

EXAMPLE LONG ARGUMENTATIVE THEME

Prompt: Choose a topic and a claim related to current events in our nation's cities, and write a multi-section Argumentative Theme about it, based on your research. Be sure to have at least two sections: one supporting the claim and one supporting a counterclaim. Each section should include at least three paragraphs. Also include in-text citations where needed and a reference list. Use the APA 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, 2016). 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.

Reasons Supporting the Use of Body Cameras by Police

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 (“Police killed...,” 2016). Between 2014 and 2015, police killed a total of 1083 citizens (Fields, 2015). Examples of unarmed people who have been killed by police include Michael Brown in Missouri (“Shooting...,” 2016) and Eric Garner in New York City (Sanburn, 2016). 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 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, 2016). 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 car provided the evidence that Mr. Hawk did not cause the injuries when the man filed a complaint about his treatment ("Do arrested people...", 2015).

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.

Reasons Against Body Cameras on Police

Nevertheless, some people do not agree that police should wear body cameras. For example, some police officers 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 in every interaction with the public. Additionally, some people question whether all police officers should wear the cameras. They suggest that only some police should wear them, like those who are in contact with the public. Also, they want to be free to speak to coworkers about personal issues and other topics not related to the job. They do not want to have to be filtering their conversations with coworkers for appropriateness during every minute of the day. Moreover, they do not want to be held accountable. They know that there are particular policies and procedures that they need to follow, but they do not want to worry about getting everything perfectly right every day. Finally, the police are concerned about who will have access to their videotapes. They do not want reporters and the public to have easy access to them.

Another concern about the use of body cameras by all police officers is that their use will cost money. Cameras will need to be bought, and good ones can cost about \$1000 per camera (Markowitz, 2016). The Los Angeles Police Department will need to buy about 7000 cameras, so the total expense is substantial for a department that large (Markowitz, 2016). In addition, people will need to be hired to watch the tapes and take care of the tapes. Some towns just do not have the money budgeted for these types of employee

expenses. Also, some jobs will change because duties will be added, which may cause more employees to be needed. Some people will need to monitor who watches the tapes and how they watch the tapes. These may be attorneys and supervisors already on staff or people who may need to be hired. Again, these high-priced employees will add a burden to already stretched budgets.

Furthermore, some citizens object to body cameras because they feel the cameras will create a “Big Brother is watching” environment in their towns and cities. They do not want to be captured on camera in their day-to-day activities. Because the U.S. is founded on the principle of freedom, they want to be free to do as they please as long as they are not breaking the law. They want to have a right to privacy. They do not want to be captured in the background of a videotaped scene and have people in the police department watching them in those scenes. If they are breaking the law and captured on camera by mistake while someone else is being arrested, they do not want to risk being arrested at a later time.

Conclusion

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...,” 2015). Also, one maker of body cameras claims that body cameras produce a 90% increase in early guilty pleas (“Reveal body camera...,” 2016) 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 will have to be investigated. If there are more guilty pleas, trials can be avoided, and attorneys and judges will 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 for police a top priority.

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