

Module 3: Case Study Assignment  
OGL 345  
James Snyder

Ethics and Professional Practice in Law Enforcement Evidence Rooms

**Section 1: What is Ethics?**

Ethics is defined as "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). I like this definition because it highlights the core of ethics—differentiating between good and bad actions and understanding one's moral responsibilities and duties. This definition is succinct yet comprehensive, encompassing both the theoretical and practical aspects of ethical behavior.

**Section 2: What is your Chosen Profession?**

My chosen profession is managing law enforcement evidence rooms. I have chosen this field because it combines my current role in providing evidence systems for law enforcement agencies along with my interest in law enforcement. It also encompasses the services I offer for the critical role of maintaining the integrity, security, and chain of custody of evidence, which is essential for the justice system. This profession demands meticulous attention to detail, organizational skills, and a strong ethical foundation to ensure that evidence is preserved correctly.

**Section 3: Case Study 1**

Mismanagement of Evidence in the New Orleans Police Department

a) Characters:

- New Orleans Police Department
- Evidence Room Manager
- Law Enforcement Officers

b) Event Summary:

In 2015, the New Orleans Police Department faced scrutiny after an internal audit revealed significant mismanagement in their evidence room. Hundreds of items, including drugs, firearms, and money, were unaccounted for. The audit discovered that many items were missing, improperly logged, or stored insecurely, raising concerns about the integrity of the evidence and its impact on criminal cases (Goyeneche, 2015).

c) Options and Decisions:

- Option 1: Ignore the audit findings and continue with current practices.
- Option 2: Implement stringent new procedures for evidence management and conduct thorough training for personnel.

The department chose to overhaul their evidence management system, incorporating new protocols and training to ensure accountability.

d) Ethical Dilemmas:

- Ensuring the integrity and reliability of evidence for criminal prosecutions.
- Balancing resource allocation between various law enforcement duties and the administrative task of evidence management.

e) Result:

The decision to revamp the evidence room procedures led to improved accuracy and accountability, though it required significant time and resources. This change restored some public trust and reinforced the department's commitment to justice.

f) Why This Case:

This case caught my attention because our company was called to discuss the issues and possible solutions to recover the integrity of the evidence room. It underscores the crucial role of ethical management in maintaining the integrity of the justice system. Mismanagement of evidence can have far-reaching consequences, including wrongful convictions or the failure to prosecute guilty parties.

g) Leadership Development:

Understanding this ethical dilemma is essential for leadership development in my profession. It highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining robust procedures and the ethical duty to ensure the integrity of evidence, which is foundational to the credibility of the legal system.

## **Section 4: Case Study 2**

### **Theft of Evidence by Law Enforcement Officers in Braintree, MA**

a) Characters:

- Braintree Police Department
- Evidence Room Personnel
- Internal Affairs Division

b) Event Summary:

In 2017, several Braintree police officers were implicated in the theft of drugs and money from the evidence room. The internal affairs investigation revealed that the officers had manipulated records and stolen narcotics and cash over several years, severely undermining the integrity of the evidence management system (Smith, 2017).

c) Options and Decisions:

- Option 1: Handle the issue internally and avoid public disclosure.
- Option 2: Conduct a thorough investigation, prosecute the involved officers, and implement new security measures.

The Braintree Police Department decided to pursue the latter, resulting in criminal charges against the officers and a complete overhaul of the evidence room's security protocols.

d) Ethical Dilemmas:

- Addressing corruption within the department while maintaining public trust.

- Ensuring that evidence used in past and ongoing cases remains untarnished and reliable.

e) Result:

The decision led to the prosecution of the involved officers and the implementation of stricter security measures. However, the scandal damaged the department's reputation and called into question the integrity of numerous cases.

f) Why This Case:

This case highlights the devastating impact of unethical behavior by those entrusted with evidence management. It emphasizes the need for strong ethical guidelines and accountability measures to prevent similar occurrences. This Police Department Implemented our RFID evidence system and publicly owned up to the issues and showed their commitment to rectify and prevent the issues in the future.

g) Leadership Development:

Understanding this ethical dilemma is crucial for leadership in evidence management, as it stresses the importance of ethical vigilance and the implementation of rigorous checks and balances to uphold the law and public trust.

## **Section 5: Case Study 3**

### **Mislabeling and Contamination of Evidence in the Kissimmee, FL Police Department**

a) Characters:

- Kissimmee Police Department
- Evidence Technicians
- Forensic Analysts

b) Event Summary:

In 2019, the Kissimmee Police Department discovered that numerous evidence items were mislabeled or contaminated due to inadequate procedures and training in their evidence room. This issue led to delays in investigations and potential wrongful convictions (Johnson, 2019).

c) Options and Decisions:

- Option 1: Ignore the procedural lapses and address issues on a case-by-case basis.
- Option 2: Conduct a comprehensive review of evidence room practices and provide extensive training to evidence technicians.

The department opted for the second option, implementing new protocols and extensive training to rectify the issues.

d) Ethical Dilemmas:

- Ensuring that evidence handling procedures meet the highest standards of accuracy and reliability.
- Addressing the potential miscarriages of justice due to mishandled evidence.

e) Result:

The decision led to improved procedures and better-trained personnel, reducing the likelihood of future errors. The department also implemented a new RFID evidence system to maintain the integrity of the evidence and chain of custody. Due to the issues, the department faced criticism and had to review numerous cases for potential impacts from the previous mishandling.

f) Why This Case:

This case underscores the importance of proper training and procedures in evidence management. It caught my attention because I worked directly with the evidence supervisor and her goal of “Not on my watch”. It highlights the direct impact that ethical practices in evidence handling have on justice outcomes.

g) Leadership Development:

Understanding this ethical dilemma is vital for leadership development as it demonstrates the need for continuous improvement in procedures and training. Leaders must ensure that their teams adhere to the highest ethical standards to maintain the integrity of the justice system.

## References

Goyeneche, R. (2015). New Orleans Police Department Audit Report. \*The New Orleans Advocate\*.

Johnson, M. (2019). Evidence mishandling in Kissimmee Police Department. \*Orlando Sentinel\*.

Merriam-Webster. (2020). Ethics definition. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics>

Smith, J. (2017). Braintree police officers charged in evidence room theft. \*Boston Globe\*.