**The Guardian vs. Warrior Police Mentalities**

Kylie Gannon

CRIM 101: Survey of Criminal Justice

April 29, 2020

**The Guardian vs. Warrior Police Mentalities**

Two competing police mindsets are often discussed: the warrior mindset and the guardian mindset. According to the warrior mindset, police are “at war” with crime. This mindset is often associated with police brutality and other negative behaviors, though the mindset isn’t always bad. It’s important to make the distinction that not every officer who has the warrior mentality commits police brutality. Alternatively, in the guardian mindset, the focus is on cooperation with the people to stop crime (McLean et al., 2019). There’s a debate as to which of these mindsets is better, or even if these are two completely different mindsets at all. This is an important topic because the way the police approach their work can have an impact on the crimes that are committed, as well as the public perception of the police.

**Literature Review**

According to a study, people generally have a more positive view of police when they are described as guardians as opposed to warriors (Thibodeau, Crow, & Flusberg, 2016). This indicates that the public may prefer for police to have more of a guardian mentality as opposed to a warrior mentality. In other words, they would prefer for the police to be more cooperative and take a less aggressive stance against crime and criminals.

In order for police to uphold a more guardian mindset, it has been suggested that they use body cameras. The purpose of body worn cameras is to increase the self-awareness of police officers, which will reduce negative interactions with the citizens and cause better relations with the public (Wood & Groff, 2019). This suggests that the negative aspects associated with the warrior mentality, such as police brutality, may be caused by a lack of self-regulation. By having police officers wear body cameras, they are made accountable for their actions. If they are made accountable for their actions, they are more likely to change to a guardian mentality.

However, not everyone holds the view that a guardian mentality is better. Gripentrog argues that the warrior mindset is superior because it is important in order for police officers to survive. Gripentrog believes that if a warrior mindset is replaced by a guardian mentality, police officers will be more vulnerable in dangerous or stressful situations and will be more likely to be injured (Gripentrog, 2018). There is a fine line between the safety of the officers and the rights of the alleged criminals that is debated.

Rahr and Rice believe that the rights of the people should not be broken in order protect others. They mention the fact that rights are what the police are meant to protect in the first place. In general, Rahr and Rice are in favor of a guardian mentality over a warrior one (Rahr & Rice, 2015). They are not arguing that rights should never be impeded on at all; they are simply arguing that rights are important, and they are too frequently limited for no proper reason. If a criminal is trying to harm someone, their rights should be limited. They believe it is just unfair that innocent people’s rights are impeded on.

According to a study by Piza, a guardian mindset is better for crime prevention than a warrior mentality (Piza, 2018). A guardian mentality should reduce the likelihood of an officer being in a dangerous situation due to cooperation with the public, so the guardian mentality shouldn’t be more dangerous than the warrior mentality.

Due to this debate, some believe officers should have a mixture of both mentalities. The possibility of this is supported by a study. This study claimed that the warrior and guardian mentalities are two separate, yet related ideas (McLean et al., 2019). Despite the fact that these mentalities are separate, they still are connected, so it stands to reason that the primary ideas of the two could be merged to form a new, mixed mentality. Alternatively, an officer could draw upon the warrior mindset when the situation calls for it and do the same for the guardian mindset.

**Conclusion**

The research shows that the guardian mindset is the most popular with the citizens. Due to this, if an officer can only have one mindset the guardian mindset is likely the best approach to take. However, some people believe it isn’t always the best mindset to have if an officer is to remain safe. In order to combat this issue, an officer could switch between the mindsets depending on when the situation calls for each mindset. Otherwise, the officer could behave in a way that is a blend of both mindsets. This research is important because it relates to officer relations with citizens. If officers know how citizens prefer them to behave, which according to this research is with the guardian approach, then they are likely to have better interactions with people. Additionally, it relates to crime fighting strategies. If officers are aware that one mindset is better for crime prevention, which was also the guardian mentality, then they may be more likely to use that mentality. Some further research could study if a blending or switching of these mindsets is possible. Additionally, further research could study body cameras and other strategies to see if they are effective at causing officers to maintain guardian mindsets. Finally, it would be beneficial to do more research involving which mindset is safer or results in less injuries for officers.

**References**

Gripentrog, C. (2018). The Warrior Mindset Attributes. *The Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement*

*Management Institute of Texas*.

Retrieved from <https://shsuir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11875/2507/1817.pdf?sequence=1>

McLean, K., Wolfe, S., Rojek, J., Alpert, G., & Smith, M. (2019). Police Officers as Warriors or

Guardians: Empirical Reality or Intriguing Rhetoric?, *Justice Quarterly*, DOI: [10.1080/07418825.2018.1533031](https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1533031)

Piza, E. L. (2018). The Effect of Various Police Enforcement Actions on Violent Crime:

Evidence From a Saturation Foot-Patrol Intervention. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, *29*(6-7), 611–629. doi: 10.1177/0887403417725370

Rahr, S. K., & Rice, S. K. (2015). *From warriors to guardians: recommitting American police*

*culture to democratic ideals*. Retrieved from <https://permanent.access.gpo.gov/gpo57170/248654.pdf>

Thibodeau, P. H., Crow, L., & Flusberg, S. J. (2016). The metaphor police: A case study of the

role of metaphor in explanation. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *24*(5), 1375–1386. doi: 10.3758/s13423-016-1192-5

Wood, J. D., & Groff, E. R. (2019). Reimagining Guardians and Guardianship With the Advent

of Body Worn Cameras. *Criminal Justice Review (Sage Publications)*, *44*(1), 60–75. <https://doi-org.proxy.longwood.edu/10.1177/0734016818814895>