

The case for 'outrage' as an element of social media-generated police scandal involving police excessive force

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Four dimensional model - Mawby 2017

Transgression

'breach of trust by an individual or organization invested with authority'

Publicisation

'the transgression becomes known in the public sphere'

Response(s)

'Involved parties, community and pressure groups, elected representatives and commentators make their voices heard through local and national news channels and, social media and direct action'

Judgement(s)

'consequences for reputations, relationships of trust and confidence, and future policy and legislation'

Sherman (1978) – outrage 1/3

'Societal reaction of intense outrage and anger' beyond 'mere disapproval'

Responses

Emotion

R1: ‘You could hear people gasping and then saying to the police “What are you doing?” You could hear all that and it’s like you were standing there in the moment, whereas for me the mainstream media were there with a purpose to report on the event, not necessarily these bits and pieces of the more personal human nature of what’s going on within the event.’ (R1 NSWPF Superintendent)

R1: ‘...people actually approached me in the street after 2013 and were quite aggressive, which is a little bit unusual for people to be aggressive towards police and no substance abuse, nothing like that motivating that behaviour, but such was the depth of feeling after 2013.’ (R1 NSWPF Superintendent)

Velocity and unpredictability

R18: ‘I was coming home from a function, getting phone calls, “We’re doing this. We’re locking down comments on these Facebook pages. There’s this video that’s up on YouTube, it shows an officer behaving badly. We’re going to have to take some action”. So quickly we put some media things in place, got some comments about the actions we were taking, how we viewed it, that we were taking it very seriously and all of that. We didn’t quite know where it was going to go, but clearly there was a very vivid video that didn’t take too much interpretation’. (R18 NSW Police Force Public Affairs)

R25: ‘There were protests in the street about the social media presence of the police in that situation and I remember seeing that quite early. It went viral and I would have seen it within the first 20 minutes of it going up. I remember the outrage around that type of situation.’ (R25 LGBTQ Community Commercial NGO)

Responses

Accountability

R26: ‘Because of this big public furore, fuelled by social media, they flipped and while they were saying, “We can’t act unless there’s a complaint put in,” they then launched their own complaint mechanism, which I thought was interesting’ (R26 Complainant)’

R32: ‘My recollections are that really the police, in endeavouring to continue with the prosecution of the kid and to defend their own position was really sort of legally insane in a sense, because it just flew prodigiously in the face of the YouTube evidence that everyone had already seen and it appeared pretty clear that he was not the aggressor, that the police were the aggressors...’ (R32 MSM Journalist)

Three dimensional model - Sherman 1978

'Societal reaction of intense outrage and anger' beyond 'mere disapproval'

'A social reaction to deviance committed by an occupant of a role invested with social trust'

'Deviance subject to a scandalized social reaction is usually a surprise to the group reacting to the deviance (**the police in this case**)'

Responses – surprise to the group reacting to the deviance

R1: ‘I can remember going to a Town Hall meeting of a whole heap of people after 2013 Mardi Gras and there was a whole heap of questions asked of all different groups around and one of the questions was where would you rate the importance of your relationship with the police? Which I found remarkable because put it in any other setting and how many other community groups would be asked that question in the first place, but they were. And out of the probably, there would’ve been possibly 15 or 20 tables there, there would’ve been at least 10 out of that 15 that placed the relationship with the police at number 1 or 2.’ (R1 NSWPF Superintendent)

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