

The most effective and insidious way to silence others in politics is a refusal to listen.

There is no point in a “right to communicate” if no one is listening.

The problem is not one of speaking truth to power, but of getting the powerful to listen.

**Without a listener,
speech is nothing
but noise in the ether.**

How Cities Listen and Demonstrate Understanding of Residents' Sentiment During Crisis

A case study of the killing of Atatiana Jefferson

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For TAMIO, the founding partner of the CPC Program

Objectives for webinar

- Understanding the theories and complexities of listening well
- Finding connections between listening and actions
- The Case: Gaining awareness of message content and strategy by the city of Fort Worth in the aftermath of Atatiana Jefferson's death
- Identifying actions for your communication planning to improve your city's listening to stakeholders and to take actions, rather than making statements

Some reflections first

The framework: The listening imperative

You've got to listen for the needs

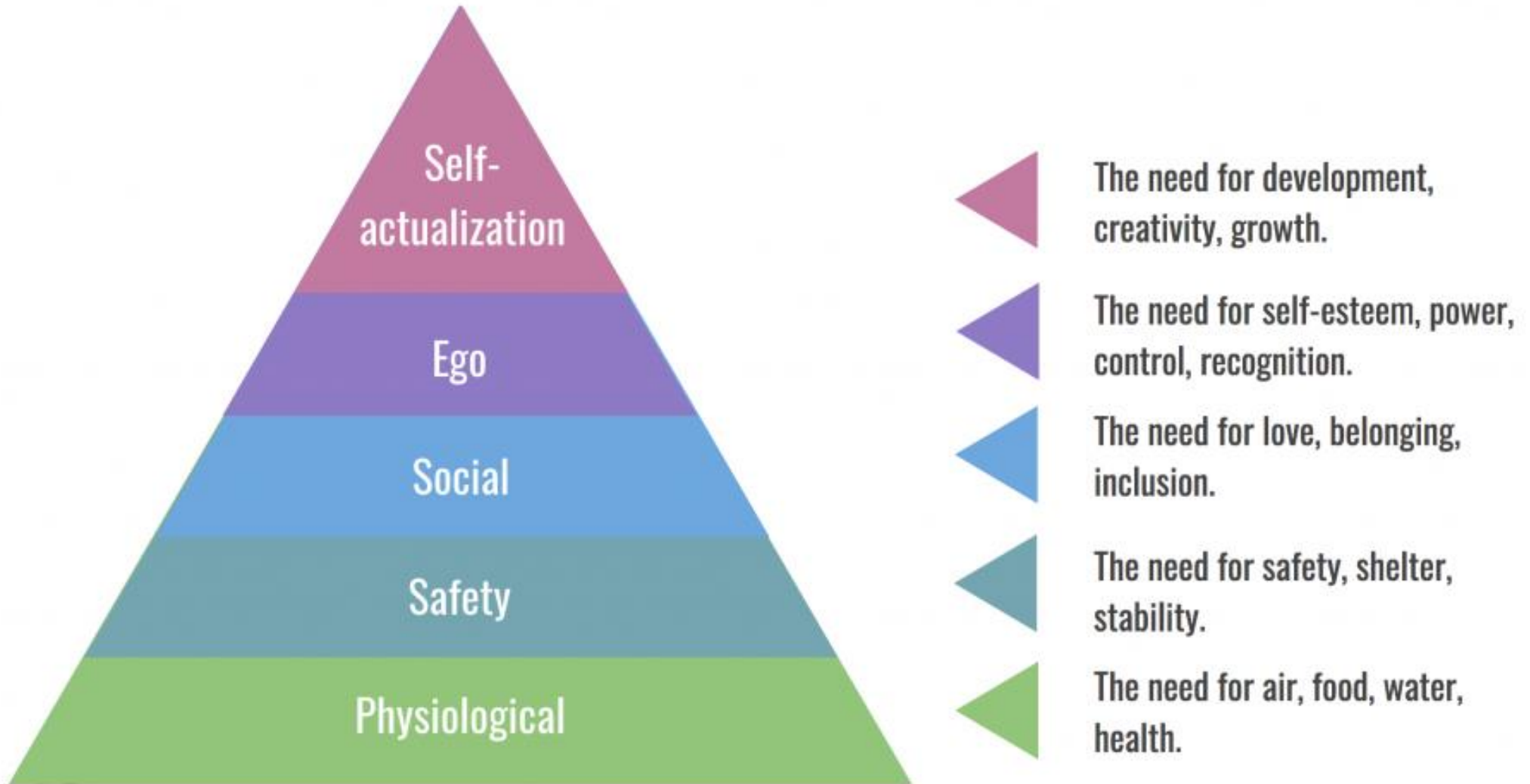
Listening = Most overlooked leadership skill

- **Both people and organizations are bad at listening.**
- Research shows us that the average person listens with only 25% efficiency.

(Source: Scott Williams, Wright State University)

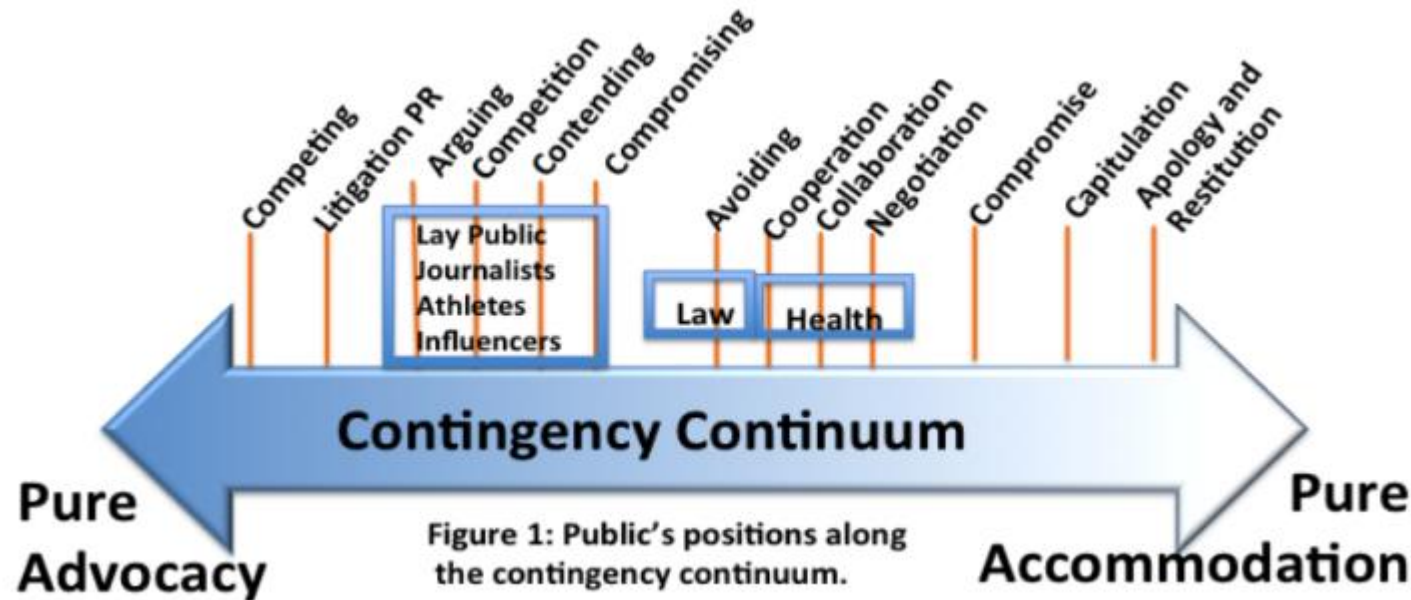


Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Theory 1: Contingency theory of conflict management

- The priorities of an organization vs. the values of its environment
- Advocacy (fight to be right) vs. accommodation (open to change)



Scholars say:

- This type of negotiation is an “active and multifaceted process to (meet) divergent legitimacy demands (**needs**) of stakeholders (and) it relies heavily upon **extensive communication** between administrators and stakeholders” (Fidan & Balci, 2018, p. 257).
- Discerning any organization’s public responsibility “is a complex and difficult task and requires **substantial management attention**” (Garriga & Mele, 2004, p. 59).

Takeaway

- STEP ONE: Your organization may choose to do things in the world, but people must be able to see them, discuss them, and reveal their needs along the way. Planning and time are key here.
- STEP TWO: Your job is to listen and to **recognize the needs**. Then, you make these need-based actions visible to the broader community, using symbols, words, dialogue.

Theory 2: Models, and the better one is ...

- Press agentry model
- Public information model

Monologue | Goal = Output

- Two-way asymmetrical
- Two-way symmetrical

Dialogue | Goal = Outcome

Mashup: Contingency + PR models

- You can do things, and make them visible, but ...
- Output doesn't matter; **only outcome**.
- Community outcomes happen through **dialogue (space)**, rather than **announcement (line)**.
- Symmetry requires dialogue, before and during the time when you make things visible.
- Symmetry requires that you meet in the spaces of others, on their clocks and timetables.

Theory 3: Dialogic theory

Relational communication with three things:

- Unconditional positive regard,
- Mutual equality, and
- Relationship-building (Johannesen, 1990; Stewart, 1978).

More on dialogic theory for public relations

- Mutuality
 - Commitment
 - Propinquity
 - Empathy
- **Risk**
 - 1. Vulnerability**
 - 2. Unanticipated consequences**
 - 3. Recognition of strange otherness**

Evidence of listening is action
or even better, change!

Listening = Action/Change = Caring

The Case Study

Thanks to three TCU graduate students during fall 2019/spring 2020, for their analyses:

Kinser Crutchfield, Olivia Koscik, and Makenna Covington



The Incident

- **October 12, 2019**
- **Wellness Check**
- 2 officers arrived, no announcement, began scanning the scene
- Aaron Dean, sees face through window, shoots
- Atatiana's nephew, Zion:
 - Playing video games
 - Heard noises, went to check
- Fatal shot, pronounced dead on the scene
- Dean: Arrested and charged with murder

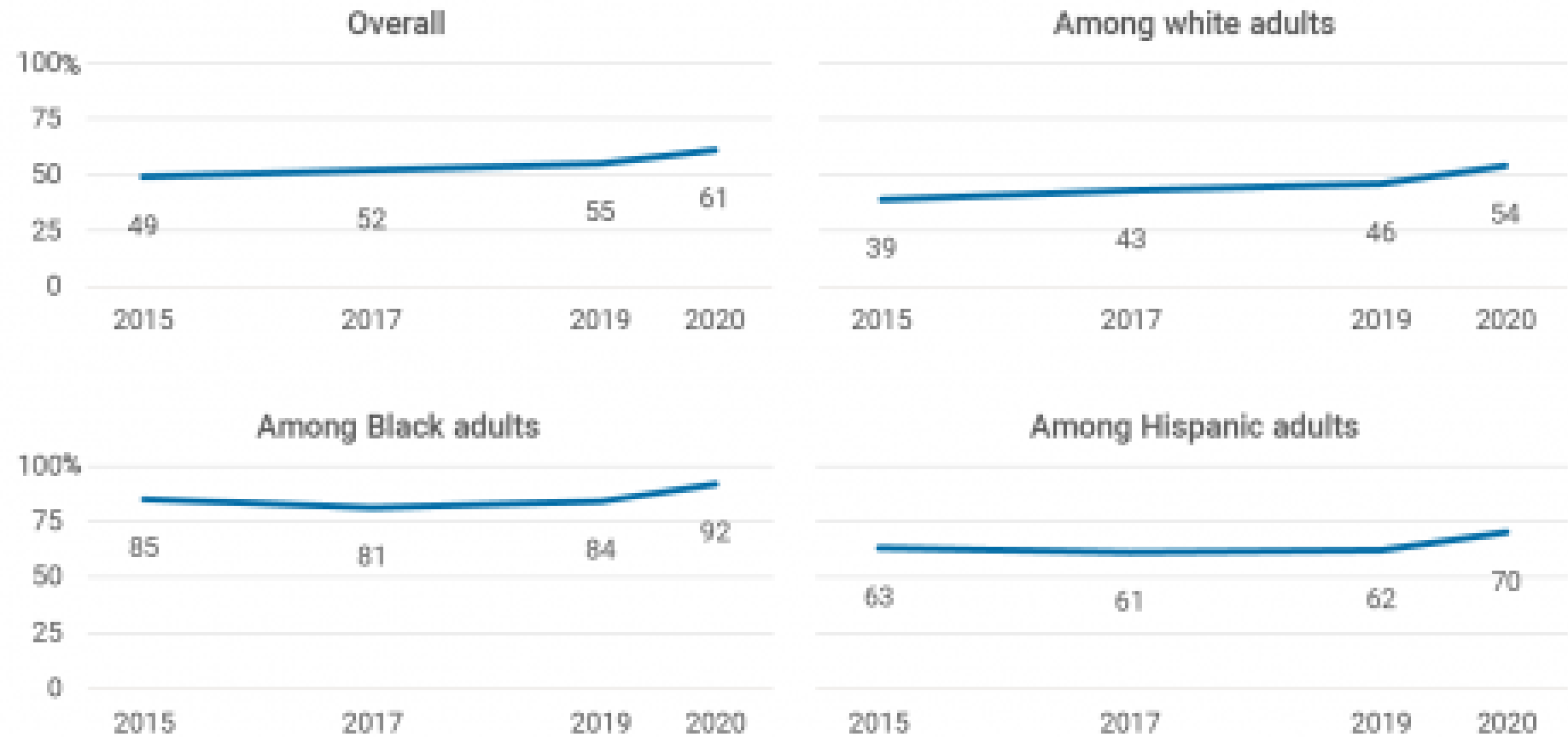


Context: Police Brutality & Black Lives Matter Movement



Americans increasingly view police as disproportionately violent to Black people

Percent of adults who say police are more likely to use deadly force against Black people

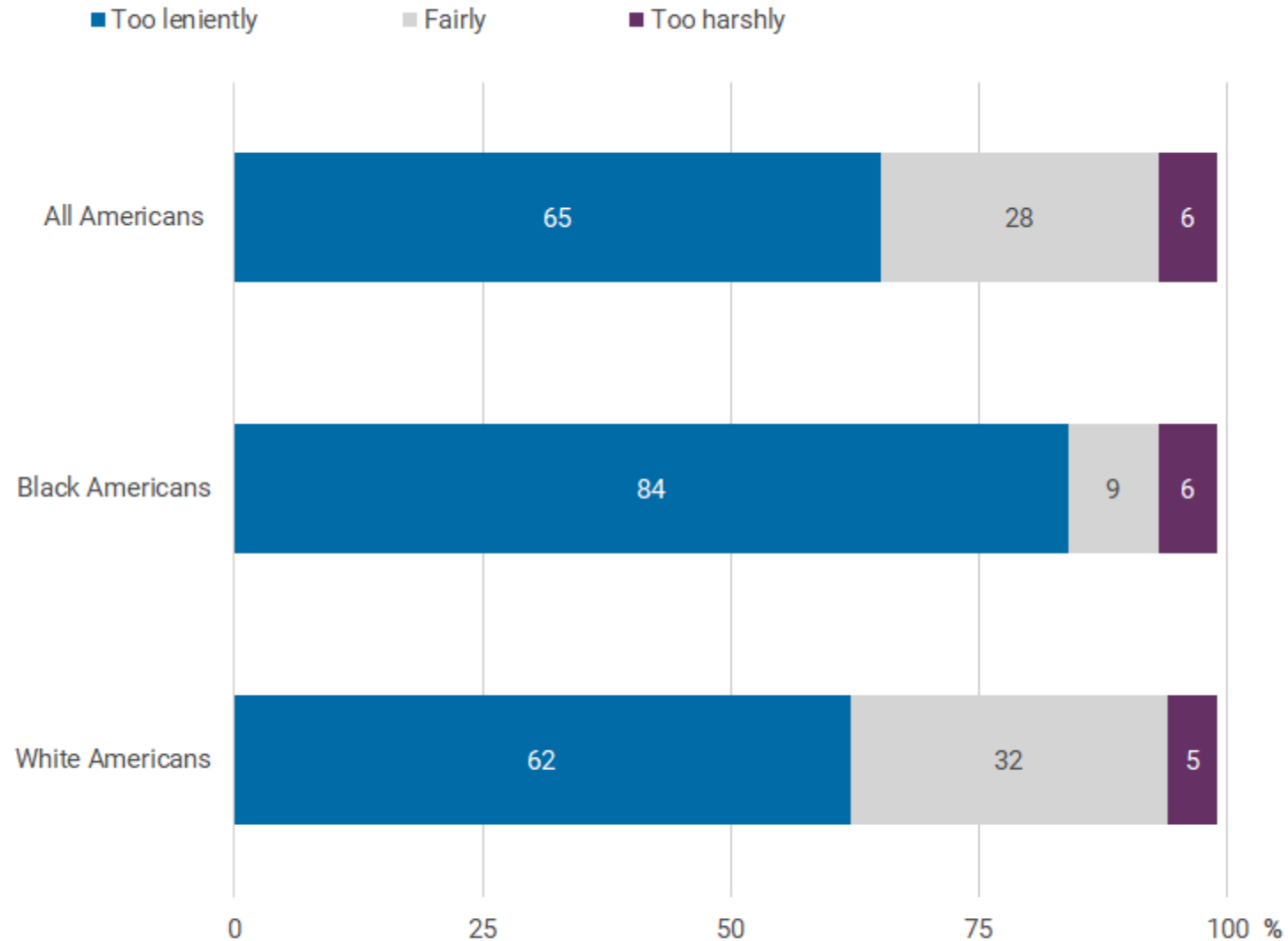


Question: In general, do you think the police in most communities are more likely to use deadly force against a Black person, or more likely to use it against a white person, or don't you think race affects police use of deadly force?

Source: AP-NORC polls, the latest conducted June 11-15, 2020, with 1,310 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

How does the criminal justice system treat police who injure or kill civilians?

Percent of adults

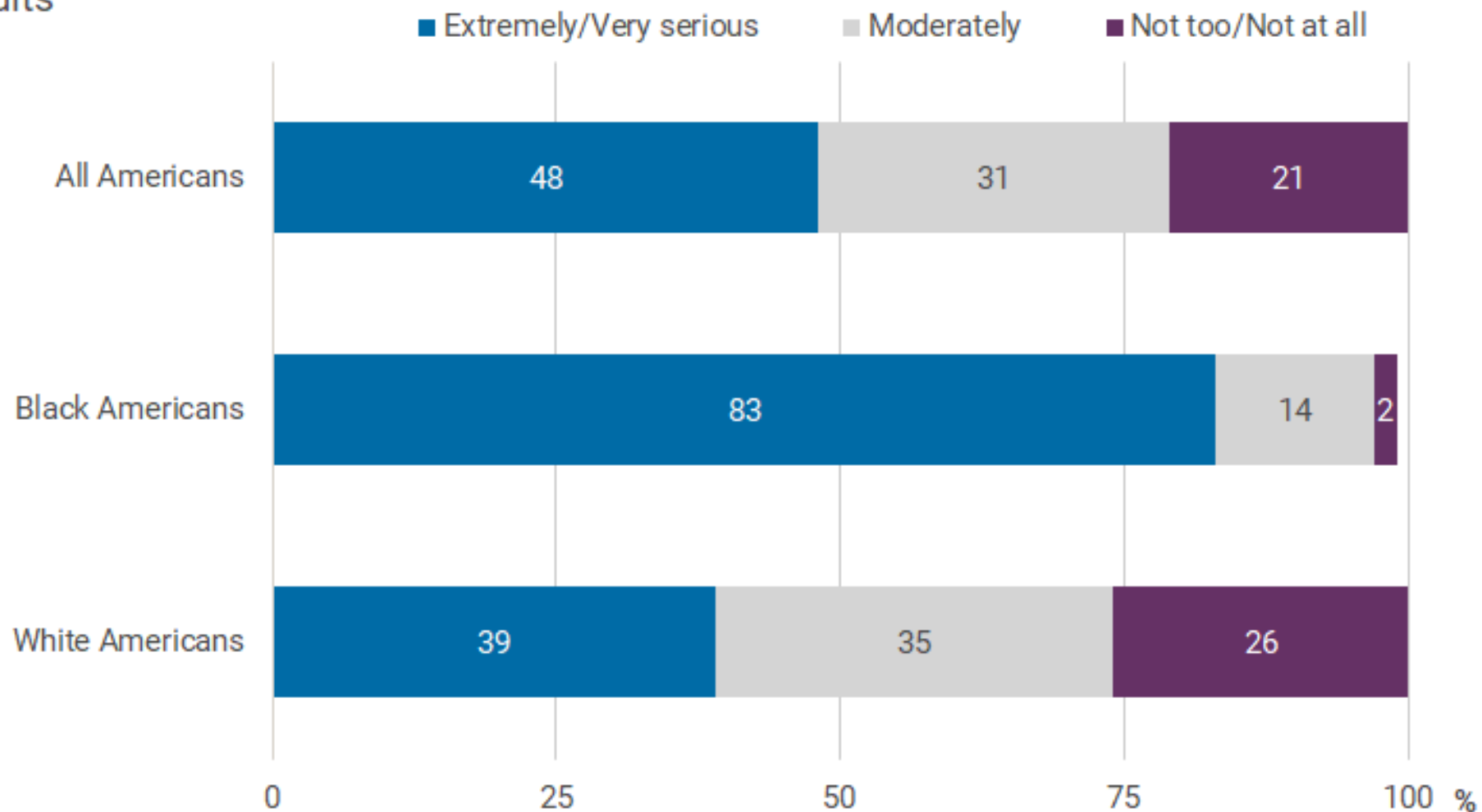


Question: How do you think police officers who cause injury or death in the course of their job are treated by the criminal justice system?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted June 11-15, 2020 with 1,310 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

How serious is the problem of police violence against the public?

Percent of adults



Question: How serious a problem do you think police violence against the public is in the United States?

Source: AP-NORC poll conducted June 11-15, 2020 with 1,310 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

Context – City of Fort Worth

- 13th largest in the US
- Majority-minority (*35% Hispanic, 20% Black, 40% non-Hispanic white*)
- Leadership predominately white



Context – Fort Worth Police Department

- History: Repeated involvement in high-profile incidents related to violence, mistreatment, and excessive force toward Black people
- 2018 Task Force on Race and Culture
 - *22 recommendations to fix issues related to diversity (62% white)*
 - *Did not begin enacting recommendations until late 2019*
- 2019: 9 officer involved shootings, 7 fatal (5 before Atatiana Jefferson)

City of Fort Worth Spokespersons



Mayor, Betsy Price



Police Chief, Ed Kraus



City Manager, David Cooke

Pre-Crisis (before October 12, 2019)

- Failed to practice effective risk assessment and environmental scanning
- Many signals indicated that FW was high-risk:
 - *Broad: Status of police shootings in America & the formation of Black Lives Matter Movement*
 - *Local: FWPD history of fatal shootings, task force recommendations and warnings*
 - *Statistics: Majority-minority cities and with large populations*

Crisis Response (October 12-17, 2019)

- Slow response by all leaders (e.g., *FWPD took 10 hours to make a statement, did not express concern for victims*)
- Inconsistent
 - *Use & frequency of social media*
 - *Content of messages*
 - *Pronunciation of name*
- Inaccurate
 - *How investigation would be handled*
 - *Release of gun photos: later called irrelevant (appeared as if leaders were blaming the victim and justifying shooting)*
- Each spokesperson did emphasize need for transparency and seeking justice

Post-Crisis (October 17, 2019 – January 10, 2020)

- All referenced corrective action
 - Independent review of the FWPD
 - Diversity and inclusion director
 - Police monitor position
- Lack of updates on progress and outcomes
 - EX: Diversity and inclusion director
 - City Manager and Mayor shared information about the candidates and public forums
 - Mayor was the only one to announce when the city hired someone
 - FWPD made no comments about the entire process




FW/FWPD Leadership Communication & Collaboration

- Lack of collaboration
 - Most efforts conducted separately
 - One group appearance
- Did not present one voice
 - City Manager: mentioned shooting once with the group. The rest of the messages focused on corrective action and new department positions
 - FWPD: only focused on shooting, no post-crisis efforts
 - Mayor: both, but often just relayed messages from the others
- Mayor was the only one to offer statements of support for other leaders and their efforts

Spokesperson(s)	Number of messages or appearances
Police Chief Kraus or other member(s) of the FWPD	6
Mayor Betsy Price	4
David Cooke or City of Fort Worth	0
Entire group (Kraus, Price, Cooke)	1

Digital vs. Traditional Communication Channels

- Twitter was the most used platform by all leaders
- Instagram & Facebook were underutilized
- City had the least presence on social media and only shared information on corrective actions
- FWPD & Mayor made their statements easily accessible but did not adapt messages properly to fit the platform

Account	Number of original posts
	Twitter: 11 (+0 on recovery/corrective efforts) Facebook: 6 (+0 on recovery/corrective efforts) Instagram: 1 (Dean's arrest)
	Twitter: 3 (+7 recovery/corrective efforts; new positions) Facebook: 3 (+4 on recovery/corrective efforts; new positions) Instagram: 0
	Twitter: 0 (+6 on recovery/corrective efforts; new positions) Facebook: 0 (+5 on recovery/corrective efforts; new positions) Instagram: 0 (not active)



Fort Worth Police 
@fortworthpd

#PressRelease -

Officer Involved Shooting - Oct. 12, 2019



PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Oct. 12, 2019

FORT WORTH, Texas – Serving the public transparently and openly during good events and difficult events is a prerequisite to any professional police department. The Fort Worth Police Department is committed to ensuring the public is aware of major police incidents, especially officer involved shootings, and that details available are released as quickly as possible given the gravity of the circumstances. On Saturday, Oct. 12, 2019, the Fort Worth Police Department responded to a call for service that resulted in the loss of a life and all evidence, witness statements, body camera footage, and any other available evidence is being collected and collated to ultimately be presented to the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office to determine the final outcome.

Near 02:25 a.m., Fort Worth Police Central Division officers responded to an Open Structure call for service in the 1200 block of E. Allen Ave. Details stated the front door to the residence was open. Responding officers searched the perimeter of the house and observed a person standing inside the residence near a window. Perceiving a threat the officer drew his duty weapon and fired one shot striking the person inside the residence. Officers entered the residence locating the individual and a firearm and began providing emergency medical care.

The individual, a black female, who resides at the residence succumbed to her injuries and was pronounced deceased on the scene. The officer, a white male who has been with the department since April of 2018, has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome the critical police incident investigation. The Fort Worth Police Major Case unit, Internal Affairs unit and the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Law Enforcement Incident Team were notified and made the scene to conduct their aspect of the investigation to ensure all information and evidence was captured and preserved.

The Fort Worth Police Department is releasing available body camera footage to provide transparent and relevant information to the public as we are allowed within the confines of the Public Information Act and forthcoming investigation. Camera footage inside the residence is not able to be released based on Public Information laws. The Fort Worth Police Department shares the deep concerns of the public and is committed to completing an extremely thorough investigation of this critical police incident to its resolution. As this investigation continues, information will be forthcoming in as timely a manner as possible.

@fortworthpd

1:20 PM · Oct 12, 2019 · [TweetDeck](#)



Fort Worth Police 
@fortworthpd

#NewsConference 10/14



 Fort Worth Police  @fortworthpd

#NewsConference 10/14

 pscp.tv

1:01 PM · Oct 14, 2019 · [Twitter for Android](#)

81 Retweets and comments 63 Likes

Public Response

- **“The police department has no credibility in our community.”** – Dr. Michael Bell, senior pastor of Greater St. Stephen First Church in Fort Worth and Member of Emancipate Fort Worth.
- **“I think what we need is for you to acknowledge that this is a systemic racism issue.”** – Resident during public comment period of city council meeting.
- **“It will require dedication and hard work on the part of leaders in civic, educational and business life working with citizens who have been left out and left behind in a city that tends to obsess on the promise of the future while ignoring the failures of the past.”** – Richard Connor, business leader.
- **“Back up the pretty words in your letter with meaningful action.”** – Resident during public comment period of city council meeting.

Provisional insights

A summary of preliminary themes

- Listening is about “**listening for the need**,” not just talking and hearing.
- Everything is going to look “political.” Even non-statements, such as not commenting about the killing of George Floyd by police, or not wanting to take a stance on wearing a mask. No matter: **Cities must weigh in.**
- Desire to be careful comes across as not caring.
- Younger Black people have different ideas from their elders about language, urgency, optimism, and more. We should listen to them, too.
- Participants said FW actions just a “show” or a photo op (police officer taking a knee).
- Fort Worth tries to control where you have your say: Police blocked bridge on West 7th Street and kept demonstrators who were exercising free speech away from “white” or affluent parts of city.
- If your last name is Bass, they listen.
- If you are the police association, you have the most power.

A summary of preliminary themes

- **How does city communicate with residents?** Condescension and punitive measures; they tell us what they are going to do; they report things to us.
- **How does city communicate with businesses?** Depends on who owns the business.
- Race and culture forums were publicized in water bills (passive), but few people came. “When water department cuts off your water for non-payment, they put boots on the ground (but not for communication or engagement).”
- The city also communicates through its actions: Police delay while creating the “justice” they will deliver, letting officers scrub social media, booking people in/out in three hours. So-called “good cops” and police association never break ranks and never comments on “bad cops.”
- The police officer’s reputation and family were more important than Atatiana Jefferson’s life and her family. “And so that was the clearest thing I heard from them.”

Five things to do right now

Foundation, planning, improved listening as spur to change

1. Diversify, intensify, scrutinize with team

- **Diversify internal teams.** Who's on your team now? Who were the last 3-4 hires your comms/marketing department made (race, gender, age)? Who can informally join your team until you can hire?
- **Intensify work with external partners and listen to them.** How many BIPOC partners do you have? How can you recruit more? "You can't keep going to the Black church to understand Black people."
- **Scrutinize your past work** to make your future work better. Be aware of your oversights, omissions, neglect. All are a form of racism. Using only English in your messaging may be seen as a form of oppression.

2. What is your city's history related to listening to and serving communities of color?

- Reflect and educate yourself and others; whites must do a lot of work here
- Acknowledge past deeds of recent and prior generations of leaders
- Apologize (see recent statement by City of Asheville, NC, on reparations and reform)
- Establish a plan with benchmarks
- Don't do performative activism—change and find solutions in dialogue with others

3. Commit to resident participation planning

- Leader briefings for every neighborhood
- Dialogue with and brief activists and their organizations
- Media briefings
- Information on city website
 - FAQ
 - Highlight decision-making process
 - Process flowchart
 - Document repository
- Required public hearings
- Communication of council decisions
- HOA communication networks
- Open-house meetings
- Blogs for specific projects/initiatives
 - Input & feedback
- Social media outreach and listening
- Multi-language communication
- Listening tours without an agenda

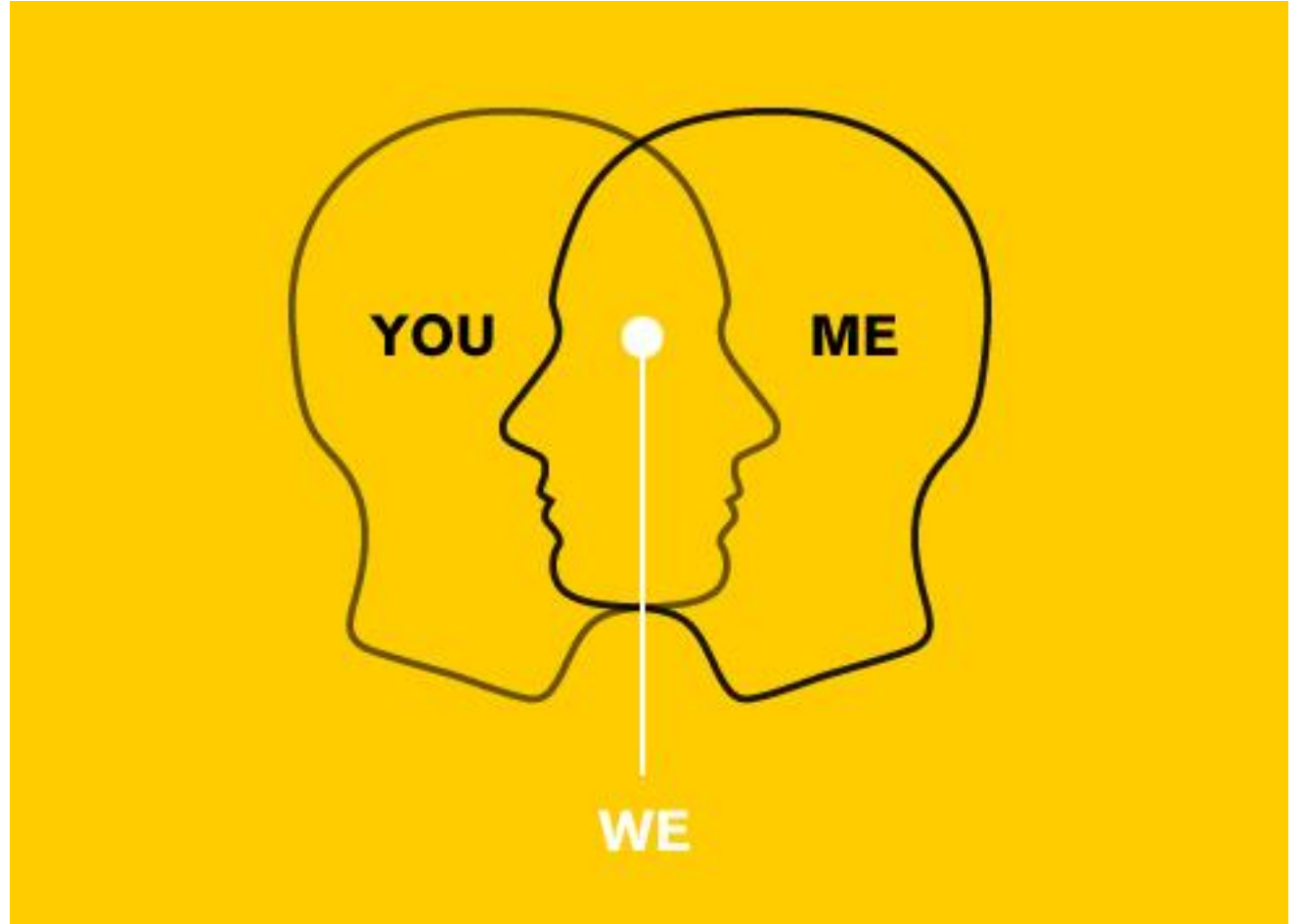
4. Focus on outcomes, not output

Every communication goal, objective, strategy, tactic should be tied to the ways it boosts:

- Listening
- Actions
- New community engagement
- New relationship-building efforts and partnerships
- Solutions
- Change

5A. Embrace empathetic listening

- There is no “them” — there is only “us.”



5B. Develop responsive listenership/leadership

Responsiveness, expressed through

- Listening, then reflection;
 - Action, not silence (silent allies aren't allies);
 - Empathy;
 - Friendliness;
 - Compassion;
 - A focus on relational aspect of daily communication.
-
- It is risky. It requires you and others to lay down control and power.

5C. Audit listening in social media spaces

- Active Empathetic Listening:

- Pertinent response

- Did you mention the subject of the speaker's message?

- Elaboration

- Did you address the speaker by name?
 - Did you address the speaker's emotion? (Through text or visuals)
 - Did you expand on the speaker's thoughts?

- Advice, Opinion, Perspective

- Did you offer the speaker advice or guidance through providing resources, such as a website link or phone number?
 - Did you provide an opinion or viewpoint on the speaker's situation or topic?

- Answering and Asking Questions

- Did you directly answer a question the speaker asked?
 - Did you explicitly ask the speaker a question?

Q&A

Let's continue the conversation. Contact us at j.lambiase@tcu.edu or a.english@tcu.edu

Twitter: @lambiase and @ElevatedEC

Additional resources

No more warrior police-recruiting videos! Feature guardians instead.

- <https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/07/15/corinth-police-chief-police-officers-must-focus-on-being-guardians-not-warriors/>

The architecture of listening:

- Organizational **listening** has cultural, procedural, political, structural, resource, skill, technological dimensions, and policy making. These eight elements are described as an “**architecture of listening**” because they need to be designed into an organization and be deployed in a coherent complementary way.
- <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/fass-organizational-listening-report.pdf>

CPC Program at TCU

- Certified Public Communicator Program
- In partnership with TAMIO
- Two weeks, one each in two summers, plus midwinter check-in
- 95 hours of instruction
- You produce a three-year comprehensive comm plan for your city, county or school district, & we help
- Topics: Leadership, theory, public relations, advertising, marketing, design thinking, creativity, organizational politics, ethics

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