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Gauging the Alignment between School and Work: An Activity Theory Analysis of Police Report Writing Instruction

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GAUGING ALIGNMENT BETWEEN SCHOOL AND WORK:
AN ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF POLICE
REPORT WRITING INSTRUCTION

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Dedication

To Chris, who always knew I could do it, and
to Ciara and Soren, who kept asking if I was done yet.

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AN ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF POLICE
REPORT WRITING INSTRUCTION

by

MARIANNA R. HENDRICKS, B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

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of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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Abstract

This dissertation is based on a fifteen-month study of police report writing instruction at one agency, connecting the curriculum at the training academy, field training, and the needs and expectations of multiple report audiences and users. It draws from Rhetorical Genre Studies (Miller, 1984; Russell, 2009), Activity Theory (Engeström, 2008), and Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré, 1999) to explore how novices learn a new genre through activity, and how this is complicated by a transition between school and work outside of a university context. Specifically, it focuses on the role of andragogical (rather than pedagogical) writing instruction, the integration between the values of community-oriented policing, writing processes and overall rhetorical awareness, and the impact of institutionalized transition phases. This longitudinal case study explores the intersecting experiences of academy cadets, instructors, trainees in the field, and field training officers (FTOs), as well as the needs and expectations articulated by academy administrators, instructors, patrol supervisors, detectives, and assistant district attorneys. Using a model of multiple activity systems mediated by genre, the discussion explores how a strong degree of alignment can signal a model for other contexts, and argues that Activity Theory can be used to both improve activity and share highly contextualized “best” practices. The findings have implications for law enforcement agencies, writing teachers, and scholars, as well as teachers and institutional leaders concerned about effective ways to scaffold learning transfer.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Every day, peace officers must condense complex events and competing narratives into the generic form of a police report in order to record citizen complaints, criminal activity, and evidence for arrests. Many days, they must complete several different reports on various kinds of incidents, each with their own elements of offense and situational details that document why an event is reportable and explain how it is relevant to multiple audiences in the legal process. Eventually, each report can become the basis for public record, as well as future evidence, testimony, and prosecution in civil and criminal court cases. Indeed, the activity of report writing illustrates how peace officers are prolific writers in the workplace who must balance ability and efficiency in their particular *genre* with the competing demands more commonly associated with their profession, such as assisting the community and removing criminals from the streets.

As with any other composition, the processes involved in writing police reports involve many choices of what to detail and omit. While negotiating pressures to respond efficiently to calls, record facts, document elements of offense, or translate narratives into statements, officers often experience tensions between demands on their time, the need to write a report that would gain supervisory approval, and the hope that their report provides as much relevant detail as possible for detectives and prosecutors as they conduct further investigations or prepare cases for court. Unlike other compositions, though, the effects of these choices can significantly affect the outcome of a case based on a report's relative clarity and presence for multiple readers, such as supervisors, detectives, or district attorneys, who each have their own needs and expectations. Moreover, despite departmental, judicial, or community expectations for effective report writing, few officers have undergone formal instruction in business or technical writing beyond their

peace officer academy training, which itself varies greatly by state and agency, and instead must develop their abilities through various combinations of previous experiences, informal field training, and supervisory feedback as they transition to full patrol duty.

The tensions between workplace demands, audience needs, and general expectations is common across the law enforcement community, including the agency I studied for this dissertation, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and its related communities at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the county District Attorney's Office.¹ Deputies commonly reported that report writing constitutes 80-90% of their work in patrol duty, yet their prior writing instruction took place largely outside of settings more commonly examined in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS), such as college-level workplace or technical writing courses and their related work settings. While some deputies have taken general-education coursework or earned degrees, college credit is not a requirement for entering the academy and most college-level writing instruction would not cover the conventions of a police report. Naturally, this leads to a wide range in officers' writing abilities within the report genre. As law enforcement moves toward increased professionalization and demonstrated expertise within community-oriented policing, pressure for effective report writing also mounts, encouraging the proliferation of numerous skills textbooks, academy placement exams, and consultant workshops even as training academies strive to prepare novice peace officers for the substantial writing demands of their workplace.

However, little is documented about best practices for teaching the police report genre or the strategies that officers employ in developing their writing abilities both in and beyond the peace officer academy setting. Factors such as officers' writing experiences between academy

¹ I identify research sites and participants by pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

classrooms and field training, and their relationship to departmental, judicial, or community expectations for the report genre are also unexplored, encouraging a detailed look into the training and learning processes which occur in the present state of writing instruction for reports at one agency. RWS can greatly benefit from such a detailed understanding, not only because a police report is likely to eventually affect the lives of a large swath of our own teachers, researchers, and students, but also because the processes involved in this context can demonstrate effective applications of Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), Activity Theory, and Situated Learning that help us recognize effective practices in the community beyond the university.

With this in mind, this dissertation examines the alignment between the roles and various purposes for reports within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the county District Attorney's Office, as well as the formal and informal teaching practices on the report genre for novice officers. More specifically, it demonstrates whether current report instruction within academy coursework and field training effectively reflects the role and purpose of reports articulated by major stakeholders (i.e., patrol supervisors, detectives, academy instructors, and district attorneys) who depend on the overall quality of police report writing in order to maintain the agency's integrity, conduct criminal investigations, and prosecute criminal cases.

1.2 What I Mean By the Police Report "Genre"

My questions of whether formal and informal report writing instruction within the Southwest Sheriff's Office align with the purposes of the reports set forth by major stakeholders is centered upon the *genre* of the report, both in the traditional sense that it is a particular form of

writing, and as it is theorized in recent developments of Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS)--a performed action in response to recurring circumstances.

This latter meaning of genre, beyond mere form, stems from the arguments of Miller (1984), which demonstrated that genres function within communicative situations beyond categories, but also as social actions. Building from Campbell and Jamieson's (1982) emphasis that genre offers social and historical perspectives on texts beyond taxonomies, as well as the examinations offered by Bitzer (1968) which expanded the rhetorical situation to include persons, events, objects, relations, and exigence, Miller defined genres as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (p. 159). Moreover, these actions are both functional and epistemological, providing appropriate responses and shaping the ways individuals understand different contexts; effectively, genres operate as both template performances and interfaces for new production. As Miller states, this implies that "what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have [...] We learn to understand better the situations in which we find ourselves and the potentials for failure and success in acting together" (p. 165). In light of genre's role as both form and action in everyday practice, a police report can stand as the primary vehicle for examining the creation, adaptation, and actions of effective writing practices in the context of the Southwest Sheriff's Office.

Devitt (1993) later drew from Miller's arguments to describe how a new theory of genre would greatly benefit teachers and researchers within composition studies, a subfield of RWS, by stating that genre knowledge "means knowing such things as appropriate subject matter, level of detail, tone, and approach as well as the usual layout and organization" (p. 577). Even further, in pointing out that genre is more than effects, formal features, or categories, but also the source of

those effects, Devitt expanded Miller's argument to state, "Genre not only responds to but also constructs recurring situation" (p. 577). According to Devitt, RGS could thus reunite examinations of text and context, and form and content within composition research to comprehend writing processes as an understanding of generic goals, the forces that shape them, and situations which call for a recurring response. Similarly, RGS has provided a useful framework for inquiry into diverse forms of workplace communication both to understand writing practices and the communities who participate in these activities.

Many scholars have since taken seriously Miller's (1984) insistence that "the 'de facto' genres, the types we have names for in everyday language, tell us something theoretically important about discourse. To consider as potential genres such homely discourse [...] is not to trivialize the study of genres; it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves" (p. 155). In doing so, several studies have emerged which examine such common forms of discourse as organizational memos (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992), tax forms (Bazerman, 2000), and medical records (Popham, 2005), thus demonstrating a growing interest within RGS for genres of organizational communication and their implications for a broader theoretical understanding of genre.

Moreover, RGS's interest in organizational communication has expanded to study various transitions between academic settings and the workplace in an effort to discuss the relationship between genre learning and its transfer to recurring practice. This has involved many different transitional contexts, whether corresponding university coursework to multiple disciplines (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000) or examining specific novices in depth, such as engineers (Artemeva, Logie & St. Martin, 1999; Artemeva, 2005), through the lens of generic writing practices from formal training to workplace demands.

However, little has been examined in regard to transitional contexts which are not specifically connected between the curriculum of higher education and a workplace, leading to a relative scarcity of previous studies on the writing practices of less academically centered community institutions such as law enforcement agencies.

While many studies of police officer reports concentrate on their later use within interviews (Rock, 2001; MacLeod, 2010), interrogation (Komter, 2006; de Keijser et al., 2011), or court proceedings (Eades, 2008), very few scholarly discussions inquire into the teaching practices for these reports as a specific genre. Indeed, most treatments of police report writing instruction are squarely centered in textbooks with such titles as *Painless Police Report Writing* and *How to Really, Really Write Those Boring Police Reports*, as well as placement exam preparation materials and consultation workshops geared toward preparation for state licensing exams.

Amid all this, there is one short article dealing specifically with the audience concerns of police reports which are largely neglected by textbooks (Miller & Pomerence, 1986), Cape's (1993) dissertation on patrol officers' composing processes in this genre. More recently, Seawright (2012) concluded that "police officers write reports with limited genre and audience awareness [and t]his may be due in part to the failure of police training and literature to address such issues" (p. 4). Seawright's deeper analysis highlights how studies of police writing represent an emerging area of RWS research, yet the imbalance in scholarship on the police report genre unfortunately privileges an underlying attitude that report writing can be validly assessed through indirect placement exams (Stolp, 2002) and formally taught as skills through textbooks, workshops, and in-house feedback as long as training is relatively embedded within the community of a department (Cotugno & Hoffman, 2011), despite the direct contradiction

between this attitude and contemporary views in both composition studies and community-oriented policing (Ortmeier, 1997; Birzer, 2003; Chappell, 2008; Hundersmarck, 2009; McCay, 2011). This disciplinary gap, both in RGS inquiries into less academically-centered contexts and in specific examinations of the police report genre, encourages initiation of deeper qualitative examination of the role, instruction, and practice of this particular form of writing in law enforcement.

Ongoing developments within RGS are suitable for extension into studies of transitional contexts located outside immediate connections between higher education and the workplace, providing the foundations for comprehending the role of a police report both as a specific form and an active response to recurring situations. An examination of this genre within a specific context could enrich disciplinary understanding of organizational communication which affects a broad swath of the community and informs teaching and research that likely contributes to such writing practices. Moreover, such an examination would necessarily look beyond formal instruction of writing skills toward the complex instruction and learning which takes place in recurrent practice, providing a fuller picture of writing practices beyond the hierarchical skills instruction reflected in current publication trends.

1.3 Research Questions and Theoretical Framework

The need for effective report writing, the relevance of RGS applications in workplace settings, and the paucity of scholarship on police report writing instruction leads to crucial questions concerning the relationship between the teaching, learning, and quality of report writing within the Southwest Sheriff's Office. This dissertation asks:

1. What are the formal and informal ways that novice peace officers at one law enforcement agency, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, learn report writing as they progress from academy instruction to field training?
2. How does formal and informal instruction relate to the components of the broader activity systems that novice peace officers participate in?

To address these questions, I conducted a longitudinal ethnographic case study (Merriam, 1988; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). I compared major stakeholders' perspectives on the purpose of the report genre within current report writing instruction practices at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and in supervised field training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office. Using a combined theoretical framework offered by Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2001, 2008), and Situated Learning (Rogoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Freedman & Adam, 1996; Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré, 1999), I articulated these comparisons through the model of "activity systems" (Engeström 1987, 2005) to show relationships between the subjects, object, and tools (i.e. officers, purposes, and the report genre) of police report writing.

Rhetorical Genre Studies, Activity Theory, and Situated Learning overlap in their epistemology, framing change and learning as something that occurs in practice through mediating tools and symbols, rather than a force applied from above a given context or erupting from below. They combine in what Russell (2009) has termed "writing, activity, and genre research," or WAGR (p. 45), and Artemeva (2006) argues that these perspectives, when used together, can help researchers gain insight into the learning processes novices go through as they enter and write in a workplace.

Previous research shows that studying such everyday genres as memos or medical records provides insight beyond the conventions of a specific type of writing; more broadly, WAGR reveals and clarifies how genres work to socialize individuals into an organizational role, shape responses to variously recurring situations, and even construct the situations they are meant to capture. However, previous studies have not extended these insights to police reports and relatively little research has examined either writing instruction in police contexts or novice officers' transition into the workplace. Meanwhile, the police report genre embodies significantly high stakes, both in marking an officer's aptitude for duty and in initiating the entire legal process for criminal offenses. Therefore, this study sought to understand how the police report genre mediates the activity systems that a novice police officer progresses through in entering the workplace, taking the form of a longitudinal case study within the combined theoretical framework of WAGR.

1.4 Methodology

This longitudinal case study took place within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, an agency located in west Texas with approximately 250 sworn peace officers operating within the patrol and criminal investigation divisions. The agency also operates the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy to prepare new peace officer trainees, in addition to providing instruction and continuing education for over 2,500 federal, state, and local criminal justice professionals from six counties in west Texas. Alongside at least ten other law enforcement agencies in the area, the Southwest Sheriff's Office submits reports of criminal cases to the county District Attorney's Office for prosecution. The wide scope of the activity systems associated with the Southwest Sheriff's Office for report writing instruction, production, and use constitutes a significant impact for the surrounding community, and thus situates these three research sites as especially

well-suited for research on formal and informal report writing instruction practices that could have implications for others in law enforcement.

My case study used ethnographic methods, including document analysis of sections from the policy and procedures manual and material curriculum related to written communication and report writing (Bowen, 2009), participant observations of relevant academy class sessions (Kawulich, 2005), and semi-structured interviews with instructors, cadets, trainees, field training officers, and major audiences of police reports (patrol supervisors, detective supervisors, and prosecutors in both the report screening and trial divisions of the county District Attorney's Office) (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Further, my methods addressed the transition from academy to field training by collecting class observations and interviews with cadets, instructors, trainees, and field training officers at multiple points in time; I conducted observations and interviews throughout six months of academy coursework, and conducted interviews with trainees and their field training officers (FTOs) at two key milestones in supervised field training, two and four months after graduation from the academy. In all, I collected data from June 2012 to October 2013, including 88 hours of class observations among five classes and seven instructors, as well as 22 hours of interviews, two ride-alongs, and 87 pages of material documents.

I collected this data with the intent to account as fully as possible for the components of activity systems mediated by the police report genre (including the academy, the law enforcement department, and the broader legal process). Similarly, to comprehend the multiple experiences represented in the components of each intersecting activity system, I interpreted data interpreted as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), wherein "all is data" and the hypotheses generated from constant comparison are evaluated in

terms of fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1998). As Glaser (1998) stated, grounded theory provides a methodology that can “get through and beyond conjecture and preconception to exactly the underlying processes of what is going on so that professionals and laymen alike could intervene with confidence to help resolve the participants’ main concern surrounding learning, pain, and profit” (p. 5). Further, grounded theory incorporates both inductive and deductive thinking in recursively progressing from coding, to concepts, categories, and hypotheses through constant comparison until the point of theoretical saturation; this process facilitated explanation focused on “making sense” based on data itself, rather than a force-fit with a theoretical framework (Stern, 2007). In short, grounded theory provided my study with a systematic path for deriving meaning from social interaction and presenting insights for participants’ ongoing practice and attempts at change.

1.5 Boundaries of this Study

This qualitative study is limited to my interpretation of the report writing instruction practices and audience expectations at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the county District Attorney’s Office. Because there is a wide range of police departments across the US—and indeed across the world—my comparisons with previous studies from various contexts does not amount to widespread applicability for my findings. This is especially important because, although the San Jose and Reno models are the most widespread models for field training throughout the US, the context I studied had a relatively unique field training model and this greatly influenced my appreciation for their approach (as detailed in Chapters 6 and 7). Since different departments may or may not run their own training academy, and thus provide cadets with access to perspectives from the very supervisors, detectives, and

district attorneys that they may eventually work with, others may only benefit from my research as it is situated in its own parameters.

Similarly, the degree of contrast I saw between my own research and previous studies on police report writing in RWS (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012), and the alignment I saw with my research context, could be common knowledge to my study's participants. Indeed, it may have been the reason for their relative openness to inquiry and critique; if things were deeply dysfunctional, I may never have accessed the amount of information I needed for this study.

Amid this openness, my research was still limited somewhat by my degree of access. Police reports are embedded in legal restrictions on confidentiality, criminal procedures, and a culture of tightly regulated behavior standards, and so trust and privacy mattered a great deal in my study's context, despite its relatively mundane content. With this in mind, I did not read or analyze actual police reports within this study, and this was never part of my research design. More importantly, I had access to only the first three graduates from the training academy when I conducted interviews about the transition between the academy and field training. Budget cuts restricted the number of available slots in the field training program, and I could not wait for additional graduates because of constraints on my research timeline. I recognize that the strong degree of alignment that I interpret from these responses could stem from a kind of sample error or survivorship bias in my study, where the small size and particular quality of my participants fundamentally skewed my findings.

I also situated my own background clearly throughout this study so that participants could be more aware of my perspective and I could more consciously avoid imposing any biases on the data. With each participant, I mentioned that my education focused on English and writing, that I teach college-level writing courses, and that my spouse is a peace officer at

another law enforcement agency. These statements may have affected whether participants chose to share their perspectives with me. I was also aware that other factors may have affected interactions more subtly, as I am a young, white female and most participants were older than me, Hispanic, and male (two interviewees self-identified as white and one other interviewee was female). More abstractly, as supported in feminist methodology, this act of making my position clear also counters any pretense to objectivity and highlights how all accounts are historically situated, partial, and incomplete (Haraway, 1988). Similarly, I situate myself here and throughout the rest of this study to clarify how I jointly constructed knowledge with participants in how I chose to make sense of different, intersecting perspectives within my study's constraints (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). In effect, I acknowledged that I inevitably brought personal biases that could somehow affect the study, in order to make them apparent and minimize their impact.

Interestingly, I initially expected different findings from what I report in this dissertation. Based on the few studies on police report writing with RWS, I was prepared to encounter breakdowns, or contradictions, between what novice peace officers were formally taught, what they were informally told, and what supervisors and users expected from them. These studies confirmed anecdotal experiences I heard from other agencies that largely centered on police who learned report writing on the job, from a single FTO and with little connection to shared academy training. Largely, they showed that formal report writing instruction comprises a remarkably small percentage of time in a training academy, that this training is generally insufficient, and that experienced peace officers largely point to supervisors' and FTOs' feedback and learning through practice—not academy instruction—when recounting how they learned to write effective reports (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012).

Despite my expectations, the activity system in field training was remarkably cohesive. I eventually found that the instruction practices in the academy and field training were effectively aligned with one another, as well as with the expectations of major stakeholders, such as supervisors, detectives, and district attorneys. Despite common applications of Activity Theory, wherein researchers often locate contradictions and work alongside participants to develop revised work models, I concluded that Activity Theory could also be used to locate effective practices and thus explain highly contextual “best” practices.

1.6 Chapter Outline

In the next chapter, “Genre, Activity, and the Transitions between School and Work,” I situate my study within previous literature in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), Activity Theory, and Situated Learning. According to Russell (2009), RGS and Activity Theory can be synthesized within Rhetoric and Writing Studies as Writing, Activity and Genre Research, or WAGR, and Artemeva (2006) demonstrated that this integrated framework is particularly appropriate for research on novices’ genre learning trajectories between university and work settings. I also connect my study to recent scholarly discussions about the transitions between school and work, the patterns that novices often follow when transitioning into new environments for writing, ongoing calls for andragogy (rather than pedagogy) in police training, and the intersecting needs for modeling, mentoring, audience awareness, and community-oriented policing within police writing instruction.

Chapter 3, “Theoretical Framework and Methodology,” includes details related to my methodology, connecting my research questions with my procedures for data collection, triangulation, and analysis. I indicate how I sought different perspectives from all major stakeholders surrounding both report writing instruction and the path that reports take in the legal

process in daily police activity. This included a variety of community members, such as instructors and administrators, supervisors and field training officers, detectives and assistant district attorneys, all compared against the subject perspectives of cadets and trainees. Further, I detail how I modeled these subjects and members of the community alongside divisions of labor, rules and norms, and the genre conventions of the police report to understand whether and how everyone's activity aligned at the Southwest Sheriff's Office.

Within Chapter 4, "What Should Happen? Users' Idealized Expectations," I provide an overview of how activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the county District Attorney's Office relate to one another. The discussion focuses on the training structure for novice peace officers, the genre conventions of a police report, how a police report moves through different paths and users, and the different needs and expectations readers have at important points along the way. Collectively, these details indicate what *should* occur in the activity system related to police report writing at the Southwest Sheriff's Office based on widespread agreement in the idealized conceptions expressed by major audiences in their interviews. For example, all report audiences expect reports to go above and beyond their minimum requirements for approval with demonstrated initiative, supplementary details and cross-referencing, allowing each user to complete their role more effectively with minimum follow-up or backtracking.

Chapter 5, "What Must You Do? Writing Instruction at the Police Academy," next details formal, or explicit, instruction practices implied by the policy and procedures manual, standardized within state-mandated curriculum materials, and delivered within the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy. Through my analysis of documents, observations, and interviews, I examine how cadets are taught the required elements of the police report, stylistic conventions

for clear and concise writing, and common errors to avoid in grammar and mechanics. Compared with previous studies on police-report writing in RWS, the sequence of coursework at the academy implied a scaffolded and highly rhetorical approach to formal report writing instruction, where specific heuristics were taught as strategies for both analyzing a call, recurring problem, pattern, or intense communication, as well as for forming the content and arrangement of a report. Amid these effective alignments, I also noted areas of tension, where the andragogical aims for collaborative learning objectives and students' inherent pleasure in participating sometimes conflicted with an underlying emphasis on obedience, "right" answers, and fear.

Chapter 6, "What Did You Do? Learning through Practice in Field Training," then discusses the less formal, tacit instruction that novice peace officers receive in report writing once they graduate from the academy and progress through field training, exploring connections between on-the-job modeling and feedback, trainees' academic preparation, and expectations from supervisors and report audiences. I describe the andragogical approach that field training officers (FTOs) commonly follow, where they allow trainees to take the lead in describing events and reporting details, then offer suggestions and "tweaks" that they gradually decrease over time. A key component in this transition is the phase system for field training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, where trainees' gradual independence is formally structured into distinct administrative stages. Meanwhile, I recognize that there was a more pronounced value for independence and initiative in field training, where participants felt that they should address their own shortcomings in writing rather than expect the correction or explicit instruction from others that was forecasted in the training academy.

Finally, Chapter 7, "Discussion and Conclusion," summarizes the ways that components in each activity system either align or conflict in training novice peace officers to write effective

reports, and considers how these findings could be more widely relevant across both the law enforcement community and scholarship in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS). The conclusion also considers how my study represents a useful synthesis of Activity Theory, Rhetorical Genre Studies, and Situated Learning that can guide further research by RWS scholars—especially in workplace settings. Moreover, I argue that researchers in this framework can and should design further studies that do not seek to locate problems, double binds, or contradictions, and remain open to the possibility of highly situated “best” practices.

1.7 Key Terms

Action	<p>According to Leont’ev’s (1981) hierarchical model of activity, we can understand action as individual and directed toward a goal, whereas activity as collective and directed toward a motive.</p> <p>Famously, he illustrated this through a collective primeval hunt motivated by food, where the work of an individual beater is directed toward frightening game: “the beater’s <i>activity</i> is the hunt, and the frightening of the game his <i>action</i>” (p. 210, emphasis added).</p>
Activity	Object-oriented action mediated by cultural tools and signs. While first theorized at the level of the individual (Vygotsky, 1978), activity is inherently social (Leont’ev, 1981). According to Leont’ev’s (1981) hierarchical model of activity, collective activity is driven by motive.
Activity System	A more robust unit of analysis developed by Engeström (1987) to further acknowledge an activity’s surrounding community, rules and norms, and division of labor within a complex activity system.
Andragogy	<p>Andragogy contrasts with the child-centeredness of pedagogy and stems from the work of Knowles (1998) to understand how adults learn differently. At its core, as described by Peace (2006), it assumes that “experience is the source of learning for adults” (p. 337). Peace (2006) expands this foundation through Rachal (2002) as six criteria of andragogical practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Voluntary participation on the part of the learners is essential; 2. Learners must have attained adult status based

	<p>on social or cultural characteristics defining adulthood or on attaining an age where adulthood has been achieved, such as 25 years;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Learning objectives should be determined by a collaboration between learners and trainers; 4. Assessment procedures should not reflect traditional school-like testing but instead should be based on a demonstration of performance exhibiting a specific pre-agreed desired outcome; 5. The measure of learners' inherent pleasure in participating in the learning experience should be the objective of the training; and 6. The learners should be respected by the facilitator, their experiences valued, and a physically and psychologically comfortable environment should be fostered.
Attenuated Authentic Participation	The second status of a novice according to the spectrum of Situated Learning described by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999). Occurs when newcomers first enter a workplace.
Cadet	A student in the training academy.
Contradiction	In the context of Activity Theory, a misalignment between the components of an activity system that results from a double bind. The presence of such misalignments or internal contradictions is acknowledged as both the inevitable features of activity systems and the motive force behind change and development (Engeström (1987, 2005).
Community-Oriented Policing	Beginning in the 1980s, community-oriented policing marked a shift away from a focus on crime control and crime statistics to instead emphasize communication and problem solving between police officers and the public and so increase community satisfaction (McCay, 2011).
Current-Traditional Rhetoric	According to Berlin and Inkster (1980), the current-traditional paradigm of rhetoric implies significant—and problematic—assumptions about reality, the writer, audience, and discourse itself: reality is understood as “rational, regular and certain,” and a writer can simply “set forth” an experience so that an audience can access the same experience through correctly transmitted discourse. Meanwhile, “Error, in this scheme, is thus simply the result of inadequate observation or emotional perverseness” and “the teacher’s task is to elicit writing that corresponds to this world. This is commonly accomplished by simply reminding the student to pay closer attention to detail” (pp. 2-3).

Double Bind	“A social, societally essential dilemma which cannot be resolved through separate individual actions alone – but in which joint co-operative actions can push a historically new form of activity into emergence.” (Engeström, 1987, p. 165, italics in the original)
Facilitated Performance	The second status of a novice according to the spectrum of Situated Learning described by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999). Based on the learning process that occurs in university, where students take on increasingly challenges.
Genre	Both a particular form of writing and a performed action in response to recurring circumstances (Miller, 1984).
Grounded Theory	A method of data analysis wherein “all is data” and the hypotheses generated from constant comparison are evaluated in terms of fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1998). Grounded theory incorporates both inductive and deductive thinking in recursively progressing from coding, to concepts, categories, and hypotheses through constant comparison until the point of theoretical saturation; this process facilitated explanation focused on “making sense” based on data itself, rather than a force-fit with a theoretical framework (Stern, 2007)
Guided Participation	The initial status of a novice according to the spectrum of Situated Learning described by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999). Stems from the learning process or cognitive apprenticeship experienced by middle-class children, and describes the relationship where students observe and participate at a comforting and slightly challenging level (Rogoff, 1990).
Legitimate Peripheral Participation	The fourth, near-professional status of a novice according to the spectrum of Situated Learning described by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999). A process that characterizes various forms of apprenticeship,” where, in all its forms, oldtimers and newcomers “have a purpose above and beyond the initiation of newcomers” and “their focus [is] on something other than learning” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 187).
Operation	According to Leont’ev’s (1981) hierarchical model of activity, operation occurs below collective activity and individual action. Operations are automatic, driven by the conditions and tools at hand.
Paramilitary	A paramilitary model of policing aligns with what McCay (2011) has described as a “militaristic” or “quasi-military model” of police training, where students “are assumed to have little, if any, applicable knowledge relevant to the

	<p>lessons at hand,” and “are made to accept their place in the hierarchy of the organization—the very bottom”—through an underlying emphasis on obedience (p. 10).</p> <p>According to Auten (1981), paramilitary policing is directly rooted in the establishment of modern policing, when Robert Peel founded the London Metropolitan Police in 1829 as an organization “that must be stable, efficient, and organized along military lines” with the principal object of preventing crime (p. 67).</p>
Trainee	A graduate of the training academy, who is in the process of completing the field training program.
War Stories	<p>“Routine conversations, often called ‘cop stories’ or ‘war stories,’ in which veteran officers recount their past experiences [... and] the department’s history is primarily conveyed” (Oliva & Compton, 2010, p. 334).</p> <p>As Layton and Jennett (2008) also show, these informal learning experiences simultaneously contribute to relationship-building and organizational socialization while also reinforcing existing culture and power divisions.</p>

Chapter 2: Genre, Activity, and the Transitions between School and Work

2.1 Overview

My study examines the police report as a *genre* with tightly regulated conventions and multiple audiences, and particularly focuses on how novice peace officers learn report writing as they progress from the academy to field training. The concept of genre here goes beyond a type or a set of formal features, drawing from previous work in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) to understand the police report genre as a social action that responds to recurring situations and links to broader genre systems (Miller, 1984, 1994; Bazerman, 1994) or genre ecologies (Spinuzzi, 2003). Further, I build on previous work in Writing, Activity, and Genre Research (WAGR) that synthesizes RGS with Activity Theory to analyze how genres mediate social actions across multiple activity systems so that researchers can understand change, or re-mediation, over time (Russell, 1997, 2009; Engeström, 1987, 1993, 2001). Finally, I incorporate concepts from Situated Learning to explore how genre mediates activity in discernible patterns for novices progressing between school and work contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999).

This integrated theoretical framework—combining RGS with Activity Theory and Situated Learning—is particularly appropriate for research on novices' genre learning trajectories between university and work settings, as demonstrated by Artemeva (2006). I extend this framework beyond university-work transitions, exploring genre learning between an academy and workplace that is largely beyond a university's influence. My study therefore broadens the landscape for researchers in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) to include contexts that are less rooted in higher education (and researchers' own influence as practitioners in those spaces), while also contributing deeper analysis to emergent (though scarce) research on

police report writing. Within this chapter, I first provide an overview of relevant concepts to articulate my theoretical framework, then situate my study's relationship to previous research on police report writing, transitions between school and work, and police officer training.

2.2 Rhetorical Genre Studies

One of the major facets of this study is that it takes the police report genre as a lens to examine social activity in organizational contexts, drawing from developments in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS). Here, genre is more than a type of writing or a set of formal features, and instead represents kinds of social action that are interpretable through rules and norms. Miller (1984, 1994) established this latter meaning by synthesizing Schutz's phenomenological analysis of typification (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973) with Jamieson and Campbell (1982), who argued that genre offers social and historical perspectives on texts beyond taxonomies, as well as Bitzer (1968), who expanded the theory of rhetorical situation to include persons, events, objects, relations, and exigence. Noting how, over time, individuals develop routine responses to similar conditions, Miller (1984) defined genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (p. 159). She posited that these actions are both functional and epistemological, providing appropriate, time-tested responses and shaping the ways individuals come to understand different contexts. As Miller states, this means that "what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have" (p. 165). In light of genre's role as both form and action in everyday practice, police reports can stand as the primary vehicle for examining the organizational contexts of novice peace officers, both in terms of their training on the genre itself and how the genre affects their transition to the workplace.

Later, scholars expanded Miller's (1984) definition of genre as they incorporated it into Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) and developed the subfield of RGS. Similar to Vatz's (1973) and Consigny's (1974) theorizing about rhetorical situation in response to Bitzer (1968), Devitt (1993) noted that genre both responds to and constructs recurring situations. Further, Schryer (1993) highlighted how individuals adapt genres to develop new performances, so that the features of a genre are only "stabilized-for-now" rather than a static template or type, and Bazerman (1994) demonstrated that interrelated genres interact with one another in specific settings as genre systems. More recently, Spinuzzi (2003) theorized these kinds of interactions between different genres as genre ecologies, and Bawarshi (2000) described how genre also creates the contexts of each interaction as "symbiotically maintained rhetorical ecosystems [...] within which communicants enact and reproduce specific situations, relations, and identities" (p. 352). Taken together, this evolving theory emphasized how genre interacts with other components in a given situation, including preceding events and changes over time. According to Devitt (1993), RGS could thus benefit teachers and researchers within RWS, reuniting examinations of text and context, and form and content to comprehend writing processes as an understanding of generic goals, the forces which shape them, and situations which call for a recurring response. In particular, RGS has provided a useful framework for inquiry into diverse forms of workplace communication, helping researchers understand writing practices and the communities who participate in these activities.

As the expanded concept of genre as social action gained momentum in RWS, many scholars studied relatively mundane genres, applying Miller's (1984) argument that "To consider as potential genres such homely discourse [...] is not to trivialize the study of genres; it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves"

(p. 155). For example, previous research examined such common forms of discourse as organizational memos (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992), tax forms (Bazerman, 2000), and medical records (Popham, 2005). These studies demonstrated a growing interest within RGS for genres of organizational communication and their implications for a broader theoretical understanding of genre.

Moreover, RGS interest in organizational communication expanded to various transitions between academic settings and the workplace in an effort to discuss the relationship between genre learning and its transfer to recurring practice. This has involved many different transitional contexts, whether corresponding university coursework to multiple disciplines (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000) or examining specific novices in depth, such as engineers (Artemeva, Logie & St. Martin, 1999; Artemeva, 2005), through the lens of generic writing practices from formal training to workplace demands. However, little has been examined in regard to transitional contexts which are not specifically connected between the curriculum of higher education and a workplace, leading to a relative scarcity of research on the writing practices of less academically-centered community institutions, such as departments of law enforcement.

While several studies of police reports concentrate on their later use within interviews (Rock, 2001; MacLeod, 2010), interrogation (Komter, 2006, 2012; de Keijser et al., 2011), or court proceedings (Eades, 2008), very few scholarly discussions inquire into the teaching practices for police reports as a specific genre. Indeed, most treatments of police report writing instruction are centered in how-to textbooks with such titles as *Painless Police Report Writing* and *How to Really, Really Write Those Boring Police Reports*, as well as preparation materials and consultation workshops geared toward state licensing exams. Until very recently, treatments

of police report writing beyond basic skills were only represented by a short article dealing with the audience concerns of police reports which are largely neglected by textbooks (Miller & Pomerence, 1989) and Cape's (1993) dissertation in Teacher Education. This latter piece concluded that officers engage all phases of the writing process while writing reports (planning, pre-writing, composing, revising, and proofreading), even though they are heavily constrained by time and frequent interruptions when writing reports, and that they write with a conscious sense of audience. However, the imbalance in scholarship on the police report genre unfortunately privileges an underlying attitude that report writing can be validly assessed through indirect placement exams (Stolp, 2002) and formally taught as skills through textbooks, workshops, and in-house feedback as long as training is relatively embedded within the community of a department (Cotugno & Hoffman, 2011), despite the direct contradiction between this attitude and contemporary pedagogical views in RWS.

More recently, Seawright (2012) studied tensions between the training novices received on report writing in one police department, the audience awareness of one officer when composing a report on duty, and the evaluations on that report from key audience members—including a supervisor, a prosecutor, a defense attorney, and a judge. Using the framework offered by Gee's (2008) concept of Discourse within composition studies, Seawright examined whether new officers acquire mastery through apprenticeship and "overt teaching of the dissected analytic bits of the Discourse" such as voice and genre (Gee, 2008; Seawright, 2012, p. 10), within a methodology that included intensive "clinician" research on one individual's writing practice (North, 1987). Seawright concluded that "police officers write reports with limited genre and audience awareness [and t]his may be due in part to the failure of police training and literature to address such issues" (p. 4). Further, she recommended that experts in

policing should partner with university writing instructors and district attorneys to collaboratively teach report writing at the police academy, that field training officers (FTOs) should recommend effective report writers as models rather than be responsible for the quality of their trainees' writing, and that departments should offer ongoing refresher courses in literacy skills that are collaboratively taught by a writing professional and an in-house writing expert.

Seawright's (2012) work is very similar to my study in its research design—particularly in accounting for academy training and audience expectations at one police department and judicial system through document analysis and interviews (as detailed in Chapter Three of this project). Seawright's deeper analysis highlights how studies of police writing represent an emerging area of RWS research, and my study extends this trajectory by going further into issues of genre-mediated *activity* and the transitions between school and work for novice peace officers. Additionally, I build on Seawright's previous inquiry into academy and field training by including extensive participant observations and interviews during these stages alongside an analysis of training standards.

More broadly, ongoing developments within RGS are suitable for extension into studies of transitional contexts located outside immediate connections between higher education and the workplace, providing the foundations for studies on the role of a police report both as a specific form and an active response to recurring situations. A deeper examination of this genre within a specific context could enrich disciplinary understanding of organizational communication that affects a broad swath of the community and informs teaching and research that likely contributes to such writing practices. Moreover, such an examination would necessarily look beyond formal, academic instruction on writing skills toward the complex instruction and learning which takes

place in recurrent practice as officers transition to field duty, providing a fuller picture of writing practices beyond the hierarchical skills instruction reflected in current publication trends.

2.3 Activity Theory

My study's effort to focus on a particular genre also resonates with recent developments in Activity Theory, a framework that maps change through discernible activity wherein subjects reach their objects and goals through mediating tools. As Russell (1997) demonstrated, the concept of genre developed in RGS can be effectively employed as a mediating tool within this framework, opening up a new theoretical framework that he later termed "writing, activity, and genre research," or WAGR (Russell, 2009, p. 45). The basic theoretical assumptions within Activity Theory can be demonstrated through a brief survey of its emergence, eventually connecting with RWS research.

Activity Theory derives from the writings of Marx and Engels (1968), which argued that neither mechanical materialism nor idealism sufficiently explained both the individual subject and social context in human actions. Instead, mechanical materialism disregarded agency by framing reality "only in the form of the object or of contemplation" outside of sensual experience, while idealism located agency solely within the mind of an individual (p. 659). This division between subjects and circumstances problematically implied that change could only happen systematically from above or through individual self-change collectively occurring from below. As an alternative, Marx and Engels proposed that activity or practice transcended such dualisms, and could bring change through "joint 'practical-critical activity' potentially embedded in any mundane everyday practice" (Engeström, Miettinen & Punamäki, 1999, p. 3). Building upon this argument, Vygotsky (1978) and Leont'ev (1981) eventually modeled activity centered

on particular tools or signs, providing a discernible unit of analysis to facilitate comprehension of acts of change.

Vygotsky (1978) developed Marx and Engels' perspective on activity further by articulating a triangular unit of analysis, which included a human's object-oriented action mediated by cultural tools and signs (Figure 2.3.1). He also differentiated between tools and signs, stating that a tool "is externally oriented; it must lead to changes in object" (p. 55), and later describing signs as a kind of "psychological tool" such as language or writing that is "directed toward the mastery or control of behavioral processes--someone else's or one's own-- just as technical means are directed toward the control of processes of nature" (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 137). This model of activity, diagrammed as a triangle below in Figure 2.3.1, provided a clear articulation of individual human action; however, it did not account for coordination or influence of multiple subjects in collective action.

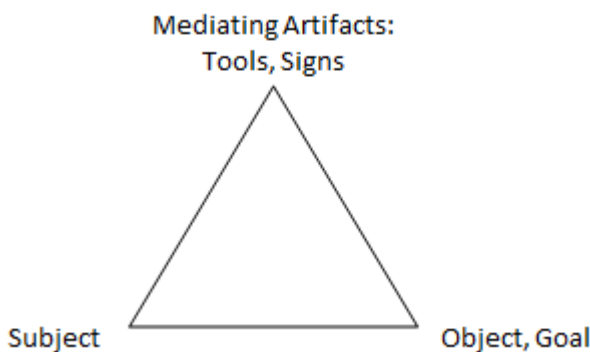


Figure 2.3.1. Vygotsky's Triangular Model of Mediation

To address this problem, Leont'ev (1981) expanded Vygotsky's model to include mediation by other human beings and social relations, specifically distinguishing collective activity from individual action. Famously, he illustrated this through a collective primeval hunt motivated by food that includes the work of a beater directed toward frightening game, stating

that “the beater’s *activity* is the hunt, and the frightening of the game his *action*” (p. 210, emphasis added). This distinction became the basis for a hierarchical model of activity involving: 1) collective activity driven by object-related motive, 2) individual or group action driven by a goal, and 3) automatic operations driven by the conditions and tools at hand. This model demonstrated that the complex imbrication between individuals and society makes analysis of something like the individual beater’s action outside collective activity “senseless and unjustified” (213), and instead described all activity as inherently social.

Engeström (1987) effectively synthesized these ideas into a robust unit of analysis to further acknowledge an activity’s surrounding community, rules and norms, and division of labor within a complex activity system, as demonstrated in Figure 2.3.2.

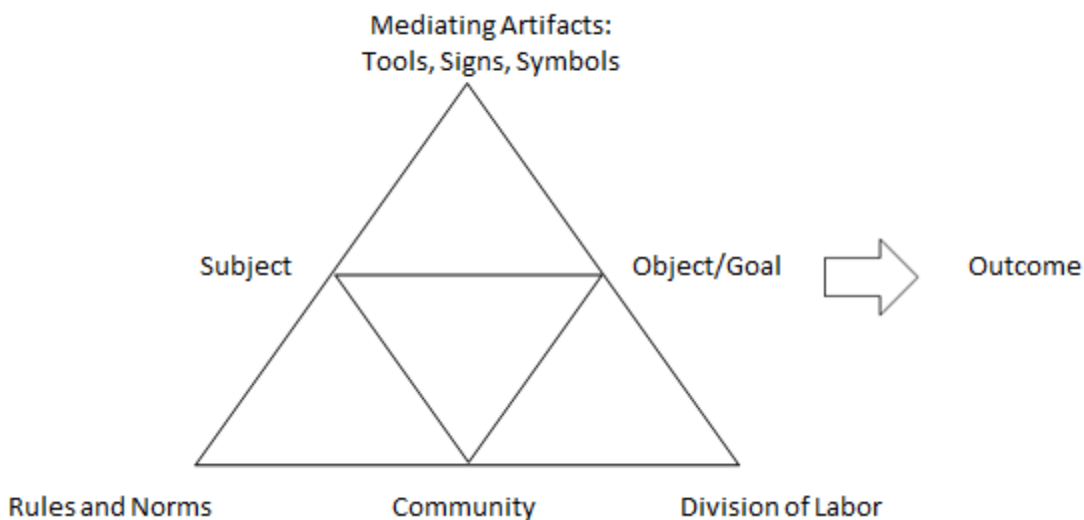


Figure 2.3.2. An Activity System (Engeström, 1987).

In applications of this model, Engeström (1987) stresses that “the essential task is always to grasp the systemic whole, not just separate connections” (2.6). This understanding would necessarily analyze both inner dynamic relations and historical change through examination of

concrete activities, focusing upon inner contradictions between components of the activity system model, such as different motives among subjects or competing use and exchange values within mediating tools. Importantly, the presence of such misalignments or internal contradictions is acknowledged as both the inevitable features of activity systems and the motive force behind change and development.

As a major theorist and practitioner of Activity Theory, Engeström has discussed productive ways to implement these models to understand organizational knowledge production and communication. In the introduction to the German edition of his 1987 treatise, he stated that such research “aims at developmental re-mediation of work activities. In other words, research makes visible and pushes forward the contradictions of the activity under scrutiny, challenging the actors to appropriate and use new conceptual tools to analyze and redesign their own practice.” This purpose directly responds to problems in ethnomethodology and many forms of action research that lead to the “nagging question [which] sometimes arises: What difference do these studies make in practice?” by applying Activity Theory concepts to understand change as “driven by reconceptualization of the object and motive of the activity [... and] grounded in disturbances experienced in daily work actions and in corresponding concrete innovations” (Engeström, 2005, pp. 171-173). Further, Engeström emphasizes that movement between these two levels of change is key, allowing a researcher to make existent disturbances and innovations visible to practitioners and facilitate connection between seemingly random incidents and contradictions in the activity system so that change may occur through attention to mediating signs and tools (p. 181).

Russell (1997) connected Activity Theory research with developments in RGS, arguing that this synthesis allowed scholars in RWS to interpret the ways macro-level social and political

structures (or *forces*) and micro-level literate actions affect one another through the lens afforded by mediating genres. Russell (1997) stated that this offered a way “to understand the relation between writing in school and writing in other social practices, particularly disciplines and professions and the powerful institutions they serve” (p. 505). Later, he termed this fused theoretical framework “writing, activity, and genre research,” or WAGR (Russell, 2009, p. 45), and demonstrated how analysis of writing-in-use “is often crucial for planning interventions to improve students’ literacy, at all levels, or to improve organizations’ communication, through document design and document management, or what has come to be called information design and information management” (p. 40; see also Bazerman & Russell, 2003). Further, drawing from Engeström’s (2001) “third generation” of activity theory research, Russell (2009) noted that WAGR can incorporate genre as the unit of analysis in multiple and interpenetrating contexts, and polycontextual systems of activity. Ultimately, Russell’s synthesis has spurred further research into organizational communication and pedagogy that could provide nuanced analyses and practicable interventions within the complexities of a given activity system.

The concepts afforded by Activity Theory thus offers a clear direction for qualitative inquiry into police reports as genres that mediate activity systems, especially when combined with the underlying concepts of RGS within Russell’s (1997, 2009) synthesized framework of WAGR. Moreover, Activity Theory’s overlaps with Situated Learning perspectives provide a broader understanding of how this mediation is particularly relevant in the transitory period between the academy and the workplace.

2.4 Situated Learning and Studies of Writing in the Transition between School and Work

Building from statements like those of Odell and Goswami (1984), that writing does not exist independently of the community in which it is immersed, several researchers have emerged

to study writing in transitions from academic to nonacademic workplace settings and thus better understand how the particularities of context impact writing performance. The majority of these qualitative examinations of the school-to-work transition were initiated by a sense of frustration mutually experienced by academic instructors, workplace supervisors, and newcomers to an organization, where school settings seemed to inadequately prepare students to enter a professional context.

As a prominent example, Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) summarily stated that “school and work are worlds apart” (p. 3), as most people believe that they learned to write on the job rather than in school or university (Bataille, 1982; Anderson, 1985; Brown, 1988; Rush & Evers, 1986, 1991) and newcomers often assert that they did not think that they would need to write differently in the workplace (MacKinnon, 1993); all too often, this frustration amounts to a perception that “[u]niversities, it appears, have failed to prepare their students to write at work” (p. 5). In contrast, studies like that of Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) argued “against [...] what Joliffe (1994) calls ‘the myth of transcendence,’” where learned skills transfer vertically after completion of coursework (p. 223), which ultimately supported Freedman and Adam’s (2000) later position that “There exists an inevitable, and *necessary*, gulf between the writing contexts of the workplace and the context of the university” that can only be bridged in exceptional and rare circumstances of simultaneous interaction between work and school (p. 143, my emphasis). Despite the necessity of this gulf, and because the disconnect continues to frustrate teachers, employers, and students alike, many of these studies continue to indicate significant issues that are integral to better understanding of this transition; in specific, they point to distinct patterns within the school-to-work transition which can make all

stakeholders more aware of what to expect, where to reflect, and how to communicate across this apparent rift.

In response to the early studies which largely expressed the anxiety of disconnect between school and work, Anson and Forsberg (1990) stated that the bulk of research on writing in nonacademic settings, while pedagogically useful, had focused on already proficient (if not expert) writers, and argued that this gap in scholarly understanding demanded further research by “taking a more developmental perspective toward the factors that contribute to learning to write in professional settings” (p. 228). To address this gap, they studied the experiences of six college seniors in professional internships at a variety of organizational settings, though they limited their participants to English and journalism majors (all of whom had previous work experience) in an effort to examine the transitions of fairly competent writers. In their analysis, Anson and Forsberg (1990) distinguished a phase pattern which they termed a “cycle of transition” wherein students qualitatively changed the ways they discussed their nonacademic writing (p. 207); this cycle included 3 stages of transition:

1. Expectation: writers build an idealized vision of themselves writing in professional settings and may exhibit intense motivations to perform well or apprehension about applying knowledge to new situations.
2. Disorientation: writers may experience senses of frustration, failure, conflict, and the need to do everything on their own as they struggle to know how or when it is appropriate to ask for help.
3. Transition and Resolution: writers begin to form new knowledge, adapt, and take initiative with a greater sense of what is expected of them.

Significantly, student feelings of disorientation appeared despite their sense of preparedness for the workplace and regardless of the institutional setting they were placed in, indicating that the sense of disconnect between school and work was quite normal; moreover, the pattern Anson and Forsberg (1990) distinguished implied that the transition could be better understood as normal, especially in the ways that novices became aware of and coped with their passage through each phase.

Later, Freedman and Adam (1996) studied the different experiences of a group of advanced finance students and a separate group of graduate public administration interns in learning very similar workplace genres in order to contrast how learning to write varies between school and work settings. In framing this comparison, they relied on the framework of Situated Learning, with the focused themes of guided participation (Rogoff, 1990) and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which they modified to “facilitated performance” and “attenuated authentic performance,” respectively, to differentiate separate phases of learning more clearly..

In these more nuanced stages, Freedman and Adam (1996) recognized that novices typically experienced cognitive apprenticeship with observation and participation at a comfortable but slightly challenging level, as in Rogoff’s (1990) theory of guided participation, but with greater mediation through sociocultural signs during “facilitated performance” than had been previously theorized in Situated Learning. In this way, a learner could perform an action *along with* a skilled practitioner but not alone (emphasis in Freedman and Adam, 1996). For example, university students experience “facilitated performance” when they learn discipline-specific writing in a setting entirely oriented to the learner and learning. Further, Freedman and Adam (1996) expanded Lave and Wenger’s (1991) idea of legitimate peripheral participation,

which is more commonly associated with apprenticeship than with schooling, to characterize a different stage that novices pass through. In this expanded idea of “attenuated authentic performance,” the focus becomes something other than learning and initiation, and any learning that does happen is incidental within the greater activity of mastering work activities. For example, a novice writer in the workplace may learn a genre in the process of producing it, yet the explicit goal is to reach supervisory approval and generate something usable rather than learning.

Freedman and Adam (1996) found that, while both types of learning were centered on “doing” the action of writing in a new genre with relatively attenuated performance conditions, they differed greatly in goals (learning v action), guide-learner relations (instructor v mentor/oldtimer/master), collaborative investment (grade evaluation v shared responsibility), timing (structure v spontaneity), and learning sites (learning before drafting v learning through revision). Overall, they claimed that these differences reflected the need to *learn new ways to learn* in a different setting rather than a need for skill transfer between school and work, especially because the gap between school and work is characterized by distinguishable phases. Further, this indicated that novices' anxiety in learning to write in the workplace is completely inevitable and not an indication of school failure.

Thus, Freedman and Adam (1996) expanded on the patterns writers tend to experience in the transitions between writing in school and work distinguished by Anson & Forsberg (1990), in particular focusing on how the typical anxiety felt in this apparent gap is necessarily created by differences in the rhetorical situations of the two settings. By controlling for disciplinarity and genre, in addition to Anson & Forsberg's (1990) control on writing ability, these differences were made more obvious; even further, they revealed the heightened importance of mentoring and

modeling in workplace learning. For example, available documents facilitated new writing and growing genre capability for most interns, and ongoing document cycling between novices and mentors was the center of most genre learning. Moreover, several examples illustrated that the degree of intern learning in the workplace was often dependent on effective mentoring relationships; as Freedman and Adam (1996) note, "Assigning appropriate attenuated authentic tasks to newcomers requires mentors' skill, subtlety, tact, and imagination, especially given the complex and multifaceted nature of the work environments we observed" (p. 412).

Other researchers had similar findings, noting patterns that better explained the process of novices adjusting to workplace writing demands and making strong connections to theoretical frameworks of Situated Learning. A prime example is Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999), who differentiated Rogoff's (1990) theory of *guided participation*, which has theoretical overlaps with Vygotsky's (1978) discussions of scaffolding within the zone of proximal development, from Lave and Wenger's (1991) *legitimate peripheral participation* in order to sketch out a general pattern newcomers go through in their transitions from school to work. The former stems from the learning process or cognitive apprenticeship experienced by middle-class children, and describes the relationship where students observe and participate at a comforting and slightly challenging level. In contrast, legitimate peripheral participation is "a process that characterizes various forms of apprenticeship," where, in all its forms, oldtimers and newcomers "have a purpose above and beyond the initiation of newcomers" and "their focus [is] on something other than learning" (p. 187).

Despite these differences, Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) demonstrated that the processes of guided participation and legitimate peripheral participation share many characteristics, as each is: 1) based on the notion of learning through performance or

engagement, 2) necessarily social in collaborations between instructors and learners, and 3) socioculturally mediated through tools and especially linguistic and semiotic signs. As part of their own theoretical descriptions of the learning processes individuals experience in transitions between school and work, then, Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) portrayed a spectrum of situated learning that proceeds from Rogoff's (1990) guided participation, to *facilitated performance* that occurs in university, to the closely supervised *attenuated authentic participation* that occurs when newcomers first enter a workplace, to the near-professional practice of Lave and Wenger's (1991) legitimate peripheral participation during apprenticeship (see Figure 2.4.1 below).



Figure 2.4.1. Spectrum of Situated Learning, based on Dias et al. (1999).

While this pattern was particularly useful in understanding newcomers' transitions between school and work, especially beyond Anson and Forsberg's (1990) reliance on the ways newcomers themselves perceived these shifts, it was also relatively fluid and not necessarily linear. Instead, Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) noted that "the movement from guided to legitimate participation does not describe a necessary developmental trajectory (although many people will experience this movement as a sequence as they move toward autonomous professional practice)," and so marked their additions of facilitated performance and authentic attenuated performance as "occasions or modes of situated learning that fall between the learning focus of guided participation and the institutional pragmatics that govern legitimate

peripheral participation” (p. 188). This acknowledged flexibility in the different phases granted researchers wider awareness of the general experiences beneath superficial feelings of frustration or disorientation between school and work, allowing deeper inquiry into how these stages were manifested, understood, and accounted for in specific transitory settings. Moreover, despite these researchers’ caveat, the relative sense of linearity implied by this spectrum emphasizes a sense of upward progress between school and work that is actually institutionalized in many police settings, where novices proceed stepwise from graduation to supervised field duty to independent patrol. Thus, the spectrum outlined by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) is a particularly useful analytical tool for examining police transitory settings.

Later, Paré (2000) structured this transition pattern into three distinct stages that he perceived among social work students interning in hospital settings, again building from perspectives of Situated Learning; in particular, he noted Lave’s (1991) observation, “Newcomers become oldtimers through a social process of increasingly centripetal participation, which depends on legitimate access to ongoing community practice” (p. 68). This pattern moved from simple observation of oldtimers to increasingly independent practice in the workplace, all while “The student newcomer works very closely with the oldtimer, who typically orchestrates and monitors a gradual increase in the student’s activities until the student is carrying an approximate equivalent” (p. 147).

In the first stage of this pattern, students simply observe while in the midst of everyday workplace activity, doing what is commonly referred to in apprenticeships as “sitting by Nellie” so as to absorb the general patterns of meetings, client interviews, or documentation. The second stage is when students perform actual workplace tasks, or parts of tasks, under direct guidance or in collaboration with supervisors, where learning is secondary to performance; as in Dias,

Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999), this preliminary phase to a more apprentice-like relationship is what Paré (2000) terms attenuated authentic participation. Finally, the third stage is what Lave and Wenger (1991) would call legitimate peripheral participation, wherein newcomers achieve a degree of autonomy through an approximation of full participation. During this stage, the work of others is often accessed for modeling purposes, and writing becomes a focus of reflection between newcomers and oldtimers.

Perhaps most significantly, Paré (2000) noted that, throughout this transition, supervisors and surrounding oldtimers are an integral part of the ways newcomers learn to write in the workplace. Specifically, he noted that supervisors' work extends beyond surface editing, and students learn more than superficial style—"they learn what is 'acceptable' [...] as the gradual initiation of newcomers into genre" (p. 151). By inquiring into these phases within a particular context, Paré (2000) demonstrated how a specific pattern in the school-to-work transition could reveal practices otherwise obscured by general supervisor sentiment that their job does not involve writing instruction. Instead, each distinguishable stage characterizes deeper learning fostered by responses from intermediate readers, models of writing, and mentoring relationships.

As researchers recognized distinguishable patterns in transitions between academic and workplace settings, they also examined the frustration and disorientation widely experienced during these periods. Le Maistre and Paré (2004) pointed out that, upon closer analysis, the feelings of disconnect are not only quite normal, but also impossible for newcomers to fully understand during the actual period of transition. Rather than transforming academic theory into workplace activities, they found that novices often adopt means that merely enable them to make it through the day. Ultimately, this led Le Maistre and Paré (2004) to argue for preparing students for the transition to work through a strategic combination of disciplinary knowledge and

on-the-job training, with the explicit recognition that “neither of these is sufficient on its own” and newcomers will fail to successfully apply classroom study in workplace practices without close attention and assistance from oldtimers (p. 48). For a better understanding of how these strategies might be effectively combined, they demonstrated that comparisons and disconnects between school and work are particularly relevant when examining “cognate workplace settings,” where academic preparation leads to a specific career (p. 44). Between this focus on matched academic-work contexts and the combined strategies that could address the mediation of workplace activity, researchers could thus fruitfully draw upon theoretical perspectives offered by Activity Theory alongside previously established frameworks of Situated Learning and Rhetorical Genre Studies.

Artemeva (2006) argued for this very integration between Situated Learning perspectives, Activity Theory, and the lens offered by Rhetorical Genre Studies when studying the process of genre learning in a specific context, suggesting that such a combination helps researchers see connections that cannot be seen when one is used as the sole theoretical framework, particularly in the study of novices learning genres of their profession. Specifically, she argued,

When studying a novice's learning trajectory in his/her learning of domain-specific genres as s/he moves from the university context into workplace communities of practice, it is crucial to understand the process through which this learning occurs. Activity theory provides us with the lens necessary for such an analysis. [...] However, this view cannot be considered complete without being complemented by the analysis of the way that the learning of genres occurs within communities of practice. (Artemeva, 2006, p. 64)

With this in mind, my study integrates the intersecting concepts offered by RGS, Activity Theory, and Situated Learning, especially in the spectrum of transitional learning described by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999), to understand how report writing instruction mediates activity for novice peace officers. Further, these theoretical frameworks will help to highlight issues that are particularly relevant for on-the-job genre learning in law enforcement, such as the greater significance of readers, modeling, and mentoring in workplace writing.

2.5 The Greater Significance of Readers in the Workplace

Some of the most pertinent findings from studies of the school-to-work transition clearly reflected the greater significance of readers for newcomers learning to write in the workplace. As Paradis, Dobrin, and Miller (1985) noted, the most important site for learning in the workplace comes during the kind of extensive feedback that they termed “document cycling,” which occurs when supervisors help staff restructure, focus, and clarify their written work. Similarly, Smart (1993) noted that, in all genres, composing processes are structured by a similar cycle of writer/reviewer collaboration: “Typically, the writer incorporates rounds of spoken and written feedback from the supervisor into successive revisions until the latter is satisfied” (p. 131). Adam (2000) reinforced this key role of readers by arguing that the reading practices and responses from those in authority reveal the socially constructed exigences that define and characterize those communities, their recurrent rhetorical settings, and their characteristic genres (p. 169). Even more importantly, Adam (2000) emphasized that these intermediate readers are ultimately responsible for any writing that goes out of their department, usually under their signature, and so there must be a collaborative relationship between readers and writers in workplace settings.

Similarly, Ledwell-Brown (2000) noted that several researchers (e.g., Barabas, 1990; Bazerman, 1985; Kleimann, 1993; Smart, 1993) supported the conclusion that readers’ responses

clearly reflect the organization's goals and values (p. 219). Further, she recognized within her own study of workplace writers that the most important outcome of any writing was "that it passes" the judgment of each audience from division to management to outsiders. Later, Paré (2000) demonstrated how readers are an essential component of his third stage of transition, legitimate peripheral participation, wherein all texts must go through "revision loops--from writer to supervisor and back" (p. 150). As a further indication of how important attention to readership is, Paré (2000) focused on writing's pertinence, which "is determined by the task of that next person, which means that team members must know something about the job performed by the person to whom they pass information" (p. 158). Taken together, these various studies agree in chorus that one of the most significant issues as novices enter the workplace is the greater importance of attention to audience when writing, and then incorporating the responses of specific readers in an intense cycle of revision.

This is especially significant in comparison to school settings which, as Freedman and Adam (1996) noted, are more concerned with evaluating skill mastery than collaboratively producing documents for readers to act on. This dynamic of collaborative document cycling also reinforces the issue of modeling in these transitory settings, highlighting some of the reasons that writing examples are typically a sort of lifeline for novice writers in the workplace.

2.6 Why Modeling Matters in Workplace Learning

In their work on the school-to-work transition, Anson and Forsberg (1990) quickly detected the significance of writing models for novices otherwise unfamiliar with the specific conventions of a given workplace. For example, when discussing the second stage of transition, containing budding frustrations, they noted that interns also tended to look upon supervisors as "caretakers and providers" and "reached eagerly for anything that sounded like a rule or looked

like a model” (pp. 214, 217). Meanwhile, they also noted that supervisors “are not formally teachers in the workplace” even though novices look to them for rules and expect authoritative statements on correctness (p. 217). Indeed, the supervisors within Anson and Forsberg’s study illustrate a common sentiment, that they are not responsible for writing instruction.

That supervisor perspective also reflects an interesting dynamic which undergirds studies into the school-to-work transition: the differences between formal/academic instruction, informal/on-the-job training, and spontaneous mentoring may be unclear, and even problematic. Billet (2004) argues, for example, that the terms “formal” and “informal” are unhelpful in understanding learning in complex contexts and suggests that “workplaces represent a socially constituted and contested learning space whose participatory practices are key pedagogical devices” (p. 319). For these reasons, it becomes even more pressing to examine nuanced forms of, for lack of better terms, informal and formal instruction, controlling for the different ways that instruction, training, mentoring, or advice comes up around one kind of genre learning in one site. Further, it is necessary to understand how such practices fit into existing modes of professional training, especially within the peculiar subculture of law enforcement.

2.7 Examining Workplace Learning for Police

While there is no set standard either internationally or across different states in the U.S. for the content or number of hours required for peace officer preparation (Palmiotto, Birzer & Unnithan, 2000), training generally consists of a period of classroom-based instruction in an academy, followed by time spent in on-the-job training under the guidance of a field training officer (FTO). As both Charles (2000) and Birzer (2003) demonstrated, this typical framework is undergirded by a relatively uniform militaristic style; further, police training has been widely characterized as teacher-centered and driven by lectures and skills instruction (McCoy, 2006;

Peace, 2006), wherein “learners are assumed to have little, if any, applicable knowledge relevant to the lessons at hand [... and] are made to accept their place in the hierarchy of the organization: The very bottom” (McCay, 2011, p. 10). These characteristics are remarkably consistent across multiple settings and continue to raise questions for instructors, departmental administrators, and researchers about the most effective ways that officers can be trained for their duties and whether existing methods can be meaningfully reviewed or revised.

As Seawright (2012) outlined, course content in police training can be categorized into five general topics: officer duties, safety, legal literacy, street literacy (i.e., verbal and nonverbal techniques of persuasion), and traditional literacy (i.e., reading and writing reports). In the specific context of report writing instruction, the prevailing uniformity in training style has fostered a concomitant mode of pedagogy: academy recruits tend to receive lectures on report writing through isolated instruction in skills, format, and grammar. They also generally spend far less time on these topics than on their other curricular concerns; Seawright (2012) found that officers at one academy spent only 1% of their time in a report writing course, resonating with Palmiotto, Birzer, and Unnithan’s (2000) observation that training concentrates on topics that officers are likely to perform only 10% of their time on duty. As part of this dynamic, the majority of textual discussions of police report writing emerge from the skills-based textbook market, containing such titles as *Painless Report Writing* and *How to Really, Really Write Those Boring Police Reports* that convey the overall impression that report writing as a content area, while necessary, is a chore which can be addressed quickly and simply.

Within the focus on skills-based instruction, across diverse content requirements and academy durations, is an entrenched desire on the part of departments to understand what factors correlate with recruits’ success in their instruction and transfer to field duty. After all, as White

(2008) points out, despite disagreement over the value of academy training and its relationship to job performance, departments clearly invest heavily in the experience and its goal of producing capable officers. Several studies in the 1980s and 90s revealed strong support for education as a statistical predictor of success for law enforcement officers, noting positive correlations between a college degree and training academy scores (Copley, 1987), overall job performance (Smith & Aamodt, 1997), and dimensions of job performance (such as specialized assignments, service awards, fewer disciplinary actions, and lower likelihood of using a gun as the first choice in resolving a violent encounter (Baratta, 1998). However, White (2008) indicated that an applicant's reading level may be more directly related to police academy performance than college education, McDonnell (2008) demonstrated no significant difference when different levels of officer education were compared to officers' evaluation scores in their first five years of employment,² and Wright, Dai, and Greenbeck (2011) instead found general work experience as a more significant correlate for success. While the benefits of a higher education or work experience for law enforcement might have an indirect impact on positive evaluations of performance in report writing, this has not been examined specifically in studies of police academy success and, even further, Wright, Dai & Greenbeck (2010) recently noted that "the impact of college education of officers' behavior on the street is still inconclusive [and] there is a great need for future research in this area" (p. 631). Perhaps, though, the difficulties in bridging gaps between the goals for training and relatively static teaching styles with empirical factors for success point to an underlying issue—both the content of "skills" and the style of lecture may continually reinforce disconnection between academic training and hands-on practice. As long as this dynamic remains unaddressed, different factors for academy success will likely continue to

² These scores reflected evaluations in areas including quality of work, writing accurate and detailed criminal and traffic accident reports and field interview cards, and providing positive and effective communication with the public, co-workers, and supervisors.

emerge with little discernible pattern across settings and thus drive further “great need for future research in this area.” However, one way that this underlying issue has been directly countered in studies on law enforcement education centers on new theories of adult learning, leading to various criticisms of traditional police instruction practices and rallying calls for overhauled curriculum strategies.

2.8 Continued Behaviorist Approaches vs. Calls for Andragogy

The overarching context of teacher-led instruction and skills-based curriculum has persisted into the era of community-oriented policing, which marked a shift in the 1980s away from a focus on crime control and crime statistics to instead emphasize communication and problem solving between police officers and the public and so increase community satisfaction (McCay, 2011). As Chappell (2008) explained, this change moved away from traditional training programs which were narrowly focused on duties of law enforcement as individual tasks, replicated for assessment. Instead, instruction was redesigned toward knowledge areas that were previously neglected, such as communications, diversity, problem solving, and police-community relations; here, tasks centered on scenarios that required novices to develop solutions to ill-defined problems. Even while many researchers have argued that new missions for community-oriented policing ought to trigger changes in how officers are trained, so as to encourage critical thought, analysis, dialogue, and practical applications of curriculum (Ortmeier, 1997; Birzer, 2003; Chappell, 2008; Hundersmarck, 2009; McCay, 2011), the underlying organizational hierarchy has also continued to frustrate instructors, departmental administrators, and scholars in anticipating any possibility of change. As Schults (2007) conceded, while there is “clear support” from training experts for integrating community-oriented policing values within training coursework, “little is currently occurring [...] and, moreover, respondents have little faith

that such integration will occur in the foreseeable future” (p. xi). Similarly, McCoy (2006) found that “the current state of the discipline is still steeped in a teacher-centered and lecture-driven approach—even though instructors are highly aware of the inadequacies of lecture” (p. 77), while Oliva and Compton (2010) noted, “Many agency leaders may agree that their training curricula should be continually reviewed and revised when necessary to address the needs of a fluid community. However, organizational or bureaucratic pressures associated with police training can often stifle this process and limit a department’s flexibility” (p. 333). This tension between theories of individual differences and persistently uniform practice is what Birzer (2003) has called “a salient paradox” (p. 32), and several researchers have proposed andragogical principles as a bridge toward revised training processes.

Andragogy contrasts with the child-centeredness of pedagogy and stems from the work of Knowles (1998) to understand how adults learn differently. At its core, as described by Peace (2006), it assumes that “experience is the source of learning for adults” (p. 337). Peace (2006) expands this foundation through Rachal (2002) as six criteria of andragogical practice:

1. Voluntary participation on the part of the learners is essential;
2. Learners must have attained adult status based on social or cultural characteristics defining adulthood or on attaining an age where adulthood has been achieved, such as 25 years;
3. Learning objectives should be determined by a collaboration between learners and trainers;
4. Assessment procedures should not reflect traditional school-like testing but instead should be based on a demonstration of performance exhibiting a specific pre-agreed desired outcome;

5. The measure of learners' inherent pleasure in participating in the learning experience should be the objective of the training; and
6. The learners should be respected by the facilitator, their experiences valued, and a physically and psychologically comfortable environment should be fostered.

Through these criteria, instructors and researchers may be able to evaluate, revise, or design curriculum that is more in line with the values of community-oriented policing, such as critical awareness, analytical thinking, or articulate communication. Birzer (2003) further applies andragogical principles to police training by asserting that training should become mission-oriented and respond to what police have to know to perform their jobs effectively (p. 34), even though "The difficult aspect of andragogy is transforming the theory and design into action" (p. 38). According to Birzer, the reasons for these tensions include institutional preference of hegemony to change and limiting curriculum guidelines in training commissions, legal requirements, and state mandates. This latter issue--an entrenched difficulty throughout the field of law enforcement training--has spurred some studies on whether curriculum has been effectively aligned with andragogy within specific settings.

In response to shifts toward community-oriented policing, a few researchers have studied departments for alignment between the goals for critically aware and articulate problem solving and the practices evident in curriculum and teaching. Peace's (2006) inquiry into police training in England and Wales argued that, despite its apparent student-centered approach, training remains much like the U.S. because police trainees may not have reached full sociocultural adult status, have no opportunity to negotiate curriculum, methods, or outcomes, and written

assessments are widespread and evidently privileged over performance in experiential scenarios. Specifically, Peace (2006) states:

The questions remain as to whether they are effective in assessing anything other than a student's ability to take written tests and whether benefits can be gained from a more adventurous choice of assessment methods [...] The most obvious weakness in this approach lies in the fact that while the majority of students' time is spent in the classroom under didactic tuition, there are no concrete experiences to cycle and learn from. (pp. 340-341)

Similarly, in the context of the Southeastern U.S., Oliva and Compton (2010) found that students preferred adult education practices, but instructional content was usually delivered in a highly structured, often didactic, format using traditional instructional technologies (i.e. books, articles, and lectures). Oliva and Compton (2010) noted that these training programs typically consisted of standardized instructional content, universal delivery of information through lectures, and state-mandated written examinations; meanwhile, creativity was often undervalued, with an emphasis given to standardization (p. 322).

Alongside rallying calls for andragogical principles in curriculum design and teaching practice, a major aspect that needs to be studied in recruits' relative success is their eventual transition to field training and how instruction proceeds in this context. This transition has long been understood as key to instruction; for example, Fagan and Ayers (1985) emphatically noted that police training was "not complete until they work the streets under the guidance of a seasoned veteran" (p. 8). Similarly, participants in contemporary studies of transitions to field training continue to "describe an informal 'curriculum' and use this to educate the recruit"

(Lundin and Nuldén, 2007, p. 234). In related examinations of training for paramedics and firefighters, Taber, Plumb and Jolemore (2008) stated that

one would expect that learning in these occupations would largely take place in formal training contexts where risk could be minimized, procedures could be mastered, and requisite competencies assured [...] however, we heard relatively little about formal training and much about the intensely situated and experiential nature of their most important learning. (p. 273)

Meanwhile, in direct connection to police training, McCay (2011) argued that “Those tasked with training police recruits should fully consider what lessons outside of the written curriculum are being taught, from an experiential standpoint as well as by their instructional methods” (pp. 24-25). Thus, scholarly inquiry into peace officer training has focused extensively on criticizing the instructional style of academy training, yet has also pointed to the significance of field training for effective, adult-oriented learning practices. Indeed, this latter setting has illustrated many ways that instruction proceeds on the job, implying useful connections which may be made between school and work settings.

2.9 Transitions from Academy to Field Training

In studying the transition between police academy training and the workplace, some researchers have begun to implement Situated Learning concepts, such as the theoretical framework of legitimate peripheral participation within communities of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through this lens, for example, Gherardi (2006) demonstrated that new recruits engage as legitimate peripheral participants both verbally and nonverbally, in ways “that are difficult to acquire except in action” (p. 77). In another examination of the daily mundane work of Swedish police officers through the lens of Situated Learning and CoP, Lundin and Nuldén

(2007) discussed how the significance of the tools involved in work “cannot be understood in isolation from the social practice in which they are used” (p. 225). They argued that the process of acquiring relative mastery is much more complex than direct, teacher-centered skills instruction; instead, newcomers learn how to talk about tools, and thus also learn how tools are to be used and understood in the community (p. 237). Helpfully, Situated Learning offers the foundation for articulating how these formal and informal practices intersect in the learning activities of novice officers--within explicit instruction as well as socially demonstrated actions.

Moreover, prior studies highlight how any inquiry into police instruction in the transition from academy to field training must also account for the distinct role that mentoring plays, whether enacted by a field training officer (FTO) or another experienced veteran as a novice enters further into specific CoP. Indeed, mentoring is a core component of most training sequences across the law enforcement community. As Sprafka and Kranda (n.d.) note, mentoring is widely espoused by the US-based International Association for Chiefs of Police because it has clear benefits for both mentors and protégés. This institutionalized privilege for mentoring is sometimes differentiated from FTO roles, though. Bozeman and Feeney (2007) define mentors apart from the evaluative roles associated with direct supervision, and instead characterize mentoring as

a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé). (p. 371)

Despite this differentiation between mentoring and supervisory roles, the importance of this dynamic is nevertheless present among novice recruits' transition to field duty alongside the guidance of FTOs. This interconnection indicates that the simultaneous influences of field training and mentoring play a significant part in how effectively novices transition into full duty.

The intersecting dynamics between novices' transitions to field duty under close supervision, alongside relative degrees of mentoring, are widely acknowledged as important factors in determining effective workplace learning. For example, in their study of mentoring among first-year police constables in Australia, Tyler and McKenzie (2011) noted that "All FTOs indicated the need for mentoring as a means of introducing policing" (p. 523). However, as Birzer (2003) noted, "scholarship regarding how effective neophyte and veteran police learn is not terribly extensive" (p. 31), and officers are often required to assume the role of trainer without receiving adequate preparation even within departments that espouse andragogical principles that advocate both technical and interpersonal skills (p. 39). Indeed, even though Tyler and McKenzie (2011) found a definite, and even universal, regard for mentoring, they also noted that FTOs "placed little emphasis on formal training as a mentor, and more often than not, mentored in isolation" (p. 518). Similarly, Peace (2006) recognized that the commonplace situation wherein trainers are experts in subject matter but inadequately trained in teaching techniques is often replicated in police instruction so that "After receiving only minimal grounding in the theories, models, and methods of adult-oriented education, the trainers are essentially left to their own devices" (p. 338). Given the heightened importance of field training and mentoring to novices' expectations for success, it appears that greater attention is needed in how police officers learn in the less formal settings which proceed after academy training.

One of the challenges in examining the gap between police academy instruction and supervised field training and associated mentoring is that both settings are suffused with an underlying assumption of linear progression and straightforward identity formation which is generally replicated in existing literature. That is, despite attempts to move police training toward a more complex andragogical approach and the acknowledged significance of typically unstructured (and therefore even more complex) field training, most studies on learning between academy and field training often continue to assume linear progressions toward insider status. For example, Lundin and Nuldén (2007) argue,

Research on police training generally takes a relatively unproblematic approach to learning: learning is understood to be either the equipping of officers with knowledge as tools for carrying out work or it is described as being socialized into practice. However, previous studies provide little reflection on how learning actually and specifically is achieved within police practice, how officers engage in the transformation of practice, and their participation in practice. (p. 223)

Further, Lundin and Nuldén (2007) state that “the practice that recruits in academy training are incorporated in is the practice of being a recruit rather than being an officer” so that whatever learning that takes place later on is intricately tied in to socialization with organizational power dynamics and a transferred identity from “recruit” to “officer” (p. 227). Since this change in identity takes place between what researchers largely criticize as an over-structured formal curriculum and a rather unstructured setting where mentors operate without adequate training, it is therefore necessary for further research into this transitory context to take account of specific practices, with an eye toward less formal ways of learning on the job.

This problem is demonstrated, for example, in Harris, Simons and Carden's (2004) examination of the peripheral learning and institutional acceptance of probationary constables in Australia. While the novices in this study appeared to have a healthy transition into field duty under their field training officers, the burden for effective workplace learning seemed to be on the novices, both in their ability to recognize everything as a learning opportunity and so observe and model others' actions appropriately, as well as their ability to question senior officers and supervisors whenever necessary. Thus, effective workplace learning relied heavily on novices' personalities as outgoing and carefully observant, with little room for error in reading different people and situations. Indeed, the authors acknowledged this in presenting an example from novices who reflected on others' emotional difficulties in speaking up when they had questions, or in dealing with tensions when they appeared precocious or nosy. Once again, this highlights the central importance of mentors and senior officers in determining the progress novices make into legitimate participation; however, it is unclear whether mentors should or could be better prepared to actively take on an attitude espoused by one interviewed sergeant, who emphasized the need to go "out of your way to teach them things" because novices represent future friends and colleagues (p. 216). Ultimately this raises questions of whether novices could be better prepared to take on the necessary dispositions for effective workplace learning, and if mentors, too, could be trained and prepared to facilitate these dispositions.

The comparison of academy to field training also often amounts to discussions of formal curriculum, or "book learning," which is later made "real" through informal mentoring and hands-on experiences (Hundersmarck, 2009), highlighting an apparent disconnect between formal and informal instructional practices. In contrast to the formal preparation of police academy training, then, Lundin and Nuldén (2007) noted, "The officers describe an informal

‘curriculum’ and use this to educate the recruit” (p. 234). Interestingly, within this informal curriculum, they note that the focus of FTOs is on attitudes towards the use of various tools rather than the more basic skills taught at the academy and, notably, that “stories play a large role in everyday police work” (p. 236). This aligns with later research into the practices of police training, which highlighted the embedded nature of “routine conversations, often called ‘cop stories’ or ‘war stories,’ in which veteran officers recount their past experiences [... and] the department’s history is primarily conveyed” (Oliva & Compton, 2010, p. 334). As Layton and Jennett (2008) also show, these informal learning experiences simultaneously contribute to relationship-building and organizational socialization while also reinforcing existing culture and power divisions. Ultimately, though, some researchers have decried the dissimilarity between formal learning espoused in academy training and the more informal experiences of the field, arguing that “the inclusion of newcomers in police practice is problematic [because] at the academy many aspects of the practice cannot be included in ways that are even remotely similar to actual police practice” (Lundin and Nuldén, 2007, p. 237). The usual argument to address this perceived disconnect is to further direct academy curricula toward andragogical values and experiential learning, better preparing recruits for a transition wherein this sort of informal training is the norm.

Despite frequent characterizations of police learning between academy and field training as either formal or informal, though, it is possible that these terms provide limited understanding for examining the complexities of novice officers’ progression into full field duty. Indeed, officers in many qualitative studies have themselves highlighted the greater complexity of experiential learning, even while under the tutelage of FTOs or mentors. For example, in Taber, Plumb & Jolemore’s (2008) research

One officer stated that what they do is impossible to describe, and must be experienced personally to be understood. It is therefore very difficult to pass on these tacit understandings to new [recruits] in any way other than engaging with them in the flow of unfolding situations. (p. 282)

Even further, as noted previously in discussing the broader significance of modeling for particular workplace actions as novices enter an organizational setting, Billet (2004) argues that the terms “formal” and “informal” are unhelpful in understanding learning in complex contexts; instead, he suggests that workplaces represent “a socially constituted and contested learning space whose participatory practices are key pedagogical devices” (p. 319). Perhaps, then, further examinations of the workplace transition for police recruits between academy and field training could recognize that learning does indeed take place despite criticisms of teacher-centered instructional practices in order to more closely examine layers of apprenticeship, mentoring, supervision, and assessment in the relatively unstructured and under-researched--yet prominently respected--context of field training.

After all, this latter context is widely accepted by supervisors and officer recruits alike as more meaningful than any given academy training. For, as Hundersmarck (2009) found, newly graduated officers rated academy courses which involved hands-on learning higher than those more academic in nature as they found it more directly related to “real” police work. Similarly, the eventual impact on field training may be a more significant area for instructional improvement as “Field training officers generally took the new officers’ academy knowledge for granted and often did not know what the academy did or did not teach” (Hundersmarck, 2009, p. 30). Thus, the general imbalance of research toward both sides of police transitions could probably be improved with greater attention to both academy instruction of particular workplace

practices and later field training related to these concerns. Such a project would fulfill Haar's (2001) insistence that academy learning should be aligned and coupled with field training to be truly effective, so that, consequently, any change to the academy curriculum will not prove beneficial until actively mediated in the department. Moreover, it would address what Hundersmarck (2009) more recently termed "the inconsistent nature of learning between academy classes and field training" so that researchers could contribute to various agencies' efforts to "bridge the learning at all levels of training by actively mediating it across the different contexts" (p. 31). Indeed, this specific attention to mediation could be key.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Overview

This qualitative inquiry was guided by a synthesis of Activity Theory, Rhetorical Genre Studies, and Situated Learning. These theories overlap in their epistemology, framing change and learning as something that occurs in practice through mediating tools and symbols, rather than a force applied from above a given context or erupting from below. They combine in what Russell (2009) has termed “writing, activity, and genre research,” or WAGR (p. 45), and Artemeva (2006) argues that these perspectives, when used together, can help researchers gain insight into the learning processes novices go through as they enter and write in a workplace.

Previous research shows that studying such everyday genres as memos or medical records provides insight beyond the conventions of a specific type of writing; more broadly, WAGR reveals and clarifies how genres work to socialize individuals into an organizational role, shape responses to variously recurring situations, and even construct the situations they are meant to capture. However, previous studies have not extended these insights to police reports and relatively little research has examined either writing instruction in police contexts or novice officers’ transition into the workplace. Meanwhile, the police report genre embodies significantly high stakes, both in marking an officer’s aptitude for duty and in initiating the entire legal process for criminal offenses. Therefore, this study sought to understand how the police report genre mediates the activity systems that a novice police officer progresses through in entering the workplace, taking the form of a longitudinal case study within the combined theoretical framework of WAGR.

3.2 Research Questions

Novice peace officers learn the police report genre as part of their academy curriculum and on-the-job training, and reports remain a significant portion of their duties throughout their career. To understand how reports mediate the activity systems of a police officer, my research questions focus on how the genre is formally taught and informally demonstrated in modeling and feedback to novices. Further, the research questions inquire into how instruction practices relate to the underlying components of each activity system, including the subjects, objects, surrounding community, rules and norms, and division of labor in the academy, the department, and the broader legal process (Engeström, 1987, 2001, 2008). Specifically, this study's research questions are:

3. What are the formal and informal ways that novice peace officers at one law enforcement department learn report writing as they progress from academy instruction to field training?
4. How does formal and informal instruction relate to the components of the broader activity systems that novice peace officers participate in?

3.3 Research Procedures

To answer these research questions within the theoretical framework of WAGR, my project examined formal and informal instruction in police report writing at one law enforcement department by employing naturalistic inquiry within a qualitative, longitudinal case study (Merriam, 1988; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Specifically, I used ethnographic methods, including document analysis of curriculum sections in written communication and report writing (Bowen, 2009), participant observations of relevant academy class sessions (Kawulich, 2005), and semi-structured interviews with instructors, cadets, field training officers, and major

audiences of police reports (patrol supervisors, detective supervisors, and prosecutors in both the report screening and trial divisions of the county District Attorney's Office) (Kvale, 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Further, my methods addressed the transition from academy to field training by collecting class observations and interviews with cadets, instructors, and field training officers at multiple points in time; I conducted observations and interviews throughout six months of academy coursework, including 88 hours of class sessions, and conducted interviews with recruits and their field training officers (FTOs) at two key milestones in supervised field training, two and four months after graduation from the academy. I collected this data with the intent to account as fully as possible for the components of activity systems mediated by the police report genre (including the academy, the law enforcement department, and the broader legal process). Similarly, to comprehend the multiple experiences represented in the components of each intersecting activity system, I interpreted data interpreted as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), wherein "all is data" and the hypotheses generated from constant comparison are evaluated in terms of fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1998).

My inquiry was centrally focused on how the genre of the police report mediates the activity systems of novice police officers, and so was guided by a synthesis of Activity Theory, Rhetorical Genre Studies, and Situated Learning. These theories overlap in their epistemology, framing change and learning as something that occurs in practice through mediating tools and symbols, and combine to form what Russell (2009) has termed "writing, activity, and genre research," or WAGR (p. 45). The perspectives of Vygotsky (1978), Leont'ev (1981), and Engeström (1987) within Activity Theory demonstrate that change and learning occur through mediating tools, such as language, and through intersecting social forces. These components

illustrate an activity system, including various individual actions but surpassing the sum of these parts through complex interactions; moreover, activity systems commonly interact and overlap with one another even within a single organization (Engeström, 2001, 2008). Developments in Rhetorical Genre Studies further show that the writing activities of a given system can be understood through a mediating genre, which represents both a template for writing and a typified social action (Miller, 1984), and studies in Situated Learning provide greater clarity for writing practices within transitional contexts (Rogoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Freedman & Adam, 1996; Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré, 1999). As a combined framework, Artemeva (2006) argues that these perspectives can help researchers gain insight into learning processes for novices as they enter and write in a workplace; thus, WAGR was appropriate for framing the context of this study.

The inquiry and findings of this study gradually emerged as grounded theory, and so it is important to note that my project was informed by the combined epistemology within WAGR, but was not directed by it. Instead, data included insights from previous studies and was constantly compared in a recursive methodology of sampling, analysis, and theory development. Since I inquired into multiple perspectives in and across multiple activity systems, the grounded theory methodology offered a comprehensive way to explain formal and informal genre instruction while also recognizing that “all is data” in making sense of these components. As Glaser (1998) stated, grounded theory provides a methodology that can “get through and beyond conjecture and preconception to exactly the underlying processes of what is going on so that professionals and laymen alike could intervene with confidence to help resolve the participants’ main concern surrounding learning, pain, and profit” (p. 5). Further, grounded theory incorporates both inductive and deductive thinking in recursively progressing from coding, to

concepts, categories, and hypotheses through constant comparison until the point of theoretical saturation; this process facilitated explanation focused on “making sense” based on data itself, rather than a force-fit with a theoretical framework (Stern, 2007). In short, grounded theory provided my study with a systematic path for deriving meaning from social interaction and presenting insights for participants’ ongoing practice and attempts at change.

3.3.1 The Research Site

This longitudinal case study took place within the Southwest Sheriff’s Office,³ which administers a peace officer academy and provides subsequent supervised field training for academy graduates, and within the county District Attorney’s Office, which works closely with the Sheriff’s Office in prosecuting criminal cases. In addition to the broad scope of the Southwest Sheriff’s Office detailed in Chapter 4 and its associated impact on the west Texas community, I selected these sites primarily due to this organizational setup, which is quite typical among law enforcement departments, so that this case study may be relevant beyond its limited focus on a single context. Moreover, these sites offered timely access to a new cohort of academy cadets and enthusiastic participants who themselves facilitated access for most of the data collection.

To some extent, my study could have taken place at any other law enforcement agency in the region, and I had designed a flexible research protocol when developing my study proposal for approved research on human subjects through my institution’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). That is, I planned to interview a core group of instructors, students, and major audiences at the most appropriate agency that responded to my initial inquiries, as well as to observe

³ I identify research sites and participants by pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

whatever writing instruction that was available, depending on the degree of greater access I could gain to a given agency.

Indeed, my flexibility was, by design, intrinsically related to concerns that it would be difficult at best, and impossible at worst, to convince a highly regulated and information-sensitive agency to allow access to different points in the police report's path—from instruction to the broader legal process—especially since my inquiry could reveal problems and contradictions across multiple activity systems with different governing structures. With these concerns in mind, I developed my research design and IRB proposal so that I would not need to access actual police reports (which are highly confidential) and all participants' privacy and confidentiality would be protected, so that any possible problems would not jeopardize individuals' position in the agency and participants could be confident and candid in any information they shared. Since IRB proposals cannot be processed without initial site approval, these preparations provided the basis of my pitch to different agencies in the area; however, the requirement for prior site approval in the IRB process also made it trickier to propose the study without the privilege of first citing institutional approval.

There are more than ten law enforcement agencies of various size and scope in the region, and they all work with the county District Attorney's Office to prosecute criminal cases. To seek access to a law enforcement agency, an academy, and assistant district attorneys, I mailed a one-page letter to agency chiefs, departmental training coordinators, and the county's District Attorney in May 2012. Of the larger group of available agencies, I targeted the three that ran their own training academies and also planned academy sessions in the upcoming months. The letters were printed with my department's institutional stationery, briefly summarized my interest in the way police reports were taught and/or used in the organization, cited oversight

from the experts in writing instruction and criminal justice who were on my dissertation review committee, and requested a phone call or meeting to discuss my idea further. Two weeks after I sent the letters, I sent follow-up emails to chiefs, assistant chiefs, training coordinators, and the District Attorney that also summarized my project's aims, my committee's support, and my desire to discuss the project further.

One agency redirected my inquiries to a different contact, who never responded, and a second agency stated that they had no interest in the project at all; both or. In June 2012, however, I received an email from a training coordinator at the Southwest Sheriff's Office and another email from an assistant district attorney, both stating that my printed letter had been directed down to them and offering to discuss my project further. I scheduled meetings with the training coordinator and the assistant district attorney within a week of receiving their replies, discussed the aims of my project with each of them, and then requested approval to come back to ask others some follow-up questions, to see how writing was taught at the academy, and to meet others who used reports in each agency so that I could use the information in my research.

They each agreed, quite enthusiastically, and so I successfully gained a letter for site approval (fulfilling the final requirements of my IRB approval process), returned with IRB-approved consent forms to document participants' agreements and confidentiality, and progressively met more participants within each organization. The initial enthusiasm that I encountered at both the Southwest Sheriff's Office and the county District Attorney's Office propelled the project forward—each participant facilitated connections with others who could provide more details, different perspectives, or better coordination between activity systems, and I was ultimately able to expand from a proposed group of 18 participants to over 37 participants, whose roles overlapped to provide greater insight than I had expected (see Figure 3.3.1.1).

	Proposed Group	Study Participants
Department administrators responsible for the overall quality of police report writing in relationship between the department and outside entities	4	3 academy administrators 1 detective supervisor 2 FTO Coordinators 2 FTO Trainers 2 Detectives 10
Supervisors responsible for overseeing the quality of police report writing	2	1 detective supervisor 2 patrol supervisors 3
Assistant district attorneys (ADAs) experienced with using police reports as evidence in court cases	2	1 ADA in Trial Division 1 ADA in Intake & Screening 2 ADAs in training academy 4
Instructors of police report writing at the training academy	2	7 academy instructors 7
Cadets in the training academy	0	17
Novice officers recently graduated from the peace officer academy	4	3
Field training officers (FTOs) responsible for overseeing the above listed novices in their field, or on-the-job, training for patrol duty	4	3

Figure 3.3.1.1. Study Participants in the Research Design and the Actual Study, by Group

3.3.2 Data Collection

I encountered minimal restrictions during data collection. While I was unable to view actual police reports as examples during interviews due to legal privacy issues, real examples were not part of my research design anyway; rather than use specific reports, then, participants offered hypothetical or generic examples to illustrate their meaning when answering my questions. Since both sites have hierarchical organizational structures, I also negotiated an otherwise restrictive organizational structure by requesting that senior administrators recommend interview participants for each facet of my study. Often, participants made further suggestions, noting who I could talk to for another perspective and providing contact information. Based on these recommendations, I requested interviews and observations with each possible participant through email based on whether they represented major components of the activity systems that novice peace officers progress through as they enter the workplace, including the academy, field training within patrol duty, and the broader legal process from report approval and detective investigation to prosecution. From the larger participant group that I observed and interacted with, I conducted 22 hours of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the participant groups listed below, noting that some had experience in multiple roles and thus offered a broader perspective:

- Representatives within the peace officer academy, including one academy administrator and one instructor of report writing;
- Representatives within field training, including the first three academy graduates and their three respective field training officers (FTOs);
- Major audiences of police reports, including two patrol supervisors, two detective supervisors, one assistant district attorney who oversees the report screening division of

the District Attorney's Office, and one assistant district attorney who oversees the trial division. One of the patrol supervisors is also an instructor for training new FTOs. I audio-recorded each of these interviews, wrote notes by hand as participants were talking, and later sent out each audio file for transcription. Later, during analysis, I reviewed the original recordings, notes, and transcripts as multiple representations of interview data.

Additionally, I worked with academy administrators to select class sessions for observations based on their subject matter; I attended courses on written and oral communication, presentations about the county District Attorney's Office and report writing, and I joined the cadets on a visit to the county courthouse that included their own observation of a criminal trial. Participants within these observations included seventeen academy cadets, two instructors of written and oral communication, three assistant district attorneys, and two instructors of report writing (one of whom was a former FTO training instructor). I audio-recorded each class session at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, wrote notes on my laptop during class lectures, activities and breaks, and wrote notes by hands during the cohort's visit to the county courthouse. During analysis, I used my original recordings, notes, and copies of lecture slides (as provided in the material curriculum) as multiple representations of observation data.

I conducted interviews between June 2012 and September 2013, organizing sessions around the timeline for new cadets entering and graduating from the Southwest Sheriff Office's peace officer academy. According to this trajectory, I interviewed the academy administrator and report writing instructor in June 2012 during administrative planning for the incoming cohort, then interviewed major audiences of police reports from September to November 2012 (i.e., patrol and detective supervisors, assistant district attorneys) in order to understand users' expectations before the peace officer academy began in December 2012. I conducted most of

these interviews within the workplace belonging to each interviewee, including offices at the Southwest Sheriff's Office training academy, headquarters, and substations, as well as offices at the county District Attorney's Office within the county courthouse. However, there were two exceptions to the location of these interviews; since two interviewees were working the graveyard shift at the time I requested interviews, one patrol supervisor chose to meet during the day within my office at the university, and the other chose to respond to questions by email. Each in-person interview lasted approximately one hour, and stemmed from the questions listed for each group within the Appendix. To verify my understanding during these interviews, I frequently repeated or paraphrased responses; additionally, I asked follow-up questions by email in cases where I needed clarification or desired more detail. In cases where I followed up, I included all email conversations as further interview data.

Before the peace officer academy began, I also collected 96 pages of material curriculum that specifically related to state-mandated standards in police report writing. This material was provided by the academy administrator so that I could know what report writing instructors are expected to provide at minimum, and included an additional 13 pages of excerpts about report writing from the department's policy and procedures manual, as well as learning objectives, class activities, and lecture slides for the 18-hour course on written communication. Additionally, I collected an updated 36-page version of the report writing curriculum, which became available in January 2013 as Unit 15 through the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)⁴. In all, I analyzed 132 pages that, collectively, comprise the material curriculum for Written

⁴ The former name for TCOLE is TCLEOSE, which stands for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. The name change occurred during research for this project, and so some source material refers to the TCLEOSE website, which remains active. Unit 15 can be retrieved from the resources for the Basic Peace Officer Course at http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/content/training_instructor_resources.cfm

Communication at Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, as well as 13 pages of departmental policy materials.

The peace officer academy lasted six months, meeting 40 hours each week from December 2012 to May 2013, and included class sessions presented by twenty-five different instructors on topics ranging from the penal code and officer safety to intercultural communication and stress management. While the academy administrator and the report writing instructors emphasized that report writing is discussed throughout these various course topics, they worked with me to select specific class sessions for observations based on whether report writing and written communication were a primary focus. Based on these recommendations, I attended the first week at the academy to introduce myself to the cadets and explain my presence during their classes; thereafter, I observed classes on:

- the culture of professional and community policing (12 hours),
- written communication (18 hours),
- communication and problem solving (16 hours),
- the District Attorney's Office (12 hours), and
- report writing (30 hours).

During observations, I sat in the back of the class at my own desk with a laptop for taking field notes. While I attempted to be relatively inconspicuous, I occasionally interacted with cadets or instructors during class sessions if I was specifically called upon, usually as an example of how an "ordinary" person might react to a scenario. Otherwise, I informally spoke with cadets and instructors during class breaks in order to clarify my questions about the coursework or verify my interpretations.

Upon graduation from the peace officer academy, cadets entered four months of supervised patrol duty as trainees under an assigned field training officer (FTO). Field training is structured into five phases, wherein trainees proceed from observation during Phase 1 (four days), to limited participation in Phase 2 (sixteen days), largely independent duties in Phase 3 (forty days), evaluation from a second FTO in Phase 4 (four days), and final administrative approval in Phase 5 (eight days). While all seventeen cadets successfully graduated, they entered field training only when shift positions became available,⁵ and their entry was based on their performance rankings in the academy. In this way, only the top four trainees completed field training from June to October 2013. I interviewed three of these trainees and their FTOs at two important milestones in field training: the end of Phase 2 in July 2013 and the end of Phase 3 in September 2013. I conducted interviews at the substation where each trainee and FTO was assigned, meeting with them separately for approximately one hour each during their work shift. As with my previous interviews, our discussions stemmed from the questions listed in the Appendix, and I frequently repeated or paraphrased responses to verify my understanding, then asked follow-up questions by email in cases where I needed greater clarification or detail.

3.3.3 Situating Myself within the Data

In addition to my efforts at verifying interpretations with participants during interviews and observations, I also situated my own background clearly throughout this study so that participants could be more aware of my perspective and I could more consciously avoid imposing any biases on the data. When an appropriate moment arose during each interaction, then, I mentioned that my education focused on English and writing, that I teach college-level

⁵ As detailed in Chapter 4, the Southwest Sheriff's Office requires law enforcement personnel to begin as detention officers and complete at least one full year of service before applying to the peace officer academy. As such, all graduates from the peace officer academy who did not immediately enter field training returned to their duties as detention officers until it was their turn to fill an open patrol position.

writing courses, and that my spouse is a peace officer at another law enforcement agency. My statements may explain why some interviewees in the Sheriff's Office noted that report writing is not taught by an English major or a writing teacher, or sometimes showed greater ease when discussing job-related stress and war stories. By situating myself during data collection, I accounted more fully for my personal background during data analysis, constantly comparing my expectations to interview responses, observation notes, and curricula, and seeking additional details when I needed further clarification. I was also aware that other factors may have affected interactions more subtly, as I am a young, white female and most participants were older than me, Hispanic, and male (two interviewees self-identified as white and one other interviewee was female). More abstractly, as supported in feminist methodology, this act of making my position clear also counters any pretense to objectivity and highlights how all accounts are historically situated, partial, and incomplete (Haraway, 1988). Similarly, I situate myself here and throughout the rest of this study to clarify how I jointly constructed knowledge with participants in how I chose to make sense of different, intersecting perspectives within my study's constraints (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). In effect, I acknowledged that I inevitably brought personal biases that could somehow affect the study, in order to make them apparent and minimize their impact.

Situating myself clearly within this study also enhanced my precautions against risk and conflicts of interest with participants, helping to ensure informed consent. While I did not place participants at direct risk within interviews or observations because I focused on matters of writing instruction, genre conventions, and audience expectations, I did obtain approval for research on human subjects from my university's institutional review board prior to data collection, then emphasized informants' privacy when gaining access and during each interaction. I provided a detailed informed consent form for each participant to sign,

acknowledging that their responses would be audio-recorded for transcription purposes, stored in encrypted files, used as part of the study's publication, and identified only by pseudonyms. Further, in noting that my spouse is also a peace officer, each participant confirmed that they were not acquainted with him, and may have also provided more candid perspectives. These precautions were especially important because police reports are embedded in legal restrictions on confidentiality, criminal procedures, and a culture of tightly regulated behavior standards; in short, trust and privacy mattered a great deal in my study's context, despite its relatively mundane content.

3.3.4 Data Management and Analysis

My emphasis on privacy also extended to the ways I managed my qualitative data. I securely stored audio recordings, emailed interview responses, lecture slides, and notes within encrypted digital files; further, I kept all hard copies of signed informed consent forms, material curricula, and field notes locked within my office. I also used the NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis (QDA) software package to manage all of this data, which allowed me to collect, organize and analyze content within one password-protected project file. Moreover, Nvivo 10 facilitated constant comparisons between raw data, previous studies, and my research memos.

As grounded theory, my data analysis incorporated themes from reviewed literature and research memos alongside interviews, observations, and curricula within the perspective that "all is data," constantly comparing these components in a recursive methodology of sampling, analysis, and theory development. Indeed, the entire process of data analysis was recursive. I began with open coding (or "substantive" coding; Glaser, 1978), wherein I read data line by line to discern patterns as indicators for codes. Eventually, I grouped codes into concepts, then categories, and finally hypotheses to explain answers to the research questions. While examining

how codes developed into overarching concepts, I also simultaneously employed axial coding to develop and link concepts further into conceptual families. Finally, I conducted a third process of selective coding to formalize relationships between concepts as theoretical frameworks (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998). I collected and analyzed data concurrently, which helped maintain theoretical sensitivity and allowed my analysis to determine further areas for inquiry. My analysis also spiraled between open, axial, and selective coding—as well as ongoing memos to document these steps—through a method of constant comparison. At the point where no new concepts emerged from data, or theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), my focus for data analysis shifted from coding to developing and articulating a fully grounded theory.

Based on these analyses, the next three chapters in my study articulate a grounded theory of the formal and informal ways that novice peace officers learn police report writing at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and how these practices relate to the activity systems that novice police officers participate in, such as the academy, the department, and the broader legal process. Within Chapter Four, I provide an overview of how these activity systems relate to one another, specifically focusing on the training structure for novice peace officers, the genre conventions of a police report, how a police report moves through different paths and users, and the different needs and expectations readers have at important points along the way. Chapter Five next details formal, or explicit, instruction practices within the peace officer academy, examining how the police report genre mediates cadets' progress toward graduation, and how this activity is affected by different instructors and teaching styles, standard curricular content, and organizational rules and norms. Chapter Six then discusses the less formal, tacit instruction that novice peace officers receive in report writing once they graduate from the academy and progress through field

training, exploring connections between on-the-job modeling and feedback, trainees' academic preparation, and expectations from supervisors and report audiences. Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the ways that components in each activity system either align or conflict in training novice peace officers to write effective reports, and considers how these findings could be more widely relevant across both the law enforcement community and scholarship in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS). The conclusion also considers how my study represents a useful synthesis of Activity Theory, Rhetorical Genre Studies, and Situated Learning that can guide further research by RWS scholars—especially in workplace settings. Moreover, I argue that researchers in this framework can and should design further studies that seek a reciprocal relationship with participants, so that problematic contradictions in activity can be changed and effective practices can be made meaningfully shared.

Chapter 4: What Should Happen? Users' Idealized Expectations

4.1 Overview

In each activity system, subjects conceptualize ideals about how they should operate. That is, within their community and according to its norms and divisions of labor, each subject idealizes how they should use mediating tools and signs to attain their objects for a specific outcome. Whether or not these ideals are explicit, or even shared, each participant in an activity system directs their operations and actions toward the broader activity with a sense of how outcomes should be accomplished effectively and efficiently. While it is clear that “collectively and expansively mastered activity is a hypothetical construct” (Engeström, 1993, p. 71), a strong sense of agreement among diverse subjects about the components and alignment of their activity system may indicate a particularly effective model of learning or work. In contrast, significant contradictions in how different participants understand or express their ideals may reveal appropriate targets for organizational change. Moreover, comparisons between the ideals of more than one activity system may reveal areas of substantial overlap or tension which are only apparent through interactions.

In light of these possible insights, this chapter focuses on articulating the activity systems related to report writing at one law enforcement agency, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, at the level of ideal types conceptualized by participants. Rather than use a theory of learning or organizational communication to impose ideals from the top down onto the complexities evidenced in actual practice—which Engeström (1993) notes would “eliminate multivoicedness and contradiction, thus rendering transitions and development incomprehensible” (p. 72)—I build ideal models by tracing each component as expressed by participants, from the bottom up, and then compare major themes within these activity systems to relevant discussions of

andragogy, community policing, and situated learning. In short, this chapter expresses what participants widely agree *should* take place within this sheriff's office, training academy, and district attorney's office in regard to report writing instruction and practice, and what they expected I, as an outsider to each activity system, *should* find within the document analysis, observations, and interviews throughout this study. As such, my narrative style actively employs modal verbs like "should" and "must" to reflect participants' ideals, rather than my own opinion.

To accomplish this, I rely on the perspectives of multiple stakeholders involved in the instruction, production, and use of police reports at major points in the legal process, as provided by interviews with participants at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the county District Attorney's Office. After providing relevant background information on each of the research sites, I weave my analysis between participants' various perspectives within the form of a narrative, citing specific interviews indirectly and according to participant identifiers (e.g., a report writing instructor). This design helps in protecting participants' anonymity, but also allows me to more fully tell the story of how participants broadly agree in conceptualizing how report writing should operate within and through the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and what major audiences such as supervisors and prosecutors expect from police reports. Eventually, the ideal models of each activity system and the audience expectations can be compared to actual practices in formal and informal report writing instruction, demonstrating where effective alignments or problematic tensions exist.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the way I model activity at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and the county District Attorney's Office is based on the theory of activity systems developed by Engeström (1987). This model recognizes that subjects mediate their tacit operations and conscious actions with tools and signs in order to

achieve goals, and that this all takes place within wider social activity. Meanwhile, social activity is directed toward a broader, collective object, and contains constantly intersecting dynamics of particular community members, rules and norms, and divisions of labor. The components and interactions of an activity system are modeled in Figure 4.1

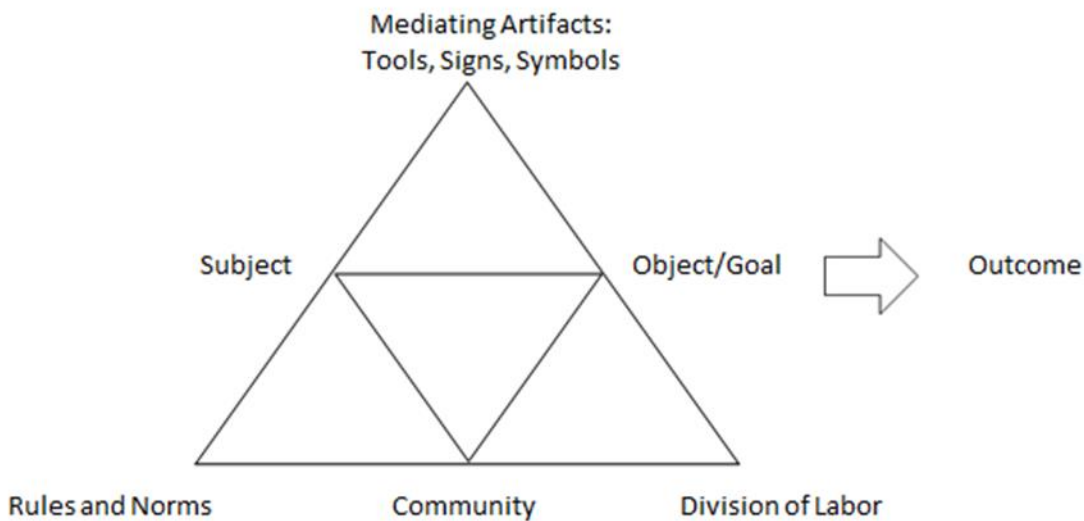


Figure 4.1.1. Engeström's (1987) Model of an Activity System.

I also incorporate theoretical developments within Writing, Activity, and Genre Research (WAGR), as articulated by Russell (2009), by focusing on the police report genre as the tool or sign which subjects use to mediate their activity both within and across these three activity systems. Drawing from Miller's (1984) theory of genre as a social action to distinguish the police report as more than a category of writing classified by its formal features, I focus more deeply on how the genre also contains traditions of using a tool, which then "make it possible [for subjects] to act with others over time in more or less but never entirely predictable ways, individually, collectively, and institutionally" (Russell, 2009, p. 43). Finally, my analysis brings in themes associated with the theory of Situated Learning as developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), and especially (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999), to discuss how my participants' ideal

concepts of formal and informal police report instruction and use align with scholarly discussions of ways that learning can be facilitated in transitions between school, apprenticeship, and work.

4.2 Background on the Research Sites

The Southwest Sheriff's Office is located in west Texas, and has a service area of over 1,000 square miles that includes urban, suburban, and rural communities. Approximately 250 sworn peace officers operate within the patrol and criminal investigation divisions, and more than 600 detention officers run two adult maximum-security detention facilities. The agency also operates the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy to prepare new peace officer trainees, in addition to providing instruction and continuing education for over 2,500 federal, state, and local criminal justice professionals from six counties in west Texas. Alongside at least ten other law enforcement agencies in the area, the Southwest Sheriff's Office submits reports of criminal cases to the county District Attorney's Office for prosecution. The wide scope of the activity systems associated with the Southwest Sheriff's Office for report writing instruction, production, and use constitutes a significant impact for the surrounding community, and thus situates these research sites as especially well-suited for research on formal and informal report writing instruction practices that could have implications for others in law enforcement.

Beyond its range and generalizable features, the Southwest Sheriff's Office has geographical and organizational particularities that are worth mention. The region's sociopolitical history and proximity to the US-Mexico border provide a backdrop to a rich mix of cultures, where approximately 82% of the population is Hispanic, 72% of residents above the age of five speak Spanish at home, and 30% of this subgroup speaks English less than "very well."⁶

⁶ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey.

Within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, 81% of the sworn personnel are Hispanic and 93% are male. In order to become peace officers, all new sworn personnel must first undergo a seven-week detention officer training academy and serve at least one year in the detention facilities before applying to the basic peace officer academy.

As part of this latter training, students (cadets) complete 24 hours of state-mandated instruction in Spanish; additionally, both detention officers and peace officers are required to attend a 24-hour course in intermediate Spanish or complete a Spanish challenge exam as part of the requirements for an intermediate detention certificate or an intermediate peace officer certificate. According to administrators at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, approximately 85% of sworn personnel are bilingual in spoken English and Spanish. The intersecting dynamics within this research context, such as gender, ethnicity, and language, variously impact the ways that different stakeholders articulate the ideals of the activity systems associated with the instruction, production, and use of police reports, as well as the way these activity systems show up in practice (as detailed in Chapters 5 and 6). Since cultural considerations are a necessary part of the written and oral communication that take place within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and since languages other than English are only permitted within legal documentation procedures when a writer also translates their interpretation of a given utterance, these issues are especially important in examining how ideal expectations and practice align or conflict.

The basic peace officer academy offered by the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy lasts six months, meeting 40 hours each week and including intense physical training and classroom sessions. For the 2012-13 basic peace officer academy that I observed, 25 different instructors and presenters discussed topics ranging from the penal code and officer safety to

intercultural communication and stress management. The state-mandated curriculum⁷ requires 618 total hours of instruction, including 16 hours devoted to written communication; however, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy exceeds these requirements by providing 1,000 total hours of instruction, with 18 hours devoted to written communication and an additional 30 hours in report writing. Further, academy administrators and report writing instructors emphasized that police report writing is discussed throughout most various class sessions, and that courses on the following topics included a primary focus on report writing and written communication:

- the culture of professional and community policing (12 hours),
- written communication (18 hours),
- communication and problem solving (16 hours),
- the District Attorney's Office (12 hours), and
- report writing (30 hours).

According to academy administrators, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy added further instruction and practice in report writing to the state's minimum requirements because, over time, participants in staff and training meetings have expressed that novice deputies at the Southwest Sheriff's Office needed more training on police reports. As detailed in Chapter 5, cadets complete this portion of the curriculum after they sit for the state peace officer license exam, and the final class is meant to provide additional exposure and practice at the academy so that cadets can more easily apply general concepts when they graduate and proceed to patrol duty.

After cadets pass the state's peace officer licensing exam and graduate from the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, they may enter patrol duty as a trainee under an assigned

⁷ Source: Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE), 2013 Basic Peace Officer Course. Available at http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/content/training_instructor_resources.cfm

field training officer (FTO) as deputy positions open within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, in the order of their rank in the academy class. Field training lasts five months, and takes place over five distinct phases. As detailed in Chapter 6, a trainee performs gradually increasing patrol duties under one FTO during Phases 1 through 3, then progresses to relatively independent duty under the evaluation of another FTO during Phase 4. The trainee completes administrative evaluations during Phase 5, and then proceeds to independent patrol duty as a full-fledged deputy. Both the trainee and FTO must document their entire field training within weekly notes, which remain on file permanently, demonstrating that they covered all required topics and redressed any deficiencies. In cases where a trainee does not progress successfully through field training, he or she returns to the former position as a detention officer within the jail facilities; according to academy administrators and patrol supervisors, the top reasons for a trainee's removal from field training are officer safety, followed by deficiencies in report writing.

4.3 The Southwest Sheriff Training Academy

In much the same way that Schafer and Boyd (2007) observe, peace officer training at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy is not analogous to college education; it is designed to help the novice officer develop skills of "learning how to learn" based on an understanding of the "tools of the trade," whereas higher education is meant to provide the basis for problem solving and future learning (p. 373). During their time at this academy, cadets should learn the essential parts and characteristics (or genre conventions) of a police report as part of their broader training in oral and written communication, even as they are also undergoing intense physical training and coursework on numerous other topics.

According to academy administrators and instructors, as well as the state curriculum⁸ for written communication, cadets' goals within the larger object of police report instruction are to

- know what information is necessary in a report, regardless of incident type;
- understand the conventional behaviors of observation and description within law enforcement that are used to gather and document information;
- sharpen their awareness of common issues which could distort clarity and conciseness in writing, and review ways to address or correct these issues; and
- become familiar with the interface of the electronic report management system (I/LEADS⁹) as they practice reporting different kinds of incidents.

Since report writing instruction is distributed and reinforced across multiple course topics, administrators and instructors believe that cadets should be able to gain sufficient skills and practice at the academy so that they can both pass state exam questions on issues in written communication and use basic knowledge of the genre when they progress to writing real reports during field training.

Cadets are expected to learn from several instructors at the academy, as well as presenters from different divisions of the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the County District Attorney's Office, and partner organizations in the region. Instructors are selected from experienced, well-respected deputies within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and must hold state certification from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)¹⁰, which requires successful completion of an 80-

⁸ Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). (23 Sep 2013). Course No. 1000: Basic Peace Officer. *Course Curriculum, Materials and Updates: Resources Available On Line*. Retrieved from: http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/content/training_instructor_resources.cfm.

⁹ Intergraph's Law Enforcement Automated Data Systems.

¹⁰ The former name for TCOLE is TCLEOSE, which stands for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. The name change occurred during research for this project, and so some source material refers to the TCLEOSE website, which remains active.

hour course emphasizing learning styles and instructional methods.¹¹ While each of the instructors is qualified to cover any section in the required material, the course schedule brings in a variety of instructors who are specifically assigned to the academy, instructor-certified deputies who are simultaneously assigned to other divisions, and presenters connected with outside agencies. This diversity helps cadets access a wide range of experience, expertise, and resources related to their anticipated job duties through different teaching styles, as reflected by the multiple instructors and presenters incorporated into teaching any one topic. For example, of the 25 different instructors and presenters in the academy session I observed for this study, seven individuals led the classes containing a primary focus on report writing and written communication, including three assistant district attorneys; additionally, three academy administrators reinforced course material while also coordinating the logistics of class sessions. Taken together, these various members of the surrounding community and overlapping divisions of labor provide multiple points in the academy activity system where cadets should find support in achieving objects associated with report writing.

The courses related to written communication and report writing are delivered at different points by different instructors and presenters throughout the six-month academy session, yet the norms and rules of the academy provide a tacit sense of a coherent, bounded activity system. As students within a schooling system, cadets are expected to physically attend each class session at the academy or designated off-site location (e.g., the county District Attorney's Office), listen attentively, and participate actively in any assignments or exercises. In return, they expect instructors to explain concepts, present and assign material, provide feedback, and make

¹¹ For further description of the requirements for instructor training, see: Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE). (17 Oct 2013). Course No. 1014: Basic Instructor. *Course Curriculum, Materials and Updates: Resources Available On Line*. Retrieved from: http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/content/training_instructor_resources.cfm.

materials available for review within an online learning management system (Blackboard). As cadets, though, they are also expected to adhere to the culture of the peace officer academy setting by attending all classes in uniform, marching in formation, standing at attention when an instructor enters or calls on an individual to speak, and submitting to physical exercise as punishments. While all instructors do not demand that cadets adhere to these latter expectations during class, they remain the default norms throughout the academy so that cadets receive continued behavioral reinforcement of their role unless they receive explicit permission to relax the rules.

These latter expectations align with what McCay (2011) has described as a “militaristic” or “quasi-military model” of police training, where students “are assumed to have little, if any, applicable knowledge relevant to the lessons at hand,” and “are made to accept their place in the hierarchy of the organization—the very bottom”—through an underlying emphasis on obedience (p. 10). Further, these norms share characteristics with a paramilitary model of policing that, according to Auten (1981), is directly rooted in the establishment of modern policing, when Robert Peel founded the London Metropolitan Police in 1829 as an organization “that must be stable, efficient, and organized along military lines” with the principal object of preventing crime (p. 67). Eventually, many law enforcement agencies throughout the U.S.—including the Southwest Sheriff’s Office—have adopted an alternative model of community oriented policing that is instead focused on proactive problem solving in collaboration with community partners. However, as noted by McCay (2011), hallmarks such as a rigid command-rank structure and authoritarian style remain deeply rooted in police culture, and support a militaristic training model in many (if not most) academy settings across the country.

Instructors and presenters use various materials, interfaces, and assignments to mediate the learning process for cadets in courses related to police report writing, depending on the course topic and their own teaching style. To some extent, though, what mediates formal report writing instruction is already designated within the TCLEOSE standards¹² for course content in written communication. According to the objectives outlined within the instructor resource materials, cadets should participate in a combination of in-class discussions, analysis of example reports, practical exercises, and multiple role-playing activities so that they can come to understand the uses for field notes and police reports, demonstrate observation and descriptive skills, and know the types of information and questions they will need to include. For goals more specific to the mechanics and style of written communication, the instructor resources further state that cadets should use reviews and drill exercises for understanding issues like run-on sentences, passive voice, misplaced modifiers, and double negatives so that they are able to quickly recognize and correct common problems in sentence conciseness and clarity. In sum, the standard TCLEOSE materials for basic peace officer training indicate that cadets should be able to gain competence in the basics of written communication skills and report writing through a combination of explicit, lecture-based review and tacit, practice-based exercises, analyses, and role-playing activities.

According to academy administrators and instructors, TCLEOSE standards for written communication directly influence the academy curriculum, so that instructors first explain the components and conventions of field notes and police reports, and then provide a workshop setting for cadets to practice within the electronic report management system they will eventually use in field duty. For this first, explanatory stage, instructors should discuss how police reports

¹² Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). (23 Sep 2013). Course No. 1000: Basic Peace Officer. *Course Curriculum, Materials and Updates: Resources Available On Line*. Retrieved from: http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/content/training_instructor_resources.cfm.

are meant to thoroughly describe an incident, and thus require careful observations and accurate notes within a deputy's field notebook, so that a peace officer, detective, or attorney could successfully use a report after it enters the broader legal process. To behaviorally reinforce the use and significance of field notes, cadets must use a steno notepad for documenting daily activities and carry it with them at all times; similarly, they are expected to participate in activities where they practice observing and describing different situations with sufficient detail. In explaining genre conventions, some of the most significant issues that instructors must focus on include

- which details constitute probable cause and the elements of an offense, and so must be included in field notes and reports;
- methods for making sure that all relevant information is concisely covered in a report, such as the six modes of journalistic inquiry (i.e., who? what? when? where? why? and how?);
- departmental policies on report writing style; and
- common problems in grammar and mechanics which could distort clarity or reflect poorly on a report writer.

In part, the degree of alignment between TCLEOSE materials and the explanatory curriculum on written communication and report writing highlights how instructors must prepare cadets to pass the TCLEOSE basic peace officer licensing exam. Since the exam uses indirect assessment methods¹³ to test writing skills, instructors often implement lectures, exercises, and activities on each major issue that would help cadets respond correctly to exam questions.

¹³ According to Breland and Gaynor (1979), "*Indirect assessment*, sometimes called objective assessment, requires no writing at all—the examinee only responds to stimuli in a multiple-choice format" (p. 119). See: Breland, H. M.,

After cadets' successful completion of the state exam, instructors should shift to implementing lectures, exercises, and activities that allow cadets to individually practice using the I/LEADS report management system in a computer lab workshop setting. During this later stage in the curriculum, cadets should gain direct instruction in how to navigate the I/LEADS interface and access some of the modules for entering information needed for different kinds of incidents, then practice composing simple, hypothetical reports on common types of calls. Instructors are expected to provide feedback on cadets' practice reports, commenting on whether each one contains the components needed for report approval, includes all important information, conforms to departmental policies on report style, and reflects overall expectations for clear, concise, and error-free writing. Further, instructors should discuss the needs and expectations of different report readers, as well as what cadets should expect when writing reports under the supervision of an FTO once they transition to patrol duty. After successfully completing this report writing course and graduating from the academy, cadets enter patrol duty as trainees with an assigned FTO, where they must become aware of how reports mediate police investigations and the broader legal process. At this point, they must learn to effectively perform within the Southwest Sheriff's Office as subjects within a new activity system.

4.4 The Southwest Sheriff's Office and the County District Attorney's Office

Report writing is one of the most significant duties for peace officers, producing important records used in later criminal investigation and prosecution, and demanding a substantial portion of time on the job. At the Southwest Sheriff's Office and the county District Attorney's Office, participants widely agree that police reports are primarily meant to document incidents so that, as much as possible, they may record reported events as they happened, provide

& Gaynor, J. L. (1979). A comparison of direct and indirect assessments of writing skill. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 16(2), 119-128.

a foundation for further investigation, and support evidence and testimony involved in criminal prosecution. During the five months that novice peace officers enter patrol duties under the supervision of a field training officer (FTO), some of their top priorities center on understanding the path and scope of a police report within the legal process, documenting relevant information to facilitate that process, and gaining competence in writing reports for different kinds of incidents.

Novice peace officers can better meet the object of report writing when they are aware of the role for police reports within the broader legal process and the major audiences who will need to read and use each report at different points along the way, both within the Southwest Sheriff's Office and then in the county District Attorney's Office. Deputies must therefore understand that they initiate the broader legal process by documenting probable cause, the elements of each offense, and as many relevant details as possible within a police report. Further, they must know that the police report genre contains several sub-genres, including a probable cause affidavit, a presentation supplement, investigative supplements, and any relevant statements from victims, witnesses, offenders, or involved others, and they must understand how the purpose and conventions of each sub-genre differs according to its use and audience. While probable cause affidavits are available to the public as open records, the other sub-genres of a police report are highly confidential; these components are typically available only to law enforcement officers, prosecutors and defense attorneys, though some contents may be available to a jury if they come up as part of court testimony during criminal prosecution. As a police report proceeds from an initial complaint to further investigation and prosecution, its major audiences include patrol supervisors, detectives, detective supervisors, assistant district attorneys in the screening division, and assistant district attorneys in the trial division. At each point in this

path, these audiences read and evaluate police reports with different criteria in mind, acting as gatekeepers at particular checkpoints.

At the Southwest Sheriff's Office, reports are entered and transmitted to supervisors, detectives, and the county District Attorney's Office through the I/LEADS electronic records management system (RMS). A peace officer must enter information into different modules for each offense by using the RMS at a computer within a substation or patrol vehicle, and the RMS delivers prompts when information is missing or does not match cross-referenced items. The RMS also allows peace officers to research reports previously entered into the system by the report author's identification number or by names of persons mentioned in other reports, and delivers prompts for deputies to import information on individuals already recorded in the system; both of these features can facilitate quicker report completion and greater levels of detail based on connections between a report and related incidents. While a report's path in the legal process can be relatively linear as it moves electronically from initial complaint to prosecution, it is consistently mediated by the RMS, as well as several checkpoints along the way where other members of the community act as major audiences who must review, evaluate, and approve reports or send them back for further development. These paths, and their associated divisions of labor, are illustrated in Figure 4.4.1 below, noting each point where a report can be "kicked back" for further investigation.

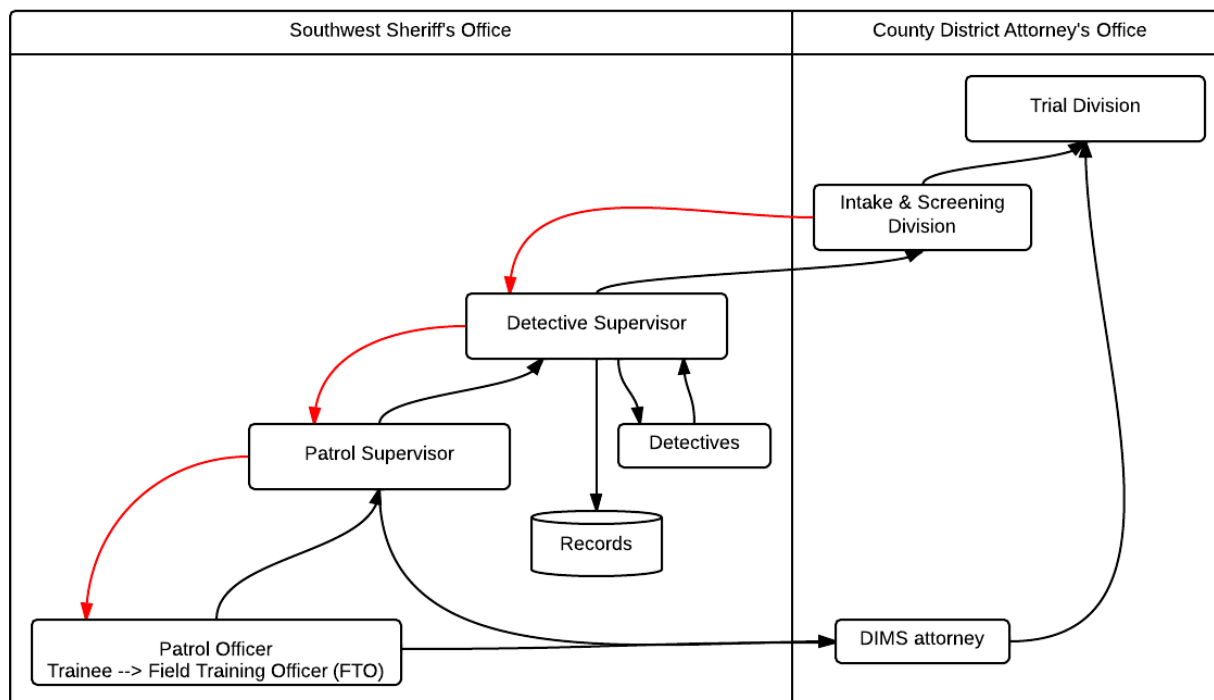


Figure 4.4.1. Paths of a Police Report

As shown by Figure 4.4.1, patrol officers complete an initial police report; this stage is usually complete within three days except in cases involving an arrest, which require a report's completion as part of the arrest process. If the case requires no further investigation because all relevant evidence has been gathered on-scene (e.g., a driving-while-intoxicated, or DWI case), a deputy will directly contact an assistant district attorney to review the report's probable cause, elements of the offense, and supporting details through the DIMS process.¹⁴ If the case is accepted by an assistant district attorney after this presentation, the deputy records this interaction and the case number before submitting the report for approval. The report must then

¹⁴ The District Attorney Intake Management System (DIMS) is a 24-hour case management strategy used in select Texas counties to streamline the flow of information. It is used for screening and filing criminal cases that do not require a warrant directly from law enforcement to prosecutors to the court system, avoiding the paperwork and time associated with presenting the case to a magistrate in person. See also: Carmichael, D., Gibson, M., Voloudakis, M., & Fabelo, T. (2006). *Evaluating the impact of direct electronic filing in criminal cases: Closing the paper trap - Final Report Submitted to The Office of Court Administration Task Force on Indigent Defense*. College Station, TX: The Public Policy Research Institute.

be approved by an immediate supervisor; usually, this is a patrol sergeant, but new peace officer trainees must gain the additional approval of an FTO before their reports can move forward to a patrol supervisor.

When a report follows the “regular route,” it is electronically forwarded for further investigation to a detective supervisor (usually a sergeant), who then reviews the report and either assigns it to a detective for further investigation or enters the case as a record needing no further investigation. After a detective provides additional investigative supplements and statements, sometimes in consultation with the initiating officer, the report returns to a detective supervisor for approval before going on toward prosecution. A detective supervisor can then either enter the report as a record, return a report for further investigation, or approve it and electronically forward it to the county District Attorney’s Office. There, the report is first evaluated by assistant district attorneys within the Intake and Screening Division, then either sent back to detectives for further investigation or forwarded to the Trial Division for prosecution. At this latter stage, assistant district attorneys may check back with initiating officers or detectives about details in a report, while the report itself serves as the basis for any testimony by the initiating officer or detectives during a trial.

These multiple checkpoints along the report’s path illustrate how a police report must accommodate multiple audiences, within different institutional contexts and across varied points in time, in order to proceed forward in the legal process. At each point in the path of a police report, primary readers have different criteria for evaluating the contents of the probable cause affidavit, investigative supplements, and statements before deciding whether the report can move on or go back for further development. In effect, then, FTOs, patrol supervisors, detective supervisors, detectives, and assistant district attorneys in the Intake and Screening or Trial

Divisions are the major audiences of reports and act as gatekeepers at different checkpoints in the legal process. Later, defense attorneys and juries may be a report's secondary readers during a trial, while the authoring peace officers and detectives also must refer back to a report as an aid to court testimony. Each level of audience ultimately informs how peace officers should ideally write reports, and thus affects how report writing is formally and informally taught between the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and field training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office.

4.4.1 Audience Expectations at Report Checkpoints

While each person who reads a police report along its path through the legal process has specific evaluative criteria, these audiences also share wider expectations for the general characteristics of the overall report. Audiences can expect that a deputy will adhere to the norms and rules associated with the police report genre at the Southwest Sheriff's Office (i.e., the genre conventions), as well as the norms and rules of the broader department. A report should, minimally, document probable cause, include the elements of each offense, provide a concise description of the reported incident, and note a disposition as to whether or not a victim wishes to file charges. For the purposes of the probable cause affidavit, which is available as a public record, these minimum elements must be provided as concisely as possible and, as a precaution, must not unnecessarily reveal names or identification information of people involved in the incident. Each deputy should also document different points of view within statements that victims, witnesses, suspects, or involved others provide, review, and sign off on. Additionally, they should give a thorough description of the incident from their point of view within the investigative supplement according to the six modes of journalistic inquiry (i.e., who? what? when? where? why? and how?). To structure the organization, completeness and readability of the description, the Southwest Sheriff's Office further requires that investigative supplements

record the events of an incident in chronological order, maintain first-person voice based on the deputy's perspective, and use lay terms as much as possible, avoiding jargon, slang, or languages other than English except when relevant and necessary. For this latter issue, the Southwest Sheriff's Office and the county District Attorney's Office expect deputies to only include non-standard English or languages other than English in the context of something that occurred during an incident (e.g., an exclamation made by a suspect) and how the statement was interpreted, as in "by this, I understood..." Among my study participants, there was widespread agreement about these norms and rules for police reports at the Southwest Sheriff's Office; meanwhile, the more specific expectations from each audience group demonstrate deeper themes about which needs and criteria novice peace officers should understand and accommodate as they compose reports in patrol duty.

As trainees, novice peace officers are primarily responsible to their FTOs as they progress through five phases of increasing responsibility in field training. During the first and second phase, they move from largely observing their FTO's patrol duties to taking on more complex tasks; around phase 3, trainees become responsible for composing entire reports and submitting them to their FTO and patrol supervisor for approval. According to the three FTOs I interviewed, trainees begin by writing draft reports about relatively simple calls on their own; once complete, FTOs might suggest new wording, additional detail, ways to improve flow or clarity, or corrections in grammar and mechanics so that the report fulfills the genre conventions at Southwest Sheriff's Office and meets the needs of other readers. Above all, FTOs seemed most concerned with whether a report demonstrated that a trainee understood the concept of each call, could "paint a picture of what happened" for an absent reader, and could withstand an attack from someone like a defense attorney if the case made it trial and the trainee had to testify. So,

rather than dictate what and how to write, these FTOs evaluate their trainees' reports by looking for the probable cause for taking a report, an appropriate offense to document (i.e., the one with the most available evidence), details that supported each of the elements of the offense, and any other relevant details that would be important for a detective, prosecutor, or jury to know about if they ever had to review the case. FTOs and their trainees also emphasize that grammatical corrections are very important at this stage, especially because careful proofreading is a reflection back on the credibility of the officer and the department. Based on these criteria, trainees must include the minimally required elements within a concise probable cause affidavit and a clear and detailed investigative supplement for an FTO to approve their report.

Once an FTO approves a trainee's police report, or a deputy who has passed field training completes an initial report, it progresses to the patrol supervisor (usually a sergeant) for approval. At this point, the sergeant evaluates the report according to whether it includes each of the minimum components by looking for probable cause, the elements of the stated offense, and a chronological investigative supplement which details the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the incident with sufficient detail. While each supervisor was careful to note that they each have individual, subjective preferences on what more to include in a report or how to phrase specific information, the patrol sergeants I interviewed for this study stressed that they focused primarily on ensuring reports were complete, clear, and concise. As such, they stated that their common reasons for kicking a report back included missing information, confusing writing, or errors in grammar and mechanics. These sergeants further stated, though, that they held a higher regard for reports which went beyond the minimum components to include further relevant detail, such as connections between the current offense and other reports or investigative information beyond an original call. As one patrol sergeant put it,

You want to have anything and everything, and you don't want to leave anything pending, anything that could have been taken care of. You don't want to leave it.

If it's outside, out of your control, something you can't do, you want to show that you made every effort to do exactly everything you could.

In discussing this preference, patrol supervisors felt that reports with greater detail reflected better deputies, who “took the time” to make further connections and provide thorough reports even amid an unpredictable workload and multiple competing demands. Indeed, each interview with a patrol supervisor emphasized that patrol officers should take the initiative to gather as much information as possible so that they could assist report users later on in the legal process, when access to pertinent information may become more difficult or impossible for detectives or assistant district attorneys.

After a patrol supervisor approves a report, it is sent to a detective supervisor for review and then further investigation by detectives. The purpose now centers on determining whether each report constitutes a criminal case and, if so, bringing the case to trial and successful prosecution. To determine whether there is a case, a detective supervisor reviews each report primarily for content and detail, noting any areas where the initiating officer may need to improve accuracy or provide more contextual information. Once it becomes clear that there is a case, the detective supervisor then assigns the report to a detective for further investigation. At this point, the detective must gather more information and follow up with individuals identified within the original report as part of the work involved in building a case for successful prosecution. While this stage in the legal process is more complex in terms of how detectives contribute further to police reports—adding, for example, additional forms of evidence, expert statements, and more information than an initiating officer has access to—a key connection

between the original report and this point is that detectives widely agree that they are better able to use reports which contain a greater level of detail than what is minimally necessary for a report to pass a patrol supervisor's initial approval. As one detective noted,

Well, you don't always need a detective. [...] before it became, "Well, this is for follow-up. We'll let a detective handle it." Well, why do that if we can close that out right now and be done with it?

This high regard for detail is similarly shared by detective supervisors as they review and approve complete reports from detectives, when they ensure that probable cause, the elements of the offense, and the description of the evidence is amply supported with accurate, clear, and detailed investigative supplements before submitting them to the county District Attorney's Office.

Assistant district attorneys are another major audience of police reports, both through the shortened DIMS process and the "regular route" to prosecution. When an initiating patrol officer at the Southwest Sheriff's Office presents a case directly through DIMS, an assistant district attorney listens over the phone to a summary of probable cause, a description of an incident, and the details which may support the elements of a specific offense. The attorney then decides whether to accept a case based on whether the incident includes probable cause and the elements of the stated offense. After the deputy writes up the report, the assistant district attorney reviews it through the RMS and can ask questions about important details which would strengthen the case or were covered during the initial phone call; once the attorney accepts the case, he provides the deputy with a DIMS number. If any changes are necessary, the deputy would modify the report before submitting it to a patrol supervisor for approval, and the report would progress directly to the county District Attorney's Office for prosecution. This systematic feedback loop is

very similar to the regular interactions detectives described in connection with assistant district attorneys, especially in cases involving specialized divisions such as narcotics or traffic, to clarify details that may strengthen a case before the report progresses to prosecution.

Once “regular route” reports are submitted to the county District Attorney’s Office, the Intake and Screening division reviews them in order to decide whether the details described within the report meet the elements of the stated offense and demonstrate appropriate probable cause. According to one screening attorney, evaluation begins reviewing the probable cause affidavit to make sure all elements of an offense are clearly met and stated—“because if you don’t have a good affidavit, it’s not going any further.” Next, they review investigative supplements and statements for greater levels of detail. As one screening attorney noted, it is particularly helpful in this review process when police reports are written with close attention to the conventions of each sub-genre. Since similar types of information are included in, for example, the probable cause affidavit and the investigative supplement, he has found that some deputies will simply copy and paste templates to both kinds of documents as a way to write more efficiently; but, he appreciates the time and meticulousness that come with directing each piece toward its respective purpose. Ultimately, the screening attorneys direct their evaluation toward determining whether a report needs to include more information through further investigation, if the District Attorney’s Office should decline the case, or if the report represents a case that would be appropriate for prosecution at the misdemeanor level or the grand jury process at the felony level.

If a case is accepted for prosecution, the police report now has an audience with assistant district attorneys within the Trial division. Here, the material within the report forms the basis for prosecutors’ arguments and evidence, and so readers are primarily interested in any details which

could strengthen their case and help prove that someone committed a crime. According to one trial attorney, important details are often those which may not matter much for a report's initial approval, as most attorneys are not concerned about departmental styles or errors in grammar and mechanics. Moreover, this trial attorney worries sometimes that patrol officers may view their role in this process too narrowly:

I think a lot of them think that once they send the case over to the DA's office, their job is done, and it's not really done. It's just begun [...] and officers I think sometimes don't think it all the way through, and so it's a constant tension. Got a lot a better at it, but I think they think a lot of times a case is [...] out of sight, out of mind.

Indeed, the concern for detail here has a very different slant than the criteria within the Intake and Screening division. Instead of looking to see whether the details within the report support the elements of an offense, trial attorneys also have to collect information which could convince a judge or jury of someone's guilt; for example, the level of detail in describing a person's appearance could prove that the person on trial was indeed the person who committed the crime. While, to some extent, the level of detail in a report would now be supplemented by detectives' further investigations and documentation, trial attorneys clearly expect that even the initiating officer has a role in providing accurate and thorough details leading toward prosecution.

In light of each of these different checkpoints, audiences, and criteria for approval, novice peace officers should view their academy training in police reports as just the beginning, recognizing that it covers the norms and rules of the genre and conventional report writing practices within the Southwest Sheriff's Office just enough to get them started in patrol duty. As they progress toward composing full reports and submitting them for approval, they should gain

progressively more insight into the broader scope of their role in the legal process, and especially become better aware of how their writing must accommodate the needs and uses that different audiences expect. In the next section, I analyze how these different expectations from report audiences reflect underlying perspectives about the community and appropriate divisions of labor in the Southwest Sheriff's Office as an activity system, and how discussions of andragogy, community policing, and situated learning may highlight effective ways that the police report genre mediates this system.

4.5 Analysis of Audience Expectations

Across the different audiences who read, evaluate, and use police reports coming out of the Southwest Sheriff's Office, participants expressed a similar underlying message that novice peace officers should be comfortable with what one report writing instructor called "wearing multiple hats." That is, they must take on an attitude where they recognize themselves as key players in launching an investigation, rather than the bottom of a hierarchical organization with rigid divisions of labor, and comfortably shift between varying roles of patrol officer, investigator, and legal partner in seeing a case progress to successful trial and prosecution. Even though reports could regularly get approved based on fulfilling minimum requirements, the perspective valued by these audiences demands that deputies take the initiative to gather additional details and make connections with other ongoing investigations along the same lines articulated by one detective: "we can close that out right now and be done with it." This is a very reader-centered perspective on police report writing, demanding that peace officers meet audience expectations at multiple levels and balance these against competing demands on their time, even though their *de facto* job duties do not explicitly account for this extended role. Moreover, this attitude aligns with the values within community policing, which disrupt what

Auten (1981) describes as a traditionally rigid organizational structure linked to paramilitary law enforcement agencies, as well as its focus on simply preventing crime, in order to focus on how peace officers can partner with related groups to address and solve community problems. These intersecting dynamics demonstrate that the police report genre may effectively serve as a mediating tool for aligning the writing practices of peace officers with the ideal divisions of labor and deeper norms and rules of the Southwest Sheriff's Office as it continues its focus on a community oriented model of policing.

Somewhat paradoxically, the level of additional work that may come with this ideal awareness has to fit into a context where peace officers must also accept the norm for very limited time to compose reports and an unpredictable workload. In light of this concern, discussions of situated learning are especially relevant, highlighting how novices must gradually understand their role and scope within a workplace if they are going to effectively integrate with their surrounding community of practice. As Anson and Forsberg (1990) noted, a typical phase pattern for novices adjusting to the writing demands of a workplace often entails a shift between idealized expectations, frustrated disorientation, and eventual resolution where they begin to form new knowledge, adapt, and take initiative with a greater sense of what is expected of them (p. 207). Meanwhile, as Paré (2000) point out, supervisors help newcomers comprehend their role through tacit forms of writing instruction and feedback; rather than merely receive surface editing or corrections from supervisors, novices “learn what is ‘acceptable’” in the tradition of writing the police report genre (p. 151). Despite the apparently competing demands within audience expectations for both efficiency and thorough detail, then, novice peace officers would ideally absorb these demands within their writing practices. Ultimately, the continued effect could lead to deputies including more of such details within their investigative supplements and

thus improving the investigative work of detectives and the screening and prosecution of assistant district attorneys on the way to trial.

Each audience's evaluative criteria reinforces the underlying message that deputies should occupy multiple roles, yet also indicates how police reports reflect and convey the values of the activity system's surrounding community. At the level of patrol duty, FTOs and patrol supervisors evaluate reports with concerns beyond the minimum elements needed for approval; they are largely concerned with the *ethos*, or authority and credibility, that each police report contains and how it reflects on the associated credibility of the initiating officer, his supervisor, and the wider community of the Southwest Sheriff's Office. This is evident in the ways that FTOs and sergeants provide feedback to trainees or deputies, evoking a permanently defensive posture in their focus on unclear writing, missing details, or errors in grammar and mechanics that could open up areas for attack from a defense attorney during court testimony. FTOs' and sergeants' descriptions of this kind of feedback evoke the goals of andragogy, emphasizing a mode of instruction which values the knowledge of the adult learner and respectfully offers suggestions by assuming that "experience is the source of learning for adults" (Peace, 2006, p. 337), even without expressly acknowledging their roles as writing instructors. Moreover, this concern for ethos is rooted in the values of the law enforcement community, privileging peace officers' expertise on legal statutes, trustworthiness, and professionalism, demonstrating further that the police report genre may act as an appropriate mediating tool for fostering the professionalism associated with community policing partnerships and the andragogical style of training the next generation of law enforcement personnel.

The central role of detail for each level of police report audience is especially interesting, particularly because each group of participants expressed different connotations for what

constitutes sufficient detail based on their varied purposes. For FTOs, the level of detail in a novice peace officer's report reflects progress in creating thorough written descriptions. When evaluating reports from a trainee, one FTO discussed how he would specifically look for details that he remembered from an incident, but may not be clear and present within the trainee's investigative supplement; similarly, another FTO mentioned that he frequently offered suggestions on report drafts to "tweak" the ways details came up in describing an incident, based on his feeling of whether he would include the information on his own reports. Patrol supervisors tend to look at report details out of concern for clarity. One patrol supervisor described how he often provided feedback by simply stating, "KISS, or keep it simple, stupid" as a way to emphasize the importance of readers, rather than writers, understanding what happened during an incident. Another patrol supervisor explained that his concern for sufficient detail did not equate with as much detail as possible, but instead referred to relevant detail that a peace officer could only learn to note and document based on experience or listening to others' "war stories" of writing or using a report in court testimony; he stated, "We don't want them to sit and write a novel. We just want them to paint the picture of what was important, given the offense that occurred." For detectives, detective supervisors, and assistant district attorneys in the Intake and Screening or Trial Divisions, the amount of detail within a report is primarily a reflection of material to build a case for prosecution. At this stage, audience expectations are connected to a context where a case may take many months or years to successfully proceed to trial. As such, the level of detail and clarity become essential characteristics. According to one detective supervisor, police reports should be written in such a way that a detective or attorney could pick it up in twenty years and be able to visualize and understand what happened without any of the authors providing further explanation. In order to include sufficient detail, then, they feel that

deputies simply cannot be content with fulfilling the minimum requirements of a report—they must take the initiative to help others along in the investigative process.

These layered meanings of what audiences expect and need when they ask for more detail requires deputies to have sophisticated genre awareness as they compose police reports, even considering that the initial report will gain more detail as it progresses through further investigation. Again, this reinforces the need for novice peace officers to acquire a broader perspective of their work, valuing the ability to go out and gather further information when it is relevant and possible in service to fellow community members in their activity system and the longer-term demands of the legal process. In terms of situated learning and community policing, this means that novice peace officers must quickly progress to a level of independence where they can seek out and recognize details which strengthen a case within a complex, department-wide commitment to collaboratively solving community problems.

4.6 Conclusion

According to participants at the Southwest Sheriff's Academy, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and the county District Attorney's Office, each activity system associated with police report writing should ideally align so that peace officer cadets progress smoothly from basic communications training to capable report writing on patrol duty, ably meeting the needs and expectations of multiple readers. Within their academy training, cadets should learn the fundamentals of clear and concise writing, accurate observations and descriptions, the basics of the I/LEADS electronic report writing system, and the subgenres and conventions for police reports within the Southwest Sheriff's Office through the expertise and varied teaching styles of various instructors and presenters. Once cadets proceed to patrol duty as trainees, they should further learn from their field training officers (FTOs) about the audiences that each police

report may reach, and how they can write effectively for sergeants, detectives, and assistant district attorneys. Eventually, each deputy should compose police reports that reflect ideal characteristics, clearly and concisely including the minimum components and thoroughly detailed descriptions which demonstrate the writer's initiative, credibility, and professionalism.

These expressed ideals reflect the values embedded in discussions of situated learning, andragogy, and community policing, anticipating that novice peace officers can smoothly transition into gradually increasing levels of responsibility within an environment that privileges experiential adult learning and individual initiative toward solving community problems. Meanwhile, the mediating role of the police report across this process indicates that the genre—and its associated conventions, history, and traditions—may effectively align the norms and rules, divisions of labor, and varied needs of community members both within and across multiple activity systems. In effect, then, the police report genre serves to reproduce the activity systems of the training academy, sheriff's office, and district attorney's office. Moreover, this mediating dynamic works back on novice peace officers as subjects across these activity systems, demonstrating what Schryer (2002) describes as being “genred,” or socialized into particular situations through genres (p. 95). Indeed, by cultivating underlying values associated with community policing culture, such as individual initiative to further or complete investigations, maintenance of professionalism and credibility, and consistent attention to the needs of readers and report users in various stages of the legal process, the police report genre may provide a catalyst for novices to successfully acquire their identity as peace officers.

Chapter 5: What Must You Do? Writing Instruction at the Police Academy

5.1 Introduction

When people work as a group, each individual could express her or his version of how, in an ideal world, everyone and everything would come together to achieve a collective goal. These ideals of what should take place could be explicit or tacit, and it is often easy enough for everyone to function with a sense of sufficient underlying agreement up until they hit a snag. But, without a deep sense of where it is rooted and how it is connected to everyone else's share of the work, it can be difficult to distinguish a snag from, say, a hiccup or a wall, or to begin addressing it without creating potential for more problems. Along the same lines, members of a group may not recognize their efforts as especially valuable or innovative if they rarely articulate their ideals or make comparisons with others' work or outside models. In short, an effective way to analyze a group's work centers on comparing participants' ideals to their actual practice.

Similarly, subjects within an activity system can usually articulate a perspective of how each participant *should* use tools and signs within their respective community and its divisions of labor to achieve specific, individual objects and broader, social outcomes. While such idealized perspectives may be codified in standards or policies, they do not always need to be explicit or shared for subjects to operate from day to day, both within their primary activity system and across multiple interrelated activity systems. However, when a "contradiction" (Engeström, 1987; 2001; 2005) emerges between the components of an activity system or the shared values and expectations across multiple activity systems, subjects may experience one or more "double-binds" (Engeström, 1987, p. 174) between what they *should* do and what they feel they *must* do, given their perspective and circumstances. Engeström (2001) asserts that these contradictions are the catalysts for expansive learning, innovation, and change, and therefore are the primary focus

in Activity Theory research. Just as importantly, I further claim that an absence of major contradictions may signal a particularly effective model of collective work, which may be the closest thing to a “best practice” model that a highly contextual inquiry could provide. Either way, it is only through comparison with actual practice that anyone can identify areas of contradiction or particularly effective alignment—the root catalysts for reproducing best practices or fostering innovation.

With the value of these comparisons in mind, this chapter examines how the police report genre mediates interrelated activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, the Southwest Sheriff’s Office, and the county District Attorney’s Office by comparing the participant ideals outlined in Chapter 4 to the formal training that cadets receive in written communication and report writing at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy. I analyze whether the ways that instructors prepare cadets for police report writing align with their anticipated field training and the array of different audiences and uses that their reports must eventually meet in the broader legal process. Moreover, I recognize that cadets learn report writing as adults, within a setting that upholds the values of community policing, and as a new genre of writing that they must practice in both the academy and field training; therefore, my analysis brings in relevant insights from discussions of andragogy, the tensions between paramilitary and community-oriented models of policing, and perspectives on Situated Learning. Drawing from comparisons between ideals, practice, and relevant scholarship, I discuss contradictions or especially effective practices which may be the basis for innovation or more general recommendation.

As discussed in previous chapters, I model activity at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy through the theory of activity systems developed by Engeström (1987). This model recognizes that subjects mediate their tacit operations and conscious actions with tools, signs and

symbols in order to achieve goals, and that this all takes place within wider social activity. Meanwhile, social activity is directed toward a broader, collective object, and contains constantly intersecting dynamics from different community members, rules and norms, and divisions of labor. The components and interactions of an idealized activity system are modeled in Figure 5.1.1, demonstrating how an effectively aligned work model could represent a highly contextualized kind of “best practice.”

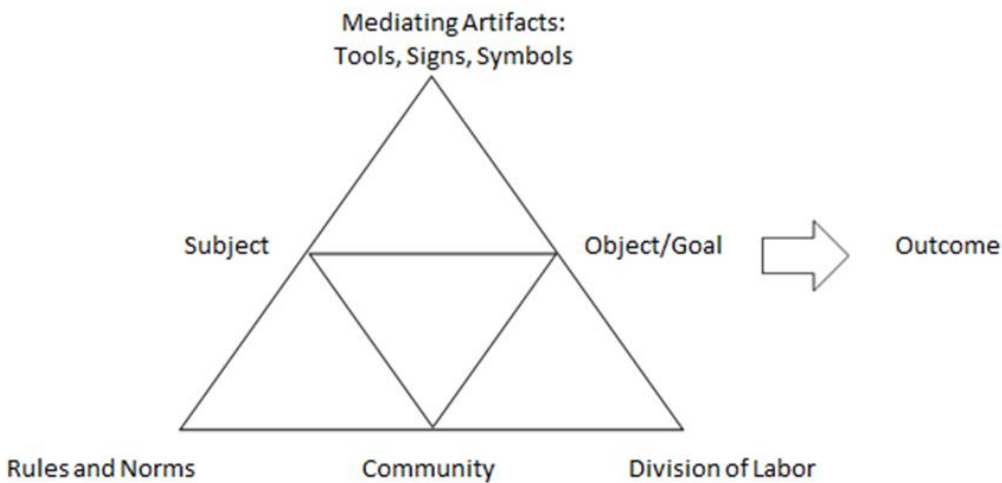


Figure 5.1.1. Engeström's (1987) Model of an Activity System.

To facilitate comparison, Figure 5.1.2 demonstrates how contradictions can be mapped between specific components of an activity system as a visual break; in this case, the contradiction appears between the subjects of an activity and the rules and norms they *should* abide by within an idealized work model. If major contradictions are sufficiently localized and described, such a model can help participants recognize a “need state” or questioning of the current working model and disturbances (Engeström, 2001; Nummijoki & Engeström, 2013, p. 54), where innovation or change could improve overall activity.

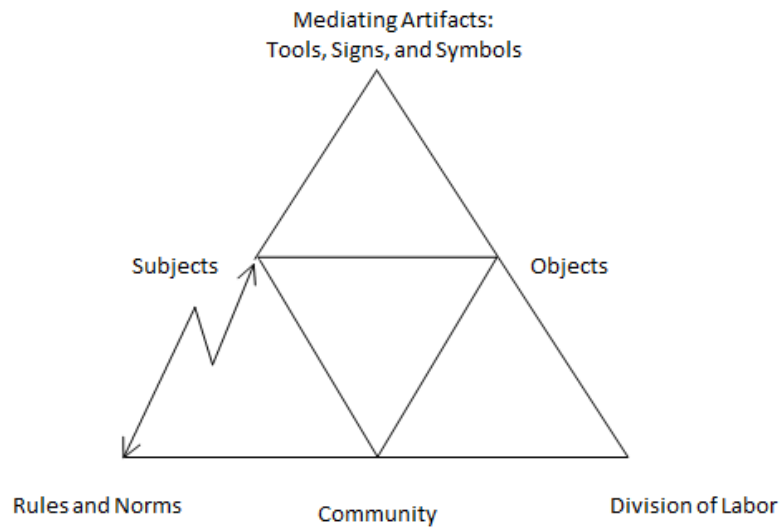


Figure 5.1.2. An Activity System Modeled with a Contradiction.

If, however, there are double binds between multiple activity systems, contradictions can be modeled similar to the illustration in Figure 5.1.3 (as developed in Engeström, 2001; 2008); here, the space between activity systems should ideally form the space for value co-creation and a shared outcome, yet does not align in a way that allows different systems to work together productively. These simplified models of interrelated activity systems provide a framework and vocabulary to understand actual practice, articulate my analyses, and explain my interpretation more concretely.

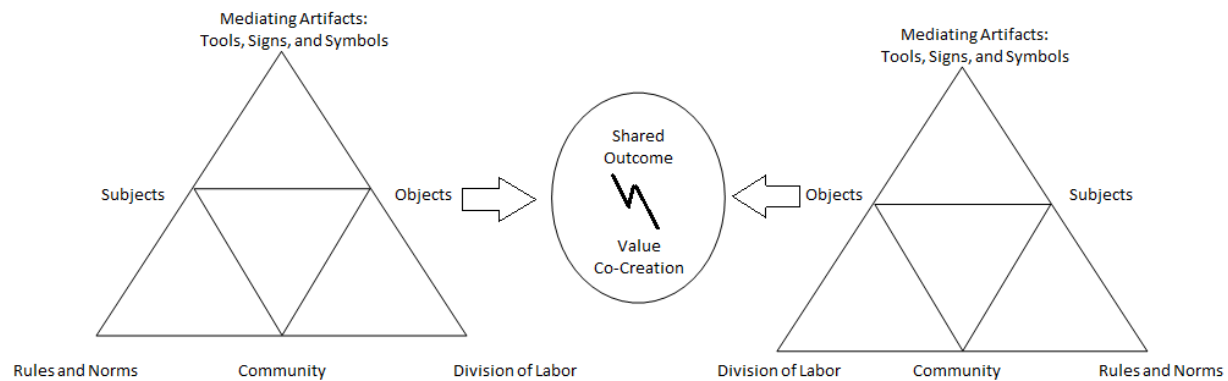


Figure 5.1.3. A Contradiction between Multiple Activity Systems.

In addition to the models offered by Activity Theory, my comparisons in this chapter incorporate theoretical developments within Writing, Activity, and Genre Research (WAGR), as articulated by Russell (2009), by focusing on the police report genre as the tool or sign which subjects use to mediate their activity both within the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and across activity at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office and the county District Attorney’s Office. Drawing from Miller’s (1984) theory of genre as a social action to distinguish the police report as more than a category of writing classified by its formal features, I focus more deeply on how the genre also contains traditions of using a tool, which then “make it possible [for subjects] to act with others over time in more or less but never entirely predictable ways, individually, collectively, and institutionally” (Russell, 2009, p. 43). Finally, my analysis brings in themes associated with the theory of Situated Learning as developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), and especially Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999), to discuss how formal police report instruction practices can be understood within scholarly discussions about ways that learning can be facilitated in transitions between school, apprenticeship, and work.

5.2 Background on the Academy

The Southwest Sheriff's Office prepares its own peace officer trainees through the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy by first training recruits as detention officers for work in two adult maximum-security detention facilities, then admitting a select cohort of cadets to a basic peace officer academy after at least one year of detention officer service. In addition to preparing novice detention and peace officers, the academy provides instruction and continuing education for over 2,500 federal, state, and local criminal justice professionals from six counties in west Texas. The academy also maintains a close relationship with the county District Attorney's Office, which processes reports of criminal cases from the Southwest Sheriff's Office alongside at least ten other law enforcement agencies in the area when developing cases for prosecution. The wide scope of the activity systems associated with the Southwest Sheriff's Office for report writing instruction, production, and use constitutes a significant impact for the surrounding community, and thus situates these research sites as especially well-suited for research on formal and informal report writing instruction practices that could have implications for others in law enforcement.

The basic peace officer academy offered by the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy lasts six months, meeting 40 hours each week at a dedicated facility for intense physical training and classroom sessions. The academy session constitutes a substantial investment by the Southwest Sheriff's Office into its workforce; the facility includes a classroom fully equipped with an audio-visual system, individual laptops for each cadet, Wi-Fi, and two computer labs connected to the departmental server and the electronic report management system (I/LEADS¹⁵). Additionally, instructors distribute curriculum materials and PowerPoint slides from each class session through Blackboard, an online learning management system (LMS), allowing cadets to

¹⁵ I/LEADS stands for Intergraph's Law Enforcement Automated Data Systems.

follow along or read ahead during class and on their own. The training academy also has its own administrators, including five dedicated academy instructors, in addition to the variety of instructors and presenters brought in from other departments in the Southwest Sheriff's Office and related organizations in the community and county government.

For the 2012-13 basic peace officer academy that I observed, 25 different instructors and presenters discussed topics ranging from the penal code and officer safety to intercultural communication and stress management. The state-mandated curriculum requires 618 total hours of instruction, including 16 hours devoted to written communication; however, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy exceeds these requirements by providing 1,000 total hours of instruction, with 18 hours devoted to written communication and an additional 30 hours in report writing. Further, academy administrators and report writing instructors emphasized that police report writing is discussed throughout most of the various class sessions, and that courses on the following topics include a sustained focus on report writing and written communication:

- Culture of Professional and Community Policing (12 hours),
- Written Communication (18 hours),
- Communication and Problem Solving (16 hours),
- The District Attorney's Office (12 hours), and
- Report Writing (30 hours).

According to academy administrators, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy added further instruction and practice in report writing to the state's minimum requirements because, over time, participants in staff and training meetings have expressed that novice deputies at the Southwest Sheriff's Office needed more training on police reports. Cadets gain practice in writing reports within the I/LEADS interface in the 30 hours of report writing coursework after

they sit for the state peace officer license exam. This practical, workshop-like experience occurs at the very end of the academy session—right before graduation—and is meant to provide additional exposure and practice at the academy so that cadets can more easily apply general concepts when they graduate and proceed to patrol duty.

My interpretation of formal report writing instruction at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy draws from multiple sources, including participant interviews with academy administrators, instructors and presenters, excerpts about report writing from the Southwest Sheriff's Office procedures manual, materials from the state-mandated curriculum,¹⁶ and observations of classes directly related to written communication and police report writing (listed above). In total, the raw data for this portion of my study included three hours of semi-structured interviews with two representatives from the academy¹⁷ and textual analysis of 132 pages of policy documents and instructor resource materials, which included learning objectives, examples, and class activities for the eighteen-hour course on written communication. I also observed 7 instructors teach a cohort of 17 cadets as they participated in 88 hours of class sessions. I documented all class sessions, interviews and informal conversations with instructors and cadets through audio recordings and field notes, transcribed audio records through an external transcription service, and developed research memos after each observation and during each round of coding. To verify my understanding of these various data sources, I also frequently employed member checks by repeating or paraphrasing participants' statements, asking follow-up questions by email, and seeking out clarification or further detail when informally conversing during my observations.

¹⁶ Academy administrators provided these materials to me in hard copy. They are also available from the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), 2013 Basic Peace Officer Course, at <http://www.tcole.texas.gov/training-instructor-resources>

¹⁷ Interview questions are listed in the Appendix.

As discussed in Chapter 3, my data analysis incorporated themes from reviewed literature and research memos alongside interviews, observations, and curricula within the perspective that “all is data,” constantly comparing these components in a recursive methodology of sampling, analysis, and theory development in order to form a grounded theory. Indeed, the entire process of data analysis was recursive. I began with open coding (or “substantive” coding; Glaser, 1978), wherein I read data line by line to discern patterns as indicators for codes. Eventually, I grouped codes into concepts, then categories, and finally hypotheses to explain answers to the research questions. While examining how codes developed into overarching concepts, I also simultaneously employed axial coding to develop and link concepts further into conceptual families. Finally, I conducted a third process of selective coding to formalize relationships between concepts as theoretical frameworks (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998). I collected and analyzed data concurrently, which helped maintain theoretical sensitivity and allowed my analysis to determine further areas for inquiry. My analysis also spiraled between open, axial, and selective coding—as well as ongoing memos to document these steps—through a method of constant comparison. At the point where no new concepts emerged from data, or theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998), my focus for data analysis shifted from coding to developing and articulating a fully grounded theory.

Here, I divide my discussion of this analysis between the themes evident within the documents that I collected and the practices that I observed or heard participants describe. This design allows me to distinguish between what participants were evidently trying to do and what actually happened, while drawing constant comparisons to the ideals participants conceptualized about how formal report writing instruction should contribute to the interrelated activity systems in this study. As I did in Chapter 4, I also weave my discussion between participants’ various

perspectives within the form of a narrative, citing specific interviews indirectly and according to participant identifiers (e.g., a report writing instructor). This helps in protecting participants' anonymity, but also allows me to more fully tell a story of how what participants believed *should* happen compared to what materials suggested *would* happen and my understanding of what *did* happen.

5.3 Textual Analysis: Procedures and Curricula for Report Writing

All participants in my study emphasized that report writing is an essential duty for deputies, and often estimated that documentation associated with field notes and police reports comprised 80-90% of their work. In addition to the hours devoted to coursework with a primary focus on reports at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, the significance of writing on duty is evident within both the Southwest Sheriff's Office policy and procedures manual, which has a section specifically about report writing, and the state-mandated curriculum, which provides instructor resource materials for the minimum 16-hour class on Written Communication. These materials collectively form an official voice from the state and the departmental administration, providing imperatives about proper procedures for report writing at the Southwest Sheriff's Office.

Overall, the manual and curriculum indicate that deputies should be fully trained in report writing by the time they graduate from the training academy and complete subsequent field training. However, these texts are also quite explicit about their insufficiency—they do not cover, nor pretend to cover, everything a novice peace officer would need to know to be effective at report writing. Instead, these materials only outline the formal features of the police report genre, and provide a direct and recurring emphasis on the need for novices to learn how the genre is enacted through practice and modeling. Taken together, excerpts from the policy and

procedures manual and the minimum curricula for written communication and report writing suggest what *would* be covered in any given basic peace officer academy for the Southwest Sheriff's Office and offer an additional point of comparison with what I eventually observed in the classroom.

The Southwest Sheriff's Office has a robust policy and procedures manual, which covers police report writing as part of a ten-page policy on reporting and releasing information and an additional three-page description of report writing procedures within the patrol bureau. The manual itself is not publicly accessible, and I received printed copies of relevant sections during my interviews with academy administrators. Within these sections, the manual describes the types of records and documentation that deputies must maintain within the I/LEADS report management system (RMS), procedures for documenting action and completing reports, and security measures for different kinds of records. According to the manual, police reports are necessary in the following instances:

1. A criminal offense is reported or believed to have occurred;
2. Vehicle crashes involving injury or death or the cost of damage to any vehicle or property is greater than \$1,000;
3. Incidents involving family violence;
4. Injuries party calls at place of employment;
5. Non-criminal activities which warrant law enforcement intervention or reports:
 - a. Runaways
 - b. Missing Persons
 - c. Life-Threatening Injuries
 - d. Unattended Deaths

- e. Abandoned Property
- f. Vehicle Impounds

Further, the manual describes the sub-genres of the police report according to the following authorized forms, some of which can be automatically generated through entering information into the report management system (RMS):

1. DAILY ACTIVITY REPORT is a chronological summary form completed by each deputy based on calls for service and other patrol activity during the shift.
2. OFFENSE REPORT is RMS generated, serving as the initiation of an investigation or case. It is based on facts obtained during the first investigation and, when entered into RMS, allows the case to be tracked, supplemented and forwarded for prosecution. Through formatting, the offense report also serves as the agency's method of designating cases as "Domestic Violence" or "Hate Crime."
3. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT is a RMS generated report that serves as the means to supplement or follow-up on a case already in the system. It shall be completed by deputies who need to add additional information about investigative activities to the existing case.
4. TRAFFIC ACCIDENT REPORT is a RMS generated report completed on a standardized format specified by the Texas Department of Transportation to document traffic crashes.
5. VEHICLE IMPOUND INVENTORY is a hard copy form completed at a scene whenever a vehicle is inventoried prior to it being impounded.
6. PROBABLE CAUSE AFFIDAVIT is an RMS generated report required following an arrest without warrant; list the probable cause, name of suspect, date and location in compliance with State requirements to obtain a warrant of arrest or search.

7. FIELD INTERVIEW REPORT: formatted information collected by deputies in the field whenever there is contact made with an individual in the field. Shall be forwarded to Crime Analysis.

By explaining which incidents police reports must document and describing each sub-genre, the manual explains some of the purpose, audiences, and conventions associated with police reports circulating through the Southwest Sheriff's Office and the county District Attorney's Office. For example, the description of the Offense Report refers to a fact-based style and indicates how a report moves from an initiating report to investigation and prosecution, aligning with the ideal expectations I heard from participants who have to read and use reports. While these audiences also noted that, ideally, deputies should recognize that reports do much more than document an event, these manual sections provide a quick overview of important differences in the kind of information and levels of detail that each part of a report should express.

Beyond the basic overview of reportable incidents and the sub-genres of police reports, there are also two pages in the manual devoted to reporting procedures. However, the wording here suggests that readers would already know how to write reports, stating that all employees who have a reporting responsibility "shall be familiar with the reporting requirements, policies, and procedures associated with criminal complaint reports." In describing the reporting procedures, the manual simply states, "A reporting employee shall ensure that their report provides a complete and accurate representation of the incident as it occurred," then provides a short list of information to include so that reports are routed correctly (e.g., case number), rules for properly formatting and submitting reports to supervisors (e.g., listing offenses in order of severity, correctly indicating case numbers), and supervisor responsibilities for reviewing reports (e.g., verifying completeness and accuracy). Beyond these technical instructions, the two-page

section on reporting procedures within the policy and procedures manual provides few guidelines on the actual writing within a police report. While there are requirements to enter descriptive details in reports involving lost, stolen or damaged property, as well as supplements with any additional information that deputies receive about an incident or gather through investigative action, there is no comprehensive description of what a report should look like, which information is necessary for each kind of reportable offense, how information should be organized, or appropriate writing style.

According to several experienced deputies, including academy administrators and both patrol and detective supervisors, the fundamentals of report writing that are absent from these sections of the manual would already be taught as part of the formal basic peace officer academy curriculum. While one field-training officer later told me that a core group of supervisors is working to create a prototype report writing manual—especially for entering reports into the I/LEADS report management system (RMS)—most participants seemed comfortable without thorough written procedures for reports’ textual features. Similarly, the three-page supplementary document on reporting procedures within the patrol bureau states that, during the first phase of field training, “new deputies will receive instruction on the Office’s field-reporting system.” As such, the policy and procedures manual is a very brief reference on report writing rules, providing only a glimpse into the basic requirements each report must fulfill as a “complete and accurate” account that successfully flows through the report management system. More importantly, these sections of the manual emphatically point to prior training as the time where novices must learn what they need to effectively write reports.

This emphasis on prior training continues in the curriculum for the basic peace officer academy. According to TCOLE, the state licensing entity for law enforcement, the basic peace

officer course must include at least 16 hours devoted to the Written Communication objectives listed as Unit 15 of the TCOLE curriculum. This curriculum was last updated in January 2013, the same month when this portion of the course was delivered at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and includes 36 pages of learning objectives, examples, and suggested class activities. During my interviews with academy administrators, I also received printed copies of previous, very similar editions of instructor resource materials from March 2008 and September 2011, as well as printed copies of academy lesson plans and lecture slides that were developed as a template from the TCOLE curriculum. In all, I analyzed 132 pages that, collectively, comprise the material curriculum for Written Communication at Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, in order to understand what *would* be covered in any given basic peace officer course there.

A distinguishing feature of the curriculum is its remarkable consistency across multiple versions and diverse materials. The content from the curriculum and instructor resource materials provided by TCOLE are clearly reflected throughout the lesson plans and lecture slides from the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, as each articulates the following goals and objectives for the course on Written Communication:

15.1 The student will demonstrate effective written communication skills

15.1.1. Identify the components of a sentence

15.1.2. Identify the process in writing complete sentences

15.1.3. Recognize sentence clarity problems and correct them

15.1.4. Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate use of punctuation

15.2 The student will understand the importance of an the creation of effective field notes

15.2.1. Discuss the definition and use of a field note

15.2.2. Demonstrate observation and descriptive skills

15.2.3. List the types of information that should be entered into the officer's field notebook

15.2.4. List the questions to be answered in field notes to complete a report

15.3 The student will understand the uses and essential characteristics of police reports

15.3.1. List the significant uses of the police report

15.3.2. List the eight essential criteria of a good police report

15.3.3. List the common types of police reports

15.3.4. Identify the difference between chronological and categorical ordering in report writing

15.3.5. List the three basic kinds of information necessary in police reports

15.3.6. Identify the importance of separating fact from opinion in police reports

15.3.7. Identify the statutory authority relating to confidentiality of sex offense victims

Each component of the material curriculum further indicates the degree of detail and emphasis that each course goal includes. Content for instruction in section 15.1 comprises 23 of the 38 pages in the TCOLE curriculum from 2008 and 2011, and 23 of the 36 pages of the curriculum from 2013. Instruction for this section would center on grammar and mechanics, as the content includes detailed lists of rules, examples, and class activities for cadets to practice recognizing and correcting errors. This section moves from identification of the parts of speech (e.g., noun,

verb, or preposition) and recognition of complete and incomplete sentences to activities where cadets correct example sentences on the basis of the placement of modifiers, double negatives, passive voice, slang, commonly misused words, unnecessary verbosity or repetition, and punctuation. Within this section, the curriculum also includes adapted excerpts from *The Merriam-Webster Concise Handbook for Writers* (1991), *Dr. Grammar's Writes from Wrongs* (1991), and *Merriam-Webster's Notebook Dictionary* (1996), especially in laying out the definitions for parts of speech and providing a four-page list of commonly misused words and a four-page supplement, "A Brief Guide to Punctuation."

Overall, the emphasis in section 15.1 is on the importance of error-free writing that is quickly and easily understood by non-police audiences; often participants at all levels reinforced this focus as a universal need for "correct, concise and clear writing." Many of these concerns are associated with how any given audience would likely judge the personal credibility and authority, or *ethos*, of an individual peace officer based on his or her writing. While the focus on types of errors to look out for and avoid is, to a large extent, out of the context of actual writing, the curriculum sums up these concerns as constant attention to personal authority. This can be seen under the header, "Importance of Complete Sentences in Written Communication," especially in linking the personal pronoun "your" with the grammatical focus of complete sentences:

- Your written communication will be one of the factors used to evaluate your competence as a peace officer.
- Your written communication may be seen by a diverse audience (your agency, the criminal justice system, the public, etc.).

- Your written communication may serve as a source document for judicial and administrative proceedings.

Additionally, the curriculum provides several imperative statements, experience-based strategies (or *heuristics*), and learning activities to reinforce what peace officers should and should not do in order to conform to a correct, concise, and clear writing style. For example, in explaining verbosity, the curriculum provides command statements like, “Flowery and fancy words and phrases are unnecessary and distracting. Such phrases are considered ‘deadwood,’ and should be kept out of your documents.” Similarly, lesson plans developed by the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy include mnemonic heuristics like “KISS: Keep it Simple and Sweet” and example activities like correcting or rephrasing example sentences to promote an overall understanding that only error-free writing in concise and clear Standard English would be appropriate for a peace officer’s written communication.

Like section 15.1, sections 15.2 and 15.3 detail the content for instruction on the genre conventions of field notes and police reports through lists, heuristics and activities. Section 15.2 comprises 10.5 of the 38 pages from 2008 and 2011, and 10.5 of the 36 pages from 2013. In all versions, it first describes the purpose, possible audiences, and style of field notes, discussing how field notes are used to provide a detailed and accurate basis for reports and thus require very descriptive writing that would be clear and consistent with any other documents—especially if the field notes are ever entered into court. To aid cadets in developing strong descriptive skills, the curriculum provides lists of what should be entered in field notes (e.g., names, descriptions of people, vehicles and property, dates and times, locations), and heuristics for thorough descriptions, such as the six journalistic modes of inquiry to describe an incident (i.e., who? what? when? where? why? how?), and the acronym CYMBAL to describe a vehicle (Color,

Year, Make/Model, Body style, and License plate information). Throughout section 15.2, the curriculum also repeatedly emphasizes that genre conventions for field notes should be taught through practical activities, stating that instructors should “[u]se this information in every scenario/role-play possible to give students practice in note-taking” because “[i]t is important for the student to practice observation and descriptive writing skills daily. Practical exercises are mandatory for this section.” To aid in practical learning, the instructor resource materials include six sample activities to sharpen observation and descriptive skills. These activities include individual writing assignments, group role-plays, and skits to describe people, locations, things and events; additionally, activities include prompts for cadets to peer-review one another’s performance and receive feedback from instructors about how clear and vivid a description would be for a target audience. While the rule-based lists and heuristics indicate a focus on the formal, textual features of the field note genre, rather than on its use in social action, this latter emphasis on practical activities appears to balance out the curriculum’s focus and demonstrate a value for actively learning a genre through practice, with adult learners, as promoted by scholars in Writing and Genre Research (WAGR) and andragogy.

The structure for the curriculum within section 15.3 is similar to the discussion of field notes, although it takes up only 1.5 pages of both the 38-page curriculum from 2008 and 2011 and the 36-page curriculum from 2013. This section begins with the purpose, implied audiences, and style of the police report genre. The curriculum states that a police report has several significant uses, working as a permanent record of facts, a document that coordinates follow-up investigation, the basis for prosecution and defense, the basis for performance evaluations of an officer, a source for statistical data, and reference material. Based on this list, a cadet could understand that numerous audiences could read a report, including the public, detectives and

other deputies, attorneys, supervisors, criminologists, and even instructors and novice peace officers. In order to meet the needs of these diverse audiences, the curriculum lists “eight essential criteria of a good police report” as: accurate, concise, complete, clear, legible, objective, grammatically correct, and correct spelling; once again, this reinforces the need for “correct, concise and clear writing” throughout a peace officer’s written communications. Additionally, the curriculum provides lists of common types, or sub-genres, of police reports and rules for police report style, such as excluding statements of an officer’s own opinions, arranging information in order of occurrence and by category, and including identifying information, a narrative to describe an incident, probable cause, and the elements of the offense in every police report. Amid these rules and lists, the curriculum also provides additional notes to the instructor that cadets should learn genre conventions for police reports through practice while also learning the particular conventions associated with report writing at their particular agency; specifically, the curriculum states that “practical application of this segment should occur during the criminal investigation block of instruction” and that different kinds of style such as first-person voice or chronological arrangement may depend on agency policy. However, the TCOLE materials provide no suggested activities for report writing under the Written Communications course. Like the content of section 15.2, the curriculum devotes much of its detail to the formal, textual features of the police report genre, although the reminders about practical activities and different agency policies provide some balance toward teaching the genre as a social action that is situated within particular communities.

Taken together, the TCOLE materials and lecture slides and lesson plans developed by the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy provide a material curriculum that indicates that any basic peace officer course would emphasize the importance of correct, concise and clear writing

that demonstrates strong observation and descriptive skills. Instruction within the minimal course on Written Communication would include a focus on grammar and mechanics, plain style for diverse non-technical audiences, and the genre conventions of both field notes and police reports through a combination of rule-based lists, heuristics, and practical activities. This combination would allow instructors to balance a focus on the formal, textual features of important police genres, such as required information and rules for accuracy or simplicity, alongside a focus on how each genre operates as a social action, embedded in a specific community and learned by a group of adult novices.

In discussions related to adult learning, scholars of andragogy promote teaching practices that align with the balanced focus evident within the material curriculum, where learning is specifically facilitated through practice. In contrast to the child-centeredness of pedagogy, andragogy aims to understand how adults learn differently (Knowles, 1998) and thus, as Peace (2006) states, assumes that “experience is the source of learning for adults” (p. 337). Rather than promote teacher-led instruction of a skills-based curriculum, Birzer (2003) asserts that andragogical principles can help community-oriented police training become more mission-oriented and respond to what police have to know to perform their jobs effectively (p. 34). Further, Peace (2006) outlines six criteria of andragogical practice that could promote effective communication and problem solving skills that are associated with a model of community-oriented policing:

1. Voluntary participation on the part of the learners is essential;
2. Learners must have attained adult status based on social or cultural characteristics defining adulthood or on attaining an age where adulthood has been achieved, such as 25 years;

3. Learning objectives should be determined by a collaboration between learners and trainers;
4. Assessment procedures should not reflect traditional school-like testing but instead should be based on a demonstration of performance exhibiting a specific pre-agreed desired outcome;
5. The measure of learners' inherent pleasure in participating in the learning experience should be the objective of the training; and
6. The learners should be respected by the facilitator, their experiences valued, and a physically and psychologically comfortable environment should be fostered.

Although learning objectives are, to a great extent, determined by TCOLE and assessment measures include some traditional testing within the state peace officer licensing exam, some of these andragogical criteria are manifest within the material curriculum at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy. For example, frequent emphases on role-playing, instructor feedback, and peer review demonstrate multiple ways to assess cadets' performance and value learners' existing experiences. By mandating practical activities alongside rule-based lists and heuristics, the material curriculum demonstrates an awareness of andragogical criteria that are valued by scholars in discussions of adult learning.

The balance implied by this curriculum content would also help instructors facilitate a gradual transition for cadets as they move from roles as relative outsiders to increasingly independent novice peace officers. As Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) describe in their research on Situated Learning, novices generally proceed through identifiable stages pictured in Figure 5.3.1, especially within an apprentice-like context such as the transition between school and work.



Figure 5.3.1. Spectrum of Situated Learning, based on Dias et al. (1999).

These different stages, though not necessarily linear, can be understood as a kind of upward progress in the context of police training because of its structured approach to academy training, field training, then relatively independent duty on patrol and the gradually lessening roles of instructors or mentors along the way. As such, teaching which scaffolds gradual progression through these stages, such as in first describing formal rules and then facilitating increasingly independent practice, would likely improve workplace learning.

According to this progression laid out in the material curriculum, cadets in a basic peace officer course at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy would proceed through a review of fundamentals in English grammar and mechanics and instruction on the genre conventions of field notes and police reports in order to fulfill the minimum requirements in Written Communication. The order in which these learning objectives progress lays out a trajectory for the Written Communication course which proceeds from basic concerns rooted in the fundamentals of grammar and mechanics, to the conventions of the field note genre, to the conventions of the police report genre. This trajectory follows what participants at the academy often called a “building blocks” approach to writing instruction, indicating that cadets would progress from proficiency with grammar to effective writing in two related genres.

In Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS), this kind of approach is commonly associated with “current-traditional rhetoric” (Young, 1978; Berlin and Inkster, 1980), where the emphasis

is primarily on “[t]he composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs, the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); the preoccupation with the informal essay and research paper” (Young, 1978, p. 25). According to Berlin and Inkster (1980), the current-traditional paradigm of rhetoric implies significant—and problematic—assumptions about reality, the writer, audience, and discourse itself: reality is understood as “rational, regular and certain,” and a writer can simply “set forth” an experience so that an audience can access the same experience through correctly transmitted discourse. Meanwhile, “Error, in this scheme, is thus simply the result of inadequate observation or emotional perverseness” and “the teacher’s task is to elicit writing that corresponds to this world. This is commonly accomplished by simply reminding the student to pay closer attention to detail” (pp. 2-3). Moreover, if the curriculum is delivered without a sustained, focus on the practical activities noted as essential within the instructor notes, the curriculum would also imply a “banking” approach to adult education (Freire, 1993), in which the student is viewed as an “empty account” to be filled by the teacher and “‘knowledge’ is a donation from those who see themselves as wiser to those who see themselves as ignorant;” in practice, this approach imagines that knowledge is merely “transmitted” or “transferred” in an imposing, unquestionable way rather than in an active and interactive way that produces reflection or debate.

However, the most recent revision of the material curriculum may align more closely with andragogy, as well as genre-based learning in Writing and Genre Research (WAGR). A major difference between the January 2013 version of the TCOLE curriculum and previous editions is that discussions of the field note genre and the police report genre precede the

emphasis on grammar and mechanics, although the numbering system for the goals and objectives remains intact. This is interesting because, together with the layout within the sub-sections on field notes and police reports, the trajectory implies a genre-based approach to writing instruction that is more closely aligned with discussions within WAGR that accept genre as a social action, rather than simply a category or a set of formal features (Devitt 1993; Bawarshi 2000). Here, teaching would be structured in progression from the “global” to the “local” concerns of a genre, prioritizing the purpose and audience needs before structure, style, or mechanics. As Bawarshi (2003) argued, this would allow students to gain more from learning how to adapt socially and rhetorically as they move from one "genred" site of action, rather than from mastering notions of "good" writing. Together with a focus on practical, hands-on and group activities, this genre-based trajectory would account for andragogical principles such as collaboratively determining learning objectives and respecting the prior training and experience of learners. Further, the trajectory would facilitate smoother transitions to field duty through modeling the increasing independence that is called for by Situated Learning.

Together with the material on report writing within the policies and procedures manual, the material curriculum for Written Communications provides a sense of what report writing instruction would likely include in any given basic peace officer course at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy. This offers an additional point of comparison to the ideals of report writing that my study participants conceptualized from the perspectives of major instructors, audiences, or users of police reports, as well as to the curriculum delivered in courses related to report writing at the 2012-13 basic peace officer academy.

5.4 Observations Analysis: Delivered Curricula for Report Writing

I interpreted the delivered curriculum for formal report writing instruction through the data produced by the combination of classroom observations, informal conversations with participants, and semi-structured interviews over the span of the 2012-13 basic peace officer academy, between December 2012 and May 2013. Administrators and instructors at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy consistently emphasized that issues in police report writing frequently come up throughout the 1,000 hours of coursework in any given basic peace officer academy, and I consulted with one administrator to observe 88 hours of class sessions with a sustained focus on written communication and report writing (see Figure 5.4.1).

Course Topic	Hours	Dates Held
Culture of Professional & Community Policing	12	Dec. 6 - 7, 2012
Written Communication	18	Jan. 11, 14 - 15, 2013
Communication & Problem Solving	16	Mar. 13 - 15, 2013
District Attorney's Office	12	Apr. 16 - 17, 2013
Report Writing	30	Apr. 26, Apr. 29 - May 2, 2013

Figure 5.4.1. Courses Observed at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy

Seven different instructors taught these courses in the order listed above, and each course was spaced across the entire six-month academy, separated by sessions on other topics. All courses except the report writing workshop were delivered before cadets sat for the state peace officer licensing exam on April 23, 2013; as such, the first four included some focus on performing well on the exam, and the report writing workshop took place once all cadets knew they had successfully passed. Additionally, each course included an evaluation component, where cadets filled in a form to rate the effectiveness of an instructor in stimulating interest, organization, clarity and relevance of class assignments, varied use of questions, discussion, lectures, and/or group work in the class, and instructor's availability when needing assistance.

After introducing myself and my project to the cadets and instructors during the first day of classes, I conducted each observation by sitting in the back of the classroom with my laptop, where I simultaneously wrote field notes, audio-recorded the session, and watched both the instructor's screens and the cadets' computer screens that were immediately in front of me. While I tried not to be very conspicuous, I answered questions from instructors when they called on me—usually as an icebreaker—and held informal conversations with instructors and cadets when they spoke to me or I had questions. Eventually, two cadets invited me to sit between them so I could have more desk space, which helped me see their computer screens and the occasional handout more clearly.

For the most part, the class sessions I observed took place within two classrooms. The first classroom contains three long tables arranged in a U shape, facing an instructor's lectern, desk, and an audio-visual system with two television screens mounted on the wall. The instructors' desk contains a laptop connected with the audio-visual system, and each cadet's workstation contains a laptop connected to the department server and Wi-Fi, allowing everyone to follow along with lessons on the Blackboard learning management system (LMS), read ahead, check email, and look up information online. The room also contains dry-erase boards along two walls, two large bulletin boards containing departmental policy updates and officer memorials, cabinets of equipment, and an adult-size training dummy. In the center of the U is an open space where instructors can move around or cadets can perform skits or role-play activities; one instructor, for example, frequently used the training dummy to demonstrate incidents during discussions. Cadets sat on at their workstations either in similar workout clothing or detention officer uniforms, depending on their physical training schedule for the day, along with a gallon-size jug of water, a copy of the Texas Criminal and Traffic Law Manual, and a steno pad for

field notes that they wrote their daily activities in and tucked into the back of their waistband whenever they left their desk. Cadets met in this room for all the class sessions I observed, with a couple of exceptions: during one session about the District Attorney's Office, I joined the cadets at the County Courthouse to listen to further presentations and attend a court session, and I observed the 30-hour report writing workshop within a second classroom that has access to the I/LEADS report management system.

The second classroom is essentially a computer lab, with 20 tables arranged in narrow rows throughout the room and two desktop PCs on each table. At the front of the classroom, an instructor PC is connected to an audio-visual system and a central projection screen, and a row of tables along the back wall has a printer and some spare equipment. Cadets generally sat in pairs, but the close proximity of each workstation and rolling swivel chairs encouraged interaction even when some cadets sat alone at a table. During the report writing workshop within this classroom, I sat with my laptop at one of the back tables next to two paired cadets, again taking field notes and audio-recording sessions as I watched the front projection screen and cadets' computer screens.

The academy class represented a selective group of applicants; one instructor explained that, the last time recruitment opened up, about 1,300 applicants tested for 30 slots, and this seems to be the norm. There were 17 cadets in the cohort for the 2012-13 basic peace officer academy, including 15 males and 2 females. Each had experience as a detention officer that ranged between one and six years in the adult detention facilities, and one cadet had additional experience in administrative roles within the Southwest Sheriff's Office. There were also three cadets who had prior experience within the military, and two had college degrees, in Psychology and Criminal Justice. The relatively low number of cadets with college degrees did not surprise

me, as the Southwest Sheriff's Office does not require college credit hours for their detention or peace officers and many individuals that I spoke with throughout this study discussed how they attended college classes while also working full-time. As one instructor put it, officers tend to pursue a college education around four to five years after joining the agency, and many complete a degree for its inherent educational value and its usefulness in a competitive environment, especially since it increases the likelihood to promote. The relatively low number of female cadets was interesting, though, primarily because it was often brought up by instructors or administrators within class sessions; according to one instructor, there are only about 10 females among the 250 sworn peace officers within Southwest Sheriff's Office.¹⁸ In class sessions, instructors and administrators commented on the number of females in the cohort to both commend their ability to enter the basic peace officer academy and warn that being female provided no extra qualification for passing on to field training. Further, cadets participated in small-group discussion activities during the first class, on the Culture of Professional and Community Policing, which specifically asked why there are so few females on the department.

The protocol at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy is generally strict, requiring cadet behavior that strongly resembles basic training (or boot camp) in the military. I often arrived in the morning to find cadets standing in formation for drills or inspection, and class sessions were usually sandwiched between physical training regimens. Cadets had to enter the

¹⁸ This is an especially low figure for female peace officers in an organization, even compared to low national percentages, and the Southwest Sheriff's Office was quite conscious of this issue.

In 2008, the US Department of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that approximately 20% of sworn law enforcement officers were women, across 62 of the 67 federal law enforcement agencies in the US. In 2007, the percent of full-time sworn law enforcement officers who are women was also low among local police departments (15%) and sheriffs' offices (13%) that have over 100 officers.

See also U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (June 2010). *Women in Law Enforcement, 1987-2008* (NCJ Publication No. 230521). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/wle8708.pdf>

classroom in formation, stand at attention when a superior entered the room or called on them to speak, request permission to leave the room or pass by someone (including me), and submit as a group to additional physical exercise or cleaning duties when rules were violated. As one academy administrator explained, this environment allowed instructors to “stress the cadets” and see how they performed under pressure, while also promoting a strong sense of discipline and group solidarity. Near the end of the basic peace officer academy session, many cadets expressed their appreciation for this paramilitary style of enculturation; when one instructor indicated that a group of individuals in the next room were sitting for the basic peace officer exam, “with their earrings and goatees and such,” the class joined him in comparing their training more favorably, especially because cadets have more experience dealing with criminals in the jails and are less likely to freeze or second-guess orders under pressure.

5.4.1 Culture of Professional and Community Policing

After introducing myself in the first class session, I came back a couple of weeks later to observe the two-day class on the Culture of Professional and Community Policing. This course included an overview of policing history in Europe, the US and Texas, provided a detailed focus on the shift from the traditional paramilitary police service model (which the instructor termed a “militaristic” model) to community-oriented policing, and involved activities to help cadets understand how community-oriented policing could be applied in example situations.

The course was taught by a master sergeant specifically assigned to the training academy. In addition to a master’s degree, this instructor has experience in supervising patrol and investigative divisions, administration, and teaching Criminal Justice classes both at the training academy and area colleges. From the beginning, the instructor explained that cadets did not need to follow the paramilitary behavioral protocol during his class; instead, they could participate and

ask questions in a more conversational manner as he facilitated progress through 120 slides of TCOLE content, examples, and 15 class activities. As the instructor phrased it, he desired critical thinking, synthesis, and theoretical understanding; during one of the first small-group discussion activities, he also reiterated the need for open discussion by stating that cadets are entering a profession in which public speaking is an important aspect of their job, so they need to be comfortable speaking in front of a group.

Through a combination of lecture, Socratic questioning, and small-group discussions, the class discussed how the Southwest Sheriff's Office has come to embrace a community-oriented model of policing that positions each officer as an agent of change in the community and creatively addresses problems alongside other professionals and citizens. As cadets discussed possible solutions to problem-based scenarios they might encounter as deputies, the instructor frequently asked probing questions, solicited feedback from other cadets, and generally pushed everyone to think more deeply about creative ways to help the community beyond responding to a call, or making a report or arrest. Further, the instructor often positioned multiple points of view for analysis by the larger group and occasionally offered examples of what he might do in the situation or what others have done, but discussions generally proceeded by acknowledging multiple possibilities rather than a single correct answer.

Several activities also facilitated connections between cadets' experiences, their professional outlook and the tenets of community-oriented policing through small-group discussion prompts such as:

- Why did you join this Sheriff's Office? What are some of your goals in this agency structure?

- How is the culture different between the detention facilities and other parts of the Sheriff's Office, such as patrol?
- Is police work enhanced or impeded by a militaristic structure? What kinds of differences can result from groups trained in a militaristic structure and those trained outside a specific agency?
- Why are so few women in this Sheriff's Office?
- If you were selected to recommend changes to the training academy, what should be the educational requirements to become a deputy? Why?
- Using Robert Peel's principles of policing, choose three and prioritize them.

Each small-group discussion proceeded from the information in instructor's lecture and supporting PowerPoint slides, and led to discussions by the entire class on several themes that are relevant to my study.

The class was not specifically about police report writing, and the TCOLE curriculum for this unit¹⁹ made no mention of reports except to compare community-oriented policing to a time when "police officers often became little more than report takers." However, this course provided a philosophical foundation for understanding the importance of communication and officer initiative, which the instructor emphasized as important elements that inform effective report writing. For example, the class taught that a major tenet of community-oriented policing is that there is greater autonomy given to line officers, implying respect for their judgment as police professionals. Similarly, during interviews about how report writing should ideally take place within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, participants often described a similar value for officer initiative in connection with highly detailed reports that are written to accommodate multiple

¹⁹ The Culture of Professional and Community Policing was based on Unit 2 of the TCOLE curriculum, accessible at: <http://www.tcole.texas.gov/training-instructor-resources>.

readers and users, as well as demonstrate appropriate levels of further investigation, even at the level of the initiating officer.

One example of how report writing came up and aligned with other participant ideals occurred within the small-group discussion on the suggested educational requirements for future training academies. A cadet commented that a high-school education would be sufficient for basic peace officer training because, in the field, deputies would not expect to communicate with highly educated people. In analyzing this cadet's claim, though, the instructor discussed how higher education could figure into a deputy's major duties on patrol, especially in report writing. He noted that report writing is more persuasive than technical, aiming "to communicate what happened in a clear storyline so that someone could see what happened through your eyes and think that they would have done the same thing as you in those circumstances." As such, he suggested that someone who is better educated could control his or her writing at different levels to achieve this purpose. The instructor then summed up his argument by noting, "you can't learn report writing in just 6 months [of combined academy and field training] – it's a lifetime of learning, and those of you with college hours have an advantage in that." Like the material curriculum for coursework on written communication, as well as ideal statements from supervisors who use and approve reports, the instructor's statements pointed to report writing instruction as an ongoing process, necessarily improved through practice and experience.

Another important theme emerged during the small-group discussion about the paramilitary, or "militaristic," structure in the training academy and how it compares with other kinds of basic peace officer training or the environment cadets can anticipate on patrol. Since community-oriented policing is often contrasted with a traditional paramilitary model of policing, this topic came up frequently to distinguish cadets' behavioral expectations at the

academy and the command-rank structure at the Southwest Sheriff's Office from the relative autonomy and initiative that deputies are expected to demonstrate in patrol and further investigations. Overwhelmingly, all of the cadets repeatedly argued that militaristic behaviors at the academy were better than other forms of peace officer training because they felt more disciplined, connected with the group, and prepared to follow orders in the field. Despite this emphasis on a command-based structure in the academy, as well as the rank system within Southwest Sheriff's Office, the instructor also pointed out that it would be insufficient for cadets to rely on obedience to superiors when they were on the job. Instead, they would be expected to be relatively independent, and should feel empowered to suggest new strategies or investigate incidents further for larger patterns and solutions in the community. While a paramilitary model of policing neither seeks, encourages, nor expects initiative from line officers (Auten, 1981, p. 68), the instructor emphasized that each cadet "shouldn't just be an employee; instead, [they should] take advantage of all the autonomous power they achieve after six months [of academy and field training]."

These themes lined up with what other participants in my study expressed about how report writing should ideally function between the multiple activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and the County District Attorney's Office. Like the idealized statements from supervisors, detectives, and district attorneys, the instructor for the Culture of Professional and Community Policing emphasized that deputies must compose police reports with a broader awareness of what multiple users will need from each document and how their writing takes place within an agency committed to community-oriented policing. As such, their reports must demonstrate more than the minimum elements that would get approved by a supervisor, including deeper levels of detail that come with further

investigation, so that they can work with other report users and audiences to address community problems.

5.4.2 Written Communication

In January, I observed four days of classes on Written Communication, which were modeled directly on the TCOLE Unit 15 curriculum and departmental lesson plans that I analyzed as part of my interpretation of what would be included in any given formal instruction on report writing at this academy. The Written Communication class was taught by a civilian instructor who is specifically assigned to the training academy and has a master's degree, experience as a detention officer, and experience teaching Criminal Justice classes at both the academy and area colleges as he also works toward a doctorate. Like the instructor in the Culture of Professional and Community Policing, this instructor specifically asked cadets to disregard behavioral protocol during discussions and activities to enable a more conversational flow to the class. Additionally, the written material that I received prior to the start of the academy session was nearly identical to the content that cadets went over in class, and was presented through an extensive PowerPoint presentation that anchored a combination of lecture, examples, discussions, and class activities.

At the start of this class, the instructor assigned a 500-word essay on the importance of effective writing. Cadets were given much of the first class session to compose their essays in Microsoft Word on their laptops, and the instructor specifically required common college-level writing conventions such as 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spacing, one-inch margins, and proper citations of any outside references. As they wrote, cadets could ask questions, and I overheard several who requested assistance on formatting their documents according to the guidelines or attaching the file for electronic submission. Once complete, essays were submitted

electronically through the Blackboard LMS, and the instructor ran each one through a software program called StyleWriter in order to “check everyone’s writing skill and abilities and dramatically improve writing for when they move on to report writing.” After running each essay through StyleWriter on his computer, the instructor called each cadet up so that he could explain the program’s output, and then sent each essay back for review and revisions.

According to its website,²⁰ StyleWriter “shows you how to work like a professional editor” and “how to simplify, cut, and rewrite.” More specifically, the program automatically detects style patterns, like passive voice or abstract usage, in addition to typical style and grammar checks. As part of its aim toward clear and concise writing, it offers suggestions to delete extraneous or complex words, as well as “bog” and “pep” scores to measure relative clarity and reader interest. Within the actual program, StyleWriter flags areas for attention and offers a separate screen with explanations and suggested alternatives, as pictured in Figure 5.4.2.1 below.

²⁰ Editor Software. (2012). *StyleWriter 4: The Plain English Editor*. Retrieved from: <http://www.editorsoftware.com/StyleWriter.html>.



Figure 5.4.2.1. StyleWriter User Interface, with Automatic Suggestions

Since cadets did not have StyleWriter on their laptops, they viewed the automated comments within their original writing on Word when they received the output back from the instructor. On their screens, these comments appeared as blue-text notes and lists of alternatives inserted within their original text. Cadets reviewed these comments, made any revisions they chose, and then resubmitted their essays through the Blackboard LMS for review by the instructor.

After the essay activity, the instructor explained that the purpose of the class was to get everyone familiar with proper writing, but was not meant to “be like 10th grade English class, where it was like pulling teeth.” Since writing comprises such a large portion of work as a deputy, he urged the cadets to “take this class for what it is,” especially because they will eventually be accountable for most of their writing on the stand in court. The instructor then

passed out a worksheet with ten example sentences containing errors in grammar and mechanics. Cadets worked individually on identifying and correcting these errors, then read their edited version of a sentence to the whole class when the instructor called on different individuals. As each cadet read corrections aloud, the instructor followed up by reading alternative corrections from a master copy. Next, the instructor began reading off of his extensive PowerPoint presentation, and occasionally provided additional examples, details, or “war stories” that recounted past experiences and departmental history (Oliva & Compton, 2009, p. 334).

Within the presentation and lecture, the instructor covered every detail of the TCOLE curriculum. He first explained that a peace officer must possess effective written communication skills to clearly articulate the facts of a case as they occurred, and discussed how reports are meant to convince readers of that an incident occurred and met the elements of an offense. As such, reports need to include chronological structure, plain language, and every relevant detail recorded by a deputy within field notes. Next, he proceeded through definitions for the different components of a sentence, the characteristics of a complete sentence, and common errors in grammar and mechanics. Throughout this presentation, the instructor also made frequent comments about how important writing would be in evaluating each cadet’s competence as a deputy; for example, he often mentioned that most people who fail out of peace officer training do so for problems in report writing, and that problems in writing will lead lawyers and juries to doubt a deputy’s credibility. While he discussed important features for written communication and issued several warnings about ineffective writing, though, the instructor did not provide explicit instruction on how to compose field notes or different components of police reports. Instead, he often emphasized that “whatever you learn in here will have to change to go with what your FTO wants, what your supervisor wants, and all that. All we can do is teach you what

TCLEOSE²¹ recommends.” Like the material curriculum for Written Communication, the delivered course emphasized the formal textual features of field notes and police reports, the importance of “correct, concise and clear writing,” and concerns about how any given audience would likely judge the personal credibility and authority, or *ethos*, of an individual peace officer based on his or her writing.

To some extent, the activities that were used to start off the Written Communication class grew from recommendations for learning through practice that showed up throughout the material curriculum, and resonated with andragogical approaches to formal report writing instruction. The essay assignment aimed to educate cadets as adults, for example, by providing individual attention and accounting for existing knowledge by meeting students at their existing writing level and expecting that they can function with different technologies enough to ask specific questions once they have attempted a task. It was difficult to tell how effective this approach was, however, because cadets appeared to struggle with reading and interpreting automated feedback from StyleWriter and the instructor occasionally announced that revised essays demonstrated the same problems that should have been eliminated through the feedback system. Although the instructor explained that the essay feedback was meant to be “an indicator of actual writing ability,” it also appeared that the assignment did not seem authentic to several cadets. Some expressed frustration with the assignment and the software when the instructor stepped out of the classroom on breaks, mentioning that the essay was “just something I did to get it done,” pointing out areas where StyleWriter had inserted suggestions that seemed “wrong,” or claiming that “all this software does is make you feel like an idiot.” Despite some alignment with the andragogical principles that were evident within the material curriculum, the activities

²¹ TCLEOSE is the former name for TCOLE, and stands for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education.

within the delivered Written Communication class did not evince the same focus on adult learning in a new genre—likely because the genre, prompt, format, and feedback of an assignment did not correspond to the context, purpose, and audiences that cadets expected to face in their workplace writing.

More broadly, the different activities within the Written Communication class demonstrated complex tensions between the paramilitary behavioral protocols surrounding cadets' experiences at the training academy, the adult-learning principles that could recognize existing knowledge and foster growing independence, and practices that are commonly associated with a current-traditional paradigm in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (Berlin & Inkster, 1980). Cadets felt they had to participate in activities such as grammar drills and essays about the importance of writing, perhaps from a sense of obedience, yet displayed little connection with the “correct” responses delivered from answer sheets and the problematic patterns turned up by StyleWriter in its automatic writing assessment. In practice, this approach depicted knowledge as something modular, which can be transmitted or transferred from a context like a worksheet or essay to a completely different genre like field notes or police reports. Moreover, it appeared in an imposing, unquestionable way more in line with paramilitary policing, rather than in an interactive way that produces reflection or debate, as valued in community-oriented policing.

5.4.3 Communication and Problem Solving

I returned to the training academy in March to observe the Communication and Problem Solving course for three days. The instructor from Written Communication also taught this course, and he included another extensive PowerPoint presentation (about 215 slides) to anchor a combination of lecture, examples, discussion, and class activities. As in the other courses I observed, the instructor also specifically mentioned that cadets did not have to follow the

paramilitary behavioral protocol, such as standing at attention to speak in class, so that class discussions could flow more freely. This course was based on Unit 23 of the TCOLE curriculum²² and, like the course on the Culture of Professional and Community Policing, did not specifically deal with police report writing. Instead, the course covered principles of effective communication such as positions of people and objects (which the instructor called “proxemics”), timing (or “chronemics”), nonverbal cues, and effective listening so that cadets could analyze different situations and act appropriately. Further, this course included discussions of critical thinking, reasoning skills, and heuristics of the SARA process (i.e., Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) and the Crime Triangle (i.e., Offender, Victim, and Location) to help cadets analyze and solve problems within the model of community-oriented policing. Nevertheless, the course incorporated concepts that the Southwest Sheriff’s Office associates with effective report writing as part of a holistic—even rhetorical—approach to effective communication.

The relevance of class content for Communication and Problem Solving within my study is largely evident through the importance of rhetoric that I interpreted from class discussions of police culture. In this class, the instructor offered several detailed breakdowns of elements that cadets must be attuned to, showing that peace officers are a group which have a very high degree of formal, explicit instruction in rhetorical awareness of any given situation (without, of course, calling it rhetoric). This instruction is rooted in the philosophy of community policing, where peace officers seek to build rapport with members of the community so that they can collaboratively work to identify and solve community problems; as such, they must have a sharp awareness of audience, motives, and ways to appeal to them. Further, this rhetorical instruction

²² This curriculum is available at <http://www.tcole.texas.gov/training-instructor-resources>.

includes an emphasis on the basic, and often seemingly obvious and everyday aspects of communication. This was especially evident for me in class discussions of increasingly nuanced ways to interpret a situation through nonverbal communication; as listed in class, cadets would need to gain skills in interpreting tone, paralanguage, behavior, appearance, environment, energy levels, “proxemics” (i.e., closeness of people or objects), positioning of people or objects, chronemics (timing), gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and ways to visibly show that someone is listening. Several demonstrations and role-play activities also reinforced how cadets should be constantly aware of each situation, as in once case where other instructors came in to explain their own posture and demeanor by discussing why they hold their hands above waist level, keep objects in their hands, and frequently “check” their utility belt, pockets, and gear when talking to someone. In short, this holistic approach to communications training frequently emphasized actions that allow peace officers to “size up” situations in much the same way that a rhetor would be trained to discern all the available means of persuasion in any given situation.

The course on Communication and Problem Solving also related to formal report writing instruction by reinforcing a systematic way to objectively observe and describe the details of an interaction. As in the course on Written Communication, objectivity was emphasized as paramount to effective performance as a peace officer, and the instructor often repeated how important it is to try to “really understand a situation” with “suspended judgment and an open mind” before making inferences or reaching conclusions. During small-group discussions and role-play activities, cadets practiced using the six journalistic modes of inquiry (i.e., who? what? when? where? why? how?) that they had previously discussed as a pre-writing heuristic for field notes and reports, as well as the SARA process that they learned in the Culture of Professional and Community Policing, as systematic ways to observe, analyze, and describe scenarios. The

instructor also frequently noted that these heuristics are also effective as personal techniques of reflection, interpersonal techniques for dialogical communication, systems of note taking, and even formats for report writing. These explicit and recurring connections between the philosophy of community-oriented policing and report writing practices further reinforced that rhetorical awareness for different situations is just as important for sizing up a situation as it is for effectively reporting its details to others.

In addition to reinforcing concepts and heuristics that were previously introduced in other courses, the class on Communication and Problem Solving continued to emphasize learning through practice, especially so that systematic behaviors become habitual. Once again, this emphasis resonates with discussions among Writing and Genre Research (WAGR) scholars that focus on learning new genres as social actions rather than simply as a set of formal textual features. Further, the instructor's use of multiple examples throughout the lecture, as well as small-group discussions and multiple role-play activities, continued to demonstrate andragogical principles that respected the experience and knowledge of adult learners.

5.4.4 The District Attorney's Office

In April, I observed one of two class sessions on the District Attorney's office at both the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the County Courthouse. Since the first of the two class sessions was devoted to covering the process for the District Attorney Intake Management System (DIMS),²³ I focused my observation on the session for Offense Report Writing and Courtroom Testimony. An assistant district attorney taught the first part of this class at the training academy, and a second assistant district attorney met with cadets at the courthouse to

²³ More information about the DIMS process is available from Carmichael, D., Gibson, M., Voloudakis, M., and Fabelo, T. (2006). Evaluating the impact of direct electronic filing in criminal cases: Closing the paper trap – Executive summary. College Station, TX: The Public Policy Research Institute. Retrieved from [www.courts.state.tx.us/tidc/pdf/ExecutiveSummary 7-12-06.pdf](http://www.courts.state.tx.us/tidc/pdf/ExecutiveSummary%207-12-06.pdf).

guide them into a courtroom trial and present additional information on evidence that deputies must collect for specific kinds of cases. The assistant district attorney who taught this class has been with the District Attorney's Office for seven years, with experience as a prosecutor in misdemeanor and felony cases, especially involving intoxicated manslaughter and family violence. The instructor anchored the class with PowerPoint slides for his main points, and structured a quick-paced, rather animated class discussion around examples from real local cases, performative demonstrations with the training dummy, group role-play activities, and examples of well-written narratives. Similarly, the presenter at the courthouse facilitated a lively debriefing session after the cadets visited a particularly energetic trial through examples and discussions that pointed back to main points on her PowerPoint slides.

Overall, the discussion of Offense Report Writing and Courtroom Testimony centered on details which deputies should look out for, record in their field notes, and fully describe within their report narratives and investigative supplements, as well as why each of these details could support a case as it proceeds to further investigation and prosecution. The instructor explained that it typically takes two years for a case to go to trial, and that reports should primarily work to refresh an officer's memory before testimony. Further, since victims of family violence often refuse to appear in court, a report can include the details necessary for the trial to proceed and the case to stick. For these reasons, the instructor repeatedly emphasized that the most important thing a peace officer can do within a report is to "document, document, document" every appropriate detail, and recognize that "*any* fact that strengthens a case a pretrial or trial is valuable." As such, he discussed how report narratives must thoroughly describe the demeanor and appearance of all people involved in an incident, all physical evidence, and all injuries – even though this information should also be supported with photos. Further, he discussed how

reports should record all conversations and statements so that a reader would know what everyone said and when, as well as identifying information and contact information so that others involved in the legal process could confirm who was there and follow up with them during further investigations or preparations for court.

In addition to actively taking notes about these concepts, the cadets applied the concepts from the discussion of Offense Report Writing and Courtroom Testimony through multiple activities in class and at the County Courthouse. They observed the instructor perform different example scenarios with the training dummy, such as positioning of physical evidence, altercations or demeanor, and practiced describing what they saw and heard with appropriate terminology and objectivity. Cadets also participated in different role-play activities that simulated confident ways to testify in court, the logical questioning they could expect during court testimony about the details of an example report, and common ways that defense attorneys use reports to question facts and an officer's credibility. At the County Courthouse, they observed testimony from two peace officers during an active trial, as well as some rather combative testimony between the victim and defense attorney that seemed to inform his approach in questioning the peace officers; in a happy coincidence with the instructional aim of the visit, one of the peace officers showed a clear and detailed memory in his testimony, while the other frequently mentioned that she could not recall specific details of the case. Following these observations, the cadets analyzed the relative strengths of the police testimony, as well as the combative context between the victim and defense attorney that they would not normally see as a testifying officer, during a debriefing session in a conference room outside the courtroom with the second assistant district attorney. Between class instruction and their visit to the

courthouse, these activities allowed cadets to see how reports informed the broader legal process from multiple perspectives and gradually try out each concept in different contexts.

The content in both the class on the District Attorney's Office and the activities at the County Courthouse aligned with the participant interviews that I gathered from assistant district attorneys, detectives, and supervisors on how they ideally conceptualize a police report, again demonstrating a strong degree of alignment between the activity system for formal report writing instruction and those associated with police report audiences. Like these major users and readers, the instructor was primarily concerned with whether a narrative or supplement contained a sufficient level of appropriate details once the elements of an offense had been established and recorded in other report subgenres (e.g., the complaint affidavit or a warrant) so that it could support further investigation and prosecution, especially within court testimony. In court, cadets were also able to see how police testimony was enacted through their memory of details in a report. Effectively, both the class and the courtroom presented the police report genre as a social action within the broader legal process rather than merely a set of formal, textual features that must successfully pass multiple checkpoints. While the instructor did briefly list textual concerns for reports that are important to attend to, such as double-checking consistency for names and times and proofreading for errors in grammar and mechanics, the bulk of this course centered on the detailed content which should go into a report and how it functions in moving the legal process forward through further investigation, prosecution, and court testimony.

The way the class was taught, in combination with a visit to the courthouse and an actual trial, also aligned with principles of both andragogy and Situated Learning. Since the instructor for this class was from outside the training academy, he did not have to spend any time in releasing cadets from their paramilitary behavioral protocol as instructors did in the other courses

I observed, and his teaching style worked alongside the class activities to actively incorporate cadets as adult learners who were gradually entering a new workplace. As the instructor moved between demonstrations, examples, and role-playing, his style resonated with andragogical principles that the measure of learners' inherent pleasure in participating in the learning experience should be the objective of the training, and that learners should be respected by the facilitator, their experiences valued, and a physically and psychologically comfortable environment should be fostered (Peace, 2006). Similarly, the class activities valued cadets' previous experience and knowledge of ways to deal with criminals and follow courtroom procedures, and also engaged them in moving through the stages of Situated Learning that were discussed by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) by facilitating gradual proficiency with different ways to observe and describe important report details, and increasing familiarity with the social actions around police reports.

5.4.5 Report Writing

After the session on the District Attorney's Office, I returned to the training academy in late April to observe five days of class sessions focused on Report Writing. Unlike the other classes that I observed, this was delivered after cadets sat for the state peace officer licensing exam on April 23 and found out that they passed, so some cadets may have been affected by a shift from learning material they would use *if* they passed, to learning what they would use *when* they graduate and proceed to field training. This course was team-taught by two instructors, both of whom are also experienced field training officers (FTOs), detectives, and sergeants with several years of experience between them in areas such as special investigations and directing the FTO program. In short, both have extensive experience in teaching report writing on the job, approving reports, and using reports as part of ongoing investigations. Like the instructors in the

courses on the Culture of Professional and Community Policing, Written Communication and Communication and Problem Solving, they also specifically asked that cadets not follow the paramilitary behavioral protocol because they wanted cadets to see the class as a learning environment, where they could be attentive yet relaxed.

The Report Writing course was delivered as a workshop, in line with academy administrators' aim to provide additional exposure and practice in police report writing at the academy so that cadets could more easily apply general concepts when they graduate and proceed to patrol duty. As such, the discussion was not anchored by a PowerPoint presentation, but instead included a progression through report conventions, sub-genres, and feedback as cadets analyzed model reports and then composed their own in Microsoft Word and the I/LEADS report management system (RMS). Since everyone needed access to the RMS, the class was held in a second classroom, which was essentially a computer lab. After discussing the overall importance and conventions of police report writing, the instructors guided cadets as they composed narratives, investigative supplements, complaint affidavits, and sworn statements based on scenarios of incidents they will likely find most common in patrol duty (i.e., beer runs, theft, robbery, assault, and family violence). The instructors also helped cadets shape their drafts by analyzing actual reports already in the RMS, providing individual and group feedback on cadets' drafts, and providing additional context for how reports are crafted in the Southwest Sheriff Office through "war stories" that recounted their own past experiences and departmental history (Oliva & Compton, 2009, p. 334).

While introducing the course, the instructors discussed the importance of police report writing for deputies on patrol, especially in the context of professional credibility (or *ethos*) and the report's role in the broader legal process. Like other instructors and the different report

audiences and users that I interviewed about how a police report should ideally function within the activity systems around the Southwest Sheriff's Office, these instructors stressed that report writing is the most important duty for a deputy; reports reflect on each officer's personal credibility and authority, and have the power to make or break a case. These points were repeated throughout the workshop sessions, and instructors also constantly emphasized how much a report's quality matters for detectives who are investigating a case further, assistant district attorneys who are taking a case to trial, or even for the community and media who consult publicly available report sections as open records. Once again, this perspective on police report writing showed a remarkable degree of alignment between the activity systems of report users and formal report writing instruction, especially because actual users contributed to coursework. Further, the consistent emphasis on aiming reports toward later use in investigation and court underlined how the police report genre functions as a social action, rather than embodying only a set of formal textual features.

Instructors then provided an overview of report sub-genres and writing conventions. Each cadet had worked at least a year in the detention facilities, where they occasionally composed very short reports on such issues as prisoners' rule-breaking or disciplinary procedures, and so the instructors highlighted how they were already somewhat familiar with the "correct, concise and clear writing" expected within the Southwest Sheriff's Office. Since reports are much more complex and frequent for peace officers, they discussed how police report writing boils down to learning several sub-genres, including the public-record narrative, investigative supplement, complaint affidavit, and sworn statement. Further, instructors discussed how each component had a specific purpose, possible audience, and general rules. For example, a narrative is meant to publicly indicate that a crime occurred and met the elements of offense, and so it must be very

brief and include language taken directly from the penal code without naming anyone except, possibly, the arrestee. Meanwhile, an investigative supplement is meant to provide all appropriate details to investigators and prosecutors about an incident, and so deputies must document anything that might strengthen a case while also providing a concise and structured story or picture of what occurred with relevant context. Since a supplement also provides the basis for prosecution and deputies' court testimony, they also explained how report writing must be directed toward what district attorneys, judges, and juries need to know and what they as deputies will need to remember.

While this overview occurred in the beginning of the Report Writing class, the instructors reinforced the importance of reports, the purpose of each sub-genre, and different audience or user needs as cadets composed a series of drafts. Cadets first listened to an instructor or peer relate the rough structure and typical language of a sub-genre, such as a narrative, then attempted to compose their own within Microsoft Word; this allowed the cadets to gradually incorporate appropriate wording and style within the purpose and conventions of the sub-genre without the additional concerns of accommodating the RMS interface. As they wrote, instructors walked through the classroom and provided feedback to individual cadets while speaking loud enough for others to hear and take note of their suggestions. For example, instructors constantly reiterated that narratives should be very short and focused only on the elements of an offense, so that all additional and relevant details would be reserved for the investigative supplement and its narrower audiences. Additionally, the instructors brought up example reports from the RMS on the projector so that cadets could examine how experienced deputies described similar incidents; since one instructor specifically displayed reports that he had written in his first couple of years as a deputy, the cadets had the additional opportunity to see an example of novice report writing

that had successfully progressed through the supervisory checkpoints, as well as the process for looking up others' reports in the RMS.

As more cadets demonstrated proficiency with each sub-genre, the instructors explained how to input each portion into the appropriate area of the RMS and incorporate various tools and lookup functions when entering details about specific kinds of cases. Often, this instruction on the interface was given as a set of tricks of the trade; for example, the instructors asked cadets to copy-paste between Word and different text boxes in the I/LEADS interface, and then submit it for a case number and approval. I overheard a couple of cadets whisper to one another that they wish they had thought of how efficient it would be to compose first in Word and then move it into the RMS, especially so they could review and revise before submitting a report for approval. Cadets also submitted their drafts for approval from the instructors, and viewed the receiver end of the RMS interface on the projector. Taken together, the cadets' processes of composing drafts, viewing models, working with the RMS interface, and submitting reports allowed them to learn report writing through practice, as it would commonly be experienced on the job—though largely through hypothetical situations with details made up by each writer.

Beyond providing tricks of the trade, the instructors gave a great deal of feedback to cadets as they wrote and submitted each report component for review, and cadets were very attentive to their comments. The instructors gave individual suggestions each time a cadet had questions while he or she was composing, and I noticed many others make changes in their drafts based on the feedback that was given to others. Mostly, these comments proceeded from compliments of what cadets did well and areas that need improvement; these latter suggestions often focused on writing within each sub-genre's conventions, as in removing excess detail from the necessarily concise narrative, or demonstrating further investigation that audiences would

need to know. For example, when a draft investigative supplement included a detail about a car fleeing the scene of a convenience store robbery, the instructor indicated that it would make sense to include additional details about whether there was any surveillance footage available from the store or if a witness had noted the license plate number; after this suggestion, many cadets began writing intently within their own supplements.

Additionally, cadets informally reviewed one another's work by asking how others had described a particular detail or worded different actions, and I noticed several times that they were discussing and actively incorporating details that were brought up within the class on the District Attorney's Office, such as victim demeanor. Once cadets submitted a draft through the RMS for review, the instructors also brought up each one on the projector to make comments; eventually, as they made similar points on several cadets' drafts, they invited others in the group to join in with additional suggestions or questions. Again, cadets also paid very close attention to comments on others' drafts, even when they were still in the process of composing. Taken together, these different forms of instructor and peer feedback allowed cadets to gradually become comfortable with the style, language, and appropriate details for reporting different kinds of incidents within different report sub-genres, as well as with repeated rounds of revision that they would likely encounter as novice peace officers. Further, since the focus of this feedback was largely centered on genre conventions rather than errors in grammar and mechanics, cadets were able to focus on more global concerns of police report writing than issues that were often picked up by simple grammar checks within word-processing software.

5.5 Synthesis: Major Themes Across the Material and Delivered Curriculum

Each of the courses with a sustained focus on report writing consistently demonstrated remarkable alignment with the idealized perspectives from different audiences about how report

writing should function across multiple activity systems associated with the Southwest Sheriff's Office. Taken together, they also facilitated cadets' sequential progression toward complex rhetorical awareness of and response to widely varying situations, especially in writing. While academy administrators and instructors consistently emphasized that report writing came up in most—if not all—classes, the classes that I observed for a sustained focus on police report writing proceeded through: 1) an overview of community policing as an underlying philosophy for all of their actions and communications; 2) basics for written communication in police contexts; 3) broader discussion and awareness of the many variables in any given situation, especially in regard to communicating and recording interactions; 4) focused attention to the audience expectations for police reports as they are used in specific contexts, and 5) increasingly complex practice in writing reports for both supervisory approval and appropriate connections with the needs of detectives and prosecutors. While these concepts were not explicitly connected with rhetoric or the terminology of Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS), the sequence implied a scaffolded and highly rhetorical approach to formal report writing instruction.

A prime example of how connections were scaffolded across these multiple, dispersed courses showed up in how different instructors discussed heuristics like the six journalistic modes of inquiry and the SARA process as strategies for both analyzing a call, recurring problem, pattern, or intense communication, as well as for forming the content and arrangement of a report. When teaching cadets how to analyze a situation and plan a response, different instructors reinforced the need to account for as many different variables through answering each question of: who? what? when? where? why? And how? Similarly, cadets constantly heard that they needed to make sure that every report noted the answers to these same questions, effectively aligning what novice peace officers should be looking for and attuning themselves to with what

they should write in their reports. In the courses on Community and Professional Policing, as well as Communication and Problem Solving, cadets also learned that the SARA process applies to both interpersonal communication and documentary procedures. The process involves Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment, according to the following possible actions:

Scanning: identifying recurring problems, prioritizing problems, developing broad goals, and confirming that the problem exists. This can involve research through calls for service, crime data, or agency records such as previous police reports for patterns and trends.

Analysis: understanding events and conditions that precede and accompany a problem, and identifying relevant data to collect. This may involve researching the problem type, taking inventory of how a problem is currently addressed and any strengths/limitations of the current response, narrowing the scope of the problem, identifying resources that may be of assistance in a deeper understanding of the problem, and developing a working hypothesis about why the problem is occurring (or if it is really occurring).

Response: brainstorming new interventions, searching for what other communities with similar problems have done, and choosing among alternative interventions. This may involve outlining a response plan and identifying responsible parties, stating the specific objectives for the response plan, and carrying out planned activities.

Assessment: collect pre- and post-response qualitative and quantitative data for process evaluation. This process would determine whether the plan was implemented, determine whether broad goals and objectives were attained,

identify any new strategies needed to augment the original plan or any strategies that showed better handling of incidents and improved response to the problem, and ongoing assessment to ensure continued effectiveness.

In short, the SARA process captures how the values embedded within community-oriented policing could show up every day and over time, from structuring how a novice peace officer mentally prepares for a call while still en route, to guiding his or her analysis of what is important at each scene, to outlining a long-term plan for police reports beyond the need for supervisory approval or audience use. Together with the six modes of journalistic inquiry, these heuristics provide a sense of connection between classes and complex rhetorical awareness, indicating that the way the police report genre gets taught at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy may foster a sophisticated path for a rhetorically informed mindset on the job. However, since these connections were largely implicit, and not specifically mentioned across different class sessions and instructors, the likelihood that cadets would effectively transfer these concepts between school and work may be more diminished than the strong sense of alignment that I interpret here.

More broadly, some dynamics emerged throughout the courses I observed that indicated tensions between the culture of the training academy, effective practices in genre-based learning, and the principles of andragogy.

While the content and progression within the material curriculum suggested that formal instruction for police report writing would balance a focus on the formal, textual features of the genre alongside a focus on how it operates as a social action, the delivered curriculum for Written Communication centered largely on mechanical issues associated with achieving “correct, concise and clear writing.” Overall, class emphasized different kinds of error and relied heavily on “correct” answers derived from automated feedback or standard responses, implying

that writing does not need a clear sense of audience or context to be effective and aligning with problematic aspects of current-traditional rhetoric (Berlin & Inkster, 1980). To some extent, the focus I saw may have been rooted in differences between the order or types of activities suggested by TCOLE and what was enacted in class, and so this may reflect how individual instructors maintain discretion on what to include in each course. However, the way the material was delivered implied a philosophy of writing instruction that may not be effective for this genre—primarily in its central use of lecture, its shift in the order of topics (so that grammar ended up being the primary focus most of the time), and its limited use of in-class activities. Nevertheless, this tension does necessarily signal a particularly urgent “need state” or “contradiction” between the formal police report writing instruction and the ideal concepts of how police reports should function across these multiple activity systems (Engeström, 1987; 2001; 2005). Since other classes had less sustained focus on errors in grammar and mechanics, the overall balance may have provided cadets with sufficient understanding of how the police report genre functions as a social action (and thus *why* error-free writing is important in this context, for specific audiences).

Additional tensions arose between, on the one hand, the andragogical aims for collaborative learning objectives and students’ inherent pleasure in participating and, on the other hand, an underlying emphasis on obedience, “right” answers, and fear. With the exception of the report writing workshop, instructor feedback to cadets’ answers or discussions often followed binary good/bad and yes/no responses; moreover, discussions of effective writing in all of the classes I observed were often delivered as warnings, where cadets should remember to “do it right, or suffer later—especially at the hands of defense attorneys when you’re on the stand.” Supervisors, detectives, and assistant district attorneys also expressed this latter theme when

discussing the importance of the police report genre; in each class, a sense of threat was consistently reinforced through explicit warnings and “war stories” of other deputies’ struggles, where someone could cause disastrous consequences through ineffective writing—from losing his or her professional credibility to failing a victim. Although each of the instructors either explicitly suspended the paramilitary behavior protocol for the duration of their class or, in the case of the assistant district attorneys, had no need to request a more relaxed learning environment, this dynamic may have been reinforced by the sense that cadets, as students and novices, must submit to the authority of their instructors and would otherwise face punishments like physical discipline (e.g., additional exercises) when doing something “wrong.” However, since the theme was also strongly linked to a sense of what prompts a deputy to write a report and value its quality (or *exigency*), it may be that formal report writing instruction could do more to explain the urgency of *effective* writing, in particular contexts with specific audiences, than persistently link *right* writing with threats and fear.

Finally, across excerpts from the policy and procedures manual, the material curriculum, and the courses I observed, there was a persistent tension between the expectation that deputies should be fully trained in report writing by the time they graduate from the training academy and complete subsequent field training, largely through practice and modeling, and an emphasis that cadets will get the full extent of report writing instruction at some other point. In the manual and curriculum, this dynamic came through as an expectation that all deputies would be fully trained by the time they reached independent patrol duty, but could not get that training from the materials alone. Similarly, academy instructors often specifically discussed how it is impossible to fully learn police report writing within a six-month academy and four-month period of field training (as when the instructor for the Culture of Professional and Community Policing linked

college education with sophisticated communication), and how the most that cadets could hope for in academy training was exposure to the fundamentals. Above all, cadets repeatedly heard that “whatever you learn in here will have to change to go with what your FTO wants, what your supervisor wants, and all that. All we can do is teach you what TCLEOSE²⁴ recommends.” Statements like this, which occurred across all the classes I observed, effectively gave the sense that cadets would *really* learn how to write reports once they reached field training and their FTO told them what to do. So, while I interpreted a strong degree of alignment between how report audiences and users conceived activity systems for report writing, and how cadets were formally taught report writing at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, I was also reminded that I would also need to account for informal report writing instruction that occurred on the job, after graduation.

As such, my interpretation of report writing instruction and my comparisons between ideal concepts and actual practice need to be extended, and the next chapter details my analysis of informal report writing instruction with the field training officer (FTO) program that academy graduates progress through before entering independent patrol duty. Before I can make any substantial claim about whether the activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the County District Attorney’s Office hold problematic “contradictions” which could catalyze organizational change or highly contextual “best practices” that other agencies could learn from, I must examine how novice peace officers learn to write real reports on the job. There, I detail whether novices and FTOs articulate a balanced sense of the police report genre, both as a set of formal textual features and a social action, that is somewhat evident within formal report writing instruction at the academy. Further,

²⁴ The former name for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) is TCLEOSE, which stands for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. The name change occurred during research for this project, and so some source material refers to TCLEOSE.

I inquire into whether novices' practice in actual report writing and FTOs' feedback occurs in ways that value the experience of an adult learner and facilitate effective practices of Situated Learning, where the novice is gradually brought into a Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Chapter 6: What Did You Do? Learning through Practice in Field Training

6.1 Introduction

Group work is complex, especially when viewed from above or outside, and this can make it difficult to tell how well things are going, whether change is needed, or where innovations are possible. Just as problematically, one person's experience inside a group, at the ground level, can signal a deeper tension or breakdown in an entire system as much as it can indicate an advanced work model that might thrive in similar contexts. Because of these difficulties, it helps to examine a group's work through the activity itself, as in Activity Theory, accounting for the complexity of both the overall system and individual perspectives by focusing on the shared tools and signs that group members use to achieve their collective objects and long-term outcomes. When these shared tools and signs take the form of specific kinds, or genres, of writing, Writing and Genre Research (WAGR) provides an additional lens to examine whether and how specific writing practices affect, enable, or hinder the social actions that groups need. By looking at activity through writing, research can incorporate the perspectives from above, below, and within by analyzing how well the expectations of audiences and users, writers, and conditions such as writing context and training intersect to contribute to group work.

To some extent, an Activity Theory inquiry can examine whether things are going well through a comparison between what participants think *should*, ideally, happen and what they feel they *must* do in practice when they write and use a genre, as I did in Chapters 4 and 5. Based on such a comparison, participants could then locate areas where dynamics like divisions of labor and a community's rules and norms are compatible or contradictory, and use these insights to make targeted changes where there is a "need state" or a "contradiction" (Engeström, 1987; 2001; 2005), or even share highly contextual "best" practices with other groups.

When a novice enters a group's work activity, though, this sort of comparative inquiry must take a more nuanced approach. While experienced participants can provide different perspectives on what *should* take place in an activity and demonstrate various ways to cope with what they *must* do, novices may experience additional tensions or alignment between what they *were taught* before they entered the group and what they *learned* on the job from others and on their own. Necessarily, this added dynamic points to possible alignment or tension between multiple activity systems, such as school and work, as examined in more recent discussions of Activity Theory and "knotworking" (Engeström, 2001; Nummijoki & Engeström, 2013). Further, it highlights the gradual transition that novices typically experience as they become part of a working group, as examined by studies of Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Taken together, the different viewpoints within Activity Theory, WAGR, and Situated Learning offer a layered approach and sophisticated theoretical framework for interpreting the writing activity of novices in a workplace and how it compares to both their previous training and the goals of the larger group. In this chapter, I use these combined lenses to examine how police report writing mediated the experiences of three peace officer trainees and their field training officers (FTOs) at the Southwest Sheriff's Office as they transitioned into patrol duty during four months of field training after graduation from the training academy. To get a sense of how well report writing worked in their context, I make comparisons between how police report audiences and users within the department and in the County District Attorney's Office also conceptualized ideal report writing across multiple activity systems, as well as the ways that policy manuals, curricula, and formal instruction at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy had prepared these trainees for report writing during the 2012-13 basic peace officer academy session. In short, this chapter focuses on how these novices transitioned from the academy to

patrol duty *through* police report writing, and whether their prior training, present demands, and audience expectations aligned well enough for them to effectively contribute to the ongoing work in their activity system.

In order to make these comparisons, I rely on the vocabulary and activity system model developed by Engeström (1987). This model, as diagrammed below, recognizes that each individual subject mediates his or her tacit operations and conscious actions with tools, signs and symbols in order to achieve goals. These operations and actions occur within wider social activity, composed of multiple and intersecting rules and norms, as well as various divisions of labor among different community members, which collectively form a group that is focused on a collective outcome. The components and interactions of an idealized activity system are modeled in Figure 6.1.1, demonstrating how an effectively aligned work model could represent a highly contextualized kind of “best practice.”

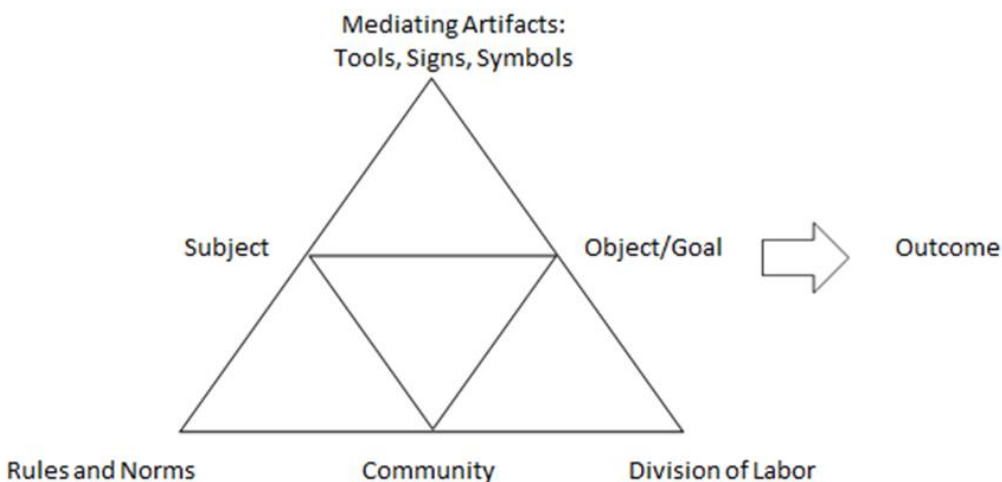


Figure 6.2.1. Engeström's (1987) Model of an Activity System.

To facilitate comparison, Figure 6.1.2 demonstrates how tensions that rise to the level of obstacles, or “contradictions,” can be mapped between specific components of an activity system

as a visual break. Here, a contradiction is shown between the subjects of an activity and the rules and norms they *should* follow within an idealized work model. If major contradictions are sufficiently localized and described, such a model can help participants recognize a “need state” (Engeström, 2001; Nummijoki & Engeström, 2013, p. 54) which could act as a catalyst for innovation or change to improve overall activity.

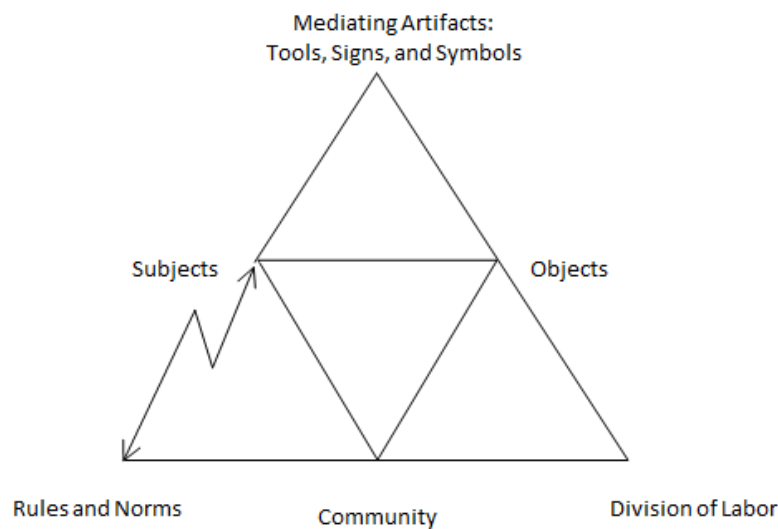


Figure 6.1.3. An Activity System Modeled with a Contradiction.

While activity could effectively progress within a single activity system, there is also the possibility of “double binds” between multiple activity systems. In this case, contradictions can be modeled as shown in Figure 6.1.3 (as developed in Engeström, 2001; 2008). Here, the interaction of multiple activity systems should ideally form the space for value co-creation and a shared outcome. However, systems may not align in a way that allows groups to work together productively, and so a contradiction lies in this in-between space. These simplified models of interrelated activity systems provide a framework and vocabulary to understand actual practice, articulate my analyses, and explain my interpretation more concretely.

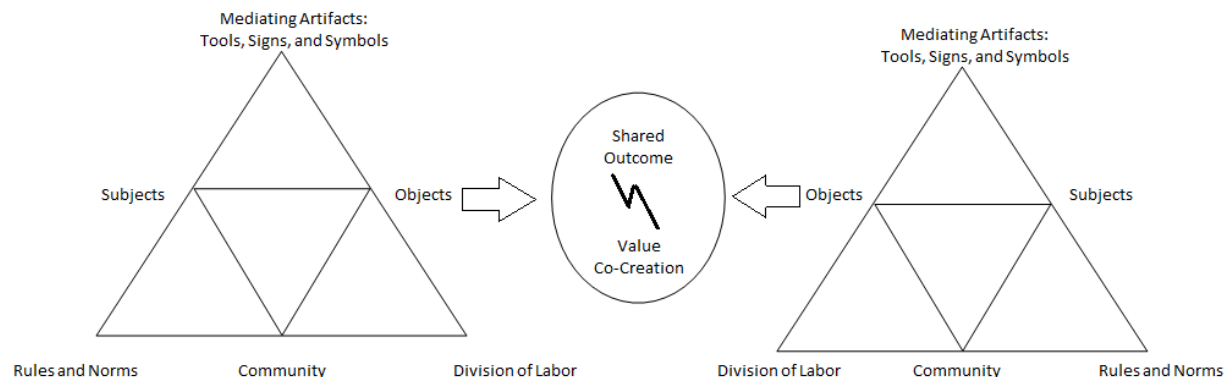


Figure 6.1.4. A Contradiction between Multiple Activity Systems.

In addition to the framework provided by Activity Theory and Engeström’s (1987) model of activity systems, my specific focus on how writing mediates activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office further incorporates the scholarly discussions within Writing, Activity, and Genre Research (WAGR), Situated Learning, andragogy, and community policing. I bring in WAGR as articulated by Russell (2009) to position the police report genre as the tool or sign which subjects use to mediate their activity, both within the Southwest Sheriff’s Office and in the progression from the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy to the County District Attorney’s Office. Through WAGR, I recognize that Miller’s (1984) theory of genre as a social action distinguishes the police report as more than a category of writing classified by its formal, textual features. This allows me to focus more deeply on how the genre also contains traditions of using a tool, which then “make it possible [for subjects] to act with others over time in more or less but never entirely predictable ways, individually, collectively, and institutionally” (Russell, 2009, p. 43). Further, my analysis brings in themes within the theory of Situated Learning as developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), and especially Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999), to discuss how police report training in both the classroom and on the job can be understood within scholarly discussions about how learning happens in transitions between school, apprenticeship,

and work. Amid all of these combined theoretical lenses, I also address how formal and informal report writing instruction relate to principles of andragogy (Birzer, 2003; Peace, 2006) and trends away from traditional, paramilitary police models toward community-oriented policing (Auten, 1981; McCay, 2011).

6.2 Background on Field Training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office

The Southwest Sheriff's Office prepares its own novice peace officers by first admitting a select cohort of detention officers to its basic peace officer training course, providing six months (1,000 hours) of formal instruction at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and then providing four months of supervised field training. As each academy graduate enters a patrol shift as a trainee, he or she progresses through the following five phases with an assigned field training officer (FTO):

Phase	Duration	Roles and Responsibilities
1	4 days (1 week)	The FTO is responsible for 100% of workload, and the trainee solely observes.
2	16 days (4 weeks)	The trainee is responsible for about 40% of workload, participating in paperwork, interviews, and calls with the FTO in the lead.
3	40 days (10 weeks)	The trainee is responsible for about 75% of the workload, and now takes the lead in initiating calls, looking up suspect information, completing paperwork, and leading interviews. The FTO is available to provide guidance and feedback.
4	4 days (1 week)	The trainee is responsible for the entire workload. The assigned FTO largely stands back in case he or she is needed, and another FTO evaluates the trainee's abilities.
5	8 days (2 weeks)	The trainee goes through administrative evaluation to proceed to independent patrol duty.

Figure 6.2.1. The Phase Structure of Field Training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office

These phases provide both instructional scaffolding and administrative structure to field training, allowing trainees to gradually take on more responsibility as they are evaluated in all

patrol duties—especially report writing—until they eventually become completely independent from their FTOs. Indeed, report writing is very important within this process; all participants consistently noted that deficiency in this area is the second-highest reason for trainees’ dismissal from the field training program, below problems with officer safety. As an additional administrative structure, both the trainee and the FTO write weekly summaries of their progress and note important skills the trainee has gained, areas for improvement, and plans for continued development. These “weeklies” remain on file for each trainee to maintain oversight of the field training program and provide documentation that FTOs covered all required areas and trainees demonstrated proficiency in required duties.

This system for the field training program has been in place at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office since 2007, when the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE)²⁵ mandated that each law enforcement agency establish a functional field training program for training peace officers and other similar groups in field applications of learned classroom knowledge.²⁶ Before 2007, FTOs were selected based on supervisors’ recommendations without specialized training, and many simply taught trainees the way they had personally been trained when they were novices; some even felt that their recommendation to serve as an FTO was a way to force them into the role. According to a former Field Training Coordinator, the TCLEOSE mandate in 2007 led the Southwest Sheriff’s Office to implement the current five-phase program for field training, as well as a revamped system for training new FTOs.

²⁵ The former name for TCOLE is TCLEOSE, which stands for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. The name change occurred during research for this project, and so some source material refers to the TCLEOSE website, which remains active.

²⁶ Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. (2007, Sep.). Field Training Officer Course and Instructor Resource Materials (Course Number 3702). Retrieved from: http://www.tcleose.state.tx.us/content/training_instructor_resources.cfm

In the new system for FTO training, available FTO positions are now announced throughout the department, and a deputy with at least two years of experience can voluntarily submit a memo of interest to their immediate supervisor. Supervisors then send a letter of recommendation for each potential FTO, and the applicant submits to a review of his or her complete record and an interview with a three-member panel on ten questions related to patrol, integrity, and policy. The panel evaluates each applicant for demonstrated proficiency in officer survival, basic investigations, public relations, and patrol functions, as well as a strong command presence and good communications. Once selected, deputies attend a 40-hour course at the academy that focuses on the training, coaching, mentoring, and evaluating roles of an FTO. After completing the course, FTOs receive a stipend for their additional duties and must periodically attend a re-certification course. The entire process is supervised by an FTO training coordinator, in partnership with the academy, to help make sure that all FTOs understand different styles of learning (e.g., visual, auditory, or kinesthetic), prepare trainees in a set of required skills, and provide support as trainees learn to manage the demands and stresses of patrol duty.

My interpretation of whether and how novice peace officers effectively transition into the demands of report writing in the workplace draws from this background knowledge of the Southwest Sheriff's Office and its FTO training program, as well as my experience of the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy's structure and advancement procedures. While attending the basic peace officer academy, cadets were ranked according to their level of performance in each course, test, and exam. Eventually, after the entire cohort successfully passed the state licensing exam and graduated, they advanced to field training in the order of their class rank as openings for deputy trainees came up within the Southwest Sheriff's Office. Originally, administrators, cadets, and I expected that the entire cohort would enter field training very soon

after graduation—if not at once. So, I had planned to follow whichever trainees agreed to participate in my study and see how they and their field training officers (FTOs) experienced informal report writing instruction within the field training program.

Due to budget cuts from a discontinued grant within the department, though, several experienced deputies were assigned back to patrol when cadets completed the training academy, and fewer openings were available for the graduates to enter a shift right away. Ultimately, everyone but the top three graduates in the 2012-13 basic peace officer cohort returned to work at the detention facilities right after graduation from the academy (though two more entered patrol in the successive weeks), and one of these three chose to leave the program about halfway through. Since my study's timeline was relatively constrained, I chose to focus my analysis of informal report writing instruction on the experiences of these first three trainees and the three field training officers (FTOs) who were assigned to them over the four-month field training program. While, to some extent, this small group reflects a limited breadth for this portion of my qualitative study, it is important to note that each of these participants gave candid, enthusiastic, and thorough responses, dramatically increasing the level of depth I report here.

The three academy graduates included two males and one female; each had completed some college hours, including first-year writing courses, and one had completed a Bachelor's degree in Sociology. The two trainees who stayed through the entire field training program each came into patrol duty with over five years of prior experience as detention officers in the Southwest Sheriff Office's adult maximum-security facilities. The three field training officers (FTOs) assigned to the top three graduates were all male, and each had previously trained at least one other novice peace officer after past academies; additionally, each had at least five years of experience as a deputy and is actively pursuing a college degree. Since both administrators and

instructors within the training academy had previously discussed how the Southwest Sheriff's Office employs very few female deputies, I found it interesting that the FTO who was partnered with the female trainee had previously trained another female deputy who successfully progressed to independent patrol duty.

I conducted separate semi-structured interviews with each trainee and each FTO at two points during field training: at the conclusion of Phase 2, in late July 2013, and at the conclusion of Phase 3, in early October 2013. Since one of the trainees left the program about halfway through, I gathered only the first interview from him; nevertheless, I still conducted the second interview with his FTO. Generally, each interview began with the questions listed in the Appendix, took place in a quiet room at the participant's assigned substation during their scheduled shift, and lasted about an hour; after the first interview, I developed additional follow-up questions for the second set of interviews (also listed in the Appendix) and asked the original questions again to see if any perspectives had shifted over time. I took field notes and audio-recorded each of these interviews, then transcribed the recordings for further analysis.

Additionally, to better understand how FTOs themselves were chosen and prepared, I conducted interviews with two FTO training instructors by email, and analyzed descriptions of the FTO training program and its history that I had previously recorded during my observations at the training academy, where one of the report writing instructors was also a former Field Training Coordinator.

There was one major exception to my interviewing method. I also gathered FTO perspectives during two separate "ride-alongs," and one of these took the place of my second interview with one of the FTOs. Like several other law enforcement agencies in the region, the Southwest Sheriff's Office offers a Ride Along Program to citizens as a way to encourage

community engagement; after completing an application and liability waiver, someone can observe the rigors of police activity by sitting in the vehicle with a deputy during all or part of his or her shift. Several participants that I interviewed about the audience expectations of police reports had encouraged me to participate in a ride-along so that I could observe everyday practices associated with report writing as they occurred. Based on these recommendations, I participated in my first ride-along in April 2013, during most of a graveyard shift in a rural area, as a way to also hone my preliminary interview questions for FTOs. Since the deputy I rode with also turned out to be one of the participants in my field training interviews, he agreed that I could incorporate our earlier conversations into my analysis. My second ride-along was in October 2013, with a different FTO, during most of a graveyard shift in a combination of rural, suburban, and urban areas. This second ride-along simultaneously allowed me to see how report writing practices differ by substation and took the place of my second interview with one of the FTOs; since there was a lot of activity that night and I was therefore unable to conduct a semi-structured interview at the substation, I asked my second set of questions more informally as we conversed in the car between calls. During both ride-alongs, I only took field notes since audio-recording the entire shift would inevitably, and unethically, include police calls and confidential interactions that were not included with my study's parameters and consent forms. Afterward, I audio-recorded my immediate reflections as a way to preserve more of each FTOs' responses, and later transcribed these reflections alongside my other data.

In total, I completed approximately ten hours of semi-structured interviews and twelve hours of ride-along interviews. Further, I triangulated data about informal report writing instruction on the job across participants, situations, and time. That is, my analysis made constant comparisons between the perspectives of trainees and FTOs, the responses given during semi-

structured interviews or ride-alongs, statements that seemed associated with particular substations or locations, and the responses given before and after trainees transitioned to independent report writing in Phase 3. Throughout both the interviews and the ride-alongs, I also frequently employed member checks to verify my understanding of a participant's perspective by repeating or paraphrasing statements, seeking out clarification or further detail with follow-up questions during the interview, or emailing additional questions after an interview was finished. These constant comparisons further contributed to my overall analysis, where I incorporated themes from reviewed literature and research memos alongside interviews, field notes, and reflections within the perspective that "all is data," constantly comparing these components in a recursive methodology of sampling, analysis, and theory development in order to form a grounded theory.

The entire process of my data analysis was inclusive and recursive. I began with open coding (or "substantive" coding; Glaser, 1978), reading data line by line to discern patterns as indicators for codes. Eventually, I grouped these codes into concepts, then categories, and finally hypotheses to explain answers to my research questions. While examining how codes developed into overarching concepts, I also simultaneously employed axial coding to develop and link concepts further into conceptual families. Finally, I conducted a third process of selective coding to formalize relationships between concepts as theoretical frameworks (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998). I collected and analyzed data concurrently, which helped maintain my theoretical sensitivity and allowed my analysis to determine further areas for inquiry. My analysis also spiraled between open, axial, and selective coding—as well as ongoing memos to document these steps—through a method of constant comparison. At the point where no new concepts emerged from data, or theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990,

1998), my focus for data analysis shifted from coding to developing and articulating a fully grounded theory.

Here, I structure my analysis of informal report writing instruction and field training through a narrative, moving from what I expected to find, to the issues that participants discussed, and finally to my interpretation of how the different activity systems associated with report writing instruction and use align with one another. This narrative allows me to weave between different participants' viewpoints and maintain a relatively coherent focus, and I discuss my findings within participant identifiers (e.g., "a trainee" or "one FTO") so that I can also avoid jeopardizing anyone's anonymity or confidentiality. In this chapter, I anchor my discussion to major themes that emerged in my conversations with trainees and FTOs during semi-structured interviews and ride-alongs. I note the tensions and alignments that I saw, both within the Southwest Sheriff's Office as a single activity system and in the interactions with the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the county District Attorney's Office that related to report writing. Taken together, these themes allow me to interpret whether the novice peace officers smoothly transition into the group work associated with police report writing, or if they experience disruptions between what they *were taught*, what they *should* do, and what they *must* do.

6.3 My Initial Expectations

While I was preparing to examine the transition between the academy and field training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, I expected that I would encounter breakdowns, or contradictions, between what novice peace officers were formally taught, what they were informally told, and what supervisors and users expected from them. This impression was, to some extent, based on conversations with my spouse, who is a peace officer with a different

agency; the anecdotal experiences I heard before commencing my study largely centered on police who learned report writing on the job, from a single FTO and with little connection to shared academy training. Similarly, the few studies in Rhetoric and Writing Studies (RWS) that have examined police report writing have largely shown that formal report writing instruction comprises a remarkably small percentage of time in a training academy, that this training is generally insufficient, and that experienced peace officers largely point to supervisors' and FTOs' feedback and learning through practice—not academy instruction—when recounting how they learned to write effective reports (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012). More importantly, several of my conversations with report audiences about their ideal expectations for reports led to comments such as “our agency seems to struggle in this area,” and that my study may be able to “shed some light on this disturbing and silent problem,” building my anticipation that I would eventually find a substantial level of difficulties. Overall, the initial steps in my study helped build up a degree of conscious bias that I would find tensions that registered a degree of “need state” for change among participants, and that I would eventually report my findings as one or more major contradictions in or between the activity systems I studied.

6.4 Major Alignments in Field Training

Despite my expectations, the activity system in field training was remarkably cohesive. My FTO participants each described a similar method for scaffolding and teaching police report writing with their trainees, although they also emphasized that each FTO has their own instructional style and technique. All trainees had to keep field notes within a steno notebook, just like at the training academy, and the FTO participants agreed on how field notes collect most of the pre-writing material for reports. The FTOs facilitate coordination between field notes and reports by exposing trainees to as many different kinds of calls as possible, even though this

practice is pretty standard for different reasons; namely, it reveals whether or not a trainee can cope with the stress of particularly disturbing calls (e.g., death) and, therefore, fully take on the identity of a peace officer. Since the level of detail that would be considered “sufficient” for report audiences necessarily varies between incidents, FTOs also use the wide exposure to teach trainees about what kinds of details to think through before arriving at a call, and then what things to look for, record, and later report by keeping accurate and thorough field notes. As one FTO described, this practice can work even when there are no calls; for example, he uses “war stories” that recount past experiences and departmental history (Oliva & Compton, 2009, p. 334) to present hypothetical scenarios on quiet shifts, and then has the trainee compose field notes and dictate possible report narratives based on the story.

There was also a great deal of similarity across my interviews with trainees, even though I met with them at two points in their development. These trainees each expressed different levels of facility with writing in a broad sense, and report writing specifically; for example, one had already completed a college degree and felt that report writing was very easy—“just like writing for class or any other thing”—while another had always struggled with writing and “never thought I’d end up in a job that needed so much writing all the time. However, they all indicated very similar strategies for learning the police report genre, getting their work approved, and progressing to increasingly complex kinds of investigations and reports. Mostly, these strategies were rooted in a shared value for independence and initiative. For example, trainees each described how they commonly looked up other deputies’ past reports within the RMS to get a sense of the necessary detail or appropriate verbiage for unfamiliar incidents, even though only one FTO had specifically suggested that his trainee look up his own past reports to get a sense of how he typically writes. They also told me about how they coped with the sheer amount reports

that they eventually had to write on their own during a shift (frequently in the range of five to seven) by taking their work home with them, even though they received no extra pay or comp time for the extra time they put in.

Additionally, the trainees recommended that future academy cadets and graduates go out of their way to take writing classes, study fundamentals of grammar and mechanics, listen to how other deputies describe calls or court testimony, and go on ride-alongs to get a sense of how report writing really happens in everyday patrol. Interestingly, these same recommendations were made by FTOs, who also widely agreed that each FTO tends to train and work rather independently. While they also agreed that FTOs talk to one another about their work with trainees, they were careful to explain that they did not usually collaborate in the sense of joint instructor training or workshops that covered common teaching issues. Instead, they shared their own best practices with one another in ways that valued each FTOs' independence; if a couple of FTOs got along fairly well, they might tell one another war stories as both cautionary tales and good ideas, yet would rarely offer direct advice that no one asked for. As one of my FTO participants phrased it, this dynamic was very much a "proud male culture," where each person could be respected for their own style of learning and training—even if that meant that trainees needed to be reassigned to someone else to get the level of training they needed. To my mind, this ongoing emphasis on individual responsibility for learning, training, and effective writing aligned across the different trainees and FTOs, and further resonated with the values of officer initiative in community-oriented policing that were discussed within the training academy.

Once a trainee had progressed through Phase 1, wherein he or she focused only on observing the FTO in his police duties, the FTOs also agreed that they each asked their trainees to begin writing reports on their own, without any specific instructions. As one FTO phrased it,

he does this to “see how the trainee thinks” and to “get a sense of what I’m dealing with,” especially since trainees come in with varying degrees of experience in the detention facilities, other law enforcement agencies, or other writing environments (e.g., college classes). After the trainee composes a draft of the report, each FTO further stated that he reads it through, points out what the trainee did well, and then offers suggestions on ways to “tweak” particular areas. For example, one FTO noted that his trainees have shown a strong ability to write concise and clear reports, and so he often focuses on appropriate verbiage without derailing into jargon that would be difficult for readers outside of law enforcement. Further, my FTO participants all described how they try to focus on greater levels of detail by suggesting “tweaks” based on comparisons between the trainee’s description and their own recollection of an incident.

This emphasis on greater detail to improve the description of an incident was, to my interpretation, deeply rhetorical—even though the participants themselves never mentioned this sort of framing or vocabulary. As could be seen with the scaffolding between field notes, incident response, and report writing, both trainees and FTOs described how feedback on multiple drafts builds a greater awareness of which details to look for when responding to calls. Many times, the participants characterized these details as something that had to be picked up in practice or heard about through war stories; rather than simply follow a protocol of checking off the six journalistic modes of inquiry (who, what, when, where, why, and how), they each had to build a sophisticated repertoire of what constituted sufficient level of initial investigation for widely varying incidents. Indeed, when I asked whether it would be easier if there was some sort of direct training on what details should be noted for which kinds of incidents in the report management system (RMS), one trainee specifically said that it might, but “this isn’t meant to be easy” – more deeply, a manual-like set of instructions would not foster the underlying rhetorical

awareness that a trainee must develop as he or she takes on the identity of a peace officer. FTOs described how they facilitate this awareness by talking out their interpretation of an incident after seeing the way a trainee framed and phrased it; in some cases, these comparisons could get rather aggressive, effectively challenging a trainee to stand by his or her interpretation as grounds for someone losing their freedom in an arrest. These comparisons between different perspectives and interpretations then allowed the trainee to recognize which details a more experienced officer would notice, record, and report on a certain call, and then internalize how those details are associated with that particular kind of incident.

Interestingly, the way that FTO and trainee participants emphasized detail incorporates very similar phrasing to how Berlin and Inkster (1980) described current-traditional rhetoric and its limited conceptions of reality, the writer, and discourse. Specifically, they stated that in current-traditional rhetoric:

The underlying assumption [...] is that both the experienced and inexperienced writers are responding to an identical experience, and that they should then be writing in a nearly identical way. Both should perceive the same events, in the same way, because the material world is uniform to all who make the effort to attend to it. Thus, the teacher's task is to elicit writing that corresponds to this world. This is commonly accomplished by simply reminding the student to pay closer attention to detail. (p. 3)

Despite these apparent overlaps, though, the experience of field training that I heard from my study participants did not reveal any problematic assumptions about stable reality and uniform experience that could, with proper attention to detail, be communicated clearly and objectively. Instead, FTOs were very careful to point out that each person always perceives things differently,

and they want to know how trainees think and observe so that they could offer suggestions. Further, trainees felt that FTOs gave productive comments more often than the common image of a supervisor “kicking back” multiple drafts of reports for *corrections* about detail. So, although there was a distinct emphasis on detail that appeared to correspond to a current-traditional paradigm because it used similar vocabulary and phrasing in communications between FTOs and trainees, the FTOs’ meaning when they asked for closer attention to detail was actually anchored in the context of trainees’ growing rhetorical awareness in both responding to calls and recording incidents within reports.

I also interpreted a greater overall sense of cohesion in field training through another scaffolding genre—the “weeklies” that both FTOs and trainees completed to document their training. In these, FTOs recorded their training goals and progress, while trainees recorded their own challenges, achievements, and development; further, they could view one another’s entries, look back over time, and return to it as part of their personnel record. Participants tended to dismiss the relative significance of these summaries, and focused largely on how they function as administrative backup to document which training goals were met, which challenges arose, and gradual progress in case problems emerge after field training is complete. For example, if a weekly summary indicated that an FTO successfully covered driver safety with a trainee, the agency would have evidence of proper training if a trainee eventually hurt someone in a car accident while acting as a deputy on independent patrol. Beyond these administrative concerns for maintaining a record for each deputy’s success, though, I saw these periodical updates as another way that FTOs and trainees worked together to build a greater rhetorical awareness of what to look for, record, and report. That is, each participant actively reflected on learning, set specific goals, and wrote about progress in much the same way that students in college

composition classes might keep a research journal or document their writing processes. Since the trainees were also taking on increasing responsibility for report writing on their shift, these additional “weeklies” may have served as supplementary vehicles for internalizing the police report genre, where the continued reflection on what they are learning to look for fed into their actual practice. Of course, my enthusiasm for this additional reinforcement of cohesive field training is necessarily undercut by my participants’ views. As long as it is relatively mundane, the weekly summary may not be as effective in informal report writing instruction as how I see it.

In the FTOs’ typical feedback and informal report writing instructional practices, as well as the departmental practice requiring “weeklies” from both FTOs and trainees, the field training experience at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office enacts several of the andragogical principles outlined by Peace (2006) as particularly effective for promoting effective communication and problem solving skills that are associated with a model of community-oriented policing. For example, the learning objectives for each week and phase are largely determined through collaboration between learner and trainers, while assessment procedures reflect whether a FTO has accommodated a trainee’s “learning style” and a trainee has met a pre-agreed outcome in their performance. Moreover, the trainee’s knowledge and experience is consistently and explicitly respected by the FTO, and FTOs frequently emphasized that a major part of field training focuses on making sure that trainees can comfortably cope with the stress and demands of the job.

More broadly, field training showed remarkable alignment with the activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the idealized conception of report writing expressed by report audiences and users within the Southwest Sheriff’s Office and the county

District Attorney's office. Trainees and FTOs were well aware of the multiple purposes for police reports, the audiences and users that would come up at different points along a report's path, and what each of these audiences needs and wants from a report. In every interview and ride-along, trainees and FTOs described how a police report is simultaneously a record of an incident, the basis of further investigation and prosecution, evidence of an officer's credibility, and the source material for court testimony. They also differentiated how different readers have different needs. While a report must, at minimum, record probable cause and the elements of an offense in order to document a crime as such and get supervisory approval, it must also include a sufficient level of detail that both "tells the story" or "paints the picture" for detectives, prosecutors and juries while "jogging the memory" of the initiating officer who may use the report for court testimony years after writing about it. Meanwhile, trainees and FTOs both explained how patrol supervisors cared more about whether reports were written "correctly," with the grammar and mechanics of Standard English, because glaring errors reflected badly on officer credibility and the agency as a whole; similarly, these participants emphasized that detectives and prosecutors cared more about whether an initiating officer had shown as much initiative as possible in investigating a case and recording details accurately than they did about "correct" writing. Like the supervisors, detectives, and assistant district attorneys who described how report writing should take place within the Southwest Sheriff's Office, as well as the policy manuals, curricula, and formal training at the academy which indicated what would be important, these responses demonstrated that deputies are actively aware of the rules and norms (or *genre conventions*) of police reports, the needs of different community members that participate in a report's path, and the divisions of labor which go into a successful progression from initiating officer to further investigation and prosecution.

I recognize that the strong degree of alignment that I interpret from these responses could stem from a kind of sample error or survivorship bias in my study, where the small size and particular quality of my participants fundamentally skewed my findings. That is, I may have heard a series of remarkably similar statements because I also happened to interview the top three graduates of an already select group. These trainees would, perhaps, be more likely to perceive report writing the way that others do in the larger agency and between the activity systems which cooperate for any given police report. Moreover, the Southwest Sheriff's Office stood out as a particularly high-functioning agency—especially in contrast to previous studies on police report writing in RWS (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012)—and so the alignment I saw could be common knowledge to my study's participants, and the reason for their relative openness to inquiry and critique; if things were deeply dysfunctional, I may never have accessed the amount of information I needed for this study.

6.5 Broader Alignments across Multiple Activity Systems

Despite their limitations, my interviews with FTOs and trainees and constant comparisons with the curriculum and audience expectations show that a major reason for shared outcomes and values between the activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the county District Attorney's Office is rooted in the phase structure of the field training program. This apprenticeship-like structure facilitates a trainee's gradual independence on the job, while also requiring constant reflection on progress, specific goals, and the training process itself. Moreover, this structure formalizes patterns that novices commonly experience in the transition between school and work and makes them explicit, effectively allowing all stakeholders to recognize what to expect, where to reflect, and how to communicate across multiple activity systems.

This structure stands in stark contrast to transitions between school and work which have been examined in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), both in corresponding university coursework to multiple disciplines (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000) and examining specific novices in depth, such as engineers (Artemeva, Logie & St. Martin, 1999; Artemeva, 2005). In these previous studies, scholars have prominently claimed that “school and work are worlds apart” (Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré, 1999, p. 3), and that “[t]here exists an inevitable, and necessary, gulf between the writing contexts of the workplace and the context of the university” that can only be bridged in exceptional and rare circumstances of simultaneous interaction between work and school, such as service-learning or internship courses (Freedman and Adam, 2000, p. 143). While previous attempts to bridge the transitions and gaps between school and work have focused on understanding patterns that commonly characterize a novice’s entry into the workplace, my study offers a context where common transitional patterns are formally built in to a novice peace officer’s field training experience.

Meanwhile, it appears that the strong degree of alignment that I saw between the academy and field training is not very common across law enforcement agencies in the US. In a 2009 survey of FTOs in New England, for example, Warners and Williams (2010) found that 41% of respondents reported that relating the academy to field experience is “the challenge” or that “active policing is very different from the academy” (p. 62). Moreover, the formal phase structure is not standard among other law enforcement agencies nationwide. Indeed, recent studies note only two prominent models for field training: the San Jose Model, which is commonly called the “traditional” model because it dates back to 1971, and the Police Training Officer (PTO) Program, which is also known as the Reno Model. Neither of these appear identical to the FTO program I studied here, although the PTO Program is very similar.

In the San Jose Model, trainees are evaluated daily for 14 weeks on a checklist of 31 discrete skills scored on Likert scales, according to how well their performances reflect that of an experienced police officer; this model is based on the premise of behavior modification and is often described as the “I do/We do/You do” method (Warners and Williams, 2010). The PTO Program, on the other hand, emerged in 2005 to provide a flexible method that develops a new officer’s learning capacity, leadership abilities, and problem-solving skills by incorporating a more contemporary paradigm of community-oriented policing (COPS, 2003). The PTO Program explicitly relies on adult learning strategies and involves its own phases as follows:

Phase	Duration	Roles and Responsibilities
Orientation	flexible	Many agencies have found that trainees graduating from the academy, especially from a regional academy, require additional training in agency-specific skills or information. The orientation phase is intended to provide this necessary training and information. Examples of this type of agency-specific training include computer literacy, specialized firearms training, defensive tactics, and policy and procedures. Orientation can also include trainee familiarization with the agency’s PTO program. This “orientation” training must be completed before the Integration phase can begin.
Integration	1 week	The Integration phase is designed to teach the trainee how to report to duty prepared. This is a period of time for the trainee to acclimate to a new environment while under the PTO’s supervision. Areas of instruction include how to acquire necessary equipment, and familiarization with the department, other government organizations, administrative procedures, and the PTO problem-based learning processes, including evaluations. The trainee does not receive an evaluation during the Integration phase.
A	3 weeks	Phase A is the initial training and learning experience for the trainee; it emphasizes Non-Emergency Incident Responses .
B	3 weeks	Phase B, the second training and learning experience for the trainee, emphasizes Emergency Incident Responses .
Mid-Term Evaluation	1 week	Following Phases A and B of the learning experience, the trainee transfers to a Police Training Evaluator (PTE) and participates in a Mid-Term Evaluations. Switching from the PTO to a PTE for evaluation ensures that the training officer is not constantly changing roles from trainer to evaluator. The roles of trainer and evaluator overlap somewhat even in the

		PTO program, but not to the point of interference as has been the case in some traditional FTO programs. The PTE will use the Learning Matrix as an evaluation tool to assess the trainee's performance during the course of that week's activities. In the event the trainee is experiencing difficulties and does not successfully complete the Mid-Term Evaluation, he or she may need to return to a prior phase of the training program or otherwise receive remedial training.
C	3 weeks	The third training and learning experience for the trainee, Phase C, emphasizes Patrol Activities .
D	3 weeks	This final phase of training and learning emphasizes Criminal Investigation .
Final Evaluation	1 week	<p>During the Final Evaluation, the trainee again transfers to a PTE. The PTE will use the Learning Matrix as an evaluation tool to assess the trainee's performance during the course of the evaluation period. If the trainee experiences difficulties and does not successfully complete the Final Evaluation, he or she may repeat a previous phase of training or receive other remedial training that focuses on the trainee's deficiencies.</p> <p>If a trainee does not respond to training and is recommended for termination, the coordinator forwards all material, including recommendations, to the Board of Evaluators. The BOE conducts a review of the trainee's performance before providing a written recommendation to the Program Coordinator.</p>

Other important components of the PTO program include weekly Coaching and Training Reports (CTRs) where the PTO/FTO reflects on a trainee's response to the theme of the current training phase, as well as Problem-Based Learning Exercises (PBLEs) and a Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise (NPE) for trainees to demonstrate an ability to address community problems and relevant stakeholders in each phase. In its use of progressively more challenging training phases and weekly reports, the PTO Program overlaps with the model of field training I studied, and the FTO program at the Southwest Sheriff's Office could be seen as an agency-specific version of the PTO Program. Nevertheless, this model is relatively uncommon in law enforcement agencies nationwide; in a recent survey of field training programs in use by police agencies nationwide,

Scott (2010) found that 67% utilize the traditional San Jose model (p.66), showing an overall preference for behavioral modification over adult learning strategies and community-oriented policing.

Based on comparisons with the two most common models for field training, the Southwest Sheriff's Office appears to have a unique and effective program. More significantly, it differs from the PTO Program by emphasizing increasing responsibility and independence within actual work situations, rather than increasingly more challenging topic areas and problem scenarios. Interestingly, the phases in my study simultaneously addressed a common concern that I heard among trainees—that it was far more difficult to write about hypothetical situations when learning to write reports at the training academy than to work from actual memory during field training. Further, the field training phases enacted the stages of Situated Learning pictured below. As Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) described in their research on Situated Learning, novices generally proceed through identifiable stages pictured in Figure 6.5.1, especially within an apprentice-like context such as the transition between school and work.



Figure 6.5.1. Spectrum of Situated Learning, based on Dias et al. (1999)

These different stages, though not necessarily linear, can be understood as a kind of upward progress in the context of police training because of its structured approach to academy coursework, field training, then relatively independent duty on patrol. While the PTO Program also explicitly allows for the recursive trajectory to previous phases that Dias, Freedman,

Medway, and Paré (1999) described as relatively normal, the phases of the FTO program at the Southwest Sheriff's Office build in the gradually lessening roles of instructors or mentors along the way in specific work duties, such as report writing. As such, the field training I studied here scaffolds gradual progression through these stages, rather than just making the pattern apparent to stakeholders.

In sum, the field training program within the Southwest Sheriff's Office stands as a key factor in the successful transition of novice peace officers from the training academy to independent patrol. While the significance of the field training experience is commonly, and even “universally,” described as the most important stage in the process of becoming a police officer (Warners and Williams, 2010), my study shows that the benefits of the FTO experience are especially apparent—and enacted—through remarkable alignments within informal report writing instruction and report writing itself. Effectively, the police report functions as more than a set of textual features that novices must internalize and then adhere to. As trainees learn the rules and norms (or *genre conventions*) for reports on widely varying situations, the needs of different community members that participate in a report's path, and the divisions of labor in each report's process, they also take on a rhetorical awareness of how to mentally prepare for each call, how to respond once they are there, and what to record in both field notes and reports. Further, FTOs' feedback on reports provides a flexible paradigm of different ways to revise and improve writing—rather than a strict, mechanical sense of editing for “correctness”—while the sheer amount of report writing that trainees complete both during and after work ensures that trainees' immersive experience in report writing is itself a vehicle for their growing sense of identity as a peace officer. In other words, trainees “are genred” by the police report because they are socialized into particular situations through a certain kind of writing (Schryer, 2002, p. 95).

6.6 Areas of Tension between Activity Systems

The activity of report writing instruction appeared to line up remarkably well within the field training program at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, as well as across the multiple activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the County District Attorney's Office. Nevertheless, I did recognize that everything did not operate perfectly, and several participants articulated underlying tensions within the transition from school to work. In my view, these tensions did not rise to the level of breakdowns in the activity system of field training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, nor were they deeply rooted contradictions. Instead, trainees appeared to experience a subdued sense of "double binds" between what they were prepared to expect and what they actually experienced—especially in terms of time management and supervisory control—yet were still able to transition effectively and write well during their field training.

One of the greatest stressors that trainees mentioned in our interviews centered on how their growing responsibilities on duty also meant greater difficulties in managing their time. As trainees took on more of the workload for report writing, especially after Phase 3, they had to simultaneously cope with learning appropriate components and sufficient levels of detail for different kinds of incidents and a typical load of five to seven reports of varying length stacked up in a single shift. Each of the trainees I interviewed mentioned that they also completed reports at home to keep up with their workload, and FTOs indicated that it was fairly typical to either work from home, come in early, or stay late for off-the-clock paperwork, with the informal understanding that supervisors will often allow time off at a later point after especially busy days. Indeed, there is no way for a trainee to anticipate his or her workload, and so their progress in learning to write effective reports constantly intersected with competing demands and psychological stress. For examples, FTOs also focused on exposing trainees to as many different

kinds of calls as possible—especially if they involved disturbing situations—as part of the process of determining whether a trainee could handle police work, and so each report associated with these calls was also a new learning process for the trainee. Moreover, the prevailing value for officer initiative called upon trainees to include as much relevant detail as possible in each report, for multiple audiences and including any possible investigative actions or cross-referenced information within RMS. Naturally, this further increased their workload.

While other FTO programs, such as the PTO Program, may not have this same dynamic of intense trainee workload because its phases focus on topic areas rather than increasing independence, it is important to note that the tension I saw was often expressed as a point of pride by both trainees and FTOs. Several times, participants mentioned their report “count,” and both FTOs and trainees became increasingly proud of how quickly the trainee could complete the entire report and paperwork process for a complex call, such as a DWI. In effect, the double-bind I interpret between the trainees’ learning curve, the demands on officer time, and the expectations for full detail and initiative were seen by participants as a kind of proving ground that was built into the entire process.

In comparing the report writing instruction practices at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the field training program at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office, I also saw tensions between activity systems in how different instructors framed expectations for supervisory control. During courses related to report writing, several different instructors frequently emphasized that the class content merely exposed cadets to fundamentals, especially in material recommended by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)²⁷, and that the bulk of

²⁷ During the academy session I observed, TCOLE was named TCLEOSE, which stands for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education. The name change occurred during research for this project, and so some source material refers to the TCLEOSE website, which remains active.

report writing would be learned on the job, based on what each cadet's eventual FTO told them to do. Indeed, many times an instructor would follow up points in the curriculum with cautions that, during field training, FTOs would likely just tell their trainees how to complete each report the way they liked it and sergeants might even like reports some other way. In this sense, cadets were warned against taking any of the academy curriculum too seriously. But, to my mind, this sense of eventual direct instruction resonated very strongly with the paramilitary model of policing, where control is exerted through issuance of commands, there is a lack of flexibility when confronted with problems or situations not covered by existing directives, and the overall culture neither seeks, encourages, nor expects initiative from line officers (Auten, 1981, p. 68).

In contrast to these expectations for direct instruction, though, academy graduates actually encountered a great deal of flexibility and independence when they proceeded to field training. Rather than tell trainees how to write a report, the FTOs allowed them to first draft out their version of events and then offered formative feedback on areas to “tweak” and improve. Further, the feedback that both FTOs and trainees described was not typically authoritative or based on adhering to a “correct” way of writing, but rather focused on developing a deeper rhetorical awareness of relevant details and appropriate degrees of thorough description. My impression of field training and informal report writing instruction was that a strongly alignment with the underlying philosophy of community-oriented policing that was explicitly taught and upheld during the training academy—not a paramilitary model of strict compliance with supervisors’ writing style or obedience to all feedback. Indeed, it would be interesting to see how much further the multiple activity systems that I studied could align if tensions between the vestiges of a paramilitary and a community-oriented model of policing could be resolved.

6.7 Synthesis: Major Themes across Field Training and Wider Report Writing Instruction

Taken together, the trainees' and FTOs' perspectives demonstrated remarkable alignment with one another, with the formal instruction at the training academy, and the needs and expectations of multiple report audiences, such as supervisors, detectives, and assistant district attorneys. This indicated a particularly effective model for the activity of police report writing instruction at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, as shown by the strong degree of overlap across multiple activity systems pictured below.

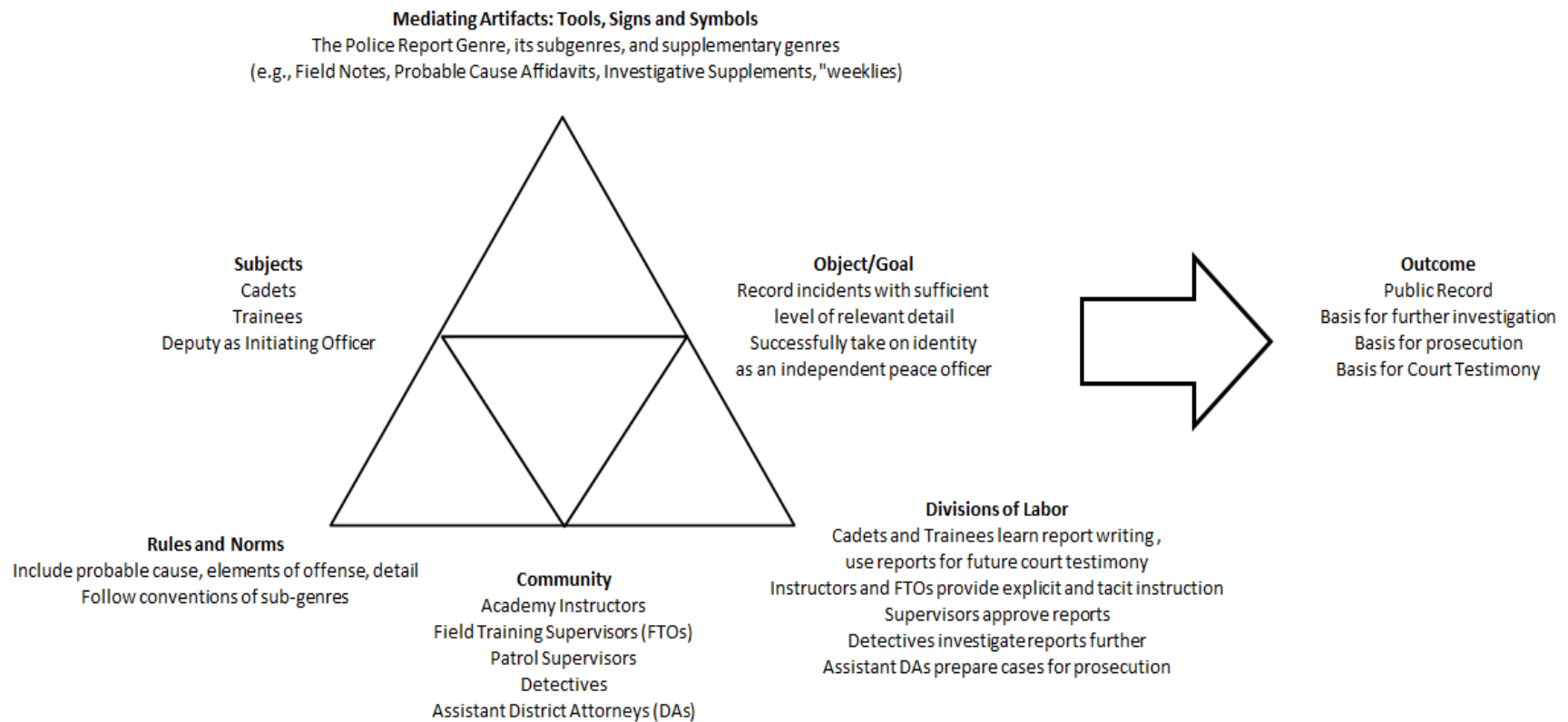


Figure 6.7.1. Alignments in Report Writing Activity System

In my interviews, observations, and analysis, I saw overall agreement and effective intersections between the explicit and tacit instruction on the police report genre at both the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the field training program after graduation, as well as a shared perspective on the multiple purposes for police reports along their paths toward further investigation, prosecution, court testimony, and public records. More deeply, stakeholders widely agreed on the rules and norms (or *genre conventions*) for effective police reports, and how they should be directed toward multiple members of the community who each understand their role in the divisions of labor across the training academy, department, and district attorney's office. Through the combined lenses of Activity Theory, Writing and Genre Research (WAGR), and Situated Learning, this well-aligned model of report writing activity stands out as a unique and particularly effective program for facilitating the transition of novice peace officers from school to work and creating shared values and outcomes between multiple stakeholders operating in overlapping group work.

Interestingly, these multiple alignments were emphasized and reinforced through the very structure of the field training program at the Southwest Sheriff's Office. While somewhat similar to the PTO Program (or the Reno Model), which is one of the two most prominent training models in the US, the field training program involved in my study stands out as a unique structure, with clear phases that facilitate increasing responsibility for trainees, growing independence, and oversight and feedback which strongly resonates with andragogical principles. Moreover, this unique structure actually enacted the stages of Situated Learning outlined by Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999), building in the scaffolding for effective transitions between school and work.

Of course, the demands of report writing instruction amid all the other work duties that trainees experienced in the transition between school and work did not amount to a perfectly smooth and easy learning experience. In my analysis of the field training experience, I recognized areas of tension between the expectations and demands on trainees' time and behavior, especially in the areas of time management and expectations for supervisory control. Still, these tensions did not rise to the level of breakdowns or "contradictions" in report writing activity in the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and sometimes represented a proving ground for fully entering the community as an independent peace officer.

Despite these tensions, the strong degree of alignment that I realized across these activity systems suggests an alternative path for studies in Activity Theory. To a large extent, Activity Theory guides researchers toward problems in group work, as demonstrated by established discussions of "contradictions" between the different objects, tools, and underlying dynamics of multiple stakeholders that can be recognized through deep analysis of the factors involved in a "need state" or a "double bind" experienced by research subjects (Engeström, 1987; 2001; 2005; 2008). Many times, researchers begin studies in Activity Theory based on problems vaguely expressed by participants,²⁸ especially in workplace contexts. However, my analysis demonstrates that Activity Theory could also reveal strong alignments within workplace communication, such as within the writing activity of an organization or the particular instruction practices for novices entering and transitioning to independent work duties. Effectively, then, Activity Theory may provide a framework for a highly contextual "best practices" model, revealing some underlying dynamics that could be informative for other contexts, even though all the complexities would necessarily be difficult to replicate. With this in mind, I explore this

²⁸ See discussions of Developmental Work Research, as in Engeström (2005).

possibility for Activity Theory alongside other conclusions, implications, and recommendations within the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Overview

This longitudinal, ethnographic case study examined the formal and informal ways that novice peace officers were taught to write police reports in one agency, the Southwest Sheriff's Office, and whether the teaching and learning they experienced aligned well with the needs and expectations articulated by major audiences and users of police reports, such as supervisors, detectives, and district attorneys. I framed my analysis within Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) (Miller, 1984) and Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1981; Engeström, 1987), which Russell (2009) synthesized as Writing and Genre Research (WAGR); when combined with Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), this theoretical framework allowed me to examine the experiences of cadets and trainees as they gradually entered patrol duty (Artemeva, 2006). Through constant comparison of interviews, policy documents, material curricula, and class observations, I developed a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to explain how instruction on the police report genre is remarkably well aligned with the purposes, conventions, and underlying values widely shared among different stakeholders along a report's path in the broader legal process.

When I initially prepared the research design for this project, I did not expect to find such a strong work model. I had heard, anecdotally, that it was common in other local agencies for a cadet to experience little to no memorable or meaningful training in the academy on written communication or report writing, and that most peace officers learned what worked well enough on the job to get supervisory approval through direct instruction from a single field training officer (FTO) and trial and error. There is more evidence for this generally dysfunctional situation in the literature. The few studies on police report writing emerging from Rhetoric and

Writing Studies (RWS) had concluded that formal report writing instruction comprises a remarkably small percentage of time in a training academy, that this training is generally insufficient, and that experienced peace officers largely point to supervisors' and FTOs' feedback and learning through practice—not academy instruction—when recounting how they learned to write effective reports (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012). Meanwhile, recent calls for andragogy within police training have noted a “salient paradox” (Birzer, 2003, p. 32), where many agencies simultaneously value new missions for community-oriented policing and its emphasis on communications, yet continue to provide a teacher-centered and lecture-driven approach in the academy that does not foster critical thought, problem solving, or analytical practice (McCoy, 2006; Oliva and Compton, 2010; McCay, 2011). Since law enforcement agencies (including the Southwest Sheriff's Office) commonly do not require college credits or degrees, it seems that many peace officers must cope with substantial demands for writing with little more than a high school education, a skills overview, and some on-the-job training.

In contrast, the cadets I studied went through substantial, participatory training on written communication and report writing during their time in the academy and took on increasing responsibility for reports during their time as trainees in the field training program, receiving targeted guidance and feedback from instructors and field training officers along the way rather than direct, obedience-based instruction. They also invested in a great deal of self-initiated learning, going out of their way to improve their own writing by seeking out supplementary experiences, feedback, and genre models. Further, my study participants widely agreed that the police report has multiple purposes in the legal process, ranging from a record of an event and the basis for further investigation to the foundation for court testimony, and so it must be clear and meaningful to several audiences along its path from initiating officer to prosecution in court.

These concerns went beyond the minimum requirements in the state curriculum for peace officer licensing, which largely focus on formal genre conventions and errors to avoid in grammar and mechanics, and helped novice peace officers learn the police report genre in both its textual features and its functions as a social action (Miller, 1984). As many participants described, they learned that the police report tells a story, paints a picture, and convinces a judge or jury, and so they gradually gained expertise in showing authority, accuracy and initiative by providing as much meaningful detail as possible.

7.2 A Strong Work Model

I interpreted a strong degree of agreement and alignment between the components of the activity systems related to police report writing at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, including instruction at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the expectations articulated at the county District Attorney's Office. According to Engeström (1987), an activity system includes a subject whose action is mediated by tools, signs and symbols as he or she works toward a goal and a collective object, and this process includes intersecting dynamics from the members of the community, its rules and norms, and its divisions of labor (see Figure 7.2.1).

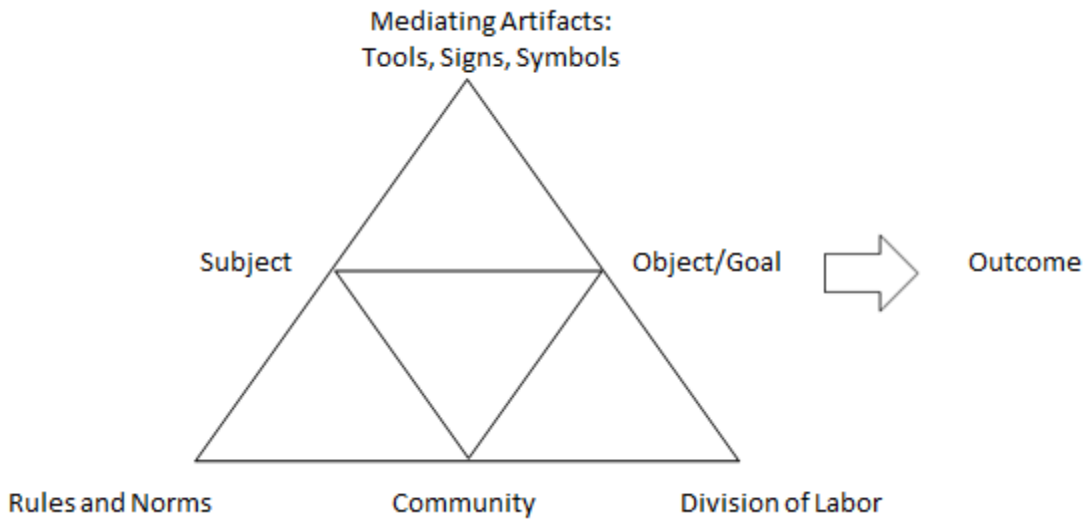


Figure 7.2.1. An Activity System (Engeström, 1987).

Additionally, Engeström (2001; 2008) demonstrated that, while activity could effectively progress within a single activity system, there is also the possibility of “double binds” between multiple activity systems. In this case, the interaction between multiple activity systems could, ideally, form the space for value co-creation and a shared outcome or a point of contradiction (see Figure 7.2.2)

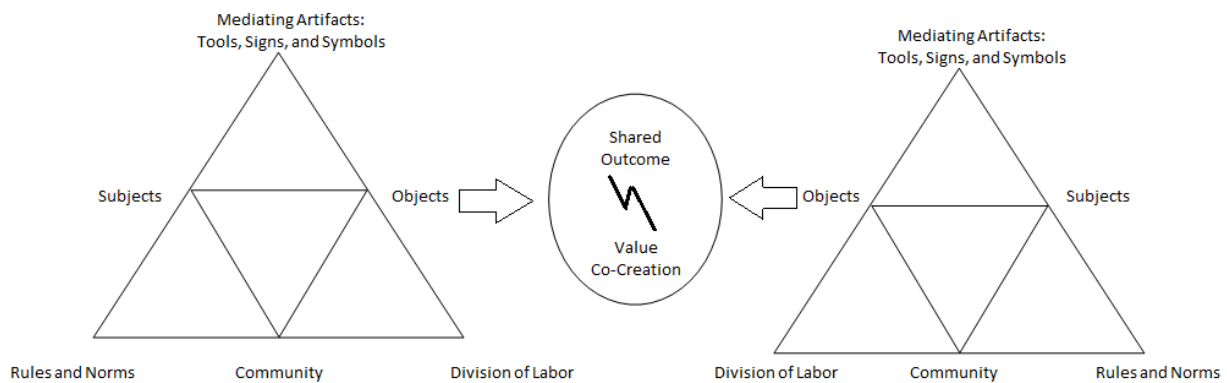


Figure 7.2.2. Interaction between Multiple Activity Systems.

I found that novice peace officers take on the subject position as both cadets in the academy and trainees in the field training program, learning to become the initiating officer in the broader legal process. In both activity systems, they learn to mediate their activity with the police report genre and its subgenres (such as the investigative supplement) so that they can gain: 1) their immediate object, supervisory approval, as well as 2) their collective goal, as much investigation as possible towards 3) a desired outcome, a solved case or criminal prosecution. As they learn, their activity is continuously influenced by rules and norms, or the genre conventions of the police report, which requires probable cause and elements of each offense as well as stylistic concerns for “correct, concise, and clear writing.” Further, their activity includes the needs and expectations of different members of the community; at the academy this community includes instructors and administrators, and in patrol duty it includes supervisors, detectives, and district attorneys who will eventually read and use reports according to their division of labor: for approval, further investigation, and prosecution.

Within my study, major audiences and users of police reports described their idealized conception of how these activity systems *should* work in much the same way that the policy and procedures and the material curricula indicated they *would* work. Further, my observations of academy coursework and interviews with trainees and their FTOs demonstrated that activity *did* work in ways that novices had been prepared for. I thus interpreted a strong sense of alignment between what *should*, *would*, and *did* work as report writing instruction and practice, according to different groups of participants at different points in each activity system. Ultimately, I found that there was a strong work model at both the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy and the Southwest Sheriff’s Office, which was bridged and bolstered by a unique field training program.

According to supervisors, detectives, and assistant district attorneys, peace officer cadets should be able to progress smoothly from basic communications training at the academy to capable report writing on patrol duty, ably meeting the needs and expectations of multiple readers. This expectation was confirmed by the implications of sections of the policy and procedures manual and the state peace officer licensing curricula related to written communication and report writing. Within their academy training, cadets should learn the fundamentals of clear and concise writing, accurate observations and descriptions, the basics of the electronic report writing system, and the subgenres and conventions for police reports within the Southwest Sheriff's Office through the expertise and varied teaching styles of various instructors and presenters. Once cadets proceed to patrol duty as trainees, they should further learn from their FTOs about the audiences that each police report may reach, and how they can write effectively for sergeants, detectives, and assistant district attorneys. Eventually, each deputy should compose police reports that reflect ideal characteristics, clearly and concisely including the minimum components and thoroughly detailed descriptions that demonstrate the writer's initiative, credibility, and professionalism.

At the academy, cadets progressed through the stages and skills related to written communication and report writing that were expected by other members of the community through at least 88 of the 1,000 hours of instruction. They participated in: 1) an overview of community policing as an underlying philosophy for all of their actions and communications; 2) basics for written communication in police contexts; 3) broader discussion and awareness of the many variables in any given situation, especially in regard to communicating and recording interactions; 4) focused attention to the audience expectations for police reports as they are used in specific contexts, and 5) increasingly complex practice in writing reports for both supervisory

approval and appropriate connections with the needs of detectives and prosecutors. Taken together, this sequence facilitated an increasingly complex rhetorical awareness of and response to widely varying situations, especially in writing. The academy's focus on practical, hands-on and group activities accounted for andragogical principles such as collaboratively determining learning objectives and respecting the prior training and experience of learners. Further, the trajectory facilitated smoother transitions to field duty through modeling the increasing independence that is called for by Situated Learning.

In field training, my FTO participants each described a similar method for scaffolding and teaching police report writing with their trainees. In general, they facilitated coordination between field notes and reports by exposing trainees to as many different kinds of calls as possible; this allowed trainees to learn about what kinds of details to think through before arriving at a call, and then what things to look for, record, and later report by keeping accurate and thorough field notes. Meanwhile, the trainees all indicated very similar strategies for learning the police report genre, getting their work approved, and progressing to increasingly complex kinds of investigations and reports. Mostly, these strategies were rooted in a shared value for independence and initiative, and trainees widely professed an ethic of self-reliance in strengthening their own writing skills and seeking out models and feedback. Rather than provide direct instruction based on a single perspective, the FTOs offered targeted guidance, feedback, and "tweaks" to trainee writing so that the novices could take on increasing responsibility for their own work. These practices enacted several of the andragogical principles outlined by Peace (2006) as particularly effective for promoting effective communication and problem solving skills that are associated with a model of community-oriented policing. Moreover, the phase

structure of the field training program further strengthened novices' transition to patrol duty by formally enacting the stages theorized in Situated Learning.

7.3 Phases of Field Training: A Crucial Bridge

A major reason for shared outcomes and values between the activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the county District Attorney's Office is rooted in the five-phase structure of the field training program. This apprenticeship-like structure facilitates a trainee's gradual independence on the job, while also requiring constant reflection on progress, specific goals, and the training process itself (see Figure 7.3.1).

Phase	Duration	Roles and Responsibilities
1	4 days (1 week)	The FTO is responsible for 100% of workload, and the trainee solely observes.
2	16 days (4 weeks)	The trainee is responsible for about 40% of workload, participating in paperwork, interviews, and calls with the FTO in the lead.
3	40 days (10 weeks)	The trainee is responsible for about 75% of the workload, and now takes the lead in initiating calls, looking up suspect information, completing paperwork, and leading interviews. The FTO is available to provide guidance and feedback.
4	4 days (1 week)	The trainee is responsible for the entire workload. The assigned FTO largely stands back in case he or she is needed, and another FTO evaluates the trainee's abilities.
5	8 days (2 weeks)	The trainee goes through administrative evaluation to proceed to independent patrol duty.

Figure 7.3.1. The Phase Structure of Field Training at the Southwest Sheriff's Office

The phases of field training formalize patterns that novices commonly experience in the transition between school and work and makes them explicit, effectively allowing all

stakeholders to recognize what to expect, where to reflect, and how to communicate across multiple activity systems.

Interestingly, the field training structure at the Southwest Sheriff's Office stands in stark contrast to transitions between school and work which have been examined in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), where scholars have prominently claimed that "school and work are worlds apart" (Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré, 1999, p. 3), and that "[t]here exists an inevitable, and necessary, gulf between the writing contexts of the workplace and the context of the university" that can only be bridged in exceptional and rare circumstances of simultaneous interaction between work and school, such as service-learning or internship courses (Freedman and Adam, 2000, p. 143). While previous attempts to bridge the transitions and gaps between school and work have focused on understanding patterns that commonly characterize a novice's entry into the workplace, my study offers a context where common transitional patterns are formally built in to a novice peace officer's field training experience.

Meanwhile, it appears that the strong degree of alignment that I saw between the academy and field training is not very common across law enforcement agencies in the US. Recent studies note only two prominent models for field training: the San Jose Model, which is commonly called the "traditional" model because it dates back to 1971, and the Police Training Officer (PTO) Program, which is also known as the Reno Model. Neither of these appear identical to the FTO program I studied here, although the PTO Program is very similar because it explicitly relies on adult learning strategies and involves its own phases (Warners and Williams, 2010; COPS, 2003). Based on comparisons with the two most common models for field training, the Southwest Sheriff's Office appears to have a unique program.

The field training phases also enacted the stages of Situated Learning pictured below. As Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) described in their research on Situated Learning, novices generally proceed through identifiable stages pictured in Figure 7.3.2, especially within an apprentice-like context such as the transition between school and work. Effectively, the first four phases of field training at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office mirror this spectrum of Situated Learning.



Figure 7.3.2. Spectrum of Situated Learning, based on Dias et al. (1999)

These different stages, though not necessarily linear, can be understood as a kind of upward progress in the context of police training because of its structured approach to academy coursework, field training, then relatively independent duty on patrol. The phases of the FTO program at the Southwest Sheriff’s Office build in the gradually lessening roles of instructors or mentors along the way in specific work duties, such as report writing. As such, the field training I studied here scaffolds gradual progression through these stages, rather than just making the pattern apparent to stakeholders as suggested in previous research on the school-work transition.

In sum, the field training program within the Southwest Sheriff’s Office stands as a key factor in the successful transition of novice peace officers from the training academy to independent patrol. While the significance of the field training experience is commonly, and even “universally,” described as the most important stage in the process of becoming a police officer (Warners and Williams, 2010), my study shows that the benefits of the FTO experience

are especially apparent—and enacted—through remarkable alignments within informal report writing instruction and report writing itself. Ultimately, the police report functions as more than a set of textual features that novices must internalize and then adhere to.

7.4 The Police Report Genre as Social Action

As novice peace officers learn the rules and norms (or *genre conventions*) for reports on widely varying situations, the needs of different community members that participate in a report's path, and the divisions of labor in each report's process, they also take on a rhetorical awareness of how to mentally prepare for each call, how to respond once they are there, and what to record in both field notes and reports. Further, instructors' and FTOs' feedback on reports provides a flexible paradigm of different ways to revise and improve writing—rather than a strict, mechanical sense of editing for “correctness.” Once trainees progress to the latter phases of field training, the sheer amount of report writing that they must complete both during and after work ensures that their immersive experience in report writing is itself a vehicle for their growing sense of identity as a peace officer.

In short, I found that novice peace officers “are genred” into their new career and identity by the police report genre because they are socialized into particular situations through a certain kind of writing (Schryer, 2002, p. 95). Rather than just mediate activity, the police report facilitates a growing sensibility and subject position as cadets and trainees learn its textual features, its stylistic conventions, and its role as a social action in the broader legal process. By the end of field training, each trainee can interpret a variety of situations in terms of how he or she would need to report its probable cause, elements of offense, and relevant details. In turn, this genred disposition allows them to both write effective reports and perform as effective peace officers, reacting appropriately to different calls and taking the initiative to complete as much of

each investigation as possible in their documentation, in order to assist others along the police report path. As such, the police report is more than the vehicle for charging criminals for their offenses in court; it is also the vehicle for novice peace officers to successfully and independently enter their workplace by articulating and proving their credibility, their investigative prowess, and their rhetorical awareness.

The way that the police report facilitates rhetorical awareness for novices at the Southwest Sheriff's Office is boosted by clear senses of purpose and explicit audience and user expectations taught at the training academy, as well as targeted feedback and shared values for independence and initiative in the transition between the academy and field training. To a large extent, these dynamics come from the training structure at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, both in its unique field training program and in its integrated approach to academy training. Importantly, the agency runs its own peace officer academy with supplemental instruction in report writing workshops and a diverse staff of dedicated instructors, active detectives and assistant district attorneys, as well as a curriculum suffused with the principles of community-oriented policing, allowing cadets to learn from the very audiences and users they will need to address in their reports. In contrast with previous studies of police report writing within the field of RWS (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012), these contextual factors may be key in locating effective instructional practices, demonstrating how a strong awareness and shared sense of purpose, audience, conventions, and social action can foster a genred learning process and successful transition more effectively when these dynamics are articulated and felt across the academy, field training program, and agency.

7.5 Tensions Were Local, Not Systemic

While my overall interpretation of the instructional practices for report writing at the Southwest Sheriff's Office was that it is a strong work model, it was not perfect. I recognized some tensions during my research, although these did not rise to the level of systemic breakdowns, or what are commonly called contradictions in Activity Theory Research. Trainees appeared to experience a subdued sense of “double binds” between what they were prepared to expect and what they actually experienced—especially in terms of time management and supervisory control—yet were still able to transition effectively and write well during their field training.

In the academy, some aspects of specific courses indicated tensions between the culture of the training academy, effective practices in genre-based learning, and the principles of andragogy. The delivered curriculum for the 16-hour Written Communication course centered largely on mechanical issues associated with achieving “correct, concise and clear writing,” emphasizing different kinds of error and relying heavily on “correct” answers derived from automated feedback or standard responses. This implied that writing does not need a clear sense of audience or context to be effective and aligning with problematic aspects of current-traditional rhetoric (Berlin & Inkster, 1980). To me, the way the material was delivered implied a philosophy of writing instruction that may not be effective for this genre—primarily in its central use of lecture, its shift in the order of topics (so that grammar ended up being the primary focus most of the time), and its limited use of in-class activities. However, the emphasis in other courses related to written communication and report writing, as well as the underlying trajectory—from an overview of community-oriented policing to the basics of a report's textual features, to the report writing workshops—ended up balancing out these difficulties.

Additional tensions arose at the academy between, on the one hand, the andragogical aims for collaborative learning objectives and students' inherent pleasure in participating and, on the other hand, an underlying emphasis on obedience, "right" answers, and fear. Instructor feedback to cadets' answers or discussions often followed binary good/bad and yes/no responses, and discussions of effective writing were often delivered as warnings, where cadets should remember to "do it right, or suffer later—especially at the hands of defense attorneys when you're on the stand." Although instructors explicitly suspended the academy's paramilitary behavior protocol during class, this dynamic may have been reinforced by the sense that cadets, as students and novices, must submit to the authority of their instructors and would otherwise face punishments like physical discipline (e.g., additional exercises) when doing something "wrong." However, since the theme was also strongly linked to a sense of what prompts a deputy to write a report and value its quality (or exigency), it may be that formal report writing instruction could do more to explain the urgency of *effective* writing, in particular contexts with specific audiences, than persistently link *right* writing with threats and fear.

During field training, trainees also experienced tensions through the stressors of time management as they took on increasing responsibility for work duties. Since there is no way for a trainee to anticipate his or her workload, their progress in learning to write effective reports constantly intersected with competing demands to respond efficiently to calls and investigate incidents as much as possible. Moreover, trainees had to simultaneously cope with the psychological stress of both a demanding workplace and constant exposure to as many calls as possible, especially if they involved disturbing situations such as deaths. Amid these constantly competing demands, trainees sometimes struggled to efficiently complete multiple reports for a given day's work while also fulfilling expectations to complete as much of each investigation as

possible and document all relevant details in these reports. Still, they emphasized that they did as much as possible, sometimes staying late and taking their work home with them, and effectively counting these difficulties as a proving ground for their worth as a peace officer. This attitude, with its underlying value for independence and initiative, further showed me that the tensions faced by cadets and trainees were limited and local, and did not indicate broader systemic contradictions.

7.6 Implications for Other Police Agencies

Given the strong, well-aligned activity system and work model that I interpreted at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, my study may be useful in other law enforcement agencies. There is no set standard either internationally or across different states in the US for the content or number of hours required for peace officer preparation (Palmiotto, Birzer & Unnithan, 2000), and training generally consists of a period of classroom-based instruction in an academy, followed by time spent in on-the-job training under the guidance of a field training officer (FTO). Yet, this typical framework is often undergirded by a relatively uniform militaristic style, and police training has been widely characterized as teacher-centered and driven by lectures and skills instruction (McCoy, 2006; Peace, 2006), wherein "learners are assumed to have little, if any, applicable knowledge relevant to the lessons at hand [... and] are made to accept their place in the hierarchy of the organization: The very bottom" (McCay, 2011, p. 10). Paradoxically, many agencies are often aware that this teacher-centered, lecture-driven, or even paramilitary, model for training does not work effectively within a philosophy for community-oriented policing (Birzer, 2003; Schults, 2007; Oliva and Compton, 2010), yet their administrative or bureaucratic pressures limit their flexibility in developing new approaches.

These characteristics are remarkably consistent across multiple settings and continue to raise questions for instructors, departmental administrators, and researchers about the most effective ways that officers can be trained for their duties and whether existing methods can be meaningfully reviewed or revised. In light of ongoing calls for andragogical instruction and teaching practices that integrate well with a model of community-oriented policing (Ortmeier, 1997; Birzer, 2003; Chappell, 2008; Hundersmarck, 2009; McCay, 2011), there is significant value in a context where the transition between the academy and the workplace seems to be going well.

Not all agencies are able to run their own training academy, and prospective peace officers often go to a regional or combined training center. With this in mind, it would likely be difficult in other contexts to staff academies with some of the people reports will eventually go to. However, it is clear that cadets benefit from hearing directly from report audiences and users during their time in the academy. In the absence of in-person instruction, these practices could be adapted to other contexts through strategic use of technologies, including video presentations or video-chat seminars from users located at a sample of area agencies.

More importantly, this study shows there is clear value from an academy course sequence that is consistently and explicitly connected with the agency's model for policing, such as community-oriented policing. Through constant reinforcement of the agency's mission and philosophy, cadets seem more likely to recognize the value of the police report genre beyond its textual features and more in line with its role as a social action. Additionally, an academy course sequence can further improve by going beyond a state-mandated curriculum, especially in providing a workshop-like setting for report writing instruction in the agency's report management system (RMS), thus allowing cadets to learn better through real practice.

Beyond the academy, other agencies could also learn from the relatively unique training structure at the Southwest Sheriff's Office. In the US, there are two prominent models for field training: the San Jose, or Traditional, model and the Reno Police Training Officer (PTO) Program. While the PTO Program sought to explicitly engage novice peace officers in adult learning strategies and the embedded values of community-oriented policing through a phased sequence of exercises and weekly journaling, my findings suggest that trainees benefit greatly from the structure at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, where they experience a combination of learning phases, wide exposure to a variety of calls, and increasingly independent practice in actual work duties, such as report writing. Indeed, the trainees I spoke with pointed specifically to the value of writing about actual events, rather than hypothetical prompts, when developing their abilities with report writing. Moreover, this increasing responsibility in real work conditions was especially meaningful among participants who otherwise struggled with English composition and generally disliked writing.

Ultimately, this study shows the value of a field training structure that implements stages of Situated Learning alongside effective feedback and andragogical principles. By formally designing the transition between the academy and patrol duty along the same stages that scholars have recognized in other school-to-work settings, the Southwest Sheriff's Office provided a scaffolded, apprenticeship-like approach to fostering effective learning. Additionally, the underlying values for collaboration between learners and trainers and respect for learners' prior training and experience, at both the academy and the field training program, led instructors to provide targeted guidance and feedback on novice report writing practices, rather than direct, obedience-based instruction. In short, this work model could be adapted elsewhere when participants widely and explicitly tie andragogical principles to the practices associated with

community-oriented policing. These connections allowed instructors and cadets, FTOs and trainees, and the wider community in the activity system to consciously recognize how school and work related to one another, and smooth the transition to novices' independence.

7.7 Implications for Other Writing Instruction Contexts

For writing instruction that takes place outside of law enforcement agencies, my study may be informative about ways to foster an effective transition between school and work. In courses such as first-year composition, workplace and professional writing, technical writing, or internship and service-learning classes that are linked with community and business partners, instructors are often concerned about whether the concepts and skills they teach “transfer” to new contexts (Beaufort, 2007; Bawarshi and Reiff, 2010). Often, this concern for transfer arises from a perceived gap between school and work. Many people believe that they learned to write on the job rather than in school or university (Bataille, 1982; Anderson, 1985; Brown, 1988; Rush & Evers, 1986, 1991), and newcomers frequently assert that they did not think that they would need to write differently in the workplace (MacKinnon, 1993); all too often, this frustration amounts to a perception that “[u]niversities, it appears, have failed to prepare their students to write at work” (p. 5). Similarly, scholars like Joliffe (1994) have pointed to a prevailing “myth of transcendence,” where learned skills are expected transfer vertically after completion of coursework (p. 223). Because the disconnect between school and work continues to frustrate teachers, employers, and students alike, my case study may indicate some ways to bridge the gap.

One way that instructors can help foster an effective transition for students between a writing classroom and a workplace setting is to learn about the typical stages that novices proceed through when they enter a new context, acknowledge these phases, and consciously

structure them into the design of lessons and courses. Much like Beaufort's (2007) encouragement to teach for transfer, instructors could point out the connections that students would need to understand in their progression beyond the class, in the same way that the policy documents and material curricula constantly pointed to future learning for the novice peace officers I studied here. Additionally, this study demonstrates that instructors could both explain the stages involved in Situated Learning and actively enact them by structuring their writing instruction within those stages. That is, curricula in a variety of writing courses could be designed to foster a progression from understanding and analyzing expert practice to increasingly independent writing projects that approximate the expectations of their workplace or next challenge. When students actively occupy multiple settings, as in internships or service-learning courses, this conscious design around stages of Situated Learning could be shared across different activity systems in an effort to make everyone—instructors, mentors, and students—aware of what to expect, where to reflect, and how to communicate across the apparent divide between school and work.

As part of this deliberate structure, instructors could also make students aware of effective practices that could help them “to learn new ways to learn” (Freedman and Adam, 1996) beyond the context of the writing class. As the participants in my study demonstrated, individual learning practices may relate strongly to the underlying values in the workplace, such as individualism and initiative. So, key strategies could address ways to analyze and understand the rhetorical situation of different contexts, including the purpose, audiences, rules and norms, divisions of labor, and members of the community associated with particular kinds of writing and communication. For example, students could conduct site observations or informational interviews with active professionals in their target workplace to gauge typical expectations for

writing and work models. Additionally, students can learn and practice their own ways to seek out genre models, multiple perspectives and feedback, or supplementary practice and experiences when developing their knowledge of workplace genres.

7.8 Implications for Activity Theory

The strong degree of alignment that I realized across activity systems at the Southwest Sheriff's Office, the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy, and the county District Attorney's Office suggests an alternative path for studies in Activity Theory. To a large extent, Activity Theory guides researchers toward problems in group work, as demonstrated by established discussions of "contradictions" between the different objects, tools, and underlying dynamics of multiple stakeholders that can be recognized through deep analysis of the factors involved in a "need state" or a "double bind" experienced by research subjects (Engeström, 1987; 2001; 2005; 2008). Many times, researchers begin studies in Activity Theory based on problems vaguely expressed by participants,²⁹ especially in workplace contexts.

However, my analysis demonstrates that Activity Theory could also reveal strong alignments within workplace communication, such as within the writing activity of an organization or the particular instruction practices for novices entering and transitioning to independent work duties. Effectively, then, Activity Theory may provide a framework for a highly contextual "best practices" model, revealing some underlying dynamics that could be informative for other contexts, even though all the complexities would necessarily be difficult to replicate.

This kind of research can be just as valuable as a developmental approach that seeks to help practitioners develop solutions, especially since the general attraction of "best practices" is

²⁹ See discussions of Developmental Work Research, as in Engeström (2005).

often undercut with the awareness that context is always key. In other words, most people can recognize that what worked in one setting will not likely replicate in another context without some degree of common underlying factors. Yet, Activity Theory offers a lens that deeply accounts for the constantly intersecting dynamics that make a context what it is, and takes the research setting itself as its own model through its practice, rather than impose an ideal from above or try to grow an ideal from below. If Activity Theory research could extend to recognizing both activity systems with contradictions and effective alignments, researchers could go beyond the concern about what effect their efforts have in practice to look toward broader significance.

7.9 Areas for Future Study

While the theoretical framework that I chose for my study revealed effective alignment, and the contextual details could be meaningful for other law enforcement agencies or other writing courses, it is important to note that other lenses may have shown deeper tensions or breakdowns. For example, an economic perspective may have centered more on the incentives to become peace officers or FTOs, or on the budgetary constraints which reduced the likelihood for immediate success and raised the stakes for outperforming peers. If I had concentrated on issues of language difference, I also may have seen more tensions in the ways that novice peace officers must learn Spanish, yet translate all Spanish utterances into English within their reports. Further, a feminist or gender studies lens may have focused more closely on the stark differences between male and female personnel and the ways that training was, admittedly, different according to a trainee's gender. Clearly, future studies are needed to understand how these issues impact police report instruction and genred identity formation, and my own study is limited in how I could interpret them.

My method reveals other limitations as well. I examined a small sample in a particularly high-functioning agency, where participants were enthusiastic and candid about my project's benefit for their organization. This in itself is rare; other local agencies ignored or refused my request to study their training practices, and other studies of police report writing in RWS have shown relatively little and insufficient training in other agencies in the US (Cape, 1993; Seawright, 2012). Future studies of police report writing could further apply a combined theoretical framework of Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), Activity Theory, and Situated Learning to analyze instruction and practice at other law enforcement agencies, especially to understand additional ways that novices learn to effectively transition into the workplace even when they entered at the middle or bottom of their class, or how they continued to develop over time. Additionally, future studies could examine the police report genre beyond the limited context of novice learning to write effectively, going further into its changes and meanings across different stakeholders in the broader legal process.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Major Audiences of Police Reports

This group includes administrators responsible for the overall quality of police report writing in relationships between the department and outside entities, supervisors responsible for overseeing the quality of police report writing, and district attorneys experienced with using police reports as evidence in court cases.

- Who uses police reports?
- How does a police report function outside the department?
- How does a police report function within the department?
- Who is responsible for evaluating reports?
- What makes an effective report that you can use in your role?
- What challenges do you experience in your role?
- What would you recommend for future training in report writing?

Interview Questions for Instructors of Formal Training in Police Report Writing

- How are cadets at the Southwest Sheriff's Office trained in report writing?
- As an instructor, how do you see report writing?
- What are the goals for training in report writing at the Southwest Sheriff Training Academy?
- How do you teach police report writing?
- What must a police report contain, at minimum?
- What makes an effective police report?
- How do you evaluate report writing during academy training?
- What challenges do you encounter in teaching report writing at the academy?

Interview Questions for Participants in Informal Training in Police Report Writing

For field training officers (FTOs)

- As an experienced officer and a field-training officer, how do you see report writing?
- What must a police report contain, at minimum?
- For you, what makes an effective police report?
- How do you help your trainee write effective reports?
- How do you oversee the quality of report writing for this trainee?
- What challenges have you experienced in helping your trainee write reports?
- What recommendations would you make for academy training or other field training officers about instruction in police report writing?

For trainees

- How do you see report writing?
- What do you think a police report should contain, at minimum?
- For you, what makes an effective police report?
- How does your training in the academy on report writing compare to your experiences on duty?
- How does your report writing on duty compare with your activities at the academy?
- What challenges have you experienced in writing reports?
- What recommendations would you have for new trainees as they enter the academy and transition to full duty?

Follow-Up Questions

Questions about training new field training officers (FTOs), directed toward FTO coordinators

- How does a deputy become an FTO? What are the requirements? Is there an application process?
- What kind of preparation do new FTOs need to go through? What must they learn before starting? Do they need to pass an exam or receive some official evaluation?
- How does training for FTOs typically proceed? Is there a standard curriculum? How might the training differ between instructors?
- How did you become an FTO training instructor?
- In your experience as an FTO instructor, are there any strategies or activities within the curriculum that you find particularly effective?
- Are FTOs encouraged to bond as a group, or to keep in touch with one another? Or, are most FTOs rather individualistic, rather than a cohesive group?
- Do FTOs receive further opportunities for training once they enter this role? Are there optional courses, workshops, or presentations for continuing education or re-certification?

Revised Questions for Phase 4 Interviews

Questions for FTOs

- As an experienced officer and a field-training officer, how do you see report writing?
- What must a police report contain, at minimum?
- For you, what makes an effective police report?
- How did you learn report writing? Who or what were your major influences?
- How did your experiences in report writing with your own FTOs compare to your academy training? How did it compare to your experiences after you moved into full patrol duty?
- How did you become an FTO? Did you go through any additional training?
- How long have you been doing it? How many trainees have you had?

- How do you cover report writing with your trainee? What do you try to instill in them?
- How do you help your trainee write effective reports?
- How do you oversee the quality of report writing for this trainee?
- What challenges have you experienced in helping your trainee write reports?
- Is there anything you wish you'd known coming in? Do you wish there was anything that your trainees knew before they were assigned to you?
- What recommendations would you make for academy training or other field training officers about instruction in police report writing?

Questions for Trainees

- How do you see report writing?
- What is the purpose of reports? Who uses them?
- What do you think a police report should contain, at minimum?
- For you, what makes an effective police report?
- How does your training in the academy on report writing compare to your experiences on duty?
- What challenges have you experienced in writing reports?
- What recommendations would you have for new trainees as they enter the academy and transition to full duty?

Vita

Marianna R. Hendricks grew up in El Paso, Texas, and graduated in 2004 from Bel Air High School. She attended her first year of college at Texas Woman's University (TWU) in Denton, Texas, with support from the TWU Presidential Scholarship and the Ysleta Education Foundation. In 2005, she transferred to the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), where she earned her BA *summa cum laude* in English and American Literature with a minor in History in 2008 with support from the G. Douglas Meyers Scholarship. In 2010, she earned her MA in English and American Literature at UTEP, where she was recognized as an Outstanding Graduate Student, then entered UTEP's doctoral program in Rhetoric and Composition.

While pursuing her degree, Marianna received the Baker Hernandez Research Grant from the Department of English, served as vice president and president of UTEP's student chapter of the Rhetoric Society of America (RSA), as well as a founding member of UTEP's student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC). In the community, she interned in grant research and writing for the Center Against Family Violence (CAFV), served as a Racial Justice Facilitator with the YWCA, and continues to serve as co-leader for a troop of Girl Scouts and webmaster for St. Francis on the Hill Episcopal Church. She also worked as an Assistant Instructor for the Department of English, a Doctoral Writing Tutor for the PUENTES Program at the Graduate School, and a Research Associate for the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CIERP), where she currently works full-time as the group leader for Research and Communications.

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