



# ROLL CALL

A Leadership and Ethics Publication

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## **The Murder of Tyre Nichols: Rooted in Racism or Law Enforcement Malpractice?**

### **A Point-Counterpoint from a Law Enforcement Educator and a Racial Justice Advocate**

By Gregory Smith & Patty Bates-Ballard

#### **Introduction**

As we express deep condolences to the family of Tyre Nichols, an unarmed Black man beaten to death January 7, 2023, by five Memphis police officers, we also must address the persistent problem of the disproportionate number of Black people who are killed by law enforcement. The majority of Black people killed in encounters with law enforcement officers are killed by White officers. The racial implications here are clear. But now, many in the public are questioning and processing how racism could have played a part in the death of Tyre Nichols, because the five officers charged in the death are Black. Is the root cause of his death racism or a failure of proper oversight and supervision?

#### **POINT: Gregory Smith**

I view the killing of Tyre Nichols through two prisms: 1) That of a 25-year veteran law enforcement instructor who specializes in Ethics and Ethical Decision Making, and 2) that of a 60-year-old African American man who has experienced my share of overt bigotry and microaggressions. I see law enforcement malpractice at the core of this terrible event.

The attack on Trye Nichols by five Memphis Police officers makes me cringe as a law enforcement official, as a Black man, and more importantly as a human being. The behaviors of these now former officers are simply outside the bounds of any definition of constitutional policing, which is focused on upholding the civil rights of all Americans and ensuring they are treated with fairness and dignity. In the behavior of these officers, do you see any form of constitutional policing? Any values-based decision making? Any respect for department policy, procedures, or codes of conduct? Any respect for humanity?

Tyre Nichols is, according to Thomas Jefferson, a person endowed by his creator with inalienable rights. Whether or not those five former officers saw this, they did not respect it. What drives human beings to defile one another like that? At this point, I expect many to say that police officers have a tough job. They see the worst of society. They must be social workers and psychologists. They must be athletes. They must be able to take on violence and win. I don't disagree. However, none of that is an excuse.

These members of the SCORPION Unit, a unit formed to target high crime environments, did not develop a disregard for humanity overnight. This

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## Pros and Cons of Citizen Review Boards

By Dr. Stacey White

In the times of anti-police sentiment across the United States, a phenomenon began to appear; local governments are considering a viable answer to citizen complaints, and that phenomenon is the CRB, or Citizen Review Boards. While many support the idea, it can be said that if that support is given without first educating oneself about the topic only sets up a scenario for failure. That is not to say that CRBs are void of viability, only if one is established prematurely. Without adequate procedures, it can lead to injustice and an erosion of the needed relationship between the police department and the community they serve.

The concept of CRBs is not a new one if you compare the civilian oversight of the military. A civilian authority has reviewed the military's operations or a paramilitary organization like police departments since the birth of our nation. When an incident in the military needed to be reviewed, it was done by civilian oversight. So, to claim that the CRB is a new idea would be a little misleading. The military comparison clearly shows that citizens have been in charge nearly since the formation of the United States. Still, in the case of oversight of police departments, CRBs have existed from around the 1950s to the 1970s. The discussion in this article will focus on the contemporary use of CRBs to oversee the actions of modern law enforcement. So, it is there that we begin talking about the pros, cons, dos, and don'ts of an efficient CRB.

First, we talk about the pros of a CRB. The police culture in the United States has a warrior mindset. Even more significantly in Post 9/11 America, where thanks to actions like the Patriot Act, the

mission of the police officer has changed to a more militant version that provides a deterrent to terrorists, or at the very least an intelligence gathering subdivision of the federal intelligence agencies.

The allegation that police departments go relatively unchecked today is a false allegation. The assertion that more oversight would be a viable argument in some areas where police departments are plagued with misconduct is partially valid. To know whether a CRB would be effective for a police department would rest on the quantitative and qualitative data collected about police misconduct at a specific agency. Yes, there is an argument that some police departments paint a different picture by manipulating the data to show lower numbers of wrongdoing in their ranks, but that is not what drives the support of a CRB. A cooperative agreement between the police and the citizens they are sworn to protect drives the approval of a CRB. At some point, the two of them must come to a consensus that there are viable reasons to have a CRB or some entity convened to review complaints made against the police and at least send back a recommendation for action based upon the facts presented to them without bias.

Probably one of the most significant pros to a CRB is that it keeps the honest police officers honest and serves as a deterrent to those that barely "toe the line" in their daily duties. In providing an extra set of eyes to complaints, what could it hurt, one may ask? For the typical person, there are no negatives to the idea. Still, to the police officers, the idea of having untrained citizens judge the complaints against police officers is an uneasy idea that creates an environment that would make it challenging to work. It is here where the procedures for a CRB must be solidly established that nobody on a CRB may serve unless they are duly qualified to do so (Friedman & Clark, 2021). One would ask what makes a person qualified, most especially the administration of the police department and the union that represents the officers. The qualifications of persons on a CRB are something to be discussed later.

Another pro to CRBs is the perceived transparency that a properly functioning committee would present to the people. Not much different than an elected official to a specific ward of the city, a CRB member provides some oversight that the citizens can hope is ethical and harmonic with the highest

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**"Do not follow  
where the path  
may lead. Go  
instead where  
there is no path  
and leave a  
trail."**

**Ralph Waldo  
Emerson**



*Class photo of participants in the 133rd School of Police Supervision held June 2-29, 2021.*

## Report Writing in Law Enforcement: Competence, Contributing Factors, and Improvement Strategies

By Dr. Richard Odin Segovia, Jr.

### Abstract

Fact gathering and evidence collection are the bedrocks of police investigations, and an officer's written report is the method by which officer memorializes their activity. Law enforcement reports have tremendous weight, and poor writing can lead to risks, such as reputational, which might affect promotional opportunities and allow crime suspects to go free. Although police trainers endeavor to promote the importance of report writing through practice and preaching, some officers still find themselves ill-equipped to produce a competent and polished written product that not only captures the facts but is easily consumable by its intended reader. This body of work will discuss micro-and macro-level factors that might contribute to an officer's writing proficiency and considerations that might help officers improve their writing skills and the impact of their reports.

**Key Words:** writing, police reports, curriculum, culture, law enforcement

### Overview

According to Xu, Chau, & Chen (n.d.), police reports usually contain errors in spelling, grammar, as well as typographical issues and are considered "noisy" in terms of information consumption. Moreover, it appears that the writing level of some officers is not commensurate with the tremendous weight of a report they might write. It also appears that some in the law enforcement community have not fully embraced the importance of professional writing. This paper will discuss micro-and macro-level factors that might contribute to an officer's writing proficiency and considerations that might help officers improve their writing skills and the impact of their reports.

### Introduction

Law enforcement officers with years doing police work under their [gun] belts can agree that there are few truths regarding police work. One such truth is that police officers desire to help others. Another truth is that every day and every shift is different. Another is that some officers view report writing as a tangential and annoying part of the job. However, writing is vital and regularly used to achieve an objective and affect an outcome (Graham, Gillespie &

McKeown, 2013). The scope of this paper's work will include the potential impact of substandard law enforcement reports and Engstrom's (1987) activity systems theory. Engstrom theorizes how a wide range of factors, primarily the interconnection of subjects and objects, working collaboratively impacts activity. This subject-object connectivity might be related to factors that contribute to writing proficiency. The body of work will include a cursory review of the literature related to writing and writing development; key terms essential to the study; and potential gaps that will support the need for further research.

### Key Terms

**Freedom of Information Act** established public access to government information. The vast bulk of information controlled by the federal government was made available under the Act, but certain exceptions still apply (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

**In-service training** is mandatory training for law enforcement officers. Police agencies offer monthly, semi-annual, and annual training.

**Law enforcement officer** is an employee of a local law enforcement agency who is an officer sworn to carry out law enforcement duties. This class includes sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, chiefs of police, city police officers, and sworn personnel of law enforcement subunits of port and transit authorities. For national-level general data, this class includes campus police officers employed by local city and community college districts (bjs.gov, n.d.).

**Miranda v. Arizona** in United States case law, 384 U.S. 436 (1966), in which Ernesto Miranda was convicted on serious charges after signing a confession without first being told his rights. The U.S. Supreme Court held that the prosecution could not use his statements because the police did not comply with Miranda's Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

**Police academy** is where law enforcement officers receive basic police training in areas such as criminal law, juvenile law, criminal investigations, firearms, driving, first aid, and report writing, to name a few.

**RAND Corporation** is a publicly and privately funded research organization that conducts research in the effort to develop solutions to public policy challenges (rand.org, n.d.).

**"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower."**

**Steve Jobs**

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*134th School of Police Supervision participants graduated on October 29, 2021.*

### **Ethical Culture Analysis of Police Departments Relative to Body-worn Cameras**

By R. Thomas Collins II, MD,<sup>1,2</sup> Matthew W. Hall,<sup>2</sup> Heidi N. Leslie,<sup>2</sup> Audrey A. Sutton,<sup>2</sup> Devin H. Merrick,<sup>2</sup> Kenneth R. Williams, PhD<sup>2</sup>

#### **Abstract**

In recent years, the nature of policing in the United States has been increasingly questioned, with some calling for the defunding and dismantling of police forces. Body-worn cameras have been advocated as a means of intervening in what has increasingly become viewed as a crisis for policing. This paper examines the ethical issues involved with the use of body-worn cameras; provides a force field analysis of the major issues at play; and uses Kotter's eight-stage change process to outline a process for successful institution of body-worn cameras among skeptical communities and police departments.

#### **Introduction**

Since the first public police force was established in 1838, the role of the police has been "to protect and serve" (Waxman, 2017). In recent decades, the legitimacy of this stated mission has been increasingly questioned, as repeated, highly publicized cases of police officers harming citizens have been documented across the country. Further, those events seem to involve disproportionate numbers of Black citizens. These ongoing events have led to calls for police reform for decades, even to the point of some cities dismantling their police force (Chang, 2012). With the May 25, 2020, murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, the issue has exploded into the public consciousness with "calls to reform, defund, dismantle, and abolish the police" (Kessler, 2020). This represents a crisis for U.S. police forces, one created principally by the ethical chasm between the mission of protection and service and the reali-

ty of police officers harming the citizenry. In searching for means to solve this crisis, many have identified police body-worn cameras (BWCs) as a tool that reduces the use of police force (Southall, 2020; Williams, 2021).

In this paper, as they pertain to the employment of BWCs, we analyze the ideal and actual cultures of police departments, the driving and constraining forces to implementation of their use, and a staged process for successful implementation. We will do this, in part, by using the Charleston Police Department (CPD) as an example.

### **The Stated (Ideal) Culture of Police Departments**

A police department is, fundamentally, a group of people, and when people are organized in groups, "they develop their own language, stories, beliefs, assumptions, ceremonies, and power structures"—their own culture (Johnson, 2021, p. 322). Organizations often have their stated culture—an ideal future state—and their actual culture, which is their current state. The distance between the ideal and actual cultures is the organization's room for growth. Being highly structured organizations, police departments have both stated and actual cultures.

The ideal culture for essentially all U.S. police departments will likely have many of the same elements. These cultural elements include a unifying vision and mission grounded in service to the community; elements that establish a common language, assumptions, and beliefs of the organization (Johnson, 2021). The CPD exemplifies a large police organization with a well-delineated, stated culture, one described in its mission, vision, and values.

The mission of the CPD contains five major components: 1) "to serve all people within (their) juris-



*Class photo of participants in the 135th School of Police Supervision participants held January 31-February 25, 2022.*

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**"Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."**

**Jack Welch**

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unit was given a mission to fight violent crime and used methods of questionable constitutionality commonly used by these “elite” units. Police officers in these environments can come to believe they need to use an overpowering strength of response, focusing on the threat an individual poses to the point that it can obscure their humanity. Over time, because the unit was producing desired results, it appears a culture of entitlement and relaxed oversight developed.

When the investigation of this incident concludes, I am confident it will show a lack of effective supervision on several levels. I am confident it will reveal reports were falsified, previous complaints were ignored, and a culture of misplaced loyalty was allowed to run unchecked in this unit. The first line supervisor’s role is to carry out the intent of the chief executive and hold officers accountable to their oaths of office. The first line supervisor is the third line of defense in ensuring that men and women who put on that badge retain the public trust. When the first line of defense (self-accountability) and the second line of defense (peer group management) fail; the sergeant must reorient the ship. I am not confident that happened in this unit. I also question whether upper levels of the chain of command were checking to ensure this specialized unit was operating with acceptable norms. Unfortunately, Mr. Nichols had to die before accountability was effectively restored.

Even without all the inside facts of this case, I do not believe specific or systemic racism must be presumed in Mr. Nichols’ death. While many on the right say this case is evidence that systemic racism does not exist because the primary officers involved are Black, on the other hand, many on the left believe this case reveals evidence of systemic racism because the officers are Black. I disagree with both arguments. I see a unit assigned to deal with “the worst of the worst” being allowed to operate with impunity, and at some point, everyone began to look like the worst.

Without proper monitoring, this psychology continued to grow. Coupled with the power these men enjoyed, they apparently felt they were above the law and could do anything. It is that arrogance that eventually took the life of Tyre Nichols and destroyed their own lives as well.

As leaders, we must adhere to an ethic of care that requires us to monitor the mental health of those in our charge. Even if someone is very good at what they do, doing that job for an extended period may not be good for them or the department. When we identify cracks in their performance, such as reports of misconduct, ethics of care require that we move them out of their assignment. The only way to stay on top of these issues is effective leadership, accountability, and supervision.

#### **COUNTERPOINT: Patty Bates-Ballard**

As a White mother of two bi-racial sons and as an advocate for racial healing and justice, I believe the death of Tyre Nichols reveals a lack of supervision superimposed over a systemic disregard for the dignity of Black people. While there are plenty of facts and data to support my belief, I’ll begin with a difficult but necessary question. How many of us can say definitively, throughout our lives, that we have treated African American people with the same level of dignity and respect as we’ve treated White people? This question requires no quick answer, but honest introspection.

The Memphis Chief of Police and others have claimed that [race is not an issue](#) in the case of Tyre Nichols because the officers who beat him to death are Black. That’s a simplistic way to avoid a deeper, more difficult truth. To understand the role of race in cases of police abuse of power, multiple peer-reviewed medical studies set aside the race of the officers and [focused on the victims](#). That methodology has identified patterns that point to [systemic racism](#) in policing: between 2015-2020, police killed [unarmed Black people](#) at 310% and unarmed Latino people at 145% the rate they killed unarmed White people.



*Graduates of the 59th School of Executive Leadership held March 7-April 29, 2022.*

**“Outstanding leaders go out of the way to boost the self esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it’s amazing what they can accomplish.”**

**Sam Walton**

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oversight standards. To ensure that is the case, conducting a program evaluation of the procedure would be necessary before any claims are reviewed. In most cases, attorneys for the city and the police unions would do this (Hudson, 2015).

One of the most important pros of a CRB is to support the internal affairs process of investigating allegations of wrongdoing by the police. Suppose an internal affairs investigation has been completed and sent to the CRB, or the case is sent to the CRB to recommend an internal affairs investigation. In that case, it solidifies the purpose of procedures that ensure complaints do not go unanswered. An extra measure of ethical evaluation of a case should not be argued as an unfair labor practice, or the CRB used as a tool to appease a political agenda.

Any CRB established without an effective policy is doomed to failure and may create an undue expense on a city by legal and arbitration costs alone (Ofer, 2015). Procedures must be agreed upon by all parties to ensure that the protocols of the CRB are in keeping with the highest standards for employee rights (Holliday & Wagstaff, 2022). Another con to the CRB that is also procedural is the persons assigned to sit on a CRB, a person who should not have any conflicts of interest, like that of a convicted felon. Once all members of a CRB are vetted to serve on a panel, they should then have to attend a Citizen's Academy, where they would learn basic police standards and tactics.

In closing, the concept of a CRB is not a new one. Still, the environment of America today and the use of a CRB as part of the resolution is somewhat different given that the evidence today is more advanced, evidence from body-worn cameras and dash cameras, an article topic for a later date.

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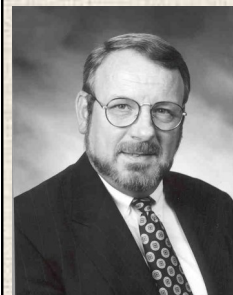
*Chief Stacey White is a career law enforcement official who has dedicated 30 years of his life to the service of the people of the United States, and his home state of Oklahoma. Chief White believes in improving the criminal justice profession through enforcement of ethical standards and improvement of the standards of training which law enforcement officers receive today.*

**"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."**

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

### GARY W. SYKES AWARD



ILEA is continually accepting nominations for the Gary W. Sykes Award for Professional Achievement in Law Enforcement and the Ethical Courage Award.

Criteria: Recipient must be a criminal justice professional for at least 10 years, has been instrumental in bringing about significant organizational change for the good of the profession; is significantly involved in community service and civic activities; and is a role model to law enforcement officers, support personnel, criminal justice professionals, and citizens.

### ETHICAL COURAGE AWARD

Given each year since 1998, this award is intended to recognize an individual or an organization for especially meritorious leadership or courage related to law enforcement ethics and integrity.

This award is given during the Contemporary Issues and Ethics Conference.

**Please forward all nominations and questions to [gsmith@cailaw.org](mailto:gsmith@cailaw.org).**

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Most police officers are committed to constitutional policing, and yet our nation has a history of police violence, largely perpetrated against people of color, sanctioned by systemic lack of accountability. [Philadelphia](#) and [Chicago](#) are just two prime examples of this troubling pattern. If the goal is for communities of color to work with and support law enforcement, this disparity cannot be ignored.

The practice of treating [African American people with less dignity](#)—in other words, racism—is not restricted to law enforcement. Law enforcement is one of many systems in our country operating under the same historic premise that White people are of higher value than Black people. Consider the well documented pattern of appraising homes at higher values when [all evidence of Black ownership has been removed](#), or the overrepresentation in the media of [White women who are missing](#) compared to missing women of color. Yet racism in law enforcement deserves heightened attention because officers have the authority to [use force](#), [restrain freedom](#), and [even take life](#). By most accounts, Tyre Nichols was a beautiful soul who [brought joy](#) to those who loved him. And now, whatever more he had to give to the world is lost.

Many have asked whether the Memphis officers would have beaten a White man to death. I wonder what they would have done if a White man had stepped up to stand beside Tyre. A month after his fatal beating, White neighbors of a young, unarmed Black man in Seattle did just that. They [stepped between their Black neighbor and police](#) officers who were pointing guns and shouting orders at him. Instantly, the situation deescalated, and the officers left the scene.

This story, along with the studies, bear out the difficult truth that our nation has not recovered from its atrocious tradition of [devaluing people of African heritage](#)—originally devised to justify slavery, and handed down [more and more subtly](#) from each generation of White families to the next ever since. This practice is so [pervasive and insidious](#) that it can cause Black people to unconsciously [internalize societal biases](#) against their own group.

Even so, violence against African Americans by [African American officers](#) is not nearly as common as violence by White officers. In fact, relative to White

officers, African American and Latino officers [make far fewer stops and arrests](#), and they use force less often, especially against Black civilians, and especially in large majority-Black areas. Yes, Black and Latino police officers want to go home after work each day, and yet most seem to be able to do so while valuing the lives of people who look like them.

The same racial pattern seen nationally is evident in Memphis. In the past seven years, Black residents across Memphis were [three times as likely](#) as White residents to be subjected to physical force by police officers, according to department data. News outlets now are reporting the stories of other [African American residents](#) of Memphis who say [they have been treated violently](#) by [members of the SCORPION unit](#). Yet these complaints seem to have been overshadowed by [accolades](#) for the SCORPION unit's results.

These complaints beg the question, if Tyre Nichols had not died, would we be having this conversation? Would these officers have been charged with a crime or even disciplined? Not likely. [Historically, law enforcement officers rarely have been disciplined](#) for beating up people who survive. Why? It appears the Memphis officers issued their barrage of commands for the body camera microphones while obscuring the camera lens to support the false reports [they planned in advance to file](#). A former officer who admits having coached officers how to write false reports says [this practice is systemic in policing](#). The officers apparently didn't consider [there could be other cameras recording](#).

With African Americans representing just 14% and Latinos representing 19% of the U.S. population, some try to obscure the documented racialized pattern in policing by disingenuously [comparing raw numbers](#). Others argue that the disparities make sense because there are higher crime rates in Black neighborhoods. Yet research shows African American men and women are more likely to be arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes than White people [who commit the same crimes](#).

Because human behavior is informed by thoughts, our broken system will only be repaired when leadership doesn't just pay lip service to the equal value of all lives, but prioritizes personal examination of blind spots, recognition of unconscious thoughts that devalue people because of their racial or other

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**"Of all the things I have done, the most vital is coordinating those who work with me and aiming their efforts at a certain goal."**

**Walt Disney**

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identities, and intentional replacement of those thoughts with high value for those lives. When leadership consistently models, teaches, and holds employees accountable, supervisors won't have to repeatedly remind officers that they, as a [University of Memphis student said](#) recently, "can't snatch a man out of a car and beat him brutally."

What would change in policing and in our world if law enforcement culture held every public servant accountable for demonstrably valuing the lives of Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian people as highly as we expect them to value the lives of White people? How many more crimes could we solve? How much more collaboration could there be between law enforcement and communities? How much more of the police budget could go to officer pay? How many more children would still have their parents? How many more parents would still have their children? And how many more people could fulfill their potential and offer their brilliant ideas, talents, and services to our communities? I hope, by focusing on all we can gain, we will find the motivation to invest in repairing our system.

We hope readers find the two position statements in this feature are not mutually exclusive, and that both contain truth. We plan to continue our dialogue toward developing a wholistic, comprehensive model. We invite you to continue with us in this conversation.

*Gregory Smith is Vice President for Law Enforcement Education at The [Center for American and International Law](#) and Director of the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration (ILEA). Responsible for operations and curriculum development, he oversees the education of at least 1,000 law enforcement supervisors throughout Texas and the country each year. A father of four who grew up in inner-city Indianapolis, Gregory also served as a Major in the U.S. Army and U.S Army Reserves.*

*As CEO of [WordSmooth](#), Patty Bates-Ballard consults with school districts, police departments, non-profit organizations, and corporations to help their teams communicate effectively across differences and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). A trained mediator, Patty is the author of [ACE-ing Conflict: Three Steps for Resolving Conflict Across Differences](#).*

*Longtime colleagues, Patty and Gregory co-delivered a series of court-ordered learning sessions for a member of the Aryan Nations in the 1990s, and they have partnered on DEI learning sessions for members of law enforcement for 25 years. Patty and Gregory are co-authors of the book [Navigating Diversity: An Advocate's Guide Through the Maze of Race, Gender, Religion, and More](#).*



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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- Servant Leadership | Arlington  
June 26-27, 2023
- Police Supervision 101 | Flower Mound  
July 17-21, 2023
- Police Media Relations | League City  
July 17-19, 2023
- Civilian Leadership Series | Oklahoma City  
Level 1 | July 19-21, 2023  
Level 2 | Sep 11-15, 2023  
Level 3 | Oct 23-Nov 3, 2023
- Teaching Diversity | Plano  
Aug 21-25, 2023
- Managing the Training Function | Plano  
Aug 28-31, 2023
- Contemporary Issues & Ethics Conf | Plano  
Sep 7-8, 2023
- The RITE Way | Plano  
Sep 11-14, 2023
- Texas Sergeant Academy | San Marcos  
Sep 11-22, 2023
- Police and Family Conference | Plano  
Sep 29-Oct 1, 2023
- The Executive PIO | Denton  
Oct 2-5, 2023
- School of Police Supervision | Plano  
Oct 2-27, 2023
- Police Media Relations | Plano  
Oct 23-25, 2023
- Internal Affairs | Plano  
Level 1 | Oct 30-31, 2023  
Level 2 | Nov 1-3, 2023
- Police Supervision 101 | Denton  
Nov 6-10, 2023
- Using MS Office, Access, Excel and Power-Point for Law Enforcement | Alfred, ME  
Nov 15-17, 2023
- Civilian Leadership Level 1 | Southlake  
Dec 4-6, 2023
- Servant Leadership | Denton  
Jan 8-9, 2024
- Using MS Office and Excel for Law Enforcement | Plano  
Jan 23-24, 2024
- School of Police Supervision | Arlington  
Jan 29-Feb 23, 2024
- School of Executive Leadership | Plano  
Mar 4-Apr 26, 2024

**"I alone cannot  
change the world,  
but I can cast a  
stone across the  
water to create  
many ripples."  
Mother Teresa**



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### Discussion

While scholarly research regarding law enforcement report writing is limited, the literature and scholarly research on writing, writing development, and writing strategies are substantial. A literature review sought to understand and synthesize existing research in three areas associated with approaches that might improve writing proficiency. These areas include 1) the importance of writing, 2) factors that affect writing, and 3) writing strategies. First, the importance of writing discusses officer development, reputation, and report writing goals. Next, factors that might affect writing discuss the qualities of an officer, police culture, and law enforcement education. Finally, steps taken discuss writing strategies, training adjustments, and cultural transformation.

### The Importance of Competent Writing

Police reports have incredible weight, and any perceived lack of writing proficiency amongst law enforcement officers can significantly impact an officer's career, agency, and criminal justice system. According to Graham and Perin (2007), those who lack writing proficiency are disadvantaged because writing well is essential for employment and promotional opportunities. On the other hand, officers with a reputation of being good report writers are typically well received by their supervisors, prosecuting attorneys, judges, and other stakeholders.

A police report's intended outcome is the chronological capturing of events of a service call; documenting the elements, evidence, and actors of an alleged crime; and illustrating the reporting officer's actions. A police report supports actions taken or not taken by law enforcement officers and influences the outcome of investigations and official proceedings (Reynolds, 2011). Moreover, according to Chandler (2017), proficient writing is an asset in any organization because it can positively affect organizational goals. In law enforcement, well-written reports support organizational goals of professionalism and public safety, and substandard reports can potentially place the officer, their agency, and criminal cases at risk.

### Officer development

According to Allen et al. (2016), the willingness to change the use of language, known as linguistic flexibility, and writing proficiency are interrelated,

and writers willing to be flexible in language use tend to be better writers. Choice of language, writing style, and cadence are elements of linguistic flexibility, and incorporating these in training can help polish up an officer's written work. Officers attend mandatory training throughout their careers that can easily total hundreds of hours; however, these mandatory classes often do not involve classes in writing development. For example, some officers who want extra training on how to be a better writer must do so independently and outside their mandatory training, and some even enroll in college.

Law enforcement officers who are first-time college students and those returning students acknowledge that being well-rounded by taking classes might give them a competitive advantage. Colleges and universities view proficient writing as an essential component of academic success. For example, the Elgin Community College (ECC) employs a system that combines learning outcomes of ECC's criminal justice classes and police academy training courses called *Police Education Delivery System (PEDS)*. PEDS incorporates six fundamental learning principles; written communication is one of these principles. PEDS demonstrated that although police cadets are trained in report writing while in the academy, the training is inadequate to develop proper writing skills. Furthermore, Martin (2014) submits that post-academy training is required for officers to become better writers. Professional development in writing competence might mitigate any lack of writing proficiency in an officer's report, producing a professionally written and polished work product.

### Officer reputation

Intelligence and technical expertise, strong moral overtones, and mental, emotional, and physical well-being are elements of a good reputation in law enforcement (Mirich, 1959). An officer's reputation follows them throughout their career. Gossip and rumormongering are commonplace in law enforcement, and officers attempt to avoid situations that label them as "...that officer..." Reynolds (2011) attests that police reports play a critical role in criminal justice, and skillful writing, like other skills, can either create benefits or barriers for an officer.

Miranda v. Arizona (1966) was a landmark Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) case in which police reports were front-and-center. The

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**"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."**

**Abraham Lincoln**

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SCOTUS opinion changed the policing landscape forever, and, as in most cases, police reports played a critical role. The Freedom of Information Act (Congress.gov, 2019) opened the door for the public to request open records for government documents. A police report is a public record, and technology allows the populous to obtain copies of police reports quickly. A report that shows a lack of writing proficiency can embarrass an officer, thus hurting their professional reputation. Also, poor writing, or the appearance of poor writing, harm the officer's employing agency and, depending on the political landscape, can be detrimental to the officer and higher-ups. An officer whose reputation is important to them will understand the significance of well-written police reports and might take steps to improve on any deficiencies they might have.

### **Outcomes and Goals**

Writing is a powerful tool that influences people and outcomes. When authors write, they intend to persuade, inform, and narrate (Harris & Graham, 2006). Writers also use writing to help them recall, arrange, examine, decipher, and construct information across different subjects. Two examples of outcome intentions include Martin Luther's 95 Theses and Sun Tzu's Art of War. Martin Luther ignited a religious revolution with his writings, and Sun Tzu's work is a tactics go-by for the battlefield and the boardroom.

Learning is an intended goal of writing because both are interrelated when consuming information. A meta-analysis shows this learning-writing relationship by Graham and Perin (2007), which determined that writing indeed enhanced learning. Learning is also about information access; today, writings are equally archivable and accessible. Technology allows people to quickly access books, articles, essays, and ideas across prominent mediums. In law enforcement, police reports are no different as they intend to persuade prosecutors, judges, and juries, inform the public, and narrate an officer's activities. Officers who understand the intended outcomes and goals of police reports might also embrace the need for professionally written and polished work products.

### **Factors that Affect Police Writing**

Many factors influence effective writing. For example, Muccino and Others (1986) attest that meta-

cognition, socially-based writing strategies, technology, and situational factors influence effective writing. On the other hand, McCardle et al. (2018) suggest that persistence, self-regulation, and self-efficacy influence writing outcomes and development. In the context of a police report writer, this suggests that officers' personal qualities, prior experiences, education, and exposure to police culture influence them as writers.

According to Crank (2015), the streets are an officer's principal environment, and police culture reinforces strength and danger in television shows and movies. These T.V. shows and movies often depict the exciting part of police work – the car chase, gun battles, and the significant arrest – but rarely do they show an officer in the report writing room typing away. Cops are supposed to put the "bad guy" in jail, and performing administrative duties, such as report writing, is often viewed as more of a nuisance than a vital part of the job. Moreover, police applicants envision the likes of Roger Murtaugh and Martin Riggs from the Lethal Weapon movie franchise and not Earnest Hemingway when they dream of donning a police uniform and strapping on their gun belts.

### **Qualities of an officer**

Each state has a regulatory body that establishes minimum standards for police applicants. These standards ensure the qualities of a law enforcement agency's workforce and that its officers have the knowledge, skills, abilities, and background to perform the job. Wilson et al. (2010) studied minimum police hiring standards that included a high school diploma or equivalent; U.S. citizenship; holder of a driver's license; free of criminal history; and passing psychological, medical, and polygraph examinations. Going through a police officer hiring process can take upwards of a year in some police agencies. Even though a candidate successfully navigates the selection process, there is no specific indicator to tell whether or not they will be a successful academy cadet or post-academy officer.

People typically seek law enforcement careers because they are results-oriented and action-driven individuals (Kanable, 2005). Law enforcement officers view themselves as the sheepdog providing overwatch for the sheep as the wolf lies

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**"You have  
enemies? Good.  
That means  
you've stood up  
for someone,  
sometime in your  
life."**

**Winston Churchill**

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in wait. One of the least favorite components in law enforcement is report writing. (Reynolds, 2011). This cultural attitude sometimes spills onto police educators, who might then subconsciously design training to focus on classes like firearms proficiency, defensive tactics, and case law updates and focus less on report writing. According to Reynolds (2011), officers with writing knowledge, skills, abilities, and educational backgrounds might be better prepared for producing well-written police reports.

### **Law enforcement culture**

Ćetković (2017) examined law enforcement language and the far-reaching implications of police reports and concluded that law enforcement-specific language, as well as internal and external factors (e.g., supervisory preferences, formal education, training, and culture), are related to how and why officers write their reports. Police culture partly exacerbates the appearance of an officer's lack of writing proficiency because it permits the use of police jargon and third-person/passive voice writing. In most organizations, culture drives business, and business drives product manufacturing. Police work and police work products are no different; culture, to some extent, drives how officers write their police reports. Officers willing to move beyond cultural norms might take steps to combat any appearance of lackluster writing.

Crank (2015) opines that among law enforcement circles, officers who keep jails full are kept in high regard, perpetuating a culture that celebrates the exciting aspects of the job, which makes sense because "good guys" are supposed to arrest "bad guys." Therefore, to some, it might be logical to deduce that since exciting arrests are held in the highest regard, a culture exists that views post-arrests activities, such as writing a report, might be better suited for support staff.

### **Law enforcement education**

The possible lack of robust writing curricula in law enforcement academies and in-service education are potential contributors to the lack of writing proficiency among police officers. In a study conducted by Glenn et al. (2003), academy report writing classes focus on an incident's who, what, where, why, and how. Furthermore, report writing classes taught in police academies generally do not cover the rules of grammar, punctuation, structure, and cadence.

Glenn et al., 2003 also conclude that in-service continuing education provides additional learning opportunities for officers. However, training typically focuses on perishable skills, like firearms proficiency, defensive tactics, and case law updates. Continuing education rarely offers training in report writing or mechanics, and officers who want such training are often left to fend for themselves. So, when it comes to report writing training, veteran officers are left to train newer officers the same way they were trained in the academy. This cyclical event could contribute to a perceived lack of writing proficiency in law enforcement. Officers willing to learn to be better writers will undoubtedly be advantaged over their peers.

### **Steps Taken to Address Writing Development**

Understanding writing development requires further examination and is akin to an unfinished painting, with parts of the canvas more complete than others. Moreover, even though writing development requires further examination, modifications within the writer and mechanical adjustments drive writing development (Harris & Graham, 2006). Reconciling writing deficiencies begins with embracing that change is needed, and accepting new writing ideas can help improve writing skills.

According to Zimmerman and Reisemberg (1997), it is essential to know what skilled writing looks like to understand writing development because writing is a goal-directed and self-sustained cognitive activity. Writing requires a precarious balance of the writer's environment, genre and topic constraints; intended outcome; and knowledge, skills, and abilities related to writing composition. In addition, writing has a social component - it is interconnected to its audience. The public is a police officer's audience, and each call for service, metaphorically, is a new canvas for which an officer can construct a new painting.

### **Writing strategies**

Harris et al. (2013) suggest that explicit and interactive learning can help improve writing skills and that self-regulation, goal setting, self-assessment, self-instruction, and self-reinforcement are helpful writing strategies. In addition to these strategies, police report writers can take advantage of the training available to them through their agencies, colleges, and universities and technology to help them become competent writers. However, ultimately, an

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**"Leadership is all about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence."**

***Sheryl Sanberg***



**“Leadership consists of picking good men and helping them do their best.”**  
**Chester W. Nimitz**

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officer’s writing self-efficacy, motivation to improve, and willingness to use established strategies will be the critical components to helping them improve as writers.

Indeed, there is evidence to support the importance of writing strategies, as previously mentioned. Some strategies include developing writing plans, acceptance of revisions, adherence to vital writing mechanics (i.e., grammar rules, sentence development, and overall flow); genre knowledge (Bhatia, 1993), which is a crucial element found in writing development; and how motivation (Maslow, 1943; Bayne, 2015) drives an individual, all supported by Harris and Graham’s (2006) study when they concluded that better-skilled writers are more motivated than lesser-skilled ones when motivation is generally supported. As a result, officers willing to employ writing strategies might be better prepared to produce better police reports.

#### **Training adjustment**

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is the nation’s third-largest municipal police department and an industry leader in policing and police training. According to Glenn et al. (2003), the LAPD is an industry leader mainly because of its intelligent instructional design, an essential part of training excellence. The basis and consumption method of thoughtful instructional design is the training’s purpose and content (Glenn et al., 2003). Training is an integral part of law enforcement, and organizational leaders see training education as a vehicle to develop future leaders and decision-makers that will benefit their agency.

Law enforcement is most effective when it mirrors real-life scenarios officers experience daily. A fundamental job function for law enforcement officers is to solve problems, and officers trained to deal with these real-life scenarios are better equipped to help people in the field. However, training stops when the scenario stops in a controlled training environment. Introducing a report writing component can make scenario-based training much more realistic and might identify gaps between an event (topic) and the report that supports an officer’s actions.

#### **Cultural transformation**

As mentioned earlier, police culture could contribute to how and why officers write their reports, but

it could also potentially influence policing and training strategies. Law enforcement leadership and commitment to training are pivotal for training to be effective. Changes in training philosophies and culture can be complex without a commitment from police leaders and their staff (Glenn et al., 2003). Acknowledging the need for organizational change in which report writing is as critical as arresting an offender might be an excellent first step in transforming police culture.

A cultural transformation will require buy-in at all levels of an organization. According to Merriam-Webster, buy-in is *acceptance of and willingness to actively support and participate in something (such as a proposed new plan or policy)*. Police culture is as sophisticated as any other subculture, and cultural shifts will be equally as complex. In the context of report writing, such a shift will need to overcome how police are portrayed. For example, the T.V. show *Dragnet* from the 1950s followed the police adventures of *Joe Friday*, who was famous for telling someone he was interviewing, “just the facts.” There have been tremendous strides since *Joe Friday*; however, the law enforcement community has not shifted too far from obtaining more than *just the facts* from an interviewee, which shows in some officers’ writings.

#### **Associated Theoretical Framework**

The learning theory worth studying as a framework for what might contribute to writing proficiency in some police reports is Engestrom’s (1987) activity systems theory. Engestrom’s theory fundamentally contextualizes the importance of culture and environment in activity and why certain individuals might perform a specific activity a certain way—for example, police officers performing the activity of writing police reports. The fundamental principles proposed in activity systems theory build upon Leontiev’s (1978) activity theory, in which he suggests the idea that subjects and objects are related, and this relationship is at the core of performing activities. Leontiev further suggests that objects (e.g., police report) of an activity (e.g., report writing) encompass focus and purpose, while subjects (e.g., officers) engaged in the activity encompass their motivation. Engestrom takes Leontiev’s theory one step further and theorizes that the subject-object connection also occurs in collaboration with other people

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or groups (e.g., officers, district attorneys, judges, a jury, and law enforcement agencies).

### Identified Gaps

There is significant research on writing, writing development, and writing strategies; however, there is limited research on factors contributing to writing proficiency among officers who author police reports. The research on police report writing focuses on strategies to improve writing and not on factors that might contribute to an officer's writing proficiency. This leaves a tremendous gap in the research because factors that affect police writing are relatively understudied. Future research in this area might include a comprehensive examination of each theme and subthemes discussed in this paper. Perhaps doing so might help identify additional factors that lead to writing inadequacies. Also, additional research might identify training models and specific writing strategies for law enforcement that can prove helpful to the workforce.

### Summary

This body of work discussed micro-and macro-level factors contributing to an officer's writing proficiency and considerations that might help officers improve their writing skills and the impact their reports might have. It appears that factors might exist that contribute to the appearance of a lack of writing proficiency among officers. For example, an officer's personal qualities; training before, during, and after the academy; and the law enforcement culture all seem to contribute to an officer's writing. This data is critical because a police report impacts stakeholders, and some landmark court cases have resulted from police reports. By its own standard, police reports accomplish their intended goal: to document events chronologically and factually. However, this does not necessarily mean that police reports are well written, following standardized rules of grammar, punctuation, structure, and flow, allowing for easy consumption by an end-reader.

The literature on police report writing and writing proficiency include books and scholarly articles that discuss challenges law enforcement officers face and why some people do not write as well as they could. While many research articles and

books focus on the importance of writing, specifically writing proficiency and written communication, there is limited research on police report writing. It is essential that researchers comprehensively examine factors that might lead to or exacerbate any lack of writing proficiency in the law enforcement community and how these factors affect an officer's written product. Additional research might also identify potential training models and strategies that can prove helpful in giving police officers practical tools to be better writers.

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**"I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people."**

**Mahatma Gandhi**

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**“To handle  
yourself, use your  
head; to handle  
others, use your  
heart.”**  
**Eleanor Roosevelt**

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*Graduates of the 22nd Texas Sergeant Academy held May 1-12, 2023 in Sherman, TX.*



*Graduates of the 137th School of Police Supervision held October 3-28, 2022.*



*Graduates of the 21st Texas Sergeant Academy held Jan 17-27, 2023 in Pharr, TX.*



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diction with respect, fairness, and compassion; 2) to protect life and property; 3) to preserve peace, order, and safety; 4) to enforce local, state, and federal laws; and 5) to defend the Constitutions of South Carolina and the United States of America (Charleston Police Department, 2021). The CPD envisions being a world-class organization characterized by a high standard of excellence, creativity, and continuous learning (Charleston Police Department, 2021). That vision is centered on five stated values: honor, excellence, accountability, respect, and teamwork (Charleston Police Department, 2021). These values “serve as a moral compass” on the journey to the final destination described in their mission (Johnson, 2021, p. 93). Members of CPD are “more likely to act with courage, demonstrate grit, control (their) impulses, be just and compassionate, and remain true to (themselves) if (they) have a clear sense of direction and identify a set of guiding principles” (Johnson, 2021, p. 93). Each component of the CPD’s culture serves to provide direction and guiding principles through the mission, vision, and values. These elements shape what is valued and repeated in the organization, through common language, beliefs, stories, and power structures (Johnson, 2021).

The result of CPD’s mission, vision, and values is an organizational dedication to excellence. The CPD desires for all members of the organization to demonstrate individual excellence, as well as promoting organizational excellence. In the interest of excellence in community service, CPD has prioritized service of their community with the aim of enhancing the quality of life and nurturing public trust through maintaining the highest standards of performance and ethics (Charleston Police Department, 2021). They see excellent officers as individuals who will serve as crime deterrents; develop relationships throughout the community; promote receptivity to tourism, visitors, and residents; and to support historic preservation (Charleston Police Department, 2021). The commitment to preeminence stresses CPD’s provision of the highest quality of service to its community and the fostering of community partnerships in crime prevention (Charleston Police Department, 2021).

Police departments, like CPD, that value honor, excellence, and accountability, as well as a commitment to high-quality community service, innovation, and fairness, are always searching for ways to improve. In 2013, BWCs were first introduced among New York police officers to decrease racial profiling (Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020). Thereafter, in response to highly publicized cases such as the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, many policing agencies saw the

use of BWCs as a means to improve their performance and provide transparency to the public (Berman and Kindy, 2020). Thus, within the ideal culture of police departments, including the CPD, the use of BWCs stands as an example of those departments’ desire to uphold their values.

### **The Actual Culture of Police Departments**

There seems to be a difference between the stated and actual cultures of many police departments. That difference should be thought of as their level of integrity. Integrity is perhaps the most important character trait when it comes to developing trust and confidence in either an individual or an organization (Shahid, 2013). It follows, if the public has low confidence in a policing agency, then the public must perceive a lack of integrity in that policing agency. Longitudinal data gathered by the Gallup Research Group have shown a large proportion of people in the US do not have confidence in the police (Jones, 2015). In their 2015 poll, when asked to what degree they had confidence in police, nearly half of respondents (48%) answered “some,” “very little,” or “none.” Additionally, from 2000 to 2020, those who responded they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the police progressively decreased among both White (63% to 56%) and Black (37% to 19%) respondents (Jones, 2020). It is clear there is a perception by the general public of a lack of integrity among the police, a perception fueled by multiple, highly visible discrepancies between the ideal culture of police departments and the outcomes citizens have experienced.

Racial profiling gained national attention in the early 2000s, and the 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin thrust the topic into the national consciousness. The following year, a Manhattan Federal District Court Judge was prompted to recommend the use of BWCs to decrease racial profiling (Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020). In 2014, the highly publicized killing of Michael Brown by police sparked outrage, riots, and calls for police reform across the country (Berman & Kindy, 2020; Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020). Perhaps the nadir in the public’s confidence in police occurred when George Floyd publicly, slowly suffocated under the weight of a Minneapolis police officer’s knee on his neck. Beyond these recent, highly visible cases, there are countless others that have shown the spotlight on the chasm between police departments’ ideal and actual cultures.

In this volatile milieu, judges recommended, and local and state governments demanded the use of BWCs (Berman & Kindy, 2020; Lowery & Berman, 2015; Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020). The intent was to increase further accountability for both citizens and police (Berman & Kindy, 2020). Citizens and police have advocated for increased use of

**“Time is neutral and does not change things. With courage and initiative, leaders change things.”**

**Jesse Jackson**

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BWCs, likely because both sides lack trust in each other (Knaack, 2020; Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019). As a result, whereas only about one-third of all police agencies used BWCs for patrol officers in 2013, by 2016 60% of local police departments and 49% of sheriffs' offices had fully deployed BWCs (Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019; Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020).

Despite the rapid growth in the use of BWCs and the hope for improved transparency and accountability, there has been hesitancy by police officers to use them (Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019). Officers have argued that BWC usage increases their workload, and the footage can be time consuming to download, analyze, and disseminate (Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019). Similarly, even though BWCs can lead to an overall net reduction in annual costs, departments have argued that storing BWC footage is expensive and requires specialized training to maintain, which is a significant up-front cost, especially for small local departments (Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020). On the other side, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has viewed BWCs as a threat to the rights of citizens and has proposed restrictive guidelines regarding the usage of BWCs (ACLU, 2021). Further, the ACLU has promulgated research that indicates BWCs are not a deterrent to police violence and, because BWC footage is exempt from disclosure by the Freedom of Information Act, "law enforcement gets to decide what video footage they want to release or keep secret" (Knaack, 2020).

While policing agencies, like CPD, ideally want accountability, fairness, and transparency to be distinguishing features of their culture, in actuality, the view of the general public and the ways in which policing agencies have employed BWCs reveal a distinctly different story. Why does this discrepancy exist between the ideal and the actual culture in police departments? It is, in large part, the result of competing interests—driving and constraining forces—that influence the actions of police officers and departments and shape the culture.

#### **Force Field Analysis of Body-worn Cameras**

In any given organization, if change is to occur—such as the institution of BWCs—the *status quo* must be overcome (Lewin, 1951). The *status quo* is effectively the current state of the system, wherein the driving forces for change are balanced against the constraining forces preventing change. As of 2016, the *status quo* for over 50% of policing agencies in the country has been to avoid the use of BWCs (Hyland, 2018).

#### **Driving Forces for Body-worn Cameras**

Depending on the group of interest, the primary driving force for the use of BWCs may be officer safety or citizen protection (Hyland, 2018). As

shown in the Figure, from the perspective of police departments, there are multiple driving forces in support of using BWCs. [Insert Figure here] These include increased officer safety; improved office behavior via the "self-awareness effect"; increased quality and quantity of available evidence; decreased officer liability by providing evidence of officer actions; and improved accuracy of police reports (Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019; Craven, 2018; Emerson, 2021). If police departments choose to employ BWCs, the driving forces serve as the benefits of implementation of the change.

In addition to the forces driving police departments to implement BWCs, there are also multiple constraining forces. The constraining forces include the cost of the equipment; the responsibility of data management and privacy; the lack of evidence demonstrating either decreased use of force by police or decreased criminal behavior by citizens; the administrative obligation to provide video evidence to appropriate stakeholders; and the liability for policing agencies in the case of wrongful conduct captured on video (Van Ness, 2020; Charleston Police Department, 2020; Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019; Nix, Todak, & Tregle, 2020; Rivera, 2021).

#### **Ethical Culture Analysis Regarding Body-worn Cameras**

As the force field analysis indicates, there is a tension between some of the interests of policing agencies and those of the public, specifically surrounding the potential for police officers and agencies being held accountable when wrongful citizen deaths occur at the hand of the police. The tension in this circumstance is ethical in nature. To address this tension and ensure the safety of citizens and police officers, the ethical culture of policing agencies can be assessed using the seven virtues in Kaptein's model (Kaptein, 2008).

Kaptein's virtues of clarity, congruency, feasibility, supportability, and transparency are closely related. Clarity exists when the ethical and behavioral expectations are clear to everyone in the organization. When clarity is absent and employees are left to their own discretion, the risk of unethical behavior increases (Kaptein, 2008). Congruency occurs when everyone in the organization adheres to those ethical and behavioral expectations, especially those in leadership. When an organization espouses behavioral expectations but acts in ways that contradict those, there is behavioral incongruence, which can lead to unethical behavior (Kaptein, 2008). Feasibility exists when organizations "create conditions that enable employees to comply with" ethical and behavioral expectations (Kaptein, 2008, p. 925). When people are tasked with unreasonable expectations or lack the means to accomplish the task—*infeasible situations*—

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**"The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things."**

**Ronald Reagan**

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frustration can lead them to unethical behavior (Kaptein, 2008). Similar to feasibility, supportability exists when organizations create support allowing employees to meet ethical and behavioral expectations. Finally, organizations are transparent when they publicly admit to their ethical and behavioral shortcomings. Transparency reduces the risk of unethical behavior (Kaptein, 2008). Most policing agencies, such as CPD, espouse accountability, fairness, and transparency. However, resistance to both the use of BWCs and the sharing of unedited video with the public is contradictory to those virtues and is behavior that represents an ethical failure (Stansell, 2021). Police officers have said employing BWCs impacts their work because it requires extra work to manage recordings, and they have limited financial resources (Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, 2019). For police departments, the importance of support may extend to the community; if the community does not support police, the police officers may be at risk for unethical behavior in retaliation (Kaptein, 2008). The demand by citizens for BWCs could have a paradoxically negative effect on ethical behavior (Knaack, 2020). Thus, many policing agencies, have significant risk of unethical behavior with regard to clarity, congruency, feasibility, supportability, and transparency.

The remaining two of Kaptein's virtues, discussability and sanctionability, are also related. When organizations do not have cultures open for discussion and debate (a.k.a. discussability), unethical conduct occurs frequently (Kaptein, 2008). It is unclear to what degree various policing agencies value discussion and debate, making assessment of the virtue difficult. Sanctionability is the concept that when unethical behavior is unpunished it will continue because it has been tolerated (Kaptein, 2008). If organizations are not open for discussion and debate, it is likely they do not sanction undesired behavior.

Most policing agencies have internal affairs personnel to address unethical behavior, suggesting this should not be an issue for those organizations, though that may not be the case if everyone in the organization is aligned in their behavior, such as avoidance of BWC use.

### **Leading Change in Favor of Body-worn Cameras**

The use of BWCs by police officers represents a major departure (change) from the way things have been done in the past. It represents a profound cultural and psychological shift. Increasingly in our country, police officers are no longer seen as public servants out to ensure the safety of all citizens, but rather as henchmen set on restricting civil rights and meting out punishments with dead-



*Class photo of 138th School of Police Supervision held January 30-February 24, 2023.*

ly force. Where once their position as civil servants was honored and their word trusted, now, as a result of mounting evidence refuting their trustworthiness, calls for BWCs or defunding them altogether are gaining momentum. As such, universal use of BWCs represents a fundamental disbelief in the trustworthiness of the officers, which creates a situation of opposition. To overcome the opposition to employing BWCs, leaders must use a thoughtful, sequential change process. Building on the three-step change process described by Lewin, John Kotter developed an eight-stage process that has become the most popular (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1996). As delineated in the Table, the eight stages range from "creating a sense of urgency" through "anchoring new approaches in the culture." [Insert Table here] The reason there are so many stages is because "major change will not happen for a long list of reasons" (Kotter, 1996, p. 20). Thus, Kotter's process addresses "one of eight fundamental errors that undermine transformation efforts" (Kotter, 1996, p. 20).

The sequence of Kotter's change process is important, as the first four stages are geared toward what Lewin described as unfreezing the *status quo* (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1996). The *status quo* is, undoubtedly, the biggest constraining force for any change effort, and it must be addressed if successful change is to be accomplished. After unfreezing the *status quo* in the first four stages, the fifth stage is geared at addressing other constraining forces. Thus, in a real sense, the first five stages of the change process are geared at addressing the constraining forces. This is because change is most successful when addressing the constraining forces (Lewin, 1951). The process like Kotter's, police departments and communities around the country could move toward the standard use of police body cameras in a manner that would benefit both parties.

**"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."**

**John Quincy Adams**

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### Conclusion

Police agencies, such as CPD, often have disparate ideal and stated cultures, and the employment and use of BWCs highlight the disparity. The strong tension between driving and constraining forces within police departments encourage maintenance of the status quo. By employing a structured framework for change that decreases the constraining forces, police agencies can unfreeze the status quo and move toward their ideal, more ethical culture.

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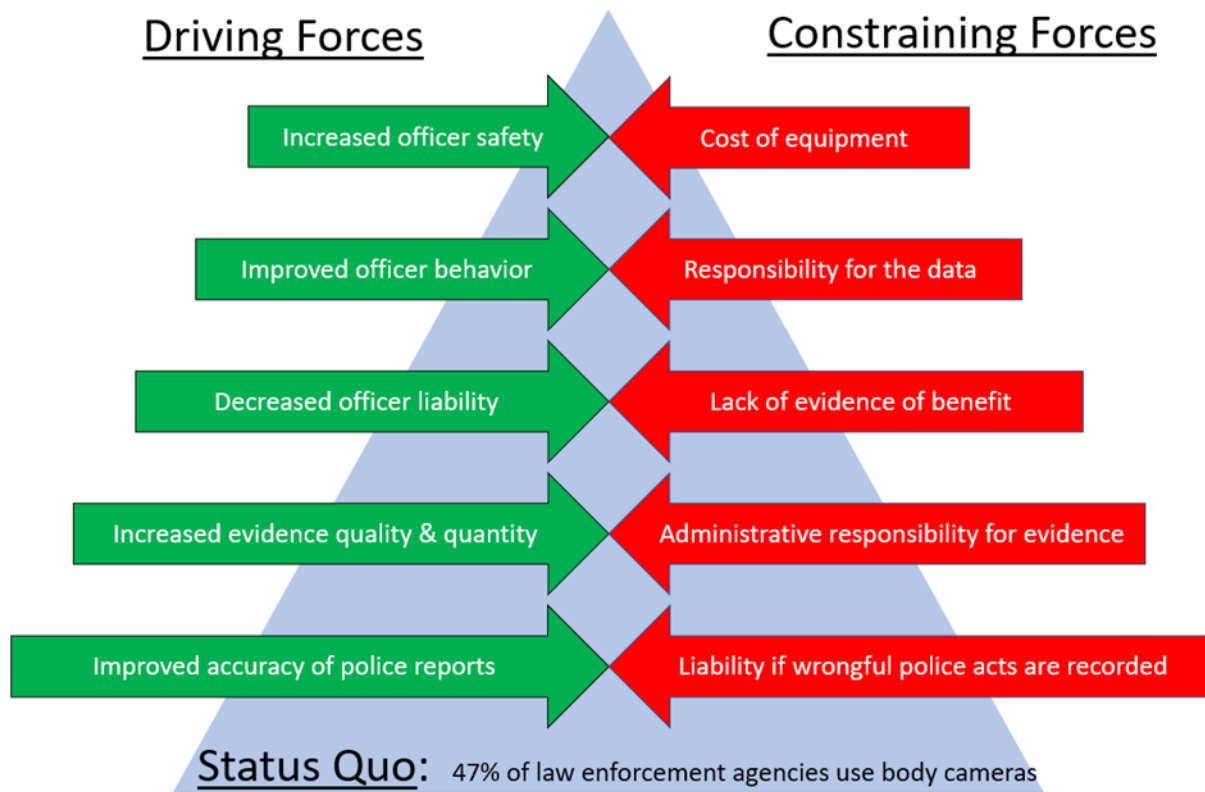
136th School of Police Supervision participants graduated on June 28, 2022.

**“Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile.”**  
**Vince Lombardi**

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Figure and Figure legend



**Figure:** Force field analysis of competing of driving and constraining forces impacting the use of body-worn cameras by policing agencies.

**"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be."**

**Rosalyn Carter**

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**Table.** Eight-stage change process to foster acceptance of body-worn cameras.

Stages of the Change Process	Circumstances to foster acceptance of body-worn cameras
Establish a sense of urgency	Police killing unarmed citizens Officer criminal liability, including trials for murder
Create a guiding coalition	Create supportive counsels of trusted police veterans Enlist participation from balanced, concerned community
Develop a vision and strategy	Reiterate the department's vision of respectful, fair, and compassionate service to all citizens Frame body-worn cameras as a strategy for achieving that
Communicate the change vision	Use every opportunity to show and tell how using body-worn cameras serves to achieve the department's vision
Empower broad-based action	Remove constraining forces, such as funding, data maintenance, and inequity of value of video Enlist officers and citizens to create ideas to help remove barriers
Generate short-term wins	Use on precinct to demonstrate proof-of-concept Share examples of how body-worn camera footage was beneficial in the first precinct Track % body-worn camera usage to show the "win" of adoption
Consolidate gains & produce more change	Use body-worn camera footage to improve police training Leverage success with body-worn camera usage to introduce more change
Anchor new approaches in the culture	Incorporate body-worn camera footage into individual officer feedback, for awards and performance improvement Associate decrease in negative police-public interactions with new approaches

**"Management is  
doing things right;  
leadership is  
doing the right  
thing."  
*Peter Drucker***