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UNYCOBA Scholarship Essay

Police officers are expected to maintain high ethical standards in both their professional and personal lives. The code of ethics for a police officer can often create ethical dilemmas that put officers in difficult positions due to them being placed in positions of authority over other people in society. There are many potential ethical dilemmas faced by officers in today’s world, these five very important modern ethical issues in law enforcement: the officer's off-duty life, upholding the law and your rights, using necessary force, acting impartially, and profiling. I intend on addressing each of these issues and further discuss possible solutions to avoiding conflict with those issues and the work of a police officer.

The first of these modern ethical issues in law enforcement is the officer's off-duty life. Police officers are often required to maintain high ethical standards even when they are not on duty. Sometimes, the officer's off-duty life can create conflicts of interest that can compromise their professional integrity. An officer may have a personal relationship with a known criminal, which could create a conflict of interest if the officer is called to investigate or arrest that individual. To combat this issue, officers must be aware and do their best to avoid the potential conflicts of interest that may arise in their personal lives. Officers must be careful not to engage in any activities that could be seen as compromising their professional integrity. They must also report any potential conflicts of interest to their superiors.

Another of these modern ethical issues in law enforcement is upholding the law and your rights. Police officers must uphold the law while also respecting the rights of citizens. However, this can create a conflict of interest when the officer is required to enforce laws that may be unjust or violate the rights of citizens. There is also the potential for an officer being required to enforce laws that they might not personally agree with. In situations like this, officers must be aware of the laws they are enforcing and their potential impact on citizens. They must also be willing to speak out when they believe a law is unjust or violates citizens' rights. Officers should work with their communities to develop policies that are fair and just. If a situation arose where an officer might not agree personally with a law they were tasked with enforcing, they need to put aside their personal beliefs and do their job as required by law.

An additional modern ethical issue in law enforcement is using necessary force. Police officers must use force only when necessary and proportionate to the threat. There is often a grey area when officers are required to use force to subdue suspects who may be resisting arrest or posing a threat. Not every officer is going to always respond the same in a given situation which opens the door for many in society to question an officer’s actions in such a situation. All departments should make sure officers are properly trained in the use of force and must use only the amount of force necessary to subdue the suspect. All States and municipalities have laws regarding the use of force and officers, as part of their training, should be aware of those laws and any changes that may be made. They must also be aware of the potential consequences of using excessive force, both legally and ethically.

One other modern ethical issue in law enforcement is acting impartially. Police officers must be impartial in their dealings with citizens, regardless of race, gender, religion, or social status. It may be difficult when officers are required to deal with individuals who have biases or prejudices themselves, but maintaining their own impartiality is of utmost importance. Officers not maintaining impartiality can create issues between different populations in society and cause unease between law enforcement and the community. Treating individuals differently can undermine the job of law enforcement. To protect against this issue, officers must be trained to recognize their own biases and prejudices and how they can affect their interactions with citizens. They must also be willing to challenge those biases and work to develop policies that promote impartiality.

The last modern ethical issue I will be discussing in law enforcement is profiling. Police officers must not profile individuals based on their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or social status. Issues can arise when officers are required to investigate crimes that may be more prevalent or perceived to be more prevalent among certain groups. Again, officers must be trained to recognize the potential biases and stereotypes that can affect their judgment when a situation like this occurs. Policies and training need to be created to help officers understand how best to combat these scenarios and they must be willing to stand up to other officers when they see something wrong, either legally or ethically.

In the end, the code of ethics for police officers often creates ethical dilemmas that require careful consideration and action. Officers must be aware of the potential conflicts of interest that may arise in their personal and professional lives and work to combat them. By doing so, they can uphold the law while also respecting the rights and dignity of all citizens. This would go a long way to help building trust between law enforcement and the communities they are tasked with policing.