Lights, Cameras, Action: A Mixed Methods Analysis of Police Perceptions of Citizens who Video Record Officers in the Line of Duty in the United States

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Abstract

There have been several high profile cases in the U.S. where officers have encountered and taken legal action against civilians who were video recording them. Officers are likely to develop preconceptions of citizens who record them and these views can considerably influence police-civilian interactions, especially in the presence of recording devices. This study was designed to explore the officers' views of being recorded in the line of duty and their understanding of the reasons why civilians would want to record them. Officers generally expressed their discontent with civilians who record and the more officers were bothered by being recorded, the more they justified taking actions against civilians who record. These findings have implications for training techniques and practices to reduce animosity between police and the video recording public.

Keywords: Police Perceptions, Police Attitudes, Technology, Video Recording, Cameras.

Introduction

The proliferation of handheld video recording devices has given citizens the ability to readily record virtually any activities. This includes documenting the actions of police officers who may be in the midst of an investigation in a public space. The increased ease with which citizens can video record police has, at some level, thrust police officers into a 'new visibility' (Goldsmith, 2010) raising levels of police accountability while simultaneously influencing the ways police perceive civilians who video record them in public places.

The current U.S. precedent outlining how police may formally address civilians who video record them while in the line of duty is traced to an incident involving Simon Glik (*Massachusetts v. Glik*). In October 2007, Mr. Glik, a Boston area criminal defense attorney, witnessed Boston police officers arrest a teenager in Boston Common, the oldest public park in the country. Mr. Glik quickly reached for his cell phone, activated the video recorder, and captured the actions of the officers. Once the officers noticed Mr.

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Glik was recording their actions, he was arrested and charged with illegal electronic surveillance under Massachusetts' wiretapping statute (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 272, § 99). The charges against Mr. Glik were eventually dropped (*Massachusetts v. Glik,* 2008) and the city of Boston settled a lawsuit on the basis that first amendment rights of citizens include being able to film officers while they are carrying out their duties in public spaces (*Glik v. Cunniffe et al.* 2011).

Following this incident and the ensuing litigation, many police agencies continued to act under the assumption they had a lawful reason to stop and arrest people who simply video recorded their activity. Some officers also confiscated digital recording devices, prompting litigation on the grounds of violation of Fourth Amendment protection against illegal search and seizure (*Christopher Sharp v. Baltimore City Police Department et al.* 2012). Few agencies have publicly addressed issues of civilian video recording with departmental guidelines (e.g. Baltimore City Police Department General Order J-16) to establish an official stance on how officers are to address the public when video recordings are being made in public spaces.

This protocol may or may not be followed in many jurisdictions and does not specifically force officers to adopt certain perceptions of the public. In spite of these policies, officers' discretion to approach and interact with civilians who are video recording is likely to remain unchanged. This leads to a very important set of lingering questions related to precisely how officers perceive members of the public who video record them because this can inform officers' formal procedural actions as an incident unfolds. The current study was designed to provide a snapshot of officers' views of citizens who record them and their views of actions in high-profile videos of police who have been recorded in the line of duty.

A Conceptual Background of Relationships between the Police and the Public

There has been a significant amount of theoretical development related to explaining how police interact with the public. Most of this work emerged during the 1970s and early 1980s in the wake of the civil unrest of the late 1960s to try and understand how police carried out their duties. The majority of this scholarly discussion has focused on police behavior as the most important outcome, but it can also offer some insight into how officers develop presumptions about the public, and those who may be most likely to video record them.

In their general examination of the social behavior of police, Sykes and Brent (1983) explain how officers, as human beings, have "…the power to structure their reality both cognitively and behaviorally" (p. 26). Police officers develop their ways of seeing the world based on their preconceptions and experiences with the public. An officer, for example, who works third shift in an urban area flush with bars and nightclubs, is likely to spend a substantial amount of time responding to disorderly conduct calls, especially after these establishments close for the night and patrons spill into the streets. This hypothetical officer, depending on the amount of time he has been in this position, has a wealth of experience handling these types of situations and can easily draw on his past interactions to inform how to best address a current one.

Officers must approach their interactions with the public in a mindset to determine the nature of the situation, who is involved, and how to best address it. These interactions can be addressed using number of techniques, which may include but are not limited to negotiation, mediation, arbitration, argumentation, suggestion, persuasion, command, and

even threatening (Sykes & Brent, 1983). The more experience an officer has with the application of these techniques in a given set of interactions, the more likely she is to draw on those past experiences in her current response. The use of suggestive comments in amicable interactions with civilians who were video recording in the past may lead an officer to use this technique in future interactions with video recording civilians. In contrast, situations involving argumentative video recording, civilians are likely to lead other officers toward implementing commands and perhaps threats in future interactions.

Another crucial element in the construction of officers' views of the public is the type of behavior that citizens project toward police. In his study of the mannerisms of police, Black (1980) convincingly argued police are likely to react to suspects who disrespect them with higher levels of authoritative action (e.g. arrest or use of force). This is not a one-to-one translation of the old adage, "Violence begets violence," but it is related, in that police are likely to meet someone with a similar level of insolence assuming the suspect fails to demonstrate the minimum expected level of respect.

Some officers may encounter impudent citizens on a fairly consistent basis, which is also likely to mold their 'perspective' (Muir, 1977). These regular encounters with disrespectful civilians can lead officers to develop a cynical outlook toward people, in general. As officers begin to expect contemptuous citizens' behavior as normative in their interactions when responding to a complaint, they may develop the impression the majority of the general public will act this way toward them. This is also likely to be a significant contributing factor to the perception that disobedient citizens with video recording devices should be viewed with significant amounts of suspicion.

If views of the public are primarily based on police officers' firsthand contact during calls for service, they are likely to also inform how police perceive being video recorded. Generally speaking, officers are going to react to a given situation based on the behavior of the citizens involved in the situation, but how might the presence of a video recording citizen influence these exchanges and, more importantly, how officers view civilians who are actively recording them? Some officers, especially those who generally perceive citizens as hostile toward the police, may avoid and simply ignore civilians who video record because they find confrontations with irate citizens so unpleasant or simply do not have a substantiated reason to interact with them. On the other hand, some officers with similar views of civilians may emphasize confronting and taking authoritative action against recording citizens in an attempt to symbolically punish a disdainful public (Worden, 1989).

These views are also shaped by cultural values held by police officers. Many officers experience a high level of social isolation from the public, which serves to create a significant amount of social distance between officers and citizens (Paoline, 2003). This social isolation stems from officers' preconceptions that the public cannot possibly understand the nature and extent of the danger they experience on a daily basis. The public is viewed as naïve and ignorant of a police officer's social reality. This great divide breeds a sense of suspicion among both parties, and adding a video recording device to the encounter is likely to enhance these tense feelings.

Officers also display a high level of intergroup loyalty to one another, which is related to their feelings of social isolation (Paoline, 2003). Officers tend to rely on one another and use their common experiences as the basis of strong social bonds. These connections solidify their relationships within the profession, but they simultaneously highlight the importance of pulling away from and viewing the public with a certain degree of mistrust.

Research has shown these cultural values can impact police officers' behavior. For instance, a study of these professional attitudes revealed that attachment to police culture (evidenced by more distrust of the citizenry, the levels of cooperation the public should display toward police, and other factors) was significantly associated with the likelihood police would initiate contact with the public and conduct a search (Paoline & Terrill, 2005). These findings may be generalized to police perceptions of video recording civilians in the likelihood that officers who hold these cultural viewpoints are most likely to be apprehensive about the motives of someone who is trying to capture their actions with a video recorder.

Although no research to date has specifically examined police perceptions of civilian video recording, closely related areas of the policing literature can inform a broader understanding of how police might respond to citizens with video recording devices. For instance, Goold (2003) studied the effect of closed circuit television on police behavior and discovered that police tried to circumvent external surveillance or supervision as much as possible. In short, police officers tried to maintain the lowest levels of visibility in situations where discretionary decision-making was highest. This implies that police held some level of resentment toward the cameras when they were documenting situations where officers had the latitude to decide how to interact with a particular suspect. If this sentiment is consistent, and it can be applied to the handheld digital recording devices that many citizens have readily available, police are likely to feel anything from mild irritation to utter contempt for those who try to capture their actions.

These perceptions are also likely to vary according to the social space in which the police make contact with citizens. Officers, by virtue of where they spend most of their time while on patrol, see how people live and can readily make assessments on their social class, lifestyles, and perceptions of police (Black, 1980). Officers incorporate these assessments into their reflective perceptions of the citizenry and act according to these generalizations. Police draw on these views in preparation for contact with citizens in certain neighborhoods to plan for how to respond to civilians' behavior. Those who patrol areas where antagonistic interactions are most likely to occur, for example, are most likely to be prepared for these types of exchanges.

The neighborhood context of police-citizen interactions has been connected to police behavior, suggested by Smith's (1986) assessment of this relationship. Specifically, he found police were significantly more likely to use coercive authority, defined as officers' use of physical force, surveillance, or verbal threat of arrest, in low income neighborhoods which may be classified as having a fairly high amount of social disorder. Smith continued his examination with a demonstration that police were less likely to use coercive authority with certain offenders, especially female offenders. This evidence demonstrates the influence of the immediate social context on police behavior toward the public, with emphasis on a territorial dimension of police attitudes. Police may develop a higher sense of antagonism toward potential suspects in neighborhoods characterized by high levels of social disarray because these areas are densely populated with low-income wage earners, known open-air vice markets (i.e. prostitution and/or drugs), and consistently high rates of complaints. Overall, officers are unlikely to expect the most courteous treatment in these types of areas, especially when community context has such a significant impact on relations between the police and the public (Schafer, Huebner, & Bynum, 2003).

Current study

This past research on police behavior has suggested there are connections between views of the public, expectations of civilians' behavior, and police attitudes, but none has directly examined the emerging issue of officers' perceptions of civilian video recording. Officers have been at the nexus of large lawsuits emanating from their reactions to recording civilians while laws and departmental policies continue to evolve alongside technological advancements. Video recording devices are virtually ubiquitous and officers must face this new reality, making this an extremely important, yet completely understudied research topic.

Given this paucity of research, the present study was designed as a mixed methods examination to assess the relationships between these elements of policing and perceptions of the public, but also to gain a richer understanding of the rationale supporting officers' views. The first research question was, "What relationships exist between officers' perceptions of civilians who video record them and their assessments of the actions of officers who were video recorded in the line of duty?" This inquiry was explored from a quantitative approach. The second question was, "From officers' points of view, what are some of the reasons why civilians would want to make video recordings of them while they are in the line of duty?" This question was investigated with a qualitative approach.

Methods

Law enforcement officers can be viewed by researchers as a "hidden population." Similar to other hard-to-reach subjects (e.g. Valdez & Petersen 2005, Wright & Decker 1997); law enforcement officers are tremendously difficult to recruit for research. Despite their positions as public officials, officers are not required to respond to requests to participate in research. In fact, many officers may be skeptical of researchers, reluctant to share their views on potentially controversial issues, or their agencies may have policies in place which explicitly prevent them from responding to surveys.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at the authors' University, recruitment activities were initiated to try and contact as many officers as possible. Given these challenges associated with sampling these 'hard-to-reach' populations, officers for the current study were recruited from many sources, including telephone contact, in-person contact, email solicitation, and secondary solicitation through professional police organizations (e.g. Fraternal Order of Police and the Policemen's Benevolent Association). Once contact was made, officers were asked to refer to the researcher the contact information for any fellow officers who were eligible for the study, following a snowball sampling approach.

This sampling technique is based on the premise research participants are part of larger social networks and can provide access to potential respondents the researcher may not otherwise have the opportunity to contact. This approach is important in conducting research with police officers because they are likely to trust the references made by fellow officers and a series of referrals in these professional circles can generate a sizable number of participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). These methods do, however, possess certain weaknesses such as biases toward eligible respondents who are more cooperative; willing to share their views on a given subject, and part of social networks who may share similar views (Griffiths, Gossop, Powis, & Strang, 1993). Full representation of a population utilizing this type of sample can be limited and results should be interpreted accordingly (Heckathorn, 1997).

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An internet-based survey was optimal for this study because addressing the first research question involved officers' watching video recordings of officer interactions with civilians. The initial version of the survey had embedded within it two brief video clips. Officers were asked to review these short videos and express their level of agreement with the actions of the officer in the video. The details of these videos are described in more detail below.

Before the internet-based survey was launched, it was reviewed by several officers who provided valuable feedback. Some officers expressed concern over the content of the videos, citing they could deter some from completing the survey because participants may feel the survey was designed to emphasize poor judgment among police. The officers made recommendations to insert two additional videos which clearly demonstrated officers' lawful and appropriate actions while interacting with civilians. The researcher accepted these suggestions and made the corresponding changes to the survey. The data collection period lasted eight weeks, at which time the survey was deactivated and the analysis phase had begun.

Sample

A total of 71 officers completed the survey. These were sworn law enforcement officers who were employed at a variety of agencies, including sheriff's offices and police departments. The sample included officers from small local agencies, mid-size jurisdictions, and large metropolitan departments. In geographical terms, participants were employed in a several states across the U.S. (these have been withheld to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents). The majority (93%) of participants was comprised of male officers who were married (86%). Almost all (96%) of respondents described themselves as "White." More than half of officers also reported they held a supervisory position (61%) and had been working in law enforcement for more than 10 years (69%).

Outcomes

As previously mentioned, the final version of the survey had four video vignettes (two of which featured peaceful, non-confrontational interactions between police and civilians, one which was confrontational and involved the use of physical force by an officer and a fourth confrontational situation which did not involve the use of force) specifically selected to assess officers' views of civilian video recordings of interactions between law enforcement officers and citizens. The two non-confrontational videos were provided (at the suggestion of officers who reviewed a preliminary version of the questionnaire) to avoid overly leading officers who completed the survey to provide certain responses. Thus, the non-confrontational videos and were not the focus of the current study and were not analyzed.

The first confrontational video which did not involve the use of force was recorded in the evening hours of May 12, 2011 in Rochester, New York by a young adult woman as she stood in front of her home a few feet away from the street. The woman moved toward the street while video recording three officers as they conducted an investigation after a traffic stop. Two of the officers had the driver of the vehicle, a young adult man wearing jeans, a white t-shirt, and a baseball cap, in handcuffs near the rear of the car as they searched his pockets while the third was peering into the windows of the vehicle using a flashlight. Immediately after the officer completed the search of the young man, he asked the young woman, "Do you guys need something?" while she video recorded

the exchange. The women responded, "This is my front yard. I'm just recording what you're doing. It's my right." The police officer responded, "Actually, not from the sidewalk." The women responded, "This is my yard." The officer responded, "I don't feel safe with you standing behind me so I'm going to ask you to go in your house. You understand? I don't feel safe with you standing behind me and you seem really anti-police so I'm going to ask you to go stand in your house." "I'm going to stand in my yard, if that's okay," said the women. The officer proceeded to approach the young woman asking her several times to go stand in her house. The women continued to object to the officer's orders by telling him she was standing in her own yard. The officer then said, "I'm going to arrest someone for not following police orders. It's very simple." The officer then proceeded to place handcuffs on the young woman, walked her to the patrol car, placed her inside, and closed the door. This incident and related civil activity between the police and the young woman were covered in local news outlets (Champagne, 2011; Etshman, 2011).

The second video vignette involved an incident which took place in mid-afternoon on June 14, 2010 in Seattle, Washington. A male police officer, affiliated with Seattle Police Department, initially stopped a young adult man who jaywalked across a city street. The man was accompanied by two young adult women, one of which was the central actor in the video. The video provides little introduction to the incident as the officer was almost immediately struggling with one young woman while she yelled, "Get the f..k off my man!" Apparently, the young adult woman was distracting the officer's investigation of the young adult man. The officer was trying to gain control in the struggle and backed the woman onto the hood of the patrol car. She continued to resist the officer and tore away from him, when the second young adult woman intervened by pushing the officer away. The officer immediately responded by punching the second young woman directly in the face, grabbing her arm, and coercing her into a position to place handcuffs on her. Meanwhile, the other young adult woman began to pull the officer away. The officer continued to struggle to gain control over the woman, but eventually placed handcuffs on her as she lay on the hood of the patrol car. This incident and follow-up stories were also documented by local news sources (Egge, 2012; KOMO Staff 2012a; 2012b).

After viewing these two videos, officers were asked to respond to the following respective questions, "The officer's arrest of the female in her yard was objectively reasonable," and "The officer's punching the female in pink is objectively reasonable." Responses ranged from $1 - 5$, where "1" referred to "strongly disagree," "2: disagree," "3: neither agree nor disagree," "4: agree," and "5: strongly agree." These two items served as dependent variables in two separate multivariate regression models.

The qualitative component of the study was designed to address the second research question and learn more about officers' views of the reasons why civilians would want to make video recordings of them while they are in the line of duty. Officers were asked, "Do you think citizens who tend to film police interactions have strong anti-law enforcement attitudes? Please feel free to provide a detailed response sharing your point of view." Responses to these questions ranged from one-word responses (i.e. "yes" or "no") to paragraph-length discussions of this and other related issues.

Independent variables

The first variable considered for the quantitative analyses was officers' age. Age was included as a continuous measure with the youngest officer at 23 years old, the oldest 65

years old, and a mean age of 41.3 years (*sd* = 9.8). Police officers' experience in the field is an important variable related to their perceptions of civilians (Sykes & Brent, 1983). A measure of officers' cumulative experience was included in the form of a measure of the length of time they reported working in law enforcement. Officers were asked, "How long, rounded to the nearest year, have you been a sworn law enforcement officer?" Responses were "Less than 1 year," "1 − 2 years," "3 − 5 years" "6 − 10 years," "11 − 15 years," 16 − 20 years," and "more than 20 years." Officers reported their law enforcement careers had lasted between 11 − 20 years, on average.

Officers were also asked about the type and nature of their contact with citizens while they are in the line of duty to capture the extent to which they had negative interactions with civilians. The introductory phrase, "How often do you encounter or deal with the following while in the line of duty?" was followed by a series of five questions which included, "aggressive citizens/offenders," "citizen complaints," "the risk of being injured while on the job," "traffic citations," and "making arrests?" These five items were used to create a composite scale (Cronbach's α = .69) with higher values (*m* = 3.0, *sd* = 1.1) indicative of officers' experiencing greater negative contact with citizens while in the line of duty.

A measure of social disorder in officers' patrol areas was also included in the study. The introductory statement was presented to officers, "How often do you observe the following in your patrol area?" Officers then responded to nine corresponding items which included, "garbage on the streets," "graffiti on the walls," "public intoxication," "young people hanging out in the streets," "vandalism," "prostitution," "drug dealers on the streets," "violent crimes," and "property crimes?" Officers responded whether they saw these items or activities "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," or "All of the time." Responses to these nine items were used to create a composite score (Cronbach's α = .89) with higher scores (*m* = 2.6, *sd* = .8) representative of greater levels of social disorder within officers' patrol areas.

Another key variable included was officers' perceptions of being video recorded in the line of duty. Officers were asked to respond to a series of 13 items such as, "The public availability of recording devices (cell phones or cameras) makes police work more difficult" and "Civilian recordings of police-citizen encounters are bothering." Response options included, "1: strongly disagree," "2: disagree," "3: neither agree nor disagree," "4: agree," and "5: strongly agree." A composite measure (Cronbach's α = .83) was created with higher values (*m* = 3.1, *sd* = .63) indicating greater discomfort with the possibility, presence, and management of video recordings conducted by citizens.

Results

1. Quantitative analyses:

The first multiple regression model estimated officers' agreement with the actions of Rochester, New York officers (Table 1). This model was significant (*F* = 5.21, *p*< .001) and accounted for approximately 29% of the variability in officers' views of actions of officers in the video clip. Officers' career length was significantly associated with the dependent variable. A one-unit increase in the career length variable was associated with a 0.29 decrease (*t* = –2.18, *p* < .05) in the degree to which officers' agreed with the actions of the officers in the video. Simply stated, this result indicated the longer officers'

had been in a law enforcement career, the less likely they were to agree with the actions of the officers in the video.

Table 1. Predictors of agreement with officer's actions in Rochester, New York video vignette

Variable	B	SE	t	p
constant	1.59	1.21	1.32	0.19
Age	0.01	.02	0.42	0.68
Career length	–0.29	.13	–2.18	0.03
Negative interactions with civilians	0.26	.14	1.82	0.07
Social disorder in patrol area	–0.12	.21	-0.55	0.59
Perceptions of being recorded	0.57	.22	2.58	0.01
$R^2 = 0.29$ $F = 5.21\star\star$				

Note. $\star\star$p < .001

Negative interactions with civilians, social disorder in officers' patrol area, and perceptions of video recording activities were also included in the regression model. There was only one significant association observed among these variables and the dependent variable. A one-unit increase in the degree to which officers were uncomfortable with civilians video recording activities was significantly associated with a 0.57-unit increase ($t = 2.58$, $p < .01$) in the degree to which officers agreed with the law enforcement actions observed in the video. The more bothered officers reported they felt by video recording activities, the more they agreed with officers' actions in the video.

Table 2. Predictors of agreement with officer's actions in Seattle, Washington video vignette

Variable	B	SE	t	p
constant	1.75	1.15	1.53	0.13
Age	–.01	.02	–0.32	0.75
Career length	.02	.13	0.15	0.88
Negative interactions with civilians	–.08	.14	–0.62	0.54
Social disorder in patrol area	.48	.20	2.43	0.02
Perceptions of being recorded	.36	.21	1.70	0.09
$R^2 = 0.14$ $F = 2.18$				

The second regression model included the same sets of variables, but the dependent variable represented a measure of agreement with the actions of the officer recorded in Seattle, Washington. This model was marginally significant ($F = 2.18$, $p = .067$) and accounted for less variability (14%) in officers' agreement with the actions of the Seattle Police Department officer in the video. The variables officers' age and career length were not associated with agreement of the officers' actions in the video. In addition, the only significant association observed in this model was between social disorder in officers' patrol area and agreement with the actions observed in the video. A one-unit increase in the social disorder scale was associated with a 0.48-unit increase in agreement with the officer's actions. This indicates officers who patrolled areas with higher levels of disorder were more likely to agree with the officer's punching of the female in the video. It is also important to note the association between officers' views of video recording and

agreement with the Seattle officer's actions was also positive (B = 0.36, *t* = 1.70, *p* = .09), albeit only marginally significant, indicative of the same underlying relationship observed in the first regression model. The more officers' felt uncomfortable with civilians' video recording activities, the more likely they tended to agree with the officer's actions in the video.

2. Qualitative analyses:

The quantitative associations between officers' perceptions of the video recording activities of civilians and agreement with officers' actions in the two videos demonstrated a noticeable trend between these two measures. The more officers were uncomfortable or bothered by the presence of civilians video recording officers in the line of duty, the more compelled they were to justify the potentially questionable actions of other officers who were recorded as they handled challenging situations with civilians. These results offer a cursory assessment of these associations, but lack the descriptive details related to some of the reasons officers may believe civilians would want to video record them. A rich understanding of these factors was revealed through officers' personal assessments of civilians who may video record them.

Officers' were asked the fairly straightforward question, "Do you think citizens who tend to film police interactions have strong anti–law enforcement attitudes?" An overwhelming majority of officers (72%; *n* = 51) replied with an affirmative response indicative of anti–law enforcement attitudes among civilians who are likely to video record them in the line of duty. Some of these officers replied with a simple "yes," but many elaborated on their complex viewpoints of this controversial issue.

One underlying matter related to the skepticism police have of civilians who video record them is adherence to an "us-them" orientation. Many police officers feel their position of authority places them in a uniquely elevated position relative to the general public, but the danger of the job can also reinforce the sense officers believe members of the public do not understand their positions. One officer expressed this sense of disconnectedness and the corresponding inability for citizens to know what it is like to be an officer and to be video recorded in the following statement:

> They don't realize that there is a human being who makes mistakes inside that uniform. That man or woman risks their life everyday. That is extremely stressful on a person. People will never know what it's like to live as an officer until they experience it themselves. You often feel like it's you against the world. You have those camera phone users and you have the camera phone video watchers (the administration) and neither is on your side. I'll be the first to admit that there are bad cops but the ones who use excessive force wouldn't have had to use that force if people would live civilized.

Skolnick (1966) highlighted this general sense of disconnection from the public which emanated from officers' senses that citizens displayed a "lack of respect for police, lack of cooperation in enforcement of the law, and lack of understanding of the requirements of police work" (p. 50). Similar concerns are underscored by the above officer's view that citizens fail to fully comprehend the persistent possibility of danger and the corresponding need to neutralize these hazardous situations simply to preserve one's life. Ultimately, this hyper-skepticism of potential assailants and the perceived objectives of nearby video recorders seem to further alienate officers from the public.

Some researchers have acknowledged officers' feelings of isolation can be self-imposed (Bartollas & Hahn, 1999), but as police develop the ability to use suspicion to identify potential threats, they may also retreat even further from the public (Crank, 1998). Officers probably experience an even stronger proclivity to withdraw as a direct result of the presence of video recording devices, especially in the hands of disrespectful civilians. Officers may develop a sense of healthy suspicion around civilians who have video cameras largely because they can be perceived as menacing, which compels officers to isolate themselves as a protective mechanism, and eventually develops into a firmly rooted belief that the public completely misunderstands their professional experience.

These distrustful views of the public were also apparent in some officers' comments about how videos may be manipulated to distort the public image of police. Take this officer's comment as an example:

> I feel they use the camera to intimidate the officer from doing his job. (Face it, do you like someone sticking a camera in your face or videoing you? and not knowing what they will do with your picture or video, plastering your picture or video on the internet). I have noticed when they disobey the police or whatever they do, once the police take action is when they start recording video, making the officer look like he is just picking on them for no reason or they edit the video, to only show when the officer takes enforcement action.

Police cynicism of the public, according to this officer, has spilled over into perceived motives for video recording. This officer highlights the 'us-them' dichotomy as he explains his view of citizens' intentions of video recording.

Another theme also emerged from officers' comments related to citizens' attempts to intimidate them. An officer expressed this sentiment in the following statement:

> I feel that every time a citizen videos me while in the line of duty is hoping to intimidate me or catch me doing something illegal. I have been involved in fights and other forms of uses of force that have been filmed by both police and citizens and I commonly hear citizens state they will "put it on YouTube" to show how we wronged a citizen.

Although this officer views recording as intimidation, this may be explained as citizens' views of technology used by the general public to exercise social control (Black, 1980). Some civilians' may believe they are 'policing the police,' (e.g. the young woman in the Rochester, New York vignette described earlier) but officers may view this as a defamatory practice since some citizens may conduct their video recording in a threatening manner. In the end, this example highlights how the use of video recording devices, especially during high-stress situations that involve the use of force, can contribute to an increase in the distance that officers perceive between themselves and members of the public.

Relative to officers who communicated their distrust of citizens who video record them, a much smaller (7%; $n = 10$) proportion of officers indicated civilians who record police are not necessarily doing so because they possess negative attitudes toward police. Several of these responses suggested recording police is becoming more commonplace due to the expanding scope and widespread use of technology and social media websites. Consider this officer's response as an example:

> Not necessarily all of civilian recorded police interactions are "anti-police" in my opinion. I believe sometimes people want to record "news worthy" incidents and be responsible for its release. Everybody posts everything on YouTube, it doesn't mean they are anti-police.

Similarly, other officers expressed a balanced and somewhat "matter-of-fact" outlook that some civilians who record them may intend to "catch" officers unlawfully exercising discretion in some form, but there are also those who were simply "in the right place at the right time:"

> Not everyone that films these encounters have those feelings. I believe that there are those that will look for opportunities to film the police not having an understanding of the situation and will put a spin on it to show that all police are corrupt. Then there are those that film because a situation erupted near them and they have no underlying feelings of being anti-cop. They just film the situation because it happened.

This viewpoint suggests some officers recognize and perhaps even accept the virtual ubiquity of video recording technology and the corresponding increase in the probability they may be recorded because most people have cameras with them at all times.

Discussion and Conclusion

Video recording police officers in the line of duty has become a controversial issue. First and Fourth amendment protections have been invoked to protect the public's right to make recordings of officers. Police are public officials who represent local, state, and federal governments, so these rights will continue to be exercised, challenged, and interpreted. However, there are intangible factors, such as police perceptions of civilians who video record them, which can significantly influence police-public relations.

The main objective of this study was to gain some insight into how police view public video recordings of them. The first interesting finding, from the quantitative analyses, was the more bothered police felt by being video recorded, the more likely they were to side with officers who were recorded in the line of duty. This fraternal association has been well-documented and described as officers' viewing the world "…as being composed of cops and others. If a person is not a police officer, they tend to be considered an outsider who is viewed with suspicion." (Gaines, Kappeler, & Vaughn, 1999, p. 305). This world view may be a residual element of police training and socialization which creates a close-knit and distinct social group. This group cohesion is probably enhanced as many officers regularly encounter and interact with unpredictable people who may wish to injure them, or worse.

Dealing with these threatening behaviors in a given social context were likely related to the second significant finding: frequent contact with socially disordered neighborhoods was associated with a greater likelihood of aligning with the Seattle police officer featured in the second video vignette. Officers who viewed this video likely inferred the situation took place in a similarly disordered area, and may have drawn on their own experiences to relate to the officer. This result is closely connected to research which has shown officers more likely to address incidents in certain neighborhoods with significantly different responses (Smith, 1986). This may be due to the people who live in the area more than

the area itself, but research has not yet examined these responses relative to civilian video recordings. Drawing this inference from this study should be done with great caution because measures indicating officers' views of residents in given areas were not included. Perhaps future research on officers' views will assess their perceptions of residents in areas where they may be video recorded.

This association between social disorder and agreement with the Seattle police officer's actions could also be connected to another unmeasured element: the "audience factor" (Reisig, McCluskey, Mastrofski, & Terrill, 2004). This video vignette did capture a number of bystanders who were drawn to the public conflict. Officers are aware of these audiences of civilians and their tendency to influence an exchange between an officer and a suspect. Assailants may be more likely to resist arrest or simply act disrespectfully toward an officer in front of a crowd to preserve or enhance their image (Worden, 1989). The same could be said for suspects who act out in the presence of a recording device as an onlooker stumbles upon a conflict, captures it on video, and publicly shares it via the internet. The officers in the current study may have characterized the audience in the vignette as a representative trait of a socially disordered area.

A third notable finding, also in the first set of quantitative analyses, was officers with greater experience, evidenced by their career lengths, were less likely to agree with the behavior of the officer in the Rochester, New York video vignette. This is not altogether surprising because the sample consisted of officers with established careers in law enforcement. Many of them probably recognized the Rochester police officer did not have sufficient probable cause to formally charge the young woman with a criminal offense. However, this finding must be interpreted with respect to the results indicating these officers also sided with the Rochester police officer as they became more bothered by being video recorded. Stated another way, officers' career length and experience did not overshadow their annoyance with video recording by civilians.

There were also several detailed accounts to demonstrate officers' primarily negative views of civilians who video record them. The predominant theme was connected to officers' beliefs the public is against them. Research has documented officers high levels of suspicion toward the public (Dunham, Alpert, Stroshine, & Bennett, 2005; Johnson & Morgan, 2013; Stroshine, Alpert, & Dunham, 2008), and this is reciprocal in research on public attitudes toward police (Gau, 2010; Tyler 2005). To further illustrate this point, recent data gathered from a number of mid-to-large sized metropolitan police agencies in the US demonstrated there is a great deal of police suspicion and distrust of the citizenry (Paoline & Terrill, 2014). This study showed 40% – 75% of officers surveyed (depending on the agency with which they were affiliated) answered affirmatively to the question, "Police officers must have reason to be suspicious of most citizens." In addition, 33% – 61% of officers endorsed the statement, "Police officers have reason to be distrustful of most citizens." The great social divide between police and the public is problematic for a number of reasons and adding video recording to this rift is not going to draw the two closer together. In fact, it is probably likely to make police more skeptical of the public and also motivate some members of the public to take it upon themselves to increase the frequency with which they record the police.

In light of these interesting findings, it is important to note the limitations of this study. The scope of the generalizations drawn from these data must take into account the nature in which they were collected. Despite the advantages to utilizing a snowball sampling technique, this approach has several inherent weaknesses, the most significant being the

likelihood of restricting inclusion to only the most cooperative participants. In the context of this study, there could be additional officer viewpoints of civilians who video record which did not materialize within the present sample. Additionally, the sample was almost entirely comprised of White, male officers who had fairly lengthy law enforcement careers. There may be important distinctions to be made between these officers and less experienced, female, racial or ethnic minority officers. The homogeneity of the sample prevented investigation of these potential differences, leaving this opportunity to future research on this topic.

Although there are limitations to consider, it is fairly clear that police officers are not fond of citizens who video record their activities and these feelings may worsen an already strained police-public relationship. There are some ameliorative approaches which could potentially reduce unnecessary litigation, avoiding the high costs and time consuming judicial processes such as those experienced by Mr. Glik in Boston and Mr. Sharp in Baltimore. The first viable approach could be to develop police training related to best practices in addressing video recording civilians. Part of this training might involve review of the First and Fourth amendment protections afforded civilians to prevent unnecessary litigation stemming from infringement of recording rights or illegal search and seizure of personal recording devices. Another part of this training might involve development of effective conversational tools which help officers diffuse an escalating encounter with a recording civilian. Training programs may even use videos uploaded to social media sites as instructional examples on how to respond to recording civilians. These training programs should also evolve as current incidents involving police and video recording civilians become publicized. This dynamic approach can quickly inform officers of an incident, how it was handled, and what techniques could have been implemented to avoid negative outcomes in these types of occurrences.

Law enforcement agencies may also consider drafting video recording guidelines for civilians. These suggestions could be written for civilians to inform them how to safely record without interfering with an officers' investigation. They could also be made publicly available (perhaps via agencies' websites) to civilians to foster minimally intrusive recording. Effective implementation of one or many of these techniques could significantly contribute to an overall increase in civility through respectful interaction which could, in turn, promote positive police-community relationships.

Although they must take on the bulk of it given their public service positions, police officers should not be charged with taking on the full responsibility of fostering more amiable relationships with citizens who video record them. Community forums could be held to hold open and honest exchanges between officers (especially administrative officers who can directly address procedural issues) and civilians involved in video recording. Once citizens are informed about how officers view those who are recording, they may become disinclined to do so and perhaps build mutual respect between the officers and the community members. Any effort designed to minimize the vastly expansive social distance between citizens and police, especially as it relates to video recording in the line of duty, should be fully considered for the sake of the enhancement of police-civilian relations.

Acknowledgements

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