Assessing the Resources and Evidence on Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras

Michael D. White, Ph.D.

National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG)
Summer Meeting
San Diego, June 16-18, 2015
Background and Overview

- Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Arizona State University


- Testified before President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing about body-worn cameras (BWCs)

- (2) One of the primary authors of the US DOJ National Body-Worn Camera Toolkit (https://www.bja.gov/bwc/)

- (3) Principal Investigator on Arnold Foundation-funded study of BWCs (multi-site randomized controlled trial)
Timeline of Key Events

2005 – Plymouth Basic Command Unit (UK) test BWCs

2009 – Oakland (CA) Police Department rolls out 200 BWCs

August 2013 – Ruling in the *Floyd* case against the NYPD (BWCs as a remedy)


August 9, 2014 – Michael Brown killed in Ferguson
  - (Eric Garner, Rumain Brisbon, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott)

December 2014 – White House announces Community Policing Plan

April 19, 2015 – Freddie Gray dies while in-custody of the Baltimore Police Department

May 2015 – US DOJ releases the National Body-Worn Camera Toolkit

June 16, 2015 – deadline for proposals for US DOJ Body-Worn Camera Pilot Implementation Program ($17 million)
Origins of the Report
- Prepared for an OJP Diagnostic Center engagement

Purpose of the Report
- Review the available research (the “puzzle” analogy)
  - Identify all relevant issues and claims (pro and con)
  - Provide a framework for evaluating the technology (the “edge pieces”)
- Assess the current state of evidence on each claim
- Make recommendations for next steps
The Available Research on Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras

Additions:

Jennings et al. (2014) – Journal of Criminal Justice (Orlando PD – just officer attitudes)
Ariel et al. (2015) – Journal of Quantitative Criminology (Rialto study)
A handful of internal department reports (Oakland, CA)
## Perceived Benefits and the Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased Transparency (~) and Legitimacy (?)</td>
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<td>Improved Police Officer Behavior (~)</td>
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<td>Improved Citizen Behavior (~)</td>
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<td>Expedited Resolution of Complaints and Lawsuits (~)</td>
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<td>Improved Evidence for Arrest and Prosecution (~)</td>
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<td>Opportunities for Police Training (?)</td>
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(?): no evidence currently available to support this claim  
(~): some evidence to support this claim, more research needed  
(+): strong evidence available to support this claim
Perceived Concerns and the Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns</th>
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<tr>
<td>Citizens’ Privacy (+)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Officers’ Privacy (+)</td>
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<td>Officers’ Health and Safety (?)</td>
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<td>Training and Policy Requirements (+)</td>
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<td>Logistical/Resource Requirements, including data storage and retrieval (+)</td>
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(?) no evidence currently available to support this claim
(~) some evidence to support this claim, more research needed
(+) strong evidence available to support this claim
Recommendations for Next Steps

- Agencies should proceed cautiously – most claims not sufficiently tested
  - Be clear about goals, desired outcomes

- Rigorous, independent research is needed
  - Research/practitioner collaborations

- Policy guidance from leadership organizations is needed

- Build a comprehensive working group of stakeholders at the beginning of the adoption process

- Technology holds great promise as a training/learning tool
  - Academy
  - Violence Reduction
  - Sentinel Events
The National Body-Worn Camera Toolkit

February 26-27, 2015: two-day Expert Panel at the White House

May 2015: Toolkit “goes live” (https://www.bja.gov/bwc/)

Serves as an information warehouse on BWCs (FAQ format) in the areas of:

- Research
- Policy
- Technology
- Privacy
- Training
- Stakeholders

Law Enforcement Implementation Checklist
Arnold Foundation-Funded Study

Multi-site Randomized Controlled Trial

- 2 year project, March 2015-2017
- Tempe (AZ) PD and Spokane (WA) PD

Key Questions:

- Documenting the planning and implementation process
- Officer perceptions (over time)
- Citizen perceptions (after encounters with BWC-wearing officers)
- Impact on prevalence and nature of citizen complaints
  - Impact on citizen complaint dispositions
- Impact on prevalence and nature of police use of force
  - Impact on discipline
- Impact on criminal processing of cases (charging, convictions)
  - Perceptions of judges, prosecutors, defense
- Implications for training
- Implications for violence reduction and Sentinel Events review
Arnold Foundation-Funded Study: Progress to Date

**Spokane**
- Randomization protocol completed
- RCT underway (May-November 2015)
- Officer Perceptions survey (2 waves complete)
- Citizen Perceptions survey (underway; n=15)
- Complaint, use of force, discipline data received (past 5 years)

**Tempe**
- Model planning process captured
- Randomization protocol completed
- Officer Perceptions survey (wave 1 underway)
- RCT set to begin August/September 2015
Thanks!

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