.3	
Bachelor's	62	38.5	
More than a Bachelor's	21	13.0	
Armed Service			161
Yes	43	26.7	
No	118	73.3	
Relationship with Law Enforcement			161
Yes	23	14.3	
No	138	85.7	
Family in Law Enforcement			160
Yes	87	54.4	
No	73	45.6	

*Biloxi, MS was used as a reference for the other agency variables.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Model Variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD
<i>Independent Variables</i>			
Exp. (Years)	154	14.224	8.755
Patrol Rank	154	.467	.501
Day Shift	154	.455	.500
Smyrna, GA	154	.123	.330
Topeka, KS	154	.260	.440
Vernon Hills, IL	154	.136	.344
Non-White	154	.123	.330
Female	154	.117	.322
Education	154	3.247	1.201
Armed Service	154	.279	.450
LE Relationship	154	.136	.344
LE Family	154	.533	.501
Public Scrutiny	154	8.149	1.571
Liability Concerns	154	8.227	1.900
Org. Unfairness	154	7.416	2.930

(Table Continues)

Table 3, Continued

Variables	N	Mean	SD
<i>Independent Variables</i>			
Burnout (Table Continues) Table 3, Continued	154	4.208	1.389
Physical Danger	154	9.442	1.576
Covid-19	154	3.883	1.318
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
Depolicing	154	7.981	3.011
Depolicing	154	11.286	3.408

Scale Analyses

As shown in Table 4, to compute public scrutiny, three Likert-scale items were used that ranged from 1-4 that rate the respondent's agreement with these statements. Each of these items were selected to be combined on a scale due to them measuring the respondent's perceptions of media attention from their line of work. One item measures whether the respondent personally fears negative media attention while due to their job as a law enforcement officer. The other two items focus on whether the respondent is bothered by the portrayal of either their department or profession in the news media. Collectively, these items combined resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .579.

Table 4. Scale Analysis, Public Scrutiny

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*I personally fear negative media attention because of my job.	161	2.652	.868
*I am bothered by the way my department is portrayed in the news media.	161	2.025	.622
*I am bothered by the way law enforcement as a profession is being portrayed in the news media.	161	3.472	.662

*Reverse Coded; Cronbach's Alpha = .579

To compute liability concerns, three Likert-scale items were used that ranged from 1-4 that rate the respondent's agreement (See Table 5). The first item measures whether the

respondent fears being sued while the second item addresses whether the respondent believes that there is a high chance of being sued in a law enforcement career. The final item focuses on how apprehensive the respondent is in having to purchase liability insurance. Together these items are addressing whether the respondent has concerns of being held liable in their career. When these items are combined, they resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .668.

Table 5. Scale Analysis, Liability Concerns

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*I am afraid of being sued because of my job.	161	2.497	.923
*In police work, a person stands a good chance of being sued.	161	3.143	.631
*I am apprehensive about potentially having to purchase personal liability insurance.	161	2.621	.873

*Reverse Coded; Cronbach's Alpha = .668

To compute perceptions of organizational unfairness from supervisors, four Likert-scale items were used that ranged from 1-4 that rate the respondent's agreement with the indicator statements. As shown in Table 6, the first three items address whether a supervisor has either been condescending towards the respondent, made derogatory remarks about the respondent, or addressed the respondent unprofessionally. The final item focuses on whether the respondent believes that the supervisors treat everyone the same when it comes to decision making. These items address whether the respondent has experienced unfairness from supervisors. These four items produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .887.

Table 6. Scale Analysis, Organizational Unfairness from Supervisors

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*In the past year, I have been in a situation where a direct supervisor was condescending to me.	161	1.913	.971
*In the past year, I have been in a situation where a direct supervisor made derogatory remarks about me. (Table Continues)	161	1.708	.796

Table 6, Continued

Categories	N	Mean	SD
* In the past year, I have been in a situation where a direct supervisor addressed me in unprofessional terms.	161	1.770	.846
My immediate supervisors treat everyone the same when making decisions.	161	2.143	.836

*Reverse Coded; Cronbach's Alpha = 0.887

To compute burnout, two Likert-scale items were used that ranged from 1-4 that rate the respondent's agreement. As shown in Table 7, the first item measures whether the respondent agrees that they work too many hours while the second item addresses whether their shift schedule is detrimental to their physical health. These two items together are used as an indicator of burnout. Together these items produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .627.

Table 7. Scale Analysis, Burnout

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*I feel like I work too many hours most of the time.	161	2.211	.809
*The shift schedule I work is detrimental to my physical health.	161	2.056	.861

*Reverse Coded; Cronbach's Alpha = 0.627

To compute physical danger, three Likert-scale items were used that ranged from 1-4 that rate the respondent's agreement. As shown in Table 8, the first item focuses on whether the respondent believes that their job is more dangerous than other professions. The second item asks respondents their agreeability that there is high chance of an officer getting hurt in their profession while the last item asks whether it occurs often within their department specifically. Together, these items produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .702

Table 8. Scale Analysis, Physical Danger

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*My job is a lot more dangerous than other kinds of jobs.	161	3.472	.603
*In my job, a person stands a good chance of getting hurt. (Table Continues)	161	3.280	.644

Table 8, Continued

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*A lot of people I work with get physically injured in the line of duty.	161	2.739	.738

*Reverse Coded; Cronbach's Alpha = 0.702

To compute Covid-19, two Likert-scale items ranging from 1-4 assessed the respondent's agreement. As shown in Table 9, the first item addresses whether the respondent agrees that their health was in danger during the Covid-19 pandemic while the second item whether the respondent felt uneasy to responding to calls due to Covid-19. These two items combined on a scale resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .703.

Table 9. Scale Analysis, Covid-19

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*I have felt that my health was in danger because of working during the Covid-19 pandemic.	161	2.068	.852
*I feel uneasy about responding to calls because of Covid-19.	161	1.814	.654

*Reverse Coded; Cronbach's Alpha = 0.703

To compute depolicing, four Likert-scale items ranging from 1-4 assessed the respondent's agreement. As shown in Table 10, the first item focuses on the respondent attempts to be proactive. The second item addresses the respondent's hesitation to perform arrests. The last two items concentrate on whether it is in the respondent's best interests to avoid proactive searches of persons or vehicles. These items combined on a scale resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .890.

Table 10. Scale Analysis, Depolicing

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*I try to be proactive in my duties as a law enforcement officer.	161	1.994	.787
*I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work for fear of lawsuits.	161	1.783	.812

(Table Continues)

Table 10, Continued

Categories	N	Mean	SD
*In today's environment, it is in my best interest to avoid proactive searches of persons.	161	2.143	.967
*In today's environment, it is in my best interest to avoid proactive searches of vehicles.	161	2.106	.912

*Reverse Coding; Cronbach's Alpha = 0.890

To compute observed depolicing, four Likert-scale items ranging from 1-4 assessed the respondent's agreement. As shown in Table 11, the items focus on whether the respondent agrees that they have seen others engaging in less proactive work due to reasons commonly associated with depolicing. The first item concerns whether they have seen other officers depolice due to their fear of lawsuits. The second item concentrates on whether they have perceived other officers depolicing due to negative media attention. The last two items have to deal with whether the respondent has observed other officers have depoliced due to protests.

Table 11. Scale Analysis, Observed Depolicing

Categories	N	Mean	SD
I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work for fear of lawsuits	161	2.814	.937
*I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work for fear of negative media attention.	161	2.950	.857
* I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work as a result of nationwide protests against police.	161	2.894	.899
* I have seen fellow officers in my agency engage in less proactive work over fear of local protests.	161	2.615	.994

*Reverse Coding; Cronbach's Alpha = 0.946

Bivariate Analysis

T-Tests

Bivariate analyses were also included in order to test and find support for each of the hypotheses. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare mean differences between depolicing and various dichotomous independent variables. Results from Table 12 indicate that those who work in the day shift show significantly higher depolicing score than those who work on other shifts. Officers who worked in the Topeka Police Department had significantly higher depolicing averages (9.40) than those who worked elsewhere (7.491). Similarly, officers who worked in the Vernon Hills Police Department had significantly higher averages (10.0) than their counterparts (7.712). There were no other significant differences shown among the other variables.

Table 12. Independent Sample T-Test (Depolicing and Independent Variables)

	Yes		No		t
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Patrol Rank	74	7.659	87	8.345	1.460
Day Shift	72	8.569	86	7.570	-2.088*
Smyrna, GA	19	7.368	142	8.112	1.007
Topeka, KS	45	9.400	116	7.491	3.733***
Vernon Hills, IL	22	10.000	139	7.712	-3.401**
Non-White	20	8.800	137	7.832	-1.343
Female	20	8.050	138	7.957	-0.129
Armed Service	43	7.581	118	8.186	1.123
LE Relationship	23	8.913	138	7.877	-1.526
LE Family	87	8.379	73	7.644	-1.537

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001; Sig. (2-tailed)

Independent sample t-tests were also conducted to compare mean differences between observed depolicing and various dichotomous independent variables. Results from Table 13 indicate that there are significant differences in the average observed depolicing score between officers who are ranked at the patrol level and officers from other ranks. Those who work during

a typical day shift also have significantly higher observed depolicing averages than those who do not. Officers who worked in the Topeka Police Department had significantly higher observed depolicing averages than those who worked elsewhere. Similarly, officers who worked in the Vernon Hills Police Department had significantly higher depolicing averages than those who worked elsewhere. Officers with immediate family members in law enforcement also had significantly higher scores in observed policing than officers who had no family in law enforcement. There were no other significant differences shown among the other variables.

Table 13. Independent Sample T-Test (Observed Depolicing and Independent Variables)

	Yes		No		t
	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Patrol Rank	74	10.662	87	11.793	2.110*
Day Shift	72	11.417	86	11.174	-0.440*
Smyrna, GA	19	12.211	142	11.148	-1.272
Topeka, KS	45	12.711	116	10.716	-3.426**
Vernon Hills, IL	22	14.136	139	10.820	-4.461***
Non-White	20	11.400	137	11.197	-0.245
Female	20	10.400	138	11.348	1.155
Armed Service	43	10.814	118	11.441	1.027
LE Relationship	23	12.130	138	11.130	-1.299
LE Family	87	12.012	73	10.493	-2.888**

Note: *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001; Sig. (2-tailed)

One-Way ANOVA

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted between education and depolicing. Table 14 provides the results for each level of education. Results indicate that there were no significant differences between groups. While these findings are not significant, it does appear that the average depolicing increases with higher education. However, the findings suggests that there is not a significant difference in averages between education and depolicing.

Table 14. One-Way ANOVA (Depolicing and Education)

High School		Some College		Associate's		Bachelor's		More than a Bachelor's		
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig.
7.571	2.471	7.546	2.670	7.581	2.643	8.242	3.278	9.095	3.534	.315

Another one-way analysis of variance was conducted between education and observed depolicing. Table 15 provides the results for each level of education. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between groups. Similarly to the results from Table 13, it does appear that the average observed depolicing scores are higher with those that have obtained their Bachelor's or more. However, the findings still suggest that there is not a significant difference in averages between education and depolicing.

Table 15. One-Way ANOVA (Observed Depolicing and Education)

High School		Some College		Associate's		Bachelor's		More than a Bachelor's		
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig.
10.286	3.832	10.667	3.425	10.419	3.149	11.871	3.331	12.381	3.426	.082

A bivariate analysis was already conducted to examine the relationship between agency and each of the dependent variables. However, to determine whether there are significant differences between each agency, one-way analyses of variance were conducted for agency and both dependent variables. Table 16 provides the results for depolicing. Results indicate that there

were significant differences between agencies. Biloxi, MS was shown to have significantly lower depolicing scores than both Topeka, KS and Vernon Hills, IL. Smyrna, GA was shown to have significantly lower depolicing scores than both Topeka, KS and Vernon Hills, IL. There were no other significant differences among groups.

Table 16. One-Way ANOVA (Depolicing and Agency)

Biloxi, MS \bar{T}, \neq		Smyrna, GA \bar{T}, \neq		Topeka, KS $*, \pm$		Vernon Hills, IL $*, \pm$		
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig.
6.787	1.679	7.368	2.362	9.400	3.427	10.000	4.059	.000

Note: Significant difference ($p < .05$): Biloxi(*), Smyrna(\pm), Topeka(\bar{T}), Vernon Hills(\neq)

Results from the one-way analysis of variance between agency and observed depolicing are shown in Table 17. Biloxi, MS had significantly lower observed depolicing scores than each of the other agencies. Of these three agencies, Vernon Hills, IL had the highest observed depolicing average followed by Topeka, KS and Smyrna, GA. There were no other significant differences among groups.

Table 17. One-Way ANOVA (Observed Depolicing and Agency)

Biloxi, MS \pm, \bar{T}, \neq		Smyrna, GA *		Topeka, KS *		Vernon Hills, IL *		
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig.
9.333	2.703	12.211	3.047	12.711	3.245	14.136	2.532	.000

Note: Significant difference ($p < .05$): Biloxi(*), Smyrna(\pm), Topeka(\bar{T}), Vernon Hills(\neq)

Correlations

Pearson correlations were conducted between each of the continuous independent variables and depolicing. The results from this bivariate analysis are displayed in Table 18. These results suggest that there is a significant correlation between depolicing and various continuous independent variables including years of experience, public scrutiny, liability concerns, organizational unfairness from supervisors, and Covid-19. The r-values for each of these correlations are all positive indicating a positive correlation between these predictors and the dependent variable. There were, no significant correlations between depolicing and both burnout and physical danger. It should be noted that despite significance, each of these correlations indicates a positive direction.

Table 18: Pearson Correlations (Depolicing)

Variables	r	Sig.
Exp. Years	.230**	.002
Public Scrutiny	.482***	.000
Liability Concerns	.519***	.000
Org. Unfairness	.164*	.019
Burnout	.122	.061
Physical Danger	.051	.260
Covid-19	.216**	.003

Note: *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001; (2-tailed)

Pearson correlations were also conducted between each of the continuous independent variables and observed depolicing. The results from this bivariate analysis are displayed in Table 19. These results suggest that there is a significant correlation between observed depolicing scores and each of the six predictor variables. The r-values for each of these correlations are all positive indicating that each of these relationships are positive. The correlations between

observed depolicing and years of experience was positive, however, this relationship was not statistically significant.

Table 19: Pearson Correlations (Observed Depolicing)

Variables	r	Sig.
Exp. Years	.122	.122
Public Scrutiny	.588***	.000
Liability Concerns	.542***	.000
Org. Unfairness	.209**	.008
Burnout	.177*	.025
Physical Danger	.175*	.026
Covid-19	.215**	.006

Note: *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001; (2-tailed)

Multivariate Analysis

Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS)

Two OLS regression analyses were conducted to test the six hypotheses. The same independent variables were used for both models. The first model examined the respondent's depolicing score and the other examined their observed depolicing score. Table 20 shows the results from the multiple linear regression model between depolicing and the independent variables in the model. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between years of experience and depolicing. In fact, when holding all other variables constant, for every one-unit increase in years of experience, the depolicing value is estimated to increase by .106.

Additionally, significant findings were found depending on agency location. If the respondent was employed at the Topeka Police Department their estimated depolicing score is expected to increase by 1.631. Likewise, if a respondent was employed at the Vernon Hills Police Department their depolicing score is estimated to increase by 1.837. Contrary to the significant findings from both agency variables, being a respondent from the Smyrna Police Department is

not a significant estimator of depolicing. Moreover, it produced a negative beta coefficient (-.041) unlike its agency counterparts. The final significant control variable was race. Being non-white significantly increases a respondent's estimate of their depolicing score by 1.725. The other control variables in the model were not shown to be statistically significant estimates of depolicing.

Out of the six independent variables, only three were statistically significant. First, results indicate that for every one-unit in public scrutiny it is estimated that depolicing increases by .369. Similarly, for every one-unit increase in liability concerns it is estimated that a respondent's depolicing score increases by .553. Finally, physical danger was also shown to be statistically significant. However, results indicate that this estimate of depolicing is in the opposite direction than anticipated. For every one-unit increase in physical danger a respondent's depolicing score is estimated to decrease by -.390. Organizational unfairness from supervisors, burnout, and Covid-19 were all shown to not be statistically significant predictors of depolicing in the model. Overall, the R squared for the model is .477, which means that approximately 48 percent of the variance in depolicing can be explained by the model.

Table 20: OLS Regression (Depolicing)

Variables	B	SE	β	Sig.
Exp. Years	.106	.028	.307	.000
Patrol Rank	.506	.485	.084	.299
Day Shift	.063	.462	.011	.891
Smyrna, GA	-.376	.677	-.041	.579
Topeka, KS	1.631	.563	.238	.004
Vernon Hills, IL	1.837	.735	.210	.014
Non-White	1.725	.610	.189	.005
Female	.867	.672	.093	.199
Education	-.068	.183	-.027	.709
Armed Service	-.600	.457	-.090	.191
LE Relationship	.091	.612	.010	.882

(Table Continues)

Table 20, Continued

Variables	B	SE	β	Sig.
LE Relationship	.091	.612	.010	.882
LE Family	.014	.423	.002	.973
Public Scrutiny	.369	.163	.192	.025
Liability Concerns	.553	.140	.348	.000
Organizational Unfairness	-.060	.071	-.058	.403
Burnout	.027	.151	.012	.860
Physical Danger	-.390	.133	-.204	.004
Covid-19	.099	.169	.043	.559
(Constant)	1.719	1.783		.337

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $F = 6.850$, $p < .000$; R Square = .477

Table 21 shows the results from the multiple linear regression model between observed depolicing and the independent variables in the model. Only four of the variable coefficients were found to be statistically significant. Two of these variables derived from respondents being employed at either the Topeka or Vernon Hills Police Departments. The model shows that if a respondent is from the Topeka Police Department, then their observed depolicing scores is estimated to increase by 2.098. Likewise, if a respondent is from the Vernon Hills Police Department, then their estimated observed depolicing score is estimated to increase by 2.948. For every one-unit in public scrutiny it is estimated that a respondent's observed depolicing score increases by .544. Similarly, for every one-unit increase in liability concerns it is estimated that a respondent's observed depolicing score increases by .457. Every other variable coefficient was not statistically significant. Overall, the R squared for the model is .527 which means that approximately 53 percent of the variance in observed depolicing can be explained by the model.

Table 21: OLS Regression (Observed Depolicing)

Variables	B	SE	β	Sig.
Exp. Years	.032	.030	.082	.288
Patrol Rank	-.466	.523	-.068	.374
Day Shift	-.754	.497	-.111	.131

(Table Continues)

Table 21, Continued

Variables	B	SE	β	Sig.
Smyrna, GA	1.728	.729	.167	.019
Topeka, KS	2.098	.606	.271	.001
Vernon Hills, IL	2.948	.791	.298	.000
Non-White	-.003	.657	.000	.996
Female	-.708	.723	-.067	.330
Education	.106	.197	.037	.591
Armed Service	-.160	.492	-.021	.745
LE Relationship	.291	.660	.029	.660
LE Family	.114	.455	.017	.803
Public Scrutiny	.544	.175	.251	.002
Liability Concerns	.457	.150	.255	.003
Organizational Unfairness	-.024	.077	.021	.756
Burnout	.100	.163	.041	.542
Physical Danger	-.045	.143	.021	.753
Covid-19	.031	.182	.012	.866
(Constant)	.578	1.920		.764

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001; F = 8.353, p < .000; R Square = .527

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The current inquiry convenience sampled officers from four police agencies. This study is an early study that attempted to quantify the relationship between predictors of depolicing and proactive behavior. Oliver (2019) was one of the first to provide a comprehensive outline of the causes of depolicing. Though, his study along with other recent works examining depolicing have been qualitative (Brown, 2019; Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018). Other prior research does show support for reasons of depolicing behavior but many of these studies do not emphasize the term depolicing itself or even approach depolicing from a broad perspective. That is why the current study sought further research by examining various causes of depolicing identified in prior literature. Included in the analyses were six predictors of depolicing: public scrutiny, liability concerns, organizational unfairness from supervisors, burnout, physical danger, and Covid-19. Only public scrutiny and liability concerns were found to be statistically significant predictors of both depolicing and observed depolicing. Additionally, other control variables were also found to be significant predictors of both depolicing and observed depolicing.

Public Scrutiny and Depolicing

Findings from the current inquiry indicate support for the first hypothesis. This gives further support to theoretical frameworks that hypothesize that negative media attention causes officers to disengage (Cooper, 2003a; Cooper, 2003b; Ehrenreich, 2002). Additionally, this finding is consistent with prior research (Oliver, 2019; Pavlicek, 2018; Wolfe & Nix, 2016) that indicates a relationship between public scrutiny and depolicing.

Events such as the ones that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 sparked widespread media attention. Many individuals were displayed across various media outlets protesting against

police brutality. High-profile incidents, such as this one, are not occurring at every precinct. When such instances do occur, the incident recordings, witness testimonies, and protests are often displayed across different forms of media. It is reasonable to believe that police officers are observing this media coverage transpire. In response to these observations of negative media attention, some police officers could feel more inclined to engage in less proactive behavior. This further reflects Cooper's (2003a; 2003b) "see-saw effect" (p. 359). While some of the claims that depolicing caused from the Ferguson effect increases crime rates can be considered anecdotal (Oliver, 2019; Shjarback et al., 2017), the results of the current inquiry suggest that public scrutiny is a potential predictor of depolicing.

Future research should examine the relationship between depolicing and public scrutiny. The current findings do indicate a positive relationship though there are not enough studies to compare these results to. As will be mentioned in the limitations section, officers from this sample are comprised of four different agencies. Given this, future research examining how public scrutiny impacts an officer's inclination to depolice should control for more variables including both geographic area and region, agency demographics, and community demographics. Some interviewed officers from Oliver (2019) mention that BWC's could cause depolicing even though prior empirical findings indicate the opposite (Gonzales & Cochran, 2017; Grossmith et al., 2015; Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019; Peterson, Yu, La Vigne, & Lawrence, 2018; Wallace, et al. 2018). Since BWC's have become more popular in recent years, perhaps officer perceptions of the technology have changed. Future research could then compare depolicing scores among agencies who have implemented BWC's and those who have not. It would also be worth examining how the actual release of BWC recordings affect officer proactivity. BWC

recordings are typically not available or released to the public without the department's consent or are released based upon other specific circumstances of the incident itself.

Liability Concerns and Depolicing

Results from the current inquiry indicate support for a positive relationship between liability concerns and depolicing. This finding is also consistent prior empirical findings that indicate a positive relationship between liability concerns and depolicing (Kappeler, 1997; Oliver, 2019; Reynolds, et al. 2017; VanBlaricum, 2005).

Officers have previously discussed the risk of losing their job or receiving further consequences due to their actions with some officers questioning whether their department would support them if a liable situation would arise (Oliver, 2019; Reynolds, et al. 2017). This comes as less of a revelation given that some prior studies show officers believe lawsuits transpire despite their appropriate actions. For instance, Hughes (2001) found that 86.4 percent of sampled police officers believed that officers are sued even when they acted appropriately. This perceived risk of being held liable for actions deemed wrong causes a concern amongst officers. Further, these officers who worry about being held liable on duty perhaps look to other avenues to decrease this risk such as disengaging from proactive police work. As one officer from Oliver (2019) simply put, "no citizen contact, no citizen complaints" (p. 86). If officers withdraw from extra work, then they are less likely to be put into situations that would cause liability concerns.

Similar to the recommendation given for public scrutiny, there is not enough research to compare future research examining how liability concerns impact an officer's inclination to depolice. Again, future studies should control for department size, geographic region, and officer

characteristics. Another recommendation lies with the scale used to measure liability concerns. The scale used to measure liability concerns in the current inquiry consists of two items pertaining to lawsuits with another item focusing on liability insurance. Future research could examine these individually. In other words, there could be a difference in depolicing scores among those who are concerned about lawsuits and those that express apprehension towards purchasing liability insurance.

Physical Danger and Depolicing

Even though results from Table 13 show a significant relationship between physical danger and depolicing, this relationship was not in the anticipated direction. Those that perceived higher levels of physical danger were less likely to depolice. This was a surprising finding given that prior research shows officer concerns over their safety (Morin, et al. 2017) and qualitative findings, such as the ones in Oliver (2019), that suggest that it is a potential cause of depolicing.

There may be a simple explanation for the current inquiry's finding. If the officers who recognize higher levels of danger, are less likely to depolice perhaps it is their level of proactivity that causes them to perceive this danger. In other words, if an officer tries to stay proactive, is not hesitant to perform an arrest, or is not bothered by searching one's person or vehicle then it may be safe to assume they are most likely to perceive a higher danger. This could further be a demonstration of the law enforcement warrior mentality (Stoughton, 2014-2015). Officers who are more inclined to depolice perhaps view their careers as less physically dangerous due to their avoidance behavior putting them at less of a risk to their safety. Prior research was not far from identifying this relationship. Muir (1977) explains, those classified as avoiders often felt less inclined to engage in force usage. Therefore, they could potentially view their jobs as less of a risk to their physical well-being.

When further examining the relationship between physical danger and depolicing, future research should consider controlling for two different factors that could affect officer perceptions of danger. First, the crime rate within the city's jurisdiction could affect how an officer perceives the danger around them. The current study's sample was comprised of officers from four different agencies across four states. The crime rates for each of these areas are presumably different as well. If an officer belongs to an agency that patrols a neighborhood with a higher crime rate, then their outlook on danger may certainly be different than an officer who patrols a neighborhood with little to no crime. Second, police are often designated to different beats, which typically consists of a specific time and area where an officer patrols within their agency's jurisdiction. Depending on both the type of agency and its respective location, officers may cycle through different beats or consistently be assigned the same beat. What is important to consider in future research is that there could be different geographic, community, and crime rates among these beats. Therefore, an officer could perceive higher levels of danger in some beats compared to others.

Experience

Results from the model on Table 13 indicate that as years of experience increase, a respondent's estimated depolicing score also increases. This is not necessarily surprising given that prior findings examining this relationship between work motivation and age have been found to be negative (Bertolino, et al. 2011; Boumans, et al. 2011; Ilke, et al. 2012). Given that this relationship was found to be similar, perhaps the motivation to be proactive, conduct searches, and perform arrests decreases with the more years of experience due to there being a lack of benefit in engaging in these activities. When considering the other predictor variables in the current study, such as liability concerns, officers potentially weigh the risk versus the rewards

of their actions. Consequently, they could decide that being proactive is not essential in their daily work schedule as it brings unnecessary work for them. Future research should consider controlling for both work achievement and goal attainment.

Agency Location

An interesting finding from this study was that two of the agency variables (Topeka, KS and Vernon Hills, IL) were found to be significant positive estimators of depolicing while the variable, Smyrna, GA, was not. All four of the agencies within the sample serve populations of varying sizes. For instance, officers from the Vernon Hills Police Department only serve a community of approximately 26,000 people while officers from the Topeka Police Department serve a population of approximately 125,000. At face value population density does not inherently appear to be a factor in depolicing.

Though if the racial composition of the communities served is taken into consideration, different reasonings for officers who disengage could potentially be made. The U.S. Census Bureau publicly displays the estimated racial composition of these communities. It appears there are lower concentrations of racial minorities, specifically black and African Americans, in both the Vernon Hills and Topeka police departments, both of which were shown to be significant positive estimators of depolicing versus the other two agencies (Biloxi, MS and Smyrna, GA). For example, in Vernon Hills, IL only 2.7 percent of their population is black or African American. Similarly, in Topeka, KS, only 10.5 percent of their population is black or African American. The other two agencies had higher proportions of blacks and African Americans with the population Biloxi, MS consisting of 20.2 percent and Smyrna, GA consisting of 31.4 percent. Officers that served communities with lesser proportions of blacks and African Americans were more likely to depolice.

Prior research findings have long displayed racial disparities within the treatment of citizens by police (Kramer, et al. 2018; Roh & Robinson, 2009; Warren, et al. 2006). The collective sample comprised of only 161 officers coming from four different agencies which are also from four different states. Also, the sample only contained 22 coming from Vernon Hills and 19 from Smyrna, GA. Moreover, the depolicing model did not take into consideration specific population or geographical differences but rather focused on which agency the respondent was employed. The demographics of the community could potentially impact levels of depolicing. However, given the current inquiry's sample, it is a little bold to say that these agency differences in depolicing were due to community demographics, such as race. Given these reasons, future research should control for community demographics, both geographical area and region, both agency and population size.

Race

Another interesting finding was that being non-white significantly increased a respondent's estimated depolicing score. A potential explanation for such an occurrence could be that racial minorities are held at different standards by their peers and supervisors. Some portions of Reuss-Ianni's (1983) cop's code that are related to proactivity discusses how officers recommend others not to bring unnecessary attention to themselves and not to create too much productivity as supervisors will expect the same productive behavior from others. Additionally, prior findings highlight discrimination between law enforcement officers based upon the racial demographic (Bolton, 2003; Hassell, 2020). Given both aspects from Reuss-Ianni's (1983) cop's code and the discrimination, perhaps minorities feel less inclined to be proactive due to them feeling unaccepted by their peers or fear that it would cause a reason for mistreatment. Currently, there are not really any research studies that indicate that racial minorities are less proactive than

their white counterparts. Therefore, this explanation has little support. Also, the sample only contained 20 respondents that were coded as being non-white making the explanation for why non-whites are potentially more likely to depolice even more bold. However, future research may find consistent findings as the ones in this current study as well as for support of a reasoning as to why there are potential racial differences in depolicing behavior.

Observed Depolicing

The results of the second linear regression analysis were similar to the first. The same model was used for both analyses with the only difference being the dependent variable. Results indicated that perceiving more public scrutiny or having higher concerns over liability are significant predictors of recognizing other officer depolicing behavior. Other predictors of depolicing including organizational unfairness, burnout, physical danger, and covid-19 were shown not to be significant predictors of observing depolicing. This could perhaps be due to how the observed depolicing variable was computed. The items contained in the observed depolicing variable are more oriented towards public scrutiny and liability concerns with addition to protests. However, these results also suggest that officers who experience a specific type of predictor of depolicing are more likely to be able to recognize other officers who are experiencing it as well.

Although, it brings the question of whether these results are just department specific. Both Topeka, KS and Vernon Hills, IL variables were also shown to be statistically significant in both analyses. Perhaps the depolicing phenomenon exists when specific geographic or population criteria are present. Future research would have to further examine how much of an impact that these factors have on depolicing behavior.

Organizational Unfairness and Depolicing

Even though the bivariate analysis indicates a significant correlation between both variables, results from table 13 indicate a lack of support for the third hypothesis. The coefficient for this variable was not only insignificant but also had a small impact (-.060). This was a rather surprising finding given prior research indicates a link between organizational fairness and work motivation (Nix & Wolfe, 2015; Oliver, 2019; Reynolds, et al. 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Both Nix & Wolfe (2015) and Wolfe & Nix (2016) included similar control variables as the current study though they did not account for the other predictor variables used in the current study. This would explain why the relationship in the bivariate analysis was statistically significant and the relationship in the multivariate analysis was not. Given the current findings, organizational unfairness from supervisors may not have a significant impact on depolicing behaviors.

While the current study found the relationship between organizational unfairness and depolicing to be insignificant, it only examined the impact of supervisor treatment and not specifically from the respondent's peers. Additionally, approximately half of the sample were ranked at the patrol level. If mistreatment from peers was examined exclusively among officers ranked at the patrol level, perhaps different results would transpire. Therefore, future research could further examine how fairness among peers affects depolicing behaviors.

Burnout and Depolicing

Contrary to prior research that highlights significant findings between burnout and depolicing behaviors (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Goodman, 1990; Martinussen, et al. 2007), the results from both bivariate and multivariate analyses indicate that there is not a significant relationship between burnout and depolicing. The current findings do not dispute the

psychological toll that a career in law enforcement can have on an individual but rather that experiencing burnout does not necessarily have a significant impact on officer proactivity. This means that there may be a fine line between mental health and work productivity. As Bakker, et al. (2014) suggests, due to burnout affecting one's health and work engagement being related to one's motivation the relationship between burnout and disengagement may be more independent of one another.

A police officer's schedule should be something to consider when further examining burnout and depolicing. The current study only accounted for whether the respondent worked during a day shift or not. No other variables pertaining to the respondent's schedule were included. Therefore, future research should control for overtime, average number of weekly hours, and various types of shift schedules. Additionally, more indicators of burnout should be considered when further examining this relationship. Maslach et al. (2001) recognized six primary causes for burnout including excessive workloads, little control over the ability to complete their work, lack of rewards, loss of connection to a workplace community, perceived unfairness, and conflict of values between employee and employer. That is why future studies should consider including various signs of burnout in their analyses.

Covid-19 and Depolicing

Despite there being a positive correlation between covid-19 and depolicing in the bivariate analysis, the relationship was not significant when other variables were held constant. Table 13 shows not only that this predictor was insignificant but also that it had little impact on depolicing. Given the timing of both this study and the recent pandemic, there has not really been any currently available research on the relationship between covid-19 and depolicing. Due to the risk of health safety, many individuals had to leave their places of employment, work remotely,

or find other avenues for profit. First responders, such as police officers, however, could not do this. Even during the pandemic, the country obviously needed law enforcement to keep conducting their daily duties. Prior survey data shows that law enforcement practices would be changing due to the pandemic (Lum, et al. 2020). Even websites such as “Police 1” recommended the reduction of proactivity (Buhilis, 2020). Though given the current finding, Covid-19 does not indicate to be a significant estimator of depolicing. This could potentially suggest that police officers do not worry about the covid-19 risk enough that it affects their proactivity. This finding is perhaps a demonstration of the lack of concerns that police overall have of Covid-19 given that recent data indicates low vaccination rates among law enforcement officers (Sanchez, Tucker, & Simko-Bednarski, 2021; Spiegelman, 2021)

It is difficult to recommend the direction for future research that examines the relationship between Covid-19 and depolicing. While the risk of contracting Covid-19 is still apparent, as of July 6th, over 157,000,000 people have been fully vaccinated for Covid-19. With more and more individuals becoming vaccinated it is presumably safe to say that the risk of contracting such an illness is reducing. The opportunities to examine how Covid-19 impacts an officer’s inclination to depolice are slowly becoming less available. However, instead, future research could examine whether health hazards in general impact cause officers to disengage from proactive police work.

Limitations

Many of the limitations of this study derive from sample itself. The survey data was retrieved during the Covid-19 pandemic. Originally, surveys were to exclusively be administered in person. However, the pandemic created an environment where it was difficult to retrieve the data. This essentially caused the data to become convenience sampled. Consequently, there are

not a lot of similarities between the included agencies. Further, two of the agencies had low survey responses (Smyrna, GA and Vernon Hills, IL) that added to the collective sample. Also, given that the sample is only comprised of 161 officers, various control variables had low frequencies of some groups. For instance, there were only 20 females and 20 non-white officers. This was not a surprise given the law enforcement is predominantly comprised of white males. A much larger randomized sample that consists of officers from similar agencies would help alleviate some of the limitations caused from sampling.

Policy Implications

The phenomenon is perceived by many, especially police officers, as something negative with some considering it to be bad police practice and should be punished (Oliver, 2019). Perhaps the solution to handling such behavior from officers lies with those that supervise them. Oliver (2019) recognized that many of the police officers in his sample both blamed supervisors and believed that they could be the solution. Oliver (2019) mentioned, “The majority of officers believed that supervisors should monitor officers for depolicing behaviors and, when they are present, talk to the officers, informally counsel them, and work toward motivating them to return to good policing behaviors” (p. 160). Rather than punishing officers, perhaps policies could potentially be shifted towards helping these officers. If supervisors react in a positive fashion to those they perceive to be depolicing perhaps it could even further demonstrate departmental support and raise morale.

There could be potential consequences of depolicing. For instance, depending on the type of disengagement, the behavior could affect police legitimacy or overall job performance. One interviewed officer from Oliver (2019) mentioned that depolicing “degrades not just interactions with the public but also overall job performance” (p. 92). Moreover, if some officers try their

best to avoid calls of service, then potentially it causes a higher workload for other officers. If agencies are worried about consequences caused from depolicing behaviors such as these then they could implement more supervision focused policies. Koper, Lum, & Wu (2020) mention that many agencies do not have a consistent method of keeping track of police officers.

However, with technological advancements in prior years, policing has become less of a low visibility job (Chan, 2001; Koper, Lum, & Willis, 2014). If agencies utilize new and different types of technology, perhaps keeping track of patrol officers would not be difficult.

Despite the concerns regarding the consequences of depolicing and the common view of the phenomenon being seen as negative (Lind, 2016; MacDonald, 2016; Oliver, 2019), there could be some benefit to depolicing worth noting. One interviewed officer from Oliver (2019) said, “I think what is called depolicing today is what was responsible for improved relations with the minority communities. Instead of being proactive, we became more reactive and pretty much left them alone. I think they liked being left alone” (p. 78). This quote suggests that there is a potential benefit of disengaging importance. Perhaps if departmental policies shift towards being more reactive than proactive, community relations with the police will improve.

Future Research

Future research may find further support of both the existence of depolicing and the significant reasonings as to why such behavior occurs. Aside from the recommendations for future previously mentioned, there are other avenues that future research should take. First, prior research indicates that supervisor treatment does have an impact on officer behavior (Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Oliver, 2019; Reynolds et al. 2017; Wolfe & Nix, 2015) and highlights non-white officer experiences of mistreatment (Bolton, 2003; Dowler, 2005; Hassell, 2020). The current inquiry found that being non-white was a positive estimate for depolicing but organizational

unfairness from supervisors was not. Perhaps future studies could create an interaction item to examine whether there are racial differences in depolicing among officers who experience mistreatment. Second, previous typology research hints at a potential relationship between personality differences and depolicing behavior (Muir, 1977; Paoline, 2001). An examination of personality characteristics could potentially provide significant findings of depolicing. Third, the current study found significant differences in depolicing levels among the sampled agencies. This means that community demographics and agency characteristics could potentially impact officer inclination to depolice. This study included four different agencies from four different states. Future studies should examine this behavior with using more randomized sampling methods preferably with agencies that share similar characteristics.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

The current inquiry is one of the first among early studies that has broadly examined depolicing. This is because few studies have tried to quantify the relationship between multiple predictors of depolicing and proactive behavior. The current findings indicate that officers who experience perceived public scrutiny and concerns over liability are more inclined to depolice. Further, it was shown that these officers are also able to recognize similar experiences with others. In other words, depolicing appears to significantly exist more due to community and external factors rather than supervisory or individual factors. This is not to say that the other predictors of depolicing within this sample are not valid. In fact, there could be many potential legitimate reasons for such behavior that have not been examined yet. Given the limitations of the current study, the results are beneficial but only to a certain degree. Further examinations of depolicing will provide more support as to why officers disengage from proactive police work.

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