

Organizational legitimization of body-worn camera use in the Swedish private security industry

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Abstract

Purpose – The authors set out to show how key private security industry actors in Sweden establish body-worn cameras (BWCs) as a tool to protect private security officers from the public the officers police and to improve the work environment of the officers.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with key personnel involved in the implementation of BWCs. The authors' analysis focused on delineating recurrent moral stories and affirmative environments to show how BWC use was made legitimate as a work environment tool.

Findings – The authors show how BWC use by private security officers patrolling public spaces in Sweden is legitimized by four organizational narratives: (1) the vulnerable security officer and the caring employer, (2) defenders of protective regulation, (3) moral selves and morally dubious others and (4) function creep and moral guardians. The authors explain how such organizational narratives are key to establishing and legitimizing the use of BWCs as a tool to improve the work environment of private security guards, and how certain narrative environments promote such organizational narratives in Sweden to improve the work environment of private security guards.

Originality/value – The authors' findings in this article add to a small but growing literature on BWC use in policing outside of the USA and the UK as well as to the hitherto very limited research from the work environment and managerial perspectives. The authors illustrate the importance of organizational narratives and narrative environments for understanding organizational change involving legitimization of new technologies.

Keywords Body-worn cameras, Legitimation management, Narrative environment, Organizational narratives, Private security industry, Sweden

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In both Anglo-American and Scandinavian national contexts, body-worn cameras (BWCs) have been adopted without any scientific knowledge of their consequences for the officers who wear them (Adams and Mastracci, 2019; Lum *et al.*, 2020). In this article, we draw on interviews with private security industry representatives in Sweden to explore how they make sense of and legitimize the introduction and use of BWCs in the industry. In so doing, we show how key actors legitimize BWCs as a tool to protect private security officers from the public as a way of improving their work environment.

BWC introduction and implementation in Sweden is a particularly interesting case, because existing research on the topic relies almost exclusively on empirical studies

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conducted in the USA and justifies them as a way of protecting *citizens* being policed rather than the officers wearing them, the latter being the case in Sweden. In the US, and in most US-based research, BWC use is represented as a way of increasing oversight and control of police officers to hold them accountable for their actions towards the public (Hansen Löfstrand, 2021). One may assume that the police crisis in the US, with primarily white police officers' use of (deadly) force towards mostly male members of minority groups, causing collective protests, fierce media debates, and pressuring police organizations around the country to act (see, e.g. Culhane *et al.*, 2016; Lawshe *et al.*, 2019) explains differences in representations of BWC technology. In Sweden we do not see the same scope for police use of deadly force against minority citizens that is characteristic of the USA context. However, in Sweden private security officers have a somewhat unique role as they have been granted so called 'limited police powers', and in recent years we have witnessed an increase in the number of security guards and places where they operate—that goes well beyond the intention of the legislation—and, hence, security officers are increasingly taken on front line roles formally in the domain of the police (Hansen Löfstrand, 2021). Security officers in Sweden are recurrently accused of excessive force, particularly against members of minority groups, and they have been publicly criticized and held to account for their actions. Several cases of (alleged) misconduct have been caught on film by bystanders. The publicly available recordings have resulted in public outcry and investigations (see, e.g. Hansen Löfstrand *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, in the Swedish private security industry, BWC technology is mainly discussed as a tool to improve the security officers' work environment and safety. How did we arrive at this situation?

Below, we first explain existing BWC research, our theoretical approach of legitimation management through organizational narratives, and our qualitative interview study and analytical procedures. We then present our findings in terms of four organizational narratives legitimizing BWCs as a tool to protect private security officers from the public they police and thereby improve their work environment; (1) the vulnerable security officer and the caring employer, (2) defenders of protective regulation, (3) moral selves and morally dubious others, (4) function creep and moral guardians. We conclude by summarizing our results and provide a contextualized understanding of the legitimation of BWCs in Sweden.

Existing research: grounds for BWC technology legitimation

Available BWC research mostly investigates the effectiveness of BWCs worn by police officers in the US, as shown in a scoping review by Backman and Hansen Löfstrand (2021). The scoping review addressed the policing problems that researchers stated or assumed that the BWC technology would solve, finding that mainstream BWC research builds upon a set of dominant policing problem representations. These are the police crisis in the USA and the police use of force, a lack of oversight and control of police officers, citizen dissatisfaction with the police, and a lack of police legitimacy in the eyes of citizens as well as police officer resistance to BWC use. The BWC technology addresses these problems by increasing control and police accountability, which is seen as legitimate if it has public support. Generally, BWC technology has been represented in USA research as a self-evident means of improving community relations and police legitimacy, mainly by deterring officers from unjustified use of force against the public (Backman and Hansen Löfstrand, 2021).

Mainstream empirical quantitative BWC research has investigated the effectiveness of BWC use based on the assumption that BWCs “civilize” both officers (in the sense that they do not use unnecessary or unjustified force) and members of the public subject to police interventions. Results about the extent to which BWCs can curb unacceptable police behavior are mixed (Backman and Hansen Löfstrand, 2021; Lum *et al.*, 2020). Researchers interested in discovering whether BWCs protect officers have conducted quantitative studies to investigate whether assaults on police officers decrease when they use BWCs. A recent systematic review

found an *increase* in assaults against police officers and resistance during arrests, although the results were not significant (Lum *et al.*, 2020). Hence, it remains unclear whether BWC technology improves the officers' work environment by reducing assaults against users.

There are countries (other than the US) where the notion of BWC surveillance as primarily a means to control officers does not dominate research, policy, or practice (Coudert *et al.*, 2015; Hansen Löfstrand and Backman, 2021). There is a lack of research about BWC use in non-US settings, managerial perspectives, and work environment aspects (Backman and Hansen Löfstrand, 2021; Hansen Löfstrand and Backman, 2021). In this article, we, therefore, set out to show how key private security industry actors in Sweden legitimize BWCs as a tool to protect private security officers from the public they police as a way of improving their work environment.

Legitimacy management by organizational narratives

In the research field of organizational management and legitimacy, there are two traditions, focusing on either institutional or strategic legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). The institutional approach (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) assumes that organizations gain legitimacy by adhering and adapting to the beliefs, norms and values of society and to established ways of thinking and acting. The strategic approach (e.g. Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990) instead regards legitimacy as a resource for which organizations compete strategically. The concept of *legitimacy management* (Suchman, 1995), on which we draw in this article, takes both institutional *and* strategical aspects of legitimacy management into account. This means that we assume that organizations simultaneously strive to adjust to the norms of their environments and strategically compete with other organizations for legitimacy, i.e. for their own actions to be evaluated as "desirable, proper, or appropriate" in the context of the "system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574) that applies to the specific (policing) context. An organization—or an organizational field or industry—has legitimacy when its behavior is congruent with the values and norms that dominate its environment. In other words, legitimacy "represents a *relationship* with an audience" (Suchman, 1995, p. 595).

Against this background, it follows that private security companies may gain and maintain the legitimacy for staff BWC use by conforming to the norms and values of the audiences in their environment. Furthermore, legitimacy crises may occur, such as company actions being evaluated as morally dubious or company legitimacy being tarnished by other companies' morally disputable actions. Legitimacy crises require restorative action. A reactive response may be to construct a "firewall" between actions in the past (by dissociation), and/or others' questionable actions (also by dissociation), thereby portraying the "essence" of the organization as proper and legitimate (Suchman, 1995, p. 597).

Social settings, as narrative environments of organizations seeking to gain, maintain or repair legitimacy, affirm certain stories and marginalize others. Affirmed stories are typically reproduced by key actors in relevant settings and privileged in accounts by many of them, while marginalized stories tend to be subject to efforts to "repair" them and are "kept in tolerable spaces" (Gubrium, 2005, p. 526). Furthermore, affirmed stories are typically loaded with discourses of broader scope—national and international—that illustrate the interplay between norms and values of different scopes and levels (Gubrium, 2005). As shown below, in Sweden the GDPR discourse on employees' right to personal integrity constitutes one such discourse, affirming the story that BWCs are used (solely) to improve the work environment.

Central to efforts to gain, maintain, and repair legitimacy are organizational narratives (Czarniawska, 1997, 2004; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Suchman, 1995). Some strategies for acquiring legitimacy are pragmatic; that is, self-interested strategies to acquire legitimacy in relation to specific and immediate audiences, such as customers or employees. However, private security companies also need the public—a broader audience—to evaluate them as

part of a *moral* trade (Suchman, 1995). Moral stories are those recounted to justify BWC use, and its purposes, in a way that shapes the self-identity of the company and its employees as “the good guys”, and shapes the audience’s evaluations of the company as legitimate (Golant and Sillince, 2007; Suchman, 1995). Such stories may also be told in response to scandals or actions by companies in the industry perceived to be morally dubious (Hansen Löffstrand *et al.*, 2017) to dissociate one company from others and their (scandalous) actions or even its own (past) behavior.

Methods to explore and analyze legitimization OF BWC use

This article reports part of the findings from our ongoing project *Body-worn cameras: implications for private security officers’ work environment* on the introduction and use of BWCs in the Swedish private security industry. In this article, we draw on interviews with employer and union representatives in the Swedish private security industry who are key stakeholders as regards BWC implementation and use on private security officers.

Methods for data collection

The Swedish Act on Camera Surveillance does not regulate BWC use. Such use is instead regulated by collective bargaining over conditions for BWC use and agreements between employer and employee representatives. Although the power of unions and collective bargaining coverage has shrunk in the Western world, collective bargaining between employers and unions is widespread in Sweden, where unions still constitute a relatively strong negotiating partner (cf. Visser, 2016). It was thus important for us to interview both employer and union/employee representatives since the two partners are ideally to agree on conditions for BWC use. Because of the same reason we also collected all written agreements made between those partners.

We interviewed nine *employer representatives* involved in the implementation and use of BWCs such as representatives of the industry’s employer organization as well as security managers and human resource officers at two large multinational private security companies operating in Sweden and providing their employees with BWCs.

We interviewed six *union and employee safety representatives*. The Swedish work environment legislation states that employers must co-operate with employees regarding work environment issues, more specifically with the specific employee elected as the employees’ safety representative, and if there are several safety representatives in one workplace, with the chief safety representative.

In addition, we also conducted one interview with a *representative of the Swedish Police Authority*, responsible for issuing guidelines concerning private security officers’ use of BWCs, and one interview with *two representatives of a technology company supplying BWC technology* (including storage, etc.).

In total, we draw on 17 interviews with different types of key stakeholders. Some of the interviews were conducted in pairs or groups at the request of the participants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and all quotations have been translated from Swedish to English by the authors.

Methods for data analysis

We regard legitimacy as gained, maintained and repaired through organizational narratives (Czarniawska, 1997, 2004; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Suchman, 1995). As part of analysis, we have considered *what* interviewees say about events, actions, actors, and deeds, and *how* they say it, including justifications of actions and deeds. We have focused on moral stories about events that have been highlighted as of central importance by interviewees and on

explanations of events and justifications of actions and deeds in connections to these events. By identifying the structure linking events, actions, and actors' deeds, i.e. "the plot", we analyzed how moral stories together constituted an intelligible whole, an organizational narrative (cf. [Czarniawska, 2004](#); [Freeman, 2016](#)). We have identified four types of organizational narratives: (1) the vulnerable security officer and the caring employer, (2) defenders of protective regulation, (3) moral selves and morally dubious others, (4) function creep and moral guardians.

We then linked these organizational narratives to affirmative environments, that is, discourses, values, beliefs, and norms of broader scope, that is, social contexts or so called *narrative environments* that produce and promote certain stories ([Gubrium and Holstein, 2008](#), p. 256), and enforce norms of appropriateness in connection to BWC introduction and use in the Swedish private security business.

Findings

The vulnerable security officer and the caring employer

The first salient organizational narrative is the narrative of vulnerable security officer and the caring employer in which BWCs are positioned as a tool to improve the employees' work environment. The security officer is, as we will show, positioned as vulnerable to threats and violence from the public. In the following example, an HR specialist at a private security company involved in BWC implementation depicts officers as "vulnerable" and in need of the additional protection assumed to be provided by BWCs.

HR specialist: We think that security officers are a vulnerable group. It is a tough work environment. It is difficult to improve the security officers' work environment; you are very much in the hands of the customer who hires a [specific] number of security guards. Officers have the protective equipment, the training required and so on, but we saw that this could be a work environment improvement measure, so we were quite happy, in a way, to be able to do something for our officers.

The vice president of the employers' organization reported that violence and the use of weapons (firearms and knives) against private security officers, was increasing dramatically, and the BWC technology was a tool to help "prosecute those who commit these crimes against our employees." BWC use was initiated by company managers "in the hope of reducing the use of force against officers." The narrative of the vulnerable security officer and the caring employer also functioned to dissociate the company from any kind of control purpose, as illustrated by the following example:

Work environment manager: there's no purpose, from our part, to like, impose some kind of surveillance on our security guards. It's to find situations where the recordings are of use to us, and have a deterrent effect, and for me that's the main [purpose]. The idea is that when you see yourself on the monitor, on the camera, most criminals react, they don't want to be on tape, so they simply calm down.

BWCs were established as an efficient tool to protect security officers on the job through a particular recurring "success story" recounted in interviews. In an interview, a former chief safety representative described their very first test at a local pub where there used to be "a lot of incidents" as a success story because "incidents decreased by 90%, or something like that". His colleague, another chief safety representative, added that "our security officers working the door had huge problems with . . . a lot of troublemakers there", and continued:

Chief safety representative: We tested it on the security guards in the pub. When the troublemakers came in and quarrelled with the guards, the guards pressed the record button, and then one of them saw himself on the display: 'Are you recording now?' 'Yes', said the officer. 'Ha, yeah goodbye.' And so they left; it was no fun anymore. So, we reduced all incidents; it was probably not completely zero, but it went down sharply to almost zero.

By the retelling of this success story, the BWC is positioned as an unquestionably “good” technology to safeguard the officers, and the company gains legitimacy and maintains the legitimacy of using BWCs by referring to “empirical facts” although they are limited to one pub setting. The fact that it was typical for the interviewed employee’s safety representatives to tell the success story was a further way of increasing the legitimacy of equipping officers with BWCs.

In our empirical materials we found traces of a marginalized story seldom talked about. It was one about BWCs making “it worse”, it was said to “escalate threats and assaults” against officers. The current BWC in use enables the public to see the recordings on a small screen on the BWC device as recordings are made. Although it was repeatedly emphasized that officers should not record in secret (“We do nothing covertly; they should know that they are being filmed. It should be done openly.”), covert filming or “running the camera in stealth mode” was allowed in certain times and places when filming overtly was expected to escalate a situation or provoke those being filmed. To marginalize stories about less successful outcomes of a new technology is also a strategy to gain and maintain legitimacy, although it is less easily detected.

To establish the BWC technology as a tool to enhance the work environment of officers, i.e. for the purpose of care rather than surveillance and control, one of the private security companies introduced the term “body-worn safety camera” (BWSC):

Head of security: Internally we call it a *body-worn safety camera*. That’s what we call it at [company name]. [...] We wanted to be very clear that should we have something body-worn; it’s for safety’s sake.

Implicitly, the head of security disavows practices involving BWC use to surveil and control the work of employees. A systematic research review on BWCs has shown that a surveillance-as-control discourse has been prominent in policies, practices and research about implementation and evaluation of BWCs (Backman and Hansen Löfstrand, 2021). In UK and USA environments BWC recordings are used to evaluate and reprimand officers for their actions (see, e.g. Drover and Ariel, 2015; Lawrence *et al.*, 2019; Rowe *et al.*, 2018). Appointed police inspectors (Drover and Ariel, 2015) or panels of local community representatives (Rowe *et al.*, 2018) review recordings from BWCs to evaluate officers’ actions. In UK and USA policing environments, BWC use is thus not linked to the issue of officer safety. Although they are far from using deadly force to a similar extent as in the US, Swedish security officers’ actions have been criticized in connection to arrests of people from minority groups, with such interventions resulting in public scandals and investigations (Hansen Löfstrand *et al.*, 2017). However, even when talking about such cases under public scrutiny and investigation, the companies do not engage a surveillance-as-control discourse in their moral stories during interviews. Consider the following example:

HR specialist: The origins of body-worn cameras in [company] were several. One of the reasons was a high-profile event, [place] in [big city], which was reported in the mass media. In the end, the security officers who were on duty at that time were released, or rather the prosecutor did not bring charges against them. They found no reason to bring charges for assault or the like. We discussed intensively how we can improve the work environment of the security guards. In addition to this, there was also the perspective that many [citizens] today film accidents, events, interventions, and choose to publish selected parts. What is the truth?

The specific incident, involving two refugee children who were detained by two private security officers, tasked by the police do so until the police patrol arrived, was filmed by a bystander. A large Swedish newspaper subsequently published the film, which resulted in public demonstrations, massive media debates and major concern within the private security sector. The officers were accused of using excessive force, but in the end, no charges were

brought against them. The incident led to private security companies wanting to implement BWC use by their officers (Hansen Löfstrand *et al.*, 2017). However, rather than engaging a surveillance-as-control discourse as an effort to repair organizational legitimacy, company representatives maintained that part of the problem was partial recordings of the events by bystanders. Partial and biased recordings made publicly available was portrayed as a legitimacy problem and not trustworthy (“what is the truth?”). BWCs were accounted for as providing the whole and true picture and thereby as a tool to protect officers from ungrounded accusations, hence improving their work environment. The company was, in this case, subsequently able to repair its legitimacy with recordings from stationary cameras showing that their employees did nothing wrong.

Defenders of protective regulation

There are no regulations for BWC use common to the Swedish private security industry. The Swedish Act on Camera Surveillance does not regulate police or private security use of mobile camera devices such as the BWC, and the Swedish Police Authority has not issued formal regulations since they regarded BWC use as unproblematic. Employer and union/employee representatives were initially in agreement regarding the need to regulate BWC use by collective bargaining over work conditions to create a protective regulation.

The second organizational narrative is the narrative of the defenders of protective regulation. The security officer is positioned as vulnerable and in need of protective regulation restraining employers and customers from surveillance of officers for control purposes, for example reprimands and dismissals due to misbehavior. Defenders of protective regulation were found to safeguard officers from misuse of recordings by managers as well as company customers, as in the following examples:

Local union representative: Then a [security company] manager talked about this idea of a small camera, which was small, like a thumb. He told us, ‘Look how nice it is; try it out guys’, and then I walked around the office and recorded a little and then we connected it to the computer and looked at it and ‘yes, we are going to buy those’ said the manager. [...] I said to him, ‘but now you have to calm down a little’.

Head of security: It was probably five or six years ago at least when it began to appear at all, the phenomenon of a body-worn camera [...] At that time it was more of an action camera. [...] A number of our customers were quite creative and innovative and thought we could put such body-worn cameras . . . these GoPro cameras . . . on the staff. Several such questions started to appear, and eventually we felt that . . . that we must set regulations so that we do not get many strange deviations or do not live up to the constitution, and so on.

In the first example, we can see the union representative positioning himself as a defender against potential control purposes of employees. In the second example, we can see a head of security positioning himself as a defender of officers against customers of security services and their potentially “wrong” purposes. The interviewees defended vulnerable officers and called for protection by regulation.

In the following example, two company representatives, in a similar vein, accounted for having investigated what could be the legal time limit, according to the European Union’s GDPR, for how long the recordings were to be stored (if marked as evidence by the security officer):

HR specialist: So, we checked how long, in general, it takes for the police to request information, and then we estimated that six months, that would do, but we couldn’t justify, like, a year or something like that, and we informed the police.

HR manager: If it's not [marked as] evidence, then it's a month [...] so we don't keep it long at all and that is just because we shall not have a lot of sensitive information about people stored on a computer, just because ... there should be a legitimate cause for it.

As illustrated above, the HR manager used terms, such as “sensitive information” and “legitimate cause”, that are prevalent in the GDPR. From the use of that terminology, it is clear that the legal requirements stated in the GDPR constitute an important narrative environment for legitimizing the narrative of defenders of protective regulation while also positioning the speaker as knowledgeable. The GDPR prevents employers from intrusive surveillance and control of employees, so referencing the GDPR legitimizes the use of BWC technology as safeguarding the work environment. Furthermore, companies' deliberations and choices involved in the implementation of BWCs were presented in detail as if to “prove” further the legitimacy—and legality—of BWC use:

HR specialist: We have investigated, okay, where is the data stored? What are the possibilities in the system? [...] What type of access does the supplier have to the [recorded] material? It has been very important for us: who has access and what is required for them to gain access. We have also looked at the technical part: where is the material stored when the camera is recording, where is it then? Is it encrypted, or isn't it? If someone steals the camera from a security guard, what happens then? Do they access the material? We have discussed many such issues in depth with the suppliers we have hired, [catches breath] [...] Can they blur pictures? How can we cut? How do we mark pictures as evidence and not? Can we have different storage times for these things? It has been very important to me that this is all automated so that there is no need for a manual process. We have looked at such things, with these different suppliers, what they have ... What are the technical functionalities to make it easier for us? We have added a type of log so that if you go in and look at the material, we can see who has been in there and watched it. That's also important, it's part of the traceability of GDPR.

Such lengthy descriptions of deliberations and decisions regarding the formation of the regulation provide legitimacy for the company's decision and portray it as a responsible company able to prevent misuse of recordings and to handle the difficult legal and ethical aspects of BWC use.

Overall, union and company representatives initially agreed in their descriptions of how to regulate BWCs. The employer/private security companies and the union reached agreements about storage, access and distribution of BWC data. It was considered to be in the employees' interest that recordings are neither available to the security guards (to protect against accusations of manipulation) nor accessible to managers for surveillance and control purposes. The first employer-union agreement stated that only a handful of carefully selected management-level staff had access to review the data—only in the presence of a union representative, and never with the purpose of surveilling, controlling or reprimanding officers. In the following excerpt, a chief safety representative reads aloud from the agreement:

Employee's chief safety representative: It must be on a locked medium that cannot be manipulated and cannot be downloaded to any other medium without it being logged electronically or manually. It may be released to the police for a criminal investigation. The recorded material can be stored by [the company] for a maximum of one month; the recorded material must be stored, locked in a safe accessible to only the head of department or another person as agreed with [the union], has a written authorization from the head of department, or a representative from the [company] personnel department. The exception is if you have handed over the material to the police for investigation. It [the agreement] also says, 'Should the recorded material be used or watched, or listened to, by [the company], the union representative, safety representative from [the company's local union club], or alternatively [the union representative] should attend the meeting.'

In the second employee-union agreement, company representatives “are not allowed to look at the recordings at all; they will only be released if the police requests them”, as a union

representative involved in negotiating the agreement explained. Company representatives, for their part, regularly refer to their agreements with the union to legitimize BWC use and internal policies:

HR specialist: That it reduces violence [. . .]. That's the purpose that we negotiated and discussed with the union. It's about work environment and safety; that's how we have built our lawful grounds. [. . .] We're pretty proud of this agreement [. . .][The union representative] doesn't sign just anything, I can tell you that. He's constantly protesting, or, rather the opposite, he's a proper defender of the right to privacy in work life—one of few I can tell you—real tough when it comes to drug testing, digital traces, GPS, BWCs. He's really tough, well informed, and intelligent. To get your ink on the same paper as his, it's hard as hell.

The HR specialist refers to the GDPR by talking about “lawful grounds”; company managers have a legitimate interest in processing personal data without the consent of members of the public who are recorded, owing to the managers’ desire to improve the work environment of their employees and protect them from harm. The HR specialist underlines how correct and morally good the company’s regulation is by describing his counterpart—the union representative—as a true hero in defending employees’ rights vis-à-vis employers. This story makes the legitimacy of BWC use almost impossible to question.

Moral selves and morally dubious others

The third organizational narrative—the narrative about moral selves and morally dubious others—relies on contrasting comparisons with morally dubious others that function to elevate the oral goodness of own actions. Demands to use BWCs for surveillance of employees and control purposes—whether raised by customers or other companies—were portrayed as wrong or even illegal, and such descriptions functioned to enhance the legitimacy of the own company. One company representative reported, “Customers have many demands, and we want to conduct good surveillance [for them], but we also want to conduct surveillance that is legal in all respects”, here (implicitly) referring to the GDPR. The company, therefore, declined customers’ requests to have “their” security officers wearing cameras and to access the footage. Such dissociation from the control perspective simultaneously legitimizes BWC use on staff as care. Disassociation from customers’ demands for surveillance as control of officers, *despite* threats and risks of financial loss, strengthens the image of the company and its BWC use as appropriate and righteous:

HR manager: We have even been threatened sometimes by our customers, [saying] that ‘if you do not agree to this, we will call your competitor’. ‘Okay, so you’re breaking a deal, and the law, to get what you want.’

The customers’ demands for companies to equip the officers serving the customer and provide access to recordings are described as illegal and as something the company would “never be able to agree to [because of] the GDPR perspective”.

As mentioned above, we also identified stories of contrasts with *other companies*. The above-quoted head of security recounted a story, infamous in the industry, of another company’s use of BWCs to surveil and control their employees. That company operated in the cash-in-transit business and used to have *two* security guards working together when tasked with restocking automatic teller machines (ATMs), but it then “came up with the idea that “we can put a camera on this person, monitor it all, send only one person and it will be half the cost” (Head of security). As mentioned in both employee and employer interviews, the union opposed the replacement of a colleague with a BWC, and the company’s purpose for doing so—to surveil staff restocking ATMs. Eventually it became a case for the Administrative Court (which ruled in favor of the company/employer). The point here is that this company’s behavior was depicted as scandalous by the union and the story “lived on and it was often

referred to” and the union became “terribly afraid” that other companies in the private security business would also demand that staff wear BWCs for the sole purpose of monitoring and controlling them. These events, in combination with the power of storytelling, spurred a legitimacy crisis. Both the companies in our study felt the union also evaluated their BWC use as potentially morally dubious; that their legitimacy was tarnished by another company’s morally disputable actions. As mentioned above, such legitimacy crises require a response to repair legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). The response of our two companies was to construct “a firewall” between their own actions and those of the morally dubious company, thereby portraying their own actions as proper and legitimate. Our company interviewees underscored that the fact that recordings made at their companies would never be available to any managers for control purposes. One company representative even used another company’s allegedly sloppy handling of recordings—providing the police with free access [note that police access and use of recordings is also used in the interviews as an example of legitimate use]—to stress their company’s proper and legitimate use of BWCs and the recordings:

HR manager: We do not release our films to the police just because they are the police. Certain requirements must be met. There must be a case number. There must be an investigation; only then can you access that recording. I know that another company has opened their entire server to the police; just ‘come and pick what you want, when you want it’.

By employers’ stories containing contrasting comparisons of own procedures with others morally dubious actions and deeds, the moral status of oneself and the own company is elevated. This contributes to organizational legitimation of BWC use.

Function creep and moral guardians

The fourth organizational narrative is a narrative on function creep and moral guardians. Although it was repeatedly stressed that the sole purpose of BWC use was to improve the work environment of security officers, representatives from both companies did tell stories about of having used it for control purposes. When a surveillance and control technology is implemented for a specific purpose and later extended to other purposes, it is often referred to as “function creep” (Backman, 2012; Dahl and Sætnan, 2009). Through function creep, the purposes and conditions for which the technology can be legitimately used are extended beyond the initial ones (Fox, 2001). There are two conditions that make function creep possible (Dahl and Sætnan, 2009). First, information technologies such as BWCs are “flexible”, both because they can be used in different ways and because the information (recordings) can be used for multiple purposes. Second, the implementation of new technologies such as BWCs shifts the “moral terrain” of the social environment. Once an investment is made and the new technology is implemented, new functions can be imagined, and it may seem inefficient not to use it for these other purposes.

In the interviews with union representatives, they sometimes positioned themselves as moral guardians of the original purpose of BWCs and stressing their ability to prevent function creep. One of the interviewees, a union representative, recounted how one of the companies, soon after agreeing on the purpose and use of BWCs, wanted to expand the use of the recordings:

Union representative: We signed an agreement with [company] and we had settled that no recording could be used for labour law reasons or anything like that, or like, against the employee; that was what we demanded [. . .]. It didn’t take long until they were like ‘we could use this to see how the individual behaves [. . .] and write a caution [for misbehaviour] or maybe we could use the recordings for educational purposes’. And that was just three weeks after we had signed the agreement.

Interviewer: Even though you had this clause?

Work environment co-ordinator: Sure.

Union representative: Yeah, yeah, like 'but we anonymize so you don't hear voices, but we would really like to use it for educational purposes'. We refused: 'Then you have to cancel the agreement' [...]. We said, 'The purpose is to protect the security officer, and to be able to, like, calm a situation down.' That's why we don't disapprove, that's why we signed the agreement, but we don't want this type of change in purpose.

In the above story, the union representative positioned himself as the defender of appropriate company conduct, ensuring that the purpose of BWC use does not change over time, to avoid function creep, and ensuring that the interests of the patrol officer remain central. As mentioned above, customers sometimes pressure companies to use BWCs for purposes other than the safety of officers. In stories about such episodes, the union representative is constructed as the moral guardian fending off absurd ideas and policing *others*, for example by regularly having to tell not only customers but also company managers to cancel their schemes and stick to the agreed purpose of BWC use:

Principal safety delegate: Every now and then it happens that the [private security company] manager comes to us and says, 'Now you have to start up this BWC thing because the customer wants us to record', and I'm like, 'No, no, now you have to keep calm boss, that's not how it's supposed to be [according to agreements].'

However, one of the companies in our study eventually decided to terminate its agreement with the union. The work environment manager described in the interview how the company terminated it to improve management-level access to the BWC footage in cases of accusations of misconduct against officers. Hence, the purpose of BWCs had changed:

Work environment manager: If a security officer is accused of having committed a criminal act, and it is urgent to investigate, you may not look at them [BWC recordings] unless [the union] is present in all situations and has approved this. In addition, everything must be approved by the officer before we are allowed to look at the material. The officer owns the material. [...] There may be other interests that are also strong. If someone is saying officers have stolen something or if someone has abused someone, yes, but then the officer will not say [to us], 'Yes, please take the material' if they are guilty, but they will say, 'No, I do not want to show that.' If there is such an accusation, and the officer is innocent, then we can look at it in peace and calm, and at any moment when we ... intend to use it, for labour law reasons, we notify [the union].

After terminating the agreement, the new procedure was that the company management controls the BWC recordings and will notify the union only when managers "intend to use it for labor law reasons" such as grounds for dismissal of employees. Such a procedure was legitimated by referring to the righteous purpose of "catching" employed officers who "commit crimes" so they can be taken to court. As the work environment manager put it, "If there is a police investigation" and the security officer has "committed a crime, then I think that then it is perfectly okay, then they should get caught".

Other company representatives also stressed that BWC use is a "work environment issue" and not a "matter of control" of security officers accused of misbehavior (HR specialist), but on the odd occasion and somewhat reluctantly told a, in the main, marginal story of having used recordings to control and even dismiss an officer:

Interviewer: But has a recording from a body-worn camera ever been used for that purpose?

HR specialist: In one case. Now we settled, but ... ehm ... it was part of the evidence for the dismissal of a security officer.

Interviewer: Well, okay.

HR specialist: That is not the purpose of the recording.

Interviewer: No.

HR specialist: But then we settled. I don't need to comment on that any further, but [...] there was testimony in this case by one officer against another. But it, we don't use it [BWC recordings] to frame officers. They're so the public will not threaten or hurt our security officers; that's the starting point in all of this.

We have in marginal stories seen that function creep occurs. That these stories are marginalized shows that such use is not legitimate in relation to an outside audience, but may be seen as legitimate within the internal social environment of the industry.

Concluding discussion

We have shown how BWC implementation and legitimation in the Swedish private security industry was achieved by four organizational narratives: the vulnerable officers and the caring employer, the defender of protective regulation, moral selves and morally dubious others, and function creep and moral guardians. We have illustrated moral stories that are drawn on for the purpose of organizational legitimation of BWC use. We have explained how the organizational narratives were key to legitimize the use of BWCs as (solely) a tool to protect private security officers from the public they police and to improve their work environment. Taken together, these narratives depict the use of BWCs as legitimate, that is, “desirable, proper, or appropriate” (Suchman, 1995:574) according to Swedish norms and values and the EU GDPR regulations. As shown above, contrasting comparisons with other companies' actions depicted as morally dubious is a strategy to claim legitimacy for the company's own procedures and its status as a *moral* business (cf. Suchman, 1995).

The organizational narrative of the vulnerable officer and the caring employer is firmly established in Sweden, in contrast to the USA, where BWC use in policing was primarily motivated by a desire to control officers, hold them accountable for their actions, and reprimand them for alleged misbehavior (see also Backman and Hansen Löfstrand, 2021).

Certain narrative environments (Gubrium, 2005; Gubrium and Holstein, 2008) in Sweden promote and affirm these organizational narratives. One such narrative environment is what is referred to as “the Swedish way”; a cultural labor market relations tradition whereby unions have a strong position in relation to employers (Bruhn *et al.*, 2013). Historically, Swedish trade unions have achieved remarkable goals in terms of working conditions. In contemporary Western countries, unions generally face many challenges for reasons such as globalization of enterprises that result in a “shift in the power balance in favour of employers” (Bruhn *et al.*, 2013, p. 180). However, in comparison, Swedish unions “are still maintaining their positions better here than in many other places” (Bruhn *et al.*, 2013, p. 180). From an international perspective, collective bargaining and agreements between employers and unions remain strong norms and are valued in Swedish society (cf. Visser, 2016). This means that Swedish unions are reasonably well equipped and have relative power and potential to influence the working conditions of their members, for example in terms of using new technologies such as BWCs compared with other countries such as the USA.

Another narrative environment is the Swedish government's justification of BWC use within the Swedish Police Authority. The aim of BWC use is described as improvement of the work environment (Marklund and Tollin, 2020; Hansen Löfstrand and Backman, 2021). Such official government justification of BWC use can be considered as a message “from the center” to the peripheries about how BWCs should be understood (cf. Smith, 2008).

There is also a narrative environment on a transnational scale that strongly influence the Swedish promotion of BWC use for work environment purposes, namely the European GDPR, implemented in Sweden in 2018. The affirmed story of BWC use for work environment purposes

is loaded with the GDPR discourse. In this article, we have seen the interplay of norms and values on different levels and different scopes (cf. Gubrium, 2005) in promoting and affirming some stories of technology use while marginalizing others. The GDPR demands lawful grounds for collection of personal data that outweigh the privacy intrusion that the collection entails. As shown above, to improve the work environment of employees is considered lawfully defensible as long as the storage of, and access to, recordings are properly regulated.

Our findings in this article add to a small but growing literature on BWC use in policing outside of the USA and the UK as well as to the hitherto very limited research from the work environment and managerial perspectives, respectively (cf. Hansen Löfstrand and Backman, 2021). In USA research, officers' attitudes to BWCs are thoroughly investigated and the officers' approval of their use has been construed to be of vital concern for their legitimate use (Backman and Hansen Löfstrand, 2021). Interestingly, it is plausible that the strong focus on BWC use to improve the work environment in Sweden may lessen resistance by Swedish security officers and reduce attention to employees' attitudes. Therefore, in future research it is important to investigate the perspectives of private security officers wearing BWCs to learn more about their implications of BWC use for the work environment. Furthermore, it remains to be investigated if the legitimation of BWC as a tool to protect officers and improve their work environment is transferable to policing agents in other national contexts outside of the USA and the UK.

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