



The Ferguson effect is the idea that increased scrutiny of police following the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., has led to an increased crime rate (or sometimes increased murder rate) in major U.S. cities.

I'm taking on a controversial topic this month. Fact or fiction: Is the "Ferguson effect" a reality within law enforcement, and is it impacting the Los Angeles Police Department in any measurable way?

I want to preface this first by saying I've always believed in the unity and strength of *BLUE*. While I recognize and am sensitive to history, I have always focused on the present and how we all conduct ourselves in the here and now. I have personally prided myself in caring for *BLUE* no matter what your ethnicity or gender is. I believe my past partners will attest to this. To be blunt, when we all put on our uniform, we have a job to do, and I have always counted on my brothers and sisters in blue to ensure I get home safely to my family. I don't think I'm alone feeling this way.

Let's openly dig into this controversial subject.

A recent *New York Post* article (<http://nypost.com/2017/01/11/survey-shows-ferguson-effect-ishing-a-real-impact-on-policing/>) highlighted a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, which questioned at least 8,000 officers from law enforcement agencies. Here are some of its findings:

- 86 percent of officers said that fatal encounters between blacks and police have made policing more difficult.
- 93 percent said they're more concerned about safety.
- 76 percent said they're more reluctant to use force when appropriate.
- 75 percent said interactions between police and blacks have become more tense.
- 72 percent said they or their colleagues are more reluctant to stop and question people who seem suspicious.

### **Police and the public: A significant difference of opinion**

Perhaps the most significant contrast between public opinion and the opinions of participating officers is this: two-thirds of the officers perceive that the fatal police shootings that prompted

demonstrations are isolated incidents—but quite oppositely, 60 percent of American adults believe these same incidents “are symptoms of a deeper problem” according to a separate Pew Research Center survey (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/01/11/behind-the-badge/>).

### **Fewer black officers describe relations with black citizens as ‘good’**

The survey also reveals significant differences among officers according to race. For example, 60 percent of white and Hispanic officers said police relations with blacks are “good” or “excellent.”

However, the survey indicates that most black officers think otherwise: Only 32 percent of black officers reported that police relations with black citizens are “good” or “excellent.”

### **Overall, use-of-force policies are ‘about right’**

The survey also indicates that 73 percent of the police officers who took part in the survey believe the use of force policies of their department are “about right.” Approximately 26 percent said their department’s policies regarding use of force were “too restrictive.” Only 1 percent said their department’s use of force guidelines were “not restrictive enough.”

What does this national dialogue propagate within law enforcement? In one word, it breeds *apathy*. Why would anyone actively seek to lose their livelihood? This subject matter isn’t an old one. It’s always percolating under the surface, and all of law enforcement has been required to adapt, especially administratively, to survive. The rules have indeed changed, and they continue to change right before our eyes.

### **What can we do?**

*SLOW DOWN!* Before the powers that be read this and think I am advocating for a work slowdown ... I am not. Let me be clear, what I am saying is we are all held to a standard—a standard that is written in our policy manual and various ever changing special order directives. Follow them methodically! These policies are what you will be held to when or if the proverbial s#@\* hits the fan. In many instances, when you’re forced to react within split seconds, your actions will be meticulously dissected, and you are administratively and sometimes criminally held accountable—all for doing a job to the best of your ability in sometimes the most hostile and inhospitable conditions. *TIME* in most instances is your friend. Take your time, talk with your partners *BEFORE* you leave your station parking lot. Formulate a plan. Who’s contact, who’s cover officer? Where are your backups located if all goes sideways? Do you have all available equipment? Slow down!

### **Learn to write and verbally articulate better!**

I can’t emphasize this enough, and this needs to be a priority. The days of copying and pasting the body of an arrest report are over, especially with digital in-car and body-worn videos. While it would be nice to just write, “see recording or video footage” on our reports, that is not our reality. Written reports will be compared to video footage. Know our Use of Force Policy inside and out, study it and be able to articulate your thoughts both verbally and in writing better. Practice!

## **Seek out and listen to tenure!**

Some of you read this and immediately discarded the advice, but I'm very serious when I say we have a lot of very knowledgeable experience within this Department. Many know more than you do simply because of their own personal training and through trial and error. Seek out officers who have weathered their own storms with the ebb and flow and pendulum swings of our Department, and learn from them. Never stop educating yourself!

## **Recognize that people count on you!**

While I personally believe the Ferguson effect is real, I do not believe it is impactful in the vast majority of contacts we have with the public. Most people are respectful and actually like the police. We all truly reap what we sow. Never forget why we became police officers. Our job is to help.

When I say people count on us, I also mean our partners, subordinates and bosses. We need to make it a priority to actually take better care of each other. I've often given pause to the fact that we are all in the "people business," but some of the very people we work with cause us the most grief. Remember, this is only a job. Caring for your loved ones and partners should always be our priority. Effort should be made every day *by each of us* to create a work environment that we look forward to coming to. If we don't, who will?

In closing, this vocation that we've all chosen is a marathon and not a sprint. I personally love blue. That may sound corny, but I don't care. I really care about each and every one of you deeply. Recognizing that the rules consistently evolve and can be interpreted in different ways depending on the political climate we find ourselves in is imperative. Will the pendulum swing back in our direction? I really don't know. I hope so, but in the interim, please heed some of the advice that has been passed down to me over the years. I am here to help and intend on leaving this place better than I found it, no matter what political winds blow our way. Be safe out there. I can be reached 24/7 via email at [MarkCronin@lappl.org](mailto:MarkCronin@lappl.org) or on my cell at (661) 510-6129.