

**SOCIALIZATION OF POLICE
VIOLENCE: EXPLORING THE
PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF
FIELD TRAINING OFFICERS (FTOs)**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pivotal yet often underappreciated role of Field Training Officer (FTO) programs in shaping police culture and the development of new officers in the United States. Drawing on multi-method fieldwork across three U.S. police departments, it explores how FTOs function as key transmitters of organizational norms, values, and behaviors. While FTOs are formally tasked with mentoring recruits in accordance with departmental policies, this investigation finds that the cultural messages conveyed to those recruits in practice often diverge significantly from official policies and leaders' goals. In many cases, FTO programs operate as informal but powerful mechanisms for perpetuating adversarial and militarized models of policing—despite institutional rhetoric emphasizing accountability, de-escalation, and community engagement.

The findings reveal a critical misalignment between leadership intent and field-level execution, exacerbated by the marginalization of FTOs in the cultural and professional hierarchy of departments in favor of more prestigious tactical units. This study argues that FTO programs are not inherently reformative or regressive. Rather, their impact depends entirely on how they are structured, supported, and prioritized by leadership. When neglected or poorly aligned with institutional values or reform priorities, these programs risk entrenching outdated and coercive policing norms. Conversely, when intentionally designed and resourced, FTO programs hold significant potential as instruments of cultural transformation. This research contributes to broader conversations about police legitimacy, professional identity, and the challenges of aligning practice with principle in law enforcement in a democratic republic. Ultimately, it calls for a reevaluation of FTO programs as central—not peripheral—to the project of meaningful police reform.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘The rookie will become what the FTO is [and the] FTO should be a good role model. If you’re a violent FTO you will produce violent rookies.’ Montgomery Field Training Officer 11

On May 25, 2020, the world witnessed a murder. For eight minutes and 46 seconds, Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin kneeled on the neck of George Floyd, whom Chauvin suspected of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill. This incident surfaces many concerns about policing: the effectiveness of use of force standards, the impact of excessive force on communities of color, and the over-expansive reach of American criminal law.¹ But for this project, the relevant issue is that Chauvin was a designated field training officer (FTO) who was training two ‘rookie’ officers that day. One of those rookies was in his first week out of the police academy.

This widely viewed incident sparked repercussions, often violent, for cities and police departments across the United States. Imagine if the cameras that caught this incident were not recording. What lessons about the uses and abuses of police violence would Officer Alexander Kueng, who was on his second shift as a probationary trainee officer, have taken from the incident? How would he, over the course of a career, have

¹ Rizer and Haggerty (2020) argue that ‘[o]vercriminalization—the expanding number of laws that criminalize benign behaviors—is a significant but overlooked factor in the death of George Floyd and ought to be a priority for police reformers across the country... To take overcriminalization seriously requires us to pause and question whether any proposed or existing law with criminal penalties attached to it is worth it. It should force us to ask: Is this law worth killing to enforce?’

put these lessons into practice? How would he have transmitted what he ‘learned’ from Officer Chauvin that day to the trainees who came behind him? And most relevant to this investigation, what would former Officer Keung instruct and *socialize* to officers should he have later become an FTO himself? To ask these questions is to begin to understand just how crucial the role FTOs play in socializing new recruits into the social world of policing. FTOs constitute a critical ‘bridge’ between formal training mechanisms, such as the academy, and the ‘street world’ of policing as a set of values, mores, and attitudes toward the job. As discussed below, they appear to be critical agents in creating and perpetuating the culture of individual departments. Yet surprisingly, these officers’ attitudes toward the job, their leadership, and the citizenry they serve have been seldom explored.

Whether through explicit statements, or by action and example, every trainee officer is made to understand that police are repositories of legalized violence within a community (Weber, 1919). In a democracy, the use of force against citizens by the state must be minimized to the extent possible, and legitimized (Jackson and Bradford, 2010). This power comes with a corresponding duty for police departments to prepare street-level officers on how and when they are permitted to use force (Simon, 1997; Eisenhardt, 1989). That is, police officers ideally are trained not just on how to use violence, but in what measure, and to identify when the demands and requirements of the situation do or do not justify its use. This socialization is critical because violence remains an extraordinarily dangerous instrument, implicating the things most universally valued by human beings: preservation of life and the prevention of pain. Acceptance of the need to grant police officers the power to use violence is one of the most monumental sacrifices of individual interest to the common good that a society makes. Given the breadth of this grant of power and its potential implications, it is astonishing how little is known about

how police departments and officers think about controlling potential violence. Indeed, police behavior can be examined from two perspectives: an organizational lens, which looks at how departments regulate officers through policies and oversight, and an individual lens, which considers how officers' actions, including their use of force, are influenced by those regulations. These perspectives are deeply interconnected; one cannot be fully understood without the other. Officers' attitudes toward force shape departmental policies, just as those policies, in turn, influence officers' decision making. Police departments, like other large public institutions, operate as complex systems in which outcomes emerge from decentralized, street level decisions rather than the directives of a single authority. The structure and policies of a department are not simply the sum of their parts; they greatly impact both frontline officers and administrators (Simon, 1997; Waldrop, 1993).

This thesis rests on an assumption, one that seems justified based on existing literature, that this training happens as much 'on the job,' often by FTOs, as it does in a formal academy setting. It is the FTO that is charged with that on-the-job training of new officers. Thus, it is critical to understand how FTOs view their role generally and their role in socializing recruits in the application of violence. At the same time, departments (represented in this study by elite ranking officers, generally at the rank of lieutenant or above) have their own perceptions of and beliefs about the role of the FTO and how FTOs should be training recruits on department policy and the application of violence. In addition, understanding where these two groups align and misalign in their understanding of the role of FTOs within the department's ecosystem, and the attitudes they seek to inculcate in rookie officers, is crucial to understanding how a department's culture is created. This investigation situates those questions within broader theoretical

debates about how social learning, perceived legitimacy, and organizational complexity shape the behavior of street-level bureaucrats.

It is worth first addressing a foundational question, one that underpins this entire investigation: Why should we be concerned with police violence? The widespread perception that police frequently engage in excessive or unjustified force is not merely a matter of public debate, it has far-reaching consequences for the legitimacy and effectiveness of law enforcement (Roth, 2017). When the public believes that officers operate outside the bounds of acceptable conduct, trust in police institutions erodes. This alienation deprives law enforcement of the public cooperation that is essential for effective policing. Police departments derive their legitimacy from being perceived as representatives of a shared civic ideal—regardless of the form that ideal takes (Jackson and Bradford, 2010). For many Americans, this ideal is rooted not in measurable outcomes like crime reduction, but in the principles of procedural justice and fairness (Hawken and Kleiman, 2009). When officers misuse their authority or engage in disproportionate violence, they not only undermine public trust but also contribute to a broader culture of legal cynicism. This decline in legitimacy has been linked to increased crime rates, reduced public cooperation, and heightened social tensions (Tyler et al., 2015; Desmond et al., 2016).

The implications are especially troubling when the institution responsible for maintaining peace and order becomes a perceived source of harm. In such cases, when legitimacy erodes, the practical foundations of community policing break down, particularly cooperation in reporting and investigating crime. The effects of this erosion are visible today. For example, many African-Americans report feeling anxious that even routine encounters with law enforcement may escalate into violence—prompting many

to avoid police contact altogether (Bowleg et al., 2020). This form of alienation is both a symptom and a driver of the deeper legitimacy crisis facing American policing.

The consequences of police violence extend beyond diminished effectiveness. Unchecked violence can fundamentally undermine the social contract that grounds democratic governance. Political theorists have long noted that delegating coercive authority to the state is one of the most significant concessions individuals make for collective security (Weber 1919). It represents a deliberate sacrifice of personal autonomy to enable the state to uphold order and protect the public. However, when police violence is perceived as capricious, excessive, or motivated by bias, public support for that authority begins to erode. In a democratic republic, legitimacy hinges on the belief that power is exercised fairly and in accordance with shared principles. When this belief falters—when citizens perceive that the police wield force not to protect but to control—they may begin to withhold the consent that legitimizes such power. Although the United States is not currently experiencing widespread, sustained rejection of police authority, there is a persistent and significant portion of the population that views law enforcement as lacking legitimacy. This perception, even if held by a minority, poses serious challenges to public safety, civic trust, and the democratic accountability of policing institutions.

A. POLICING IN A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

This investigation offers a bottom-up view of police work, looking at the ongoing issues of police violence that underscore the precarious nature of police legitimacy. As sociologist Randolph Roth notes, one of the key insights from legitimacy research is that when police violence is not controlled and public trust in law enforcement erodes, crime rates may increase (Roth, 2017). This is largely because community members become

less willing to engage with the police, whether by reporting crimes, cooperating during emergencies, or serving as witnesses. Such outcomes directly undermine the foundational mission of policing: to protect and serve the public. Comparative scholarship shows that legitimacy crises tied to police violence are not unique to the United States but manifest across democratic systems that rely on discretion-heavy street-level enforcement. The cross-national literature surveyed in Chapter 2 frames this U.S.-based investigation within those broader democratic tensions, clarifying what is structurally particular, and what is cross-jurisdictional, about the American case. Police departments can strengthen public trust and improve their reputation by prioritizing the well-being of the communities they are meant to serve. Crucially, law enforcement cannot merely impose rules upon a community they must uphold those rules *on behalf* of the community. Legitimacy, in this context, involves more than just legal authority; it is about making the exercise of power feel justified, especially when it requires individuals to act against their immediate interests. Legal authority and the capacity to use force are not, on their own, sufficient. What matters most is whether community members view the police as having the rightful authority to enforce laws and maintain order.

Managing any a police department is uniquely complex. Unlike private organizations, state-sponsored agencies cannot pursue self-serving goals, freely allocate their resources, or define their own missions; they must operate within the constraints of public law and democratic accountability (Wilson, 2000). Managing a police department introduces an additional layer of difficulty. Unlike military or corporate structures, policing often lacks true unity of command, especially in large departments where top leadership has limited visibility into the day-to-day actions and decisions of street-level officers. Police leaders, in particular, face structural and practical challenges: they have limited capacity to guide or assess the highly specialized, context-specific training

required to prepare recruits to respond effectively under pressure (Simon, 1997). Their authority is often more administrative than operational. Furthermore, leaders are expected to show unwavering support for officers facing difficult or controversial situations, even when full information is unavailable. At the same time, leaders must carefully navigate the political landscape, balancing internal solidarity with external accountability. They are tasked with shielding the department from political fallout while also maintaining credibility with their rank-and-file officers. All of this must be done while resisting external pressures, whether from elected officials, advocacy groups, or private interests, that may be seen as threatening the department's autonomy or cohesion (Simon, 1997).

Acknowledging that some have argued that any definition of democratic policing is inextricably intertwined with ideological priors, I advance a working definition of 'democratic' policing that aspires to be apolitical. As Manning explains, drawing on empirical work that will be discussed below, 'conservative' policing theories, often based on 'broken windows' and related ideas, are more grounded on ideology, 'not rigorous academic research' about how to reduce crime (Manning, 2003). Further, historical forces around race and ethnicity have without question shaped policing in America. Evident racial disparities in the application of policing tactics means that some groups are more likely to be victims of mismanaged police violence. Both of these realities are considered when developing a working definition of what is meant when describing the 'democratic' application of police violence.

I argue for a working definition of democratic policing that acknowledges the realities of the challenges officers face, the empirical research around patterns/practices, and the historical forces that have shaped structural disadvantages disproportionately

suffered by historically marginalized persons.² I posit that relatively high levels of state-sanctioned violence directed at discrete groups likely reflects gross government overreach and that equal treatment regardless of race, class, gender, or other attributes should be the norm. Whatever the ‘right’ conception of policing, the job still calls for the use of coercive force in limited circumstances. Officers must sometimes compel citizens to act in ways they otherwise would not, ranging from minor requests to major impositions, including employing deadly force at times to protect themselves or others. Even when legally justified, the use of force frequently generates public resentment and hostility toward law enforcement. The central challenge lies in regulating police use of force and ensuring that it is applied appropriately, fairly, in narrowly defined circumstances, and in pursuit of legitimate objectives. When force is constrained in this way, it can mitigate, though not fully eliminate, community hostility toward police actions.

In popular culture, the debate around the appropriate use of police violence is often stymied by the perception that police frequently make ‘split-second’ decisions in the face of unexpected threats or aggression and cannot be expected to reason through potential de-escalation tactics. The legal framework for this view is set forth in U.S. Supreme Court cases such as *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985); *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989); and *Scott v. Harris*, 550 U.S. 372 (2007). Fagan and Campbell (2020) note that much of the empirical basis for the framework in these cases is based upon James Fyfe’s (1986) *Split-Second Reasoning*. But Fyfe’s account was not only more nuanced than is commonly supposed, it also shows how the ‘split-second’

² I also do not consider the model employed by Geller and Toch (1996) to be sufficient for defining abuse of police violence: not only is it dated, but there are also issues with how a department can ‘justify’ violence that need to be reconceptualized.

narrative can become an after-the-fact justification for mismanaged police violence. Indeed, Fyfe's view on officer decision-making was embraced without deep scrutiny in Justice O'Connor's *Garner* dissent. A former NYPD officer, Fyfe warned that while quick decisions are sometimes necessary, 'split-second' reasoning can also justify excessive force after the fact. He suggested courts should consider whether safer alternatives existed instead of glorifying an officer's choice to shoot. This suggests the reliance on split-second justification in such cases may be flawed.

I do not deny the reality that situations requiring 'split-second reasoning' do occur in policing. But it is important to note that less than five percent of arrests nationally are for violent offenses, which suggests that dangerous interactions that require split-second reactions and decision-making are not as common as the public supposes. (Just as an example: No such 'split-second' narrative applies to Derek Chauvin's interaction with George Floyd, an encounter that was far more the norm than the stereotypical 'split-second' interaction.) Nonetheless, this narrative of 'split-second' reactions informs much of the current legal framework governing the use of police violence.

Because the lack of specificity around what is 'reasonable' and empirical work that focuses on 'reasonableness' may both invite and exacerbate inequities, I argue that appropriate use of police violence has three characteristics.³ The first is that it is predictable. The public should understand that there are certain situations where police will likely use violence to achieve compliance and others where police will not use violence. Whether violence is necessary may be context-specific, but it should not be an

³ I have in large part derived these from the *Task Force on 21st Century Policing, President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (2015).

arbitrary determination. Second, violence should be measured or limited—that is, no more oppressive or forceful than is required to achieve compliance and resolve the immediate conflict or situation and, hopefully, employed only when all other means of handling a problematic situation have failed. Though this necessarily means that the use of force depends in part on the actions and reactions of the subject, this principle would presume that serious violence or loss of life at the hands of police should be rare, because an officer is using only that much force necessary. Police decisions to use force must hinge on conduct, not demographic characteristics. And there must be an underlying assumption that violence is a tool of last resort, and a presumption that officers attempt in good faith to de-escalate encounters to avoid the use of violence if possible.

The working definition of the democratic application of police violence employed in here adopts a definition of democratic police use of force that aligns with Kane's (2014) view that police organizations should cultivate internal cultures that prioritize safeguarding human life above enforcing the law. The current uproar over police violence in the United States, which in part sparked this investigation, calls for further investigation into how departments understand and constrain their monopoly on violence. But the need does not just arise from present circumstances. The current institutional and cultural arrangements of police departments are the result of a long historical evolution, but they have resulted in (or at least have often countenanced) excessive police violence, both historically and today. The issue concerning America's history of police abuse, especially as directed at minority groups, can best be explained by historian Khalil Muhammed's statement that 'the problem is the way policing was built' (North, 2020). There is no inherent contradiction in an institution serving as both an extension of the state's monopoly on violence and a bureaucratic entity governed by rules, norms, and professional standards. However, too often, police who are entrusted

with the authority to exercise legalized coercion over communities, fail to embody the competence, integrity, and accountability that citizens reasonably expect from any institution wielding such significant discretionary power over the use of force. In fact, U.S. history is rife with examples of police misconduct, including brutality and corruption (Berghahn, 1982). Even today, officers frequently respond with excessive force and overstep their authority (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Rios, 2011). The killing of Mr. Floyd (and resulting unrest) is just a recent example of how a failure to control and channel police violence leads to dire consequences, for individuals and society (Yan and Fantz, 2015; Razek, 2020; Goldstein and Schweber, 2014).

B. RESISTANCE TO RESTRAINT

The killing of Mr. Floyd also highlights the failures of various methods that police departments have employed to control police violence and instill professionalism in trainees. Again, from the point of view of one interested in police departments as institutions with distinct cultures and organizational imperatives, it is striking that Chauvin was a field training officer, charged with initiating newly graduated officers into the methods of street-level policing. Field training officers and other mentorship-centered programs have been, in recent decades, among the most common means by which police departments try to carry out their duty to train new officers and to channel the use of force by the police into acceptable, legitimate forms (Jenkins et al., 2021). Yet the Floyd incident seems to confirm what many observers have long suspected: that these programs have been unable to overcome other currents within policing that encourage unrestrained police violence, specifically socialization from peers including the very same FTOs that departments charge with training new officers.

These currents include resistance to restraint among the ‘middle management’ of policing, the sergeants and mid-level administrators within departments most responsible for training new recruits, as well as pertinent institutions such as police unions. In addition, the militarization of police that has occurred over the past four decades or more, in terms of weapons, tactics, and training that primarily take their cues from military models, has worked at cross-purposes with other innovations designed to help curtail police violence (Kraska, 1993; Kappeler and Kraska, 1997). As a result, FTOs and other tactics meant to ameliorate police violence may have unwittingly amplified it by putting a kind of imprimatur on police tactics and practices likely to lead to continued unrestrained violence. To encapsulate one lesson Officer Kueng *might* have learned if the cameras had not been rolling on that fateful day in Minnesota: if the FTO subdues the suspect in a non-violent crime by kneeling on his neck until he ‘chokes out,’ that must be an acceptable use of violence. That lesson learned would have been put into practice in the future and transmitted to future trainees with whom Officer Kueng interacted. Through lessons like this, reforms meant to restrain police violence (such as the institution of FTO programs) instead perpetuate it. Later chapters return to this paradox through social-learning theory, which explains how formal mechanisms meant to restrain misconduct can, through imitation and reinforcement, reproduce it.

C. THE MISSION OF POLICING

Standing behind the question of how officers are or ought to be trained is the larger question of the standard to which officers should be trained. That is, looming behind all this is the question of what characteristics or models we want officers to embody. Two themes run throughout modern consideration of this question: the supposed difference

between the ‘warrior’ cop and the ‘guardian,’ models that tend to dominate popular conceptions of police.

Throughout movies and television shows where American policing is at the center of the plot, as well as in real life encounters captured on cell phones and posted on social media, the figure of the commanding, and sometimes aggressive, officer tends to resonate more deeply with many Americans than the model of a competent, rule-abiding civil servant. Yet, what policing arguably needs most is precisely that deeper sense of professionalism, which can serve as a check on the use of force. Max Weber (1922) famously argued that professionals gain authority through specialized expertise and mastery of a specific knowledge domain. The 2015 report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, formed under President Obama in the wake of Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson, Missouri, another modern-day example of police violence that caused substantial unrest, identified two core failings in modern policing: lack of accountability in the application of force, and fractured relationships with many communities across the country (President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). If resolving the current policing crisis requires both a reduction in excessive violence and the rebuilding of public trust—goals that are, in my view, equally crucial and inseparable—then reimagining officers as Weberian professionals may offer a promising path. This would mean developing a police force characterized by stable, pragmatic, and rule-governed actors, whose relationships with the public are based on legal equality and whose career-driven professionalism enables them to perform their duties effectively. The expanded theoretical model developed in Chapter 3 treats this professional mission as a social-learning environment: recruits observe, internalize, and replicate their trainers’ interpretations of when force is legitimate and when restraint is expected.

Just as society expects a level of professionalism from the state's principal domestic force-wielding body, police officers themselves often seek, and at times insist upon, acknowledgment of both their paramilitary and professional roles. This desire for recognition surfaces in various ways, such as through the advocacy of police unions or the evolving interpretation of what constitutes 'command presence' (Skolnick, 2002); Stoughton, 2015).⁴ One could argue that this pursuit of dual recognition is a contributing factor in police violence. When either identity is overlooked or misrepresented, officers may perceive it not just as disrespect, but as an imposition of a narrow or degrading image of their work. In such circumstances, the often-criticized 'warrior' identity, frequently used to disparage modern policing, risks becoming a reality through repetition, ultimately shaping behavior in accordance with the stereotype.

We should first consider what the desire for recognition through command presence actually reveals. While there is no single, standardized model for the police use-of-force continuum, most begin with command presence—an officer's arrival on the scene to assert lawful order (NIJ and BJS, 1999; Stetser, 2001). But this concept carries an implicit, often overlooked layer. There is a palpable difference between being the approachable officer on the beat and projecting a dominating, looming presence over others. The way command presence is embodied reflects deeper assumptions about the role of policing itself. Officers who adopt a 'warrior' stance interact with members of their communities in markedly different ways than those who see themselves as 'guardians.' The visual impact of tactical gear and military-style weapons, combined

⁴ 'Command presence' refers to the visual and behavioral projection of official authority in a given encounter, through elements such as the officer's demeanor, uniform, equipment, and patrol vehicle. It also functions as a tactic to elicit compliance from individuals without the need for physical force. In most use-of-force frameworks, command presence is recognized as the initial step in the continuum, setting the tone before any escalation is considered (NIJ and BJS, 1999; Stetser, 2001).

with collective memories of violence or firsthand experiences of aggression, transforms the warrior's presence into a signal: failure to immediately and fully comply may be treated as a challenge to authority, one that invites consequences, sometimes even violence meted out. When this dynamic plays out with civilians, especially inner-city young men for whom mutual respect is paramount, it is easy to see how everyday encounters can escalate into conflict.

The dual identities of policing (paramilitary and professional) often seem trapped in unsatisfying extremes. On one hand, there is a strong pull toward the use of force; on the other, a responsibility to regulate it. These opposing impulses both reflect real aspects of the institution, which functions as both the state's authorized wielder of violence and a bureaucratic agency bound by rules and procedures. This tension prompts the search for a model of policing that can reconcile these dimensions. In the public imagination, two overarching conceptions of the police profession tend to emerge. The first is the 'warrior' officer, evoking the ethos of a soldier prepared to carry out a mission: to 'deploy, engage, and destroy' threats to public order, echoing military doctrine.⁵ This image, while troubling, is the one most often reinforced through media representation (Waddington, 1993).

Beyond the 'warrior' officer, the second way of conceptualizing the police mission is through the lens of the 'guardian' officer, an ideal figure who upholds the duty to 'protect and serve' and builds a respected, stable career rooted in the legitimacy granted by bureaucratic authority. This perspective moves beyond the combative framing of the warrior model, offering instead a cohesive and purpose-driven understanding of

⁵ More precisely the U.S. Army soldiers' creed reads in part: 'I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life. I am an American Soldier.'

the profession. Unlike the warrior, the guardian is guided by clear objectives that align with the broader societal role of policing—goals without which the institution itself would lose its significance. After all, a sense of purpose is central to how law enforcement agencies make decisions and justify their actions. Indeed, in practice officers often justify their actions by appealing to their department’s overarching goals, but typically only after a course of action has already been chosen (*See Paoline, 2003*). While, in theory, the act of apprehending individuals aligns with broader objectives like public protection, rehabilitation, and deterrence, the decision to arrest in the moment is frequently driven by instinct or immediate situational judgment, rather than a conscious alignment with those aims. Savvy officers distinguish themselves by navigating unpredictable encounters with judgment and adaptability.

At the same time, the role of a police officer inherently involves participating in a system of coercion. The job is undeniably difficult, officers are routinely required to direct or compel individuals to take actions they may not want to take, whether the resistance is minor, verbal, passive, defiant, or even violent. This resistance, in its many forms, can easily become a source of strain and hostility for those in uniform. In certain communities especially, the day-to-day reality of police work can be deeply distressing. Behind every harrowing news story is an officer who had to respond in real time, often under extreme conditions.⁶ While effective policing requires authority, skill, and presence of mind, we should question at the outset whether anyone should serve as a front-line officer for the entirety of a career, given the emotional and psychological toll it takes.

⁶ Headlines related to policing: Moynihan (2014) ‘Pimp who dismembered woman after watching “Dexter,”’ *New York Times*; Luperon (2025) “‘I shot that b— in the face’: Ex sentenced for killing woman outside day care, now must face trial for strangling deputy,’ *Law & Crime*.

Focusing too heavily on the ‘professional’ mission of policing often creates a disconnect between administrative ideals and the lived experience of officers on the ground. Conversely, an overemphasis on the ‘paramilitary’ mission can isolate street-level realities from broader organizational goals and obscure potential avenues for reform. Yet these two dimensions are inherently linked. To overlook the mindset specific to policing, the way officers perceive and interpret their role, is to risk fracturing the institution itself. A fuller understanding emerges only when we pay close attention to the subtle, moment-by-moment decisions that shape officer behavior. The core issue is not simply the function or end goal of policing, but rather how officers conceptualize their role in relation to that function. Likewise, the fact that police are authorized to use force matters less in isolation than how that authority is understood, embodied, and enacted by individual officers within the department. These dual identities, the professional and the paramilitary, will be examined in greater theoretical detail in Chapter 2 section F, where their interaction is explored as a structural foundation for how police use of force is learned and reproduced.

D. THE CENTRAL ROLE OF FTOS

The aim of this research project is to shed light on an understudied and key actor in the socialization of officers into the culture, norms, and attitudes of a police department, the field training officer (FTO). Given their unique role in training recruits, it seems critical to explore the different ways that FTOs, specifically, understand their own role in training new officers in how to use violence and how this self-understanding contrasts with department leadership expectations and perceptions.

If, as is widely believed, the answer to the question, ‘Why are the police excessively violent?’ is ‘police culture,’ then gauging how FTOs understand these

critical issues of violence and restraint seems central. After all, few are as effective in transmitting to new officers a set of expectations, norms, methods, and attitudes (especially toward violence) than the trainers who train officers in the details and byways of street policing (Roithmayr, 2016). The current investigation starts by asking FTOs to look into a mirror, as it were. That is, the first research task is to understand how FTOs themselves understand their role, and what models and examples they privilege in policing. Specific questions are posed: What is FTOs' conception of the ideal officer? How do FTOs perceive themselves and their role in training officers in the use and abuse of violence? How does that contrast with how the department leadership perceives the FTO role? And finally, how do these conceptions, attitudes, and values play out in actual training? These questions are explored through three empirical chapters. Uncovering misalignments between police leaders who set the policy on when violence should be used and those socializing and training new officers on the use of violence will both identify an area where departments need to focus resources and confirm the hypothesis that FTOs are playing a key role in socializing the use of violence, but in ways that may not reflect departmental policy around de-escalation or conform to democratic norms.

Answering these questions is the task of this study, which is built on hundreds of hours of semi-structured interviews and ride-along observations with field training officers and police leaders in three U.S. cities: Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; and Montgomery, Alabama. Understanding how FTOs view themselves and their role in shaping police culture will necessarily require some review of the external forces and institutions that press on policing and that impact how these officers understand their role, especially as relates to training officers in the use and abuse of violence. This study aims to review the literature on policing in democratic societies, police self-perception, and explanations for why police violence has continued to persist. Special attention is

paid to social learning literature, emphasizing that law enforcement agencies are ecosystems and that officers socialize behaviors and culture to their peers. This investigation then focuses on the gap around our understanding of the values and attitudes of FTOs, one key agent of social change among officers. The methodological design introduced in Chapter 3 builds on these conceptual foundations through a multi-method approach combining semi-structured interviews and ride-along observation. This design makes it possible to trace how abstract norms of legitimacy translate into situated teaching moments during field training.

This investigation is critical, not simply because of the urgency of the present moment, but because of the vital importance of preserving the legitimacy of law enforcement in a democratic republic. In order to both understand why police violence has been uncontrolled, and also to find practical ways to instill a greater sense of restraint and respect for the sanctity of life among police, we must first understand police and their culture. And to understand police, we need to understand how FTOs, who train the next generation of police and are in many ways the flag bearers of police culture, understand their role within the police ecosystem. Understanding how internal mechanisms such as FTOs perpetuate excessive violence provides a starting point for developing badly needed policing reforms that can prevent incidents like the death of Mr. Floyd. These incidents tear at the foundations of police legitimacy and cause citizens, especially minorities and the poor, to be alienated from police.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

This investigation proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I define and then attempt to map the scope of ‘police violence.’ The literature about police violence is vast. But prior to discussing relevant literature on how police in America control violence in their ranks, it

is important to define what we mean by ‘violence.’ My definition draws—though it also departs significantly from—existing literature, attempting to take into account the fact that not all police violence is unnecessary or unjustified, even though the use of violence always carries within it the seeds of potential abuse.

Then, with special attention to the American context, I recount relevant literature on who is impacted by police violence and to what extent. Next, I discuss several different factors identified in empirical and historical studies that both help inform the origins of the existing police culture and newer developments such as police militarization that help to preserve the status quo. I then discuss departmental policies around use of violence and different formal departmental mechanisms that are employed to control police violence, as well as the impact of social learning on teaching new recruits how to apply violence in the field. My review of the literature highlights the scarcity of research and analysis on field training officers, key actors responsible for both culture-bearing and socialization of officers. It identifies a critical gap in understanding the role of FTOs in the social learning that occurs within a police department.

Chapter 3 then aims to describe my working theory that FTOs are the underappreciated linchpins in socializing new police recruits into a department’s culture as it relates to the use and management of violence, but that their potential to help control police violence is compromised by misunderstandings about their role. That is, FTOs are among the most important actors responsible for the socialization of new recruits; departments perceive FTOs as leaders to new recruits; but there is a misalignment between how departments and FTOs understand the role, specifically as to their attitudes around the administration of violence. This mismatch is a central factor in departments’ abilities to transform their culture and constrain and manage violence effectively. Further, this chapter describes the research methods utilized, how the interview

instrument was used, and how consent was obtained. This chapter also describes my positionality as it relates to this study. The chapter concludes with disclaimers about the limitations of my investigation. Chapters 2 and 3 together provide the conceptual and methodological scaffolding for the empirical analysis. Chapter 2 maps the theoretical and comparative landscape of police violence, while Chapter 3 details this study's theoretical grounding in social-learning and legitimacy frameworks and the multi-method design used to capture FTOs' and leaders' perspectives.

Chapter 4, the first empirical chapter, is designed to gain in-depth understanding of FTOs' and police leadership's perceptions relative to the following question: How do FTOs and police leaders understand the role of the FTO within departments? This chapter provides a thematic analysis of observations and the responses of department leaders and FTO interviewees to a series of defined, repeated questions that seek to understand police leadership and FTO perceptions of what characteristics define a good officer, department leader, and FTO. The questions also seek respondents' candid views on whether the FTO position is perceived and treated as a leadership role. In this chapter first emerges what becomes a major theme of this investigation: the critical importance of notions of 'prestige' to police culture. It appears that one major hindrance to using FTO programs to effectively control police violence is FTOs' own perception that the position is not prestigious, as compared to other positions where violence is central that are perceived as being prestigious and are treated as such by department leadership.

The second empirical chapter, Chapter 5, constitutes the heart of the investigation. It investigates how FTOs and police leaders perceive FTOs' role in socializing probationary recruits in the application of violence. This chapter starts with the premise that reduced police legitimacy and legal cynicism has been linked to increases in crime, reduced cooperation/safety, and more violence. Moreover, if citizens

believe that police violence is being meted out arbitrarily, they will begin to withdraw their acceptance of that authority. Therefore, the mechanisms by which police departments socialize their recruits into the use of violence is one of the most important tasks that confront police departments. FTOs are at the heart of this process of culturalization.

Chapter 6 then lays out the difference—what is called here ‘misalignments’—between FTOs and police leaders on issues of socialization and violence. The premise here is simple: if FTOs and department leaders are not on the same page when it comes to the proper application of violence, it is unlikely that any top-down reform designed to curb police violence can be effective. The most striking finding in these interviews was the open cynicism displayed by FTOs when it came to perceptions of the FTO role. Most officers seemed to understand that FTOs play a crucial role in transmitting an agency’s cultural values. Yet, they often displayed distrust about their role and the way they are viewed by higher-ups. This was also true for how participants viewed the role of the FTO in the socialization of new recruits, including the application of violence. This chapter also briefly notes that despite substantial differences in the three cities profiled (in terms of size, racial and socioeconomic makeup, and relevant history), the interviewed officers responded in broadly similar ways, which suggests that the challenges in socializing violence identified here reflect an issue that is not limited to a specific jurisdiction but is wider in scope. That is, despite the evident differences between the three cities, three departments, and three FTO programs, there is general agreement that despite the FTO being among the most critical roles in policing, the best officers are not being selected for the FTO role. Quite the opposite: Often, officers are ordered into the role (a theme I develop later as ‘warm bodies’) despite not having an aptitude for the job or the skills necessary to be a success in it. In large part, this reflects

both the pressures of police staffing and may also reflect departments' focus on specialized units that, perversely, are central in perpetuating what I have termed the older, 'kick-ass' model of policing the FTO program was originally designed to respond to and combat. This mismatch between skills and job requirements has profound follow-on effects for new recruits, who look to FTOs for socialization into the field of policing, particularly how to appropriately use violence in the field. Hence, as one FTO interviewee poignantly stated: 'The rookie will become what the FTO is . . . If you're a violent FTO you will produce violent rookies' (*FTO Interview M011*). It thus appears that the central insight behind FTO programs is correct: these officers really are central to perpetuating departmental culture and inculcating norms and values in new recruits. They are powerful agents of social learning within police departments. They simply are perpetuating attitudes and norms that are frequently at odds with the norms and values the current generation of police leadership want to advance. Instead of effective agents of reform, FTOs appear to have become powerful allies of the status quo in policing.

Fundamentally, this investigation is premised on the assumption that finding solutions to the policing crisis requires focusing on how police actually operate and understanding the incentives and beliefs that drive them, rather than imposing top-down policy making or new legislative proposals.⁷ Police departments are complex human institutions, buffeted by policy and public opinion, shaped by history, and responding to incentives. It is thus crucial to gain insight of the various components of policing in order to assess how changes to them may affect the whole system. This investigation focuses

⁷ This approach challenges the prevailing tendencies of many academics and nearly all elected officials. Academics typically concentrate on the structure, objectives, and funding of institutions, while politicians often prioritize symbolic actions and performative gestures (Posner and Vermeule, 2013).

with particularity on FTOs as a critical but understudied actor within this complex ecosystem.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING POLICE VIOLENCE: DEFINITIONS, GAPS, AND INFERENCES

'De-escalation [is stressed in training] but only if you know how to kick-ass first.' Los Angeles Field Training Officer 08

A. INTRODUCTION

The academic literature regarding both the scope of police violence, and how departments attempt to control it, has a number of gaps. This is surprising, given the critical policy importance of these issues, their salience in popular media, and the apparent scope of the problem. At the threshold, one issue is actually defining what we mean by 'police violence,' which presents both normative and descriptive challenges. With a definition in hand, the second issue is ascertaining the scope of police violence. In 2023, at least 1,351 people were killed by U.S. law enforcement, according to news reporting—which we must necessarily turn to because there is no central and uniform record of police killings (Campaign Zero, 2025). But is that the best measure of police violence, a useful proxy, or simply a red herring? I describe and analyze both of these challenges in this chapter, before describing the mechanisms by which departments attempt to control violence, and assessing their effectiveness.

Prior to discussing relevant literature surrounding how police in America control violence in their ranks, I first define police violence for the purposes of this study. Then, I briefly discuss the scale and pervasiveness of police violence observed in contemporary

policing, both through data that directly tracks violence and through proxies that indicate the pervasiveness of police violence. Next, I discuss how departments attempt to control police violence through recruitment, policy, training, and disciplinary systems. I also highlight different historical or systemic factors that have sustained or exacerbated police violence including unionism, militarization, and socialization. Finally, my review of the literature uncovers the scarcity of research and analysis on field training officers (the central agents of social learning in departments), who turn out to be key actors responsible for both the appropriate use of violence and socialization of officers. This review reveals a critical gap in how departments understand the ways in which they attempt to control police violence, specifically vis-à-vis social learning.

B. DEFINING POLICE VIOLENCE

Any consideration of efforts to control or manage police violence must start with a clear definition of what police violence is. The definition turns out to be surprisingly nebulous, combining as it does both descriptive elements (what police conduct constitutes violence) and, inevitably, normative elements (is all violence bad, or is some justified?).

The term ‘violence,’ to most people (and especially, one senses, to non-Americans) has an inherently negative connotation: physical force used coercively for illegitimate ends. This might be described as ‘police brutality’ or, in terms more amenable to legal analysis, ‘excessive force.’⁸ But to the extent ‘coercion’ is inherent in the notion of physical force, this study posits that there are some coercive applications of

⁸ Stetser (2001) discusses the complexities surrounding police use of force, particularly in the context of managing violent situations. Stetser explores the conditions under which force is applied, emphasizing that decisions to use force are shaped by a mix of situational factors, policy guidelines, and individual officer discretion. The work underscores that while force may sometimes be necessary to control violent incidents, its use is a deeply consequential choice that can impact public perceptions of police legitimacy and trust.

force by police that are legitimate, even if they are potentially problematic as a matter of community relations and important to control, channel, direct, and render accountable. An officer who tases a suspect on the verge of hurting himself or others; the use of a strike or hold to bring an unruly person to heel; using a vehicle as a ram to stop a dangerous fleeing suspect in a car chase—these are all examples of legitimate violence, of physical coercion used for reasonable, pro-social ends.

I thus consciously use the term ‘violence’ in a non-standard fashion, to mean the threat or application of physical force to hurt or kill in order to achieve compliance. I include the ‘threat’ of physical force in my definition of ‘violence’ because I believe the affront to personal autonomy involved in threatening physical force is only marginally less serious than the actual application of physical force. Indeed, in a democratic republic that prizes personal liberty above all other goods, there is little to distinguish between the threat and the actuality of force in terms of the humiliation attendant on compliance.

But pervasive or seemingly uncontrolled violence, even if legitimate in discrete instances, has the potential to undermine police-community relations and can cause the public to question or even withdraw the grant of authority to use violence that makes policing legitimate in a democratic republic. Violence, even justified, carries costs: it harms the person subjected to it and can quickly deplete the reservoir of good will. The wise police leader knows that violence must be used sparingly to avoid violating democratic norms, even if particular instances of violence meet the generous test for legality. Thus, the channeling and control of even legitimate violence should be a central concern of police leadership.

This study's understanding and use of the term 'violence' is best understood as a reference to 'power' and 'coercion.'⁹ Power refers to the ability to have individuals change their behavior. Coercion is described by some scholars as 'hard power,' using one's discretion to generate a hierarchy over another. 'Soft power,' by contrast, structures relationships by aligning people's values with one's own (Stetser, 2001). Put another way, power is the authority to use violence, while coercion is the act of using power.

A seminal piece of work on coercive power is Muir's 1977 book *Streetcorner Politicians*, where he identifies the challenge of police wielding coercive power and the inherent paradoxes associated with that coercive power employed for the ends of justice (Muir, 1977). Muir explains that officers must resolve these contradictions of achieving justice via coercive means in their daily activities and interactions with citizens. Moreover, officers' training environment, including and maybe especially time spent with an FTO, is instrumental in developing virtuous officers who use coercive violence in just ways. Therefore, placing particular acts into buckets labelled 'good violence' and 'bad violence,' or 'justified' and 'not justified,' does nothing to address the central question of this investigation: how do police *control* violence via FTO socialization, direct it toward just and legitimate ends, and minimize the costs associated with police violence?

Admittedly, the definition of 'police violence' is contested, and my definition is hardly the only one scholars have employed. For example, Albrecht's (2017) typology uses the concept of police deviance, which is broken down into corruption, criminality,

⁹ Further for the purposes of this investigation, 'police violence' is not used as a synonym for 'police brutality' or what is more formally known as 'excessive force.'

excessive use of force, abuse of authority, and police misconduct (Albrecht, 2017). Abt, in his 2019 study of police violence in urban areas, restricted his definition to only include use of force ‘that results or could result in serious injury or death’ (Abt, 2019, p. 4). However, adopting these definitions in this study of police violence could restrict our analysis to the most serious but least common incidents, while ignoring whole categories of violence that are omnipresent and have more baleful day-to-day effects on police-community relations. These include, for example, intrusive stop-and-frisk policies, rampant use of tasers, chokes and holds, and the use of police dogs. These are all tactics that have strained police-community relations in recent years, but yet might represent in some instances the legitimate use of violence in the pursuit of just ends.

C. UNDERSTANDING THE SCALE OF POLICE VIOLENCE

One challenge in understanding how police control and manage violence is the difficulty of determining exactly how common it is. The federalist system of the United States—which largely devolves the policing power to states and localities, with no centralizing entity to dictate standards, practices, and reporting—makes it virtually impossible to identify statistics regarding police use of force across the United States.¹⁰ This is further an outgrowth of a general problem, which is that it is extremely difficult to measure both the inputs and outputs of a police department. Police are in that class of officialdom that Wilson (2000) calls a ‘coping’ agency, meaning that police work is bureaucratic but highly discretionary, with its daily activities often unreported, even in the face of official

¹⁰ More than 20 years ago, Congress mandated that the U.S. Department of Justice should collect national data on police use of force, but did not require local agencies to participate in the data collection. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 14142. As a result, some departments do not collect and report data, some only collect data on fatal incidents, and many use widely disparate definitions of ‘force,’ ‘excessive force,’ and other key terms (McCann et al., 2017).

reporting requirements (Wilson, 2000). Consequently, the day-to-day activities of individual officers, including their use of violence, is often preserved in the fragmented, and sometimes traumatized, memories of bystander eyewitnesses, police officers, and those who are the targets of police violence.¹¹

1. Impact of Police Culture on Attitudes and Aggression

Various scholars have made the connection between attributes of an organizations' culture and tendencies for violence. For instance, a foundational contribution to the study of police culture comes from William A. Westley's (1953) research in *Violence and the Police*. In this seminal work, Westley argues that the use of violence by officers stems largely from the nature of their job and the shared values within their peer group. Within this internal culture, the use of force is not only normalized but often viewed as ethically justified based on standards set by fellow officers, rather than by legal frameworks. The group's shared goals and understanding of the job often serve as a stronger source of legitimacy for violent actions than formal legal principles. Officers come to see force as a tool that belongs to them personally—something they may exercise at their own discretion.

Eugene Paoline (2003) built upon this research by challenging the notion of a uniform police culture. He proposed instead that law enforcement agencies are shaped by a variety of overlapping subcultures, each reflecting different values, roles, and experiences within the profession. Paoline (2003) created a conceptual framework that outlines what is often referred to as police culture, including its origins, guiding norms,

¹¹ Crowd-sourced data on police shootings that exists suggests that endemic abuse of force has continued through the past decade, yet counts are riddled with semi-reliable information (*See e.g.*, Finch et al., 2023).

and resulting behaviors, and he explored alternative perspectives that challenge the assumption of a single, uniform occupational culture within policing. Understanding police culture is critical due to its pervasive influence on the routine practices and decision-making of street-level cops. Scholarly work frequently characterizes this culture in a negative light, with numerous researchers identifying it as a central impediment to effective institutional reform efforts within law enforcement agencies (Paoline, 2003). Paoline (2003) also points out that scholars have constantly observed that initiatives aimed at increasing police accountability frequently encounter resistance rooted in occupational culture and that this resistance is often linked to informal norms discouraging officers from reporting misconduct by their peers, the pervasive 'blue wall of silence' that can obstruct internal investigations and external oversight (Paoline, 2003). Yet at the same time, Paoline (2003) noted that police culture also has benefits. Like in many professions, the shared norms and collective identity within policing can provide emotional and psychological support to officers in managing the challenges presented by the job. Additionally, the cultural transmission of occupational knowledge, often conveyed informally by veteran officers, serves as a practical means through which both new and continuing members of the force learn how to operate effectively in the field (Paoline, 2003). This notion is quite explicitly an operating assumption of this investigation.

Research also suggests that masculinity contest culture, a pervasive element of policing, can breed aggressive behavior throughout the organization (Matos et al., 2018; Buhrig, 2024). With men comprising approximately 73 percent of the policing workforce in the United States, and considering the field's historical emphasis on aggression, control, and resilience, law enforcement institutions may be particularly prone to fostering masculinity contest cultures (FBI, 2019, table 74; Buhrig, 2024). These

environments often uphold ideals that glorify strength and dominance, discourage vulnerability, demand unwavering dedication to the job, and reinforce hierarchical authority. Research and observations set forth here give a glimpse into this: the ways in which officers are moved to act, how they embody certain emotional states, and how they interpret the meaning of their environments, implicitly revealing how they perceive the control of violence and, more broadly, how they conceive of their professional identities. This perspective is what I describe and explain in more detail in Chapter 4 as the self-perception of policing: a shared, often intuitive understanding among officers about their place and function within the social order (*i.e.*, police culture.)

Pertinent to the topic of organizational culture in policing, James Q. Wilson (2000) emphasized that each bureaucratic institution develops its own distinctive culture, an ingrained, consistent framework that shapes how members of the organization understand their roles and relationships (Wilson, 2000). This internal logic often stems from professional norms that emerge when individuals with similar training or shared backgrounds come to dominate an agency (Wilson, 2000). In policing, organizational culture has been the ‘x’ factor in shaping officer behavior (Brehm and Gates, 1997). But departments, as noted, vary widely across a range of characteristics and approaches that shape culture, and the resulting cultural differences influence the degree of enforcement, professionalism, and the style of policing practiced. Some departments may lean toward aggressive enforcement, necessitating reform strategies that reinforce legal accountability and constrain excessive use of authority. Others (possibly less common in the United States) may struggle with underenforcement, calling for reforms that support officer discretion and prioritize the maintenance of public order in fragile environments.

Some scholarship on the organizational behavior of police agencies challenges the idealized view of much of police leadership, where personnel are selected based on

merit, insulated from political pressures, and guided by hierarchical rules established by publicly accountable leaders. For example, David Alan Sklansky's (2005) research on the evolving demographics of policing draws attention to the often-overlooked internal impacts of these phenomena, particularly shifts in subcultural norms, collective identity, and institutional insularity. These organizational dynamics, while less studied, may hold the greatest significance for meaningful reform. In the end, effective policy is not defined by legislative intent or public rhetoric, but by how it is understood and applied in daily practice by rank-and-file officers.

Scholars like Kaufman (2006) suggest that street-level discretion is not a flaw in bureaucratic systems but a necessary feature that, when properly managed, can support rather than undermine control. Rather than depending solely on rigid oversight, effective governance stems from the alignment of external incentives and internalized values. Recruitment and training processes tend to attract individuals who already align with the agency's goals, helping to foster a culture that filters out misaligned actors and reinforces commitment. In applying these ideas to policing—as Kaufman (2006) did with forest rangers, formal rules (both proactive and reactive) are designed to guide behavior while evolving in response to field realities. Meanwhile, informal norms and professional identity shape officer conduct from within. This dual system can be productive but is not without drawbacks. Overreliance on internal culture for control and the inculcation of norms risks insulating the department from external accountability, stifling adaptability, and diminishing officers' ability to navigate public expectations, which can conflict with internal incentives and priorities. As other scholars have pointed out, personal interactions in the field (in our case via the field training program) often reshape how policy is deployed, raising concerns about unpredictability and making street-level discretion untenable (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody, 2003).

Tools and tactics also have a kind of cross-pollination effect on culture, with pervasive use of militarized weapons and tactics both reflecting and shaping departments' culture. Connections between access to military-grade equipment and the proliferation of violent culture within law enforcement have been documented. A 2017 study examining the U.S. Department of Defense's 1033 Program—which facilitates the transfer of surplus and obsolete military equipment, ranging from rocket launchers to wire cutters, to civilian police departments—identified a correlation between such transfers and increased aggressive behavior among officers (Delehanty et al., 2017). The findings suggest not only a broader cultural shift toward militarization within departments that received this equipment, but also a tangible manifestation of this culture in police-public interactions. Importantly, departments that acquired equipment through the 1033 Program were associated with a measurable increase in fatalities stemming from officer-involved shootings, indicating a statistically significant link between militarized policing and lethal outcomes (Delehanty et al., 2017). This phenomenon was found to be elevated in low-income neighborhoods and racial minorities (Kraska, 2007; Lawson, 2018).

Moreover, embedded within the broader framework of the culture of police militarization is a distinct subculture that explicitly draws its prestige from its connections to violence (Kraska, 2007). Specialized tactical units, such as SWAT teams, tend to attract certain officers who are drawn to the perceived prestige and intensity of high-risk operations. These individuals often see themselves as part of a select group within law enforcement, mirroring the way elite military units are regarded within the armed forces (Kraska, 2007). This self-image is bolstered by a thriving entertainment industry that glorifies their work. The subculture is characterized by a focus on heavy weaponry, specialized attire, advanced technology, and a hypermasculine identity that

emphasizes control and combat-readiness. For officers who align with these values, the appeal can be powerful (Kraska, 2007). Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, these tactical officers are often admired by their peers, leading to the gradual diffusion of this subcultural mindset into the wider policing culture and environment through processes of socialization and informal influence.

Their relative prestige within the larger organization helps to broadly disseminate, for example, the subcultural mindset specific to specialized, militarized policing units. In this investigation, prestige turns out to play a striking role in creating culture, by creating a set of informal (and in some cases formal) incentives and blandishments that individual officers respond to and conform their behavior to. Research on police organizational culture and use of force indicates that officers often tailor their actions and attitudes to reflect what they believe is acceptable or encouraged by their leadership (Alpert and Dunham, 2004; Lawson, 2018). Much like in other organizations, officers learn their roles not only through formal training and written policy, but also through ‘cues’ dropped by more experienced personnel, especially in the distribution of organizational resources and promotions (Geller and Toch, 1996; Getty et al., 2014; Lawson, 2018). Guidance from supervisors and the influence of senior officers also help to shape the decision-making of newer recruits, who gradually adopt the dominant attitudes and practices of the more experienced officers around them (Lawson, 2018). When training programs emphasize a militarized officer identity, officers may begin to interpret their responsibilities as involving control and domination rather than community engagement. These ideas are often passed along through training officers and supervisors, becoming embedded in daily routines and peer interactions (Roithmayr, 2016; Getty et al., 2014). Relevant to this investigation, as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, many of the agency leaders interviewed in this study came from specialized

tactical units, and a number of field training officers viewed those units as being uniquely important and helpful to career advancement. This finding in this investigation appears to confirm a trend seen nationally, in which former SWAT members are more likely to be promoted over peers who have not spent time in specialized units (*see* Kraska, 2007; *see also* Balko, 2013).¹²

The increasing militarization of police culture can be traced to both the practical operations of departments and the influence of internal authority structures. Officers are not simply shaped by policy, they are molded by a combination of personal predispositions and the institutional environments they operate within. Individuals who already hold militaristic views may be more inclined to seek out law enforcement careers. Once they join, the perspectives that brought them to policing are reinforced through informal mentoring, shared experiences with seasoned officers, and a leadership culture that valorizes aggressive, combat-style policing and informally promotes from within the specialized units that reflect this mode of policing (Alpert and Dunham, 2004; Lawson, 2018; Stoughton, 2015). In this way, both pre-existing beliefs and the department's internal norms contribute to the formation of a militarized mindset. This internalization of values has implications for how officers use their discretion in the field. While each officer makes decisions independently, those choices are informed by the collective attitudes of their peers and superiors.

A note on bureaucratic terminology is also important here. In what follows, the terms 'department,' 'organization,' 'institution,' and 'agency' are used interchangeably to describe the bureaucratic entity of the state responsible for applying coercive power to

¹² As will be noted in Chapter 8 in the discussion of the need for future research, there is a notable absence of research indicating that officers with SWAT experience (or other specialized experience of that kind) are promoted more often or more quickly. This is an area calling out for further research.

maintain domestic social order. But technically, of course, they delineate different bureaucratic entities. For instance, generally, ‘department’ tends to imply the conventional notion of a police force; ‘organization’ highlights the internal structures, norms, and rules that shape officer behavior; and ‘institution’ or ‘agency’ emphasize either the bureaucratic character of the entity or its place within the broader context of public administration. My use of the phrase ‘police departments’ primarily refers to municipal agencies, as reflected in the examples and research cited, although the term generally encompasses other agencies such as county sheriff’s offices as well. In contrast, the term ‘officers’ is used broadly to include personnel from both police and sheriff’s departments, covering sworn individuals engaged in patrol duties, investigative roles, and specialized assignments such as narcotics. The label ‘officers’ applies to frontline personnel, sergeants (or first-line supervisors), and command staff at the rank of lieutenant and above, with specific ranks indicated where relevant.

These terms can all be important to understand the bureaucratic ecosystem in which a ‘department,’ or an individual officer, operates, since it plays a role in shaping police culture generally. But one should never give in to the temptation to ascribe too much to these categories. Police organizations exhibit emergent properties that are not the product of any single actor’s intent, and their outcomes are often not deliberately designed. For example, the militarization of police is maybe better understood as an evolving trend rather than a consciously crafted initiative by leaders or lawmakers. As a recognizable pattern, it allows for the identification of general principles and retrospective value judgments. However, because police departments operate as complex systems, any efforts to intervene or propose solutions must be approached with care, mindful of the interdependencies within the system and the potential ripple effects of change.

2. Police Killings of Civilians

Determining the pervasiveness of police violence (however defined) turns out to be surprisingly difficult. There are few comprehensive measures or centralized data collection entities tracking ‘violence.’ So one must turn to proxies.

Deadly police shootings are one obvious proxy measure for police violence; certainly, they are high profile and tend to attract the most public comment. Homicides are universally considered a useful gauge for measuring trends of violence in general, because they tend to correlate with other forms of violence, and also tend to be more comprehensively reported (Eisner, 2008). In the same way, police homicides are the paradigmatic measure of violence within the policing profession, due to it being the only class of violent crimes where we can be somewhat confident regarding their reporting and statistics.

There is no national, government-run, centralized database of deadly police shootings that covers an extensive period of years. For example, in 2016 the FBI attempted to build a database reporting fatal and non-fatal use of force by police. The result was so evidently marred by underreporting and data collection shortcomings that the then-director of the FBI, James Comey, termed the effort ‘embarrassing,’ and more recent iterations of this data set have been derided as evidently incomplete (Peeples, 2019). Of itself, the fact that no such database exists may well be indicative of a serious ‘mindset’ issue. Governments count what they care about, and the lack of a sophisticated database regarding police killings could be telling us something about our government’s priorities.

In the absence of comprehensive FBI data, the best government source is the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, which in a 2018 report on police use of force identified a slight but steady upward trend in deadly police shootings from 2005 to 2015 (USCCR,

2018). But again, the fact of police violence, even deadly police violence, does not alone mean that the use of force was unjustified or excessive. So, this measure, while illuminating, is not dispositive of mismanaged police violence.

Journalists and non-governmental organizations have played a critical role in trying to close the data gap left by government failures, crowdsourcing and collecting reports of police shootings and civilian deaths. Most notably this effort includes a reporting venture from the *Washington Post*; Campaign Zero's 'Mapping Police Violence' campaign; and the initiative Fatal Encounters. In 2020, the *Washington Post* combed local police and press reports nationally and determined that there were 999 deadly police shootings in the U.S. in the prior year. That number has climbed every year since, reaching 1,164 in 2023 (Washington Post, 2024). The initiative Fatal Encounters found that black, American Indian/Alaskan native men, and Latino men face higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than white counterparts (Edwards et al., 2019; Feldman, 2019). Finally, Campaign Zero, a grassroots advocacy/policy organization that creates open data platforms aimed to end police violence, compiled the data across the three platforms in addition to other miscellaneous sources.¹³ While the data may come close to the numbers reported by the FBI, other investigations have rendered the issues around underreporting to the FBI (Fischer-Baum, 2014). One investigation found that some deaths, including the high-profile deaths of both Eric Garner and Tamir Rice, were missing from the FBI data of police killings (Swain and Laughlin, 2015).¹⁴ In 2017,

¹³ Campaign Zero argues that it has the most comprehensive dataset accounting the people killed by police since 2013. They highlight that 'while there are undoubtedly police killings that are not included in our database (namely, those that go unreported by the media), these estimates suggest that our database captures 92 percent of the total number of police killings that have occurred since 2013' (Campaign Zero, 2025.)

¹⁴ Thus, while the Campaign Zero Mapping Police Violence dataset nears the FBI numbers, it is important to understand the limitations relating to underreporting to the FBI.

Campaign Zero reported 1,147 deaths caused by police, and by 2023 that figure had risen to 1,329, the highest annual total the organization has recorded since it began tracking the data in 2013. Other important findings include that most killings began with police responding to ‘suspected non-violent offenses’ (including 89 traffic-related offenses), and that the majority of unarmed people killed were people of color. Specifically, Campaign Zero found that blacks ‘were more likely to be killed by police, more likely to be unarmed and less likely to be threatening someone when killed’ (Campaign Zero, 2025).

While acknowledging the limitations of data from advocacy/grassroot organizations with an overt policy agenda, a recent Columbia Public Law Research Paper that was published in the *Boston University Law Review* helped validate these findings through developing a standard of ‘reasonableness’ for officer shootings, finding that

black suspects are more than twice as likely to be killed by police than are persons of other racial or ethnic groups; even when there are no other obvious circumstances during the encounter that would make the use of deadly force reasonable (Fagan and Campbell, 2020).

Data on non-fatal shootings and incidents of police violence have yet to be compiled on a large-scale level but one investigation that obtained department data (including non-fatal incidents) found even more concerning disparities. Looking at data across America’s 50 largest cities, one news investigation found that there were more than 4,000 shootings between 2000 and 2016, the majority non-fatal. Moreover, 20 percent of non-fatal incidents involved unarmed persons (higher than fatal) and that 55 percent of all non-fatal shootings involved black Americans (more than double their rate in the general population) (McCann, 2017).

3. Arrests of Police for Misconduct

Another possible proxy for determining the prevalence of excessive police violence or use of force is to analyze prosecutions of police for such violence. A comprehensive 2016 study of arrests of sworn officers found that between 2005 and 2011, there were roughly 1,000 arrests of police officers a year, with the most common category of crimes being related to police violence (*i.e.*, police battery) (Stinson et al., 2016).¹⁵ In addition, Kraska and Kappeler's (1995) work analyzed the situational opportunity police have with relation to vulnerable populations (primarily women) with, at times, little or no direct accountability. Although not always cross-listed with typical police violence per se, sex crimes are unmistakably part of the same power dynamics and relatively frequent: 1,475 arrest cases of 1,070 sworn officers in the years 2005 to 2011 (Stinson et al., 2016).

This type of quasi-corruption has lasting effects on a police department. On the street level, even one case of police corruption or abuse can turn a community's (or in the George Floyd case, an entire nation's) view of their police department from public servants to an occupying force (Syed, 1997). This has baleful effects on police effectiveness. Eroded police legitimacy increases crime in a community, since untrusting citizens are less likely to call for an emergency, will refuse to serve as witnesses, and so forth (Fagan and Campbell, 2020; Roth, 2017; Tyler et al., 2015). But ultimately, arrests of police officers are likely not a particularly useful way of gauging the extent of police violence, since so few incidents result in an arrest.

¹⁵ 5,545 sworn officers were arrested in the U.S. between 2005 and 2011.

4. Over-Policing and Falling Crime Rates

One of the more puzzling phenomena in recent years has been steady rates of police use of force and violence, even as crime rates have been in a multi-decade freefall. Indeed, crime rates, including violent felonies, rose steadily from the 1960s to their crescendo in the 1990s and then fell in almost every category until 2020, by which point they were all down by half (FBI, 2024). While there were slight increases in violent crime due to the severe economic and external shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, crime rates since appear to have continued their decline (Council on Criminal Justice, 2024). This trend is germane to the central questions of this investigation: Is there something about the way departments are socializing new recruits that explains the more or less continuous rise in police killings, the best proxy we have of rates of police violence, despite the fact that crime rates (and thus the need for police-civilian encounters) have fallen dramatically (Campaign Zero, 2024)?

Various explanations have been posited for the dramatic fall in crime rates in the past 25 years.¹⁶ For present purposes, however, the important point is that the aggressive policing tactics that are more likely to lead to police violence remain prevalent despite the fall in crime rates (USCCR, 2018). NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani credited ‘broken windows’ policing for New York City’s drop in crime while others pointed to the use of CompStat, but the actual effect these tactics had on the drop in crime rates is hard to

¹⁶ Probably the most popular explanation is the widespread adoption of ‘broken windows’ policing in cities across the country during the 1990s. A second common explanation for the dramatic decline in the crime rate is that more people in the aggregate are aware of the community relations component of policing than in previous periods. Building relationships with the community eases local officials’ discomfort about contacting the police force, as people are more likely to report problems to members of institutions of policing that they know. A third explanation championed by John Donohue and Steve Levitt (2019) is that the rise in abortions contributed to the decreasing rates of violence and crime. They argue that the sociocultural effects of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 started to unfold in the early 1990s, as single mothers ill-equipped to rear infants began to abort children who were at greater risk of becoming future delinquents. Each of these explanations has its fair share of people who doubt its importance.

disentangle from the drop that occurred nationally, and empirical evidence suggests that tactics like stop and frisk have little impact on crime reductions (MacDonald et al., 2016). Moreover, literature finds that proactive policing actually may increase crime, not prevent or reduce it (Sullivan and O’Keefe, 2017). Recent empirical work renders the ineffectiveness of these types of policing tactics, only showing the disproportionate impact on communities of color and little impact on improving safety and reducing crime (Sullivan and O’Keefe, 2017).¹⁷ Nevertheless, despite crime rates decreasing, more than 95 percent of arrests are for non-violent offenses and victimizations not reported to the police remain high, with little change over 20 years in terms of proportion to offenses reported to those not reported (Vera, 2019).

To complete the picture, we must look beyond America’s crime drop and its influence on domestic policing policy, situating it within the broader global decline in crime rates to advance this investigation’s argument about policing culture and training. The developed world has seen a dramatic decline in crime rates since the early 1990s (Farrell et al., 2014; Tonry, 2014). Crime rates moved in remarkable parallel across countries: after rising from the 1960s to the early 1990s, indices of both violent and property crime plummeted in North America and Western Europe thereafter (Tonry, 2014). If the decline was largely driven by societal and technological changes rather than enforcement tactics, then the persistence of aggressive, high-contact policing, taught and reinforced through field training and departmental norms, reflects institutional inertia rather than necessity. Examining international patterns therefore helps clarify whether

¹⁷ Zimring (2008) claims that relatively superficial changes in urban life (*e.g.*, aging population) can be associated with up to 75 percent of the drop, not major societal overhauls.

over-policing stems from genuine strategic effectiveness or from deeply ingrained professional habits perpetuated through FTO socialization.

The fact that crime dropped in parallel across so many countries points to common structural causes. Indeed, most researchers examining the crime drop conclude that changes in policing or punitive policies were not the primary drivers of the decline (Tonry, 2014). For instance, Farrell et al., (2014) evaluated seventeen proposed explanations for the crime drop (including shifting demographics, expanded incarceration, fluctuations in drug markets, and even the removal of lead from gasoline) and found that only one clearly aligns with the cross-national evidence: improved security limiting criminal opportunities. Specifically, this ‘security hypothesis’ posits that innovations like anti-theft car immobilizers and more effective household locks substantially reduced opportunistic crimes such as vehicle theft and burglary, which in turn drove down overall crime (Farrell et al., 2014). Since property crimes constitute the bulk of offenses and often serve as an individual’s entry point into criminality, their sharp decline likely produced a ‘knock-on’ reduction in violent crime as well (Farrell et al, 2014).

Equally important, the broad-based nature of the crime drop undermines claims that aggressive policing strategies were the crucial factor. The decline occurred in nations with widely divergent law-enforcement and penal policies. Indeed, some (preeminently the United States) embraced ‘zero-tolerance’ policing and mass incarceration, while others maintained more restrained approaches. But virtually all experienced similar downward trends (Tonry, 2014). This cross-national evidence casts doubt on narratives crediting tactics such as stop-and-frisk or broken-windows policing for large crime reductions, given that comparable declines unfolded even where such tactics were absent or minimal. In short, while effective policing can help maintain order,

the global data indicate that the great crime drop was fundamentally not a policing-driven phenomenon (Tonry, 2014). A consensus in the literature holds that whatever the true causes of falling crime rates may be, they lie chiefly outside the realm of ordinary law enforcement tactics (Tonry, 2014; Farrell et al, 2014).

Outside of the United states and explored democracies in Europe, evidence of declining crime has also emerged: India is an applicable example. According to official statistics, India has witnessed significant decreases in both violent and property crime rates since the early 1990s (Verma et al., 2019).¹⁸ The timing of India's crime decline broadly parallels the post-1990s pattern seen in the West. However, domestic perceptions in India have been skeptical of this apparent progress. A common claim is that police forces 'play the numbers game' by under-reporting or reclassifying incidents to artificially deflate crime figures (Verma et al., 2019). This claim is put to an empirical test by examining crime data across numerous Indian states and districts (Verma et al., 2019). Their analysis finds that the downward trends are broadly consistent nationwide and not confined to just a few areas, suggesting that the decline reflects a genuine reduction in crime rather than a statistical artifact of manipulated reporting. This reinforces that the phenomenon of falling crime extends beyond Western nations (Verma et al., 2019).

Overall, situating the U.S. experience within this global context underscores the case for a cautious view toward over-policing. The fact that crime has plummeted across diverse societies largely due to forces external to policing calls into question the necessity of extraordinarily proactive or heavy-handed tactics as a means of achieving public safety. Put simply, if crime was destined to fall due to broader social changes,

¹⁸ One notable exception is the category of crimes against women, which has not followed the general downward trend.

then aggressive strategies like routine stop-and-frisk or ‘zero-tolerance’ crackdowns were neither the decisive cause of improved safety nor evidently required to sustain it. This sharpens the central puzzle highlighted here: why, in an era of declining crime, have police use-of-force rates and fatal encounters remained troublingly high? The persistence of high levels of police violence despite much safer streets suggests a disconnect between actual public safety needs and entrenched policing practices. It underscores the importance of examining how police culture, training, and institutional incentives might be perpetuating aggressive behaviors independent of genuine crime trends. In sum, the global crime drop provides critical context for this investigation’s need to scrutinize what internal dynamics within policing organizations may be driving continued aggressive practices in a time of unprecedented overall safety.

5. Racial and other Disparities in Enforcement and Use of Force

In understanding how mismanaged police violence impacts the legitimacy of policing in a democratic republic, we need to consider not simply the rate of mismanaged police violence, but also who is most frequently at its receiving end. Here, the data are clear: the poor and communities of color are disproportionately the targets of policing tactics that are seen as harassing and intrusive, and are disproportionately the targets of police violence.

In New York City, for example, stops pursuant to the city’s ‘stop-and-frisk’ program grew by 603 percent between 2002 and 2011, or about 700,000 stops that year (Mummolo, 2017). Ninety percent of the suspects stopped in those years were nonwhite, in a city that is a little more than 40 percent white (Mummolo, 2017). Nationwide, minority drivers are stopped and interrogated for often trivial vehicle operation offenses—broken taillights, speeding or driving too slowly, improperly tinted windows,

etc.—at a rate that far exceeds the rate for white drivers, and these stops are more likely to turn into full-blown searches and interrogations (Pierson *et al.*, 2020).

Studies investigating police misconduct, including incidents of excessive police use of force, generally establish both that excessive force incidents are relatively common, and disproportionately impact racial and ethnic minorities. As data has become more readily available through different methods, so has our understanding of the extent and seriousness of the problem of police violence. In 2020, a hallmark empirical study on the disproportionate impact of police violence on blacks highlighted the need for evidence-based studies to better understand how departments control violence (Fagan and Campbell, 2020). The authors of this study suggest that training needs to be reconsidered and that color-blind approaches are not sufficient.

Smith and Holmes found that cities with higher percentages of black and Hispanic residents had significantly higher rates of complaints of excessive police use of force that were sustained (Smith and Holmes, 2014). Another study found that the vast majority of arrests (> 80 percent) are for low-level offenses and that while blacks comprise 12 percent of the population, they represented an estimated 28 percent of all arrests (Vera, 2019). Specifically, they also find that black Americans were 2.39 times more likely to be arrested for ‘drug abuse violations’ (Vera, 2019). Roland Fryer found that blacks and Hispanics were 50 percent more likely to experience some form of non-lethal use of forces during a police stop than persons of other races, with context and civilian behavior reducing, but not fully explaining, those disparities (Fryer, 2017). In almost every context, minorities are the targets of police enforcement strategies/contact at rates that exceed their prevalence in the population or among the ranks of criminal offenders.

6. Global Prevalence, Patterns, and Comparisons

Police violence is not unique to the United States, many democracies struggle with excessive force and tense police-community relations (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). However, the scale of lethal force in the U.S. far exceeds that in other wealthy nations (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). As noted above, the exact number of people killed by police in the United States is disputed due to inconsistent reporting, but one estimate suggests that U.S. police killed approximately 8,767 people between 2013 and 2020—and 1,139 more in 2021 alone (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). In contrast, other democracies record far fewer fatalities: Canada saw about 254 *police-involved deaths* from 2013–2020, and some countries (e.g. Finland, Norway) have gone years with zero police killings (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). In England and Wales—where most officers do not carry guns—police have fatally shot only 87 people in total since 1990 (Inquest, 2025). These stark differences suggest the U.S. is an outlier in its *lethal* use of force, even as issues of brutality and bias exist globally.

i. Organizational Structure and Oversight Mechanisms

A structural difference is the organization and oversight of police forces. Most OECD countries have more centralized police systems than the highly fragmented U.S. model (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022).¹⁹ For instance, Sweden maintains a single national police force, and England and Wales use regional forces that must still meet national

¹⁹ The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental body composed of 38 member countries committed to democracy and market-based economies. Established in 1961, the OECD serves as a forum for nations to exchange policy experiences, identify effective practices, and coordinate domestic and international strategies to promote economic and social progress. Because its members are largely wealthy democracies with comparable institutional frameworks, including professionalized police systems, the OECD provides a useful benchmark for cross-national comparisons involving the United States.

standards on training and misconduct investigations (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). By contrast, the U.S. has roughly 18,000 law enforcement agencies with no single set of standards (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). Scholars argue that centralization enables uniform professional standards and accountability, whereas America's decentralized oversight contributes to uneven practices (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022).

Beyond the internal organization of police forces, the degree of external oversight represents another structural dimension of policing. Centralization often coincides with clearer accountability mechanisms, making it important to consider how independent complaints bodies and review authorities fit into the broader organizational landscape. Denmark is an example of centralization: it has a national police under the Ministry of Justice and an independent police complaints authority established by law in 2018 (Denmark, 2025). This Danish Independent Police Complaints Authority investigates all serious incidents (deaths, serious injuries in custody), though critics note that very few complaints result in criminal charges against officers (Denmark, 2025). India's police are organized at the state level but operate under a legacy of centralized, colonial-era statutes. Recognizing problems of abuse, India's Supreme Court in 2006 ordered all states to create Police Complaints Authorities (independent oversight bodies) (National Academy of Sciences, 2022). Research shows these court-mandated accountability institutions significantly reduced police human rights violations in the states that implemented them (National Academy of Sciences, 2022). This underscores how external oversight can curb misconduct, although implementation in India has been uneven and some nations—Brazil and South Africa for example—saw similar external watchdog groups having minimal impact when they lacked investigative powers (National Academy of Sciences, 2022).

ii. Understanding Police Violence Across Political Systems

It is important to note that no country is immune to police brutality. Democracies from France to India have witnessed aggressive crackdowns on protesters and minorities. Bias and abuse of marginalized groups by police, whether it is racial profiling in France or mistreatment of indigenous people in Australia, are recurring issues worldwide (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). Thus, international research shows that the underlying drivers of police violence are global, and that countries consistently struggle to implement effective accountability, bias reduction, and use-of-force controls. The U.S. represents an extreme case in terms of police lethality, but the space between official reform efforts and everyday street-level practices is evident in other countries as well (and in some instances widening).

India offers a useful comparison to the United States by showing how entrenched institutional cultures can undermine reform efforts and perpetuate coercive street-level practices. The country's police training and deployment still have deep roots in the colonial era, with an emphasis on discipline and control over community engagement (Verma, 2012). The persistence of this legacy has been linked to recurring patterns of coercive enforcement, including custodial deaths, killings, and the routine use of intimidation or force to maintain order (Joshi, 2005). An example of this can be seen in a recent analysis of police behavior during the COVID-19 lockdowns, where there was documented widespread physical abuse of civilians under the guise of public health enforcement (Shoib et al., 2022).

While these incidents reveal the enduring authoritarian tendencies within Indian policing, they also point to the potential for meaningful reform. A large-scale randomized evaluation in Rajasthan tested several institutional interventions, including training modules emphasizing communication, stress management, and leadership. These

produced significant gains in perceived legitimacy and measurable improvements in public perceptions of the police, suggesting that even within deeply hierarchical institutions, cultural change is possible when reforms target day-to-day behavior (Banerjee et al., 2012). Such findings parallel evidence from the United States, where training that emphasizes interpersonal and emotional competencies has been shown to alter officer conduct more effectively than traditional classroom education (Blumberg et al., 2019).

Building on these observations, scholars have provided deeper theoretical and historical insight into why police violence in India has persisted. For example, Radha Kumar traces the structural roots of custodial violence in India, showing how torture and impunity were normalized across colonial and post-colonial regimes. He argues that such brutality is systemic rather than episodic; a pattern mirrored in other democracies grappling with inherited coercive traditions, including the United States, where policing has long been shaped by the legacies of slavery and racial domination (Kumar, 2021). Complementing this perspective, Sinha and Dutta (2025), highlight the limitations of India's community-policing initiatives, arguing that attempts to reshape police-citizen relations are constrained by resource deficits and cultural inertia within the ranks. Finally, Beatrice Jauregui (2013) situates Indian policing within broader patterns of state authority and public resistance, showing that police power in the subcontinent functions within a landscape of contested sovereignty and fragile public trust. Taken together, Indian scholarship reveals persistent police violence caused by deep structural continuity and uneven modernization, one that reflects the global tension between command discipline and professional discretion but also underscores how colonial legacies, hierarchical organization, and political inertia continue to shape the use of force and the limits of reform.

In Western democracies, police violence is framed less as a symptom of authoritarian excess and often as a question of legitimacy and proportionality. In the United Kingdom, Mark Sanders and colleagues offer rare quantitative evidence that state institutions treat use-of-force reduction as a matter of organizational reform rather than individual misconduct (Sanders et al., 2024). Their evaluation of the 2021–2022 rollout of the national Public and Personal Safety Training program, an initiative emphasizing de-escalation and communication, found an 8 to 11 percent reduction in officers’ weekly likelihood of using force. The finding reflects a policy environment in which police violence is treated as measurable and governable through institutional design. Yet as Neil Basu (2022) argues, the British model’s restraint is not merely technocratic. Rather, it is rooted in Peelian ideals and human rights law, which construct force as legitimate when exercised in service of public confidence (Basu, 2022). This doctrinal foundation situates police violence within a moral framework of accountability rather than mere effectiveness. Wicks (2024) exposes how racial ideology continues to shape British policing, arguing that police violence cannot be dismissed as a breakdown in procedure but must be understood as a structural expression of the racial hierarchies that determine who is policed, how, and to what end.

Across both postcolonial and Western democracies, the persistence of police violence reflects deeper institutional logics rather than isolated misconduct. Regimes may differ in rhetoric (discipline versus legitimacy) but the underlying dynamics of bias, discretion, and impunity remain constant. Viewed through this lens, the United States is neither an outlier nor an exception in kind, but in degree: its levels of police lethality and racialized enforcement represent an intensified expression of the same structural tensions observed elsewhere. Yet the comparative evidence also clarifies what is distinct about the American case: the frequency of armed encounters, the fragmentation of oversight

across thousands of jurisdictions, and the historical fusion of policing with racial and frontier control. Together, these contrasts show that while global patterns of coercion reveal the universality of police violence, the United States illustrates how certain institutional and cultural conditions can magnify it to uniquely lethal effect.

iii. The role of Firearms in Shaping Police Violence

A significant difference between the United States and most other democracies is the prevalence of firearms. In the United States (where there are more guns than people), widespread civilian gun ownership heavily shapes police tactics (Mascia and Brownlee, 2025; Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). American officers are by default armed and trained extensively in firearms use. In contrast, more than a dozen developed countries generally do not arm regular patrol officers at all. For example, UK police typically patrol unarmed, embracing a philosophy of ‘policing by consent’ that ties legitimacy to minimal force. Ireland and New Zealand likewise keep most officers unarmed, deploying special armed units only when necessary.

Even among armed European police, gun use is tightly restricted, and many nations follow the European Convention on Human Rights standard of force being ‘absolutely necessary,’ a higher threshold than the U.S. constitutional standard of ‘reasonable belief’ of danger (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022). In practice, this means deadly force in Europe is used only as a last resort: For example, warning shouts and shots are required in Denmark before firing at a suspect. Further, as will be discussed below, American officers’ mindset and training often prioritize officer safety in a high-threat environment, where officers are trained to assume every civilian has a gun. Anglo-European models, conversely, put greater emphasis on de-escalation, communication, and public trust. Indeed, European police academies allot far more hours to conflict management; for example, German training teaches how to avoid using force, and

Japanese cadets must study martial arts as an alternative to firearms (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022).

Democracies everywhere struggle with the same tension: police must protect rights while relying on coercion to enforce the law. Whether through colonial legacies, bureaucratic rationalization, or armed exceptionalism, states reproduce violence as a tool of order. The United States simply renders these contradictions more transparent, revealing the fragility of democratic control over state force.

D. FORMAL MECHANISMS FOR CONTROLLING VIOLENCE

Understanding and accounting for the formal mechanisms by which police departments attempt to control violence is complicated by the patchwork quality of policing in the United States. Policing in the U.S. is highly decentralized, since only states (not the federal government) have a general ‘police power’ to regulate behavior and ensure public safety, health, welfare, and morals.²⁰ All told, there are more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States, including municipal, sheriff offices, tribal, colleges and universities, etc. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). While there are state standards set by various states’ Peace Officer Standards and Training boards, agencies often set their own policies and procedures with relatively little oversight from some higher authority.²¹ A department’s autonomy in employing mechanisms to control violence is often substantial.

²⁰ *Metropolitan Life Ins. Co. v. Massachusetts*, 471 U.S. 724, 756 (1985) (‘[S]tates traditionally have had great latitude under their police powers to legislate as to the protection of the lives, limbs, health, comfort, and quiet of all persons’).

²¹ *Hillsborough Cty. v. Automated Med. Lab.*, 471 U.S. 707, 719 (1985) (‘Police powers’ to protect health and safety are ‘primarily, and historically ... matter[s] of local concern’).

The proliferation of different departments—each with its own history, size, training regimen, and overall ethos—makes it challenging to identify external ‘levers’ that can be pulled to influence outcomes around violence, since the mechanisms that regulate (or fail to regulate) violence seem to be embedded within the very structure of police institutions. Moreover, the effectiveness of these ‘levers’ are impacted by the classic principal-agent dilemma common to bureaucracies. One might imagine identifying some discrete factor whose adjustment could demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship with levels of violence: the introduction of new technologies, policy reforms, or evolving social norms. But the individuals responsible for setting policy and ensuring accountability (the principals) rely on frontline officers (the agents) to carry out directives (Eisenhardt, 1989). When the agents’ actions diverge from the principals’ intentions, a phenomenon known as agency loss, it becomes difficult to determine which external variables are truly influencing violence, and which ones are simply coincidental (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003).

Understanding the way formal mechanisms work to control police violence becomes even more complex when we consider that how officers perceive their role in society directly influences their use of force. A simple rational choice model does not fully explain the behavior of police organizations or how these institutions shape the decisions of individual officers. Beyond rules and incentives, factors like values, norms, and culture play a major role. In particular, the unique organizational culture within each police department strongly influences how both frontline officers and supervisors think and act. In addition, it is rarely obvious what an officer should do in any particular incident where force may be required, and that officer’s response may depend on the officer’s personal judgment, experience, and temperament. Despite the complexity of the issue, it is crucial to understand it through a theoretical lens, and just as importantly, to

show that it can be addressed in real-world practice. This is especially urgent given the increasing militarization of police since the 1960s and the steady expansion of police forces since the 1990s (Balko, 2013).

The result of the diversity of policing institutions in the United States is a bewildering array of policies and approaches, which makes it difficult to generalize about how ‘departments’ try to control violence given that ‘departments’ across the United States can range from a small town with a few part-time officers, through the military-brigade-sized ranks of the New York Police Department. Nonetheless, some common threads can be discerned. Though their effectiveness is open to question, generally speaking departments use several formal mechanisms to control violence, including recruitment and hiring standards; departmental use of force policies; academy and field training (the most relevant to this study); accountability and disciplinary policies; and community policing.

1. Recruitment and Hiring

Departments have looked to control the outputs of violence by more rigorously controlling the input of police recruits. Though far from universal, two of the more common approaches are screening for basic intelligence and for higher ‘emotional quotients,’ a measure of emotional intelligence traits such as self-awareness, calm, and empathy.

Indeed, some police departments intentionally overlook intelligence testing or avoid hiring candidates with higher scores due to concerns that the most intellectually capable recruits suffer from the highest amount of turnover (Behling, 1998). This widespread practice was actually challenged in U.S. courts as discriminatory, but a federal appeals court upheld the practice in 2000, calling the policy of not hiring

applicants who scored too high on intelligence tests a ‘rational policy instituted to reduce job turnover,’ even if potentially ‘unwise’ (*Jordan v. City of New London*, 2000; ABC News, 2000). The danger of such practices is homogeneous departments that lack diversity in educational background and intelligence, since they exclude candidates who may be the best fit for, and most likely to enjoy, complex and adaptive roles like policing (Behling, 1998). Literature indicates that individuals with lower emotional quotient/intelligence, or EQ scores, are generally more prone to violence and less likely to intervene when witnessing wrongful behavior in others (Schokman et al., 2014). Specifically, one study recommended that individuals with high scores on general intelligence assessments are best suited for roles that involve substantial problem-solving, grant significant independence to new hires, prioritize learning through experience over prior knowledge, and demand quick acquisition of new skills along with the ability to adjust swiftly to changing job demands, which fairly describes the demands of police work (Behling, 1998).

Quantitative data supports this thesis, showing that better-educated officers are less prone to using excessive force (Rydberg et al., 2010). One study found that officers with college degrees used less forceful means in public encounters than officers with a high school education (Rydberg et al., 2010). By screening out higher-scoring applicants, departments are thus more likely to increase the likelihood of hiring candidates who may resort to aggression and violence to maintain or reinforce their authority.²²

It should come as no surprise that there is a correlation between lower emotional intelligence and a greater propensity for violent behavior (Schokman et al., 2014). Lower

²² For a discussion of the power imbalances that aggressive individuals attempt to establish and the resulting practical implication, see Smith and Brain, 2000. See also Rayner and Hoel, 1997.

emotional intelligence is associated with impulsivity and sensitivity to slights; when people with these tendencies are granted authority, weapons, and the symbolic power of a badge, they may exploit this imbalance to assert control and intimidate others, even those in the community who they encounter in wholly innocuous circumstances (Smith and Brain, 2000). The real-world consequences of these dynamics have been brought into sharp focus by high-profile incidents, including those that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and countless other cities throughout the United States. Hiring officers with higher educational qualifications, which can indicate stronger emotional intelligence and critical thinking abilities, could help create more restrained police forces.

Another widely adopted recruiting tool has concentrated on the underrepresentation of minorities and women within police forces (Ewijk, 2011; Silvestri, et al., 2013; Jain et al., 2000).²³ These efforts build on studies that demonstrate that enhancing diversity in law enforcement can lead to a reduction in police violence (Sklansky, 2005; Smith, 2003). For instance, an analysis of the New York City Police Department from 1975 to 1998 revealed that as the department became more diverse, rates of misconduct declined (Kane and White, 2012).

2. Use of Force Policies

Departments also employ ‘Use of Force’ policies to set acceptable parameters on how and under what circumstances to apply coercion, including physical force. Many of these are derived from models developed by national organizations. For example, the

²³ Ewijk (2011) highlights that empirical studies from the U.S., U.K., and Germany reveal low levels of diversity concerning gender and ethnic background within police departments, particularly at higher ranks.

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the largest organization of U.S. law enforcement executives, has issued a number of reports and policy papers noting that its members have sought guidance on how to best reduce violent encounters by adopting or adapting models such as the National Consensus Policy on Use of Force that was updated in 2020 (IACP, 2020). Departmental policies are important to understand as a key mechanism to controlling violence. Scholarship has found that more restrictive use of force policies are associated with fewer police killings (Fyfe, 1979). For example, research examining the repealing and loosening of use of force policies in Philadelphia resulted in more police violence (White, 2001).

As a matter of federal constitutional law, American police are afforded substantial leeway in the use of force, with courts disinclined to second-guess police tactics. The U.S. Supreme Court has said that the use of deadly force is permitted only when ‘the officer has probable cause to believe that the suspect poses a significant threat of death or serious physical injury to the officer or others’ (*Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 3, 1985). But this standard has proved to be quite forgiving, since the Court also made it clear in a separate case that the reasonableness of police use of force:

must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight.... The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving—about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation (*Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 396-97, 1989).

It should be noted that state supreme courts also provide guidance on acceptable use of force that is sometimes more restrictive, but more commonly mimics the federal constitutional standard as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court. However, observers have noted that even though a use of force by police may be excused under this highly forgiving standard, that does not mean the public will view it as justified (Carbado,

2017). And ultimately, it is the public's view that determines whether police in a democratic republic operate with legitimacy.²⁴

As a result, many jurisdictions have gone beyond these legal requirements to enact use of force policies that exceed the constitutional minimum. Generally, these policies take the form of 'use-of-force continuums.' These guidelines provide officers with a series of potential responses to achieve compliance that graduate in severity and aggressiveness (NIJ and BJS, 1999).²⁵ These models have been criticized as being overly rigid and simplistic, and not reflective of the pace and variety of most police-civilian encounters. These critics suggest that officers should be trained to evaluate a situation holistically and develop plans to resolve it without the use of force or resort to rigid guidelines (PERF, 2016).

3. Transparency and Accountability Systems

Departments have also turned to accountability and transparency measures as a way of controlling violence (Police Crime Database, 2024). One investigation found that police who kill civilians are prosecuted for fewer than two percent of killings (Lopez, 2021). Scholars argue that stronger accountability systems can effectively identify, investigate, and administer discipline, which will also create a deterrence effect to prevent further misconduct (Nagin, 2013).

²⁴ Jackson and Bradford (2010), discussing the factors that contribute to public perceptions of police legitimacy.

²⁵ A model from the National Institute of Justice has levels that proceed as follows: 1) Officer Presence: No force is necessary; Non-threatening verbal commands—for example: 'Let me see your license,' (may increase in volume as necessary.) 2) Empty-Hand Control: Grabs, holds, joint locks, and harder techniques such as punches and kicks. 3) Less-Lethal Methods: Blunt impact from baton or projectile or chemical sprays. 4) Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs), commonly known as 'tasers.' 5) Lethal Force.

Chief among the most salient accountability measures since the community protests in 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri has been the adoption of body-worn cameras to record police-community encounters. Former FBI Director James Comey suggested that a ‘viral video effect’ might lead officers to be less assertive in law enforcement, fearing accusations of excessive force (Lichtblau, 2016). One major challenge is the storage and retrieval of camera footage, which requires enormous (and expensive) data collection capacity, often beyond the means of local police departments (Arnold Ventures, 2020).²⁶

Another major challenge to holding police officers to account is the opaqueness of police disciplinary practices and investigations. Oversight entities (such as civilian oversight boards) have proven unable or unwilling to monitor and constrain the police behavior of street-level agents, even ones as heavily recorded as police officers (Walker, 2005). This is true because civilian oversight bodies often operate under significant institutional constraints that limit their effectiveness in enforcing meaningful accountability (Walker, 2005). Many lack key mechanisms such as subpoena power, independent investigative authority, and sustained political support, all of which are critical for robust oversight (Harris, 2012). Compounding these limitations is the frequent resistance from within police departments, which may actively impede external review processes (Harris, 2012). These structural and cultural barriers hinder oversight not only in cases involving serious misconduct, such as excessive use of force, but also in more routine, discretionary practices like traffic stops, where decisions about whom to stop and why often evade meaningful scrutiny (Epp et al., 2014). ‘Police patrol’ oversight requires exorbitant resources. Moreover, it is occasionally *not* in agencies’

²⁶ Further, there is mixed evidence that recording officers has actually decreased police officers’ use of excessive force.

interests to monitor; in other words, departments might turn a blind eye or even encourage deviant and even bad behavior. As noted below in the discussion on police unions, many police contracts also shield police disciplinary processes from civilian oversight, or even public notice. Many departments are deliberately vague about the process for carrying out investigations of misconduct. Only half of department websites point citizens to information on how to make a complaint (Chanin, 2017). Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia make police misconduct records confidential, while another 15 states limit access to all but the most serious examples of misconduct that result in suspension or termination (Lewis et al., 2015).

In addition, the decentralized nature of U.S. policing makes it easy for so-called ‘bad apples’ to bounce from department to department, even after they are fired. A 2020 article in the *Yale Law Journal* by two law professors found that in Florida roughly 1,100 officers were ‘wandering officers,’ who had moved to another agency after being fired (Grunwald and Rappaport, 2020). The study also found that after being fired, these officers tended to move to smaller agencies with fewer resources in areas with larger communities of color and were more likely to be fired again for excessive use of force or commission of a felony (Grunwald and Rappaport, 2020).

The effectiveness of police disciplinary and accountability measures vary widely, in truth, as widely as one might expect given the diverse and decentralized nature of American policing. But regardless of whether it accurately reflects a universal truth, in many communities, there is a widespread belief that officers are rarely held accountable for misconduct, a perception fueled by a persistent lack of transparency. This opacity erodes public trust, particularly when those who report police abuse receive little to no information about how their complaints are handled internally. Further compounding the issue are legal hurdles that limit access to officer personnel files, making it difficult to

assess patterns of misconduct. As a result, the public remains largely in the dark about whether wrongdoing is concentrated among a few individuals or more broadly spread across units within departments.

4. Academy, Field Training and Comparisons

Police training represents the foundation of professional socialization in law enforcement, encompassing both the formal instruction of the academy and the experiential learning of field training. Together, these stages form the core of how recruits transition from civilians to sworn officers. Yet the structure, duration, and philosophy of police training vary dramatically across jurisdictions—both within the United States and internationally—shaping not only officer competence but also organizational culture and use-of-force outcomes. This section examines the continuum of police education beginning with the academy phase, followed by the field training process, and concluding with comparative international models. Through this lens, it highlights how differing institutional approaches to recruit preparation influence policing style, accountability, and the integration of reform-oriented principles into everyday practice.

i. Academy

While there is no national standard or certification for non-federal law enforcement officers, every state has its own Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) board or similar agency that sets state-wide guidelines or requirements (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). Still, many departments follow broadly similar models that include both academy and field phases. As academy-specific materials from Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, and Montgomery were unavailable, this section instead

summarizes general features of U.S. police academy training based on national data and prior research.

In general, academies provide four to six months of structured instruction designed to teach legal foundations, tactical skills, and departmental policies before recruits begin field training. But there is significant variability across states surrounding the minimum number of training hours required, certification/decertification protocols, administration and more (Buehler, 2021). While the research on training standards is scarce, one investigation found that state POST and training programs are lagging, outdated, and inconsistent (PERF, 2022). In addition to the required POST training, agencies can administer their own additional training. This is the opportunity for agencies to instruct recruits and officers on how policies should be interpreted, understood, and applied theoretically.

This time in the academy represents the formal and institutionalized foundation of officer preparation, covering topics such as use of force, law, firearms, defensive tactics, emergency response, and community relations (Reaves, 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2022). The structure often follows a paramilitary format, emphasizing obedience, discipline, and chain of command, but this approach varies widely by state and department (Stoughton, 2015). According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, nearly half of U.S. academies follow a ‘stress-based’ or ‘military-style’ model, while 18-percent employ ‘non-stress’ or academic models designed to promote critical thinking and problem solving (Reaves, 2016).²⁷

Although the content and tone of academy instruction differ, most states delegate control to training boards, which establish minimum curricula and certification

²⁷ The remaining recruits are trained in a balanced high-stress/low-stress environment.

requirements. These typically include legal instruction (constitutional law, use of force, search and seizure), weapons proficiency, defensive tactics, and procedural justice modules. However, because each jurisdiction supplements their board standards with its own training, the practical application of these lessons can diverge significantly between departments (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020; PERF, 2022).

ii. How Field Training Sits in the Wider System

The FTO phase functions as the extension, and in many ways, the test of academy education. While academies seek to inculcate foundational knowledge and basic proficiency, field training introduces recruits to the realities of patrol work, translating abstract classroom lessons into street-level practice. Ideally, the academy and field phases operate as an integrated continuum: recruits learn legal frameworks and tactical procedures in the academy, and FTOs reinforce and contextualize those lessons under real-world conditions. Yet empirical research shows that this alignment is often imperfect. When FTO culture conflicts with academy ideals, especially regarding communication, de-escalation, or procedural justice, the lessons of reform-era training can be undermined in practice (Haarr, 2001; Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Stoughton, et al., 2020).

Because there are no federal requirements governing this relationship, the integration between academy and field training depends on local leadership and culture. Some departments have sought to bridge this gap through ‘seamless’ curriculum design, such as the Reno Police Department’s Problem-Based Learning model, which explicitly connects academy modules to field scenarios (CPOP, 2007). Others have restructured both academy and FTO programs to emphasize decision-making, emotional intelligence, and legitimacy over compliance-based evaluation (PERF, 2022). This integration, or lack

thereof, largely influences whether the values taught in the classroom endure when officers encounter the realities of the street.

Following the completion of academy and training, departments commonly have recruits proceed through field training of probationary officers, pairing them with mentors who can teach practical policing skills. This is the focus of this study. Field training under mentor officers took off in the 1970s, as a way of creating a bridge between police academy training and practice (Haberfeld, 2002). Field training officer programs pair new and experienced officers from four to 20 weeks, often cycling through various types of shifts and internal departments (Walker, 2005).²⁸

The ostensible goal of FTO programs is, *inter alia*, to show new officers how to put into practice departmental policies and other rules that constrain officer conduct. However, FTO training programs have yielded mixed results in terms of the benefits. True, studies have argued that field training can have *either* a positive or negative effect on the impact of academy training (Haarr, 2001; Mastrofski and Ritti, 1996). New officers may be forced to behave in a way that satisfies the expectations of their new peers, instead of the expectations of the organization (Van Maanen, 1975).²⁹ Getty et al., (2014) linked time with specific FTOs to later misconduct, suggesting that FTOs can socialize officers either into restraint or excess when it comes to police violence. While the scholarship on training is mixed, the issue of the scope and effectiveness of field training specifically is understudied and one that will be further discussed.

²⁸ Field training is crucial, especially since many departments lack ongoing professional development requirements for officers. Although officers receive further technical training after the academy, there are few structured opportunities for them to deepen their understanding of the profession of policing or develop leadership skills for guiding their peers (Reaves, 2016).

²⁹ Further, James Forman (2017) has noted that black police recruits are often pressured to be more aggressive with black suspects, as one way of identifying with the larger police culture and to dispel any suspicion that these officers are soft on crime or criminals.

Further, in understanding how FTOs fit within the broader system of training new recruits through socialization, it is instructive to consider how other professions mentor their novices. Fields such as medicine and education employ apprenticeship-style training, revealing common patterns in professional socialization. Across these domains, researchers note a persistent tension between formal instruction and informal practice: the transmission of unwritten norms. In these professions, mentor evaluations and power asymmetries present challenges that closely parallel those found in policing's FTO programs. Comparing these fields highlights how mentorship dynamics can either reinforce or subvert official training and how deliberate design of mentorship structures can shape organizational culture.

In medicine, newly graduated doctors undergo residency under senior physicians, akin to a multi-year apprenticeship. Formally, residencies teach clinical skills, but sociologists have long noted a 'hidden curriculum' of unspoken norms and behaviors that trainees absorb from mentors and clinical culture (Hafferty, 1998). Often, not everything taught in medical school aligns with what residents see in practice. For example, while compassion and communication are preached in classrooms, veteran clinicians may model detachment or cynicism under stress. This can be conceptualized as the informal system of norms and practices that operate alongside formal instruction, an influential form of socialization that reveals how work is actually done, often in tension with official rules. (Hafferty, 1998; Lehmann et al., 2018). Tellingly, over half of medical students in one study reported disconnects between what they were explicitly taught and what they observed in mentors' behavior (Lehmann et al., 2018). This mirrors policing: an academy may extol de-escalation and community engagement, but a rookie on the street might instead learn a very different ethos from a hardened FTO. Notably, medical institutions have recognized these risks and begun implementing formal

coaching and mentorship programs to illuminate and correct the hidden curriculum (Lehmann et al., 2018). By encouraging mentors and trainees to reflect on discrepancies between official standards and actual practice, the medical field attempts to better align practical training with professional ideals. The lesson for policing is clear: without deliberate effort, an FTO's informal lessons can either reinforce or subvert academy training.

This phenomenon also rings true in the education sector, where new teachers typically enter the profession through structured induction programs that pair them with experienced mentors. These mentors observe lessons, provide feedback, and help novices navigate real-world classroom challenges. Such programs are intentionally designed to socialize teachers into the profession's norms and culture beyond pedagogy (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). Mentoring serves both emotional and instructional functions, transferring practical knowledge while fostering confidence and retention among new educators (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011).

The parallels with policing's FTO system are clear. Like mentor teachers, FTOs are charged to guide recruits in applying theory to practice while introducing them to organizational culture. Both relationships involve a pronounced power asymmetry: the mentor evaluates the novice and can profoundly shape their career trajectory, much as a probationary officer depends on their FTO's approval to advance. As research on education emphasizes, mentoring is not an ad-hoc role but a professional skill requiring oversight and development. All mentoring relationships, after all, are power relationships: mentors control access to opportunities and networks, and mentees inevitably adapt to those expectations (McWilliams, 2019).

This dynamic carries both risk and reward: on one hand, power asymmetry can be abused, yet so too a strong mentorship can greatly accelerate professional growth and

instill positive values. Because proteges tend to emulate their mentors, if a mentor exemplifies integrity, skill, and sound ethics, those qualities will propagate; if a mentor displays cynicism or misconduct, that too can be passed down. Policing is no different: an FTO wields outsized influence on a rookie's attitudes and behavior. Indeed, police scholarship increasingly recognizes the FTO as a linchpin of cultural socialization who can shape a new officer's approach to the job for years to come (Getty et al., 2014). To prevent abuses of power and counteract regressive habits, institutions introduce ethical guidelines, training for mentors, and evaluation mechanisms for mentorship programs (Ragins, 1997; McWilliams, 2019). In policing terms, this means establishing clear standards for FTO conduct is crucial for transmitting practical skills and professional identity, yet it can also entrench old norms or power hierarchies if those norms are institutionalized within an FTO program. Situating police field training within a broader comparative context of police training underscores how formative this mentorship period is for new officers. It is during field training that the lofty principles taught at the academy are either engrained or eroded in practice.

iii. International Models of Police Training

Police training programs around the world vary dramatically in duration and content. The U.S. generally requires significantly fewer training hours than other advanced countries. A typical American police academy lasts about 21 weeks, averaging roughly 806 hours of basic training (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022; Buehler, 2021, World Population Review, 2024).³⁰ In contrast, many European countries demand two to three years of training before an officer is fully qualified. For instance, Finland and Norway treat

³⁰ On average academies 'spent the most time—seventy-one hours—on firearm skills, compared with twenty-one hours on de-escalation training . . . and crisis-intervention strategies' (Cheatham and Maizland, 2022).

policing as a multi-year college program, and recruits spend two to three years on a mix of classroom education and supervised field internships, often earning a diploma or degree in policing (World Population Review, 2024). These longer programs allow extensive coursework in law, ethics, and communication, alongside practical skills. Notably, Norwegian cadets do a year of field placement after their second year of study as part of a three-year degree. In the United Kingdom, it generally takes two years to become a police officer. For instance, the Metropolitan Police of London offers two main entry routes for new constables: a three-year Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship for applicants without a degree, and a two-year Degree Holder Entry Program for those who already have one (Metropolitan Police, 2024).

Virtually all police systems worldwide include a probationary period of supervised field practice for new officers. This stage, though implemented differently across jurisdictions, serves a similar purpose to U.S. FTO programs: linking academy learning and independent patrol by pairing rookies with experienced mentors who assess their readiness for solo duty. Examining international models reveals how various systems institutionalize this critical phase of socialization and professional development.

In England and Wales, new constables undergo a probationary period lasting approximately two years following initial academy training (Home Office, 2019; Cleveland Police, 2021). After initial classroom training, new officers typically enter a tutoring phase of about 12 weeks, working one-on-one with a Tutor Constable in real policing environments (*See, e.g.,* Wiltshire Police, 2025). During this time, they handle calls and incidents under close supervision from their Tutor Constable to show they can work safely and lawfully. Once recruits demonstrate consistent competence, meaning they can perform duties independently without compromising safety or legality, they are granted Independent Patrol Status (*See, e.g.,* Wiltshire Police, 2025). They then continue

under probation for the remainder of their program while being monitored and assessed until they qualify as fully sworn constables. The system is highly structured: national bodies such as the College of Policing oversee curriculum design and quality assurance, setting national standards for training and evaluation (College of Policing, 2022).

However, despite the rigorous structure, surveys conducted reveal persistent issues with tutor selection and preparation, where approximately 70 percent of officers reportedly lack formal selection criteria for Tutor Constables, leading to cases where minimally trained or unenthusiastic officers occupy these mentorship roles (Cockcroft, et al., 2025; Chandler, 2021). Many tutors receive only limited mentor instruction, often one or two days, and some begin tutoring shortly after completing their own probation (Cockcroft et al., 2025; Chandler 2021; HMIC, 2002).³¹ This uneven implementation mirrors challenges found generally in the United States, and consistent with this investigation, where FTO selection is often ad hoc and (as discussed later) amounts to finding ‘warm bodies’ to fill the role. The British example therefore illustrates that even within a more cohesive national framework, the quality of field mentorship depends on institutional support, leadership prioritization, and consistent investment in field training.

In Scandinavia, particularly Denmark, field training is deeply integrated into the broader education and employment structure for new officers. Recruits are hired as probationary employees upon admission to the Danish National Police College, where they undergo a roughly three-year program combining academic study with extensive field internships at police stations (Politiskolen, 2013). The model integrates academic study with structured field training, combining theoretical instruction with practical

³¹ HMIC, Training Matters is a 23-year-old report illustrating that, like the United States, the United Kingdom has long grappled with fundamental issues in police training, including inconsistent standards, inadequate tutor preparation, and the absence of clear selection and evaluation criteria for field training officers (tutor constables) (HMIC, 2002).

experience in police districts. The program's problem-based design aims to produce officers who demonstrate both intellectual understanding and operational competence. Field modules are embedded within the three-year professional bachelor's degree rather than taking place as a separate, post-academy FTO stage (Diderichsen, 2017). This integration of learning and fieldwork exemplifies a holistic approach to police professionalism that contrasts with the more segmented American model.

But not all Scandinavia countries are created equal when it comes to field training. In Sweden, for instance, the balance between classroom and field training has shifted dramatically over time. Between 1972 and 1985, recruits spent about 70 percent of their education in the field, but today that figure has dropped to roughly 20 percent (Hjertström Lappalainen and Nordström, 2025). Hjertström Lappalainen and Nordström (2025) argue that this reduction has marginalized practical training and widened the gap between theory and practice. Shorter and less structured field placements, vague learning objectives, and inconsistent supervision have, they suggest, devalued the experiential knowledge and professional judgment developed through real policing. As a result, recruits may graduate with strong academic preparation but limited socialization into the realities of frontline police work (Hjertström Lappalainen and Nordström, 2025).

Turning to a non-European democracy, India's police training varies across states and ranks but generally follows a lengthy, paramilitary-oriented structure. New constables typically receive nine to twelve months of academy instruction followed by three months of field training and a probationary period under senior supervision (Wahab, 2024; Times of India, 2025; *see also, e.g., Yadav vs. State of M.P.*, 2016;). Despite the length and structure of Indian training, studies indicate that the curriculum continues to prioritize hierarchical command and compliance rather than community engagement or de-escalation (Wahab, 2024; Verma, 2010; BPRD, 2020). These findings

echo broader critiques of India's policing culture, which remains influenced by colonial-era statutes such as the Police Act of 1861 and retains a highly militarized orientation (Verma, 2012). Nevertheless, ongoing reform initiatives, including Supreme Court directives for independent Police Complaints Authorities, represent efforts to enhance accountability and modernize professional standards (BPRD, 2020; Verma, 2010; *see e.g., Singh v. Union of India* (2006)).

Taken together, these international examples reveal that the fundamental objectives of field training (translating classroom instruction into effective practice and socializing recruits into occupational norms) are widely shared across systems. What differs is the degree of institutionalization, quality control, and cultural emphasis. The British model underscores the importance of national oversight and structured mentorship, but also warns of the pitfalls of undervaluing the mentor role. The Danish approach integrates academic and practical elements to foster both judgment and capability. The Indian experience highlights the enduring influence of militarized traditions on training philosophy that permeates across international boundaries. At the same time, India's relatively low firearm prevalence (Karp, 2018) and more centralized police hierarchy differentiate it from the U.S., reinforcing the argument that America's unusually lethal outcomes likely arise from a distinctive combination of decentralization, pervasive civilian armament, and occupational culture rather than from the existence of force itself.

Each model offers lessons for the U.S. context, where the absence of a national police academy or uniform standards produces wide variation in the duration, content, and quality of FTO programs. As in the United Kingdom, many American FTOs receive minimal preparation or compensation, weakening the potential of field training as a professionalizing force. Yet the comparative evidence also suggests that when properly

structured, supported, and linked to institutional accountability, mentorship can function as a powerful mechanism for shaping culture and promoting lawful, reflective policing.

5. Professional Development

Professional development (ongoing, mid-career training that develops the leadership skills of mature officers) might be considered another way to reduce police violence. Yet, studies indicate that many police leaders in police departments receive little to no more professional development than officers who have just completed the academy, which typically only lasts between 16 and 25 weeks, and often even less in smaller departments (Reaves, 2016). Although officers may continue to receive instruction throughout their careers, most of this advanced training is focused on technical skills, such as tactical procedures or equipment use. Relatively little emphasis is placed on developing leadership capabilities or deepening an understanding of policing as a professional discipline. While this lack of leadership-oriented training might raise concerns for most observers—excluding perhaps the most committed advocates of organic organizational order—it appears that this issue has not been the subject of sustained academic inquiry.

The profession, as a whole, appears to accept the notion that professional development is an essential function of education and training in preparing law enforcement personnel with the competencies, ethical frameworks, and standards required for effective policing (Staller et al., 2022). It is also acknowledged that significant limitations exist within existing training models, which often fail to adequately reflect the multifaceted and evolving demands of contemporary law enforcement, and observers agree there is an urgent need to expand and enhance professional development initiatives to better align with the realities of modern policing

(Staller et al., 2022). Yet it remains the fact that many law enforcement agencies provide only the minimum training required by law, such as firearms certification, first aid, and emergency vehicle operation (DeMuth, 2020).

In contrast, a smaller number of departments maintain more comprehensive professional development programs (among the jurisdictions examined in this study, the Los Angeles Police Department appeared to offer a relatively extensive array of training opportunities, Miami-Dade offered a moderate level of programming, and Montgomery exhibited a notable lack of ongoing professional development.) Even in agencies where such training is available, the responsibility often falls on individual officers to identify relevant opportunities, coordinate time away from regular duties, and, in some cases, find ways to fund the costs themselves (DeMuth, 2020). These challenges have been acknowledged for nearly a century, as evidenced by a 1935 publication that noted such issues are particularly pronounced in smaller law enforcement agencies. In these settings, constrained financial resources often result in limited access to adequate training, thereby hindering officers' professional development and potentially compromising their effectiveness in performing essential duties (Brereton, 1935).

Examining the role of professional development in reducing the use of force is essential to advancing the effectiveness and professionalism of contemporary law enforcement personnel (Rydberg and Terrill, 2010). This has been found to be especially true for vulnerable communities most likely to experience police violence, or experience it disproportionately (College of Policing, 2021).

6. Community Policing

Incorporating community policing into a department's mission is widely believed to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the public, which is one posited way to reduce the need for police violence. Unlike traditional policing, which is mostly reactive (focused on responding to crime, collecting evidence, and arresting suspects) community policing emphasizes building safer neighborhoods through outreach, partnership, and prevention programs. Research on police diversity has also shown that having more women and minorities on the force can improve trust between police and the communities they serve, as it makes departments more reflective of the populations they protect (Sklansky, 2005). Indeed, the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University (2016) compiled a broad set of studies, including randomized controlled trials, evaluating the effectiveness of community policing. While the most rigorous studies often show little effect on reducing violence or victimization, the overall body of evidence leans positive. Most community policing programs result in beneficial outcomes, and when negative effects are observed, they tend to come from smaller, narrowly focused initiatives.

Historically, community policing emerged in the United States not only as a reform strategy but as a response to the racial unrest of the 1960s. In the wake of the race riots and the findings of the 1968 Kerner Commission, police departments, most notably in Chicago, sought new ways to rebuild trust in communities of color where relationships with law enforcement had collapsed (Kerner Report, 1968). As Kelling and Moore (1988) describe, this period marked the transition from the 'reform era' to the 'community era' of policing, as departments recognized that the professional model's emphasis on centralized control and reactive enforcement had deepened racial and social divides. The movement toward community policing was therefore as much about

legitimacy as it was about effectiveness. Skogan's (2006) later research in Chicago underscores that the initiative was explicitly designed to bridge racial divisions and restore confidence in the police through partnership, transparency, and neighborhood problem-solving. This historical context reveals that community policing, from its inception, was intended as a legitimacy reform aimed at addressing the racial and social fractures that had long undermined policing's democratic mandate.

Understanding this historical lineage makes its current form particularly relevant. What began as an effort to rebuild legitimacy and trust has, in many departments, drifted toward a symbolic posture rather than a substantive practice. Particularly relevant in the present day is the way that 'community policing' has been rebranded through militarized aesthetics and public-relations theater. As DeMichele and Kraska (2001) observe, this shift has produced what they call (and title their chapter) 'community policing in battle garb,' a paradox in which police promote community-oriented models while simultaneously expanding paramilitary capacity. This evolution underscores a deeper contradiction in reform efforts, an ongoing struggle to balance the rhetoric of partnership with the reality of coercive power. While community policing and militarized policing may seem ideologically opposed, they are not necessarily incompatible in practice. Both approaches have, in the past, been used to reinforce a sense of public order, often serving as a means to legitimize expanded police authority. This overlap reflects the persistence of a control-oriented mindset beneath reformist language, revealing how efforts to restore legitimacy can, at the same time, reinforce state dominance. This does not imply that community policing inherently leads to militarization. However, implementing community policing reforms without addressing the broader issue of controlling state-sanctioned force risks overlooking the deeper structural dynamics at play.

E. FOSTERING AND SUSTAINING POLICE VIOLENCE

As against departments' efforts to control violence through policy, training, and hiring, other countervailing factors work to sustain and exacerbate police violence, blunting the effectiveness of the measures discussed above. These include American policing's racialized history, the effect of police unionization, police militarization, social learning, and the effect prestige has on officers' behavior.

1. History of U.S. Police and Race

The disproportionate and routine deployment of violence is not a modern feature of policing, but a foundational element of the institution from its origins. Furthermore, understanding how demographic, technological, and other exogenous shocks have continued to transform and sustain the legacy of police violence in the U.S. is an important aspect of understanding the challenges of why departments struggle to control violence.

The history of policing in America is inextricably entangled with the social realities of racial injustice and majority control of minority groups. Walker (1980) has suggested that the earliest organized police forces in the United States were Southern slave patrols that hunted down runaway slaves. Muhammad (2010) traces the historical development of the institution of policing in America and how it was employed as a mechanism for social control of black Americans. He asserts that 'black criminality,' a racist narrative developed in the aftermath of the reconstruction era, was 'crucial to the making' of urban policing in America (Muhammad, 2010).

Formal policing in the U.S. began in the colonial era, evolving from militia groups focused on protecting communities from military control (Angell, 1971). By the 1840s, the first formal police forces emerged, building upon the efforts of sheriffs,

constables, urban night watches, and self-policing neighbors who worked together to maintain public order (Angell, 1971). The growth of cities between the Civil War and World War I demonstrated a great need for stronger administrative control of police departments, which were widely corrupt and largely unsupervised (DeMichele and Kraska, 2001). Agents with nearly unlimited discretion abused their power, essentially acting as protection rackets. Reformers targeted corruption by reducing patronage hiring and enhancing the professionalism of recruitment, selection, training, and retention practices, training, and retention practices. After the 1968 Kerner Commission report on widespread riots in American cities, federal grants for law enforcement agencies began with the goal of professionalizing policing (Kerner Report, 1968).

But as critics assert, even if policing no longer operates as explicit agents of racial control, police have often been implementors of racial oppression.³² They argue that policing retains this racial taint even as de jure racial discrimination has been dismantled, pointing to racial profiling, racial disparities in arrests, and especially disproportionate police violence against minorities, especially black men (Davis, 2017). Potentially, even despite the rise of police professionalism, policing's roots as an explicit agent of racial control are important to understanding the prevalence of police violence today. Indeed, statistics show that minority groups are exposed to violent police interactions at rates that far exceed those of whites (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).

³² Consider, for example, the work of Harvard Kennedy School professor Khalil Gibran Muhammad, who described 'tough on crime' policing in northern and midwestern American cities as 'Jim Crow justice in the urban North,' explicitly linking policing with racial codes that dominated life in the American South after Reconstruction. *See* Muhammad, 2010.

2. Police Union Contracts and Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights

Research finds that police unions and associations employ several different mechanisms that work to preserve the status quo and are linked to increased police violence (Rad et al., 2023). Chief among these is collective bargaining rights, or police unionization (Dharmapala et al., 2022; Cunningham et al., 2021).

Provisions in union-negotiated contracts limit meaningful third-party oversight of police violence. For example, one investigation that reviewed 962 police union contracts found that 263 included provisions that require investigators to give notice and permit officers accused of misconduct a ‘cooling off’ period before they can be questioned, which can shield officers from accountability by giving them time to construct an exculpatory narrative (Campaign Zero, 2025). Other common provisions of police union contracts also limit the number of people who can question an officer (usually to one person); the amount of time questioning can take place; and require questioners to be law enforcement officers, which prevents oversight by independent bodies such as civilian review boards. Contracts often require investigators to provide the officer being investigated notice of any potential charges and all access to available evidence (often including body-worn camera footage, if available)—which police are not required to do when questioning a member of the public—and prevent investigators from publicly acknowledging that an officer is under investigation. Other contracts require non-transparent arbitration of misconduct charges, in lieu of potential prosecution, or require sealing or expungement of officers’ misconduct records (Rushin, 2017; Rushin, 2018).

In other states, some of these provisions are actually enshrined in statutes, called Law Enforcement Bills of Rights (LEOBORs) (Rushin, 2017). Generous police union contracts that swathe officers in ample layers of appellate review of any disciplinary finding, have led to officers in some cities remaining on the police force, collecting

salaries despite being adjudged guilty of crimes that include excessive force and falsification of evidence (*See, e.g.*, Meara, (2020)). Similarly, there are several investigations looking at how the same favorable provisions found in union contracts have been enshrined in state LEOBOR legislation (Keenan and Walker, 2005).

Evidence suggests a link between police unionism and higher levels of violence: U.S. Department of Justice statistics indicate that unionized police forces tend to receive more citizen complaints for excessive force and are less likely to have these complaints upheld in after-action investigations (Hickman, 2006; Nelson, 2021). The lack of transparency and involvement of civilian actors in disciplinary investigations can make them vulnerable to the kind of negative ‘social learning’ around uncontrolled violence (Bobb, 2003).

3. Police Militarization

In recent years, the issue of police ‘militarization,’ defined by the American Civil Liberties Union (2014) as ‘arm[ing] state and local law enforcement agencies with the weapons and tactics of war’ has garnered significant attention. But we should be careful to distinguish between police *violence* (which is an irreducible attribute of policing that must be managed) and *militarization*, a phenomenon of specific police departments that expresses itself in tactics and equipment. The two are often paired and can reinforce each other; but they are distinct phenomena and not necessarily dependent. Nevertheless, militarization is often a symptom of the disease of mismanaged police violence, arising, at least in part, because police have failed to successfully control their monopoly on legalized violence.

To understand how police militarization has become so pervasive requires starting with an historical perspective. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

American policing emerged from local militia groups, which were often formed to protect communities from external military control rather than to impose it (Angell, 1971). By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, police departments faced a different challenge: widespread corruption and a lack of meaningful oversight (DeMichele and Kraska, 2001). As in any decentralized institution subject to strong political influence, often unchecked discretion led to abuses of power (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). Reformers responded by attempting to depoliticize law enforcement, introducing merit-based hiring and restructuring training and personnel practices. These efforts marked a critical shift toward the ‘professionalization’ of policing, transitioning authority away from patronage networks and local political actors toward a more bureaucratic, rule-of-law-based model, consistent with Max Weber’s (1919) vision of a rational-legal authority structure.

One notable development in recent years is the increasingly common perception of police as being in conflict with the communities they serve. A key factor contributing to this perception is the transformation of paramilitary police units. Originally established as reactive forces for responding to rare, high-risk emergencies, these units have evolved into proactive teams routinely deployed for everyday law enforcement tasks. This shift signals a broader change in policing philosophy—one that emphasizes aggressive enforcement over community engagement. At the same time, administrative reforms, such as appointing new police leadership, have shown limited effectiveness in reducing crime. Despite their good intentions, these changes often fail to produce measurable outcomes, underscoring the need for deeper structural reform (Lopez, 2017). Instead, there tends to be an increase in recorded minor infractions, such as citations and low-level offenses, largely because these are quantifiable and can be used to demonstrate

organizational productivity (Simon, 1997). Addressing serious crime is a complex and often elusive goal; but shaping public perceptions of order is a far more manageable task.

Driving the transformation of militarized units into elements of routine policing has been strategies such as ‘zero tolerance’ and ‘order maintenance,’ which have empowered departments to actively identify and, at times, construct social problems under the banner of improving public confidence and reducing fear. These approaches are frequently framed as efforts to foster better relations between police and communities by eliminating the perceived divide between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ However, in practice, they may reinforce that very divide, fostering resentment and reinforcing images of police as occupying rather than serving forces (DeMichele and Kraska, 2001). In 1968, for example, the Supreme Court ruled that officers can legally stop and pat down individuals if they have reasonable suspicion of criminal activity (*Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 1968). This practice expanded during the war on drugs in the 1980s, eventually developing into broader ‘stop and frisk’ programs. Paired with the contemporaneous rise of other ‘proactive policing’ tactics such as ‘broken windows’ policing (the theory that combating low-level offenses prevents more serious crime), stop and frisk created an environment in which aggressive police and citizen interactions have been normalized (Bratton and Kelling, 2014; Harcourt, 2001; Kelling and Wilson, 1982; Smith, 2016).

A clear sign of militarization has been the arming of police forces with military-grade weaponry and the adoption of paramilitary tactics. Historian Volker Rolf Berghahn (1982) has discussed how U.S. military power, expanded through two world wars and the Cold War, normalized the use of military force to achieve policy goals. This shift had domestic consequences, as American police established paramilitary units, especially as police and military functions began to overlap and be bundled with the Cold War (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997; Kraska, 1993). Criminologists Peter B. Kraska and Victor

E. Kappeler (1997) documented sharp increases in police paramilitary units from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s. In *The Economist's* 2014 investigation, it was noted that even as violent crime rates have fallen, the number of 'SWAT' deployments increased (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997; Kraska, 2007). Specifically, between 1980 and 2005 paramilitary raids (or SWAT) increased from 3,000 to 60,000, or a 1,400 percent increase (Balko, 2014; Shapiro and Meyer, 2015). By the late 1990s, 89 percent of police departments in mid-sized to large cities had paramilitary units; by 2007, 80 percent of small-town agencies had also formed such units. Further, a recent study found that militarization fails to both improve public safety or reduce crime, while it may harm police reputation (Mummolo, 2018).

Academics, politicians, and some members of the public have called for curbing police militarization (Balko, 2013; Glawe 2014; Rizer and Hartman, 2011). President Barack Obama curtailed the federal government's 1033 Program, which has transferred billions of dollars of excess military-grade equipment from the Pentagon to local police departments (Korte, 2015; McCarthy and Gambino, 2015). However, Donald Trump revived the program, which was once again curtailed under President Biden (Johnson, 2017; Ciaramella, 2016). Further expansion in the second Trump Administration can be expected.

Although police violence shares some similarities with violence committed by civilians, key distinctions set it apart. Unlike non-state actors, police officers possess two significant institutional advantages: they are (1) legally authorized to use force against civilians and (2) equipped with weapons, often of a military-grade nature, to carry out that force. New weapons have brought new mindsets. Kraska (1996) noted that since the early 1970s, police uniforms, weaponry, training, operational tactics, and even language have increasingly taken on a militarized tone. In 2014, the ACLU reported a more

aggressive style in officer recruitment materials, including fliers, videos, and advertisements. Nor has militarization been blunted by the concomitant rise in ‘community policing’ (DeMichele and Kraska, 2001). Although recent scholarship has shifted from general examinations of police use of force to more focused analyses of the long-term effects of militarization and lethal violence, one critical question remains largely unexplored: How are police institutions actively responding to and managing their unique authority to exercise legally sanctioned force?

4. Socialization and Social Learning

The dominant proverb for the rogue police officer is the ‘bad apple,’ the one rotten officer who helps to spoil the otherwise healthy barrel of a department.³³ But research suggests that this metaphor is not quite accurate. Instead, a police culture of uncontrolled violence is more like a virus, spreading from person to person as officers see other officers being rewarded for using excessive force (Roithmayr, 2016). And the spread of the virus of uncontrolled violence can be reinforced by systemic attributes, especially police union contract provisions, that stymie meaningful oversight and accountability.

Roithmayr (2016) analogizes uncontrolled police violence to a virus, using contact-tracing techniques drawn from epidemiology to show its spread from officer to officer. She notes that excessive force spreads horizontally through a social space such as a police department. If officers observe a method of dealing with non-compliant or defiant persons that appears to shorten those encounters, they will adopt them, even if those strategies involve excessive use of force that may be against written policy.

³³ For a researcher who rejects this metaphor and instead focuses on systematic causes of police violence and corruption, *see* Sherman (1978).

Officers who see another officer using a particular strategy or sequence of behaviors against non-compliant or even merely defiant persons, and then be praised, promoted, or held up for approval, will model that behavior in their own encounters. ‘Each new incident of excessive force potentially increases the probability of future excessive force, and the strategy of excessive force diffuses over time’ (Roithmayr, 2016, p. 410).

In this model, FTOs could potentially serve as ‘super-spreaders,’ persons who stand at the center of social webs within a department and thus ‘infect’ large numbers of officers with attitudes about police violence that do not conform to departmental policy and serve to undermine it. Importantly, social learning models show that the subculture of policing has a great impact on the behavior of a new officer (Chappell and Piquero, 2004). Another study by Horel and colleagues (2019) employed advanced computational social science methods. It found that police violence is contagious and spreads to other officers within their network. Employing the same set of datasets, another study finds that ‘officer involvement in excessive use of force complaints is predicted by having a greater proportion of co-accused with a history of such behaviors’ (Ouellet et al., 2019). Thus, the socialization of officers is an important dimension to understanding whether the social learning transmitted is aligned with agency expectations.

This study adopts social learning theory as a conceptual framework for understanding how field training officers transmit occupational norms and practices. According to Bandura (1977; 1986), learning occurs through a dynamic interaction among behavior, cognition, and environment: individuals observe others’ actions, interpret and internalize those behaviors cognitively, and then reproduce them, with subsequent environmental feedback reinforcing or modifying what has been learned. Within policing, FTOs occupy a position of high authority, competence, and control over

valued outcomes, making them especially influential models in the process of professional socialization.

The application of social learning theory here is conceptual rather than empirical: it provides a lens for interpreting how cultural transmission could occur within field training. Rather than testing the extent of behavioral imitation by recruits (because recruits were not observed), this framework helps identify the environmental and interpersonal conditions under which modeling and reinforcement are most likely to reproduce existing occupational cultures. It is treated as an organizing theoretical premise consistent with prior ethnographic findings (*e.g.*, Van Maanen, 1973; Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2010) and empirical studies of role modeling in police socialization (Conti, 2009).

5. Hypervigilance and the ‘Danger Imperative’

Another phenomena that pulls against formal mechanisms for controlling violence (and that is likely an outgrowth of problematic social learning) is what scholars refer to as the ‘danger imperative’—the pervasive sense that policing is a uniquely dangerous profession and that any police-civilian encounter is potentially or even imminently a fatal one. This imperative may be a factor in uncontrolled police violence, since it incentivizes officers to respond with preemptive violence in situations that might be controlled or managed through non-violent means (Moskos, 2009).

Gilmartin (19³⁴86) discussed ‘addictive hypervigilance’ as a cause of uncontrolled police use of force. The hypothesis suggests that officers may develop a behavioral addiction to a reactive, fight-or-flight state. This leads over time to persistent

³⁴ This quote is from the book’s promotional website (Sierra-Arévalo, n.d.).

misinterpretation of threats and diminishes officers' ability to apply appropriate restraint in using force. If this hypothesis holds true, Gilmartin's clinical insights would support the need to balance hypervigilance's fear-driven alertness with the intentional development of alternative professional roles (Gilmartin, 1986; Cheng, 2024).

Then, Sierra-Arévalo (2024) argues that this hypervigilance and obsession with the possibility of imminent violence is not a race-neutral attitude. Rather, the officers in poor and minority neighborhoods, imbibing a generalized sense that those populations are unusually disposed to violence, adopt a hypervigilant stance that justifies preemptive violence and makes it almost inevitable:

From the front seat of a patrol car, it shows how the institution of policing reinforces a cultural preoccupation with violence through academy training, departmental routines, powerful symbols, and officers' street-level behavior. (Sierra-Arevalo, 2024).

What makes the ubiquity of the 'danger imperative' so striking is that felonious officer deaths have actually *decreased* for half a century, and recent analyses find no significant changes in recent years in patterns of assaults on officers, whether fatal or not (White et al., 2019; Sierra-Arévalo and Nix, 2020).

6. Concepts of Prestige

The concept of prestige is relevant to this study as it helps explain some central themes discussed here, specifically how participants perceive the role of the FTO and perceive their role in socializing new recruits. The link between prestige and policing outcomes has been explored in various studies. One such revealed that higher perceived professional prestige not only improves job satisfaction, and officers' stress levels, but also community relations (Songze et al., 2024; Mumford et al., 2022). Moreover, research has explored the motivations behind individuals choosing to become police,

with prestige being among the prime considerations. This research also suggested that departments could emphasize humanitarian motivations during recruitment, which could create a police force with a more heterogeneous set of reasons for becoming police (Schuck, 2021).

Prestige plays a powerful role in shaping organizational culture, especially in fields where public perception is integral to professional identity, such as law enforcement, which in turn plays a role in how officers are socialized (Brachle and Waples, 2022). The desire for occupational prestige encourages officers to prioritize professionalism, adherence to protocols, and community engagement, as these factors enhance the public's respect for the police force. This drive for prestige can also create a culture of internal competition and pride, where officers seek to uphold or elevate the status of their role, reinforcing norms of excellence and diligence.

F. THE PROFESSIONAL IDEAL AND THE PARAMILITARY REALITY

The structural and cultural persistence of police violence in the United States cannot be attributed solely to weak oversight or inadequate reform. It also reflects the institutional DNA of policing itself: the competing logics through which the organization defines authority, control, and legitimacy. Two dominant frameworks, often coexisting within the same agency, anchor this tension: the professional and the paramilitary models of policing. Each has distinct implications for how officers understand and deploy force, and how training programs, particularly field training, reproduce those understandings.

1. The Professional Model

The professional model of policing traces its lineage to early twentieth-century reformers such as August Vollmer (1936), who sought to purge law enforcement of political

patronage by aligning it with Max Weber's (1919; 1978) bureaucratic ideals of rational-legal authority. This approach framed police professionalism as a means of efficiency and impartiality but also institutionalized distance from the public, a theme later critiqued by Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) as contributing to insularity and excessive force. As Reiss (1992) describes, authority in the professional model is exercised through law, policy, and technical expertise. Organizational control is achieved through rules, specialization, supervision, and standardized procedure. The professional officer, in this conception, is a civil servant rather than a soldier, a technician of law whose legitimacy rests on procedural fairness, restraint, and accountability (Reiss, 1992). Tyler extends this logic by arguing that police legitimacy ultimately depends on the public's perception of procedural justice, that authority is accepted not because it is feared, but because it is viewed as fair, neutral, and accountable. (Tyler, 2004).

Within this model, use of force is conceptualized as a regulated last resort: it is justified through policy and case law, documented through formal reporting, and reviewed for proportionality and necessity. The professional framework therefore treats violence as a matter of legal compliance and organizational governance. Success is measured by adherence to policy, quality of articulation, and maintenance of public trust. This orientation underpins later innovations in problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979) and procedural-justice policing (Tyler, 2004), which extend professionalism's emphasis on legitimacy and evidence-based discretion.

2. The Paramilitary Model

The paramilitary model, by contrast, centers on command-and-control. Drawing from military structure and ethos, it treats many policing tasks (particularly those involving potential violence) as requiring hierarchy, rapid obedience, and decisive action. (Kraska

and Kappeler, 1997; Kraska, 2007). Here, force is not simply a tool of last resort but one that secures compliance and preserves safety. The model is most visible in specialized or high-risk contexts (*e.g.*, SWAT), but its logic also shapes routine patrol through stress-inoculated training and a ‘warrior’ occupational identity (Stoughton, 2015).

The paramilitary orientation constructs the world as potentially hostile and valorizes decisive coercion over deliberation. It prizes solidarity, discipline, and physical courage, but risks normalizing pre-emptive or escalatory force as proof of competence (Paoline, 2003). While the professional model secures legitimacy through law and process, the paramilitary model secures legitimacy through command and survival. We should never forget that the police mentality, on paper at least, is to protect and serve. The warrior mentality is to engage and destroy the enemy ... and try not to kill the innocent in the process.

3. Interaction and Hybridization

American policing never fully replaced one organizational model with another. Rather, it hybridized elements of the military and civilian bureaucratic models. The professional reforms of the 1930s through 1960s imported features such as military-style ranks, discipline and hierarchy into civilian law-enforcement agencies, producing a form of bureaucratic militarization of policing. (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997). Federal funding and surplus-equipment programs later deepened this convergence, embedding tactical capacity within agencies even as accreditation and oversight systems proliferated.

The professional model operationalizes those constraints through policy, reporting, and review; the paramilitary model interprets them in terms of tactical necessity and officer survival. Thus, legal rationality and tactical pragmatism coexist in uneasy partnership.

This hybrid structure explains the divergence between formal policy and lived practice. Departments may advertise procedural professionalism, yet occupational prestige often accrues to those who embody paramilitary values: physical dominance, decisiveness, and loyalty under pressure (Van Maanen, 1973). The organization's reward structures, commendations, peer respect, and promotions all signal which model truly governs behavior. In practice, formal professionalism masks an informal paramilitary ethos, producing the very contradictions reformers aim to resolve.

4. Implications for Training and Field Socialization

The hybridization of these models is most visible in training. In agencies that emphasize the professional ideal, in-class and field trainers focus on decision-making, articulation, proportionality, and de-escalation; recruits are evaluated on policy compliance, judgment, and reporting quality. Under a paramilitary emphasis, FTOs prioritize rapid-compliance tactics, physical control, and stress-based performance under time pressure. Most departments blend the two, but the organizational signals—call mix, evaluation rubrics, supervision style—pull trainees toward one pole or the other.

Consequently, use of force patterns are not reducible to individual disposition. They are socially produced outcomes of whichever model dominates the learning environment at the moment of instruction. The same recruit may receive contradictory cues: the academy rewards analytical restraint, while the field valorizes speed and control. This tension helps explain why reforms emphasizing de-escalation often erode once officers enter field training, where paramilitary cultural capital retains greater legitimacy (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2010).

5. Reconstituting Police Professionalism

Post-Ferguson and post-Floyd reforms seek to re-balance this equilibrium. The PERF Guiding Principles on Use of Force (2016) and Transforming Police Recruit Training: 40 Guiding Principles (2022) explicitly advocate a guardian-professional orientation, integrating scenario-based learning, decision-making under stress, and sanctity-of-life principles (Rahr and Rice 2015; PERF 2016; 2022). These efforts do not abolish the paramilitary framework but re-purpose its discipline to serve professional ends. Evaluations of early adopters suggest reductions in violent incidents and citizen complaints though sustaining these gains requires aligning field supervision and evaluation with the same ethos (PERF, 2016; Worden et al., 2024).

The coexistence of professional and paramilitary logics forms the cultural terrain upon which new officers are socialized. Nowhere is this more apparent than in field training, where recruits observe, imitate, and internalize what the organization truly values. The next section examines FTOs as the pivotal translator of these institutional models into practice: how FTOs reconcile or reproduce the contradictions between professionalism and paramilitarism, and how that process shapes the social learning of police violence.

G. SHINING A LIGHT ON FTOS AND SOCIAL LEARNING

The literature above discusses a host of explanations and variables that need to be considered when looking at how departments control violence and what factors may encourage the unconstrained use of violence and how departments control violence. Even if agencies take all the steps to attempt to control violence through the mechanisms at their disposal (*e.g.*, training, recruitment, etc.), the undertow of countervailing factors such as racial attitudes baked into policing, unionization, militarization, and social

learning can still sustain or even exacerbate police violence despite well-intended efforts to curb violence. Central to this question is whether the rank-and-file who are responsible for carrying out the responsibilities are following the policies set forth on paper or if they have been socialized to respond differently. FTOs have also been identified as one of the key actors to be involved with ‘buy-in’ of changes aimed to improve outcomes and reduce violence (Kane, 2014; Geller and Toch, 1996). Geller and Toch (1996) argue that FTOs play one of the most important roles in the organization and can play a role in ‘bridging the gap’ between policy and practice as relates to the control of police use of force.

Understanding the factors that may drive the misuse of violence, despite formal controls like policy and recruitment, is essential to addressing and reducing poorly managed violence. Bearing in mind that external mechanisms are important and effective in controlling police violence (Vitale, 2017), this study solely looks to understand the internal mechanisms that departments can utilize to control how violence can be administered in a predictable, proportional, and unbiased way.

Geller and Toch’s (1996) work on how to control police use of force, which is directly relevant to this research question, is a significant contribution and one that represents a kind of launching point for this research. But the work is dated and its reach was stymied by the unavailability of data and empirical work at the time around police violence (Geller and Toch, 1996). For example, Geller and Toch (1996) claim that there is no evidence that there are methods that can screen out or identify officers who are ‘violence-prone,’ while recent research cited above finds that such screening mechanisms (even if imperfect) are available. Moreover, computational social science was only emerging at the time they wrote, which hindered their ability to better identify what may be encouraging the spread of violence. The research exploring social learning

among officers who routinely engage in excessive force, which suggests that violence may spread to other officers within their networks, was done through advanced computational social science methods not available to Geller and Toch (Wood et al., 2019).

Further, since social learning has been identified as a one of the ways violence spreads, the lack of an ethnographic/multi-observational study of the persons responsible for officer training hinders the field's ability to understand how violence may be socialized. While there are a host of reasons why departments struggle with controlling violence, social learning literature identifies a potentially relevant underlying mechanism (Roithmayr, 2016). Understanding what specific actors may be responsible or play a more influential role in the socialization of officers is critical to identifying effective ways to disrupt social learning that encourages police violence. Moreover, understanding differences between how those who are socializing others view themselves in comparison to how the department perceives and understands their role, specifically around management of police violence, is a critical next step and falls under organizational justice (Myhill and Bradford, 2013). Literature around training discussed above stresses the considerable influence of field training officers on new officers and stresses that social learning could increase the likelihood of misconduct (Getty et al., 2014; Ouellet et al., 2019; Chappell and Piquero, 2004). Most relevant to this research is the study that finds a link between officers who commit misconduct and a relationship between the field training officer they trained under (Getty et al., 2014).

To summarize, the link between social learning and variation in the application of violence is a significant and a major contribution. A broad range of literature suggests that FTOs are one of the most significant and influential actors in the socialization of officers. Moreover, another quantitative link between police misconduct and FTOs

suggests that FTOs specifically may play a significant role in socializing officers around misconduct. This is not surprising, given that FTOs are responsible for mentoring officers and instructing them how to police. But the role FTOs play in socializing violence, transmitting department culture, and resisting top-down reforms around abusive force, remains under-studied.

While there are a number of future avenues for further investigation, two key questions that scholarship fails to illuminate regarding FTOs, are (1) How do police departments and FTOs view the role of FTOs? and (2) what is the FTOs' role in socializing violence within the profession of policing? Both gaps hinder our ability to understand the key agents who socialize officers. Closing those gaps would help provide insight and understanding about the link between police culture and violence. Contrasting perspectives and attitudes will allow for scholarship to understand policy and practice misalignment around socialization of violence.

Ethnographic research of officers in the field is necessary to fully understand these two questions. But this is not merely a descriptive exercise. To develop a deeper understanding, the focus instead should be on describing and situating police department practices and officer behavior and then using that understanding to illuminate precisely how FTO training is contributing to, or proving an obstacle to, the management of police violence.

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONS OF THEORY AND METHOD

'This was murder—it wasn't a lack of training.' Chief Medaria Arradondo (2017-2022 –
Minneapolis Police Department)

In May 2020, George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin drew global outrage, but the incident also involved two rookie officers, Thomas Lane and J. Alexander Kueng, who had only been on the job for a few days. Crucially, Chauvin was not only the senior officer at the scene but also Lane's designated Field Training Officer (FTO). Lane, who had been on duty for just four days, expressed concern about Floyd's wellbeing during the arrest, asking Chauvin whether they should reposition Floyd to improve his breathing. Despite this concern, Lane ultimately deferred to Chauvin's authority, trusting his guidance as both a senior officer and his official mentor.

In 2021, Chief Medaria Arradondo, then Chief of the Minneapolis Police Department, testified in court in the trial of Derek Chauvin:

But once there was no longer any resistance and clearly when Mr. Floyd was no longer responsive and even motionless, to continue to apply that level of force to a person prone out, handcuffed behind their back—that in no way shape or form is anything that is by policy. It is not part of our training, and it is certainly not part of our ethics or our values (Levenson, 2021).

This tragic case underscores the profound influence that FTOs wield in shaping new officers' behavior. As noted by then-Chief Medaria, while it was clear that Chauvin

violated the policy and went against training, rookie officers like Lane often learn to navigate complex situations by mirroring their training officer's actions. In this instance, Chauvin's conduct — combined with the hierarchical pressure typical in policing— resulted in Lane's hesitation to intervene, revealing the dangerous consequences of harmful socialization in law enforcement.

A. THEORY: FTOS SOCIALIZING VIOLENCE

While law enforcement agencies employ various strategies to regulate the use of force, limited insight into how officers acquire professional norms and are socialized within their institutions continues to impede efforts to curb the misuse of violence. Building off Sierra-Arévalo (2024), there has been a lack of attention and understanding of the norms which are transmitted to officers, this is in part due to limitations routinely employed quantitative methodologies or inadequate qualitative data collection. Field training officers without question are critical to training recruits on institutional norms and expectations. Their very job title has the word 'training' in it. However, the decentralized nature of the training creates an essential and formative environment for the socialization of an officer (Getty et al., 2014; Holz et al., 2023; Adger et al., 2022). This study contributes to existing scholarship that argues that the spread of police violence is in part due to peer socialization. It does so by exploring FTOs, who appear to be one of—if not *the*—most important actors in on-the-ground training and socializing of new recruits. This investigation theorizes that failure to understand how FTOs view the issues around police violence, and misalignments between their understanding of those issues and that of departments, is key to understanding why police violence persists and is mismanaged.

Before discussing the proposed research design and methodology, I first discuss the prevailing policing orientations and mindsets, which tend to guide how officers

socialize violence. Next, I discuss the development and formal role of the FTOs in U.S. law enforcement. Subsequently, I present the theoretical basis for this investigation: that FTOs should be treated not only as key components for training institutional norms but key agents of socialization. Our lack of understanding of FTOs' perceptions of their role in the socialization of recruits concerning the proper application of violence is a critical blind spot for practitioners attempting to control police violence.

1. Why The Descriptive Approach?

As will be explored in Chapters 4 through 6, the data collected in this study sheds light on how FTOs interpret their responsibilities and the use of force. These patterns point to a broader worldview that informs how officers perceive authority and construct their institutional identities. It might be argued that most street-level analyses of police behavior and practices (such as this one) remain largely descriptive, and therefore fall short of offering a framework for meaningfully addressing the regulation of violence. Without a model that articulates the underlying logic of violence—its causes, functions, and patterns—we lack both the tools to propose effective interventions and the conceptual clarity to interpret the facts themselves, regardless of our subjective views.

The response to this objection might proceed like this: when confronted with empirical realities that demand interpretation, we are compelled to impose meaning. In the absence of a rigorously developed theory of violence and policing, anchored in objective and publicly verifiable criteria, this need for understanding is often met instead through symbolic narratives, instinctual reactions, and emotionally charged reasoning. Constructing models and drawing sound causal conclusions from empirical evidence offers a means of forming beliefs grounded in observation and rational analysis. Belief

provides structure for people to interpret situations and plan their actions. In contrast, doubt disrupts that structure and can impede movement toward a decision.

There is merit to this argument; any study of institutions built around violence requires more than moral ideals—it demands a practical framework rooted in how systems and people actually operate, including their motivations, constraints, and consequences. By prioritizing observable behavior and practice over stated intentions or ideals, I run the risk of slipping into normative judgments that reflect ingrained habits or biases rather than theory grounded in the data. Our judgments about policing should be set in explanations that emerge from close engagement with real-world practice and on the ground truths, not abstract models removed from lived experience. Understanding police institutions requires observing officers in action through methods that stay close to their day-to-day work. Normative theories that overlook the realities of police behavior often lack the depth of the practices they attempt to explain (Roithmayr, 2016). A significant body of research on police organizations underscores the value of participant observation, particularly for centering dimensions of policing that have often been treated as peripheral. David Alan Sklansky (2005), in his examination of shifts in the demographic composition of police forces over recent decades, outlines the major types of impact these changes have on policing. Sklansky (2005) noted that the most significant impact, namely the organizational effects that demographic change has on internal departmental dynamics, had received relatively little attention in legal scholarship or in broader public debate. Yet they are arguably the most consequential, as they intersect with issues like the strength or fragmentation of police subcultures, internal cohesion and identity, and the persistence or transformation of institutional dysfunctions.

For instance, as laid out in Chapter 2 section C, police use of force incidents in the U.S. are poorly recorded. Regardless of how use-of-force incidents are measured,

simply describing officer behavior at the street level does not amount to a sufficient explanation of how violence is exercised or restrained. Without a theory that explains the mechanisms and logic of violence, it becomes difficult to develop meaningful reforms or to interpret policing practices in a way that moves beyond individual assumptions. Indeed, in the absence of a coherent, externally grounded framework, efforts to interpret these encounters often rely on intuition, symbolism, and emotional reasoning rather than systematic analysis (Geller and Toch, 1996). Developing models and drawing defensible causal connections from observable behavior enables us to form beliefs rooted in evidence and deliberate reasoning. Such beliefs provide a sense of coherence about how the world operates, allowing us to anticipate outcomes and guide our actions. By contrast, doubt disrupts this coherence, complicates judgment, and drives continued inquiry until a more stable understanding is reached.

Relying solely on normative commitments is insufficient for this inquiry. A workable account must be anchored in the realities of human behavior, institutional incentives, and the practical limits that shape policing. Without a grounded understanding explaining why people act as they do, efforts at reform risk being driven by intuition or preference rather than grounded analysis. My emphasis in the empirical chapters on recording not only stated responses but also the in-between-the-lines behavior reflects this concern, though it also risks slipping into normative judgments unsupported by deeper reasoning. I aim, through this study, to understand policing and base my explanations on reality—not in detached theories or abstract models. This demands methods, as laid in section C of this chapter, that closely follow what officers actually do, not just what policies prescribe. Ethnographic work, in particular, offers insight into the practical reasoning embedded in daily routines. Normative frameworks that ignore this lived dimension often miss the complexity of real-world policing.

2. The Origins and Development of FTO Programs

Given the decentralized, federalist nature of the United States, there is no uniform set of training or standards mandated by the federal government for the more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the country. Nonetheless, FTO programs have become a requirement for accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), and most departments have instituted some form of FTO training (Jenkins et al., 2021). Furthermore, they have repeatedly been deemed one of the most critical components and the ‘first frontier’ of officer training by law enforcement executives. As stated in *Police Chief* magazine, published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP):

Recognize Field Training Officers as the First Frontier

Police chiefs are ultimately responsible for defining the purpose, process, strategic outlook, and initiatives for an agency; however, these serve only as the foundations for an agency’s culture. It is important to recognize that formal leadership cannot shape the culture of an agency on its own. That’s where FTOs come into play.

FTOs are more than a resource for new officers; they are the first line for mentorship. Their responsibility to train and mentor new officers in complex policies and procedures is a crucial component to setting the tone for a positive experience. FTOs play a key role in shaping the next generation of officers and, most likely, the next generation of leaders (Debbie, 2021).

The most common model for FTO programs throughout the United States is the San Jose model, which established the foundation for structured, behaviorally anchored evaluation in the 1970s (Jenkins et al., 2021). Over time, other approaches have emerged, most notably the Reno (PTO) model, which introduced adult learning and problem-based education, and a wave of post-Ferguson and post-Floyd ‘emerging models’ that blend structure with reflective, legitimacy-focused pedagogy (Jenkins et al.,

2021). Together, these models illustrate the evolution of field training in American policing.

i. San Jose Model

The San Jose Model of Field Training emerged in response to a tragic event. In 1969, a San Jose police officer, known to his superiors to lack basic skills and temperament, killed a civilian in a traffic accident while speeding. The incident prompted the department's effort to create a structured evaluation and assessment system to identify and remediate, or if necessary remove, recruits unfit for policing (San Jose Police Department, 2019; 2025). By 1972, the department launched its Field Training Program staffed by 42 officers selected for their 'professional and personal commitment' and 'objectivity ... absolutely necessary to fulfil the roles of trainer and evaluator' (San Jose Police Department, 2025). Within its first year, these FTOs trained 125 recruits and generated 3,500 Daily Observation Reports (DORs), which the department condensed into a catalogue of skills and traits necessary for solo patrol. These observation logs effectively became the first job-task analysis for police officers.

The program received national recognition from the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1973 and was codified by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (CCPOST) in 1974 as the statewide standard (CCPOST, 2019). The San Jose model thus became the foundation for most traditional FTO programs in the United States. Its stated mission remains 'to train new officers so that each is prepared to function as a solo beat officer at the conclusion of their training cycle,' typically through a 16- to 20-week on-the-job process following academy graduation (San Jose Police Department, 2025).

At its core, the San Jose model is a behaviorally anchored evaluation system. It relies on structured DORs in which the FTO scores the trainee's performance across

standardized behavioral categories. Low or high outliers trigger reviews, while weekly phase reports and a final recommendation on solo readiness complete the cycle. The model is grounded in behavior-modification theory, an approach that assumes that clear expectations, observation, and feedback will produce competent, compliant officers (PERF, 2016). The learning logic is linear and compliance-oriented: master discrete tasks, meet the benchmark, and progress to the next phase.

The San Jose model's strengths lie in its clarity, defensibility, and scalability. Because the model emphasizes documentation and numeric scoring, it has been widely regarded as legally defensible and administratively transparent (PERF, 2016). Thousands of agencies have adopted it or variations thereof, citing its systematic documentation as valuable for liability protection and human resources decision-making (PERF, 2016; CCPOST, 2019). However, critics argue that the framework often positions the FTO as a 'score-keeper' rather than a mentor and can reward checklist compliance over adaptive judgement (Haberfeld et al., 2019). Because the FTO functions simultaneously as coach and evaluator, recruits may focus on 'pleasing the grader' rather than developing critical thinking or community-oriented discretion (Adger et al., 2022). This dynamic is part of the hidden curriculum of policing, wherein FTOs transmit local subcultural norms through their subjective evaluations (Staller et al., 2022). While POST and other regulatory bodies have periodically updated DOR forms to include dimensions such as communication and ethics (POST, 2019), the underlying tension between teaching and evaluation remains (PERF, 2016).

ii. Reno Model

The Reno Police Department developed the Police Training Officer (we will refer to PTOs as FTOs for consistency) program in the early 2000s in collaboration with PERF and the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

(COPS Office). The program was conceived as an alternative to the traditional San Jose model, replacing its behaviorist and task-based grading system with a learning model rooted in adult education and Problem-Based Learning (PERF, 2022; CPOP, 2007). Grounded in community-oriented problem-solving, the Reno model aims to develop officers who can think critically, adapt to new challenges, and engage effectively with diverse communities rather than simply demonstrating technical compliance (CPOP, 2007).

At its foundation, the Reno model is built on the principles of adult learning theory, emphasizing reflection, self-assessment, and experiential learning. Instead of daily numeric ratings, trainees complete learning portfolios that include Problem-Based Learning Exercises, journals, and Neighborhood Portfolio Exercises. These tools require trainees to identify local problems, propose solutions, and evaluate outcomes collaboratively with their FTOs (CPOP, 2007). The program separates the roles of coach and evaluator: the FTO functions primarily as a mentor and facilitator of learning, while a separate review board or evaluator periodically assesses progress. This structure was designed to reduce the conflicting pressures inherent in the San Jose model, where the FTO simultaneously teaches and judges the trainee.

At its core, the Reno model redefines the field training relationship. The FTO is expected to act as a coach and role model, guiding recruits to become reflective practitioners capable of diagnosing problems, engaging communities, and learning continuously throughout their careers (PERF, 2022; CPOP, 2007). The approach explicitly seeks to align field training with academy instruction, ensuring that lessons in ethics, de-escalation, and procedural justice are reinforced rather than eroded once recruits get on the road. By embedding problem-based learning within the field training

process, the model aims to create a bridge between academic learning and street-level policing, fostering adaptive officers rather than rote task performers.

Evaluations of the Reno model have shown some promising results. PERF's multi-site pilot projects reported that recruits trained under the PTO framework demonstrated improved problem-solving skills, stronger communication abilities, and more equitable decision-making compared to those trained under traditional FTO systems (CPOP, 2007). Agencies also reported that problem-based learning enhanced organizational commitment to community-oriented policing by operationalizing these principles at the field training level. However, implementation challenges persist. The program requires substantial investment in instructor development and command-level buy-in, and some departments have found the documentation process more complex than the traditional DOR system (CPOP, 2007). As a result, many agencies have adopted emerging or often called hybrid models, maintaining numeric DORs for administrative accountability while incorporating PTO principles to promote critical thinking and reflective learning (CPOP, 2007).

iii. Emerging Post-Ferguson/George Floyd Models

In the aftermath of the riots in Ferguson, Missouri (2014) and the murder of George Floyd (2020), a new generation of field training programs began to emerge, informed by national reform efforts led by PERF. Drawing on key workstreams such as Guiding Principles on Use of Force (PERF, 2016); the Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) de-escalation program (PERF ICAT, 2016); and Transforming Police Recruit Training: 40 Guiding Principles (PERF, 2022), agencies across the United States started developing hybrid models that blended the structure and documentation of the San Jose model with the reflective, adult-learning orientation of the Reno model.

These PERF-informed hybrids are grounded in pedagogical shifts. They emphasize decision-making under uncertainty and critical thinking as core competencies, moving beyond skill mastery by conditioning and toward adaptive judgment in complex real-world scenarios (PERF, 2022). The emerging approach incorporates scenario-based, adult-learning pedagogy, consistent with the principles of experiential learning theory, and redefines the FTO/PTO relationship to separate coaching from high-stakes evaluation. Importantly, it also aims to align academy instruction and field training, ensuring that what is taught in classrooms—particularly around procedural justice, de-escalation, and legitimacy—is reinforced, not undone, in field settings (PERF, 2016; 2022).

These emerging models represent a design space rather than a single template. Many departments retain San Jose–style documentation systems, including DORs, for administrative defensibility and HR continuity, but retool the mentoring dynamic to prioritize reflective supervision and coaching (PERF, 2022). The emphasis shifts from grading to guided development: FTOs and PTOs act as facilitators of judgment rather than task monitors. ICAT’s integration into field scenarios serves as a practical bridge, embedding de-escalation and critical decision-making exercises into daily calls for service (PERF ICAT, 2016). The overall direction of this model aligns with a guardian–professional identity in policing, placing life preservation and community trust at the center of the field training experience (PERF, 2016; 2022).

Evidence from early implementation suggests that these hybrid approaches are having an impact on police training. National surveys and follow-up reports indicate widespread agreement among chiefs and training executives that legacy training models overemphasized firearms and defensive tactics while underemphasizing communication, judgment, and emotional intelligence (PERF, 2022). Agencies piloting ICAT and

adopting the 40 Guiding Principles have reported tangible gains in officer composure, situational awareness, and proportionality in use-of-force encounters (PERF ICAT 2016; PERF 2022). Although the emerging/hybrid model is still evolving, it represents the convergence of reform-era pedagogy, procedural justice principles, and pragmatic accountability mechanisms.

Yet, reform does not occur in a vacuum and even as these training models signal progress, they remain tethered to the gravitational pull of inherited culture. Field training officers, themselves products of earlier FTO and paramilitary traditions, inevitably transmit aspects of the old system to new recruits. As the empirical chapters below suggest, this social inheritance persists even within reform-minded programs like Reno's, where the mentoring role can sometimes amplify, rather than mitigate, entrenched habits. In such contexts, the 'big-brother' dynamic risks allowing a single resistant or cynical trainer to shape an entire cohort's orientation. Compounding this challenge, agencies report practical obstacles, such as FTO reluctance and increased paperwork burdens, that hinder recruitment and sustainment of high-quality trainers, as will be seen in Miami and Montgomery.

B. THIS INVESTIGATION: POSITING AND APPROACH

As noted in the review of the scholarship and policing perspectives from law enforcement agency executives, departments continue to struggle with controlling the deployment of violence in their ranks. The reasons for this difficulty are diverse: police work, by its nature, is decentralized and highly discretionary, with every individual officer or squad car on patrol operating as 'the department' in a particular location and empowered to mete out violence against citizens in order to uphold the law.

1. Current Literature Gaps

There has been significant work in improving *systems* of police recruitment, training, and accountability. And existing literature on FTO programs posits that these officers are preeminent ‘culture bearers,’ transmitting a department’s values and mores to the next generation of officers. Much scarcer, though, is literature examining *who* is socializing new officers. This gap in the literature concerning FTOs is especially concerning given that research has found that officers are socialized by peers and mentors into patterns of violent behavior.

But there has been relatively little research on the role of field training officers in socializing new officers, especially as it relates to the use and abuse of violence. This is unsurprising: FTOs are largely invisible to the public in a way that, say, SWAT teams are not. In addition, the value of mentorship programs in professional institutions is generally uncontroversial. But in another sense, this gap in the literature is surprising. Given that law enforcement agencies continue to struggle with mismanaged violence, the lack of attention to one of the key agents responsible for guiding the application of department policies and socializing department norms hinders our understanding of why violence may continue, despite the types of policies in place concerning administration of violence. Hence, understanding and exploring how FTOs understand these critical issues of violence and transmit departmental norms and expectations is central.

This gap in the literature is especially surprising since studies of social learning focused on police have noted that officers are frequently socialized into patterns of violent behavior (Chapman, 2023). Thus, it is plausible to hypothesize that FTOs are (1) authoritative, (2) mentors to recruits, (3) instructors, and (4) how departments translate academy training and policy regarding violence into practice. Investigating the way FTOs themselves understand when it is and is not permissible to apply violence, how

FTOs and departments understand their role, and whether there are any misalignments in those understandings, thus seems critical to understanding how departments can better control violence.

While departments employ FTOs as part of the professionalization and training of an officer to understand prevailing institutional norms, they also play a critical role in socialization into the department's social norms. Thus, the disconnect between the departmental 'line' on issues such as police violence, and the actual lessons being taught to rookie officers on the job, can be a serious blind spot in understanding the first and one of the most important agents of socialization.

2. Theory: FTOs Socializing Violence

My contribution towards understanding police violence in the U.S. lies at the intersection of three different, yet interrelated, themes found in criminology scholarship (Horel et al., 2019; Roithmayr, 2016; Getty et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2019). First, my study treats the issue of violence as network based and transmitted and spread by peers vis-à-vis social learning, departing from traditional 'bad apples' frameworks (Wood et al., 2019; Holz et al., 2023). Second, I build upon research that emphasizes the importance of FTOs and how they serve as a key mechanism for transmitting norms (*e.g.*, Geller and Toch, 1996). Finally, I build upon the studies finding a relationship between FTOs and misconduct (*e.g.*, Getty et al., 2014; Adger et al., 2022). Specifically, research examining the relationship between FTOs and misconduct suggests that officers who engage in higher levels of violence do so, in part, because their FTOs have transmitted norms that legitimize or encourage such behavior. Drawing on social learning theory, this transmission occurs through mechanisms such as observation, imitation, and reinforcement, where recruits internalize their FTOs' interpretations of appropriate force.

As a result, violent behavior is not merely a reflection of individual disposition but rather a learned practice reinforced through peer influence during critical stages of socialization.

Similarly, I theorize that violence in law enforcement is socially transmitted by peers, specifically FTOs, whose perceptions and understandings of the proper management and use of violence vary from those of department executives. Thus, it is critical to understand if FTO programs, far from having intrinsic normative content or bias toward a particular model of policing, instead reflect and transmit the existing departmental values, for good or ill. To the extent that older, more authoritarian values of policing persist within a department (what I will later describe in this study as the ‘kick-ass’ model of policing) an FTO program is likely to perpetuate these values directly or sometimes, like a Trojan virus, by training generation after generation of new officers in these problematic approaches. Further, patrol officers are unique because they often work independently, without close supervision. This autonomy allows them to develop their norms and behaviors primarily through interactions with peers and partners, making peer socialization especially influential in shaping their conduct. Moreover, department leaders sometimes may not fully understand the way their FTO programs are working to entrench a model of policing that relies on militarized attitudes and preemptive use of force, sometimes at cross-purposes with official departmental policy and those leaders’ agendas.

Officers’ individual use of violence is affected by their own vision of their role in society. In addition, how they envision their role in society may not reflect the way the department envisions their role. Thus, a formalizable rational choice framework is not sufficient in explaining the macro-behaviors of police departments and how they affect the micro-motives of officers (Burns and Roszkowska, 2016). And while policies and

procedures matter, ultimately the most important factor in shaping the behavior of individual, rank-and-file officers is organizational culture, which exists in many ways separately from the organizations' formal structures (Armacost, 2004; Ingram et al., 2018). Notwithstanding these difficulties, this puzzle still demands to be understood theoretically, given the importance of police to a functioning democratic society.

As noted in Adger et al., (2022) the implications for this theory are profound for department executives and practitioners who have an interest in curtailing violence applied by their officers. What this study posits is that departmental leaders who are genuinely working to transform the culture of the police agencies must invest time, resources, and above all considered attention to their FTO programs. Properly resourced and thoughtfully designed, these programs can be powerful instruments of reform and revitalization in police departments, especially around the pressing issues of channeling and socializing police violence, which present an almost existential issue for police in America today. But if merely left to run themselves or left as an afterthought to more glamorous initiatives such as SWAT or other specialized teams that command departmental resources and attention, FTO programs can become powerful obstacles to transforming police for the better.

C. MULTI-METHOD RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Building on the recent scholarship finding that more aggressive FTOs are linked to increases in violence amongst recruits (Adger et al., 2022), I intend to contribute to the gap in understanding the attitudes and perceptions of both department leaders and FTOs around the training and socialization of violence. To do this, the data analyzed for this investigation was generated through a nuanced multi-method research (MMR) approach that employs a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and 'ride-along'

observations (Beach and Rohlfing, 2015; Collier, 2011; George and Bennett, 2005). By meeting, observing, and interviewing the FTOs who are entrusted with the monopoly of legalized violence as well as the administrators who dictate policy concerning when violence is appropriate, I aim to accurately appreciate the departments' challenge in controlling violence in the face of extraordinary constraints, conflicting goals, misalignment, disconnect, sometimes vague tasks, and broad demands.³⁵

I begin by discussing the sites selected to collect data for this study. I then describe the Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach that was developed for this investigation and discuss the nature of the participant interviews and observations. Next, I outline the framework developed for qualitative coding and analysis in this project, which combines thematic analysis supplemented with descriptive quantitative analysis. Finally, I address issues of positionality, consent, and other research techniques.

1. Site Selection

I engaged and analyzed data across the three agencies: the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD), and the Montgomery (Alabama) Police Department (MPD). Some of the factors that made these the final three are included below:

- **Agency Size and Variation:** Each city is the largest in their respective state.

Further, geographically these cities give a broad cross section of the nation, with

³⁵ In his broader analysis of bureaucracies, Wilson (2000) highlights that citizens expect organizations to be effective, efficient, accountable, responsive, free of scandal, and capable of handling significant tasks. However, he argues that no organization can fully achieve all these goals simultaneously, a challenge that is particularly acute in the American context, where a pluralist political system imposes numerous and often conflicting demands Wilson (2000).

agencies on the West Coast (LAPD), the East Coast (Miami-Dade Police Department), and the deep South (Montgomery Police Department).³⁶

- **San Jose FTO Model:** As noted earlier, all three agencies employ the San Jose FTO Model, which reduces some other variation that would complicate the analysis.
- **Historical Relevance:** All three departments have a relevant history of police violence, often racially charged, that have caused them to be the subject of heightened scrutiny by federal officials and reformers.
- **Access and Engagement to Officers:** All three agencies created accessible opportunities for engagement with and participation by their staff compared to other agencies.³⁷
- **Access to FTO Evaluation Sheets Policies:** FTO evaluation sheets were successfully obtained from all three agencies.

Before recounting the relevant background and histories of each department, I will first discuss why the three sites are well suited for this investigation. Next, I will discuss each city's key historical events, department engagement strategy, and details on departmental policies pertaining to FTOs. This investigation does not seek to make generalizable claims for all U.S. agencies. Instead, I treat each city as its own individual study to provide more in-depth insights on the state of FTOs in these three different agencies with very different histories.

³⁶ While there are other regions represented by different cities in the United States that were considered and approached (*i.e.*, Chicago, Washington D.C., New Orleans, and New York), time constraints and/or difficulty in obtaining buy-in from department leaders meant they were ultimately not included.

³⁷ For instance, Chicago was close to being chosen over Miami, but byzantine processes ultimately made its inclusion impossible. New York indicated that I could shadow a few officers but not to the level needed for this study, and they could not guarantee FTOs would be available.

i. Los Angeles

Los Angeles is an obvious choice for this project. The department serves America's second-largest city and is one of the largest departments in the nation. It also has a lurid history of violence, frequently playing out on America's television screens. Indeed, there have been 239 movies and shows concerning the LAPD (*See, e.g., IMDb (2025)*).

a. Relevant Historical Background

Corruption is a recurring theme in the history of the LAPD. Eight LAPD police chiefs were felled by scandals between 1919 and 1923.³⁸ Moreover, violence, often race-based, has been a running theme in the LAPD's history. For example, on Christmas Eve in 1951, a false rumor that some Hispanic men had overpowered and beaten several policemen caused an estimated fifty officers, liberally drunk and all angry, to take turns beating the men in their cells. The press titled the incident 'Bloody Christmas,' (Rasmussen, 1997) and it gave rise to a grand jury that chief William Parker stonewalled, though eventually five officers were convicted of the assault (Buntin, 2009). Parker's department-produced television show *The Thin Blue Line* helped popularize the phrase for the modern era, and he also shaped public opinion through his close working relationship with the popular radio-turned-television show *Dragnet* (Buntin, 2009).

Decades of conflict between the LAPD and the city's black and Mexican American communities reached two horrifying crescendos: the Watts Riots of 1965 and the riots after the beating of Rodney King in March 1991. That year, a video emerged of four white Los Angeles police officers beating a defenseless Rodney King with their batons for 81 seconds. After three of the officers were acquitted, rioters set more than

³⁸ *See all LAPD Chiefs Bios (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.)*.

1,200 fires in the first 24 hours, causing \$1 billion in property damage and contributing to 63 deaths.

The 1999 Rampart Scandal dealt a significant blow to the LAPD's reputation. Throughout the 1990s, the Rampart Division, operating in one of Los Angeles' most challenging neighborhoods, was plagued by corrupt officers who engaged in excessive force, coercion, false arrests, perjury, and obstruction of justice. The investigation into the murder of one corrupt officer by another revealed widespread misconduct, implicating dozens of officers, particularly within the anti-gang CRASH unit. Over 100 convictions for police corruption were secured, yet several cases of rape, murder, and robbery involving Rampart Division officers remain unresolved (Buntin, 2009).

b. Research Activities and Engagement

Outreach to the Los Angeles Police Department was initiated by a research assistant who e-mailed the Department's Public Affairs Division. We were informed that each divisional commander controlled access to their officers. The Hollywood Division Commander granted me an interview to talk about the purpose of my research. At this in-person meeting, the commander granted me access and put me in contact with two other divisional commanders who also granted me access after a short meeting (Foothill and Rampart Divisions). In total, I interviewed six leaders and 12 FTOs in this city.

c. Departmental FTO Policies and Materials

Los Angeles has a different evaluation report than the other selected cities. The most significant difference is that recruits are not evaluated daily but rather over the entire year of the FTO program. Moreover, the report, called the Structured Learning Content Checklist, is a sprawling 241-page document that covers 17 main categories with hundreds of detailed subcategories. For example, there are reports for 'Missing Persons' reports, 'Thorough Search of a Missing Child's Home and Nearby Area,' and 'Handling

of Bomb Scene.’ Recruits are scored as ‘competency demonstrated,’ or not. Moreover, every skill set is evaluated before a recruit can complete a program through four evaluation methods: field performance (real-life situation), role play with the FTO, written test, and verbal test with FTO. Because of its length, a two-page selection of the Los Angeles Report can be seen at Appendix A.

d. Training the Trainers: Preparing and Evaluating FTOs

Within LAPD, FTOs are selected officers who undergo formal training, where officers must complete a POST-approved 40-hour Field Training Officer Course before assuming any training duties, and they must renew this certification every three years through a 24-hour update course (CCPOST, 2019; Los Angeles Police Department 2024). FTO candidates are typically required to have completed probation, possess at least one year of patrol experience, hold a POST Basic Certificate, and pass an internal selection process or interview (CCPOST, 2019; LAPD Police Commission, 2024). The LAPD therefore treats the FTO assignment as a specialist role, not a default progression.

The LAPD’s 40-hour FTO course emphasizes both pedagogical and operational competence. Training modules cover orientation to the FTO role, adult learning and coaching methods, documentation and evaluation tools, legal issues and liabilities, risk management, and agency-specific policies and procedures (LAPD, 2024). FTOs are taught how to use standardized evaluation instruments, primarily DORs, to assess and document trainee progress (LAPD, 2024; CCPOST, 2019). The curriculum also incorporates practical exercises on supervision, mentoring, and feedback delivery, reflecting a broader shift toward adult-learning methodologies in field training (LAPD, 2024). The 24-hour FTO update course reinforces these competencies and integrates new developments in case law, departmental policies, and procedural justice practices (CCPOST, 2019; LAPD, 2024).

Once certified, FTOs operate within a structured, multi-layered accountability framework that includes phased evaluations and real-time supervision of their work with probationary officers. In addition to routine supervision, FTOs are evaluated annually to verify continued competence and adherence to training standards (CCPOST, 2019). The POST framework requires a dual evaluation process: (1) an end-of-program trainee critique of each assigned FTO, and (2) a Supervisor/Administrator/Coordinator evaluation of each FTO's performance at least once per year (Legal Information Institute, 2024; CCPOST, 2019). These evaluations provide structured feedback on FTO communication, fairness, documentation quality, and overall training effectiveness.

Satisfactory performance as an FTO is defined by compliance with established documentation protocols, consistent application of evaluation criteria, and demonstrated instructional effectiveness (CCPOST, 2019; LAPD Police Commission, 2024).

Specifically, a satisfactory FTO should:

- Receive positive trainee evaluations at the conclusion of each program (Legal Information Institute, 2024).
- Earn a favorable annual evaluation on instructional quality, professionalism, and adherence to CCPOST and departmental standards (Legal Information Institute, 2024).
- Maintain process discipline by completing required documentation, particularly DORs, accurately and on time (LAPD Police Commission, 2024).
- Exhibit effective coaching, ethical conduct, and leadership consistent with principles taught in the FTO certification course (LAPD, 2024).

While this framework establishes clear expectations, recent oversight reviews have identified implementation gaps. A 2024 inspector general report commended the program's structure but found inconsistency in documentation, limited collection of

trainee feedback, and the absence of a centralized tracking system for FTO performance data. It recommended stronger standardization, better use of trainee input, and expanded digital monitoring to ensure fairness and accountability (LAPD Police Commission, 2024).

LAPD's FTO program is robustly designed and well aligned with state standards: officers are trained as educators, subject to recurring evaluation, and guided by detailed documentation protocols. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on consistent enforcement and integrating feedback, a finding echoed in both the CCPOST guidelines and the LAPD's own oversight reports, along with this investigation. Indeed, on paper, LAPD's FTO system represents the most comprehensive and well-regulated of the departments studied—complete with formal certification, recurring evaluations, and structured oversight. Moreover, the length and detail of this LAPD section also reflect a deeper reality: unlike Montgomery or Miami-Dade, information about LAPD's field training program is readily accessible through public reports and policy documents—a level of transparency that, in itself, signals both institutional maturity and an acknowledgment of public accountability.

Yet, as my research indicates, even here the ideals of the model do not consistently translate into practice. As will be discussed in later chapters, despite strong procedural frameworks, cultural factors, inconsistent mentoring, and the persistence of problematic attitudes toward force reveal that the FTO program, while robust in design, remains uneven in execution.

ii. Miami-Dade

Miami-Dade is the epitome of a Sunbelt boomtown, exploding from a sleepy, mostly Southern town at its incorporation in 1896 to an international hub for finance and tourism today. The MDPD has grown with the city: Before 1956, the night shift of the

Miami Sheriff's Department had one police car to patrol an area of about 1,150 square miles, but today the department has more than 3,200 sworn officers.

a. Relevant Historical Background

In the 1970s, Miami became a major hub for drug trafficking—the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency estimates that 95 percent of all marijuana and virtually all cocaine smuggled into the U.S. came through south Florida in the 1970s. In 1979, a war between various drug cartels broke out, starting with a shootout at the Dadeland Mall. Widespread disorder and a spiraling murder rate sent the city into crisis. Miami officers took bribes from drug dealers, leading to a 'cocaine cops' scandal in which a group of homicide detectives were implicated as partners of narco-trafficker Mario Escandar (New York Times, 1981).

Inexperienced and outgunned by narco-traffickers, twice the normal number of officers quit the force in 1980. The city initiated a hiring spree in 1985, doubling the department from 600 to 1,200. Entry standards were lowered, and ultimately, the *entire* Miami academy class of 1985 ended up imprisoned, dead, or leaving the force. In July 1985, the 'River Cops' scandal broke, where three murder suspects were found dressed as police officers and were later found to be actual Miami police officers. Seven officers were tried for racketeering, possession of narcotics, and murder. In the end, more than 10 percent of the department was found to be corrupt, with a shocking range of charges, from homicides to witness intimidation to money laundering. The city eventually ended the narcotics wars, primarily by calling in the federal government.

b. Research Activities and Engagement

Outreach to Miami-Dade started with a research assistant emailing the department. I was linked with a department leader who was interested in conducting a study on observing police compliance via body worn police cameras. I indicated that I could not conduct that

study but invited the department's participation in this research. He received permission from his leadership and personally drove me to every ride along and interview and back to my hotel, acting as a chaperone to ensure my rides occurred and I was safe (some of the stations where my rides started were in high police activity neighborhoods.) In total, I interviewed six leaders, and 12 FTOs in this city.

c. Departmental FTO Policies and Materials

The MDPD uses a two-page Officer's Daily Evaluation Report. FTOs evaluate a recruit according to specific traits or tasks on a daily basis and document her success or failure with regards to that trait or task.

Miami-Dade breaks its evaluation report down into 5 categories: Human Skills, Appearance, Attitude, Knowledge, and Performance, with each category having multiple sub-categories and the FTO grading (S) Satisfactory, (NS) Not Satisfactory, (NO) Not Observed, or (NRT) Not Responding to Training. In addition, a recruit is given an overall daily rating of (S) Satisfactory or (NS) Not Satisfactory based on the day's patrol. For example, under Performance there is a sub-category of control of conflict physical skill that is evaluated if a recruit gets into a physical altercation during a shift. If the recruit handles the physical conflict in line with academy training she will receive a (S), if no such conflict occurs a (NO) would be assigned, if the recruit uses too much force or not enough force to control the situation they could be marked with a (NS) and if there is repeated issues with the sub-category, the recruit would receive a NRT and department leadership would become involved with her training. The entire Miami-Dade Evaluation Report can be seen at Appendix B.

d. Training the Trainers: Preparing and Evaluating FTOs

In Florida, the structure of FTO programs is shaped less by statute than by a combination of accreditation standards and local agency policy. The Florida Department of Law

Enforcement (FDLE) and its Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission (CJSTC) establish statewide minimum requirements for officer certification and maintenance (such as forty hours of mandatory retraining every four years). But FDLE does not prescribe the structure or content of an agency's field training program (FDLE, 2024). Instead, the primary mechanism governing FTO programs across the state is the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA), which requires accredited agencies to maintain a written directive covering FTO qualifications, training, supervision, reporting responsibilities, and recruit-evaluation procedures (CFA, 2024).

Within this framework, the MDPD operates a highly formalized FTO program. Recruits complete the police academy before transitioning into a structured field phase under certified FTOs (Miami-Dade County, 2024). FTOs are selected through an internal process and must complete a forty-hour certification, which serves as the regional CJSTC-certified training center for the county (Miami Dade College, 2024). But as we will see, many of the Miami-Dade FTOs are 'selected' against their wishes.

The FTO curriculum emphasizes pedagogy, leadership, ethics, and structured evaluation. Core topics include adult-learning theory, how to instruct and deliver feedback during shifts, leadership and supervision, legal and ethical responsibilities, liability awareness, and the use of DORs (Miami Dade College, 2024; FDLE, 2024). The program reflects a blend of instructional and operational learning, preparing officers to coach, mentor, and assess probationary recruits. Continuing training is also expected: FTOs remain subject to FDLE's recurring forty-hour retraining cycle, but there is no indication that this in-service training includes content specific to the FTO role or its instructional responsibilities. (FDLE, 2024).

Accreditation assessors review evidence of compliance, including training rosters, evaluation records, and policy directives, during on-site audits. These standards

are supposed to, in theory, provide a statewide accountability mechanism, functioning as a quality-control system even in the absence of detailed statutory regulation.

Unlike California's highly prescriptive CCPOST system, Florida agencies assess FTO performance primarily through compliance with accreditation directives and documentation quality. A satisfactory FTO at Miami Dade is one who:

- Meets agency and accreditation qualifications and maintains current FTO certification (CFA, 2024; FDLE, 2024);
- Fulfills supervisory and reporting responsibilities by submitting DORs and phase evaluations accurately and on time (CFA, 2024);
- Applies evaluation criteria consistently and fairly across trainees, demonstrating effective coaching and feedback (Miami Dade College, 2024); and
- Aligns their conduct with agency policy and the professional standards outlined in the regional FTO curriculum (Miami Dade College, 2024).

Supervisors are charged with verifying these elements through documentation audits, trainee feedback, and periodic performance reviews. During accreditation cycles, assessors interview FTOs and supervisors and review program records; compliance is considered evidence of effective performance (CFA, 2024). This model therefore links FTO accountability to the agency's ability to maintain accreditation, a structural incentive to preserve procedural consistency and instructional quality.

In practice, Miami-Dade's system illustrates the advantages and limits of an accreditation-driven framework. The county's robust training infrastructure supports professionalization and continuity across FTO cohorts. However, because state law leaves implementation to local discretion, much depends on the diligence of supervisors and the frequency of accreditation audits. Publicly accessible information on the program

remains limited to accreditation proofs and training outlines, underscoring the partial transparency of the system.

Compared with Los Angeles, Miami-Dade's model offers less statutory definition but similar procedural formality. The MDPD FTO program is structured and well-documented, yet its effectiveness ultimately hinges on consistent supervision and follow-through, issues that my research suggests are uneven across the department. The relative scarcity of publicly available data on FTO performance may itself indicate the constraints of an accreditation-based approach: transparency is procedural rather than cultural.

iii. Montgomery

Montgomery is an exemplar of the 'new South', formerly sleepy Southern towns that have been transformed by technology and transplants from other regions. Nonetheless, tragic racial history runs close to the surface in this first capital of the Confederacy and epicenter of the Civil Rights movement.

a. Relevant Historical Background

Few cities are as evocative of America's troubled racial history as Montgomery. In May 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) began organizing bus trips to the city, consisting of mixed-race pairs of students and civil rights activists. These 'Freedom Rides' were a protest of non-enforcement of Supreme Court decisions striking down segregation in interstate passenger travel, including bus stations (*Boynton v. Virginia*, 364 U.S. 454, 1960; National Park Service, 2025). Stops in the first few states drew little public attention (King Institute, n.d.), but when the first two buses entered Alabama, intense violence broke out, with thirteen riders beaten by crowds of white protesters (History.com, n.d.). CORE wanted to discontinue all remaining rides but a group of Riders pushed on to Montgomery where they were met by hundreds of protesters. There

was no police protection (Equal Justice Initiative, n.d.a), because the Montgomery Public Safety Commissioner had indicated he would delay the arrival of police when the riders pulled in (Equal Justice Initiative, n.d.b). The mob used various weapons to attack reporters and news photographers, then beat the riders as well as an official from the DOJ (National Park Service, 2025).

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy sent around 600 federal marshals to Montgomery (History.com, n.d.). On May 21, 1961, civil rights leaders traveled to Montgomery to lead approximately 1,500 people in a church service while a mob of more than 3,000 gathered outside and began to vandalize the building. President John F. Kennedy threatened the Alabama governor with sending federal troops to restore order, and martial law was declared (Lafayette, 2011). Kennedy struck a deal with Alabama officials: state police would protect the riders from mob violence, while federal officials would not intervene to prevent city and local police forces from arresting riders who broke local segregation laws relating to bus station restrooms, lunch counters, and waiting rooms.

Tensions between the Montgomery police department and black communities remained high through the following decades, reaching a climax after the 1975 police killing of Bernard Whitehurst, Jr. (MacPherson, 1977). In December of that year, a white Montgomery police officer shot and killed Whitehurst for suspicion of robbery. Whitehurst, the suspect, was black but was dressed differently from the suspect's description (Pell, 2018; Little, 2017). The police report described the killing as self-defense, but investigators discovered that officers planted a gun on Whitehurst (New York Times, 1976). The police did not inform Whitehurst's family of the death and the *Washington Post* even reported that the police attempted to frame community members who investigated the case (MacPherson, 1977). The department was also suspected of

erasing recordings from that evening in which officers admitted to killing the wrong man.

The falsified evidence and cover-up led to the resignation or termination of eleven police officers and city officials, including the mayor, chief of police, and director of public safety. Still, no officer was ever convicted. The city eventually built monuments honoring Whitehurst, but his family has received no compensation and continues to call for reparative justice.

b. Research Activities and Engagement

Montgomery-Dade outreach started with professional connections. I am a member of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) (LEAP, Arthur Rizer, n.d.), a non-profit organization made up of current and former law enforcement members that work on criminal justice reform issues (LEAP, n.d.a). I noticed that the Montgomery Chief of Police was also a member (LEAP, n.d.b), and reached out to him via LEAP staff. He put me in contact with an officer in charge of the department's FTO program and I was given access to study their FTO program. It should be noted that the Montgomery chief was not a participant in this study. In total, I interviewed six leaders, and 12 FTOs in this city.

c. Departmental FTO Policies and Materials

Montgomery employs a two-page Daily Observation Report that, like Miami-Dade, evaluates a recruit on a shift-by-shift basis. The scoring is similar to Miami-Dade but with a broader scale: (E) Excels, (P) Proficient, (N/I) Needs Improvement, (U) Unacceptable), (NO) Not Observed, and (NRT) Not Responding to Training. One notable difference between Miami-Dade's and Montgomery's observation report is that Montgomery's is broken into two sections. The first is labeled 'always required' and includes four categories: Knowledge, Attitude/Relationship, Appearance/Physical

Condition, and Field Performance (which is defined as self-control/judgement under stress). The second section is broken into five phases (phase 0-4), with each phase tied to where the recruit is in their training. For instance, phase 0 is the first week the recruit is out of the academy and in the FTO car and evaluates topics such as suspicious persons and situational awareness, while phase 3 (the mastery phase) is for weeks 10-13 of training, where the recruit is evaluated on crime scene procedures and evidence handling, among other topics. The entire Montgomery Evaluation Report can be seen at Appendix C.

d. Training the Trainers: Preparing and Evaluating FTOs

In Montgomery, the Alabama Peace Officers' Standards and Training Commission (APOSTC) governs basic certification and continuing education requirements for all sworn officers in the state. However, APOSTC does not prescribe a statewide Field Training Officer (FTO) model, mandate evaluation forms, or establish recertification cycles, leaving such decisions entirely to local agencies (APOSTC, 2024).

Many departments, including the Montgomery Police Department (MPD), rely on CALEA Standard 33.4.3, which requires accredited agencies to maintain written directives on the selection, training, and supervision of FTOs, and to ensure documentation of recruit evaluations (CALEA, 2024). While this provides a quality-control framework, it functions as an accreditation rather than a legal mandate, allowing considerable variation across agencies.

Following graduation from the police academy, new recruits enter a structured 14-week Field Training Program before being cleared for solo patrol (City of Montgomery, 2024). During this field phase, recruits work under certified FTOs who coach, evaluate, and document performance. Officers 'selected' to become FTOs in Montgomery complete an internal department-run FTO training program. The FTO

course slides provided to this study were primarily focused on what to expect from the department's 'rookies.' One notable slide stated the goal of the FTO program, which was to 'produce a solo officer.' The slide also stated, 'We cannot produce an experienced officer, only an officer that has been trained to the best of our ability.' This absence of a broader developmental goal, one that emphasizes professionalism, judgment, or ethical policing, suggests a narrow and utilitarian approach that may contribute to systemic deficiencies in officer preparedness and culture within the Montgomery Police Department.

While all Alabama officers, including FTOs, must complete APOSTC's continuing-education requirements, including a minimum of twelve hours annually and forty hours over four years, there is no evidence that this in-service training includes content specific to the FTO role or its instructional responsibilities (APOSTC, 2024; Justia Law, 2024). Consequently, FTO skill refreshers depend primarily on agency initiative or optional instructor courses.

As a CALEA-accredited agency, MPD's Field Training and Evaluation Program operates under written directives that specify FTO qualifications, supervision, and reporting procedures (CALEA, 2024; City of Montgomery, 2024). An FTO coordinator oversees the program, reviews DORs, and monitors the progress of probationary officers. Supervisors are responsible for auditing DORs and phase summaries for timeliness, completeness, and consistent application of evaluation standards. In theory, these audits function as the main accountability mechanism; however, their effectiveness in practice depends heavily on the quality of local recordkeeping and supervisory engagement. This investigation found that such reviews are rarely conducted in a way that produces meaningful oversight.

In the absence of statewide metrics, MPD defines satisfactory FTO performance through compliance with agency directives. According to the department's training slides, in theory a satisfactory FTO is one who:

- Acts as a de facto supervisor expected to function as the rookie's immediate authority figure, not as a peer or partner;
- Teaches laws, policies, and procedures;
- Maintains and completes all Field Training Program documents (DORs, field notes, training checklists, summaries) correctly and on time; and
- Corrects unsafe behavior immediately and reports recurring safety violations or insubordination.

MPD's framing of the FTO role reflects a fundamentally bureaucratic orientation rather than a developmental one. The officer is positioned primarily as a compliance monitor, tasked with documenting, correcting, and grading, rather than as a professional mentor. The emphasis on paperwork, liability mitigation, and what training slides describe as 'no off the record' supervision reveals an organizational preoccupation with control and defensibility over learning and growth. By defining the FTO as a quasi-administrative supervisor rather than an educator, the department risks perpetuating a culture of proceduralism in which success is measured by documentation rather than development.

While MPD maintains a defined Field Training Program with goals, it operates within a regulatory vacuum that relies heavily on local discretion and leadership commitment. The program's structure is sound in theory—bridging academy and field while incorporating documented evaluations—but its success depends largely on individual FTO engagement and supervisory follow-through. Compared with Los Angeles and Miami-Dade, Montgomery's framework offers the least professional

reinforcement. As this research indicates, even where a structured program exists, the absence of consistent oversight and professional incentives has led many FTOs to view the role as burdensome and undervalued, undermining both the program's effectiveness and its potential to model professional policing.

2. MMR Approach and Research

The theory investigated in this study hypothesizes that understanding what is being socialized cannot be appropriately captured through a large-scale quantitative study (*i.e.*, Sierra-Arevalo, 2024). Like past studies that conduct in-depth interviews and observational methods to better capture officer understanding and perceptions (Muir, 1977; Westley, 1970), this investigation aims to provide an understanding of the socialization of violence by focusing on not just the mechanism for socialization but the content and norms being socialized. Further, the study attempts to understand alignment or lack thereof between FTOs and department leaders when it comes to the norms into which new officers should be socialized.

The decision to use qualitative methods (such as in-depth interviews and participant observations) is well-grounded in criminological research, especially in contexts where socialization processes, such as the transmission of norms related to the use of force, are being examined (Fassin, 2013; Sierra-Arévalo, 2024). The decision to focus on qualitative methods, including interviews and 'ride-alongs,' is particularly effective for capturing the nuances of how violence is normalized and transmitted within police departments. Ethnographic approaches, like those employed by Fassin (2013), have shown that immersive, contextual data collection methods are essential for uncovering the implicit values and practices that might not be visible through quantitative designs (Ingram, et al., 2018; Fassin, 2013). By directly interacting with

FTOs and observing their behaviors in real time, this research design can offer insights into how FTOs train and socialize the application of force within their specific working environments, something that more standardized data collection methods are not well suited to document.

Moreover, the decision to contrast FTO perspectives with those of departmental leadership is supported by research on organizational culture in policing. Studies indicate that discrepancies between leadership policies and street-level training can lead to varied outcomes in the use of force, suggesting that internal organizational misalignments could contribute to issues with the management of violence (Ingram et al., 2018).

The decision to employ this research design allows this investigation to both fill a gap in current research, particularly in the U.S. context, but also enables the address of complex, systemic issues around police socialization and violence through rich, detailed data collection (Geller and Toch, 1996; Getty et al., 2014). To date, there is no other study that has explored FTOs' perceptions of their role generally and their role in training new recruits in the application of lethal violence. Nor have any studies contrasted FTOs' attitudes departments' expectations, to better understand mismanaged violence, specifically in the United States. Consistent with my research goals and my understanding of the current research gaps, this project's research activities include conducting interviews of department leaders, of FTOs conducted during ride-alongs, of ride-along observations outside of interviews, and review of FTO and other training materials provided by the departments I reviewed.

To clarify the limits of what this design can demonstrate, I specify the scope of observation as follows. Although the study draws on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), it does not attempt to measure trainee learning or behavioral imitation. I did not observe recruits directly, nor did I collect longitudinal data on their performance in the

field. Instead, the analysis centers on FTOs' accounts of modeling, evaluation, and reinforcement practices, supplemented by institutional documents that regulate training and assessment. This approach captures the organizational conditions that make social learning possible, rather than the individual-level outcomes that may result from it. The approach thus provides evidence about the mechanisms and context of cultural transmission, not the degree of its success.

3. FTO and Leader Interviews

Overall, I conducted 54 interviews, over hundreds of hours, producing hundreds of pages of observational notes and transcriptions. I also collected documentation regarding the FTO evaluation process, the FTO training process, and officer recruiting literature. Given the unique nature of political and social climate in the U.S. as well as human subjects' privacy concerns, these interviews were not recorded but were memorialized in notes. Further, in early interviews that I conducted preparatory to this study, I noticed that participants' demeanor and answers would be affected if the interview was being recorded (Rutakumwa et al., 2019). So, the legal and ethical constraints against recording also proved helpful in obtaining more authentic responses.

The interview instruments and field work for this project were approved by the University of Oxford Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) and were deemed to meet the appropriate ethical standards.³⁹ I followed university CUREC ethics, guidelines, and considerations at the start and

³⁹ CUREC 2 Ref No. R57321/RE002. When submitted for CUREC 2 approval the title of this study was *Watching the Watchman: How Do Police View their Monopoly of Violence Over the Protected and Served?* On October 18, 2018, this project was approved for a risk assessment and field work. In addition, on October 26, 2018, this project was approved by the Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) as meeting appropriate ethical standards.

throughout each interview. I also made every effort to present the aim of the project clearly to each participant and to be as transparent as possible to ensure the integrity of the data.

All of the structured questions and responses were easily recorded; many of them called for yes/no responses. There were minor differences between the leader and FTO interviews. For the semi-structured parts of interviews, I took hand-written notes, recording both responses and changes in tone, nuance, or body language that either confirmed, or were at variance with, verbal responses. For each interview I would read the question and take copious notes regarding subjects' responses. I would frequently pause and ask subjects to repeat notable sentiments to ensure my notes were accurate. I would also repeat prominent quotes to ensure accuracy. Leader interviews took place in an office setting, save for one department leader, where I was left in the car for several hours because of an active shooter situation.

FTO interviews took place during ride-alongs, which lasted for hours. In that time, I would go back and touch on conspicuous answers, asking many of the questions again but adjusting the questions to the subject's previous answers, background, experience, job function, and geography. I would not stop subjects to ensure quotes were accurate during this phase of the interview, as I was trying to elicit how they felt about the presented topic from behind the curtain, especially if I heard a contradiction between responses. Indeed, much of this phase of the FTO 'interview' was discursive in style, with questions sprinkled in between calls and exchanging stories. Thus, the interviews were not all uniform in their style and formatting. This is among the reasons why the findings are not presented in a chart or other table.

4. FTO Observation

Policing studies that rely on self-reported responses without practical, real-time observations (or ethnographic elements more broadly) face a consistent risk: Any variable, phenomenon, or observation that does not fit pre-conceived notions or cannot otherwise be explained is attributed to ‘culture’ or ‘social norms.’ These disparities are thus rationalized as either uncorrectable or requiring root-and-branch reform, without understanding how they arose (Ewijk, 2011). Such explanations attribute all variables to systemic causes and tend to lead readers to conclude that an institution is beyond saving with no solution but to abandon the model. These attitudes all contribute to the police abolition discourse in advocacy-based scholarship (Vitale, 2017; Richie, 2012).

It is worth emphasizing that, similar to social learning literature discussed above, I worked under the assumption that police departments are more like ecosystems than machines, where specific inputs will result in easily predicted outputs (Roithmayr, 2016). That is, police departments as a whole have attributes that no individual caused, and produce outcomes that are not the result of any one individual’s design or action. This is precisely why careful attention should be paid to the attitudes, actions, and perceptions of the individuals who together comprise this ecosystem. An example of this can be seen in the below conversations about militarization. The rise of police militarization appears less the result of deliberate design by lawmakers or administrators and more the outcome of an evolving pattern. As with any emergent phenomenon, certain recurring features and trends can be identified, and retrospective judgments about its consequences can be made. However, addressing the challenges posed by militarized policing, particularly the mismanagement of coercive capacity, requires acknowledging the complexity of police organizations. These are intricate systems, and any reform effort must account for the

interdependencies within them, carefully considering how changes in one area may produce ripple effects across the institution.

5. Structured Tools Used by FTOs

The structured tool used by most FTOs are ‘observation logs,’ also referred to as a Daily Evaluation or Observation Report. This is a structured tool FTOs use to assess the performance and development of recruits during on-duty training. The reports capture a recruit’s daily performance across categories such as knowledge, attitude, skills, and field performance, and break down these categories into observable tasks or behaviors documented over each shift. Recruits are marked as satisfactory, needing improvement, or not observed, with some systems also including ratings for excelling or not responding to training. Additionally, some reports adjust the evaluation criteria based on the recruit’s stage in training, with earlier phases focusing on foundational skills and later phases assessing more advanced competencies like crime scene management. The observation log serves both as a daily feedback tool and a record of the recruit’s progress or areas for improvement. Blank copies of observation logs for each city are attached respectively in Appendix A, B, and C but completed logs were not available for me to analyze.

6. Positionality, Consent, and Research Techniques

Because fieldwork is inevitably shaped by the researcher’s identity and approach, this section details the positionality, consent practices, and research techniques that structured my interaction with participants and the data.

i. Consent

All participants were promised anonymity in return for their cooperation. For many participants, this was a *sine qua non* of their participation, especially those who might

face professional political consequences for participation. To retain anonymity, I use descriptive phrases such as 'Montgomery FTO' or 'Los Angeles leader.' To make this study more readable, and to protect anonymity of officers, female FTOs in particular where they are heavily outnumbered by male FTOs, I refer to all participants as 'he/him' in Chapters 4 and 5 and as 'she/her' in Chapters 6.

Because the interviews were primarily conducted in patrol cars during active police work, consent for interviews was acquired verbally. Participants were read a script from an oral consent form and then received a copy of the form. Participants' questions about the process or purpose of the interviews were answered before the interview was conducted.

ii. Positionality

I served as a part-time civilian police officer for three years in Cheney, Washington, from 2000 to 2003. In addition, I served more than 20 years in the United States Army, both active and in the reserves, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel from the West Virginia U.S. Army National Guard in 2014. I spent a portion of my tenure in the Army in the military police, serving as a military police company commander, military police battalion operations and executive officer, and finally as military police acting battalion commander. In these roles my primary job was to help train new military police recruits. As relevant to this study, I deployed with the U.S. Army to Fallujah, Iraq in 2005 to 2006 and experienced personally the horrors of war and mismanaged violence. I was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service in a combat zone and the Purple Heart for combat injuries. After my time on active duty in Iraq, I returned to my second career as a federal prosecutor (among other roles) in the United States Department of Justice.

My law enforcement background also gave me a level of 'informal access' that other researchers may not be able to duplicate. Specifically, many of the officers I rode

with saw me as a fellow member of the profession and were much more willing to provide information than they might have been to an ‘outsider.’ As many social science methodologists have highlighted, understanding the culture of what one is studying allows the researcher to identify themes and terminology that researchers without that knowledge will not detect (King et al., 1994). Indeed, my background enabled me to perceive and record changes in tone, nuances, stops and starts in conversation, and other telling minutiae that less well-positioned observers might have overlooked.

For example, because of my background, when riding with FTO M002, I noticed that he lacked basic policing skills⁴⁰ let alone having the skills necessary to train and socialize new recruits. I also observed FTO M001 ‘putting on a show,’ as I described it in my field notes, while being hyper alert and trying to appear to be doing everything ‘by the book.’ I do not think I could have observed these nuances absent my policing experience. Lastly, FTO L001 mentioned that he had researched me before the ride and read some of my police writings, this would not have happened but for my background.

Interestingly, however, it was my military experience—especially my time in combat—that seemed to impress and relax the officers I observed. When many of the officers found out I was in combat, at least six asked if I had killed anyone, but I did not take active notes on that exchange for personal reasons.

In retrospect, I recognize that my military background, particularly the disclosure that I had served in combat, may have influenced how some officers engaged with me. While this information was not something I volunteered, it often emerged organically in conversation, and once it did, I observed a shift in tone and comfort level. Clearly, I had

⁴⁰ For example, the officer appeared to not understand how his police cruiser impacted traffic. Further, he could not articulate why he decided to stop someone and gave an impression of timidity and fear of the public.

gone up in FTOs' estimation and had passed some unspoken test or rite of passage. Such dynamics are well documented in qualitative fieldwork, where shared identity markers, such as occupational background or subcultural membership, can simultaneously enhance access and distort disclosure, though in what ways and to what extent is difficult to identify with precision (Rowe, 2007). It is possible that participants' awareness of my combat experience facilitated greater candor, especially on topics related to fear, violence, and camaraderie, but it may also have produced a form of social desirability bias in which officers expressed stronger views in favor of the use of force to align with what they presumed to be my own perspective (Loftuf, 2009). I did not systematically record every instance in which this disclosure occurred, which I now recognize as a methodological limitation. To mitigate potential bias, I maintained a consistent semi-structured interview protocol and avoided affirming or disaffirming participants' statements about force. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the possibility of differential rapport remains and could have subtly shaped how certain officers framed their accounts.

I also believe that being a white male impacted this investigation. As a male, I observed officers making sexist comments that I believe would likely have gone unsaid if I was a female researcher. For instance, one FTO with the LAPD told me that 'yoga pants are the bacon of clothing,' but not when 'fat women' wear them, and that the best part of being a cop was looking at pretty women as he pointed to an attractive woman crossing the road. (*FTO Interview L007*). This was the most extreme comment, but other comments had sexist overtones.

In addition, many white male officers made comments that I do not think would have been said if I was a person of color. For example, several officers stated that affirmative action made it harder for white officers to get hired. Some even went further, saying there were 'a bunch of black cops that should not have been hired,' while others

were hired despite lower test scores because of affirmative action. Others just made blatant racist comments (*i.e.*, community policing is just ‘hug a thug’) that I feel confident would not have been made if I was a person of color. (*e.g.*, *FTO and Leader Interviews D002, D004, M003, M004, L012, LE01, and LE02*).

Lastly, while I internally tried to prevent this, my own disposition could have played a role in how I interacted with leaders and FTOs. Often my rides were late at night after a long airplane ride. Further, each department treated me with different levels of respect, which could have subconsciously affected my recordings. For instance, Los Angeles treated me as a VIP who was doing important research. The commanders for each Division ensured the officers I was riding with knew who I was and what I was doing. In Miami the Department assigned me an escort (who was a senior officer) who picked me up from my hotel and drove me to my rides and would pick me up again after the ride was over. My escort would explain what I was doing before the ride started ensuring I started with a certain amount of legitimacy. However, in Montgomery, I personally felt disrespected on more than half the rides. The FTOs often were not told I was coming and were surprised and even annoyed; at times, they even had another person in the car. The leadership seemed completely disinterested in my research or that I was spending time with their FTOs.

I was aware that my rapport and level of access varied substantially across the three departments and that these dynamics could shape both what I observed and how participants interacted with me. To minimize the potential for bias, I took several steps to maintain analytic consistency. I used the same semi-structured interview and field note template across all sites, ensuring that my attention and documentation followed identical prompts regardless of how welcoming or dismissive the environment felt. I also wrote reflexive notes immediately during the interviews noting emotional responses and

situational factors that might have influenced my perception so these could be revisited critically during coding rather than left unexamined. Most importantly, by utilizing a thematic approach where I compared themes across departments rather than within them, I reduced the risk of over-weighting any single setting based on the quality of rapport. Despite these precautions, I recognize that differential treatment could still have affected the tone or depth of my field notes, which is why I make this variation explicit here. Acknowledging these conditions is part of maintaining transparency about how access and interpersonal dynamics can subtly shape qualitative findings.

iii. Observation and Interview Technique

As noted earlier, the interviews were semi-structured. There were several steps from the initial session with a participant to the final qualitative coding. First, during the participant session, I used color coding when taking notes using a BIC 4-Color retractable pen with four colors to denote different types of information (BIC, n.d.). Red was used for direct quotes, blue was for my thoughts, black for administrative data, and green to note when I saw a possible theme emerging. Within 12 hours after the ride/interview was over, I would transcribe my notes into a Word document to ensure I could read my handwriting while the information was fresh. Here, the coding was changed slightly. Underlined text represented direct quotes, text in *italics* represented my thoughts, plain text was reserved for the question itself and administrative data, and themes were highlighted in *pink italics* with an explanation of what possible theme presented itself.

I made an error when taking notes and drafted them in third person. When used in the empirical chapters here, I changed the quotations and notes to first person. Finally, I would review the interview within 24 hours of completing this process and make an audio file of anything I could remember that was remarkable regarding my observations

and responses. I then used a research assistant to transcribe those recordings and make a master interview sheet for each participant. An example of a completed and transcribed interview sheet can be seen in Appendix D.

Next, these notes were then manually coded using Quirkos, a qualitative coding technology, using the codebook that can be viewed below. This recording and coding allowed for the extraction and development of themes across observations, interviews, and other supplemental publicly accessible documentation to help cross-reference or contextualize interviews and observations.

D. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

I employed a hybrid thematic discourse analysis to organize and analyze the data.

Specifically, the process started with a deductive framework. I then proceeded through an inductive approach for the refinement of the coding framework, which is best suited for the research objectives of this investigation. Several factors and tools were employed to aid the analysis and provide richer insights. First, I will discuss the formation and evolution of the coding framework. Second, I outline the development of different proxies which are helpful tools concerning violence and other recurring themes. Finally, I consider the limitations to the analysis and my empirical approach.

1. Coding Framework (Code Book)

This framework was primarily utilized in the early interviews to account for the themes that were not salient earlier in the study. The coding and analysis of the interviews was done in four steps:

i. Development of Survey Instrument

First, I developed a survey instrument which was approved by CUREC. This instrument had broad categories based on existing literature. The design and development of this survey was informed by the following research questions intended to explore the above research questions. Based on existing literature, guided semi-structured interview questions were focused on the following areas:

- Background and Contextual Information on Participant;
- Recruitment and Academy/Classroom Training;
- Field Training;
- Militarization/Equipment; and
- Police Diversion

ii. Identifying Relevant Sub and Overlapping Themes

Next, I noted different themes which would appear during participant interviews and ‘ride-alongs.’ This can be viewed here:

Table 1

<u>Parent Theme from Interview Instrument</u>	<u>Coding Themes</u>
Background Characteristics	Public Concern with Military/Equipment/Uniform Career Goals (background) Reason for Joining
Officer Self-Image	Prestigious Devalued by Community/Misjudged/Not Safe Not Valued by Higher Ups Either Connection to Militarization
Academy	Formal Use of Force Training in Academy Preparation Level Avoiding Lawsuits/Complaints (body cameras) Officer Perception of Use of Force Training (Academy)

Field Training, Officer Training and Practices	Power/Discretion of FTO Precinct Discretion (training and policies) Bad FTOs (How leaders formally react to them) FTO Program Controls on Violence
Professional Development	Promotion Structures Departmental Incentives Accessibility to Training and Information Around Promotions
Equipment	SWAT
Recruitment	Warm Body Ideal Officer Bad Hire/Recruit Ideal Leader
Departmental Image	In-Service training Covering Your Ass Positionality Toward Research View of FTOs
Controlling Violence	Violence is Fun Controlling Violence (in practice)
Officer Safety	Getting Home

iii. Post Field Training Observations

Subsequently, after all the interviews were completed, I reviewed all the interview sheets and noted routinely appearing themes. Two research assistants supported the mechanical organization of data under my direct supervision. I independently generated the thematic framework, coding scheme, and keyword list that guided this process. The assistants' tasks were restricted to identifying occurrences of these predefined keywords within interview transcripts and relocating corresponding excerpts into the thematic categories I had established. They did not participate in any analytical interpretation, coding decisions, or theme refinement. All intellectual framing, methodological design, and

interpretive analysis were conducted solely by me, consistent with the approach reviewed and approved by my supervisors.

iv. Validation Process

I then validated each input, ensuring all the data was sorted and coded correctly. Finally, when I started drafting the empirical chapters, I checked each quote and observation to ensure it was coded properly and the quote was accurate. I also checked the quotes a final time before I submitted my chapters during the confirmation process.

2. Identifying Proxies

Early in this research project, before the formal interviews started, I became increasingly aware that police officers are very hesitant to speak about their attitudes concerning violence—an attitude consistent with what I observed (and at times emulated) during my time in law enforcement. Hence, I developed various ‘proxy’ questions to flesh out participant opinions while reducing the self-filtering that is inevitable when direct questions were asked by an outsider. Some proxies proved to have little illustrative power; but others were highly effective in generating responses that unveiled attitudes that might otherwise have remained hidden or muted.

One of the most ‘successful’ series of questions was related to militarization. These questions were designed to elicit how participants truly felt about militarization and whether it is a symptom of a greater disease of mismanaged police violence. Given the centrality of this issue to my investigation, I included a short understanding of the literature regarding militarization in Chapter 2. Other useful and revealing proxies included:

- Questions about leadership, specifically if FTOs were considered ‘leaders’ and whether the FTO is considered prestigious within the department. This was a

useful proxy for whether FTOs feel about their treatment by department leadership. Bluntly asking ‘are you mistreated by leadership’ likely would have been interpreted as me being a ‘spy’ for the department or biased in some way.

- Asking FTOs’ views on body worn cameras, to understand what they thought about the recent heightened scrutiny of police conduct.
- Asking about implicant bias training to elicit opinions about their departments’ strategy of reducing police violence and engaging better with their respective communities.

To be clear, some proxies did not produce useful data, such as question I.9:

‘What is your favorite cop movie or show?’ This was an attempt to see if officers who enjoyed violent police movies or shows would have more violent leaning responses, but no meaningful data could be gleaned from the responses.

3. Limitations and Disclaimers

This study is subject to the following limitations and disclaimers, which obviously may impact the applicability of these research findings to different kinds of localities, departments, or organizational structures. Nonetheless, I believe enough variation in the sample has been preserved to make at least some generally applicable findings about FTOs and their role in managing (or failing to manage) police violence.

i. Race

As discussed above, law enforcement agencies across the U.S. have been found to engage in misuse of police power through different types of misconduct.⁴¹ Literature has

⁴¹ This is not to say that misuse of violence is normally distributed across agencies and that it is an issue in every department. By ‘across,’ I am referring to how police misconduct has been found in departments all across the country of varying sizes and geographies.

demonstrated how history and other factors have informed and sustained a police culture that disproportionately targets black and Hispanic communities (Muhammad 2010; Vitale 2017; Davis, 2017). Moreover, this literature suggests that the policing environment was not shaped overnight, but is informed by both histories, specifically around race, and transformed through recent developments such as police department militarization.

The empirical research discussing the disparate impact of violence on black/Hispanic persons further reinforces the notion that no study of American institutions is complete without the discussion of racial orders (King and Smith, 2005). This thesis does not fail to consider racial forces but admittedly fails to do a thorough exploration of this issue with FTOs. This is in part due to the nature of the research aim, which is focused on capturing both FTO and department perceptions around their role in socializing new recruits in the application of violence. However, to the extent the discussion of violence inextricably interacts with race through coded language, the responses were included, and often prompted questions aimed to mitigate an officer's concerns or fears given the political climate around policing.

ii. Interpretation

Some readers may take issue with my interpretation of specific interview responses. This is inevitable when dealing with large amounts of data generated by in-person interviews, free-form responses, and observations. Because accessing police departments is difficult, policing researchers generally cannot carry out full ethnographies of police behavior.⁴²

The barriers to access are heightened when it comes to studying the 'organizational

⁴² For literature on departmental decision making and setting organizational tone and culture, including the contributions of police unions and other largely unmeasurable factors, *see* Friedman and Ponomarenko, 2015; Sklansky, 2005. *See also* President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Manning, 1977.

infrastructure’ of police departments, which demands active immersion if not outright membership in the organization studied. This project is no different. While my data is not able to give a fully nuanced examination of police departments, it nevertheless reveals much about the ‘intent’ behind the arrangements and mechanisms for managing the use of violence as well as the ‘understanding’ of how violence is controlled by the police. Officer behavior is deeply influenced by cultural factors. Therefore, even when instruments of control cannot be directly observed, examining the officers responsible for training and socializing new recruits provides valuable insights into the ‘organizational infrastructure’ of police departments.

iii. Site Selection Bias

A major limitation is, obviously, site selection. As is discussed in greater detail above, all of the selected cities are larger metropolitan areas and the departments I review are all departments of general jurisdiction (*i.e.*, they are not departments with specialized purposes such as highway patrol or university police). There may well be meaningfully different approaches to training in suburban or rural departments or those with specialized missions. That said, my sample selection depends first and foremost on whether the department gave me access—a factor that alone may say something about these cities’ commitment to reform.

Each department studied is located in a city with a population of 200,000 or more; such cities likely are the locus of most of the homicides in the United States every year (Abt, 2019). As such, my findings may have limited application to nonurban areas of the country, since violent crime and brutality in urban areas generally occurs in public spaces where people congregate, a pattern that does not hold in nonurban areas, where violent crime occurs mostly in homes (FBI, 2017, table 17). Yet I do believe that police

departments across these different metropolitan areas are similar enough to give the study a broad inferential scope.

Nonetheless, I am aware and have tried to resist the temptation to make larger or national extrapolations from data from three cities or the 54 police interviews that were conducted for this investigation. The United States has roughly 18,000 different law enforcement ‘departments’ ranging from single-man forces to departments with more than 30,000 sworn officers (FBI, 2019, table 74). In total there are over 800,000 sworn officers in the United States (National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, n.d.). These findings do, however, inform our understanding of how these larger urban departments attempt to control police violence with the socialization of new recruits via their FTO programs and whether those efforts are misaligned with officers’ perceptions and attitudes.

iv. Participant Selection Bias

Selection bias certainly had a role in how my data was shaped. The officers I was allowed to interview were completely controlled by the respective departments. Generally speaking, the leaders I spoke to were those available that met my rank threshold (Captain in Los Angeles and Lieutenant in Miami-Dade and Montgomery), and I did not feel there was any attempt to place me with leaders as a way to influence the research.

This was not true with FTOs. In Los Angeles, the department made a concerted effort to have me ride with officers who, in the department’s opinion, presented well for this investigation. In fact, I was told by L001 that leadership selected FTOs who had more experience. This can be seen with LAPD FTOs averaging 19.88 years in service, compared to 14.03 in Miami-Dade and 6.71 in Montgomery. In Miami-Dade, there was some effort to ensure I rode with a wide range of FTOs from different backgrounds. I

overheard my contact on the phone saying he wanted me with a black female on one occasion. I did not record race and gender for anonymity reasons, but I did observe that the next FTO I rode with was, in fact, a black female. In Montgomery, there was no such consideration. In fact, more than half the times I arrived for my scheduled rides, the desk sergeant had no idea who I was or why I was there. I was placed with any officer they could find who was an FTO or had been (my only requirement). Indeed, one of the first FTOs I rode with in Montgomery, M002, seemed to have some cognitive difficulties and a Southern drawl so slow the interview took three times its normal length. The officer was wearing a uniform that appeared to be two sizes too big and he seemed confused about basic police work. I considered whether the department was playing a practical joke on me as a hazing ritual. In fact, he was an active FTO.

v. The Gap Between Saying and Doing

Though heavily time- and resource-intensive and featuring high barriers to entry, a lengthy participant observation can control observational bias and uncover the uniformity and fragmentation from responsibilities of street-level bureaucrats (Fenno, 1986). Here, such observational bias was controlled through my lengthy field officer ride-alongs.

My observations of street-level officers were limited, as individual officers are not the primary focus of this study. The core issue I aim to address is identifying the manageable and adaptable tools that police departments use to regulate officers' use of force. Police leaders and FTOs significantly influence the behavior of street-level officers, including those who may be predisposed to act outside the boundaries of democratic policing. When I state that my aim is to investigate what shapes the actions of street-level officers, I am outlining a specific methodological perspective. It cannot be assumed that street-level officers consistently act in accordance with their managers'

expectations, adhere to formal or formalized rules, or fully implement the policies, whether broad or routine, set by various stakeholders or higher authorities in the chain of command. Through meetings, observations, and interviews with both the officers authorized to use force and the administrators who oversee its use, I aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how police departments operate under diverse constraints and demands. My goal, via the lens of the FTO role, is to analyze the perceptions, judgments, habits, incentives, dispositions, community relationships, and other factors influencing officers when they confront the situational demands of their work. Additionally, I seek to illustrate how department leaders address, manage, and direct their officers, taking into account non-compliance with formal rules, the principal-agent problem, and other complexities of law enforcement management.

Finally, one must account for the bias inherent in the gap between ‘saying’ and ‘doing,’ or more directly stated, the tendency of many officers to show off by talking big (Waddington, 1999). This phenomenon is well-documented in literature that theorizes that officers frequently use loose or bold talk about violence, as well as what might be termed ‘locker room talk,’ as a means of establishing rapport, managing stress, and processing trauma (Waddington, 1999). The connection between such talk and underlying attitudes about violence—to say nothing of violent conduct—is not entirely straightforward. I certainly observed a certain amount of verbal showing off in the ride-alongs. One example was FTO D003 reminiscing about his time patrolling the ‘Northside’ of town because in that area there was a need to ‘crack more heads.’ (*FTO Interview D003*). When I received responses that struck me as especially clear examples of this phenomena, I noted that impression and recounted it in the empirical chapters as relevant below.

vi. Political Climate and the Pandemic

All FTO interviews in this study were conducted prior to the death of George Floyd, an event that sparked a period of civil unrest and protests around the country. Further, all but two of the leader interviews were conducted before Mr. Floyd's murder. So, the political climate around policing and criticisms around policing agencies were not as salient when most interviews were conducted as they have been over the last few years. Nonetheless, then-recent events such as the riots in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 shifted the political climate around policing and, some observers contend, had already led to attacks on police officers, most notably in Dallas, Texas where five officers were killed and nine injured in 2016. It seems likely that had my research been conducted immediately after the Floyd riots, the perception that police were under attack that I observed repeatedly would have been even more evident.

All of the FTO interviews were also conducted prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and only two of the leaders were interviewed once pandemic restrictions were in place. These later two conversations were held via video rather than in person, largely due to travel and health limitations, and the video participants frequently noted time pressures related to staffing shortages and operational disruptions. However, there is no indication that the change in interview format substantially altered the substance of the discussions.

One important but impossible-to-answer question is how the enormous social and political dislocations of the COVID pandemic and lockdowns would have affected my observations (beyond the obvious fact that it would have made hours-long ride-alongs impossible). As the opening months of the pandemic coincided with the George Floyd protests, it might have been difficult to disentangle the effects of one from the other. Additionally, the fact that police were disproportionately exposed to the virus as

‘essential workers’ may have deepened the disenchantment with the profession that I observed in many FTOs.

Beyond these contextual factors, the broader research environment also shifted in ways that likely would have affected this study’s methodology. Emerging literature suggests that post-pandemic qualitative policing research has faced increased barriers to field access, reduced ride-along opportunities, and heightened institutional sensitivity to external scrutiny (Lum et al., 2022). Departments have become more cautious about researcher presence, partly due to health protocols but also to reputational concerns following public criticism during the pandemic and protest periods.

Finally, the post-pandemic rise in violent crime between 2020 and 2023 and the accompanying shift in public attitudes toward policing likely would have influenced the tone of FTO interactions, though the direction of that change is uncertain. Some scholarship points to a reassertion of control ethos as agencies responded to perceived declines in legitimacy (Rosenfeld et al., 2023), while others suggest renewed emphasis on officer wellness and retention (President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing Update, 2022). In either case, it is reasonable to conclude that had the fieldwork been conducted during or after the pandemic, the overall atmosphere—both within departments and in the public’s perception of them—would have been more defensive, politicized, and operationally constrained. All of this is to say that one must account for the particular moment in U.S. cultural and political history in which my observations occurred, and understand how that moment resembles or differs from the current realities. Thus, while the field work involved in this study is not biased by recent events, it likely does reflect past events that evidently made police more alert, concerned, and cautious around ‘outside’ researchers. Again, I believe that both my background as a former police officer and in the U.S. military helped mitigate some of these concerns.

Nonetheless, there still remains a bias worth noting in officer responses, sourced from caution around researcher intentions and goals. This is also why anonymity was such a delicate and serious matter for each participant, as discussed below and why only handwritten notes were taken instead of an audio recording.

E. CONCLUSION

As noted before, Getty et al., (2014) finds that FTOs significantly influence the likelihood of a recruit receiving misconduct complaints, highlighting the crucial role they play in socializing recruits into the culture of policing, including how and when to apply force. This aligns with findings from Adger et al, (2022), which show that more aggressive FTOs lead to recruits with a higher propensity for forceful behavior for years after their training is completed. Such long-term behavioral effects emphasize the importance of understanding the socialization process within policing beyond technical skills (Getty et al., 2014; Holz et al., 2023; Adger et al, , 2022). This study aims to provide further insight on departmental and FTO perception concerning the socialization of recruits, particularly concerning violence.

The empirical investigation will be structured as follows. In Chapter 4, I examine perceptions from the field, specifically how interviewed FTOs and leaders understand the role of the FTO within departments. This is an important first step: Before we can understand how FTOs view their role in socializing probationary recruits in the application of violence—which is the second research question as set out in Chapter 5, and the heart of this investigation—we must understand how FTOs understand the role and purpose of their position in the first place. Finally, in Chapter 6, this investigation will explore misalignments in relevant understandings and attitudes between FTOs and

leaders. All three empirical chapters will follow the same structure and organization and present data through a consistent thematic analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS OF PRESTIGE AND PROFESSIONALISM: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

'In the old days [we wanted] police who can kick-ass and take names.'

Los Angeles Leader 02

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the first empirical research question: How do FTOs and police leaders understand the role of the FTO within departments? Ultimately, of course, the goal in this investigation is to understand how FTOs work to socialize recruits and young officers in a department's norms and values regarding violence. This chapter presents an intermediary step in that investigation: What FTOs and the police leaders who administer police forces understand about the FTOs' positioning within a department? This chapter explores, through a thematic analysis, the responses of police leaders and FTO interviewees to a series of defined, repeated questions regarding this positioning. These questions seek to understand police leaders and FTO perceptions of what characteristics define a good officer, a good department leader, and a good FTO, as well as the respondents' candid views on whether the FTO position is perceived and treated as a leadership role within the department. The questions also explore officers' perceptions of how the community views them.

A persistent theme emerged in response to these questions—the strikingly open cynicism displayed by a large majority of participants when it came to the FTO role.

Most officers interviewed seemed to understand that FTOs play a crucial role in transmitting a department's cultural values. At the same time, they displayed near-contempt for their role and the way they are viewed by fellow and senior officers. By and large, FTOs do not believe their role is viewed as prestigious and do not feel as if they are leaders. Likewise, many believe they were chosen for the role because of a need for 'warm bodies' to fill slots in the roster. The cynicism on display points to a serious disconnect in how departmental brass perceive the role and the beliefs of the officers who actually fill it. Whether this disconnect suggests a fundamental flaw in the FTO model and how it transmits cultural norms as relates to the socialization and use of violence will be explored later.

B. PERCEPTIONS OF OFFICERS, ELITES, AND FTOS

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study interviewed and/or observed a total of 54 officers. Of these, 36 were field training officers—12 from each of the three jurisdictions—who were currently or had held the position of FTO in their respective departments. In addition, 18 leaders were interviewed, six in each of the three jurisdictions. 'Leadership' was identified based on classifications maintained by the respective departments. This ranking varies by department due to variation in department size and position. Specifically, in Montgomery and Miami-Dade, the rank of lieutenant and above was leadership, while in Los Angeles the rank of captain and above was leadership.

1. Perceptions of Others

Throughout this project, some of the most enlightening responses were offered *sua sponte*, reflecting the felt concerns of the officers I interviewed. This was the case with the theme that developed regarding the definition of an ideal officer. Leaders especially

frequently reverted to this topic without my raising it. In retrospect, this makes perfect sense, as these leaders reasonably wanted to set forth a standard by which the ultimate output of the FTO system would be judged. It also reflects their understanding of the goals of the FTO system: the production of officers who are trained and enculturated in the expectations and ideals of the department. It was through this theme that the gulf between the ideal and practice which marked this entire investigation first started making itself felt. Leaders articulated a very high standard in terms of the ideal qualities of a recruit—but often acknowledged that filling slots with any minimally qualified recruit was their actual practice.

Leaders were also asked questions designed to tease out their attitude toward violence and the scope of police discretion. The responses situate the discussion of actual FTO characteristics and help contextualize and sharpen our later view of the misalignment between how departments and FTOs understand the role, especially as to their attitudes around administration of violence.

i. Leaders' Perceptions on the Ideal Officer

Leaders' comments on the characteristics of an ideal officer ranged widely, but respondents consistently observed that the definition had changed over time—reflecting, it appears, an evolution in the goals of policing itself. One Los Angeles leader (LE02) noted that in the 'old days,' the department sought to hire officers who could 'kick-ass and take names [but] today it's a public servant, someone who can limit risk.' (*Leader Interview LE02*). In this context, 'risk' meant the department's exposure to potential lawsuits charging excessive force and other violations of constitutional norms or department regulations. Continuing the theme, LE02 noted that the department should never recruit:

hot headed, emotionally unstable, people addicted to violence, [those who] lack emotional intelligence, [those] addicted to violent games with ... weapons or find joy in watching suicide videos. (*Leader Interview LE02*).

(It was striking in and of itself that watching suicide videos is so common in potential recruits that the officer mentioned it as a characteristic to be avoided.) Instead, he wanted to recruit officers who ‘love their job, [are] selfless, service driven ... engaged, [have a] tremendous sense of gratitude.’ (*Leader Interview LE02*).

From this interview, I have adopted a paradigm to which I will revert frequently in this investigation as a kind of short-hand: ‘kick-ass policing.’ This is an older model of policing that emphasizes a warrior mentality, dominance of persons and situations, easy recourse to violence to obtain compliance, and refusal to accept challenges to police authority. As we shall see, police leaders mostly insist that this model (however they describe it) is a thing of the past in their departments. But FTOs rather notably persist in enculturating recruits into this model. Right here, the discrepancy between aspiration and practice is seen, and the centrality of FTOs in maintaining that discrepancy is already apparent.

LE02 agreed that in the past, the department had hired unsuitable officers, but somehow connected this to racial diversity imperatives (often referred to as affirmative action): ‘[T]here was a desperate need to hire black cops in the ’90s because of the riots—so they hired a bunch of black cops who should not have been hired.’ (*Leader Interview LE02*). This would prove to be a recurrent theme: Many interviewees mentioned ‘affirmative action’ being the cause of faulty hiring. FTO D006 told a story of a member of his academy class who was hired to satisfy racial quotas but was arrested shortly after hiring for having an open warrant. (*FTO Interview D006*). Further, some of those older ‘kick-ass’ or other unsuitable officers identified by D006 are now FTOs themselves (though most, he acknowledged, currently occupy higher ranks than FTO).

However, most officers interviewed acknowledged that recruitment procedures have improved greatly over the years to include background checks, polygraphs, social media checks (looking for extreme behavior or opinions), and psychological examinations.

Leaders also consistently focused on emotional regulation when describing the qualities most desired in an officer. They generally reported they wanted officers who conveyed maturity and calmness (also stated as ‘not aggressive’) or showed integrity. Other leaders mentioned wanting officers who are older or had deep life experiences (*i.e.*, not fresh out of high school or college) or expressed a dedication to the profession of service or helpers. Others wanted new recruits who met diversity hiring goals stated as ‘gender and ethnic background,’ ‘reflects the community,’ and ‘diversity in personalities’ (*Leader Interviews LE03, DE05, and DE06*). But even among police leaders (especially in Montgomery), the older kick-ass models of policing have adherents: two leaders from that city stated they did not think that ‘passive’ or ‘timid’ officers were ideal (*Leader Interview ME02 and ME06*). Overall, however, the interviews revealed that leaders believe they have implemented procedural safeguards against violence such as psychological tests and background exams that work to weed out potentially unstable recruits. But as we shall see below, the persistence of older officers in the FTO position appears to actively undercut whatever gains are achieved by these procedural safeguards.

When defining an ideal police *leader*, many leaders’ responses duplicated or overlapped with responses mentioned above. But there were some differences. For example, unlike responses relating to new officers—where the most commonly mentioned desired trait was ‘maturity’ or ‘calmness’—none of the leaders identified

those as characteristics of the ideal police leader.⁴³ It was unclear if this was deliberate or simply reflected a sense that any police leader is likely mature already. Instead, the most common desired trait mentioned by leaders regarding an ideal *leader* was public relations and communication skills or possessing problem-solving intelligence.

One unusual response came from LE03, who appeared visibly agitated by the questions, asserting they were ‘loaded’ and ‘it depended on what we are promoting them to, for an FTO—natural teacher, Sergeant—natural leader.’ (*Leader Interview LE03*). LE03 concluded his response by stating ‘LAPD [has] a profound lack of training [to] prepare people for leadership and [they] promote people to leadership because they were the best cop.’ (*Leader Interview LE03*). LE03 was alluding to the fact that being good at police work (*e.g.*, making arrests) is not necessarily indicative of who will be a good police leader. This response may suggest police departments have a ‘natural selection’ problem, where officers who get promoted reflect the ‘cop’s cop’ mold (*e.g.*, makes lots of arrests, is good in a fight, and assertive and at times aggressive) rather than an officer who is good with the community or is the best potential leader.

The focus leaders placed on the importance of maturity, calmness, emotional regulation, and life experience in recruits ran up against a hard reality that leaders almost universally reverted to: Recruiting pressure means accepting candidates who fall far short of the ideal. This reality expressed itself frequently in response to the question ‘what is the department looking for in admitted recruits?’ Several leaders (especially in Montgomery) frankly admitted that the pressure to meet recruiting goals means that the

⁴³ Questions that proved to be most relevant to this theme were ‘what is the department looking for in admitted recruits’ (Q II.2.b.), ‘are there certain personalities or character [traits] which the department should *not* recruit?’ (Q II.2.c.), and ‘what characteristics do you look for in officers that you would like to promote to leadership positions’ (Q II.2.d.).

most desirable quality in a recruit was, in the words of leader ME02, ‘people who will fill numbers.’ (*Leader Interview ME02*). Another Montgomery leader, ME05, echoed this, stating that ‘they just need numbers—quantity over quality.’ (*Leader Interview ME05*). Montgomery leader ME03 told me about a recruit that he ‘had to write up ... twice for insubordination and truthfulness,’ but who remained in the program despite a recommendation of dismissal because of the department’s need for ‘breathing’ bodies for police positions. (*Leader Interview ME03*).

The focus on putting bodies in uniforms highlights the inadequacy of the procedural safeguards leaders frequently mentioned, such as background and psychological investigations. As we shall see, FTOs almost certainly undercut the benefits of those safeguards by enculturating recruits into a kick-ass model of policing at odds with the goals of those safeguards. But the procedural safeguards themselves give way to recruiting pressure, which makes departments accept candidates who fall short of desired qualities. This problem will not be solved by FTOs who are, themselves, at odds with these desired qualities because they, most likely, were socialized by kick-ass model FTOs. And, of course, some of these officers who fall short of the ideal recruit will themselves become FTOs during their own careers (as we will see in Montgomery, sometimes as quickly as two years) and they will train less-than-ideal officers. The ‘warm bodies’ theme is one that reverberates across multiple generations of police classes within a department.

ii. FTOs’ Perceptions of the Ideal Officer

FTOs were not asked specifically what their ideal officer looked like. Nonetheless, many FTOs’ responses to other questions addressed this theme and were accordingly grouped in this thread. Again, the willingness of these participants to frame their responses to me by articulating an ideal conception of a police officer gets at the purpose and conception

of the FTO position—many respondents seemed to intuit that FTOs can or should play an outsized role in developing the most desirable qualities of young officers.

I should state at the outset that, perhaps not surprisingly, FTO responses to these and many of my questions felt far more honest than leaders' responses. As mentioned in the positionality section in Chapter 3, as a former police officer and federal prosecutor I have witnessed and, at times, personally weaved the law enforcement web of obfuscation. Numerous times throughout this investigation I perceived a studied and somewhat rote quality to responses. This was especially so from leaders, where I often strongly felt like I was being given a rehearsed answer or stump speech. This likely has two causes. First, I simply had more time with FTOs; my interviews with them lasted over most, if not all, of a patrol shift. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I would go over all the interview questions early in the shift and then return to some of the questions as the FTO and I got to know each other. This helped me develop a clearer picture of what FTOs thought. With leaders, interviews were mostly conducted in an office setting and felt more formal. I often felt like leaders saw me as a reporter rather than a researcher. Also, police leaders are trained (both formally and on the job) to be politically savvy. Indeed, that savviness is often how they became elites in the first place.

As with leaders' responses, many of the FTOs highlighted maturity and emotional regulation as important traits for the ideal officer. One Miami-Dade FTO commented on why so many immature officers get hired in the first place: the 'process [is] set up for people who never did drugs or anything wrong,' which, he claimed, 'weeds out good people' with more substantial but diverse life experience, leaving the department to hire young individuals with minimal life experience. (*FTO Interview D011*). According to this FTO, persons with relatively limited experience were less than ideal officers: '[N]o one should have a badge and a gun at 19.' (*FTO Interview D011*).

An LAPD FTO explained how hiring mature versus immature officers can play out in real life. He recounted how his FTO had told him that ‘giving a ticket could destroy someone’s day’ because ‘most people [you encounter] are poor,’ and thus could be forced into a decision to buy food or pay the ticket. (*FTO Interview L001*). He explained that he tries to pass this lesson on to his probationary officers, ‘but I know other FTOs don’t. There is nothing formally in the program that tells FTOs to train rookies [like] this.’ (*FTO Interview L001*). Later in the interview I asked this officer about pre-charge diversion efforts, or efforts (formal and informal) to divert persons to treatment or other forms of assistance in lieu of an arrest (often, in drug cases, diversion to substance abuse treatment). This earlier exchange took a new light when I asked about diversion, because this officer took a hardline stance, saying that officers should not be ‘gatekeepers’ and ‘it’s the legislature’s responsibility to enact laws’—a response at odds with his previously more humane answer regarding destroying someone’s day with a ticket. It should be noted that this FTO had a more deliberate and thoughtful view of the FTO role, as compared to other participants. He had considerable education and was open about his goal of moving through the LAPD ranks and, perhaps more than any other interviewee, was intellectually curious about what my study would find.

These responses suggest that officers generally, and FTOs in particular, recognize the value of maturity, calm, detachment, and even empathy in policing. But even alongside that recognition, the persistence of the older model of cracking heads—the ‘kick-ass’ model of policing, as I have dubbed it—was notable.

For example, in Miami-Dade, one FTO responded to the question of whether he wanted his family members to be police officers by saying ‘no,’ but then added that in fact both of his daughters are police and are ‘natural shooters.’ (*FTO Interview D001*). This spontaneous response revealed, by accident, that to this FTO, marksmanship was a

highly prized quality in an ideal officer. Another FTO in Montgomery responded to the question, ‘would you recommend this profession to others?’ by saying that his ‘wife can’t be a cop, she is too sweet and nice of a person’—suggesting that ‘niceness’ is a liability for an effective cop. (*FTO Interview M009*). Another FTO, when asked about the hiring process, responded that he ‘failed the personality test [because] he was too timid.’ (*FTO Interview D008*). While this response does not indicate how this FTO thinks about the ‘ideal’ officer, it does allude to what his department is and is not looking for in recruits. How he still became an officer was not explored, as I got the impression it was a sensitive topic.

As we saw above, police leaders emphasized the values of detachment, self-regulation, calmness, and maturity in recruits, but then readily admitted that recruiting pressures undercut their pursuit of young officers with these characteristics. A different discrepancy was immediately perceived among FTOs: Lip service paid to these characteristics co-existing with an evident fondness for their opposite as embodied in the kick-ass model of policing. Whether and how that discrepancy is manifested in the actual work of being an FTO is explored later.

iii. The Ideal FTO: Warm Bodies

As seen above, both leaders and FTOs have a relatively clear (and consistent) theoretical view of what an ideal officer is: a mature and honest servant of the people. This is true even if, in practice, that view is hemmed in by the realities of recruitment and the persistence of an older model of ‘kick-ass’ policing. But there was far less consensus about the qualities of an ideal FTO—a striking sign of real confusion within departments about what role these officers should play in transmitting departmental culture.

This confusion has consequences. Academic research has suggested that field training can have *either* a positive or negative effect on the effectiveness and impact of

academy training (Haarr, 2001; Mastrofski and Ritti, 1996). For example, time with specific FTOs has been linked to later misconduct, suggesting that FTOs can socialize officers either into restraint or excess when it comes to police violence (Getty et al., 2014). This research strongly suggests that FTOs are important ‘culture-bearers’ within a department and that FTOs are linchpins in the process of socializing recruits, either for good or ill.

Given their importance in developing and fielding the flag of department culture, one would expect that department leadership would give serious thought to the ideal characteristics of an FTO. Sadly, however, this investigation suggests a different theme, one labeled ‘Warm Bodies.’ This theme arose from different questions, the responses to which recall the above answers from some leaders on ‘bodies in uniform’ being the reality driven by recruiting pressures. Here, however, these responses relate to ‘bodies in FTO positions,’ who obviously are needed to train even more new warm bodies in uniforms.

L003 sounded this theme this way: An ‘FTO is like the Greek myth of Sisyphus who rolls the rock up the hill and then has to do it again the next day. The FTO’s role is to keep churning out new rookies.’ (*FTO Interview L003*). This theme turns out to be one of the most important in understanding the gaps between what is desired in an FTO and the characteristics of the officers who actually fill this critical role.

One series of responses came from the question: ‘Is being an FTO prestigious?’ While the topic of prestige is discussed in greater detail below, for present purposes, it is noteworthy that many respondents connected the question of prestige to the ‘warm bodies’ motif. These officers perceived the FTO role as being filled mostly by any available officer who meets minimal requirements, regardless of actual fitness for the position—largely because the position simply doesn’t matter in the hierarchy of the

department. One Miami-Dade FTO noted that the position ‘should be prestigious but not anymore, they need bodies these days.’ Instead, this officer proffered what was prestigious in his department was ‘SWAT and stuff like that,’ which ‘gets you promoted. If you look at most of the brass, a lot were in SWAT.’ (*FTO Interview D005*).

Another Miami-Dade FTO echoed the comparison, asserting that ‘People are forced to be FTOs or they will volunteer because they want weekends off,’ but what was truly prestigious was ‘Special units because you get the benefits of weekends but [you] don’t have to be on the road—some of the meatheads want the gun fighting units.’ (‘Meatheads’ is a derogatory term for individuals who show physical prowess but little in the way of intellect) (*FTO Interview D007*). The responses suggest that in the very practical coin of opportunity for advancement—the place where departments send the clearest message about what leaders do and do not value when they choose the next generation of elites—FTO is not a position an ambitious officer will choose. As noted below, that has strong implications for the quality of the officers who will fill this critical role.

Why, then, did these officers become FTOs? Often because they were ordered into the role by leaders, who FTOs believe do not view the position with respect and who, they insist, give little thought to whether an officer has the experience or personal qualities needed to succeed in the role. One Montgomery FTO, M002, stated that though it ‘[d]epends on leadership, some people are forced to be, [and it’s] not respected by leadership.’ He also mentioned that he was only ‘on the street’ (meaning, served as a patrol officer) for two years before the department forced him to be an FTO. (*FTO Interview M002*).

Other Montgomery officers echoed this theme. ‘No one wants to do it [*i.e.*, become an FTO],’ M003 told me. ‘[T]hey force people ... I was told I had to, it’s too

much work.’ When asked the follow up, ‘what is prestigious?’ FTO M003 laughed and said ‘anything but FTO or patrol ... something with normal hours.’ (*FTO Interview M003*). Another told me that it is ‘easy to become an FTO because no one wants to be one, [the] vast majority are forced into it, so we have to keep the dirt bags.’ (*FTO Interview M004*). A third Montgomery FTO responded that the ‘Department does not see them as prestigious. Constant training for rookies. It’s like baby-sitting someone, so no.’ Later during the interview, this FTO, while responding to a different question, asserted that bad FTOs are retained because, despite lacking the skills to be successful in the role, ‘they need FTOs too much.’ He told me a story of his FTO ‘fall[ing] asleep on shift’ while he was in training. (*FTO Interview M010*).

Given that FTOs were often forced into the job against their will, it is of little surprise that many FTOs were perceived as low-quality or unsuited for the job. Participants were asked if their department currently had bad FTOs. It was clarified that the question was not asking whether the FTOs were bad officers, but rather whether the department had filled their FTO positions with persons who were not specifically suited to the FTO role. Almost universally, interviewees (both FTOs and leaders) acknowledged there were officers in FTO roles who were not suited for the position.

But despite the low quality of many FTOs, participants generally agreed that it was difficult to fire bad FTOs, usually because there was no one else to fill the role. Participants were asked, ‘Is it easy to fire an FTO who is not up to the FTO standard?’ Out of 54 interviews, 31 said ‘no,’ 21 said ‘yes,’ and two said they were ‘unsure.’ The most common stated reason for the difficulty of firing bad FTOs was that departments needed officers in those roles, regardless of performance. An FTO from Montgomery stated that he had ‘never heard of a single one being fired for being terrible at their job, and there are a lot [of bad ones].’ (*FTO Interview M004*). Another Montgomery FTO

echoed this analysis, stating while it is ‘easy to get rid of [bad] FTOs ... the department is desperate for them [so] they don’t.’ M006 explained that problematic FTOs, instead of being relieved from the FTO position, are sometimes not assigned new rookies or they will be given the rookies who are ‘good,’ and thus require less training and guidance. This is a subtle but critical point: at best, a department’s most promising recruits are put in cars to be trained by their worst-performing FTOs—an approach that might serve to limit the damage that a bad FTO can do but that obviously fails to maximize the program’s potential to effectively train new recruits. At worst, this approach could corrupt the department’s more promising rookies before their careers can even begin. M006 further stated he ‘could not give one example of one FTO being relieved’ and summarized this flawed system by saying ‘rookies [just] expect crappy FTOs.’ (*FTO Interview M006*).

In Miami-Dade, an FTO said it was ‘very hard’ to relieve FTOs because ‘they need butts in seats.’ (*FTO Interview D002*). One leader confirmed these sentiments, stating that it was very hard to fire low-performing FTOs, because the department did ‘not have enough because of rollover’ preventing the department from building ‘seniority’ within the FTO ranks. (*Leader Interview ME05*).

These responses, taken together, suggest that the current FTO system is almost ‘generational’ in its perpetuation of mediocre training, and that the position itself has a ‘box-checking’ quality, in which someone, anyone, will do, so long as the box is checked. Departments appear to railroad mediocre officers (who might not be considered ideal for more prestigious ‘special units’ roles) into the position and will not fire those who cannot meet the expectations of the role because of some metric of ‘FTOs roles filled’ that must be satisfied. The result is the overloading of good FTOs with new trainees, while ‘good’ trainees are shunted off to less effective FTOs. Good FTOs get

overextended and burnt out, while the most promising recruits often learn the bad habits of the least effective FTOs. Lost in this bureaucratic shuffle are trainee officers, who are being socialized into bad habits and misguided notions by mediocre FTOs or are under-trained by overworked good ones. Departments' unwillingness to cashier bad FTOs or make the position attractive to the most promising officers means departments are stuck in a self-perpetuating cycle of mediocre, even damaging, training.

2. FTOs' and Elites' Self-Perception

My research was also designed to capture officers' understanding of the FTO role in the abstract—not just how their department filled the position or what kinds of officers find themselves as FTOs and how, but how the role exists (or was supposed to exist) within the ecosystem of a department. The questions employed were designed to get at these perceptions orthogonally, rather than head on. My sense was that asking FTOs directly, 'What do you think the role of the FTO is?' would not elicit useful responses or would only prompt canned or contrived responses. Instead, to get at the important question of how FTOs view their work and their role in transmitting culture, proxies were created to glean those attitudes through indirect questioning and informal follow-ups discussions during our rides. These proxies included questions such as: Are FTOs perceived as leaders and is the FTO position prestigious? These are questions that are central to understanding whether FTOs are effectively transmitting cultural expectations. Simply put, the teaching and example of an officer who fills a prestigious role, and is perceived as a departmental leader, will naturally be more influential with young officers.

Other proxies that generated useful responses relating to this issue were identified during the thematic analysis, including themes such as 'respecting the badge' and 'cops are not law makers.' All of the questions that created these themes helped FTOs to speak

in a more granular way about how they perceive their role and the work they do in the department, than a direct query likely would have.

i. Respecting the Badge

Interacting with FTOs, it did not take long to encounter the older model of ‘kick-ass’ policing that persists alongside the more contemporary ‘guardian’ model that emphasizes emotional regulation, maturity, and deeper life experience. The kick-ass model was especially prevalent in response to questions that focused on participants’ egos—perhaps better defined as a need to save institutional face—and played a role in how all respondents carried out their duties (Muir, 1977). This theme was introduced in a roundabout way: not as a discussion of the officers’ or FTOs’ own ego, but in terms of challenges to their authority, in the officers’ response to what is colloquially referred to by some scholars as ‘contempt of cop’ (Garner, 2019).⁴⁴ The striking finding here was that despite the focus on maturity and emotional self-regulation—not to mention departmental nostrums about ‘proactive policing’—many respondents placed on *the public* and not on officers themselves the responsibility for controlling violence.

An example of this came from an elite participant from Montgomery, when questioned about police diversion or choosing some form of enforcement other than an arrest. The officer indicated that officer ego is one of the biggest impediments to diversion—specifically, that ‘people mouthing off is a barrier to diversion.’ What he meant was that officers often responded to ‘mouthing off’ by ramped-up enforcement, largely out of ego. This same elite was later asked if ‘there are some laws which should

⁴⁴ Defining ‘contempt of cop’ as ‘[a] civilian's challenge to a law-enforcement officer's authority—as by expressing defiance, anger, mockery, or similar disrespect—made in such a way as to provoke the officer to respond inappropriately or illegally, as by making an arbitrary arrest, improperly detaining the person, or using unwarranted force.’

not lead to arrest, where pre-arrest diversion is the best solution.’ ME04 responded that ‘arrest is associated with leverage—if you don’t want to cooperate then you get arrested. Whether you sign [for a] bond or sign a ticket, if you don’t want to cooperate then you get arrested.’ (*Leader Interview ME04*). The suggestion was that the choice of enforcement over diversion for low-level offenses (or even non-offenses—refusing to cooperate is not necessarily an offense) was often driven by officers’ emotional needs for control and domination. Another leader, responding to the same question in Montgomery, stated it was impossible to prevent arrest for low-level offenses because ‘every [officer] has a pet peeve and teaching someone to curb that pet peeve is impossible so it does not happen’—a striking admission of the difficulty of instilling emotional regulation in officers. (*Leader Interview ME01*).

The FTOs in Montgomery had similar responses. For example, FTO M006 stated that he had ‘mixed emotions’ on marijuana arrests, but that ‘what [the suspects’] attitude is like’ determined if they would be arrested. (*FTO Interview M006*). Interestingly, this same FTO made a somewhat contradictory comment later when asked what he thought the barriers to diversion were in his city. M006 responded that he thought ‘stigma against calling for additional units’ was a barrier to diversion. When pressed on what he meant by this, he said that officers were ‘worried about being considered a pussy so officers put themselves at risk.’ What this FTO was saying is that some officers won’t make an arrest because they don’t want to be seen as weak by their peers, so they will let the individual go instead of ‘calling for additional units’ and damaging their reputation within the department. (*FTO Interview M006*). In essence, the desire to look strong and independent outweighs public safety and trumps a more considered view of when diversion is appropriate. Another example of this attitude came from D010, who stated that the SOS button in the patrol car (an emergency call button that summons additional officers for

help) is ‘nicknamed the bitch button.’ (*FTO Interview D010*). This response suggests that in Miami-Dade, there is a culture of not calling for help even if needed. This in turn could lead to more violence: If a single officer is overwhelmed, they are more likely to employ force, including deadly force, in situations where calling for assistance from multiple officers might have avoided the need for violence, especially in a nation with approximately 434 million guns (Mascia and Brownlee, 2025).

This theme of ego and respect was also repeatedly raised in the specific context of controlling or channeling violence. One officer with LAPD addressed this issue directly. When asked what steps he takes to control violence, L007 stated that officers needed to ‘check ego and [not] take it personally, treat it professionally.’ This same officer stated that hiring is the critical time to weed out those with ego issues: ‘If you are an aggressive person when you come on board—it’s impossible not to be when you get on this job.’ (*FTO Interview L007*).

Like L007, when M001 was asked ‘how he personally controls violence,’ he stated that ‘I respect people as long as they let me,’ meaning there was a limit to his ability to respect individuals he interacted with in public. M001 continued his response stating, ‘I try to de-escalate and calm people down so I don’t have to go hands on, I plan out possible outcomes when I am going to a call so I am not caught flatfooted.’ (*FTO Interview M001*). In the same city, FTO M011 responded to the same question: ‘Get there, assess the situation and if it requires going hands-on, then do it. If you’re going to be an asshole, then I can be an asshole too.’ (*FTO Interview M011*).

In Los Angeles, one FTO’s response to the question of how he controls violence had several layers to it. At first, he stated that to control violence you don’t have to ‘like violence’ but that he ‘is not afraid of [violence].’ The FTO then quoted Napoleon Bonaparte, explaining that he uses a ‘velvet glove over a mailed fist’ and in the same

sentence boasted about his talents at dispensing violence, asserting that he was ‘very efficient with a 9mm.’ He went on to clarify that when he arrives on a scene, he:

watches [his] tone and respects everyone until they disrespect him. If you come up cursing right out the gate then you won’t get the pleasant officer, you will get extreme [officer]. (*FTO Interview L003*).

Of note to this study, L003 later mentioned during the interview that the department’s policy at controlling violence was ‘vague and gives great flexibility so hard to enforce, [this] flexibility creates inconsistencies.’ To demonstrate this point, he described the training he received from his own FTO: ‘He told me that if anyone gave me lip’ (was disrespectful in tone or words) he was to ‘smack them across the head with a flashlight’—a tactic now considered deadly force in most departments across the United States. (*FTO Interview L003*). To be clear, L003 did not advocate striking suspects for disrespect, but his description of how he was socialized into this use of violence by his FTO is especially relevant to this study, since it demonstrates how FTOs can socialize young officers into problematic uses of violence as easily as not.

In Los Angeles, L007 provided a thematically consistent response to the question ‘what type of education did the academy provide surrounding use of any lethal weapons?’ This FTO stated that the training’s ‘focus [was] on responding to suspect actions, de-escalation is crap, treat people with respect until you need to respond with something else.’ I pressed him on the difficulty of applying this approach to persons undergoing a mental health crisis or suffering from addiction, and he did not respond further. However, the FTO went on later to say that:

people ... comply or [they are] going to the hospital, [that] has not changed and de-escalation causes a lot of headaches and hesitation. [We] need to run through a check list but the bright lines of just mirroring what the suspect does aren’t there anymore. (*FTO Interview L007*).

It should be noted that these responses are self-contradicting: Mirroring a suspect's actions is an older police model and is the antithesis of de-escalation, basically dictating that an officer responds to aggression with more aggression (*i.e.*, they pull a knife, you pull a gun). De-escalation uses flexibility, softer verbal communication, and distance (often moving through a checklist) to calm people down (*i.e.*, they pull a knife, the officer moves further away). This FTO reported that de-escalation is 'crap' but stated that he uses 'check lists' and flexibility when dealing with agitated individuals—practices wholly consistent with de-escalation techniques and approaches.

FTOs in Miami-Dade similarly placed the onus of controlling violence on the public. When asked, 'what do you do personally to control violence while on the job as a police officer?', FTO D005 stated that the use of violence is 'controlled by [the] suspect, if they go up the force chain I have to as well. Remember every jerk ... can control the situation by complying.' The FTO explained further that

even when the officer is being a jerk, the subject can avoid violence by being compliant ... [I]f you do what we say, chances are you will be able to walk away from this, if you come across an asshole cop, do what he says, then later on you can complain.

But this FTO's insistence that escalation is controlled by the public and not by the officer was undercut by the preface to his comments: 'Because I have been doing this a long time, I know instinctively [when force will need to be used], but I don't mind talking a few more minutes before I use force.' (*FTO Interview D005*). There is an inherent chicken-and-egg problem here: the officer places the responsibility on controlling violence on the person being encountered, but admits he has pre-conceptions about which encounters will require violence.

In Miami-Dade, FTO D007 echoed this attitude when speaking about whether training controls violence. He deflected somewhat by responding that 'people used to

listen to the police,' insinuating that citizen disobedience creates violence. D007 later stated that he was frustrated that 'people just do not listen. When I was growing up in the community people listened to police.' (*FTO Interview D007*).

To be clear, there were dissenting views among FTOs. For example, also in Miami-Dade, D011 stated that 'you only get respect if you show respect' when talking about community relations training. Later, D011 stated that the FTO program controls violence by teaching a customer service role; specifically, 'even if someone says go fuck yourself, you still say good morning the next day.' However, D011 raised the issue of respect again later in the interview, this time with a more aggressive tone, stating that patrol officers' uniforms do not command respect and should be replaced with military style uniforms. Specifically, he remarked, 'I want [patrol] to feel more tactical, more ready for the shit, patrol outfits get less respect.' (*FTO Interview D011*). Again, when asked what he thought the public thought about military style uniforms on patrol officers, he responded that 'it scares the public and we get more respect.' Thus, despite D011's initial view of respect as something that is earned, the FTO apparently actually conceives of respect as something that is taken.

But overall, it appears that for many of the FTOs interviewed, there are sharp limits on their willingness to regulate their emotional responses. That is, they are willing to mouth nostrums about de-escalation, respect, and building bridges with the community. But the older kick-ass model of policing remains a lived and felt tradition for them, and one they almost certainly pass on to new recruits. And for many of these officers, recourse to and control of violence is an entirely external issue. That is, it is *civilians* who set the tone of encounters and who determine whether violence will be meted out through their emotional reactions, not officers. In this conception, the officer is merely a reactive instrument, throttling up or down in response to the emotional pitch

set by others, and without any inherent duty to attempt to defuse encounters or regulate their own responses.

At the risk of exaggerating slightly, this view takes police officers as emotional automatons, dispensing respect to those who kowtow and violence to those who challenge an officer's *amour-propre*. It is a frankly disheartening view of officers, because it is so discordant with the focus on emotional maturity that many officers pay lip service to the ideal. Possibly more importantly for this investigation, this theme also suggests that recruits are often being enculturated by FTOs whose values and approaches do not mesh with those leaders' agendas, or whose allegiance to newer approaches to police violence is potentially skin-deep.

ii. Are FTOs Perceived as Leaders?

The ability of FTOs to communicate departmental values is obviously related to the perception that they are leaders, to be looked up to and with valuable practical wisdom to impart. I thus asked FTOs whether they thought they were leaders, were treated by department elites as leaders, and were important to the police force. This question was exclusive to the FTO participants, because, by definition, elites are departmental leaders. This is related to, but distinct from the above-mentioned theme of Perceptions of an Ideal Leader, with this theme addressing how FTOs perceive themselves and their role within departments, and the former on what participants—elites in particular—consider to be the traits of an ideal leader.

The questions produced an interesting mix of responses. When asked if FTOs consider *themselves* to be leaders, most FTOs said yes. But the responses were far more varied when asked whether they thought the department considered FTOs leaders, and whether their departments treated them as such. The majority of respondents answered 'no' to both questions and far fewer answered 'yes' to both parts. Again, the point here is

not to attempt to quantify particular responses and pretend they are representative of opinions throughout the field of policing; they aren't. The responses, however, do suggest that FTOs feel a disconnect between their perception of the importance of the role and how they are treated and perceived by others. This almost certainly has implications for how they go about their task of enculturating recruits. It seems certain that the sense that they are not valued by departments or viewed as department leaders will impact FTOs' willingness to 'stick to the script' regarding violence handed to them by those same department leaders.

One FTO's response was particularly notable for its bluntness. When asked whether FTOs are considered leaders/are treated like leaders, and is it considered an important position for the department, he responded: 'no and no and no' and then laughed and shook his head. (*FTO Interview D010*). Two participants commented something in between yes and no (recorded as 'depends' for data purposes). L010 stated that whether FTOs were treated as leaders depended on how department elites perceived the FTO program in general. (*FTO Interview L010*). He went on to say that FTOs 'are important and needed, maybe the most important, I just wish we treated our FTOs better.' The other participant, LE06, whose answer was categorized as 'depends,' stated that 'he hopes they are treated as such but there are attitudes, especially the higher-ups, that you need to promote out of the field.' (*Leader Interview LE06*). LE06's response was interpreted to mean that he personally considers FTOs leaders, but they are not treated as such because of flaws within the FTOs chain of command, and the solution is to remove ('promote') the problematic leaders out of the program's hierarchy. This is an interesting comment and one that is not isolated to this elite. 'Promoting' problematic officers—kicking them upstairs to some other role that minimizes their negative effects

on recruits—appears to be a well-understood phenomena in policing, but its implications for overall department leadership quality are less well considered.

Several FTOs added comments to their answers to this question to clarify that they feel they are ‘necessary,’ ‘needed,’ or a variation thereof, to the department, but distinguished that from being treated like a leader or feeling important to the department. D005 clarified his response to say that he felt FTOs were important ‘to their trainees, but not by our Lieutenants, Captains, and up, [department leadership] needs [FTOs] training so [it’s] important because [it’s] needed.’ (*FTO Interview D005*). This FTO reflected the ‘check the box’ or ‘warm bodies’ theme identified earlier: FTOs were important to higher-ups only insofar as they fulfilled a need or satisfied a metric, but not intrinsically or for the actual output of the FTO program.

One illustrative observation pertaining to whether FTOs perceive themselves as leaders came from Miami-Dade. During the ride, a supervising officer (who was not the interview participant) was observed aggressively telling a woman who had been illegally evicted to ‘shut up,’ and would not let the woman explain her side of the events. He told the woman to get out of the house. The FTO, who was the subject of my interview, did not intervene or correct the more senior officer, publicly or privately, despite later admitting to me that he knew the supervising officer was wrong and the woman was legally entitled to occupy the residence. The FTO handled the situation by waiting until the supervisor left and allowing the woman to go back into her home. When asked later during the ride-along if he would report the officer for his aggression and attempt to illegally evict a citizen, the FTO responded ‘no.’ When pressed on why, he responded, ‘because I am not a leader.’ However, during the same interview when asked if he considered himself a leader, he responded ‘yes.’ (*FTO Interview D008*).

Clearly, this officer was confused (possibly deliberately) about his own role and even about what it means to be a ‘leader’ in the department in the first instance. It is almost certain that rookies he was training, and will train in the future, will internalize the lesson that the FTO’s training could be somewhat discounted, and that the real leader to be emulated was the aggressive supervisor. I also learned later that the aggressive officer used to be an FTO before being promoted to a supervisor role. This particular scenario illustrates two insights of this investigation. First, recruits are constantly assessing ‘atmospheric’ clues about what the department actually values in determining which and whose lessons about violence to take seriously. Second, bad FTOs train bad recruits who become bad FTOs, in a repetitive cycle that requires active intervention to break.

iii. Not a Lawmaker

A comment that arose enough times that it was assigned its own sub-theme pertains to the distinction between law enforcement and law making. This theme often arose around questions dealing with officer discretion. For example, when asked if some offenses should not lead to a physical arrest, a common answer was ‘yes, but the legislature should make those rules, not us.’ (*FTO Interview D002*). This sentiment was repeated half a dozen more times. Interestingly, almost all the officers who seemed to take a hard line on ‘the law is the law’ also believed that ‘officer discretion’ should be encouraged and advanced. One example of this was M006, an officer in Miami-Dade who stated that it was ‘not his job’ to determine who should be arrested or not, but later in the interview stated that he will sometimes not arrest individuals ‘but if they are an asshole they go to jail.’ (*FTO Interview M006*).

iv. The Perception of Prestige

Another theme central to the question whether FTOs are leaders is whether FTOs believe their position to be a prestigious one within the department. Numerous questions in the interview provided data for this theme, but one question was central: ‘is being an FTO prestigious?’ In general, participants were skeptical about the prestigiousness of the FTO role. Out of 54 participants, only about a third responded ‘yes.’

There were dissenting views from the generalized sense that FTO is not a prestigious position. LE03 was one officer in this minority, stating:

by the time you make FTO in LAPD you are probably a pretty senior guy on the watch. We worship time on the job. The more hashmarks you have on your sleeve the more we assume you are good at what you do.

(‘Hashmarks’ refer to silver stripes on a LAPD police uniform indicating three years of service for every stripe) (*Leader Interview LE03*). Another leader in Los Angeles commented that ‘it’s prestigious to a degree, because it’s a position of power,’ but even he acknowledged that ‘I think those crazy jobs will always be [the] prestigious [ones]: SWAT [or] homicide detective, it’s why people become cops in many instances.’

(*Leader Interview LE01*). Several participants clarified that they thought the FTO position was prestigious but only among other patrol officers, with DE01 asserting that

for a lot of people it is, some join just for benefits [(better shifts and pay), but the] department thinks it’s prestigious and they are treated with prestige and respect, nothing more prestigious for patrol. (*Leader Interview DE01*).

Another minority group of participants mentioned during interviews that the FTO position was prestigious in the past, indicating that they did not believe it to be prestigious any longer. ME03 stated that the position ‘used to be, but I do not think the younger kids think so anymore, SWAT is the most prestigious [now]’ and explained that:

it used to be if you were sent to be an FTO [leadership] thought high enough of you as a cop and you were supposed to be excellent, but [today] many of the FTOs in Montgomery . . . can’t do basic polic[ing] (*Leader Interview ME01*).

In Miami-Dade, D010 stated that being an FTO ‘used to be prestigious—not anymore—anything but patrol is prestigious.’ (*FTO Interview D010*). It is unclear (and the study did not allow for further investigation) whether this response reflected a sense among these officers that the FTO position had over time devolved into a rote, box-checking exercise in which filling the position with anyone at hand satisfied departmental requirements. If so, that would certainly be consistent with the ‘Warm Bodies’ theme developed above.

But by far the largest group of respondents stated that being an FTO is *not* prestigious. FTO L004, for example, stated that while he personally ‘thinks it is but not sure how other officers think about it, probably not prestigious.’ (*FTO Interview L004*). L004 went on to say that he believed that patrol was the most prestigious because ‘we get the job done, [but] to the rest of the force it’s whatever can get you out of patrol and up the ranks.’ (*FTO Interview L004*). D007 agreed with L004’s opinion responding to the prestige question with: ‘No, people are forced to be FTOs or they will volunteer because they want weekends off, [anything where you] don’t have to be on the road’ is prestigious. (*FTO Interview D007*).

Prestige is a central notion in this study, for several reasons. First, prestige is likely linked to FTOs’ effectiveness in training recruits (Songze et al., 2024; Mumford et al., 2022). Rather naturally, recruits will respond best to guidance from officers they perceive to be leaders in the department who occupy prestigious positions. Then, prestige is linked to the qualities of the officers who fill the FTO positions (Schuck, 2021). If the position is a leadership role and is widely considered to be prestigious, it will likely attract the most ambitious, best educated, and most promising officers (Kane, 2014). These officers are also likely to be the ones most attuned to departmental policies related to the socialization and use of violence. The generalized sense among officers that the

FTO position is not prestigious is therefore likely related to FTO positions being less effective in transmitting desired values to young recruits, or to transmitting values that are antithetical to stated policies. As will be discussed later, this strongly suggests that infusing the FTO position with the markers of prestige—leadership attention, promotion through the ranks, and departmental resources—is a critical missing component in any effort to improve the outcomes of FTO programs.

3. Perceptions of Community Views

A theme associated with how FTOs and elites see the FTO role within their departments is how these same officers see their role and reputation within the community. While one of the goals of this study is to identify how police view themselves and the particular role of the FTO within the department, those views are obviously shaped in part by community views. Thus, it is an important feature of this investigation to look into the mirror of ‘police perspective’ and explore the reflection the public sees.

Most relevant to this theme is that officers felt the profession of policing had become more dangerous and they were devalued and misjudged by the community at large, despite evidence pointing to the contrary.⁴⁵ Another sub-theme that arose during these questions was officers’ focus on the police-community tensions they perceived. Numerous officers suggested that it felt like the public was ‘at war’ with police in some way. Many mentioned this concern several times in the same interview, suggesting that this is a ‘top of mind’ concern for them. This reflects and validates existing scholarship

⁴⁵ Felonious officer deaths have actually decreased for half a century, and recent analyses find no significant changes in recent years in patterns of assaults on officers, whether fatal or not (White et al., 2019; Sierra-Arévalo and Nix, 2020).

finding that officers increasingly perceive themselves as being at odds with the community.⁴⁶

During the background phase of the interview, when asked if officers would recommend the job of policing to others, roughly a third of participants responded in the negative, very often because they felt like the community was against police. Further, less than half of the respondents (22 of 54) said they would want to see their son or daughter become a police officer (three more said ‘not sure’), with several officers explaining their answer by saying that the community was now hostile to the profession. One Miami officer described policing as a ‘hard, hard job where bad guys are now the good guys, [and the community] hates you.’ (*FTO Interview D003*). Another Miami officer stated that the police used to be ‘hated by the criminals,’ now they are ‘hated by the Director ..., leadership, and the public.’ (*FTO Interview D009*). (In Miami-Dade the top policing official’s title is ‘Director’ rather than Chief or Sheriff, which is the norm in the profession outside of Federal agencies.) Another FTO in Miami-Dade stated that new recruits do not understand that the

profession is in trouble because people take the job for the benefits and they aren’t ready to be cops, [they] don’t understand the job, [and new recruits] have to understand we are not the good guys anymore. (*FTO Interview D010*).

Undoubtedly, these FTOs’ perceptions of a profession under fire from the public are communicated in myriad overt and covert ways to the recruits they train. Especially important here is the way these perceptions may color training on interactions with the public, where these officers are likely to embrace a ‘warrior’ mentality in response to the

⁴⁶ This literature has focused on the so-called ‘trust gap’ that has opened up between police and some communities. It works as a kind of vicious cycle: a single corrupt officer or publicized case of victimization of a private citizen can make a community view their police force as the enemy or come to believe that the entire department is corrupt or hiding similar violations (Syed, 1997). This has baleful effects on police effectiveness.

belief that they inhabit a ‘battle space’ where interactions with civilians can turn deadly—regardless of whether that belief actually characterizes the average officer’s lived experience.

This sentiment was also prevalent in Montgomery and Los Angeles. In the latter city, one officer responded to the question whether he would advise his child to become a police officer: ‘hell no—not with the way we are treated by the public. [I] feel like a bad guy.’ (*FTO Interview L002*). Further, police elites were not immune to this sentiment, with two leaders in Montgomery responding that they did not want their children to become officers because of the perceived ‘war on the police.’ (*Leader Interviews ME05 and ME06*). ME06 explained that he would not want his family to join the force ‘because of cultural change and lack of support for the police.’ (*Leader Interview ME06*).

It is also important to acknowledge that this theme extended past any particular question and into those regarding the community relations and lessons that probationary officers are expected to learn during the FTO phase of training. Several officers took this as a prompt to discuss concerns surrounding police/community relations. In Miami, one officer, D007, discussed the ‘trust gap’ between the public and the police due to micro and macro police abuses.⁴⁷ (*FTO Interview D007*). Specifically, D007 explained that the community ‘don’t trust us, they’ve seen so much abuse by police that there is a trust gap.’ (*FTO Interview D007*). This officer also complained that others in his department think they are ‘owed something’ by the community, which creates friction between

⁴⁷ As noted above, Fagan and Campbell and others have discussed the way that unconstrained police violence can lead to a ‘trust gap’ between police and the community they serve (Fagan and Campbell 2020; Roth, 2017; Tyler et al., 2015). The gap can lead to increased crime as community members decline to assist police by reporting crime, serving as witnesses, etc.

police and community. Yet again, during this same ride-along, this officer was observed trying to change lanes in traffic and when he could not easily move over (due to very heavy traffic), he used his light bar to force his way into another lane (called ‘running code’), while yelling obscenities in the car at the other driver—a serious breach of conduct in most departments, including his own. The windows of both cars were up so the other driver could not hear the obscenities, but he was visibly scared when D007 turned his light on and forced his car into the other lane. For this officer and others (as discussed throughout this study), responses to questions sometimes did not match observations of behavior made during the interview.

It should be emphasized that not all responses pertaining to this theme were ‘negative.’ When asked what types of training should be continued throughout officers’ careers, an elite officer in Los Angeles stated:

[T]here is . . . a perception in the department that people hate the cops. [But] 99 percent of people actually respect the cops, even in liberal L.A., they just don’t like the dickhead cops. There needs to be more training on clarifying the community perception of cops. So many people are thankful for the cops. (*Leader Interview LE02*).

The ride-alongs I participated in also had moments that demonstrated that despite officers’ stated belief that they were at odds with the community, they nonetheless play a valuable and positive role in the lives of community members and in defusing community tensions. One example was Miami-Dade FTO D007, who was observed dealing with an individual who was suffering from mental illness. The FTO displayed immense compassion and patience, ensuring that the individual got home safely. He mentioned after the encounter that the best and most important part of his job was ‘public service.’ (*FTO Interview D007*). Also, in Miami-Dade, an individual was handcuffed due to a warrant being issued for his arrest. He became extremely agitated, cursing, and thrashing around. The FTO mentioned that some officers might escalate the situation and

hog-tie the arrestee, but he believed his role was just to be calm and that the individual just needed to ‘blow off steam’ and was not hurting anyone. (*FTO Interview D002*).

Finally, in Los Angeles, a woman approached the patrol car during the ride-along and was crying over a traffic altercation. Because the altercation was only words and no collision or other criminal activity occurred, there was nothing the officer could do. Nonetheless, the FTO spent time listening to her and displaying compassion for her frustration. After the incident the FTO commented that his job was to be a ‘peace officer’ and sometimes that meant taking the time to listen to someone’s bad day. (*FTO Interview L003*). These incidents suggest that while attitudes and perceptions (as expressed in answers to this study’s questions) are important in shaping actions, they are not dispositive.

C. CONCLUSION

This project starts from the assumption that FTOs are critical to transmitting police culture within departments. None of the observations made here undercut that thesis. But they do complicate it. Overall, participants’ responses suggest a real disconnect between FTOs’ role and the way they perceive that role in the ecosystem of their departments. That is, FTOs recognize the role they play in training new officers and how key they are to transmitting a department’s culture. They think they are leaders within the department. But they report what can only be described as disillusionment with the way department leaders and others view the role. FTOs believe they are leaders but do not think they are viewed and treated as such by department leadership. FTOs also seem to have imbibed a generalized sense of grievance about the communities they serve, perceiving themselves as at odds with the community despite serious evidence to the contrary.

This persistent belief that police are under fire, or even at war with the communities they serve, is almost certain to impact the way FTOs socialize young officers. Combined with the hair-trigger response to challenges to police authority recognized in some FTOs and the persistent sense that it is the public, not officers, who are responsible for controlling violence and setting the emotional tone of encounters, a picture emerges. Despite being able to mouth current orthodoxies about the importance of guardianship, emotional regulation, and maturity in the policing profession, a significant fraction of the FTOs observed here (a clear supermajority) appear to be cynical about their jobs and their role in the department, demoralized about the profession itself, and ready to crack heads in order to gain compliance from civilians. It should not be surprising, if not even expected, that these attitudes will be conveyed to trainee officers under their care, and those attitudes dispersed among multiple generations of trainees on a police force.

Thinking back to the research question this chapter aims to address (how do officers understand the role of the FTO), it appears likely that FTOs are right in perceiving themselves to be important actors in the transmission of departmental culture—but that the values they are transmitting are not those departmental leaders (and civilian observers concerned about police legitimacy and the control of police violence) would likely prefer. And to a certain extent, it is departmental leadership's failure to imbue this position with the kind of prestige and authority that attracts the best officers—the tendency simply to put warm bodies into any slot and presume the work is being done—that helps to create this disconnect between the promise of the FTO position and its somewhat dispiriting reality. This observation will certainly have a profound impact on how elites and FTOs will perceive their role in socializing probationary recruits in the application of violence, which will be explored in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

FTOs AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

'If we look like we are ready for business [in military uniforms] and kick-ass, [people] will pause.' Los Angeles Field Training Officer 06

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed perceptions of the role of FTOs within departments, as well as FTOs' and elites' views on issues around policing, recruiting, training, and ideal officer characteristics. This chapter tries to answer the second research question—How do FTOs and leaders perceive their role in socializing probationary recruits in the application of violence—and tries to narrow the focus to discuss FTOs' role in socializing violence within the profession of policing. While this is hardly the only job that FTOs have around training young recruits, it is doubtless one of the most important, especially in a climate of police/community relations marked by increasing suspicion in minority and impoverished communities that police direct unconstrained and lawless violence against them—for example, against George Floyd in Minneapolis. The legitimacy of policing in a democratic country that prioritizes (at least in theory) personal autonomy is always fragile and is threatened by images of the police as out of control and arbitrarily violent. As described in Chapter 2, the perception that police regularly engage in excessive or unjustified violence can undermine the public order by alienating the public from police, depriving them of the assistance that police need to carry out their duties (Roth, 2017).

But the damage can go much deeper than merely making it less likely that police will get cooperation from the public. As the literature suggests, police legitimacy for Americans is based only marginally on a sense of police effectiveness in the form of, say, reductions in crime rates (Jackson and Bradford, 2010). Far more important to police legitimacy are notions of procedural justice and a sense that police embody—and in their conduct, reflect—broad democratic notions about fairness.⁴⁸ Excessive police use of force can make a community view their police force as the enemy, or come to believe that the entire department is corrupt or hiding similar violations (Syed, 1997). Sociologist Randolph Roth argues that when police legitimacy declines, crime in a community rises, as distrustful citizens become less likely to call for emergencies, serve as witnesses, or cooperate with law enforcement (Fagan and Campbell, 2020; Roth, 2017; Tyler et al., 2015). The misuse of violence fosters distrust and cynicism toward the police, which has been associated with higher crime rates, decreased public safety, and increased violence (Tyler et al., 2015; Fagan and Campbell 2020; Desmond et al., 2016). The consequences may extend even further. Granting police officers the authority to use force is one of the most significant compromises of individual freedom for the sake of the common good in any society. However, in a democratic republic, if citizens perceive police violence as arbitrary, disproportionate, or driven by bias, they may begin to withdraw their acceptance of that authority.

Thus, the mechanisms by which police departments socialize their recruits into the use of violence is one of the most important tasks that confront police agencies. The importance of the FTOs' role in training recruits thus goes beyond increasing police effectiveness or disseminating departmental rules of conduct. FTOs are at the heart of

⁴⁸ See, for example, Hawken and Kleiman (2009.)

process acculturation. If FTOs are perpetuating practices and attitudes in young recruits that undermine police legitimacy, then understanding and correcting that is a task of vital importance. So, it seems critical to understand what FTOs think about these topics and what role they perceive themselves to appropriately play in teaching young officers about how, when, and in what way to use force to accomplish policing objectives, including the use of violence.

Given the importance of understanding exactly how FTOs perpetuate and teach police departments' culture, the results of my ride-along observations and interviews are sobering, especially for any person who might see the FTO program as a potential means of socializing recruits into a more judicious and restrained use of violence. As it turns out, FTOs, no less than the recruits they are supposed to be training, display striking nonchalance regarding the use of violence. Indeed, they are positively attracted to it in many instances. Participants understand that membership in the policing units most likely to use violence (such as SWAT) is a marker of prestige and an important tool for advancing within the department; they respond to violence on a personal level as fun and even glamorous; and they have imbibed a culture that views the use of violence as no big deal or, even worse, a personal prerogative that comes with wearing the uniform (Songze et al., 2024; Mumford et al., 2022).

Fundamentally, there appears to be a real disconnect between 'official' department narratives about the appropriate use of violence and what FTOs actually believe and put into practice as part of their training. This has distinctly concerning implications for any effort to use FTOs in a positive way to control police violence. It also suggests that FTO programs may need a serious overhaul, as to both personnel and guiding policies.

B. HOW FTOs ‘BEAR CULTURE’ TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLICE

As described above, FTOs are preeminent ‘culture-bearers,’ prime agents of both instruction and socialization (Chappell and Piquero, 2004; Haarr, 2001; Mastrofski and Ritti, 1996; Van Maanen, 1975). They have been identified as one of the key actors involved in generating ‘buy-in’ to changes aiming to improve outcomes and reduce violence through their official role as trainers and informal role of training via osmosis (Kane, 2014). Geller and Toch (1996) argue that FTOs play one of the most important roles in the organization and can play a role in ‘bridging the gap’ between academy training and real-life policing and in the control of police use of force. Studies have argued that field training can have *either* a positive or negative effect on the effectiveness and impact of academy training (Haarr, 2001; Mastrofski and Ritti, 1996). Getty, for example, linked time with specific FTOs to later misconduct, suggesting that FTOs can socialize officers either into restraint or excess when it comes to police violence (Getty et al., 2014). This concept was summarized by an FTO in Montgomery who stated: ‘The rookie will become what the FTO is [and the] FTO should be a good role model. If you’re a violent FTO you will produce violent rookies.’ (*FTO Interview M011*).

1. Officers and Perceptions of Violence

How officers perceive violence—both its necessity and its limits—directly influences their actions and interactions with the public. Of course, these perceptions are shaped by training, broader societal attitudes toward policing and public safety, and their own individualized socialization. Understanding how police officers view violence is essential for addressing concerns about misconduct, accountability, and the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

i. The Prestige of Militarized/Specialized Units

Though not overtly connected to the question whether and how FTOs act as ‘culture bearers,’ the question of what participants thought the most prestigious jobs were within their departments generated a substantial number of responses that spoke to participants’ perceptions of the use of violence in policing, and especially its glamor. Participants were specifically asked about whether the FTO position was considered prestigious, which allowed for free-form answers exploring what other positions within the department might be prestigious. As theorized above, prestigious positions are likely to draw the most promising younger officers. If these most promising officers are drawn to high-intensity units and see them as the most helpful to career advancement, this revealed preference speaks volumes concerning the attitudes of police officers about the use and proper role of violence in policing.

It was striking how consistently respondents reported that ‘special units’ within the department were the most prestigious. Generally speaking, ‘special’ refers to special weapons and tactics or ‘SWAT’ teams. As it turns out, these are the elements of American policing most directly connected to the increasing militarization of police, which (as described in greater detail below in the section on police militarization) appears to have contributed substantially to police violence and to the erosion of trust between the public and police (Mummolo, 2018).

In more than half of the interviews I conducted, respondents mentioned ‘SWAT,’ ‘special,’ or similar terms as the most prestigious police jobs. Other ‘prestigious’ roles that were mentioned several times (though at a lesser frequency) were homicide or other investigators, bomb squad, and K9 units or police dog squad. That is, ‘high-intensity’ jobs were named as the most prestigious police units over and over again. These responses were common in all three cities, from both FTOs and elites. ‘I think those

crazy jobs will always be prestigious—SWAT, homicide detective,’ said one Los Angeles leader. ‘It’s why people become cops in many instances.’ (*Leader Interview LE01*). One Miami-Dade FTO noted the disparate allocation of resources between SWAT and other programs such as FTO training: The department, he said, does not ‘give the training to patrol,’ but instead to ‘special units ... but I agree the field needs more of that training.’ (*FTO Interview D008*). Later in the interview D008 stated that the most prestigious roles in the department were ‘special units’ that ‘get all the gear, attention, training, and better hours—and [are] less stressful [so] more demand for those jobs.’ (*FTO Interview D008*). A Los Angeles FTO said that being an FTO ‘used to be prestigious,’ but now it is ‘probably special units like K9 or SWAT, things that get you out of patrol actually’ are prestigious. (*FTO Interview L002*).

Besides the allocation of material resources, FTOs also noted that special units get the attention of departmental leadership. ‘Getting you time with brass are the prestigious jobs, SWAT and stuff like that.’ (*FTO Interview M009*). Face-time with the ‘brass’ is an especially valuable limited resource, as one Los Angeles FTO noted, ‘[p]restigious jobs are the ones that lead to rank—so specialty units, traditionally SWAT or other crime impact units.’ (*FTO Interview L001*). To move up the ranks, an officer should seek out ‘[t]hings that get you attention ... so special units that serve some Captain or Major’s pet project.’ (*FTO Interview D009*).

By contrast, being an FTO is widely considered not to be prestigious: it’s a ton of extra hours, not really worth it. Sadly, easy jobs or the really extreme hard jobs [are prestigious]. So people want to be behind a desk and lazy or kicking in doors with SWAT. (*FTO Interview L003*).

One FTO said that it was ‘too easy to be an FTO’ and that it was only marginally helpful for one’s career. ‘Getting into a gang unit or some other special unit that has big busts’ is prestigious, and FTO L009 was transparent that getting into the gang unit was his career goal. Being an FTO is not prestigious because there is ‘no minimum time required to be

[an] FTO, so quality of FTOs have dropped. Going into Bomb squad, or some other high-speed squad' is prestigious. (*FTO Interview L010*). One Montgomery FTO was blunt: the 'FTO program sucks because everyone is forced to do it, SWAT and jobs that you see are cool on TV' are prestigious. (*FTO Interview M008*). Being an FTO is 'rewarding but not prestigious and the department does not see it as prestigious. If you are not in a special unit, you are trying to get into a special ... unit.' (*FTO Interview M011*).

As one Los Angeles FTO acutely observed, 'power equals prestige in police work. Any job that gives you power over others are prestigious, so getting rank. SWAT where you get to blow down doors are all prestigious.' (*FTO Interview L012*). It's '[j]obs that get you in the mix' that are prestigious, with 'in the mix' used as slang for gunfights and other high-intensity situations. (*FTO Interview D001*). These exchanges reflect a frank reality: in American policing today, number of arrests, use of militarized force, and confronting organized criminal activity is often equated with excellent policing, despite the fact that it occupies very little of the average officer's time.

This sub-theme is acutely germane to the focus of the current chapter. As some of these responses indicate, officers see SWAT and other specialized units as the most prestigious precisely *because* they are those most likely to engage in violence. They also believe that these units get the attention of department leadership and are showered with resources—which if true would suggest a revealed preference of department elites as well. What these preferences strongly suggest is that despite the lip service paid to the importance of FTO programs and to socialization of violence through positive mentoring, what actually helps an officer's career and gets the attention of leadership is full immersion in the 'kick-ass' model of policing, represented by membership in specialized units. While this investigation did not reveal direct evidence, it is difficult to

see how this revealed preference would not communicate itself to generations of new recruits, who get the message implicit in such promotions and allocations of resources: Empathetic guardians will get stuck in patrol, while warrior cops get promotions, resources, and respect. While my study provided no direct evidence of this phenomenon, the fact that officers widely perceived it as a reality is itself suggestive.

ii. Officer Safety: Getting Home Safe

Another theme that emerged from the responses was officers' prominent concern for their own safety. Police attitudes toward violence are almost certainly impacted by the 'danger imperative,' the ubiquitous sense that policing is a uniquely dangerous profession and that officers regularly face threats to their lives. Academic observers have noted that the safety imperative may be a factor in uncontrolled police violence, since it incentivizes officers to respond with what they see as preemptive violence (Moskos, 2009; Gilmartin, 1986; Cheng, 2024). This fear for personal safety is, most observers agree, directly connected to the 'warrior' cop, the controlling figure who makes aggressive demands for respect and is ready to use violence to obtain that respect, or at least compliance.⁴⁹ It is also associated with police suspicion of community members (Skolnick, 2011) and widespread police support for particularly aggressive tactics in dealing with that community (Ingram et al., 2018). This version of the policing profession is the worrying one that dominates media coverage, especially in recent years (Waddington, 1993).

Numerous participants asserted that officer safety was among the most important considerations in how they went about their jobs. This fear has manifested, for many, into a 'getting home at all costs' mentality. Many respondents sounded this theme. For

⁴⁹ For texts on status injuries *see* Aristotle (1984) Book II of Aristotle (ed. 1984); Nussbaum (2016); Mill (1859).

example, FTO D009 from Miami-Dade crystalized this sub-theme when answering a question about what he thought were the most important lessons an FTO should teach to control violence. He responded, ‘officer safety, [a probationary officer] might get [themselves] into a dangerous situation where [they] have to be more violent than necessary to get out of it.’ (*FTO Interview D009*). Here the FTO demonstrates this sub-theme: to avoid even worse violence by the police, the police had to take a ‘hard’ stance and engage in preemptive violence.

A respondent in Montgomery, M004, articulated this theme even more forcefully when commenting on what the official FTO program itself teaches new officers about controlling violence. He stated that ‘we train officer safety.... I tell them to assume the worst and assume everyone has a gun—if you do that you will never be surprised.’ (*FTO Interview M004*). A similar response came from M008, when asked, ‘What do you do personally to control violence while on the job as a police officer?’ responded, ‘I try to keep myself alive. Not as strong as [some other cops] so go a little bit above what [others] would do.’ (*FTO Interview M008*).

For other participants, the concept of officer safety was described as ‘getting home’ or ‘survival.’ Participants were asked what they thought were the most important lessons to teach new officers on how to control the application of violence. M010 reported as one of his critical lessons to impart on new officers as ‘firearms confidence, [because] at the end of the day this is your lifeline and it decides whether or not you go home.’ He said this as he pointed to his service weapon. (*FTO Interview M010*).

Immediately after this question participants were then asked what *actually* was being taught to officers to prevent violence. De-escalation or similar themes were rarely sounded. Instead, the theme of ‘get home alive’ was invoked by nearly half of respondents, a strikingly broad response. Respondents reported that they train officers to

‘[f]ocus on stop[ping] the threat—officer safety is first and foremost, got to come home at night,’ (*FTO Interview D002*); to ‘win the engagement first and foremost,’ because ‘survival has to come first,’ (*FTO Interview D006*); and to take ‘someone down without getting hurt, at the end of the day you need to go home. I [was taught while] on patrol to bring back someone in cuffs or don’t come back.’ (*FTO Interview L005*).

This finding is fully consistent with academic literature, described in Chapter 2, that emphasizes the ‘danger imperative’ as a preeminent concern and nearly universal cultural motif within policing. Relevant to this study is the implications of this danger imperative for the socialization of violence among new police recruits. All the nostrums about de-escalation are unlikely to have much effect if the ‘culture-bearers’ within a department are enculturating new recruits to regard every encounter with a civilian as possibly fatal and every civilian as a likely enemy to be controlled through preemptive violence.

iii. Violence is Fun

Throughout this investigation, participants and other officers were recorded showing a striking nonchalance regarding the application of violence. In fact, in some cases respondents indicated that they *enjoyed* being violent. This sub-theme was not often triggered directly from interview questions. Rather, it arose in the form of ancillary comments about themselves or other officers or was observed from their actions.

Some of the most revealing examples of this sub-theme include a Miami-Dade FTO admitting that his department had aggressive cops who enjoy getting into ‘a fight every day.’ (*FTO Interview D003*). To be clear, this FTO was not suggesting that this is positive behavior. To the contrary, this same officer mentioned that he joined the force because, in his words, ‘I am a protective type, I hate bullies, people need help.’ (*FTO Interview D003*). However, during the same interview when asked how he personally

controls violence, D003 stated that when he gets to a call he immediately tries to ‘control[] the room, establish[] authority, I play off the suspect’s behavior, it’s a mirror.’ Again, this means the officer will mirror his behavior to the suspect, increasing his aggression if he encounters aggression, which is the opposite of de-escalation. And again, as we have seen above, this approach places the responsibility for controlling the emotional tempo of an encounter with civilians.

D002 recited a story about an arrest in which he was involved: A woman ‘with mental issues’ who was in handcuffs, was ‘going ballistic in the car until he put a seatbelt on’ her. He reported that other officers on the scene were eager to ‘beat up’ the lady for ‘going crazy in the back of a patrol car’ and that they were simply looking for a reason to become violent. (*FTO Interview D002*). The participant told this story as an example of successfully helping other officers control violence because the woman, who was obsessed with getting her seatbelt on, calmed down once she got one, a crisis averted without violence. It was noted, however, that the officer made no comment on the fact that his fellow officers wanted to assault a mentally ill handcuffed citizen, other officers seemed to assume that this response was normal. Moreover, D002 failed to detail if he felt compelled to report said officers or take any action for the breach of police protocols. Unfortunately, this type of response was not uncommon during this investigation. The takeaway here, for at least D002, is that officers can recognize the right and wrong in a situation but have a hard time going the extra step to hold fellow officers accountable.

Similarly, in Los Angeles a sergeant police officer, who was not subject to an interview, asked FTO L003 if a recent arrest was a ‘use of force’ incident (this incident involved a foot chase from a robbery with other officers who were not subject to this study). (*During FTO Interview L003*). When FTO L003 said ‘no,’ the sergeant said ‘damn’ and made a gesture suggesting he was disappointed that force was not used. After

this conversation, FTO L003 was asked what the ‘damn’ comment meant. He explained that when there is a use of force incident, the ranking sergeant has to go back to the station house to review the body cameras to ensure force was necessary and applied correctly. This particular sergeant, the FTO said, did not want to be out on patrol because it was hot and he wanted to ‘relax’ back at the station. (*FTO Interview L003*). While this sergeant was not reveling in the use of violence, he, a first line supervisor (and, it was later learned, a former FTO) was disappointed that he had been deprived of a chance to stay in the air conditioning. The comment was mostly, it seems, tongue in cheek. But it seemed to epitomize an attitude to violence that was observed throughout this investigation—violence that was fun or had other personal benefits for the officer.

In Los Angeles, an FTO triggered this theme by stating that he was ‘irritated that people in shows can do cool stuff like crack heads and everyone in the public loves them in the TV shows, but in reality, no one supports them.’ This particular FTO frequently contradicted himself. For example, when asked what within the FTO program taught new officers how to control violence, he responded that the FTO program helped to ensure that the department does not hire aggressive cops in the first place. However, this FTO also stated, not in response to a question, that ‘I don’t want to kick someone’s ass who doesn’t deserve it. I don’t want to shoot anyone that doesn’t deserve it.’ L007 also made one of the most incendiary comments in the entire study, one that will be discussed in detail below: ‘Shooting more people’ would be a good crime deterrence because the ‘message gets out and less people get shot in the long run.’ (*FTO Interview L007*). The takeaways here are hard to miss. This FTO has trained dozens of recruits and has been an officer for over two decades. The potential for corrosion of the LAPD culture from this one officer is immeasurable

Also in Los Angeles, FTO L008 narrated a story from when he was a trainee: he and his FTO were in a barricaded suspect situation and he was instructed to take up a position 'behind a tree with a shotgun.' His FTO told him, 'If that guy comes out and runs toward you, I want you to smoke him,' meaning to kill the suspect. L008 recounted that he started to smile and his FTO asked him 'what are you smiling about?' L008 responded, 'You told me I got to smoke someone.' His FTO replied, 'that's what I'm talking about.' L008 later mentioned that from that encounter onwards, his FTO 'seemed to like him more.' (*FTO Interview L008*). The atmosphere in the car when this officer told this story is hard to describe in writing. The best description would be the FTO expressed glee as he recounted his close encounter with killing a human (he did not in fact 'smoke' anyone) and the bonding experience he and his FTO had over the potential use of deadly force. L008 added to his story that when he was a U.S. Marine he had to be in the field ('the field' is a term used by the Marines and Army to describe training in a war simulated location) away from home, but now 'I am getting paid to stand out here with a shotgun and get to go home tonight.' (*FTO Interview L008*). He implied that his getting home was related to his ability to potentially kill the suspect.

Another story that triggered this theme came from L002. Here, the FTO mentioned that when he was a new officer, his nickname was 'the shit magnet.' (*FTO Interview L002*). Typically, a 'shit magnet' refers to an officer who is inexplicably and frequently involved with high-intensity situations (*i.e.*, car chases, violence, or officer-involved shootings). By itself this was not particularly noteworthy, except L002 referred to this time in his policing career as 'fun.' Said another way, being involved with high-intense situations, including the use of violence, is desirable. Notwithstanding the bravado factor in these responses (some of these officers were no doubt engaged in

puffery) the fact that for many participants violence has become a joking matter is problematic and most certainly bleeds into their role of training new recruits.

In Montgomery, while on a call at a mental health institute with M006, I observed the officer get into a fight with a suspect who had assaulted staff at the institute as well as the participant FTO and was refusing to take court-ordered medication. It should be noted that M006 appeared to only use the force necessary for compliance (though while the fight started in a hallway where I could observe things, it ended in a room where I lost my line of sight). However, after the incident was over and M006 and I were leaving, four other officers arrived on scene. On learning that the individual was already restrained and no longer a threat, one of the officers snapped his fingers with disappointment, saying he was 'hoping to have fun.' (*During FTO Interview M006*). While M006 did not respond to the comment verbally, he did, however, laugh, showing, at best, a certain amount of acquiescence to the sentiment. (*FTO Interview M006*).

Finally, while riding with M003, numerous officers were observed arresting a woman for assault with a weapon (she broke a potted plant and used a shard to cut the victim) who was vigorously resisting. While the individual was resisting, one officer slammed her on the ground, in a grassy area. When the officers saw me observing the incident while leaning on a different patrol car one yelled aggressively, 'what are you doing here?' and 'get off that car.' However, after I was identified by M003 as an embedded researcher and told that I was a former police officer, the arresting officers were then observed bragging about the violence used during the arrest and laughing. One of the present officers stated 'man, you slammed her so hard' and proceeded to laugh. (*During FTO Interview M003*). The lessons imparted in this series of observations are hard to ignore, especially given that it was often FTOs themselves displaying nonchalance regarding the use of violence. In any profession that deals regularly with

violent and/or disturbed persons, and where the application of violence is at times necessary, familiarity is likely to breed a certain nonchalance. Nor am I entirely unaware that one feature of any closely bonded unit that often includes a significant number of young men is a certain underplayed bravado about bad behavior. So, to be clear: my concern about the nonchalance displayed by these officers is not mere prudishness, nor am I being naïve about group dynamics in high-stress situations, as discussed in the positionality section in Chapter 3.

Rather, as pertinent to the themes of this investigation, my concern arises from a persistent sense that violence here is being applied (or ignored) in a thoughtless manner. Again, the legitimacy of policing within a democratic republic depends in part on the sense that force is being employed fairly, consistently, but also *thoughtfully*—that is, only when necessary, and with a considered sense of its implications and import. Both the witnessing and application of violence might be common in policing, especially in some jurisdictions. But it should never be so boringly routine as to become a joke. In these instances, it was apparent that a joke was what it had become to some of these officers.

Few things could possibly be as corrosive, especially when the entire purpose of the FTO role is to teach rookie officers what is important, and what the department values. Thoughtless violence is only a half-step away from excessive, illegitimate use of violence. That these FTOs seemed to be sending a message that violence was no big deal, a cause for desultory laughter, or, much worse, a personal prerogative, strongly suggests that they will be ineffective in teaching their charges how to be thoughtful in the application of violence and control its use appropriately.

iv. The Lure of Militarization

Early in this research project, before the formal interviews started, I became increasingly aware that police officers are very hesitant to speak of their attitudes concerning violence. Thus, proxies were used to explore how participants understood their role in socialization of new police in the application of violence, to prevent self-filtering. One proxy that was effective was asking officers what they thought about the militarization of the police. Another proxy that did not garner any meaningful data was asking officers what their favorite police TV show or movie was.)

The impact of police militarization on police attitudes and training has been well documented. From the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, criminologists Peter B. Kraska and Victor E. Kappeler observed sharp increases in the number of police paramilitary units, the number of activities they partake in, the integration of paramilitary into standard on-duty policing, and the interconnectedness of paramilitary units and the armed forces (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997). A 2018 study from the International Association of Chiefs of Police found that more than 90 percent of law enforcement agencies studied had their own SWAT team or participated in a multi-agency SWAT team (IACP, 2018). The rise of militarized police units has been marked, Kraska observed, by changes in uniforms, weaponry, training, operative and tactical strategies, and even language, all adopting a more militaristic tone (Kraska, 1996). In their 2014 report on police militarization, the ACLU observed a more martial tone in new officer recruiting fliers, videos, and advertisements (ACLU, 2014). Radley Balko, an American journalist who specializes in reporting on police and excessive use of force, has collected a variety of police unit shirts designed by the members which use violent language and imagery (Balko, 2013).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Some examples: 'Hunter of men,' 'We get up Early, to BEAT the crowds,' 'Baby Daddy Removal Team,' 'Narcotics: You huff and you puff and we'll blow your door down' (Balko, 2013).

Perhaps the most troubling example of this can be seen in the 2016 killing of Daniel Shaver by Officer Philip Brailsford in Mesa, Arizona. Officer Brailsford had etched ‘You’re Fucked’ into his department-issued AR-15 assault rifle (Robinson, 2017). While this ugly addition to the rifle has been reported, what is often overlooked is where it was located: on the inside ejection port cover (or ‘dust cover’). As someone who served 20 years in the military with a combat tour in Fallujah, Iraq, and who carried the military variant of this weapon, I found this point especially notable. I recognize that the etching had been done on the inside of the ejection port, where it could not be viewed by examining the outside of the weapon unless a round had been fired and the ejection port expelled the brass and hung open. That is, *after* the officer shot someone, the phrase would be exposed as a grotesque joke. Which is exactly what happened: Officer Brailsford shot and killed Daniel Shaver while he was begging for his life.

Interview questions designed to elucidate officers’ views on militarization included:

- Do you have access to an assault rifle in your daily policing activities?
- Do you believe that all officers should have access to assault weapons?
- What about officers routinely carrying military grade rifles on patrol?
- Do you have issues with officers wearing military-type uniforms or equipment visibly seen when on routine patrol or performing a routine mission (*i.e.*, not special units)?
- Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way routine law enforcement officers view themselves?
- Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way the community views routine law enforcement?
- Do you think there is a blurring of the mentality of policing with soldiering?

The responses to these questions illuminate much about the extent that military tactics and, more commonly, militaristic attitudes have taken root in police departments. Many participants reported that they had access to an assault rifle.⁵¹ But only two stated that officers should *not* carry assault rifles on routine patrol.

Along the same lines, when asked, ‘Do you have an issue with officers wearing military-type uniforms or equipment visibly seen when on routine patrol,’ only about one-fifth of participants answered in the affirmative. The balance, apparently, have no issues with military uniforms or equipment being utilized by officers on routine patrol. D011 maybe went the furthest, stating that in his opinion police on patrol ‘are the military inside the U.S.’ and later saying ‘I don’t see a problem with police acting like soldiers because we have a similar mission.’ (*FTO Interview D011*). To be clear, ‘routine patrol’ means officers on foot or in their car moving through designated patrol sections to look for or deter crime with their presence and responding to emergency calls via other officers or 911 dispatchers. Here, we see a clear example of militarized thinking impacting even the most routine of policing work.

Drilling down, FTOs and elites were asked if they thought ‘military style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affected the way officers view themselves?’ The vast majority of all officers answered yes. Even more—almost the entire study—also answered yes to the follow up question: ‘Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way the community views routine law enforcement?’ Finally, participants were asked if they thought ‘there was a blurring of the mentality of policing

⁵¹ By ‘assault rifle’ I meant, and respondents universally understood, an AR-15 or like weapon. I am aware that the term ‘assault rifle’ is both technically incorrect and in some quarters politically contentious. Nonetheless, the terminology has been widely adopted and for convenience, I have adopted its use here.

with soldiering' within the United States?' Here, participants were basically evenly split between 'yes' and 'no.'

Again, with only 54 respondents, one cannot generalize or draw conclusions about the whole of policing from this data.⁵² Yet, examining this series of questions together reveals a consistent mindset: It was nearly unanimous that respondents believed that officers should carry assault rifles on routine patrol, and close to unanimous that officers were untroubled by police being dressed and equipped like the military on routine patrol. But fully four-fifths of respondents acknowledged that officers dressing and equipping themselves like soldiers would impact how officers view themselves in a negative way and nearly all agreed that military style weapons and uniforms would impact the way the community views these officers (and as shown below, by making officers seem more fearsome and aggressive). On its face this is an important finding: the vast majority of participants did not have any problem with militarization, even though they believed that military style uniforms, weapons, and tactics change the way officers view themselves and the way the policed community views its police. The finding strongly suggests that many police have not simply been affected by militarization, they welcome militarization with their eyes wide open to the fact that it changes the way they operate as police and interact with the community.

⁵² While the sentiment analysis calculation aims to render the overall sentiment of interviewees, it is important to caution that this in no way aims at, nor intends to be viewed as, a quantitative measure to generalize FTO perceptions. Nor should the percentages reported be read as generalizable survey results. Instead, this approach aims to provide an easier and more accessible way to visualize the prevailing sentiments of participants across the study and provide context to participant responses and behaviors. For example, when analyzing and presenting qualitative data from one participant, understanding where this individual is situated both within their department and as compared to other officers in the same or contrasting group can provide further insights or highlight limitations. Given the uniqueness of the profession, the range of individuals interviewed, and the empirical focus of this investigation, the sentiment analysis as preface to the thematic analysis of the evidence provides a helpful way to situate the qualitative evidence vis-à-vis the other participants in the study. To summarize, while the sentiment analysis is not a quantitative measure and should not become the basis of unhelpful and unsupported generalizations, it is a helpful way of viewing the responses of individual participants.

However, the picture is still incomplete. To fully understand the relevance of these findings and its connection to the perception of violence and socialization of new recruits in the application of violence, the follow-on question of ‘if so, how?’ must be analyzed. Specifically, respondents were asked: 1) Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way routine law enforcement officers view themselves? *If so, how?*; and 2) Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way the community views routine law enforcement? *If so, how?*

For the first question, the resounding response was that militarization makes officers more aggressive—which respondents largely appreciated. As FTO M010 stated: ‘Some will feel more like Superman and like they are invulnerable—make them more bold and aggressive.’ (*FTO Interview M010*). Another FTO noted that militarization ‘leads to more aggressive policing.’ (*FTO Interview ME02*). Indeed, ‘aggressive’ or some variation was mentioned by the vast majority of officers as one of, if not the primary consequences of militarization. A few of the most conspicuous comments came in response to a question about *how* militarization of routine patrol officers affect self-perception. These responses demonstrate that participants understood the connection between aggression and militarization: Military-style weapons and uniforms give officers a ‘sense of being tougher than they actually are, [and] some [will] think they can be more aggressive or heavy handed.’ (*Leader Interview ME06*).

When ‘aggressive’ was not used directly, officers often used other words to describe their response to military weapons and uniforms that cast much of the same concept—and indeed, in some instances, seemed even more threatening than ‘aggressive.’ Elicited variations included *confident, assertive, less approachable, tactical, intimidating, and intense* as a way of describing the effects of militarization in individual officers. For example, one leader noted that militarization made ‘cops ... less

likely to de-escalate because they become overly confident.’ (*Leader Interview LE05*). Others wanted to wear military-style battle dress uniforms (BDUs) on patrol because they are more ‘comfortable,’ even though they assumed that the uniforms would make officers ‘less approachable’ (*FTO Interview LE06*) or more ‘assertive ... but sometimes that is not a bad thing even on routine patrol.’ (*FTO Interview D004*). Another Miami-Dade FTO (after offering the curious observation that ‘We used to be guardians, but we need more warriors’) explained that he approved of the blurring of the line between the military and the police and that officers’ uniforms ‘should look more tactical.’ (*FTO Interview D006*).

M009 gave a related (and somewhat contradictory) response, stating that military-style uniforms would not change the way the officer thinks about themselves, but also that ‘comfort is the most important thing and that [comfort] is worth a few officers [who] will be more intense.’ (*FTO Interview M009*). LE06 also noted that you ‘have to admit [the] physicality and dirtiness involved in [this] job.’ (*FTO Interview LE06*). This last comment about ‘physicality and dirtiness’ refers to the fact that military style uniforms can generally be cleaned at home in a washing machine while the more traditional button-down uniform shirt with slacks often needs to be sent to the dry cleaners. These references to comfort and the ease of cleaning uniforms demonstrates the value these officers place on convenience over the knowledge that military style uniforms can make officers ‘less approachable’ to the public, or even more aggressive.

L011 gave a contradictory response to this question, stating that he did not think military style uniforms and weapons would affect the way an officer would think about themselves, but in the same response stated that these uniforms and equipment ‘might be intimidating, maybe, but doesn’t change their job.’ (*FTO Interview L011*). He acknowledged that military style uniforms and equipment changed the way the public

perceives the police, but he insisted that is the public's fault, since the 'public just does not trust us.' He did not consider or acknowledge whether there might be some connection between these phenomena, that the loss of the public's trust in the police might be caused by the change in the way the police present themselves through the use of military-style weapons and uniforms. And again, we see a response consistent with an earlier theme: that violence is primarily the public's fault and not subject to the officer's control. This entire thread is summed up perfectly by FTO D010, who stated that 'any person that dresses like a soldier, will think like one—if you dress like a soldier, you'll act like one.' (*FTO Interview D010*). It should be noted that D010 was among the very few FTOs that did *not* think police officers should routinely use military style uniforms or equipment. (*FTO Interview D010*).

To the follow-up question (whether participants thought militarization changed the way the community viewed routine law enforcement) a similar theme developed. As mentioned, nearly all participants stated that militarization had an impact on the community. When asked the follow-on question, 'if so, how,' almost all respondents who agreed that militarization impacted police-community relations described that effect as 'fear,' or something similar. As one Los Angeles elite stated, 'Absolutely, they're more *intimidated* by it,' *i.e.*, by military uniforms and weapons, which he said he meant:

in both a good and a bad way. It can help cops with their command presence and help to avoid having to use force, [but] our community here in LA, a progressive city, is absolutely against it. (*Leader Interview LE03*).

Yet, despite knowing that his city would be against such measures, this police leader had no issue with militarization in practice. (*Leader Interview LE03*). Others agreed that once police put on military garb, the public is 'more *standoffish* and sees cops as less human.' (*Leader Interview LE05*). To a Miami-Dade FTO, this is a benefit: the public, he said, 'will respect you more because they will *fear* you more.' (*FTO Interview D008*). Officers

were aware that their military uniforms and weapons inspire fear in the public—and they preferred it that way.

Again, few officers seemed to care about the way these tactics and uniforms affected police-community relation: ‘Yes, I am sure it scares them—outer vests [*i.e.*, wearing ballistic vests on the outside of a uniform] seem to scare people, but our job is safety first, feelings second.’ (*FTO Interview D012*). Wearing ballistic vests outside of the uniform is a method developed by the military in order to carry a combat load (*e.g.*, bullets, grenades, water) and distribute the weight on the shoulders. On the use of military uniforms, a Montgomery FTO stated, ‘[m]akes you look scarier and people won’t mess with you as much.’ (*FTO Interview M008*). These uniforms make officers ‘look better trained and more dangerous,’ meaning the public will ‘give [police] more respect because they’re more feared and makes them look more aggressive.’ It should be noted that this is the same FTO that stated earlier in the interview that he controls violence with his ability to ‘calm down’ situations. (*FTO Interview M012*). ‘[I]f we look like we are ready for business [and to] kick-ass, people will pause.’ (*FTO Interview L006*). ‘[We] need to send a message,’ said one Los Angeles FTO, and ‘a beanbag sends a different message than [a] gun. Beanbags and tasers are probably not a good thing.’ (*FTO Interview L007*). Who the audience of this ‘message’ might be was unexplained.

The response that summarized this thread best came from a Miami-Dade elite, who stated:

definitely yes, dressing like a military person makes the public expect [that] you [will] use force like the military as opposed to [the police. The police] uniform is intimidating already so adding a military look just amplifies it. (*Leader Interview DE03*).

The disturbing takeaway here is the extent to which many FTOs desire militarization precisely because it inspires fear in community members—a clear example of tactics and tools both shaping, and being shaped by, thoughts and attitudes. The tension creates a

negative feedback loop, where officers both (1) recognize that they are increasingly at odds with the community and (2) embrace tactics, dress, and weaponry that amplify the divide, in the belief that it is the very distance from the community that justifies these distancing tactics. This raises an extraordinarily disturbing possibility: that far from seeking to heal community-police relations, officers have accepted the ‘inevitable’ divide and even seek to widen it for reasons of their own. Whether this divide can be sustained as consistent with democratic governance is a (maybe *the*) central question facing police in America today.

As relevant to the concerns of this study, these sentiments also raise real questions about whether the FTO model, as currently constructed, can ever be an effective tool in socializing and restraining police violence, or whether in fact it has become a pathway for transmitting older models of policing that rely on violence as a means of control.

2. FTO as Evaluator, Educator, and Mentor

So far, much of what has been reported has focused on the ‘informal’ elements of police training vis-a-vis FTOs: how their day-to-day interactions with recruits work to enculturate the next generation of officers. But FTOs also have a formal role as evaluators, teachers, and mentors whose contours are worth exploring, especially as these formal roles help to socialize probationary officers in the application of violence.

i. Evaluator

As an FTO in Los Angeles stated, the ‘primary duty’ of the FTO is to ‘train’ and with their sergeant do regular ‘evals for probationary officers.’ (*FTO Interview L001*). What exactly FTOs evaluated differed among participants. One elite in Montgomery opined that the chief mission of the FTO was to ensure that a probationary officer learned what

they were supposed to in the police academy and if not ‘send someone back to training.’ (*Leader Interview ME06*). Another Montgomery elite said the FTOs should focus on rating ‘communication skills and attitude towards public and peers.’ (*Leader Interview ME04*). Further, ME04 also stated it was important that new officers are ‘observed on how they respond to stressful and non-stressful situations’ but ultimately whether that happens depended on if they drew a good FTO. (*Leader Interview ME04*). Lastly, ME04 stated that the program was designed to give new officers exposure to multiple situations that police officers regularly encounter. (*Leader Interview ME04*). M010 concurred with this assessment, stating that new officers are ‘moved to each part of the city’ during four different phases, though this procedure is more the result of informal rather than formal processes. (*FTO Interview M010*).

Another common response consistent with this theme was that FTOs used the review process to evaluate their trainees. ME01 stated that he ensures FTOs review any videos of use of force encounters, foot or vehicle pursuits, or any other highly intense situation with their probationary officers and then he will go over the videos with both officers. (*Leader Interview ME01*). In Los Angeles, L006 mentioned the same method of evaluation and how this method has prevented erection of a ‘blue wall’—the term for the informal officer network of intramural cooperation and silence that many critics claim stifles reporting on violations—from protecting bad officers. (*FTO Interview L006*). Specifically, he claims, ‘blue wall and not ratting on other cops [is] a thing of the past, sergeants review every use of force now.’ This evaluation model was summarized by a Miami-Dade FTO, D012, who stated that ‘each FTO is different, but you are supposed to watch and tweak, supervise and refine,’ and then retrain if necessary. (*FTO Interview D012*).

Finally, as regards to the FTO's evaluator role, many participants questioned the quality of the evaluations used by their departments. For instance, when asked if probationary officers are taught how to deal with different segments of the community and if that training was evaluated, M006 responded that 'nothing in the FTO program' teaches that. He added that the evaluation process was 'limited because of the other requirements on FTOs, and the boxes they need to check.' (*FTO Interview M006*). In Los Angeles L008 stated 'none' to this question, explaining that:

if there is, it's a paper drill, it's up to FTO and most don't care about this, my FTO did not do this. [There is] nothing in [the] manual [but] some people go to schools but it is not mandatory. [The Department] doesn't really train [their] officers on community relations. I spend \$100 of my own money to buy ice cream for kids. (*FTO Interview L008*).

He later admitted that he buys ice cream because he found that it helps witnesses come forward if something happens in the neighborhood. But when asked if he could give an example of this working he said 'no.' (*FTO Interview L008*). I noted at the time that while spending his own money on ice cream for kids is a good thing, it does show that he fundamentally did not understand what community relations is about—and he certainly won't be able to teach his probationary officers on the concept.

Others mentioned that because FTOs had so much discretion on how they train and evaluate, the evaluations do not weigh heavily. An elite in Los Angeles stated in response to 'How much discretion does the individual FTO have in how training is carried out?' that 'FTOs have so much influence, they can do what they want—so long as the training and evaluation forms are filled out, it's hard to determine what is happening.' (*Leader Interview LE02*). These comments from LE02 were demonstrated in the field by L004, who mentioned that the LAPD's Mission Division (one of LAPD's 25 geographic divisions) failed roughly five to six probationary officers from the FTO phase in a 10-year period (meaning the new officer is let go completely from the force), but

LAPD's Hollywood Division had a reputation of being tougher on probationary officers and fails roughly five to six a year. (*FTO Interview L004*). L004's assertion was supported by an elite participant in Los Angeles who stated that a probationary officer could 'pass in one division but fail in another' because of the inconsistent evaluation process in their department. (*Leader Interview LE01*). Intuitively, one could come to the conclusion that the fact that it appears that the evaluation process is not consistent with regards to weight is evidence of leaderships' lack of attention and oversight over their FTO programs.

In Miami-Dade, an elite participant mentioned that districts within the department and individual FTOs would customize their evaluations, so different districts could have different evaluation standards for probationary officers. Further, DE05 mentioned that if a probationary officer had trouble with training, they could get 'switched around' to another district or FTO. (*Leader Interview DE05*). The implication here was that a struggling new officer could be moved to an FTO to ensure they passed.

The importance of a consistent evaluation process to ensure the quality socialization of new officers via FTOs was summed up by an off-hand comment from a leader participant in Miami-Dade. DE03 stated that there 'is no set curriculum for the PPO' (probationary officer) and FTOs have 'way too much discretion. [There is] no structured training or FTO manual, it is up to their experience.' (*Leader Interview DE03*). Later in the interview, DE03 inadvertently demonstrated why this extreme FTO discretion could be dangerous in police training, stating that based on his experience, 'you are more inclined to get a bad evaluation if you are not aggressive because they see it as weakness or bad for officer safety,' while 'if [the probationary officer] is measured [or calm], some FTOs may view that negatively.' (*Leader Interview DE03*). Here again,

we see in the evaluation process a familiar pattern of an FTO reinforcing narratives around policing and aggression that embrace unchecked rather than controlled violence.

ii. Educator

By definition, FTOs are educators and trainers. In Los Angeles a probationary officer will be with an:

FTO for 12 weeks before they are moved on to another FTO ... so [they] have a limited amount of time to cram a lot of information [into] someone with a very different life experience. (*FTO Interview L003*).

This is likely the formal aspect of the FTO job, the one that an observer would expect to be most prescribed and most closely mirror departmental directives and guidelines.

Instead of this aspect of their job being highly scripted by department guidance, however, it was notable just how much discretion FTOs had in what and how to train new officers. One leader in Los Angeles responded to the question, ‘how much discretion does the individual FTO have in how the training is carried out?’ by stating that ‘the FTO has wide discretion as long as the specific mandates by the department and the state are met—they have a lot of freedom.’ (*Leader Interview LE03*). This notion was confirmed by another elite in Montgomery who said, ‘FTOs have freedom to do whatever they want within the guidelines.’ (*Leader Interview ME02*). And again, an elite in Miami-Dade reported that ‘FTOs are flexible in the day-to-day and how they communicate that information. They observe more than engage [and] watch and give feedback about situations.’ (*Leader Interview DE04*).

D003 commented that this immense discretion extends not just to individual FTOs but to the different districts within the department: ‘FTOs do things differently, we all know this, and each district has different needs.’ D003 provided the following example: ‘In Northside they need to crack more heads.’ (*FTO Interview D003*). It should be noted that ‘Northside’ refers to an economically depressed, predominantly black area

of the city where the crime rate is higher. The comment is telling in its equation of ‘discretion’ with aggression and potential police violence, with discretion apparently always being exercised in favor of additional violence to maintain or achieve control.

The same comparison was seen in Montgomery, where M003 stated that:

what side of town you are on will change that a lot, and of course the FTO dictates almost everything. FTOs differ greatly in quality of training. Big discrepancy [between] east side versus the west [training]. (*FTO Interview M003*).

‘Westside’ refers to the poorer, heavily minority area of the city, the ‘Eastside’ of town is wealthier. The implication was that more aggression is needed in the poorer areas of the city. This was made clearer when this response was considered in conjunction with his response to the previous question regarding FTO training on city demographics, where he stated:

west side people are more aggressive, but on east side if you piss anyone off they will report you, so you have to think of that when policing. You learn this during FTO phase but it’s not formal so if you have a lazy FTO you won’t [learn this]. (*FTO Interview M003*).

This FTO thus openly admitted that the possibility of being reported by citizens (wealthy citizens in this example) changed the way he conducted police work.

Also pertinent to FTO discretion is a comment from L009, who stated ‘quality [of training is] very FTO dependent, [they are] king of the car.’ (*FTO Interview L009*).

M004 also stated that the FTO is ‘king’ and ‘you are at the mercy of the FTO, the good ones and the bad.’ (*FTO Interview M004*). An obvious takeaway from these answers is the recognition that immense FTO discretion means that the quality of FTO training is highly dependent on the quality of the individual FTO. Perhaps the most potent comments came from M009, who said ‘the FTO has a lot of power, how you are trained depends on how the FTO wants to train and how good they are at their job’; and L001,

stating that because the ‘FTO is fully independent, training quality is very FTO dependent.’ (*FTO Interviews M009 and L001*).

Responses varied as to the focus of the FTO program’s education. But three main concepts arose out of the interviews: reinforcement of academy teachings, de-escalation, and officer safety. When asked ‘what within the FTO program controls violence,’ ME06 stated that FTO training is first a ‘reiteration of what [trainees] learned in the academy whether it be de-escalation or use of force continuum.’ (*Leader Interview ME06*). DE06 stated something similar in response to the same question: ‘Continuing training from the academy but one on one’ training. (*Leader Interview DE06*).

Many participants focused their training comments on ensuring probationary officers learn how to handle the stress of the job, stay calm, and de-escalate intense situations when possible. ME02 said de-escalation training is critical and ‘observed through command voice and physical skills. It judges their ability to handle a situation.’ (*Leader Interview ME03*). A Los Angeles FTO said that he tried to ‘[d]rill into [trainees] maturity, controlling emotions, don’t take things personal—teach, show, and observe and you pull the leash back when they go overboard.’ (*FTO Interview L009*). A Montgomery FTO reported that he teaches ‘rookies to be mindful, try to [be] calm and de-escalate.’ (*FTO Interview M009*). This FTO also stated he avoids violence by ‘staying calm as long as possible until there is no other viable option, or they touch me.’ It was observed that when he said ‘touch me’ he made a fist and hit the palm of his hand; in essence the FTO reported staying calm unless he is touched and then he would use force. (*During FTO Interview M009*).

Overall, about half of participants spoke of de-escalation, or some variation thereof, as being a focus of training. Still, even when purportedly espousing de-escalation, some FTOs endorsed contradictory tactics that strongly suggest that they

believed de-escalation is simply a form of command-and-control policing, such as M008: ‘Keep control over them and over the scene—teach use of force continuum and make sure they follow it.’ In the same response, M008 also said that he ‘levels up with rookies, if they go hands on then I go hands on, I level up with them.’ This was a particularly remarkable comment because in essence this FTO, who is supervising the trainee officer, will escalate aggression and violence based on what his rookie does, not based on the officer’s assessment of whether additional force is necessary. It should be noted that this is the same FTO who said ‘staying alive’ was his prime tactic to control violence. Further this FTO, in response to the militarization questions, stated that he did not have a problem with officers wearing military style uniforms and carrying military style equipment—in fact, he said, ‘I want them,’ and he believed that these uniforms and equipment gave officers an ‘ego boost’ and made them look ‘more tactical and powerful [by] show[ing] authority.’ (*FTO Interview M008*).

Moreover, the older, ‘kick-ass’ model of policing remains alive and well among the ranks of FTOs: most described officer safety as being the key to effective training. D002 mentioned that having a ‘good shot group’ was among the most important aspects of training to ensure ‘officer safety’ was maintained. (*FTO Interview D002*). (‘Shot group’ refers to the ability to group bullets in a target during marksmanship training—basically being a good shot.) When asked what training is conducted to control violence, M005 prioritized ‘mak[ing] sure the officer is safe—you can’t control violence if you are not safe.’ M005 went on to explain his answer by adding that ‘people in society are trying to ... defame police officers ... [and] it makes it hard because we go on calls and people will categorize us as being killers.’ (*FTO Interview M005*).

In Los Angeles, a participant stated that one the FTOs’ main training objectives is ‘making sure that the trainee is not hesitant to protect themselves and their fellow

officers [and not . . . use] de-escalation techniques to try to prevent the use of force' when force is necessary. (*Leader Interview LE05*). Some participants went beyond not prioritizing de-escalation in new recruits training, instead actively resisting it. L007 stated that the 'suspect['s] action[s] dictate what you do, if they have a knife, you have a gun, none of this de-escalation crap and not . . . kicking the shit out of people immediately.' It was observed when L007 made this comment he recognized it as problematic (his eyes got big and he smiled like he was joking); he then tried to clarify his response: 'You do want to kick someone's ass, you just don't want to do it right away.' I sought further clarification, because this did not seem any less aggressive, and he asked me to move on. Yet L007 began, impromptu, to further clarify that in the past 'people understood to comply or you're going to be going to the hospital.... [This] has not changed and de-escalation causes a lot of headaches and hesitation.' He concluded by stating that he was 'jealous of East Coast cops' aggression [that goes] unquestioned, but [citizens] on the West Coast get butt hurt for being talked to poorly.' (*FTO Interview L007*).

Finally, many participants mentioned that the main training tool utilized by FTOs to reduce the use of force was having probationary officers mentally run through scenarios before they arrived on a call. DE03 summarized this training tool, describing that he would have his trainee run 'through different scenarios and [explain how] he would handle it, [while] remaining calm and consider [available] resources before you take action.' (*Leader Interview DE03*). D007 has a similar technique: 'I mentally prepare them before we get to a call—show them how to do things.' (*FTO Interview D007*). Sometimes this mental preparation focused on avoiding violence: DE03 went on to state that throughout his career he could have 'legally ... shot four to five people ... [but] he took a minute and avoided it. Fear causes a lot of officers to use unnecessary force.'

(*Leader Interview DE03*). But just as often, mental preparation could be a precursor to the expected use of violence. For example, M001 stated:

I show them what to do, if we are going to a hostile call I prepare them by making them run through scenarios ... [like] what if we get a call that someone [has] a gun in their hand? [I have them] them go through a scenario of what they will do when they get to a call. (*FTO Interview M001*).

This FTO concluded this answer with ‘approach with caution and go to the call slower, try not to bully someone and be as nice as you can be but be prepared to do what you need to do to make it home.’ (*FTO Interview M001*).

Here, in the most overt formal role that FTOs have—that of educating new officers in the tactics and byways of policing—we see a number of examples of FTOs using their teaching role to enforce and perpetuate what I have described as the kick-ass model of policing (though, to be fair, a number of FTOs also emphasized the need for self-control and mature thinking). Several previously sounded themes come together in these descriptions of FTOs acting in their formal role as educators. We see, for example, the consistent theme of officers ‘mirroring’ others in police encounters and allowing civilians to control the emotional tempo of an encounter—which absolves the officer of responsibility for emotional self-regulation. We see the suspicion of civilians and its concomitant, the obsession with the danger imperative. Finally, we see the theme of ‘officer ego’ and the need to maintain control and dominance at all times. Officers’ almost unanimous desire to use military style weaponry and uniforms are merely the exterior manifestations of these impulses. That is, the actual teaching content of many FTO programs appears to be fundamentally inconsistent with much of what leaders intend for these programs to communicate to rookie officers.

iii. Mentor

One central sub-theme concerning the role of the FTO in socializing new officers is that FTOs perceive themselves as mentors. ‘The rookie will become what the FTO is, [thus] the FTO should be a good role model. If you are a violent FTO you will produce violent officers.’ (*FTO Interview M011*). This is likely the aspect of the FTO’s job where the most important work is done in transmitting department culture, since it is in emulation of experienced officers that rookies tend to learn the byways of policing as actually practiced, not just as taught.

In Miami-Dade, D011 summarized this role as:

mentor them, teach the golden rule, I use honey before the hammer when teaching—treat people with respect, [it’s] customer service and if you can’t do that then go get another job. (*FTO Interview D011*).

A Los Angeles elite said he would train rookies on how to ‘slow everything down.... I have always been a good talker and [know how to] talk people down.’ (*Leader Interview LE02*). Miami-Dade FTO D008 reported that he teaches rookies ‘the same way I act—get distance—slow down and pace yourself, be in control.’ (*FTO Interview D008*).

But even in the FTO’s mentorship role, there were discordant and contradictory notes. Los Angeles FTO L007 stated that:

If you are an aggressive person when you come on board—it’s impossible not to be when you get on this job, I can’t teach you otherwise, [FTOs] need to teach [probationary officers] how to control and lead by example, only use the necessary amount of force and talk to [probationary officers] about controlling emotions and adrenaline.

However, this was the same FTO who advocated for ‘shoot[ing] more people as deterrence, message gets out and less people get shot in the long run—need to send a message.’ (*FTO Interview L007*). Los Angeles FTO L005 said that he would never ‘cross the line’ of police misconduct ‘because probationary officers will think it’s fine’ to do

the same. (*FTO Interview L005*). It seemed less important to him not to commit police misconduct because it's wrong.

The FTO-probationary relationship is a learning loop: FTOs train what they learned from their FTOs, then pass it on to their new recruits, some of whom will become FTOs, continuing the loop. LE05 commented on this loop, stating: 'You are really taking the experiences of the FTO based on where they serve and learned police work—they are going to teach it the way they learned.' (*Leader Interview LE05*). Many participants agreed that FTOs are 'father figures to young officers' and critical to teaching police to 'be good cops.' (*FTO Interview L006*).

In this way, my observations on FTO attitudes and conduct relating to violence echo much of the existing literature on FTOs: they are uniquely positioned as 'culture-bearers' within departments and serve as a key figure in the way a department communicates its expectations and ethos to junior officers. The question is precisely what lessons are being taught, what cultural values are being transmitted. On the cluster of issues related to the socialization of police violence, it is clear that young officers are being sent highly contradictory, often deeply cynical and problematic messages that work at cross-purposes with leaders' interest in resolving police-community fractures and preserving police legitimacy. Instead, the lesson often being imparted by FTOs is that violence is no big deal, often fun, an important tool for maintaining both respect and control among civilians, and the key to navigating the dangers of policing in the community, which are omnipresent. To the extent this is the main message being sent new recruits by their FTO training, it will be that much more difficult to reform policing along lines more congenial to the contours of a modern democratic republic.

3. The Problem of ‘Unobserved Lessons’

Moreover, given this observed disconnect, it is chilling to speculate about what I *didn't* observe. This research did not involve observations of FTOs while they were in the process of training probationary officers. There was almost no contact during this study with trainees. Instead, these observations were made to an investigator who—although I have a background in law enforcement—was nonetheless an outsider, one who was taking copious notes to boot. This raises the possibility that no matter how extreme or incendiary some of the observations may have been, the FTO may actually have been more extreme when in a position of power and authority teaching new police officers one-on-one.

One example came from an FTO while engaged in a side conversation about how Miami has become a center for human trafficking. D009 stated that some human trafficking victims are actually ‘victims, but some like it.’ D009 then recounted a story of a 15-year-old girl that ‘liked the stuff the pimp was buying her,’ and stated that some people just ‘want a new purse.’ (*FTO Interview D009*). Again, we were talking about a 15-year-old victim of human trafficking. D009 was training new recruits, and it is likely that these attitudes have been passed to those impressionable new officers. Lastly, at the beginning of the ride-along with FTO L003, it was observed that the officer was ordered to take part in another study on how officers should respond in domestic violence situations when one partner is deaf. The FTO laughed about the assignment and joked that he would give it to one of his subordinates as punishment. (*FTO Interview L003*). Overall, this officer evinced a somewhat chilling nonchalance about the victimization and truly appalling human dramas he encountered as part of his job. And notably, he did so while he *saw me observing and taking notes*. Which raises the question: What was this officer like when outsiders weren't watching?

Related to the question of what takes place off-stage, when no one is watching, is how conduct is reported through official channels, often in ways that ‘sanitize’ it. This arises in the very common emphasis on ‘articulation’ from the participants. While not a featured separate theme, it was noted that a sizeable minority of respondents spoke of the need to teach their trainees the ‘art’ of articulation. In essence, this refers to how to document police actions to avoid disciplinary actions, ensure arrests can be prosecuted, and avoid civil lawsuits. For example, M005 stated:

I show and I teach [probationary officers] to use their best judgment—if they need to use a weapon then they should follow their training and as long as they can *articulate* why they will be fine. (*FTO Interview M005*).

Note: the emphasis here is on being able to *articulate* a satisfactory justification for the use of a weapon, instead of the actual *need* for one. M002 supported this observation, saying that trainees needed to know that ‘use of force comes down to articulation’ and also that much of police formal training is focused on being able to ‘articulate what you did and who you did it [to].’ (*FTO Interview M002*). D008 said avoiding going to ‘jail or getting sued’ was among the most important tools to control violence with his recruits. (*FTO Interview D008*). Lastly, D007 demonstrated this by disclosing he was ordered to attend a report writing course where he was ‘horrified because training [was primarily] about articulation and covering your ass, not about facts.’ (*FTO Interview D007*). The emphasis on articulation is, it seems, something of a double-edged sword. To the extent that the use of violence is legitimized in part by the application of rules, procedures, and review, teaching recruits to articulate why violence was used is an important skill. But if articulation simply puts a gloss of routine over otherwise uncontrolled violence, it becomes deeply cynical and potentially delegitimizing.

Another observation of note was the willingness of participants to talk about unethical behavior. For instance, D002 recounted an arrest of which he was particularly

proud, where officers would purposefully entice people to buy drugs in school zones to increase penalties. The officer reported that even when suspects were hesitant to buy drugs on school grounds, undercover officers would insist and use the suspect's addiction against them. (*FTO Interview D002*). D007 who offered a self-description as calm and respectful to community members but was later observed being aggressive to citizens. Further, D007 stated, 'I talk to them [citizens] with respect.... [I] calm myself and people down.' But then he contradicted himself: 'I would rather have [citizens] think I could be violent and go home safe—at the end of the day no one wants to die on the job.' This FTO readily admitted he gets 'lots of complaints because he yells and screams at people.' This admission was observed where the participant was very aggressive toward citizens for no evident reason, but he was also witnessed being very kind and gentle with a homeless woman. (*FTO Interview D007*).

Lastly, several FTOs eagerly volunteered how they are ready to hurt or kill at any moment. D009 stated he was 'ready to kill anyone he meets, but constantly reading the situation.' (*FTO Interview D009*). ME05 stated that he 'assume[s] there is a weapon on [everyone].' (*Leader Interview ME05*). Also, as previously reported L007 stated that police should 'shoot more people as deterrence. Message gets out and less people get shot in the long run.' (*FTO Interview L007*). ME03 told me that when he was trained the motto 'if they touch you, they better end up in a hospital' was stressed. (*Leader Interview ME03*). These observations, spoken to an outsider, raise the disturbing prospect that in unobserved interactions, the 'kick-ass' model of policing is even more frankly espoused.

C. CONCLUSION

The promise of the FTO, when the programs first became prevalent in American police departments, was that older, more experienced officers could help to 'professionalize'

young recruits. And all the literature cited here suggests that they are culture-bearers, who help transmit departmental values to the next generation of officers. But the interactions I had with FTOs during these ride-alongs greatly complicate the question of precisely what cultural attitudes are being transmitted. These observations suggest that FTOs are not just ineffective in passing along official policies concerning de-escalation and the need to control police violence. Rather, in many instances FTOs are actually impediments to the transmission of those purported values. They appear to embrace and teach that civilian interactions are dangerous; that violence is glamorous; that military weapons and uniforms are good precisely because they increase the distance between civilians and police and instill fear in the populace; and that nonchalance about the use of violence can even be positive for one's career. These observations suggest that departments need to take a serious look at reforms to FTO programs if they are serious about changing police culture. How departments might approach those reforms is the subject of a coming chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN FTO AND LEADERS' VIEWS ON TRAINING AND POLICING

Being an 'FTO is leadership but [the command staff] don't treat us that way—most of us hate it.' Montgomery Field Training Officer M002

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters focused on how participants understand the FTO position and the part FTOs play in socializing new officers in the application of violence. Here, attention is given to the differences between the FTO and leader participants in regards to some of these issues. Specifically, I investigate whether there are misalignments between FTOs and leaders as it relates to the research questions: 1) How do FTOs and leaders understand the role of the FTO within departments? and 2) How do FTOs and leaders perceive their role in socializing probationary recruits in the application of violence? Relevant literature (and this investigation) strongly suggest that the FTO is a key actor in the socialization of new recruits, while the leaders are charged with establishing department policy for what that socialization should look like (Getty et al., 2014; Roithmayr, 2016). If there are misalignments between the two groups in their understanding of how FTOs should act in their mission of socialization, and what principles and values should guide socialization, there is little chance the FTO position can be successful in socializing values of de-escalation, empathy, and respect. This dynamic can be understood through the lens of social learning theory: recruits observe

and internalize the behavioral norms of their trainers (Bandura, 1977). Where leaders and FTOs differ in their expectations or modeling, recruits are more likely to adopt the informal practices and attitudes reinforced during field training rather than those articulated in policy. This expectation aligns with Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucracy theory, in that front-line officers like FTOs effectively become policy makers on the ground, so their discretionary practices can reshape or override formal leadership intentions. The empirical evidence that follows illustrates how this breakdown unfolds in daily practice. Together, these frameworks provide a multi-level understanding of misalignment: social learning explains transmission of norms at the micro level; street-level bureaucracy captures discretionary translation of policy at the organizational level; and institutional decoupling describes the macro-level divergence between rhetoric and practice.

Training occupies a central role in police professionalization, yet scholars have long observed that the transition from academy to field is characterized by significant discontinuity. As detailed in Chapters 2 and 3, classroom instruction emphasizes procedural knowledge, ethical reasoning, and communication, while field training socializes recruits into pragmatic routines shaped by peer culture and operational pressures (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Conti, 2009). This mismatch, often termed the 'training–practice gap,' limits the transfer of academy learning into everyday behavior. The findings in this chapter demonstrate how that gap persists within FTO programs, revealing the fragility of formal reforms when they collide with the informal logic of occupational culture.

Chapters 4 and 5 examined the FTO role from different angles: first how FTOs and leaders each perceive the FTO position, and then how each group views its own role in instructing recruits on the appropriate use of force. This chapter, by contrast, explicitly

compares these perspectives to pinpoint where they converge and where they sharply diverge. Rather than reiterating earlier findings in isolation, this chapter highlights where frontline trainers' and command staff's views coincide and where they conflict. For example, earlier chapters revealed a persistent cynicism: FTOs recognize their importance but feel unappreciated and not treated as department leaders, whereas leaders insist that FTOs are highly regarded mentors. Mapping these misalignments is crucial: if FTOs and leaders misunderstand each other, there is little chance the training program will instill values like de-escalation and respect. By focusing on these convergences and conflicts, Chapter 6 underscores its distinct importance and lays the groundwork for understanding how to bridge theory and practice.

In Chapter 4, the participants' opinions concerning the role of the FTO were explored. However, except where necessary (*i.e.*, only leaders were asked to define an ideal officer/leader), leader and FTO responses were not segregated. Once those responses are segregated, however, certain material differences emerge. In this chapter, I explore some of the differences in the responses of leaders and FTOs and ways in which FTOs and leaders perceive policing generally and the FTO position differently. Fundamentally, the misalignments focus on questions of prestige, with leaders insisting that the FTO position is a prestigious one and that its holders are department leaders; and FTOs believing they are not treated as such by the department. This difference has important effects within the ecosystem of any police department. Prestige is a critical inducement to the highest-quality officers taking any position. The disdain in which many FTOs hold their jobs bodes ill for prospects of attracting the best officers to fill this key role within a department.

Other key differences emerged around the cluster of issues touching on police militarization, with FTOs far more willing to embrace military-style weapons and tactics

than departmental leaders. These differences point to a subtle but nonetheless significant chasm between department leaders and those charged with hands-on training of new recruits on issues that bear on the effectiveness of FTO programs and the values they are imparting to rookie officers.

As with previous chapters, participants' responses that go beyond the 'top-line' interview questions are presented as a way of gauging the prevailing sentiment of officer participants and are not intended as a quantitative measure to generalize FTO and leader perceptions. In this chapter, I explore demographic differences between elites and FTOs, as well as in their general attitudes toward policing. Then, I delve more specifically into misalignments between how FTOs and elites view the FTO position, with extended attention to the central notion of prestige. Further, there is an extended discussion of the differences in respondents' viewpoints about various issues relating to the socialization of violence, including attitudes toward de-escalation and militarization. Finally, I briefly discuss areas of agreement between respondents in the three cities.

B. MISALIGNMENTS IN PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF THE FTO

The literature on training integration highlights that learning is most durable when recruits can connect classroom theory to lived experience through guided reflection and modeling (Kolb, 1984; Van Maanen, 1975). Police academies rarely provide this bridge: evaluation emphasizes rule retention rather than adaptive judgment, leaving FTOs to translate policy into practice. Where that translation fails, recruits absorb cultural cues that contradict academy instruction. The misalignments documented below show how this failure plays out in the field. Before examining these misalignments, it is important to situate the findings within the broader literature on police training. Scholars have long

emphasized that effective professional socialization depends on integration between academy and field instruction. As discussed in Chapter 2, classroom training typically prioritizes procedural knowledge and rule compliance, while field instruction socializes recruits into the informal norms and practices that govern everyday policing (Conti, 2009; Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2010). Yet, as Chapter 3 outlined, this integration often breaks down in practice, producing the ‘training-practice gap’ that allows occupational culture to override formal curricula. The misalignments analyzed in this chapter illustrate how that gap manifests in the lived experience of FTOs.

In analyzing the differing responses of leaders and FTOs, it is important to note a few basic biographical differences between them, many obviously driven by differences in rank and position. For example, leaders averaged 25 years on the job, while FTOs averaged 13 years. But even on this point, there were distinct differences: Montgomery FTOs had a mere 7 years on the job compared to Los Angeles and Miami Dade, which averaged 20 and 15 years, respectively.

Education level is another differentiator between the two groups (leaders and FTOs). Out of the 18 leaders interviewed, one had a high-school education; two went to college but did not receive a degree; nine completed a bachelor’s degree, and six had a master’s degree. Thus, all but three department leaders had at least a four-year college degree. By contrast, of the 36 FTOs interviewed, four had a high-school education, 13 spent some time in college but did not receive a degree; 17 had a bachelor’s degree; and two had a master’s degree—or just over half had a four-year degree. While this snapshot provides no data from which we can generalize about education levels in policing throughout the United States, it is an intriguing finding in light of the fact that research suggests that officers with more education generally use physical force less often (Rydberg and Terrill, 2010). As noted there, officer education may be an underexamined

‘lever’ in decreasing use of force incidents and in identifying potential FTOs who might be more amenable to values of de-escalation. The facts that (1) FTOs appear to have less education than department leaders across the board and (2) express more skepticism about the value of de-escalation, or a greater willingness to embrace military tactics and weaponry, is certainly consistent with this supposition. This enthusiasm for combat-style equipment is consistent with analyses of police militarization (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997; Stoughton, 2015), suggesting that a paramilitary ethos is deeply ingrained among street-level officers.

Leaders and FTOs were also asked whether they would recommend the profession of policing to (1) ‘others’ (Q I.8); (2) your best friend (Q I.8.a); or (3) your son or daughter (Q I.8.b). The point of these questions was not simply to gauge officers’ satisfaction with the profession, but also in the hope that it would spark useful observations regarding how elites and FTOs understand the public’s view of policing. That is, do these different kinds of officers view policing as a respected profession in which a person—and more importantly, a close friend or child—could have a productive and rewarding career?

There were distinct differences between leaders and FTOs, with FTOs being far more negative about the profession than police leaders. Taken as the weight of respondents, more than twice as many FTOs (39 percent) as leaders (16 percent) would not recommend the profession of policing to ‘others.’ Similar percentages in both groups would not recommend the profession to a best friend. With the third question—Q I.8.b, or whether the respondent would recommend the profession to a child—the responses became intensely negative, with a strong majority of FTOs saying they would attempt to dissuade a child from joining the police, and a large plurality of leaders saying the same. The clear message I received was that, deep down, many or even most of my respondents

did not like the profession of policing, or at least had serious regrets about their choice to enter the field.

Some leaders sounded this theme, such as ME03, who stated that she would not recommend becoming a cop because ‘killing [a] cop is nothing now. Police are nobody. [The public] does not see cops as here to protect and serve them and be good, they see police as the enemy.’ (*Leader Interview ME03*). But my interviews suggest that this ‘war on cops’ theme—which gets at the tension between police and the community they serve, and which in turn appears to drive the ‘kick-ass’ model of policing that many FTOs continue to socialize recruits in—is largely a ‘bottom-up’ phenomenon. In my interviews, a strong majority of FTOs mentioned a perceived ‘war on cops,’ in many cases tying it to their reasons for not recommending the profession to others. This theme also obviously connects to what I have earlier described as the ‘danger imperative’—the pervasive sense among some officers that the streets they patrol are a battle space and enemies lurk around every corner, requiring near-constant vigilance and an emphasis on civilian control in order to ‘make it home alive.’ Of course, some of the disparity in these responses between FTOs and leaders likely arises from the fact that leaders in general were more guarded and more circumspect in their responses. It also likely is partly explained by leaders having different kinds of interactions with the public, where they rarely are involved in arrests and day-to-day police operations.

But the disparity between leaders and FTOs on this cluster of themes also suggests that there is a real misalignment between leaders and FTOs in how those two groups think they are perceived by the public. FTOs, far more than leaders, believe police to be pinned down (literally and figuratively) by public disdain and even anger, and are inclined to react aggressively to perceived threats from the public. If that is the case, and this research strongly suggests that it is, any leader-driven effort to emphasize

de-escalation and other responses that avoid violence is very likely to fail. That is, leaders who seek to inculcate these values have placed the education and socialization of the next generation of officers into the hands of a group of trainers who appear to be fundamentally hostile to those values and beset by a sense that police are under fire from the public. It is hard to see how any such effort to break the ‘kick-ass’ model of policing through FTO training programs can, in these circumstances, be successful. Although many leaders aim to move beyond the old warrior model, in practice FTOs continue to instill it. This dynamic reflects a more general pattern identified in the training literature: the limited transfer of classroom learning to field contexts. Even when recruits receive explicit instruction on communication, ethics, or bias awareness, those lessons are often overshadowed by the experiential modeling of their FTOs, who define what ‘real’ policing looks like in practice (Stoughton, 2014; Chappell, 2008).

Another misalignment centered on whether the FTO position is prestigious, in response to Question III.5. Again, there were distinctions between FTO and leader responses, though somewhat less stark than the questions above.⁵³ Half of the leader respondents stated that the FTO position is prestigious, but only seven FTOs agreed. While the divergence on its face does not appear overly significant, the follow-up responses provided more texture. Notably, leaders almost universally responded with a simple (and sometimes curt) ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ My observation is that the question made many of the leaders uncomfortable, and they were less candid as a result. Even when pressed, with a few exceptions, the answers from the leaders were not more than a few words. Almost all the meaningful responses were from FTOs themselves. These responses suggested a widespread cynicism about their role among these officers. One

⁵³ I did not record how many of the leaders I interviewed were once FTOs. This was a mistake and one that I would remedy in future studies.

noteworthy exception came from leader ME05: some ‘hold [FTOs] as prestigious. The [FTOs] doing it for the right reason will tell you that they enjoy it and aspire to do it.’ (*Leader Interview ME05*). However, ME05 also admitted that the department simply ‘needed more [FTOs] because they had more trainees.’ (*Leader Interview ME05*). To fill this FTO gulf, leadership forced ‘senior officers from their [preferred shifts] to be FTOs and they did not like it, it’s prestigious to be on investigative [units] because hours are better.’ (*Leader Interview ME05*).

The question of the FTO position’s prestige was explored further with FTOs themselves through questions about perceived leadership attitudes. When asked if FTOs are considered leaders by the department and if they were treated as leaders by the department, a significant number of leaders were ‘double-yeses’—that is, they both thought FTOs were leaders and said FTOs were treated as leaders by the department. This was in stark contrast to FTOs themselves, who overall indicated that they were not *treated* as leaders, despite 75 percent stating that they *considered themselves* leaders in the department.

This stark disconnect between elites and FTOs almost certainly explains some of the discontent in the FTO ranks that I observed. Responses included blunt assessments such as: ‘Not treated like leaders—not treated with respect—just look at the dumb \$500 bonus we get, it’s disrespectful.’ (*FTO Interview M008*). The reference is to the \$500 annual stipend Montgomery officers receive for serving as an FTO, which is far below the industry standard. Another participant, referring to how leaders treat rank-and-file FTOs, stated that being an ‘FTO is leadership but [the command staff] don’t treat us that way—most of us hate it.’ (*FTO Interview M002*). In Los Angeles, an FTO echoed this sentiment, stating that FTOs ‘should be [leaders] but no, ... everyone knows FTOs are important but they are not treated that way.’ (*FTO Interview L003*). Finally, FTO M009

suggested something more ominous: ‘being [a] good FTO[] traps you in the program. They’re valued, but only valued when it comes to churning out new trained officers.’ (*FTO Interview M009*). This FTO was concerned that doing a good job as an FTO could actually hinder career advancement, because FTOs are too valuable in their current positions to move up the chain of command. Given the earlier noted fact that prestige, in respondents’ view, is highly correlated with attention from leadership and access to resources, any perception that being an FTO is a career dead end is almost certain to help steer the most promising young officers *away* from, rather than *toward*, this position. This disconnect fits Lipsky’s (1980) observation that street-level bureaucrats (like FTOs) often develop their own norms that diverge from administrative intent. In Weberian terms, FTOs may hold formal authority but lack the ‘legitimacy’ of resources or respect (Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993). Viewed through the lens of professional-learning research, the broader mentoring literature helps explain why these divisions persist. These patterns point to structural rather than merely attitudinal causes of misalignment. As noted in the wider organizational literature, mentoring systems tend to mirror the incentive structures of the host institution (Wenger, 1998; Eraut, 2004). When mentorship is framed as ancillary labor rather than core professional work, mentors lose status and influence, producing exactly the cynicism and disengagement observed here. In policing, this dynamic is reinforced by paramilitary hierarchies that privilege enforcement activity over education (Loftus, 2009; Chan, 1996). Further, this reflects Paoline’s (2003) idea of overlapping police subcultures: here, informal norms of a paramilitary subculture (emphasizing enforcement) override the formal professional hierarchy. FTOs effectively operate as street-level educators within that subculture.

This same disconnect was seen in responses to a question that asked participants whether being an FTO helps an officer’s career (Q III.5.a). A large majority of

department leaders indicated that being an FTO did help with an officers' rank progression. Yet, FTOs were basically split on the question. The difference in the sentiment can be illustrated by comparing two responses. First, one leader said that being an FTO helps with career advancement because:

FTOs capitalize on opportunities. Good FTOs are always on-top of the policies and procedures which is a major part of your promotional examination. By rearing another officer, you are preparing yourself for later promotion. (*Leader Interview DE06*).

But that is contrasted with an FTO's response that the position is 'overlooked and underappreciated, my reward is seeing my rookies make it in their career and become good cops and don't get arrested.' (*FTO Interview D001*). This misalignment suggests, at the very least a lack of communication concerning what experience leadership values for promotions and at worst a disregard for the FTO position, which almost universally was claimed to be a critical role within each of the three departments.

The disparity in sentiment between this FTO and leader is not uncommon in the analyzed interview responses. The frustration of FTOs is perhaps best described as feelings of discontent—even despair—in being trapped in a job that is 'needed' but not 'appreciated.' Consider the common response from FTOs:

It should add weight [to promotion decisions] but it does not help promote your career. A lot of people want to get into [an] investigation unit but they need FTOs on the road, so it's a catch-22. (*FTO Interview D004*).

Another Miami-Dade FTO is even clearer when answering the same question: 'no—it hurts [our career] because they need us and make us stay.' (*FTO Interview D003*).

The responses to the questions discussed above highlight clear misalignments between leaders and FTOs, apparent right from the face of the responses. In response to other questions, however, there was initial apparent unanimity that was undermined—or at least complicated—by the follow-up responses. For example, participants were asked 'do you currently have bad FTOs.' (Q III.5.c). It was clarified that the question was

asking whether these officers were bad at the role of FTO, not simply bad officers in general. The response was almost unanimous: all but one respondent agreed there were bad FTOs currently in those roles (the lone dissenter was a leader from Montgomery). However, the follow up question—is it easy to fire an FTO who is not up to standard? (Q III.5.c)—revealed a substantial difference of perception between leaders and FTOs. Leaders were evenly split on this question. But a supermajority of FTOs agreed both that their department currently had substandard FTOs training new recruits, and that it was difficult to remove these poor performers. The response appears to connect to the consistent theme of ‘warm bodies’—the perception that leaders filled the FTO position with any officer at hand.

As mentioned earlier, various ‘proxy’ questions were developed in an attempt to flesh out participant opinions while reducing the self-filtering that is inevitable when more direct questions were asked by an outsider. Some proxies proved to have little explanatory power; but others were highly effective in generating responses that unveiled attitudes that might otherwise have remained hidden or muted. Once such proxy was to ask leaders and FTOs about their participation in implicit bias training (Q II.7). The goal was to elicit opinions on how they felt about the training and by proxy their departments’ strategy of reducing police violence. It is important to note that it was independently confirmed that each of the three departments have implicit bias training that is mandatory for all officers. Leaders overwhelmingly reported they had received implicit bias training. But less than half of FTOs responded the same. Even more surprisingly, about two-thirds of the FTOs who said they had not received implicit bias training reported that they had never even heard about it. Taken together, these inconsistent and guarded responses point to a deeper tension surrounding implicit bias initiatives themselves. Officers’ ambivalence about the training—some denying it occurred, others dismissing it

as superficial—illustrates how formal reform measures can collide with entrenched occupational beliefs. This provides an entry point into the broader question of what such training signifies within police culture, and whether it meaningfully alters practice.

These patterns raise a broader question about what implicit bias training actually accomplishes within the occupational culture of policing. Indeed, several officers denied having completed implicit bias training despite documentation confirming their participation. This denial likely reflects a combination of factors rather than simple inaccuracy. First, many participants appeared to view such courses as bureaucratic compliance exercises rather than meaningful learning experiences. This perception aligns with the broader devaluation of training within police culture identified in prior chapters, where ‘training’ is rhetorically prized yet practically marginalized. In this case, officers may have dissociated from the training because they did not view it as relevant to the occupational skills or moral frameworks that define good policing within their peer culture. This reflects a weak ‘transfer climate,’ in which the lack of reinforcement mechanisms prevents classroom concepts from being sustained in operational settings (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). Without supervisory modeling and feedback, even well-designed instruction decays rapidly once officers return to the field. As Worden et al., (2024) found in a large multi-agency evaluation, implicit bias training produced negligible changes in enforcement disparities or officer decision making. Similarly, Lai and Lisnek (2023) demonstrated that although such programs can momentarily influence officers’ awareness of bias, the effects on underlying attitudes and behaviors fade quickly. These findings suggest that the persistence of police violence and differential treatment is not primarily a function of individual bias that can be ‘trained away,’ but of institutional norms and reward structures that sustain those patterns.

For FTOs in particular, this disconnect has important implications for the reduction of police violence. If field trainers themselves regard implicit bias instruction as perfunctory or irrelevant, they are unlikely to model the behavioral restraint and situational awareness such programs are meant to instill. Instead, recruits internalize the implicit lesson that reform initiatives are symbolic rather than substantive, a view that helps explain the endurance of aggressive policing styles despite formal training interventions.

Although these findings derive from U.S. agencies, comparable tensions appear internationally. Studies of U.K. and Australian policing describe the same gap between policy-level reform discourse and on-the-ground training culture (Loftus, 2010; Chan et al., 2003; Fielding, 1988). In each case, formal training espouses community-oriented or ethical policing ideals while field supervision reproduces traditional craft norms. This suggests that the problem is not uniquely American, but rather characteristic of professions that rely on apprenticeship-style learning under conditions of organizational hierarchy and risk. This comparative evidence suggests that misalignments between field mentors and organizational leadership are endemic to hierarchical professions where formal reform rhetoric outpaces changes in everyday practice.

Further muddying the data is how responses were given. Specifically, many of the FTOs who responded ‘yes’ gave peculiar or very short answers on a follow-up question that asked ‘what they thought of the training’ (Q II.7.a). Indeed, a Montgomery FTO, who responded ‘yes’ about receiving the training appeared palpably nervous while answering and gave the impression she was not being honest. (*During FTO Interview M003*). This observation and analysis were supported when FTO M003 was next asked what she thought of the training and responded, ‘Well, everyone knows not to be biased’ and disengaged from the conversation by making a radio call. (*FTO Interview M003*).

FTO L005 responded to the same question by stating, ‘Honestly, it was kind of a waste of time.’ (*FTO Interview L005*). Yet in response to the very next question—‘What type of training programs do you think should be continued through an officers’ career after the academy’—L005 responded that ‘implicit bias was good—even though it pissed people off,’ then immediately pivoted to ‘firearm training should be better, ensuring you hit what you shoot at.’ (*FTO Interview L005*). Why implicit bias training ‘pissed people off’ was unexplained, and I could not get the officer to unpack the response, which the officer appeared to believe was some kind of gaffe. These contradictory responses make it difficult to compose a theory regarding the used proxy. However, what can be determined is that the training was likely not as common as presented by department leadership, or simply so cursory that half of the participants forgot about it. Clearly, implicit bias training is a sensitive topic where officers of all ranks may be self-censoring their true feelings about the programs. These contradictions illuminate how police culture shapes the reception of reform initiatives, especially those that challenge ingrained ideas about professionalism and control.

These findings highlight a broader contradiction at the heart of modern policing. The profession routinely invokes training as the preferred solution to nearly every operational or ethical failure, from use-of-force incidents to community relations, yet in practice training itself is often marginalized. Officers and leaders alike described FTO programs as critical to reform, but the programs are simultaneously de-valued and under-resourced, and FTO positions allocated to what participants called ‘warm bodies.’ This reflects the paradox of an institution that views professional competence as essential while subordinating the labor that produces it. As Manning (2003) observed, the work of policing is fundamentally contradictory: it combines service and coercion, care and control, bureaucratic procedure and discretionary power.

Training embodies these tensions. It is celebrated rhetorically as a mechanism of professionalism yet operationalized as a bureaucratic obligation rather than a substantive pedagogical practice (Loftus, 2009). The low prestige attached to FTO work mirrors the wider organizational ambivalence toward reflective learning. In effect, departments valorize ‘training’ in discourse while neglecting to invest in the quality, content, or evaluative mechanisms that would make it transformative. This illustrates Meyer and Rowan’s (1977) institutional decoupling: police agencies adopt training reforms as symbolic gestures, but those reforms remain unreinforced in everyday practice. FTOs thus learn that formal programs are compliance exercises rather than meaningful instruction.

C. MISALIGNMENTS IN HOW PARTICIPANTS VIEW THEIR ROLE IN SOCIALIZING PROBATIONARY RECRUITS

The heart, the entire purpose, of FTO programs is to train new officers in the byways of policing and inculcate the values that departments prize in their next generation of officers. If leaders and FTOs are not on the same page about the importance of FTO programs, or what those hoped-for values are, these programs are bound to become sources of confusion and misalignment in police departments. This research suggests that such confusion abounds, especially around key areas such as perceptions of prestige, the danger imperative, attitudes toward militarization, and the centrality of de-escalation in training new recruits. This difference echoes the ‘warrior vs guardian’ dichotomy in policing literature (Stoughton, 2015; Paoline, 2003). Leaders espouse a community-oriented ‘guardian’ model, whereas many FTOs default to a ‘warrior’ mentality that downplays de-escalation.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, understanding what jobs participants considered the most prestigious is vital in understanding how they view the goals and purposes of policing. Out of the 43 times high-intensity jobs (such as SWAT or bomb squad) were mentioned as being the most prestigious, only five mentions came from leader officers, with the remaining 38 coming from FTOs. Consistent with earlier findings in Chapter 5 chapter, if SWAT or other special units are considered the most prestigious to FTOs, one could easily see how they would promote those roles to the young impressionable recruits they are training, and the cycle continues to the next generation of police officers.

The parallel theme of officer safety has similar misalignments to the above considerations of prestige. Attitudes toward officer safety are almost certainly impacted by the ‘danger imperative’ or ‘getting home safe’ themes, which refers to the pervasive sense that police are in constant peril from civilians. This theme was overwhelmingly triggered by the responses of FTOs as opposed to leaders. Similarly, ‘violence is fun’—an unexpected theme that arose from several responses and other more informal interactions with officers—was unanimously triggered by FTOs. The latter point is perhaps unsurprising: by the time an officer becomes a department leader, they have certainly learned the discretion necessary to not espouse or glorify physical violence. What is surprising, again, is how common the theme was triggered by FTO officers who themselves are generally more experienced and several years removed from the academy. This suggests that FTOs are immersed in a subculture that valorizes aggression (Reiner, 2010; Paoline, 2003). By the time officers reach leadership, they have learned restraint; the younger FTOs still reflect an older, machismo-infused ethos. This pervasive ‘danger imperative’ recalls early ethnographic findings that officers habitually see the streets as hostile (Westley, 1953; Muir, 1977; Moskos, 2009; Sierra-Arévalo, 2024). It

also aligns with work on police militaristic values (Paoline, 2003), explaining the FTOs' emphasis on safety and force (Gilmartin, 1986).

One significant misalignment between leaders and FTOs was in the area of militarization. To reiterate, questions surrounding militarization served as a proxy to understand attitudes concerning violence without self-filtering. Interestingly, on most issues dealing with militarization, both FTOs and department leaders were largely aligned, in that they largely supported increased militarization of policing (a confluence that raises real concerns about the chances of success in breaking older, 'kick-ass' models of policing). But there was a real and telling difference between FTOs and leaders on the questions pertaining to the kinds of weapons or equipment officers thought were *inappropriate* for routine patrol—meaning, that patrol officers should *not* be equipped with (Q IV.2.b-c).

Here, leaders took a more moderate tone than FTOs, though the differences were often more in the nature of degree than of kind. Leaders drew the line at automatic weapons: ME01 listed 'fully automatic weapon' as a no-go, while DE05 stated 'nothing, beyond fully automatic weapons.' (*Leader Interviews ME01 and DE05*). LE01 said 'bombs' and LE03 responded with 'fighter jets,' although I did get the impression she was joking. (*Leader Interviews LE01 and LE03*).

But FTOs drew the line much, much farther along the military grade weapon spectrum. FTO L003 and L005 both affirmatively stated they believed police should be permitted to use MRAPs (mine-resistant ambush protection, a vehicle used extensively in Iraq by the U.S. Army to prevent road-side bomb injuries). (*FTO Interviews L003 and L005*). In Miami, D004 said 'anti-air missiles,' and D006 thought 'anti-tank missiles' was a bridge too far for routine police equipment. (*FTO Interviews D004 and D006*). D005 answered that bazookas were inappropriate for police work—but M010 thought

differently, stating ‘if I could have a bazooka I would.’ (*FTO Interviews D004 and D006*). From this admittedly small sample, it appears that FTOs (and presumably, the rookie line officers they are training) would welcome police access to highly militaristic weaponry and equipment. It certainly has troubling implications for efforts to control violence through FTO socialization if these officers are drawn to, and want access to, highly violent weapons of war.

Likewise, misalignment was also seen in the leader versus FTO response to Q III.4: Do you have an issue with officers wearing military looking uniforms/equipment visibly seen when on routine patrol or performing a routine mission? Here, a solid majority of leaders had an issue with officers wearing battle dress-type uniforms, while a mere three FTOs said the same. LE04 stated that she is ‘all about the sharp appearance of police uniform.... [I]f you are working patrol, you should be in a police uniform.’ (*Leader Interview LE04*). DE02 prefers the ‘officer friendly days.’ (*Leader Interview DE02*). DE06 echoed this, stating ‘cops should look like cops.’ (*Leader Interview DE06*). In essence, a solid plurality of leaders appears to take a more traditional approach to police uniforms that sharply distinguish between police and the military, while FTOs overwhelmingly preferred wearing uniforms that blurred that line.

Finally, and perhaps most directly related to the purpose of this inquiry, is the divergence between leaders and FTOs in the content of training provided by FTOs to rookie police. Despite some contradictions in their actual practice (such as the kinds of backgrounds they prioritize when making promotion decisions) or their attitudes (such as those around militarization), police leaders at least rhetorically emphasized the importance of de-escalation in FTO training, with about two-thirds of leaders focusing on that topic as a critical part of the socialization FTOs provide. But less than one-third of the FTOs I interviewed said the same.

Some examples from leaders: LE05, when answering Q II.5: What do you consider the most important training tools to control violence?, stated in part ‘de-escalation and having a plan. You should take time to assess your resources and think about possible de-escalation techniques.’ (*Leader Interview LE05*). LE02 agreed, stating that de-escalation should be part of an officer’s ongoing education throughout their careers. (*Leader Interview LE02*). DE01 said de-escalation is a ‘top priority’ for training recruits so they can prevent violence. (*Leader Interview DE01*).

FTOs, when they did talk about the benefits of de-escalation, had facially similar responses, but there was often a dismissive quality in the way they spoke of de-escalation. This impression is mostly observational. For example, D006 stated that de-escalation was among the most important tools to avoid violence—but when she said this, she let go of the steering wheel and made air quotes with her fingers to signal that her response was simply formulaic. (*FTO Interview D006*). Other FTOs would say de-escalation is important but there was a rote quality to their response, often exhibited by explaining responses to other questions, but only saying ‘de-escalation’ in response to this one, and moving on. One example of this came from M010, who when asked to name the three most important training tools to control violence listed: 1) communication, 2) firearms confidence, and 3) de-escalation. (*FTO Interview M010*). However, as to communication and firearms confidence she gave details on why those skills were critical but offered no details about the third. (*FTO Interview M010*).

She was not alone in this type of response. Other FTOs would mention de-escalation as being critical training, but then immediately discounted the training tool. M004 said the department’s focus was on ‘de-escalation but not a lot of training on how to apply it.’ (*FTO Interview M004*). M003 echoed this opinion stating that ‘de-escalation’ was important training but the department ‘did not really practice it—just

talked about it—did not really learn how to apply it.’ (*FTO Interview M003*). M005’s response had a different tone: She too mentioned that de-escalation was among the top three most important tools to teach new recruits to avoid violence, but added that ‘in society everyone is watching you and you also have to make it back to your family’—suggesting both that she really believed de-escalation was a tool to avoid being killed *and* being caught on camera doing something wrong. (*FTO Interview M005*).

Finally, a response from L001 needs to be explored in depth. The night before our interview, L001 had encountered an individual who stabbed someone and still had the weapon on his person. The officer explained that she spent 20 minutes talking this suspect down and mentioned she could have used deadly force but decided against it. (*FTO Interview L001*). It was observed that she appeared to think 20 minutes was a significant amount of time to work on de-escalating the situation. At first glance, this seems like textbook de-escalation, until hours later during the interview it was revealed that the ‘weapon’ involved was a normal writing pen, not a knife. It was observed that the officer took considerable pride for not shooting someone armed with a pen and believed she had shown heroic restraint. The story highlights something that was observed throughout this investigation. When an officer forbears to use physical force on someone during routine police work it is seen as something unusual, a departure from standard practice, which obviously suggests that for many officers, physical force is the default. This would be consistent with some of the other findings and themes surfaced by this investigation.

The last misalignment recorded between leaders and FTOs involved the concept of ‘articulation.’ As discussed in Chapter 5, articulation was not originally coded as a separate theme, but it was an observation that surfaced repeatedly throughout the interviews and during data analysis. Essentially, this refers to how officers document

police actions to avoid disciplinary actions, ensure arrests can be prosecuted, avoid civil lawsuits, and, in the case of FTOs, train their recruits to the same. Indeed, when I was a young police officer in training, my FTO made this point to me explicitly: ‘It’s not what you see, it’s what you can articulate.’ Admittedly, I did not realize the harmful impact of this training until years later. Examples of this are laid out above in section B of Chapter 5, but what is noteworthy for this section is *all* of the participants who endorsed the concept of using and teaching their trainees the ‘art’ of articulation were FTOs, none were leaders. This focus on paperwork over judgement echoes Muir’s (1977) ‘noble cause’ dilemma: officers learn to justify force ex post, often preferring legal protection (‘cover your ass’) to reflecting on ethical restraint.

D. HOW WERE THE CITIES THE SAME?

Rather surprisingly given the diversity of the cities investigated, and the incredible diversity of American policing in general, there were very few significant differences among responses from officers in the three cities, as opposed to between the two classes of officers interviewed. This was not the anticipated finding.

To be sure, some differences emerged that clearly reflect local circumstances. For example, when interviewees were asked about what departments were looking for in ideal officers, the majority of responses (half of the total responses) that indicated departments were looking for ‘warm bodies’ came from Montgomery, a department where recruiting has suffered in recent years from lagging pay (WSFA, 2024).

Another significant variance between cities was in participant’s view on the prestige of the FTO position. Specifically, in both Montgomery and Miami-Dade, interviewees were split on the notion that holding the FTO position was positive for career advancement. Los Angeles, however, overwhelmingly thought it helped with

promotions. Montgomery, however, had the most extreme comments when asked if being an FTO was prestigious. When asked ‘what is prestigious?’ in the department, FTO M003 laughed and replied that almost anything was more prestigious than FTO except entry-level patrol work. (*FTO Interview M003*). FTO M004 said ‘no one wants to be [an FTO] so we have to keep the dirt bags’—as in, there were currently ‘dirt bags’ training new recruits as FTOs. (*FTO Interview M004*). A third Montgomery FTO responded that the ‘department does not see them as prestigious. Constant training for rookies. It’s like baby-sitting someone, so no.’ (*FTO Interview M010*).

Possibly reflecting the political and cultural conservatism of the region, and especially the ‘honor’ culture more prevalent in the South than in other American locales, Montgomery also led the way on triggering the theme of ‘respect the badge’ and comments relating to the community being ‘at war’ with the department. Montgomery also has a majority of officers who denied ever having taken implicit bias training (despite being verified that every officer receives such training). Overall, it should be noted it was observed that Montgomery also had most of the comments showing discontent for the profession of policing.

Then, the theme of ‘getting home at all costs,’ often referred to as officer safety, was disproportionately triggered in Miami-Dade and Montgomery, but only rarely in Los Angeles. (It was in Miami-Dade, for example, that FTO D012 said her focus was on ensuring she has a ‘good shot group,’ meaning she was accurate with her duty weapon. (*FTO Interview D012*.) But seemingly at odds with this focus on officer safety and preparedness, ‘de-escalation’ of civilian-police encounters was reported as the focus of training by a significant percentage of Montgomery officers, as opposed to interviewees from Los Angeles and Miami-Dade. This was an unexpected finding; but it was reported

to this investigator that de-escalation was recently introduced to Montgomery officers. The recency of that training may account for this.

The sub-theme of ‘articulation,’ as described above, was dominated by Montgomery officers. For example, FTO M003 stated officers needed to learn ‘how to articulate to get out of trouble.’ (*FTO Interview M003*). FTO M004 mentioned that an emphasis of training new recruits is on articulation; specifically, ‘the question is am I *allowed* to shoot [rather than] *should* I shoot.’ (*FTO Interview M004*). She followed this by describing a situation where she could have shot someone legally and resisted and was *not* praised for saving a life.

But despite these differences, the strong overall impression is one of sameness, especially in the most striking findings in this investigation. Of note on this topic was how SWAT, or some variation of it, was mentioned as the most prestigious position equally across the selected cities. The theme ‘violence is fun’ was also equally triggered across the departments. These findings suggest that despite regional and local variations, there is a uniform substratum among police departments in America—one that draws inspiration from the older ‘kick-ass’ model of policing in America, the one that has become so politically and culturally problematic of late. This uniformity is consistent with Paoline’s (2003) conclusion that police subculture has strong common elements nationwide, particularly the older paramilitary kick-ass model that transcends local context.

How do the areas of misalignment I have identified—attitudes about militarization, the danger imperative, and the content of training sessions—relate to the research questions presented here? Fundamentally, many of these issues bear on police relationships to their fellow citizens. What I have called throughout the ‘kick-ass’ model of policing is rooted in a pervasive suspicion of civilians as dangerous, potentially out of

control, and requiring overt shows of force to compel submission. A strong ‘us versus them’ mentality runs throughout these attitudes and seems to be perpetuated in the training provided by FTOs to new officers. By contrast, police leaders—at least to some degree; the variance is not universal or consistent—seem to want their training programs (and their departments’ cultures) to embrace a greater openness to and rapport with the community. Typically, this is expressed as the difference between ‘warrior’ and ‘guardian’ mentalities. These typologies may be too broad to be fully explanatory. But whatever typologies we adopt to explain this difference, there appears to be a real disconnect between leaders who prize openness, transparency, and harmonious police-civilian relations; and a rank-and-file attitude reflected (and perpetuated) by FTOs who value guardedness, preparation for conflict, and even suspicion.

While this might seem a somewhat sobering finding, it also opens up a note of hope. A national problem might be amenable to national solutions; that is, wholesale reforms to FTO training programs that can be implemented in gross (though with reasonable adaptation to local custom, practice, and needs). Suggestions for such changes are described in the coming chapter.

E. CONCLUSION

Repeatedly in this investigation, I have come back to the central importance of prestige as a driver of police departments’ culture. It is evident that in the departments I studied, specialized and hands-on units that are more likely to engage in aggressive, combat-like policing such as SWAT and the bomb squad are considered prestigious, attracting attention and resources from leaders and departments. This observation reflects research suggesting that the ranks of police leaders are drawn disproportionately from officers who formerly worked in these units.

By contrast, FTOs themselves displayed an open cynicism about the prestige of their role—despite also repeatedly affirming the importance of what they do in terms of training a new generation of officers. That is, and contrary to departmental leadership, they do not believe this role provides them a heightened stature within the department or facilitates their climb up the personnel ladder. They also believe that the job’s low prestige means that it is too often filled with poorly trained and performing officers—an insight I saw played out in real time on several of my ride-alongs.

This tension between perceived prestige and institutional neglect reveals something larger about the symbolic versus substantive nature of police reform. Departments celebrate ‘training’ rhetorically, but in practice they often treat it as a procedural requirement rather than a professional investment. This pattern underscores a deeper problem in how police agencies conceptualize learning and reform. Training programs such as implicit bias instruction are frequently implemented as visible signals of progress but remain disconnected from the everyday mentorship and modeling that actually shape behavior. FTOs sit at the intersection of these competing logics: formal reform and informal reproduction. Unless training is integrated into the lived realities of police work and reinforced by credible mentors, its effects will remain superficial. The general training literature underscores this same principle: learning that occurs in isolation from the operational environment tends to erode quickly (Kolb, 1984; Van Maanen, 1975). In policing, the result is that classroom instruction, no matter how progressive, cannot meaningfully reform practice unless the field component embodies and reinforces those values. This is consistent with adult-learning and experiential-education frameworks, which stress that knowledge becomes durable only when learners can test and reflect on it in authentic contexts (Kolb, 1984). In policing, the lack of

structured feedback loops between academies and field units prevents such reflection, ensuring that informal culture, not formal curriculum, remains the dominant teacher.

The misalignments documented here reflect a deeper conflict between bureaucratic control and occupational autonomy: a tension common to all mentorship-based professions (Eraut, 2004; Billett, 2011). In policing, the effect is magnified by cultural narratives of danger and authority that shape what counts as legitimate knowledge. Until departments reconcile these competing logics, FTO programs will continue to reproduce, rather than reform, prevailing occupational values. As Lipsky (1980) noted, such a split is intrinsic to street-level work: front-line officers must constantly negotiate between organizational rules and the exigencies of policing. My findings show this tension playing out, with FTO programs caught between formal reform goals and the entrenched values of officers. Here, we see a real divide between department leaders and FTOs, one that points to a serious dysfunction in the way FTO programs are designed and implemented. These contradictions are not peripheral; they lie at the core of the misalignments identified in this chapter. Until departments reconcile the tension between their rhetorical dependence on training and their practical devaluation of it, FTO programs will continue to reproduce rather than resolve the cultural problems they are meant to cure.

In short, while the specific cultural idioms of danger and prestige may be distinct to U.S. policing, the structural roots of these misalignments—weak integration of learning systems, status differentials, and organizational inertia—are globally recognizable in mentoring-based professional training. It is clear that department leaders have not adequately conveyed to the rank and file the importance of this role and supported their lip service about its central importance with what could be called the ‘hard currency’ of resources, promotions, and departmental attention. Ideas for bolstering

the prestige of the FTO position constitute a major component of the policy recommendations made at the conclusion of this investigation.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

'The FTOs are the gatekeepers. It is crazy that [rookies get off] probation because they have bad FTOs [who are not paying attention].' Los Angeles Field Training Officer 03

This investigation began with a hypothetical question: What lessons might rookie officers have taken from the murder of George Floyd had it not been captured on camera? A definitive answer remains beyond reach. But this study brings us closer to understanding the institutional dynamics at play. Existing research on Field Training Officer programs identifies FTOs as key transmitters of organizational culture—individuals who shape the professional identities of new recruits by imparting departmental norms, values, and practices. However, the literature also warns that this influence is not inherently positive. FTOs are as equally capable of perpetuating adversarial, aggressive, or coercive behaviors as they are of modeling empathy, restraint, and community-oriented service. This dual capacity positions them as both stewards of reform and potential conduits of institutionalized violence.

The findings and arguments presented in this study strongly support this concern. When traditional, authoritarian models of policing remain embedded within an organization, its FTO program often becomes the mechanism through which these outdated norms are perpetuated—subtly, yet persistently—by socializing each new cohort of officers into those same practices. In effect, the FTO structure can operate like a Trojan virus, reinforcing militarized mindsets and a predisposition toward preemptive force, regardless of formal policies emphasizing de-escalation and community-focused

policing. Notably, the data suggest that some department leaders may lack a full understanding of how their FTO programs function in practice, inadvertently allowing them to sustain policing behaviors that conflict with stated organizational goals and community-oriented agendas.

Further, police leaders seeking to transform organizational culture must prioritize Field Training Officer programs as central vehicles for institutional change. When adequately funded, carefully structured, and intentionally aligned with reform objectives, FTO programs hold significant potential to shape the values and practices of new officers in ways that support accountability, restraint, and public service. This is particularly critical in addressing the enduring challenge of how police violence is socialized and normalized, a challenge that poses a fundamental threat to the legitimacy of policing in the United States. Conversely, when these programs are neglected, allowed to operate without oversight, or treated as secondary to high-profile units like SWAT and other specialized divisions, they risk becoming entrenched sources of resistance to reform, perpetuating the very cultural dynamics that leaders may be attempting to change. This notion aligns with Weber's (1919) concept of professional legitimacy: authority should rest on specialized expertise and moral restraint. Elevating the FTO role as a professional identity reinforces democratic legitimacy by rewarding measured, accountable use of force rather than aggression.

Field Training Officer programs do not possess inherent normative content; their significance and impact are shaped entirely by the individuals who implement and participate in them. In other words, the value and direction of an FTO program depend on how departmental leadership chooses to structure, prioritize, and utilize these programs. Absent this intentional engagement from leadership, the program remains a formal framework without substance, merely a set of policies and practices, rather than a

meaningful vehicle for professional development or cultural change. But the job of making FTO programs meaningful agents of reform lies not just with leadership, but also with FTOs themselves. In that regard, recall FTO D001's remark that one measure of success is whether her trainees avoid being 'arrested' later in their careers. Her emphasis on such a distant, long-term outcome—one she is unlikely to observe firsthand, or maybe even be around to witness—underscores a sense of detachment from the immediate purpose and potential impact of her role. This perspective is significant not only because it reflects a lack of investment in the present responsibilities of field training, but also because it suggests a limited conception of both the profession and her contribution to shaping it. Rather than viewing the FTO position as a critical opportunity to instill professional values and competencies, her comment implies a narrow, even cynical, understanding of what success in the role entails.

A. SITUATING THIS INVESTIGATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Grounding this study is a recognition that policing in a democratic society is a fraught exercise. The scope and role of police in a democratic republic that consciously maximizes and prizes personal autonomy and especially bodily integrity is not self-evident. Just like (at least in theory) every grant of political power, the authority Americans grant police over their lives and property can be withdrawn. As discussed above in the chapter on the philosophical grounding for this study, to maintain its legitimacy, police authority must be exercised with restraint and due concern for popular sentiment. Above all, police power must be exercised fairly and not in an arbitrary or unprincipled manner.

When police violence is or appears to be meted out arbitrarily or without adequate justification, a significant portion of the American public withdraws from

cooperation with police, which both increases the likelihood of disorder but also makes police ineffective in carrying out their basic functions. Further, in American culture, the pull of the nation's peculiar racial history is also strong. The historical reality that the exercise of police power is inflected with racial and (to a lesser extent) class overtones has implications that persist to this day, especially in the disproportionate exercise of force on racial and ethnic minorities. Navigating this reality is a central part of the challenge of maintaining the legitimacy of policing in a democratic republic.

In giving police the authority to apply violence, the people of a democratic republic thus make a significant concession of personal autonomy to the public good. That power inherent in that concession needs to be constrained by policies that emphasize the fraught nature of the application of police violence and direct its use to the common good, instead of simply becoming an arbitrary or racist application of power. Field training programs are one of the central formal means by which departments attempt to channel violence to acceptable ends. They were designed specifically to address the looming phenomena of police 'culture,' the whole set of norms, values, practices, and assumptions by which a department understands itself and attempts to train new recruits.

Addressing the issue of police violence is closely tied to the broader challenge of articulating a coherent and sustainable professional identity for law enforcement. Prevailing archetypes, such as the 'warrior' or the 'guardian,' may capture certain dimensions of police work, but each falls short of encompassing the full complexity of the role. But despite the difficulty of defining a comprehensive self-conception, this task remains essential. In a democratic society that values individual autonomy, the legitimacy of policing is inherently fragile and continually vulnerable to erosion,

particularly when law enforcement is perceived as excessive, unaccountable, or arbitrarily violent.

This ‘value reinforcement’ can be seen in resource allocation within law enforcement agencies and appears to underpin a broader structure of uncontrolled violence—both in substance and in symbolism. The message being communicated, explicitly through programs like the Field Training Officer (FTO) system and implicitly through the institutional frameworks surrounding police culture, is that the ‘kick-ass’ model of aggressive, force-forward policing is not only acceptable but desired. It is therefore unsurprising that such practices have become deeply embedded in routine police work. This trajectory poses serious concerns for democratic legitimacy when the public (or a significant portion of it) comes to view police as arbitrary, violent, and uncontrolled.

The FTO program occupies a central position in this dynamic. It sits at the nexus of ‘culture-making’ in departments, transmitting departmental norms to new officers but also amplifying broader cultural patterns within policing. This study strongly suggests that the norms and beliefs being inculcated in young officers are at odds with efforts to move away from force-forward policing tactics and attitudes. In fact, the FTO model is likely an important element in spreading that older (and problematic) ‘kick-ass’ model of policing. Even if specific claims made by participants in this study were exaggerated or inaccurate, the underlying perceptions they reflect are real and consequential, and appear to be quite pervasive. After all, perception shapes behavior, informs legitimacy, and demands critical examination if reform efforts are to be effective and enduring. Although a growing body of research points to a decline in public trust in law enforcement across multiple demographic groups, it would be one-dimensional to view public opinion as fixed or to assume that the divide between communities and police is beyond repair.

Historical patterns demonstrate that public attitudes toward institutions are malleable and can shift significantly over time. These shifts suggest that, under the right conditions, meaningful improvements in public perception and police-community relations are not only possible but achievable.

In addressing my first research question—how do FTOs and police leaders understand the role of the FTO within departments—this analysis begins with the foundational premise that FTOs serve as essential conduits for socialization of new officers. The findings of this study do not contradict that assumption, but they do add nuance to our understanding of this reality. While FTOs broadly recognize their role in shaping the behavior and attitudes of new recruits, a substantial disconnect emerges between their self-perception and how they believe their role is viewed by leadership. Many FTOs see themselves as front-line leaders, integral to the training infrastructure of their departments, yet express a deep sense of disenchantment regarding the lack of institutional recognition and support for what they do.

This perceived marginalization extends beyond internal hierarchies and into broader community relations. FTOs often articulate a worldview characterized by opposition to the public they serve, describing strained relationships with community members and framing their role as inherently adversarial. This perception persists despite evidence indicating that this antagonism may not reflect broader community attitudes, and it conflicts with the professed ideal of policing as a service-oriented, community-guardianship profession.

Such sentiments are not without consequence. The belief that officers are embattled or at odds with the public they serve likely influences the way new recruits are socialized. The data suggests that many FTOs, while rhetorically endorsing contemporary reform language, such as emotional regulation, guardianship, and

maturity, nonetheless express a readiness to assert dominance through force when compliance is challenged. This mindset, particularly when combined with a sense that they are not supported or respected by the department and a tendency to externalize blame, may contribute to a form of cultural transmission that emphasizes control over cooperation and coercion over communication. While FTOs rightly identify themselves as key agents in shaping the professional identity of new officers, the values they convey may diverge sharply from those endorsed by reform-minded leadership and members of the public concerned with accountability and democratic policing. This gap appears to stem, in part, from leadership's failure to treat the FTO role as a position of prestige and influence. Assigning officers to serve in this mentorship role without adequate consideration of whether those officers are suited for it, or providing them institutional training and support, undermines the potential of FTO programs to advance cultural reform. Instead, it risks reinforcing outdated and adversarial models of policing—ones that are then passed from generation to generation, despite formal efforts to move in a different direction.

The second research question this study addressed focused on how FTOs and leaders perceive their role in socializing probationary recruits in the application of violence. The initial rationale behind the establishment of FTO programs in American policing was to enhance the professionalization of new recruits through mentorship by seasoned officers. Scholarly literature and this investigation positions FTOs as cultural transmitters, responsible for shaping the attitudes, behaviors, and values of the next generation of officers. However, the data collected through the ride-alongs complicates the assumptions surrounding what values are actually being conveyed.

These interactions suggest that FTOs are not merely *ineffective* in reinforcing departmental commitments to de-escalation and the measured use of violence. They

appear in many cases to be active obstacles to the transmission of such values. Many FTOs appear to endorse, and in some cases actively promote, a worldview that characterizes civilian encounters as inherently dangerous, glorifies the use of force, and valorizes militarized aesthetics and tactics as tools for asserting dominance and generating fear. In several instances, a casual attitude toward violence was framed not as a liability, but as a marker of professional competence and even career advancement. These findings strongly indicate that if departments are genuinely committed to reshaping policing norms—particularly around accountability, restraint, and community trust—then a fundamental reevaluation of how FTOs are selected, trained, and supervised is warranted.

The third research question addressed was whether there were misalignments between FTOs and leaders as it relates to the first two research questions. Here, the central role of institutional prestige emerged as a critical factor in shaping police culture and how officers are socialized. In the departments examined, units associated with tactical or high-risk operations (such as SWAT teams or bomb squads) appear to enjoy elevated status. In stark contrast, FTOs frequently expressed skepticism regarding the perceived value of their role within departmental hierarchies. Although they emphasized the importance of their work in mentoring and developing new officers, many also conveyed a sense of disillusionment about how that work is viewed internally. Rather than seeing the position as a valuable step in their career path, they appear to view it as something of a dead end, lacking in prestige and filled by individuals who may not reflect the department's highest standards; an observation corroborated by this study's fieldwork. This disconnect between FTOs and leaders reveals a significant organizational misalignment. Despite public and internal assertions that FTOs are central to shaping departmental norms and ensuring professional development, agencies appear to have

fallen short in reinforcing the role's significance with tangible incentives such as: promotion opportunities, institutional support, or strategic recognition. The failure to link aspirational rhetoric with material investment undermines the program's effectiveness and contributes to the broader cultural tensions identified in this investigation.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM AND WHY THEY FAIL

The recommendations that follow are grounded in the theoretical framework developed in Chapters 2 and 3. Drawing on Bandura's (1977; 1986) social learning theory, Lipsky's (1980) concept of street-level bureaucracy, and legitimacy theory (Jackson and Bradford, 2010), they aim to align reform efforts with how officers actually internalize and reproduce norms. The FTO, situated at the intersection of these frameworks, operates as both a 'street-level bureaucrat' exercising discretion under ambiguous mandates and a 'social learning vector' through which organizational culture is transmitted. Reforms that fail to address this nexus will continue to founder, because policy change alone cannot override what is modeled, rewarded, and reproduced through informal learning and prestige hierarchies.

Any meaningful account of what constitutes acceptable police use of force must be accompanied by a concrete framework for achieving that standard. Such a framework must be rooted in a realistic understanding of institutional behavior—one that considers the mechanisms, incentives, cognitive tendencies, and tradeoffs involved in regulating violence within complex systems. Only by grounding reform efforts in a pragmatic theory of institutional and individual behavior can we hope to align departmental goals with officer incentives and cultivate a professional culture capable of meaningfully constraining the use of force. The objective, then, should be to develop a theory of violence control that reflects the actual conditions under which police work, instead of

one based on abstract models or idealized assumptions detached from practice. This investigation demonstrates that, although many departments possess formal plans for managing the use of force, these frameworks are often poorly communicated to and inconsistently understood by rank-and-file officers—and, more critically, by the FTOs responsible for transmitting departmental norms and expectations to new recruits.

As a final consideration: This project was conceived and drafted prior to the second presidential term of Donald Trump, during a period when institutional reform of police departments—however contested—still seemed tethered to a shared investment in the rule of law. The recommendations advanced below presume a baseline commitment to democratic norms, institutional accountability, and lawful governance. However, at the time of this writing, something like four months into the second Trump term, the strength of the shared commitment to these norms has been called into question. It is beyond the scope of this project to pass judgement whether a commitment to the rule of law is truly under attack in the United States, even if all the proof necessary to make that judgement was available, which it is not. But it seems evident that these questions are now contested in the United States in a way they have not been in at least a half-century. If the rule of law itself is destabilized, whether through politicized policing, selective enforcement, or executive disregard for legal constraints, the viability of internal reform mechanisms like FTO programs becomes gravely compromised. Under such conditions, even the most thoughtful, well-structured initiatives risk being co-opted or, even more common, ignored. Reform cannot succeed in a vacuum; it requires a broader ecosystem committed to legitimacy, transparency, and constitutional governance. Without those pillars, the project of professionalizing law enforcement collapses into performance, cosmetic over substantive, and is easily undone by shifts in power. Thus, the following reforms target a distinct level of the cultural transmission process. Taken together, these

proposals operationalize the theoretical argument that sustainable reform must intervene simultaneously in the cognitive, institutional, and symbolic dimensions of police culture. Reform begins at the point of entry. The composition and character of those who join the profession determine the cultural raw material upon which every subsequent stage of training and socialization depends.

1. Hire Better, Fire Often

One reform that would have an impact on police violence is simply hiring better candidates, both as rookie police officers and as the FTOs who train those rookies. Consider the 2015 case of Justin Way, a man who expressed suicidal thoughts while brandishing a knife. Instead of receiving the mental health treatment Way so obviously needed, armed officers arrived to confront him with military grade M-4 rifles. The encounter ended tragically with Way's death. Most relevant for the discussion at hand is that one of the responding officers had previously posted on social media: 'Most people respect the badge. Everyone respects the gun,' a comment that reflects a troubling mindset about the role of force in policing. This officer is still on the force and was promoted to a supervisor in 2024. Addressing such attitudes requires more than just policy reforms; it calls for more intentional and rigorous hiring practices aimed at identifying candidates who value restraint, empathy, and sound judgment.

In addition, discussions about diversity centered on American policing have largely focused on the underrepresentation of women and racial minorities. While these concerns remain important, far less attention has been paid to other forms of diversity—particularly those that could broaden how officers interpret and respond to situations ranging from peaceful demonstrations to civil unrest. One such dimension is cognitive diversity, or more simply put, emotional and cognitive intelligence. As discussed in

Chapter 1 section C, the practice of limiting the general intelligence scores of applicants out of concerns over turnover, may inadvertently narrow the pool of candidates in ways that undermine other critical competencies, namely, emotional intelligence. The ability to recognize, regulate, and respond to one's own emotions and those of others is vital in policing, particularly in high-stress or rapidly evolving encounters. In addition, research shows that general intelligence and emotional intelligence are more closely connected than once thought (Almat et al., 2023). This raises the possibility that limiting cognitive aptitude could weaken a department's ability to foster empathy as well as the more immediately practical skill of de-escalation. Thus, a meaningful reform would be to revise hiring practices so they place greater weight on critical thinking, emotional regulation, and ethical judgment as essential qualities for police candidates.

Further, one of the most effective mechanisms for reducing police violence is the timely and consistent removal of officers who engage in misconduct. Research has shown that a small number of officers are often responsible for a disproportionate share of use-of-force incidents (NIJ and BJS, 1999). By strengthening accountability systems and making it easier to terminate officers who engage in repeated or serious violations of law or policy, law enforcement agencies can disrupt patterns of abuse before they escalate. In addition to deterring misconduct through clearer consequences, more rigorous disciplinary practices signal a cultural shift toward integrity and public trust. This is especially true for FTOs, who act as super spreaders of a department's institutional norms and values, for good or bad (Getty et al., 2014).

From the standpoint of social learning theory, hiring is the first point of cultural transmission: who a department selects to serve as an FTO determines which values will be modeled and normalized across future generations of officers (Bandura, 1977). Departments that hire primarily for conformity or tactical skill rather than moral

reasoning and emotional intelligence risk reinforcing the same behavioral patterns this study found embedded in FTO culture. Conversely, hiring for reflective capacity, empathy, and ethical decision-making creates a foundation for recruits who are more receptive to learning restraint and legitimacy-based policing. Further, consistent with legitimacy theory, the fairness and transparency of hiring and termination practices themselves communicate the moral authority of the institution, signaling to both officers and the public that accountability, not mere cohesion, defines professionalism in a democratic police force (Jackson and Bradford, 2010). Strengthening recruitment and accountability establishes the foundation upon which more substantive learning-based reforms can take hold. Hiring and retention practices set the foundation, but without sustained investment in what officers actually learn, even the best recruits will absorb and reproduce existing cultural norms. The next step, therefore, is to confront the institutional mechanisms through which those norms are taught and reinforced.

2. Training, Education, and Professional Development

This study does not attempt to make broad generalizations about education levels in American law enforcement. Yet research indicating that officers with higher levels of education tend to use physical force less frequently cannot be ignored (Rydberg et al., 2010). As explored previously, officer education may represent an underutilized lever for reducing use-of-force incidents. The findings that (1) FTOs generally possess lower levels of formal education compared to department leadership, and (2) they express greater skepticism toward de-escalation or stronger affinity for militarized approaches, lend further support to this hypothesis. Data from multiple sources suggest a relationship between educational attainment and officer behavior: Officers who had completed college were less likely to engage in acts of violence, while officers with only a high

school diploma account for a majority of disciplinary cases. Although higher education is not a comprehensive solution to the problems of excessive force or the broader trend of police militarization, it is nonetheless associated with more measured and responsible approaches to policing.

Making more advanced education a requirement to serve as an FTO is likely to increase the professionalism of policing. A profession requires structured, ongoing professional development at all levels of service. Yet, in many departments, there is no substantive distinction in professional development between newly sworn officers and those in senior leadership roles. Although some departments offer episodic or specialized training, most of what constitutes continuing education is narrowly technical, focusing on firearms proficiency and the introduction of new equipment. Far less attention is devoted to cultivating reflective, ethical, and community-oriented understandings of the profession itself. A shift toward meaningful professional development would be a critical step toward reorienting how officers conceptualize their roles and responsibilities and helping control violence. Rather than viewing tools such as firearms and tactical gear as simply instruments of violence, officers equipped with a broader professional education may be more likely to interpret them as instruments to be employed judiciously, within a framework of democratic accountability. Furthermore, in a context of finite fiscal resources, investments should prioritize the intellectual and ethical development of officers. Allocating resources to leadership training, ethical reasoning, communication skills, and procedural justice would do more to enhance public safety and trust than maintaining armored vehicles that function more as symbolic displays of state power than as operational necessities.

To that end, given that many police departments now identify de-escalation as a formal priority, including the departments in my selected cities, FTO programs should be

restructured to reflect this commitment. A training model centered on de-escalation, integrated into both initial instruction and ongoing mentorship, is essential for ensuring that recruits internalize and apply these principles in the field. To support this shift, state legislatures should mandate active, scenario-based de-escalation training within police academies, complemented by continuing education requirements for mid-career officers. That academy-based scenario training can be evaluated in the relative safety of the FTO's car. Without sustained and practical instruction, de-escalation policies risk becoming symbolic rather than operational, leaving officers unprepared for high-stress encounters that demand restraint and emotional control.

In parallel, departments should transition away from militarized 'stress-based' training models and adopt non-stress training approaches that emphasize academic learning, emotional regulation, and strong supervisory relationships—a reform the FTO is perfectly situated to assess and refine with individual recruits. These models, which prioritize communication and professional development are more consistent with modern understandings of effective policing and have the potential to reduce unnecessary use of force. While tactical and technical training remain important, greater emphasis must be placed on building the cognitive and emotional skills necessary for officers to navigate complex, community-facing roles with professionalism and discretion.

Muir's (1977) analysis of the 'moral resolution' required of officers underscores that coercive power can only serve justice when it is consciously constrained. Embedding this ethos in FTO training reframes restraint as an act of professional virtue, not weakness. These reforms derive from the central insight of Bandura's (1977; 1986) reciprocal determinism: that behavior, cognition, and environment continually shape one another. By intervening in the social learning environment of the FTO program, departments can influence not only what recruits are taught, but how they interpret and

normalize violence on the street. Indeed, learning occurs through imitation of what is observed and reinforcement of the standards rather than formal instruction alone. FTOs are the critical transmitters in this process, shaping recruits through daily modeling of behavior. Training that isolates classroom content from field practice fails because it overlooks this dynamic interplay between behavior and environment. Departments must therefore design training that deliberately links formal instruction to the lived and practical reality of policing, through reflective exercises, guided debriefs, and mentorship grounded in procedural justice and legitimacy principles (Tyler, 2004); Jackson and Bradford, 2010). Maybe most critical is to keep in mind Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy which reminds us that discretion is inevitable; training must prepare officers to exercise that discretion ethically, not merely efficiently. By integrating these theoretical insights, professional development becomes not a compliance function but a form of moral and cultural formation.

Once training environments reinforce reflective learning, the next challenge is to dismantle prestige structures that glorify aggression. Yet training reform alone cannot thrive within a symbolic order that continues to glorify aggression and tactical prestige. To reshape learning, leaders must also confront the imagery, incentives, and hierarchies that define what 'good policing' looks like. Classroom reform only sticks if the culture modeled in the field matches it, which requires deliberately selected, prepared, and supported mentors.

3. Create Intentional Mentors

One of the most consequential reforms is to reimagine the FTO program as a professionalized mentorship system, drawing on best practices from other disciplines. This means intentional selection of mentors who receive specialized training and

developing robust accountability measures to ensure field training truly aligns with departmental (and community) values. As this study has shown, FTOs act as the critical bridge between academy ideals and street-level practice. To leverage these programs for positive change, police agencies must treat mentorship as deliberately as other professions do. In medicine, for instance, institutions do not simply assign senior personnel to train newcomers by chance or convenience, they carefully select and prepare mentors because the quality of early on-the-job socialization is pivotal (Lehmann et al., 2018).

Likewise, policing should assign FTO duties not to the next available officer, but to those with the right temperament and experience, but also who are committed to organization's ideals. Departments should elevate the status of FTOs and screen candidates for the role, favoring officers with exemplary conduct, strong communication skills, emotional intelligence, and a knack for teaching. Intentional mentor selection helps ensure that the attitudes and habits passed to recruits are those the department wants to propagate, not those it hopes to reform. In short, who becomes an FTO matters enormously, a point underscored by other fields where mentors are chosen with care to mold the next generation of professionals (Ragins, 1997; McWilliams, 2019).

Beyond selecting and preparing individual mentors, departments should also institutionalize mentorship as a collective practice rather than a series of isolated pairings. Agencies could establish FTO peer cohorts that meet regularly across precincts to discuss dilemmas, share strategies, and develop consistent approaches to socializing recruits. These peer networks would serve as informal accountability mechanisms, helping mentors calibrate their discretionary decisions and align them with organizational and democratic values. In doing so, departments transform discretion from a private, potentially inconsistent act into a collective exercise in professional

judgment, reinforcing the idea that mentorship itself is a form of shared governance within policing.

Beyond selecting the right people, agencies must invest in training their trainers. It is paradoxical that police departments often provide extensive training to new recruits, but little to the veteran officers entrusted to train those recruits. Other professions offer a model: teachers who mentor new instructors frequently receive workshops on how to coach adults, provide feedback, and model best practices, and doctors who supervise residents are guided to be mindful of the ‘hidden curriculum’ they convey (Hafferty, 1998; Lehmann et al., 2018). Adapting this approach, police departments should implement robust FTO training curricula, covering adult learning techniques, ethical use of discretion, effective communication and de-escalation pedagogy, and ways to counteract biases. Professional development courses for FTOs would empower them to teach intentionally rather than rely on ‘how I learned it’ practices. An FTO who understands principles of mentorship and pedagogy is better equipped to reinforce academy teachings (like procedural justice or restraint tactics) in real-world settings. This approach also signals to the FTO that the role is not an afterthought but a core professional function worthy of skill development. Indeed, treating field trainers as a specialized professional class with certifications or credentials for FTOs who undergo training could foster a sense of pride and accountability in the role. For example, some U.S. states and accrediting bodies have begun requiring that FTOs complete a certified training course and that agencies maintain written directives on FTO selection and oversight. Ultimately, embedding a culture of continuous learning for FTOs themselves will cascade to better learning for recruits.

Reforming FTO programs requires institutional accountability mechanisms to monitor the mentorship process and its outcomes. This addresses the inherent power

imbalance in mentorship: as noted, mentors hold substantial sway over mentees, which can yield either beneficial or detrimental results (Ragins, 1997; McWilliams, 2019). To ensure an FTO's influence remains positive, police agencies must introduce checks and feedback loops. For instance, departments could implement a system of second-layer evaluations of recruits, whereby the assigned FTO assesses the trainee, but another supervisor or training coordinator periodically observes the recruit or reviews their performance data. This mirrors practices in other fields (such as law or medicine) where multiple supervisors or a board review a trainee's progress to guard against a single mentor's biases or lapses. Further, strong accountability and oversight create incentives for FTOs to excel, rewarding those who develop highly competent, community-oriented officers. Departments might formalize this by tracking recruit outcomes and tying them back to FTOs as one measure of mentorship effectiveness. In essence, what gets measured gets managed: if agencies measure how FTOs shape new officers, they can manage and improve it.

This reform situates FTO programs as central pillars of organizational development and accountability, where each coach is also coached, and each mentor is also monitored. Such a model not only curbs the risk of 'bad apples' reproducing themselves, as currently feared, but also actively cultivates good apples, multiplying the presence of officers who exemplify restraint, empathy, and professionalism. Thus, professionalizing the mentorship role of FTOs is a linchpin reform that can secure all other training reforms. Without professionalism, academy lessons may never leave the classroom; with it, those lessons have their best chance to take root in the field. Mentorship will not scale unless the organization rewards it and status and advancement must reflect the behaviors mentors are asked to model.

4. Rewire Prestige

As noted above, prestige emerged as a central motif in this investigation and a driver of troubling trends around police violence. While departmental rhetoric often emphasizes the importance of FTO programs in shaping police culture and developing new officers, this narrative is frequently undermined by the material realities within departments. Officers do not take cues from official messaging alone—they respond to visible indicators of value, such as who receives attention from leadership, who is selected for promotion, and which units are prioritized for resources. These tangible signals function as the ‘hard currency’ of institutional prestige, and in many departments, that currency is being spent on militarized units like SWAT rather than on training and mentorship roles such as FTO programs. The result is a disconnect between the professed values of the organization and the incentives embedded in its structure, one that undermines the effectiveness of FTO programs in shaping departmental culture along desired lines.

A key needed reform emerging from this investigation is the need to reassess how prestige is distributed and defined within police departments. Currently, high-risk tactical units such as SWAT often command the most institutional status, attracting attention, resources, and promotional opportunities. This signals to officers that aggressive, militarized policing is the most valued form of police work. Meanwhile, FTOs—who are responsible for shaping the next generation of officers—report feeling undervalued and overlooked, despite recognizing the significance of their role in shaping departmental culture.

As discussed in Chapter 6, prestige hierarchies distort organizational incentives. Reforms must therefore realign prestige, linking advancement and recognition to success in mentoring and restraint, not tactical aggression. Departments should give sustained attention to the question of how they can bolster the prestige associated with the FTO

role. Elevating the status of FTOs through promotions, recognition, and meaningful salary supplementation would align departmental priorities with reform goals and signal a commitment to cultivating thoughtful, community-focused officers. Furthermore, agencies should critically evaluate their current standards for FTO selection and retention, revising qualifications and incentives as needed to ensure that the most capable and principled officers are entrusted with shaping the next generation. One concrete mechanism for this prestige realignment is to track and publicize Field Training Officer performance using indicators that reflect democratic and procedural values rather than enforcement metrics. Departments could evaluate FTO success through the subsequent performance of their recruits—specifically, reductions in community complaints, improvements in procedural-justice ratings, or evidence of restraint and communication in use-of-force reviews. By shifting recognition away from arrest and citation counts toward these legitimacy-based outcomes, agencies redefine what ‘success’ means within their prestige hierarchy. This approach operationalizes legitimacy theory (Jackson and Bradford, 2010) by rewarding behaviors that build public trust and, consistent with Bandura’s (1977) social learning framework, signals to recruits that professionalism and fairness, not aggression, are the pathways to status and advancement. Once prestige is realigned, the remaining obstacle is symbolic: militarized imagery and tactics still signal aggression as virtue and must be unwound.

5. Break the Militarization Cycle

One obvious first step in reforming the militarization of the police is to limit the military grade equipment that police have access to. Officers should of course have access to equipment necessary to ensure their safety, especially given the inherent risks of the profession and the volume of guns in the United States (estimated at approximately

400,000,000 with a population of 340,000,000). Still, the scale and scope of militarization in some departments is noticeable. In densely populated urban centers, where threats of terrorism or high levels of violence may temporarily resemble combat conditions, specialized gear may be justified. But it seems reasonable to question whether small municipalities need dozens of M-16 rifles, other fully automatic weapons, and armored vehicles. Reducing militarization in policing requires a critical reassessment of federal initiatives that enable the transfer of surplus military equipment to civilian law enforcement agencies. Moving beyond politically charged discourse, national policy-makers must adopt a more deliberate and balanced strategy; one that ensures officers are adequately equipped for legitimate operational needs, while also safeguarding the fundamental distinction between military operations and civilian policing. Maintaining clear institutional and cultural boundaries between these roles is essential for upholding democratic norms, ensuring transparency, and preserving public confidence in law enforcement.

However, the necessary reforms extend far beyond the regulation of what equipment police can and cannot deploy. At the core of the issue is a deeper transformation in the identity and operational logic of policing, marked by an increasingly indistinct boundary between law enforcement and military practice. This phenomenon, often referred to as ‘mission creep,’ reflects a gradual but consequential shift in how police understand their role. When training, language, and tactical frameworks are rooted in military paradigms, officers are more likely to approach civilian encounters through a lens of hostility and control. Officers who take this view tend to perceive the public not as a community to safeguard, but rather as a potential source of threat to be managed through force and dominance. This dynamic was evident in the present investigation, where the majority of participants acknowledged a blurring

of the lines between policing and military roles and recognized that militarization may contribute to increased aggression among officers, yet few expressed concern or opposition to this development. The result of this troubling dynamic is a self-perpetuating cycle wherein officers simultaneously perceive themselves as increasingly alienated from the communities they serve and respond to that alienation by adopting further militarized tools, attire, and strategies. The adoption of these tools and tactics, rather than being viewed as unfortunate necessities, are often justified precisely because they create psychological and physical distance from the public. Said another way, some officers have not only internalized the divide between law enforcement and the community but have come to view it as desirable. Rather than attempting to bridge the gap in legitimacy and trust, they may be reinforcing it in ways that are fundamentally at odds with the norms of democratic policing. Within the context of this study, such attitudes call into question the viability of the FTO model as a mechanism for shaping officer conduct toward restraint and public accountability. If the model is dominated by mentors who perpetuate legacy norms grounded in coercion and control, it risks serving not as a reform tool but as a conduit for the reproduction of outdated and adversarial policing paradigms. This cycle must be broken.

Determining how to break this cycle is more difficult than identifying it. Specific to FTO programs, these findings suggest that a more focused effort to identify and understand the attitudes of FTOs is warranted. (To put it another way: No more FTOs like Derek Chauvin.) I have before proposed that efforts to reform police culture may benefit from examining the professionalization of the military as a model for institutional transformation (Rizer, 2016). At first glance, this may appear paradoxical. However, if law enforcement agencies are already adopting elements of military structure, tactics, and equipment, it stands to reason that they should also adopt the military's commitment

to professionalism, accountability, and disciplined leadership. The armed forces have undergone a long process of institutional reform to become one of the most respected public institutions in the United States. There are valuable lessons in that evolution that police departments might draw upon to enhance both public trust and internal standards of conduct. Much like law enforcement today, the U.S. military once found itself an object of public mistrust and criticism after the Vietnam War, driven by perceptions of excessive violence and moral ambiguity (Stauffer, 1982). The military responded by initiating reforms that helped transform the services into a more professional, disciplined institution. Today, the U.S. military is regularly cited as one of the most trusted organizations in the country (Gallop, 2016). This example suggests that policing, too, has the capacity to rebuild trust through intentional professional development where advancement through the ranks is systematically tied to participation in formalized educational professional programs. Strengthened, focused FTO programs would be a valuable tool in this effort.

The persistence of militarization can also be understood through the lens of organizational prestige and social learning theory. As demonstrated in this study, internal status structures within police departments often elevate tactical units and ‘force-forward’ behaviors, signaling to officers that aggression and domination are pathways to professional respect. This dynamic operates as a feedback loop: the more departments valorize militarized imagery and tactics, the more such behaviors are modeled, observed, and reinforced throughout the FTO pipeline (Lieblich, 2018). Breaking this cycle therefore requires not only policy reform but also cultural reengineering, in which status and recognition are tied to democratic professionalism rather than paramilitary identity. Framed through legitimacy theory, this shift is essential to rebuilding public trust: legitimacy cannot coexist with symbols or practices that position the police as an

occupying force rather than a civic institution accountable to the community it serves. To make these changes durable, departments need feedback loops that keep learning reciprocal and legitimacy-focused for mentors, recruits, and communities.

6. Rewire the Feedback Loop

Building on the theoretical foundations of social learning and legitimacy theory, departments should institutionalize structured reflection and two-way feedback mechanisms within FTO programs. Bandura's (1977) social learning framework emphasizes that behavior change depends not merely on instruction but on observation, reflection, and reinforcement. Yet most departments assess FTOs through mechanical performance metrics (checklists, hours logged, or trainee completion rates) that reward procedural compliance rather than meaningful cultural influence.

To counter this, departments should create Reflective Practice Modules within FTO training that incorporate narrative debriefs, critical incident journaling, and peer reflection sessions. These activities help FTOs model cognitive control, empathy, and situational awareness, qualities that directly oppose the 'kick-ass' prestige culture identified in this study. Comparable initiatives in European policing have emphasized reflection as a core professional competency, arguing that officers must learn to critically assess not only how they act but why they act (Staller and Koerner, 2021).

Complementing these internal reflective practices, agencies should adopt a legitimacy focused evaluation system that replaces generic performance reviews with measures tied to procedural-justice outcomes. FTOs and their recruits would be evaluated on indicators such as community complaint rates, citizen satisfaction, and observed use-of-force restraint. This realigns success metrics with the legitimacy principles discussed by

Jackson and Bradford (2010), signaling that democratic accountability, not enforcement volume, is the ultimate standard of professional excellence.

Finally, these elements should be connected through a cultural feedback loop that integrates data from recruits and community stakeholders into ongoing program assessment. Anonymous trainee surveys, community panels, and periodic qualitative reviews can be used to provide feedback on whether FTOs are modeling the values departments claim to champion. Embedding this loop operationalizes organizational-behavior theory by transforming learning into a reciprocal process, one where FTOs not only teach culture but are also shaped by transparent, legitimacy-oriented feedback. Collectively, these reforms target the mechanisms of socialization itself. They make reflective practice, empathy, and public accountability visible, measurable, and rewarded, thereby transforming the FTO program from a conduit of inherited subculture into a self-correcting system that continually aligns practice with the democratic ideals of policing in a republic.

7. Transparency

Transparency in government, particularly regarding the use of force by state actors, is fundamental to democratic accountability. Members of the public have a legitimate interest in understanding the policies that govern how and when law enforcement officers may exercise force. Historically, public scrutiny and community oversight have often served as catalysts for meaningful reform. To support this process, states should mandate that police departments publicly disclose their use-of-force policies and related protocols governing civilian interactions, and also the training tools (including FTO-based programs) used to inculcate those standards in new police. Doing so not only clarifies departmental standards for both officers and the public, but also enables

community members to compare and contrast the policies of different jurisdictions, creating informed opportunities to advocate for stronger safeguards, consistency, and improvements where deficiencies exist.

Incidents of police misuse of force are, to some extent, inevitable. However, how departments and the broader policing system respond to such incidents is critical for maintaining institutional legitimacy and sustaining community trust. At the federal level, the Department of Justice should actively enforce constitutional policing standards, including the Law Enforcement Misconduct Statute, and make full use of consent decrees when necessary to drive reforms (34 U.S.C § 12601). Moreover, the federal government should invest in developing internal accountability mechanisms that can be implemented in departments, including through data collection by FTOs.

Another area of potential reform would be for department leadership to proactively utilize body-worn camera footage as a tool for monitoring and evaluating Field Training Officer programs. While it is common practice for body camera footage to be reviewed in the aftermath of critical incidents, complaints, and use of force situations, it is rarely used to assess the routine, day-to-day dynamics of FTO training. Incorporating periodic, randomized review of body camera recordings from training shifts could offer valuable insights into how departmental policies, especially those related to use of force and community engagement, are being modeled and communicated to recruits. This type of oversight would allow leadership to identify both exemplary instruction and problematic behavior early in the training process, helping to ensure greater consistency between formal policies and on-the-ground practices. Indeed, Bandura's (1977; 1986) framework suggests that observation and reinforcement, not rules alone, drive behavioral learning. Incorporating structured mentorship and reflective debriefs operationalizes this theory, making prosocial modeling a daily practice rather

than an abstract policy goal. Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy clarifies why this matters: discretion is inevitable at the point of service delivery. Departmental systems should guide that discretion through supportive supervision, peer accountability, and transparent feedback loops.

Collectively, these recommendations operationalize the theoretical synthesis advanced in this study: that police culture evolves through social learning (Bandura, 1977) enacted by street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980) within prestige hierarchies that reward certain behaviors over others. By redesigning the FTO role to elevate professionalism, recalibrate incentives, and institutionalize reflective practice, reform can intervene at the precise nexus where cognition, discretion, and legitimacy converge. Only by grounding policy and procedural change in this theoretical foundation can departments hope to produce enduring cultural transformation rather than temporary compliance.

8. Why Reforms Fail

Despite decades of high-profile commissions and reform efforts—the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement, the 2015 President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, and countless state and local initiatives—the deep roots of FTO-based socialization in U.S. policing remain largely unaddressed. The problem runs deeper than policy drafts or classroom training: the United States operates nearly 18,000 discrete law enforcement agencies, each with its own political context, training culture and accountability architecture. This fragmentation means national recommendations too often stop at the threshold of implementation, while field-training programs revert to entrenched local norms rather than embrace the change envisioned at the national level (Ponomarenko, 2022).

At the same time, reform efforts have overwhelmingly focused on formal policy: use-of-force procedures, body-worn cameras, accreditation standards, while giving far less attention to the informal social learning networks through which rookie officers internalize norms (for example who gets promoted, how unit prestige is allocated, what FTOs reward and model). Studies of reform durability highlight that unless the recruitment, selection, incentives and mentoring of FTOs are explicitly targeted, the informal culture will simply out-pace formal policy. Union contracts and disciplinary regimes present another barrier: many labor agreements limit oversight, shorten the period for investigations, purge records of minor infractions and thereby send ambiguous signals to FTOs and the rest of the force about the costs of deviant behavior.

Even when departments are willing, implementation capacity differs vastly: training hours, instructor quality, field evaluation tools, and mentorship programs are wildly inconsistent from one agency to the next. Finally, reform momentum tends to rise and fall with the political climate. Scandals create urgency, but once the attention fades, many departments slide back into status quo patterns (Sklansky, 2022). U.S. policing also carries a unique mix of widespread civilian gun ownership, localized funding and a strong tactical/militarized heritage; in such a context, FTO environments are particularly prone to reproduce coercive norms unless reformers realign the prestige incentives and embed auditable behavioral pathways into the FTO phase. Indeed, past reform waves did not fail because their ideas were weak, they failed because they were under-designed for the social learning pipeline that begins in the field with FTOs (Simonson, 2019). Effective reform must therefore intervene at the nexus of policy and practice: who teaches; what is modeled; how teaching is rewarded; and how it is audited.

Although the fieldwork for this study captured the post-Ferguson but pre-Floyd era, subsequent developments in U.S. policing have reinforced many of the dynamics

identified here. The 2020 protests prompted renewed scrutiny of police use-of-force training, leading to expanded de-escalation and duty-to-intervene requirements in numerous states (PERF, 2015; Lum et al., 2021). Federal and state reforms have emphasized scenario-based training, yet research suggests that cultural and institutional barriers to sustained behavioral change remain. These post-Floyd reforms thus underscore the continued relevance of this study's findings on the limits of formal training to reshape embedded occupational norms.

C. CONTRIBUTIONS AND A CALL FOR FUTURE LITERATURE

I set out to contribute to the existing scholarship that links the persistence of police violence, at least in part, to the peer-based socialization of officers. While substantial research has addressed proposed or enacted reforms in police training, recruitment, accountability, and professional development, comparatively little attention has been paid to those individuals directly responsible for training new officers in the field—the FTOs who play a pivotal role during the early stages of an officer's career, when social learning and enculturation into police norms are most likely to occur.

While this study is U.S.-focused, analogous training roles exist across other democracies, for example the tutor constable model in England and Wales. Evidence from this example suggests both transferable lessons and universal pitfalls. Tutor constables often receive formal guidance on pedagogy, formative feedback, and welfare support, yet rank-and-file surveys still report inconsistent preparation, weak supervisory bandwidth, and role strain; all of which mirror U.S. complaints about FTO selection, incentives, and time-on-task for mentoring.

Two design features from abroad appear exportable to the U.S. FTO model. First, embedding problem-based learning and structured reflection in field phases, akin to

PTO-style manuals used in reform programs, can shift day-to-day evaluation from ‘task completion’ to demonstrable judgment, de-escalation, and communication. Second, codifying the mentor role as a recognized professional track (with training, release time, and advancement credit) helps counter the prestige deficit vis-à-vis tactical units.

Beyond the Anglosphere, we can look to India’s national ‘Training for Attitudinal Change’ modules, which explicitly attempt to reshape recruits’ dispositions (respect, restraint, service) rather than force compliance with procedure. That ambition recognizes a universal problem this study highlights: mentors transmit attitudes as much as skills. But as we saw in Chapter 2, like the United States, the India experience also underscores the risk that curricula evaporates once trainees are embedded in station houses where local cues and incentives point the other way.

This gap in the literature is particularly noteworthy given that existing studies on social learning within law enforcement consistently highlight the ways in which officers are often socialized into patterns of aggression and excessive force. Thus, FTOs occupy a uniquely influential position. They are not only figures of authority and mentorship, but also serve as the primary conduit through which abstract principles from academy training—especially those concerning the appropriate use of force—are translated into operational practice. As such, this addition to the literature on how FTOs conceptualize violence, how their role is perceived both by themselves and their leadership, and whether misalignments exist between institutional goals and field-level instruction is a critical step toward understanding and addressing the cultural dynamics that cause police violence. But despite the importance of this role, there remains a notable gap in the scholarly literature concerning the ways in which FTOs shape new officers’ attitudes and behaviors, particularly in relation to the use and misuse of force. This relative absence of inquiry is not entirely unexpected. Unlike specialized units such as SWAT, FTOs

typically operate outside of public view and receive far less media or academic attention. Moreover, the presence of mentorship structures in professional organizations is generally regarded as beneficial, which may contribute to the assumption that these programs are inherently constructive. However, this lack of academic scrutiny, while possibly understandable, is also puzzling. If, as many scholars and practitioners assert, ‘police culture’ is a key explanatory factor in understanding the persistence of excessive force, then examining how FTOs interpret, internalize, and pass on norms related to violence and restraint should be a central concern in efforts to understand and reform law enforcement practices.

This investigation, while advancing the somewhat meager literature on FTOs, hardly fills the research gap I have identified. Sustained research attention to FTO programs in different kinds of departments—rather than the large urban departments I studied here—is an obvious follow-up research priority. Quantitative studies that seek to provide hard data around the outcomes generated by different FTO program models is another potential avenue for fruitful research. Given the critical position that FTOs occupy in department ecosystems, a more comprehensive assessment of the characteristics of the officers who fill this role is likely called for. In general, my sense is that this position is under-studied, and it is likely a fruitful place for further research.

My research does suggest several potentially fertile areas for immediate follow-up research on FTOs. As noted, the available—though limited—research consistently indicates a relationship between higher levels of formal education and reduced use of force by officers (Rydberg et al., 2010). This suggests that education may be an underutilized tool for shaping officer behavior. Particularly noteworthy is the absence of focused research on FTOs and level of education on the socialization of police recruits. Such research, both on policing in general and FTOs in particular, might identify

whether education levels can be a driver of policing reform. And in general, as stated above, there is a serious need for further research that can round out our understanding of the characteristics and attitudes of the persons who serve as FTOs.

In addition, an emergent theme in my investigation was the perception among FTOs that assignment to specialized units, particularly SWAT, enhances opportunities for promotion within police departments. This was not a topic I intended to ask questions about, but this belief surfaced frequently enough to warrant sustained research attention. No data currently exists to confirm the accuracy of this perception, but the consistency with which it was expressed suggests it holds significance within the occupational culture of policing. In short, whether or not it is true that SWAT helps with a career, officers *believe* it to be true, and that has significance. If such a connection does, in fact, exist, it could help to explain the appeal of militarized policing roles, with officers making an entirely rational choice to embrace militarized attitudes and practices as helpful to their career advancement. This possibility highlights an important gap in the literature and underscores the need for further research into how promotion incentives may be reinforcing the broader trend of police militarization.

Further, this research project contributes to a broader understanding of global policing by interrogating FTO programs, one of the most influential and among the most underexamined mechanisms of cultural transmission within American law enforcement. International experience shows that most liberal democracies pair academy learning with a structured probationary phase that functions much like the U.S. FTO system, often with clearer national standards and longer pre-independent practice. England and Wales, for example, require a multi-stage pathway in which recruits complete initial classroom learning, enter a 1:1 tutoring phase under a trained Tutor Constable, and earn Independent Patrol Status before continuing through probation; curriculum and quality

assurance are set centrally by the College of Policing. Scandinavian models further integrate supervised fieldwork within multi-year higher-education programs (*e.g.*, Norway's three-year bachelor with a dedicated field placement year), explicitly tying workplace socialization to degree-level professional formation. These designs offer two pragmatic lessons for the American model: (1) standardize FTO selection, preparation, and assessment at a level above individual agencies; and (2) lengthen and better integrate field mentoring with formal education so that the 'hidden curriculum' of street practice is supervised against transparent, competency-based outcomes. These structures are documented in national materials and force-level policies.

At the same time, recent UK research cautions that even with national frameworks, tutor selection and training remain uneven, with many tutors under-prepared and local implementation drifting from the model, a pattern that mirrors the inconsistent FTO programming seen in the United States. These challenges underscore that mentorship quality (and its organizational prestige and support) remains the fulcrum on which outcomes turn. Effectiveness evidence aligns with this mixed picture: longer, standardized pipelines appear to reduce variation and improve perceived readiness for independent patrol, but they do not by themselves neutralize the cultural transmission problems identified in this thesis. Even in centralized systems, mentor capacity, status, and workload shape the real curriculum new officers absorb. Comparative scholarship also shows that ambitious higher-education reforms can falter when not backed by coherent organizational incentives, reinforcing the argument here that the American FTO program can borrow global scaffolding (national standards for selection and training, competency-based progression to solo patrol, and integration with broader professional education) but still be subverted unless leadership invests focus, prestige, and resources.

India offers another useful point of contrast. Police recruits there undergo lengthy academy instruction and supervised fieldwork, yet the curriculum continues to reflect the command-and-control orientation inherited from the 1861 Police Act, emphasizing obedience over judgment or interpersonal skill (Verma, 2010; Wahab, 2024).⁵⁴ The pattern indicates that when organizational norms reward coercive authority, extensive or centrally planned training alone is unlikely to transform day-to-day practice.

While policing is often framed as a local or national enterprise, the patterns and tensions revealed in this study are far from uniquely American. The influence of FTOs as agents of socialization reflects a broader Anglo policing tradition, in which officer discretion, mentorship-based training, and the reproduction of occupational culture are central to police identity formation.

However, the United States exhibits a form of policing exceptionalism characterized by decentralized oversight, paramilitary aesthetics, and an entrenched warrior ethos. These unique cultural markers often manifest most clearly in the disconnect between stated reform goals and street-level behavior—a gap that this study finds is frequently mediated through the FTO system. While many democratic countries employ policing models that emphasize community trust through procedural justice and centralized accountability, the U.S. context allows for considerable variability in how training is delivered, who delivers it, and what cultural messages are embedded in that delivery. Moreover, the sheer number of guns in this country drives police behavior in ways that are hard to measure, but easy to imagine and identify. Globally, as nations confront rising demands for democratic policing and institutional legitimacy, the lessons from American FTO programs become both cautionary and instructive. The FTO

⁵⁴ As previously mentioned, even randomized reform trials in Rajasthan, focused on communication and leadership, raised perceptions of legitimacy without shifting the underlying hierarchical culture (Banerjee et al., 2012).

structure is not inherently problematic; rather, it reveals how the informal reproduction of values can either reinforce or undermine reform, depending on institutional design and political will. In this sense, the American experience offers insight into the risks of allowing police culture to persist unchecked beneath a surface of policy change—a warning that resonates across borders, especially in countries grappling with their own legacies of coercive state power and public distrust.

D. CONCLUSION

Not surprisingly—given that they are closely involved in training new generations of officers—FTO programs appear to touch nearly every urgent concern in American policing today. Issues of race, constraint on the use of force, police-community relations, and role of police in a democratic society are all surfaced in any consideration of the work done by FTOs. The findings of this investigation strongly suggest that FTO programs are underexamined elements of American policing that have tremendous potential to be agents of reform, while currently falling far short of that ideal. The content, orientation, and working of these programs deserve careful scrutiny and attention from police leaders and policy makers. In the end, the Field Training Officer program reflects both the greatest challenge and opportunity in modern policing: it is the mechanism through which reform either takes hold or collapses back into old habits.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Selection of Los Angeles FTO Evaluation Report

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MISSING PERSONS 13.16

13.16.01 Requirements for Handling Missing Persons

The probationary officer shall review and explain state law (including statutory reporting requirements) and the LAPD's policies and procedures for handling missing persons, both adult and juvenile.

Reference: 784.5 PC; 14205(a) PC; 14205(b) PC; 14206(a)(1) PC; 14207 (a)-(c) PC / Reference Guide – Patrol Procedures

	INSTRUCTED		COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED		How Demonstrated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test	REMEDIATED		How Remediated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test
	Name	Date	Name	Date		Name	Date	
F.T.O.								
PO 1								
Comments:								

13.16.02 Search Procedures

The probationary officer shall explain the LAPD's policy regarding search procedures for missing persons.

Reference: LD 27 / Reference Guide – Patrol Procedures

	INSTRUCTED		COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED		How Demonstrated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test	REMEDIATED		How Remediated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test
	Name	Date	Name	Date		Name	Date	
F.T.O.								
PO 1								
Comments:								

13.16.03 Thorough Search of a Missing Child's Home and Nearby Area

The probationary officer shall explain the reasons for making a thorough search of a "missing" child's home and nearby area at the outset of the investigation.

Reference: LD 27 / Reference Guide – Patrol Procedures

	INSTRUCTED		COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED		How Demonstrated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test	REMEDIATED		How Remediated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test
	Name	Date	Name	Date		Name	Date	
F.T.O.								
PO 1								
Comments:								

13.16.04 Amber Alert

The probationary officer shall review and explain the criteria and initiation process for an Amber Alert.

Reference: LD 27 / Reference Guide – Patrol Procedures

	INSTRUCTED		COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED		How Demonstrated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test	REMEDIATED		How Remediated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test
	Name	Date	Name	Date		Name	Date	
F.T.O.								
PO 1								
Comments:								

13.16.05 Handling a Missing Person Incident

Given an incident involving a missing person, the probationary officer shall properly apply the LAPD's policies and procedures in reporting the situation and, if necessary, initiating search procedures.

Reference: LD 27 / Reference Guide – Patrol Procedures

	INSTRUCTED		COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED		How Demonstrated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test	REMEDIATED		How Remediated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test
	Name	Date	Name	Date		Name	Date	
F.T.O.								
PO 1								
Comments:								

BOMBS / EXPLOSIVE DEVICES 13.19

13.19.01 LAPD Policy and Procedures

The probationary officer shall review and explain the LAPD's policy and procedures for handling explosives.

Reference: LD 26, 43 / Reference Guide – Patrol Procedures

	INSTRUCTED		COMPETENCY DEMONSTRATED		How Demonstrated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test	REMEDIATED		How Remediated? ↑Field Perform ↑Role Play ↑Written Test ↑Verbal Test
	Name	Date	Name	Date		Name	Date	
F.T.O.								
PO 1								
Comments:								

Appendix B: Miami-Dade FTO Evaluation Report

MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT
FIELD TRAINING AND EVALUATION PROGRAM
DISTRICT INTRACOASTAL

BLE CLASS # 122

OFFICER'S DAILY EVALUATION REPORT

PHASE 1 WEEK 1 DATES 4/8/19 4/14/19

Rodriguez, Chelsea 5005 Cunningham, P. 7792
PPO'S LAST NAME, FIRST NAME BADGE # FTO'S LAST NAME, FIRST INITIAL BADGE #

RATING INSTRUCTIONS: See back of form for detailed instructions.

	DAY: _____	_____	_____	4	5
	DATE: _____	_____	_____	4/11	4/12
HUMAN SKILLS					
1 INTERPERSONAL	1			S	S
2 PERCEPTION	2			S	S
3 DECISION MAKING/JUDGMENT	3			NS	NS
4 DIRECTING OTHERS	4			NS	NS
5 ORAL COMMUNICATIONS	5			S	S
6 DECISIVENESS	6			NS	NS
7 ADAPTABILITY	7			S	S
8 WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS/GRAMMAR/SPELLING/SENTENCE STRUCTURE	8			S	S
APPEARANCE					
9 GENERAL-PERSONAL GROOMING/UNIFORM APPEARANCES/PHYSICAL CONDITION	9			S	S
ATTITUDE					
10 ACCEPTANCE OF CRITICISM - FTO/PROGRAM	10			S	S
11 ATTITUDE TOWARD POLICE WORK	11			S	S
12 DEPENDABLE	12			S	S
KNOWLEDGE					
13 DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REFLECTED BY VERBAL/WRITTEN/SIMULATED TESTING REFLECTED IN FIELD PERFORMANCE	13			NS	NS
14 CRIMINAL STATUTES & COUNTY ORDINANCES REFLECTED BY VERBAL/WRITTEN/SIMULATED TESTING REFLECTED IN FIELD PERFORMANCE	14			NS	NS
15 JUVENILE PROCEDURES REFLECTED BY VERBAL/WRITTEN/SIMULATED TESTING REFLECTED IN FIELD PERFORMANCE	15			NS	NS
16 TRAFFIC LAWS REFLECTED BY VERBAL/WRITTEN/SIMULATED TESTING REFLECTED IN FIELD PERFORMANCE	16			NS	NS
17 CRASH INVESTIGATION REFLECTED BY VERBAL/WRITTEN/SIMULATED TESTING REFLECTED IN FIELD PERFORMANCE	17			S	S
18 ARREST AND DETENTION PROCEDURES REFLECTED BY VERBAL/WRITTEN/SIMULATED TESTING REFLECTED IN FIELD PERFORMANCE	18			NS	NS
PERFORMANCE					
19 DRIVING SKILL: STRESS/NON STRESS SITUATIONS	19			S	S
20 DISTRICT GEOGRAPHY/RESPONSE TIME TO CALL	20			NS	NS
21 ROUTINE FORMS: ACCURACY/COMPLETENESS	21			S	S
22 REPORT WRITING: ORGANIZATION/DETAILS	22			S	S
23 FIELD PERFORMANCE: NON STRESS CONDITIONS	23			NS	NS
24 FIELD PERFORMANCE: STRESS CONDITIONS	24			NS	NS
25 INVESTIGATIVE SKILL/INTERVIEWING	25			NS	NS
26 SELF-INITIATED FIELD ACTIVITY	26			NS	NS
27 OFF. SAFETY: GENERAL/SUSPECTS/SUSPECTS/SUSPICIOUS PERSONS/PRISONERS	27			S	S
28 CONTROL OF CONFLICT PHYSICAL SKILL	28			NS	NS
29 RADIO: APPROPRIATE USE OF CODES/PROCEDURE	29			NS	NS
30 RADIO: LISTENS AND COMPREHENDS	30			S	S
31 RADIO: ARTICULATION OF TRANSMISSIONS	31			NS	NS

Satisfactory = S*

Not Satisfactory = NS*

Not observed = NO*

Not Responding to Training = NRT*

32 15.01-1H
114.01-245 8/17/16

Instructions for the Daily Observation Report

The FTO (Field Training Officer) is required to complete the appropriate sections of the Daily Evaluation Report (DER) and discuss the comments with the trainee daily. The rater must apply the evaluation rating to the behavior being evaluated by describing how well the trainee typically performs the job aspect and by giving a rating on each aspect of performance.

When rating the trainee, keep in mind the definition of the aspect being rated. The following rating codes should be used on the front of the DER when rating the Probationary Police Officer (PPO):

Satisfactory (S):	PPO demonstrates the ability to perform the task being rated without FTO assistance
Not Satisfactory (NS):	PPO cannot perform the task being rated without FTO assistance
Not Observed (NO):	A particular task was not performed by the PPO on the day being rated
Not Responding to Training (NRT):	Indicates that all efforts to improve the PPO's performance have been ineffective

Overall Daily Rating: The FTO should consider what level of performance is expected for the training phase being evaluated. It is possible for a trainee in phase one to receive a significant number of NS ratings and still receive an overall rating of Satisfactory for the day. Use the following ratings codes when assigning a daily rating:

Satisfactory (S):	The PPOs performance for the day was acceptable for the current training phase
Not Satisfactory (NS):	The PPOs performance for the day was not acceptable for the current training phase

Remedial training, ratings of NS or NRT, as well as the reason for any absences must be explained in the narrative section. Any performance well above or below Department Standards must also be explained. The FTO must also enter the **shift** hours worked in the space provided and the PPO must initial the daily rating.

The Communications Signal Code for the **Types of Calls Handled** each day should be listed in the space provided.

Comments should refer to a particular day in each phase; the FTO will enter the appropriate number in the **Day #** column to the left of the corresponding comments. The FTO will enter the number of the appropriate guideline being referred to in the **Item #** column. If it is determined that remedial training is necessary, the number of minutes spent conducting the remedial training will be entered in the **Time** column.

Overall Daily Rating				Types of Calls Handled
Day	Rating	Shift	PPO Initials	Enter Signal Codes
1				W/ FTO Moody
2				W/ FTO Moody
3				W/ FTO Moody
4	S	3p-11p		17, 234D, 15/22R
5	S	3p-11p		12/34D, 34, 317

Probationary Police Officer's Signature

Field Training Officer's Signature

Sgt. Burt Gonzales **4357**

Field Training Sergeant Printed Name Badge #

Field Training Sergeant Signature

32 15.01-1H
11/01-245 Rev. 1 5/17/15

Appendix C: Montgomery FTO Evaluation Report

Montgomery Police Department
Field Training Program (FTP)

Daily Observation Report (NICS Scale: Modified)

Rev: August 31, 2020

REPORT DATE:	PHASE:	SHIFT:	DISTRICT:
Officer on Training Name (Initials, Last Name)	Badge/ID#	FTO Name (Initials, Last Name)	Badge/ID#

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate observable behaviors in accordance with the Standardized Evaluation Guidelines (SEGs)

OOTs can complete tasks OUTSIDE of their phase; if accomplished then document appropriately. However, current phase tasks is where training focus should be.

(U) Unacceptable	(N/I) Needs Improvement	(P) Proficient	(E) Excels	(NRT) Not Responding to Training
Significantly below agency standard; policy/officer safety violations	Progressing toward acceptable but does not yet meet agency standard.	Meets agency standard of SOLO PATROL OFFICER	Significantly above agency standard	After remediation, performance shows no improvement.

* N/O: Not Observed * D/S: Documented Situation

RATING BY CATEGORY

---Scale Based on FTP Standards---

KNOWLEDGE	N/O	U	N/I	P	E	D/S	NRT	R E Q U I R E D	
1. Knowledge/Application- Agency Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Knowledge/Application- Title 13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. Knowledge/Application- Title 32	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
ATTITUDE/RELATIONSHIP									
4. Acceptance of Feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Attitude toward Police Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. With FTO/Supervisor/Department Members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
7. With Citizens/Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
8. With Other Ethnic/Cultural/Gender Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
APPEARANCE/PHYSICAL CONDITION									
9. General Appearance/Bearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
FIELD PERFORMANCE									
10. Self Control/Judgement Under Stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
PHASE 0 (Orientation: Week 1)									
(Observation Only)									
When Required									
Officer Safety									
11. General	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PHASE 0	
12. Suspicious Persons/Suspects/Prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
13. Location/Situational Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
PHASE I (Need a Name: Weeks 2-5)									
14. Pat-Down/Searching and Handcuffing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PHASE I	
15. Interview: Victim/Witness/Suspects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Report Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
16. Grammar and Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PHASE II	
17. Details/Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
18. Use of Time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Radio Communications									
19. Listens/Articulation/Comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PHASE III	
20. Use of Codes/Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
21. Detective Notifications/Traffic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
PHASE II (Acclimation: Weeks 6-9)									
22. Handling Disputes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PHASE IV/Lateral/Re-Hire	
23. Mobile Data Terminal Usage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
24. Vehicle/Pedestrian Stops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Conflict Control									
25. Voice Command	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
26. Proper Use of Force	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Patrol Vehicle Operations/Driving Skill									
27. Normal Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
28. Moderate/High Stress Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
PHASE III (Mastery: Weeks 10-13)									
29. Decision Making/Problem Solving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
30. Investigation Techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
31. Crime Scene Procedures/Evidence Handling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
32. Affidavits/Statements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
PHASE IV (Solo: Weeks 14-16)									
33. Self-Initiated Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
34. Patrol Techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

PART A

INSTRUCTIONS: Document the Agency Policy and Title 13/32 that were reviewed during the shift, including the Officer on Training's knowledge, or lack thereof, and any observed behavior where the Officer on Training applied the items reviewed during the shift.

AGENCY POLICY COVERED/OBSERVATIONS

TITLE 13 COVERED/OBSERVATIONS

TITLE 32 COVERED/OBSERVATIONS

PART B

INSTRUCTIONS: Document the Agency Policy and Title 13/32 that were reviewed during the shift, including the Officer on Training's knowledge, or lack thereof, and any observed behavior where the Officer on Training applied the items reviewed during the shift.

MOST SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE

Category Number(s)

The **MOST** satisfactory performance area of the day was in the following category(ies):

--	--	--	--

LEAST SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE

Category Number(s)

The **LEAST** satisfactory performance area of the day was in the following category(ies):

--	--	--	--

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

Category Number(s)

NOTE: Any DOR rating of U (Unacceptable) or E (Exceeds) **MUST be** documented

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REMEDIAL TRAINING Recommended:

Yes

No

I certify that the ratings and documentation contained therein is true and accurate, and have been reviewed with the Officer on Training.				Report Date:	
Officer on Training Signature	Date	Field Training Officer Signature	Date	Field Training Coordinator Signature	Date

Appendix C: Example of Complete and Transcribed Interview Sheet (FTO Interview L008)

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Field Training Officer Ride Along

Study Number: L008
Department: LAPD
Date: 24 April 2019
Time with Officer: 6 hours

-Bold: Admin **-Underline: Interviewee's Responses** **-Italics: My Thoughts**

VIOLENCE

I. Background

Location Related	Questions	Code
	1. Where are you originally from? (0 = from the city, 1 = outside the city) <u>-Foothills part of LA</u>	0
	2. Question deleted	
	3. Where do you live now? <u>-Right outside LA. Moved after running into people he arrested</u>	
	4. Have you ever lived within the city limits (within your precincts jurisdiction)? <u>-Grew up in LA. From Foothill where he patrols. Used to be a black neighborhood but now it's Hispanic.</u>	
	5. How long on the job: <u>- 16 years</u>	
	6. Career goals as a cop? <u>-LT at least or gang unit</u>	
	7. Education level? <u>- Was a Marine. HS, no college</u>	
	8. Would you recommend this profession to others? <u>Depends</u> a. To your best friend, <u>-To friends with the right temperament.</u>	

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	b. son, or daughter? <u>- to kids if no better options --little room for mistakes and worries about the profession</u> <u>--works with assholes but are cops at end of the day</u>	
	9. What is your favorite Cops movie or show? <u>--The wire --realistically portray drama between cops, broken marriage and</u> <u>investigating</u>	

Notes:

- Latino and Shame: He is ashamed about other Latino's not assimilating into American culture—*not sure what I think about that but some big opinions given.*

II. Recruitment & Academy/Classroom Training

Recruitment & Academy	Questions	Code
	1. Was there any specific reason for applying to a law enforcement agency? <u>Always wanted to be a cop – Dad was deported and wanted to know the law</u> a. Is it a familial influence? (0= no family influence; 1 = family influence <i>{we should have a theme for wanting to help}</i>) <u>no</u>	0
	2. Did you find it to be rigorous or too easy to be admitted? What specifically about the process? (you can do ask on a scale of 1-10 or just 0 for not easy or 1 for easy) <u>- -Easy. They weed out a lot of good people because of how crazy long it takes.</u> a. Where their people hired with you that you thought should not have been due to a flawed disposition? <u>--Yes, but they got cut during FTO period</u>	2
	3. How long was the academy? (place time period in box) - Do you believe that you are trained/well-equipped to handle the duties of your job, regardless of the situation? <u>-6 months – no but this is a job you learn in the field, but academy gave us good basics</u> <u>--instructors seem bad ass but 90% are posers Theme: Sounds familiar, sounds like college. This is a big problem that I've heard several times, that the people in the academy aren't elite so you have second tier people giving the foundation for what is</u>	.5 year

	<p><i>hoped to be first tier officers. And that is obviously a recipe for disaster. I like the military system much better where being a drill sergeant is considered very prestigious, you get a pretty substantial chunk of money to do it and it really helps your career. And also, you get the best and the brightest, sometimes the meanest, but still the best. There're a few people who go there for—which again is why the damn field training program is the most important piece career advancements but most go there and stay because it is an easier job. (theme Learn in field, 008)</i></p>	
	<p>4. What type of education did the academy provide surrounding use of any lethal weapons: a) Was there a large focus tactical, b) use of weapon, c) when to use? (0=no; 1 = yes)</p> <p>- <u>When you should use violence – not enough focus on tactics –taught two in the body, one in the head and now they teach “one bullet assesses, one bullet assess.”</u></p> <p>a. What aspects of policing do you think were stressed the most throughout your training? Do you agree with this prioritization? (i.e. hammer or de-escalation, I explained that hammer represents using force first and the de-escalation.)</p> <p>- <u>de-escalation – maybe – but only if you know how to kick ass first.</u></p> <p><u>The academy focuses on de-escalation. Throughout his career he thinks it used to be the hammer and now it’s deescalate.</u> <i>I pushed a bit on this idea that you should know how to de-escalation but only after you learn how to kick-ass first, not because I disagree but curious why he thought that, he believes that you need to understand how to protect yourself and your fellow officers (did not say public) before you try and talk someone down.</i></p>	1
	<p>5. What do you consider to be the three most important training tools/aspects/types of training as it related to controlling violence? (List the three – this is more qualitative)</p> <p><u>1) Knowing and interpreting policy: protect self by knowing how things actually play out and looking at case studies. Theme: avoid going to jail or getting sued (theme Covering Your Ass, 004) this was interesting it kinda falls under articulation theme as well. And how do you train someone not to go to jail? I pressed him on this and he said you just teach them to do what is right and pray the cards land right no idea what that means but when I pressed more, he moved into the third training tool</u></p>	

	<p>2) How to treat people with respect: If you treat people with respect, you're going to end up in a much better spot.</p> <p>3) Tactics: how to actually do what you need to do. Wait for an additional unit before hands on. Know how to escalate and deescalate. Know when to use what is a tactical decision. Need to know how to be a good cop.</p>	
	<p>6. Now that you told me what the 3 most important types of training for controlling violence in the academy – what do you think is actually trained to control violence – what actually happens? <i>policy is stressed and law and use of force continuum—even though that's not really used anymore. This is really interesting that he still cites this and he is a leader – LAPD does not use the fore continuum - regardless it's important to lay out what that is – in 2009 the DOJ said the force continuum was: Most law enforcement agencies have policies that guide their use of force. These policies describe an escalating series of actions an officer may take to resolve a situation. This continuum generally has many levels, and officers are instructed to respond with a level of force appropriate to the situation at hand, acknowledging that the officer may move from one part of the continuum to another in a matter of seconds. An example of a use-of-force continuum follows: Officer Presence — No force is used. Considered the best way to resolve a situation. The mere presence of a law enforcement officer works to deter crime or diffuse a situation. Officers' attitudes are professional and nonthreatening. Verbalization — Force is not-physical. Officers issue calm, nonthreatening commands, such as "Let me see your identification and registration." Officers may increase their volume and shorten commands in an attempt to gain compliance. Short commands might include "Stop," or "Don't move." Empty-Hand Control — Officers use bodily force to gain control of a situation. Soft technique. Officers use grabs, holds and joint locks to restrain an individual. Hard technique. Officers use punches and kicks to restrain an individual. Less-Lethal Methods — Officers use less-lethal technologies to gain control of a situation. Blunt impact. Officers may use a baton or projectile to immobilize a combative person. Chemical. Officers may use chemical sprays or projectiles embedded with chemicals to restrain an individual (e.g., pepper spray).</i></p>	

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	<p><i>Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs). Officers may use CEDs to immobilize an individual. CEDs discharge a high-voltage, low-amperage jolt of electricity at a distance.</i></p> <p><i>Lethal Force — Officers use lethal weapons to gain control of a situation. Should only be used if a suspect poses a serious threat to the officer or another individual. Officers use deadly weapons such as firearms to stop an individual's actions.</i></p> <p><i>- theme: protect from department being sued. Training comes down to risk avoidance instead of good police work (theme Covering Your Ass, 005). Training is used as exhibits at their criminal or civil trials.</i></p>	
	<p>7. Have you received implicit/unconscious bias training? - yes a. What did you think about the training? --Went in with a bad attitude but got a lot out of it</p>	

Notes:

- Fear and the Academy: People fear lawsuits so stay inside and avoid being accused of not having a good command and control presence—that seems like a really big problem to me. Now competition for internal affairs because it is safer. Environment of fear of lawsuit has lowered arrest rates-- I found that very interesting. In old days they could stop and talk to someone wearing baggy pants—he is absolutely talking about profiling people so maybe not such a great cop after all.
- And now the cellphones come out, they start recording, you get into a beef for racial profiling—which is funny because that is exactly what he was describing. This cop is interesting because he says a lot of good things and then says a lot of kind of disturbing things. Gets asked about racial composition of is stops. Race doesn't play into the fact that he was trying to talk to them in the first place-- interesting perspective. "So why would I put myself at risk for that when I'm getting paid the same as the 'clowns that are teaching at the academy'."

III. Field Training

Field Training	Questions	Code
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	<p>1. What types of training programs do you think should be continued through an officer's career after the academy – FTO car and beyond? (0= no mention of violence; 1 = mentions violence) <u>- Refresher on tactics –Law Enforcement Command and Control lets cops reflect with other cops. Helps discuss best practices and uses of force. I find this kind of troubling. I'll have to look into this a bit more, I've never heard of this type of training before. Because, the way that he described it seems like it is a way for everyone to get on the same page in order to avoid accepting responsibility that they know the right thing to say when they get in trouble and things like that. I find that to be quite odd. You hear the scenarios about what happened and then what the officer did or said. That seems shady to me for some reason.</u></p>	0
	<p>2. What type of community relations dimensions are discussed on the job and evaluated through the FTO training phase (would explain: what within the FTO program is designed to teach officers how to communicate with members of the community and interact with civilians)? (0 = no discussion; 1 = discussion) <u>-none – if there is it's a paper drill – it's up to FTO and most don't care about this – my FTO did not do this. --nothing in manual –some people go schools but not a mandatory. Doesn't really train his officers on community relations. Spent \$100 of his own money to buy ice cream for kids. I think that's a good thing. I think it shows that he doesn't fundamentally understand what community relations is all about and understanding the community is about. It's a great thing that he does but is just another point that there's almost a different language that officers use. Like the fact that they don't really know what diversion is and they seem not to really understand what community relations mean as well. And if they don't understand what it means, they certainly are not gonna be able to teach it to their probation officers. He mentioned does hand out ice cream so that those people he gave ice cream to can be a witness if something happens. He does it for a selfish reason and that's not community relations. I asked if he had an example of this working and he said no.</u></p>	0
	<p>3. Are demographics of the city/different neighborhoods discussed during field training and evaluated through the FTO training phase – if so, how so (would explain: what within the FTO program is designed to teach officers how to interact with different religion/ethnic/race/wealth segments of their given jurisdiction)? (0= No; 1=Yes) <u>focus was on city wide training and the division – but not a lot about what is going on in different neighborhoods. nothing formal in the FTO book</u></p>	0

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	<p>4. Is field training uniform across different precincts/divisions/sections? (0 = no; 1 = yes; take notes on additional comments)</p> <p>- -yes -</p> <p>a. How much discretion does the individual FTO have in how the training is carries out? <u>-a lot but again it's a paper drill so they have to fill out the same paperwork as every officer but when they are not specifically doing something that is being evaluated - then the officer has a lot of leeway.</u></p>	1
	<p>5. Is being an FTO prestigious and what is prestigious, <u>Too easy to be an FTO, yes slightly prestigious, it's good for career but not even close to being necessary. Getting in to a gang unit or some other special unit that has big busts</u> <i>theme value of policing is arrests</i></p> <p>a. does it help with career, <u>- yes, helps with promotions.</u></p> <p>b. do you currently have bad FTOs (not bad cops just officers who do not excel in this role)? <u>- Yes</u></p> <p>c. is it easy to fire a FTO who is not up to standard, <u>- never heard of an FTO being relieved</u> <i>theme: there's this massive disconnect throughout the entire police force on this question (Firing Bad FTOs, 005)</i></p> <p><u>CAZY: Division commander gets bonus for not firing people who are probation (they get bonus for the number of officers they get through probation.</u></p> <p>d. are there better benefits? <u>-small pay increase</u></p>	
	<p>6. Question deleted</p> <p>=</p>	

	<p>7. What do you do personally to control violence while on the job as a police officer?</p> <p><u>-Respect – think 2 steps ahead – honesty and straightforward –told a story about trans woman who did not let him in the house. Explained and was respectful and finally talked her into letting him in. Respect the people you are patrolling—which is a good thing. Can always escalate but the starting point is always respect.”</u></p> <p><u>--treats people as people. Learned in marine corps. He met the children of billionaires who made them go to the marines to take over the family business and they were privates just like he was.</u></p> <p><u>--Respect can turn people from adversary into an asset even gangbangers. Get further with respect- I think this shows that he is a very good cop.</u></p> <p><u>--begins planning as soon as possible in terms of officer safety. He first looks at problems related to officer safety, “can he stop the car by himself? should he wait for a highly lit area?” If he is safe, he will feel a lot less likely to be violent because that’s when most cops are violent.</u></p>	
	<p>8. What within the FTO training program controls violence – is that evaluated in any way?</p> <p><u>he worked on teaching PIs community relations – be a man of your word, honest and don’t bluff. If you say, “if you do X I am going to arrest you,” and you’ll ruin your reputation –gangbangers ask for him by name. Witnesses afraid of the gangbangers and police.</u></p>	
	<p>9. Are FTO’s considered leaders/are they treated like leaders and is it considered an important position for the department?</p> <p><u>-Not really - we are always told we are but at end of day we are paper pushers</u></p> <p>a. What types of leadership or professional development training exist for leadership?</p> <p><u>-Told FTOs and sergeants are the backbone but no real professional development for them. Mostly tactical and how to fill out paper work. Receive tuition assistance</u> <u>- For FTO almost none – there are some for officers but they are hard to get into because we are shorthanded so only the pogues get it. The word “pogue” is a pejorative military (from Marines originally) term for any service member that is not directly involved in combat.</u></p>	

	<p>b. Do you consider yourself a leader? <u>- yes, but promotions based on bookings and not leadership. So much revolves around how good of an officer you are in the tactical components but he doesn't think there is much thought put into the leadership side of things. <i>theme value of policing is arrests: This is a phenomenon that I've seen throughout my career. Even as a prosecutor the people who got promoted to more senior prosecutor positions were the people that were good at trials but that doesn't make you a leader of other prosecutors. The military has done. I thought, a pretty good job of doing this where sure your PT score ensuring that you're proficient with your weapon is important but at the end of the day what they really look for promotion to senior command positions in the military are leadership skills and the aptitude for leadership.</i></u></p>	
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Notes:

- He said "our job is to be an iron fist in a velvet glove."
- Told a story of a barricaded suspect positioned behind a tree with a shotgun, his FTO told him that if the guy came out and ran towards him, he should "smoke him." Always tells himself at least I can go home tonight". In the marine corps, he'd be out in the field for days, in the desert. Now, getting paid to stand out here with a shotgun and gets to go home tonight." As he smiled, his FTO saw the smiling and asked "what are you smiling about," and he responded "you told me I get to smoke someone" and his FTO said "that's what I'm talking about!" From that point on his FTO seemed to like him more. I found that to be really interesting about how he was bonding with his FTO over joking about violence. And it just goes to show that this guy started the ride and I was really impressed by the way he was answering questions and by the end. His story started to come out, he fell into the same category as all the other officers that I've been dealing with throughout my career. And perpetuates the kinds of problems that we're trying to talk about. I think it's important to note that this officer was in the marines but never went to war. I find most people who've gone to war don't joke about violence like that.
- He recited the Marine Corps Rifleman's Creed to me – I pasted it here in case it become relevant during my analysis: This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine.
- My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. Without me, my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will ... My rifle and I know that what counts in war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, nor the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit ... My rifle is human, even as I [am human], because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights and

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its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will ... Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life. So be it, until victory is America's and there is no enemy, but peace!

Militarization/Equipment

Militarization	Questions	Code
	1. Do you believe you're well equipped for every incident? (0 = No; 1 = yes) <u>-yes</u> <u>good for the general mission of policing. very versatile tools</u> a. Is there any equipment you think you should have but don't? <u>-no</u>	1
	2. Do you have access to an assault rifle in your daily policing activities? (0 = No; 1 = Yes) <u>- no</u> a. Do you believe that all officers should have access to assault weapons? How do you feel about officers routinely carrying military grade rifles (0 = No; 1 = Yes (0 = No; 1 = Yes) <u>--yes – everyone with training</u> b. Is there particular equipment, you currently have issued, that you do not feel like you should have? <u>-no – what we have is good</u> c. Is there equipment that you don't have and you feel would not be appropriate for the routine police mission? <u>- He thinks that everything should be basically on the table.</u>	0 1
	3. What kinds of scenarios warrant the use of special, militarized units SWAT (narcotics searches, traffic checkpoints, terrorism-related events, hostage scenarios, violent scenarios only, all of the above)? X	

	<p><u>-Barricade suspect – but I wanted more any search warrant – fortified home-- which is everywhere in LA because they have bars on all their windows. If you think there might be a lot of bad guys in the house-basically he's very expansive on how he thinks SWAT can be used.</u></p>	
	<p>4. Do you have issue with officers wearing military looking uniforms/eq visibly seen when on routine patrol or performing a routine mission (basically not special SWAT units)? (0 = no; 1 = yes)</p> <p><u>-no</u></p> <p>a. Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way routine law enforcement officers view themselves? If so, how?</p> <p><u>--yes – makes you more comfortable, confidence and command presence. It gets you more respect from the public-- which is totally counter to what he says on the next q about it scaring the public. (theme Disconnect on Militarization .008)</u></p> <p>b. Do you think military-style uniforms, vehicles, and weapons affect the way the community views routine law enforcement? If so, how?</p> <p><u>- -yes, but it should be standard – being a hard target is good because it scares the public, shows they mean business and are there to suppress crime. Which is very counter to his earlier conversation about being respectful and being a member of the community. It is amazing to me how much the dialogue changes the longer I'm in the car and the more rapport that I build with each officer.</u></p> <p><u>Command presence demands more respect. That's crazy.</u></p>	
	<p>5. Do you think there is a blurring of the mentality of policing with soldiering?</p> <p><u>--no everyone knows there is a big difference.</u></p>	
	<p>6. What do you think about wearing cameras?</p> <p><u>-No issue</u></p> <p>a. Has your opinion changed since they were implements as part of your equipment load?</p> <p><u>-No record of him answering this - but based on his last response - does not seem to have change opinions</u></p>	

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- SGTs are the backbone of the police force- they set the tone for FTOs
-

DIVERSION

Diversion	Questions	Code
	1. Do you believe that there are some laws which should not lead to the subject being arrested, where pre-arrest diversion is the best solution? (Explained what pre-arrest diversion is) (0 = No; 1 = yes) <u>--yes – letter of law, spirit of law – so yes for some crimes –discretion built into the system, do not need real institutional change.</u>	1
	2. Is it important to enforce some laws a little more in certain areas in an effort to reduce crime? (0 = No; 1 = Yes) <u>--yes, absolutely – “pretext is gold” so will enforce some laws if need pretext. Stops people based on specific areas. Depends on policing mission. The goal is, in addition to deterrence, but places an individual at a time and place.</u>	1
	3. Are you aware or did you learn about different pre-arrest diversionary programs surrounding low-level crimes? (0 = No; 1 = Yes) <u>--Drug diversion prop 36 was good – but prop 47 is terrible because I used lower-level crimes to get into their pockets to search them and not I can’t –likes diversions that let him check pockets in effect, the reason he likes it is because it makes his job easier. Prop 47 removes repercussions and does not give officers tools and frustrates shop owners. I actually do think there is a point there but I have to think more about it.</u> <i>He only knew post arrest diversion and court programs. I think this is another example of police arrest deflection is even after I defined it. It just kind of goes to show that there is just a fundamental lack of understanding about what pre-arrest diversion even is.</i> <u>Prop 47- Reduced Penalties for Some Crimes Initiative: reclassified most “nonserious and nonviolent property and drug crimes” from felonies to misdemeanors unless the suspect has prior convictions for murder, rape, and certain gun or sexual offenses. Also allowed for re-sentencing of those in jail or prison charged with the reclassified crimes.</u>	0

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	<p>4. Do you find yourself enforcing low-level laws stricter because of police culture? (0 = no; 1 = yes) <u>-- Nothing department wide –flavor of the month – right now its hands off the homeless but that will change when tourism goes down. Business owners and tourist will get pissed at homeless. soooo yes</u></p> <p><i>I was absolutely stunned by the homeless issues there and I don't advocate that they should be hammered but the fact that we are consistently seeing homeless people do illegal things and really couldn't do anything about it, I found pretty disturbing.</i></p> <p><i>Quick story, I was with my wife in downtown and this homeless person was basically screaming at my wife and I obscenities, saying nasty things about her and there were cops that were standing right there and they kind of looked at me and then looked at the homeless person and in essence just kind of struggled at me like "what do you want me to do about it." They were harassing what appeared to be two tourists in their city and they did nothing and not even try to come over and create a physical barrier. They just let it happen. And I found that to be very kind of disturbing.</i></p> <p>5. What barriers do you think there are for more pre-arrest diversion/deflection programs in your city? <u>- need more help dealing mainly with addicts and crazy people – Have limited option: ignore or handcuffs –depends on age, priors, criminal history and circumstances. Stealing food is different from diapers. If a guy has stolen from a store multiple times, he should be looked at differently than a kid who just graduated from college, 21. Often the kid in college has done it more times, he just hasn't been caught multiple times. Because of this phenomenon of people getting released and cops looking away. If it's a kid in college it's "boys will be boys" but if it's a kid from the street, it's "you're a hoodlum." I think I can see through that veil pretty easily.</u></p> <p>Up in FTO leadership question he said this <u>"yes but promotions based on bookings and not leadership."</u> <i>If you incentive officers with promotions based on arrests - why are you surprised they are resistant to change</i></p>	<p>1</p>
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Notes:

****Maybe change 5 here to ask what barriers there are for diversion/deflection – focus on we need more mental health help

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