

EXAMPLE SHORT ARGUMENTATIVE THEME

Prompt: Choose a topic and a claim related to current events in our nation's cities, and write a multi-paragraph Argumentative Theme about it, based on your research. Be sure to have at least five paragraphs in your theme. Include at least one paragraph that supports the counterclaim. Also include in-text citations where needed and a reference list. Use the MLA style.

TITLE OF PAPER: A Third Eye

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A Third Eye

A recent controversy has focused on whether all police should wear body cameras. This issue has been discussed in the press because citizens have taken photos and video clips showing police harming people during arrests. Because almost everyone has a cell phone capable of taking photos and making video clips, this type of event has happened more and more frequently. Indeed, because of their usefulness, people have recommended that the creation of these visual records should not be left to random witnesses but should be part of every-day police practice. They have suggested that video cameras should be a standard part of police equipment and attached to their uniforms. Fortunately, such “body cameras” are small, light weight, and relatively inexpensive. They can cost as little as \$129 per officer (Smith & Wesson 1). Because their use may protect citizens, protect the police, and result in more convictions, police departments should invest in buying body cameras and should require every officer to wear them.

One reason why all police should wear body cameras is that there is evidence that some police treat citizens poorly and can even kill them needlessly. In fact, police killed more than 120 unarmed people in 2015 (“People killed...” 1). Between 2014 and 2015, police killed a total of 1083 citizens (Fields 1). Examples of unarmed people who have been killed by police include Michael Brown in Missouri (“Shooting...” 1) and Eric Garner in New York City (Sanburn 1). These people’s deaths were filmed by citizens, and the need

for deadly force in their cases has been questioned. Not surprisingly, the actual number of people harmed needlessly by police is unclear because police departments often neglect to submit information. Only about 200 police departments reported fatal shootings by police out of a total of 18,000 departments in the nation (Swaine & Laughland 1). Some of the well-known cases of people being killed by police did not appear in those reports.

Another reason why all police should wear body cameras is to protect the police. Most importantly, a video clip can prove that a citizen was resisting arrest or trying to harm a police officer. If the officer uses deadly force as a result, the officer need not be suspended or fired because of a citizen's injuries or a dishonest complaint. Also important, the presence of a camera can serve as a deterrent when police are making an arrest. A citizen is less likely to resist arrest if a camera is present. Also, if arrested, sometimes people harm themselves while in the custody of a police officer; video clips can show that the officer did not cause their injuries. This is important because prisoners sometimes injure themselves so that they can sue the police. For example, Christopher Hawk reported that a man in the back of his police vehicle repeatedly banged his face against the wire mesh separating him from the front part of the car. The camera in the police car provided the evidence that Mr. Hawk did not cause the injuries when the man filed a complaint about his treatment ("Do arrested people..." 1).

A further reason why police should wear body cameras is that video clips can be very useful in providing evidence of criminal behavior. Certainly, police officers are in the community, and their cameras can record crimes being committed. For example, if an officer's camera records a fight, the person who started the fight is likely to be identified in the videotape. Moreover, body cameras can provide videotaped records of evidence that

the officers have gathered at the time that the evidence was found. Citizen complaints about the police planting evidence will be less likely. Thus, not only can officers testify as witnesses to crimes, but their cameras can also provide evidence to be presented in trials. Officers will be less likely to be accused as being biased in a criminal case if they have hard evidence in the form of video clips.

Nevertheless, some people do not agree that police should wear body cameras. For example, some police object to the idea because they do not want all of their activities to be reviewed by their supervisors. They do not want to be careful throughout their work shifts regarding what they do and say. They want to be free to speak to coworkers about personal issues and other topics not related to the job. Additionally, the use of body cameras will cost money. Cameras will need to be bought, and people will need to be hired to watch and take care of the tapes. Some towns just do not have the money budgeted for these types of expenses. Furthermore, some citizens object to body cameras because they feel the cameras will create a “Big Brother is watching” environment. They do not want to be captured on camera in their day-to-day activities.

In spite of these objections, the reasons for using body cameras, including protecting citizens, protecting the police, and producing more evidence that will lead to more convictions, outweigh the reasons against using them. Since body cameras are relatively new to police, the results of their use are not certain, but one study has been done. An experiment in Rialto, California, showed reduced numbers of use-of-force incidents for police wearing body cameras by 58%. Additionally, only three citizen complaints were made about police treatment during the experiment versus 24 per year in previous years (“Body worn cameras...” 1). Also, one maker of body cameras claims that body cameras

produce a 90% increase in early guilty pleas (Reveal Media 1) because the criminal evidence from the cameras is so clear. Certainly, these types of results save police and justice departments money. If there are fewer use-of-force incidents, there will be fewer injuries to police and citizens and fewer lawsuits for injuries. If there are fewer complaints, fewer complaints have to be investigated. If there are more guilty pleas, trials can be avoided, and attorneys and judges do not have to be paid. In other words, because lives and money can be saved when body cameras are used by police, the expense involved in using them seems to be a very good investment for police departments. Towns and cities need to make the use of body cameras by police a top priority.

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