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Searching for Answers: What are the effects of body-worn cameras on police behavior?

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Overview

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Research Questions
- ▶ Research Findings: Dr. Craig Uchida
- ▶ Findings from Experiments: Dr. Aili Malm
- ▶ Using Findings in the Field: Lt. Tom Woodmansee
- ▶ Discussion

Background

- ▶ BWCs – most rapidly implemented policing technology to date
- ▶ Issues: accountability, transparency, citizen confidence
- ▶ Over 90 articles and reports have studied the use of BWCs in some capacity



Research Questions



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What is the effect of BWCs on police and citizens?

Do BWCs impact officer safety?

Do BWCS influence perceptions of procedural justice?

Do BWCs influence use of force and citizen complaints?



Citizen Attitudes

- ▶ At least 16 studies that use surveys
- ▶ National survey—wide support of BWCs; require the use of cameras
- ▶ Local—improve officer behavior and legitimacy; less concern about privacy

Citizen Attitudes



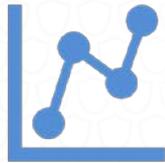
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- ▶ Surveys show support for adoption of BWCs
- ▶ For example, in 2 counties in Florida:
 - ▶ 87% believe that BWCs will improve officers' behavior
 - ▶ 80% believe that BWCs will improve residents' behavior
 - ▶ 88.5% believe that BWCs will assist in collecting evidence
 - ▶ 78% believe that BWCs will increase police legitimacy

Officer Attitudes



32 studies



Descriptive,
surveys, and
experimental
designs



Support for BWCs
by officers tends
to increase over
time



Opposition to
BWCs connected
to the technology
and workload

Officer Safety



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- ▶ Only one study has looked at this issue and the findings are counter-intuitive
- ▶ When officers used discretion to activate BWC, use of force *increased*
- ▶ BWC activation during tense situations may increase aggression between citizens and officers

Procedural Justice



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Do BWCs affect interactions between police and the public?



JSS evaluation with the LAPD: measure encounters through observation



Measure characteristics of procedural justice: participation, neutrality, dignity and respect, trustworthiness



Procedural Justice



- ▶ Significant, positive increases in:
 - ▶ Participation
 - ▶ Neutrality
 - ▶ Dignity and Respect
 - ▶ Procedural Justice
- ▶ No significant effect on trustworthiness

Findings from Experiments: Dr. Aili Malm

Findings from Experiments



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- ▶ Approximately 15 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and 10 quasi-experiments
- ▶ Majority in large (500+ sworn) departments
- ▶ Small and mid-size departments
 - ▶ Rialto, CA
 - ▶ Spokane, WA
 - ▶ Tempe, AZ
 - ▶ Anaheim, CA
 - ▶ Hallandale Beach, FL



Different Stories



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“When you put a camera on a police officer, they tend to behave a little better, follow the rules a little better, . . . and if a citizen knows the officer is wearing a camera, chances are the citizen will behave a little better.”

—William A. Farrar, Chief of Police, Rialto
(California) Police Department

“We are unable to detect any statistically significant effects. As such, our experiment suggests that we should recalibrate our expectations of BWCs. Law enforcement agencies that are considering adopting BWCs should not expect dramatic reductions in use of force or complaints, or other large-scale shifts in police behavior, solely from the deployment of this technology.”

—Yokum, Ravishankar, and Coppock, Washington
DC Metro



Complaints

- ▶ 20 of 26 studies show reduction in complaints against officers
- ▶ Especially in small and mid-size departments!
 - ▶ Rialto
 - ▶ Spokane

Use of Force

- ▶ 11 of 19 studies show reduction in use-of-force
- ▶ Even in small and mid-size departments
 - ▶ Rialto
 - ▶ Spokane



Criminal Investigations

- ▶ 5 of 7 studies show positive effects on criminal investigations
 - ▶ Rate of prosecutions
 - ▶ Time to disposition, etc.
- ▶ Most research outside of US

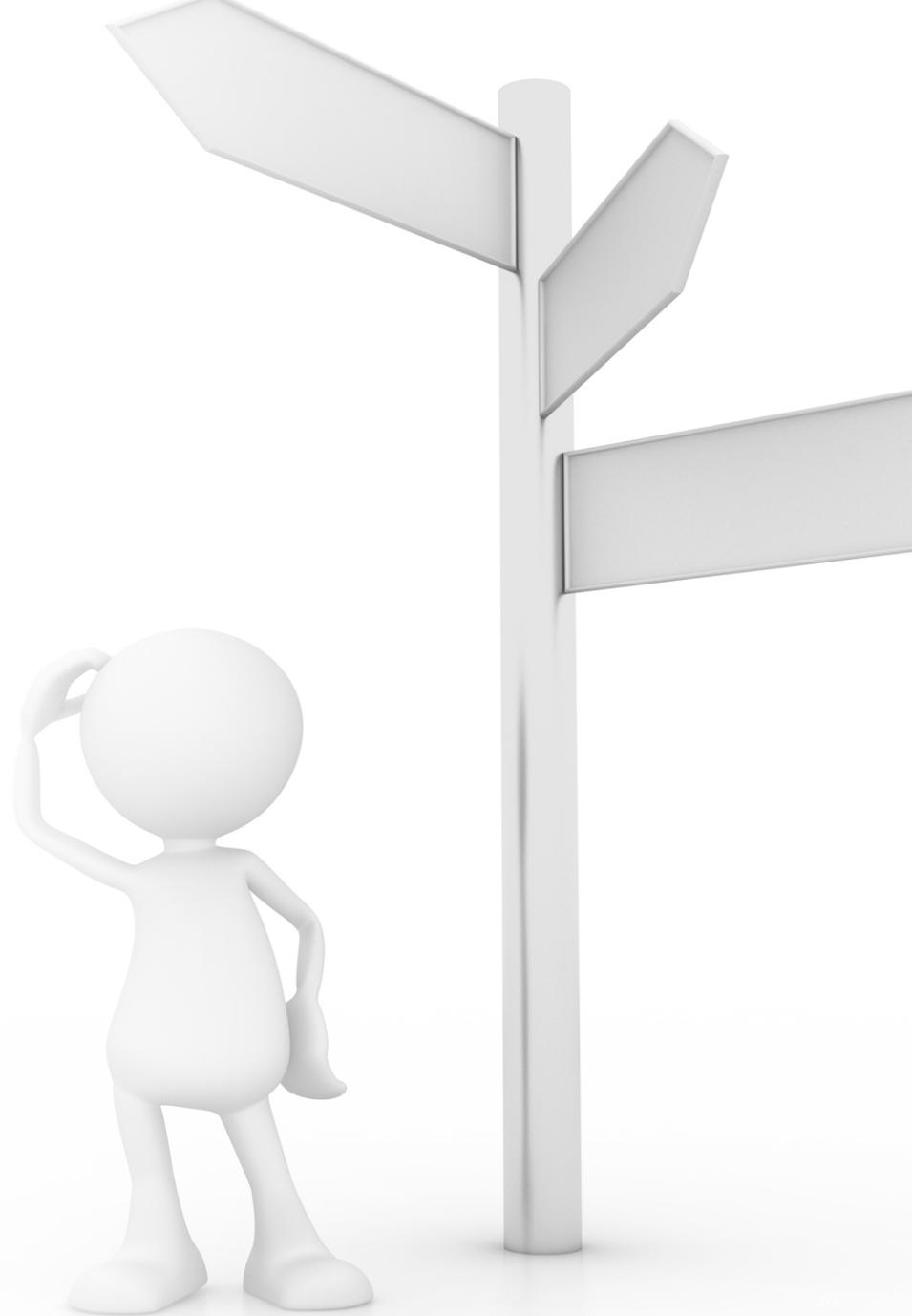


Officer Activity

- ▶ Very mixed results!
- ▶ 5 of 12 studies show reduction in arrests; 3 show increase
- ▶ 2 of 3 show increase in citations; 1 shows decrease
- ▶ No support for “de-policing” with BWCs

Why the Mixed Results?

- ▶ Context, context, context!
- ▶ Moderators
 - ▶ Activation
 - ▶ Policy
 - ▶ Goals



Using Findings in the Field: Lt. Tom Woodmansee



Police Dynamics with Understanding and Embracing BWC Research

- ▶ General Perspectives and Dynamics
- ▶ BWC – Why the Research Matters to Police
- ▶ Who Benefits and Why?

Examples of Police Utilizing BWC Research



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- ▶ Policy Impacts on Notification
 - ▶ <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/PIJPSM-07-2016-0105/full/html>
- ▶ Complaint Resolution Process – Complainant Reviews
- ▶ Training – Communication and Tactics
- ▶ Cost Benefit Impacts – Las Vegas Study
 - ▶ https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/IRM-2017-U-016112-Final.pdf
- ▶ Community Outreach
- ▶ Officers Viewing BWC and Report Writing – Philadelphia
 - ▶ <https://bwctta.com/key-trends-body-worn-camera-policies>

Comments from the Field

“Forward thinking Administrators want and need evidence-based research and data.”

“Understanding how to use BWC research is easier said than done, the language doesn’t really relate to most cops, so it takes time and effort to learn about it.”

“Chiefs, lawyers, risk mitigation, and liability specialists use every bit of evidence based, and peer reviewed research and data for writing best practices policies on mostly hot topic issues but sometimes try to be proactive with those before they are hot topics.”

Comments from the Field

“Agencies must understand that Research outcomes may vary from agency to agency – utilize the research but realize that the variables between agencies will likely result in the outcomes being different.”

“If you don’t have the expertise to critically examine the research bring in someone from an area university to help educate you on what it is saying – like everything, the quality of research will vary and some studies are just not well done.”

“Bottom line, I believe most of us want research, and since we are not academia sometimes we have to spend too much time sorting through valid research against crappy research and try to establish which is the most accurate and evidence backed with solid data.”



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The Outcome Directories

Use of Force:

<https://bwctta.com/impacts-bwcs-use-force-directory-outcomes>

Complaints:

<https://bwctta.com/impact-bwcs-citizen-complaints-directory-outcomes>

Officer Activity:

<https://bwctta.com/impacts-bwcs-officer-activity-directory-outcomes>



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