

Research:

Kalle & Hammock: Bias in Video Evidence: Implications for Police Body Cameras (2019):

Camera perspective that focuses on the suspect, particularly when observers with strong implicit racial attitudes watch a video with a racial minority suspect, led observers to rate the individual more negatively and the officer more positively.

Findley Commentary: This strikes me as a reason to try to get multiple camera perspectives, but not a reason to not use cameras. Without cameras the data may be even more ambiguous and subject to biased interpretation.

Turner et al., Body camera footage leads to lower judgments of intent than dash camera footage (2018):

The body cam wearer is typically less visually salient when depicted in body versus dashcam video, which corresponds with lower observer intentionality judgments.

Findley Commentary: Same as above

Ariel et al., Wearing body cameras increases assaults against officers and does not reduce police use of force: Results from a global multi-site experiment (2016):

Using a prospective meta-analysis of multi-site, multi-national randomised controlled trials from 10 discrete tests with a total population of +2 million, and 2.2 million police officer-hours, we assess the effect of BWVs on the rates of (i) police use of force and (ii) assaults against officers. Averaged over 10 trials, BWVs had no effect on police use of force ($d = 0.021$; $SE = 0.056$; 95% CI: -0.089 – 0.130), but led to an increased rate of assaults against officers wearing cameras ($d = 0.176$; $SE = 0.058$; 95% CI: 0.061 – 0.290).

Ariel et al., Report: increases in police use of force in the presence of body-worn cameras are driven by officer discretion: a protocol-based subgroup analysis of ten randomized experiments (2016):

In some sites, rates of use of force decreased and in others increased when BWCs were introduced. When officers complied with the experimental protocol and did not use discretion, use of force rates were 37 % lower [SMD= $(-.346)$; $SE = .137$; 95% CI $(-.614)$ – $(-.077)$]; when officers did not comply with treatment protocol (i.e., officers chose when to turn cameras on/off), use of force rates were 71 % higher [SMD = $.392$; $SE = .130$; 95% CI $(.136)$ – $(.647)$], compared to control conditions. When full discretion (i.e., overall breakdown of protocol) was applied to both treatment and control conditions, null effects were registered [SMD= $.009$;

SE=.070; 95% CI (-.127)–(.146)], compared to control conditions. Conclusions; BWCs can reduce police use of force when then officers' discretion to turn cameras on or off is minimized—in terms of both case types as well as individual incidents. BWCs ought to be switched on and the recording announced to suspects at early stages of police–public interactions.

Ariel, Sutherland, & Sherman, Preventing treatment spillover contamination in criminological field experiments: the case of body-worn police cameras (2018):

Critiques a highly publicized experiment (Ripley 2017) on the effect of police body-worn cameras (BWCs) on the rates of documented use of force and civilian complaints against police officers. Some 2000 police officers were divided randomly to two groups: a treatment group instructed to wear BWCs while on patrol and a control group who were not given the devices. The unit of randomization was the individual officer. However, Control group officers (with no cameras) who attend calls with treatment officers (who are wearing cameras) are, by definition, contaminated. By being exposed to the (manipulated) presence of the camera for the treatment officers, the control officers' treatment is no longer independent from the treatment of the experimental officers. Such spillover is exactly what occurred in the BWC experiment with the individual officer as the unit of analysis (Yokum et al. 2017). As one might expect, the RCT concluded that the intervention was not effective in reducing rates of either complaints or use of force, when comparing officers assigned cameras to officers who were not. It appears that the contamination is so extensive that an "intention to treat" analysis—that is, one in which all units are analyzed in the groups to which they were randomized—would result in no measurable impact.

Yokum, Ravishankar, & Coppock, A randomized control trial evaluating the effects of police body-worn cameras (2019):

To estimate the effects of BWCs, we conducted a randomized controlled trial involving 2,224 Metropolitan Police Department officers in Washington, DC. Here we show that BWCs have very small and statistically insignificant effects on police use of force and civilian complaints, as well as other policing activities and judicial outcomes.

Peterson, Yu, LaVigne, & Lawrence, The Milwaukee Police Department's Body-Worn Camera Program (2018)

From October 2015 to December 2016, the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) deployed body-worn cameras (BWCs) in a phased rollout to all of its roughly 1,100 patrol officers. Through a randomized controlled trial of 504 officers, the Urban Institute found that those who wore BWCs conducted fewer subject stops and were less likely to receive a complaint than officers that did not receive cameras. However, BWCs had no effect on whether officers engaged in use of force during the study period.

Comment: Note that the unit of randomization appears to have been at the individual officer level.

Jones, Crozier, & Strange, Look there! The effect of perspective, attention, and instructions on how people understand recorded police encounters (2019):

Our first study demonstrates that participants who watched body-camera footage, compared with people who watched surveillance footage of the same encounter, perceived the officer's behavior as being more justified and made more lenient punishment decisions. In our second study, only one of the four police encounters that participants watched led participants to perceive the officer more favorably when they watched body-camera footage compared with bystander footage. Our results demonstrate that some body-camera footage—specifically videos that capture an officer using his or her body to apprehend a civilian—can lead to biased perceptions of police encounters that benefit the officer. Our findings suggest that this occurs because: (i) in body-camera footage, the civilian is the more easily visible figure, thus making less salient the officer's role in the encounter; and (ii) the body camera—attached to an officer's uniform—is unable to adequately capture certain use of force movements that are important in determining an officer's intent.

Houwing & van Eck, Police Bodycams as Equiveillance Tools?: Reflections on the Debate in the Netherlands (2020):

The attachment of the body cam to the uniform of the officer leads to an imbalanced representation of perspectives. The police perspective is emphasized by the footage that is literally taken from their perspective, in which others are filmed slightly from below, making them look bigger and more overwhelming. Also, the police officers' movements create shaky footage with deceptive intensity that invokes the image of a hectic situation that calls for police action. Secondly, it is the officer who decides when to wear a camera and when to start and stop recording. This leaves the potential to not record any misconduct. Thirdly, access to the recorded images, whilst in theory open to police and citizens alike, is in practice exclusively for the police. Within the current regulatory framework, body cams are thus not neutral reporters of interactions between civilians and the police.

Findley's Takeaways:

1. Bodycams should be worn as high on the body as possible.
2. Officers should have no discretion about when the cameras are turned on and off
3. Civilians must have access to the videos
4. Technology to stabilize video images should be employed.

Hartzog, Body Cameras and the Path to Redeem Privacy Law (2018):

1. Data Collection: To protect obscurity, body cameras should, by default, be inactive until a set time, condition, or action. Automated triggers could help solve the problem

with officer discretion while simultaneously fostering people's obscurity by enacting rules that the cameras are to remain off until activated. For example, tech companies are experimenting with and marketing body camera technologies that automatically activate according to certain triggers that might indicate the need for video surveillance, such as when a gun is drawn from a holster, when a police cruiser's door is opened or lights and sirens are activated, or when raised voices are detected or an officer's pulse is quickened.¹⁹² A built-in historical buffer can ensure that the prior few minutes leading up to activation are also captured. Lawmakers who seek to preserve trust between officers and the public should also consider mandating obvious warnings to people that the camera was on, such as a bright red, blinking recording light as well as verbal notice when feasible. Policies should give officers some discretion to honor requests to turn off body cameras.

2. **Data Storage:** To store data is to create a privacy risk. Lawmakers should require that police departments and any third-party vendors take all reasonable measures to secure body-camera data. Perhaps just as importantly in terms of storage, lawmakers should mandate regular deletion as well as give data subjects deletion rights.
3. **Data Processing:** Data can be processed in ways that destroy obscurity and erode people's trust and autonomy. Industry already processes data and uses algorithms in inscrutable and dangerous ways. As a starting matter, governments and departments that are particularly committed to privacy might even consider adopting some of the framework of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation for data. This framework prohibits data processing without a legitimate reason. Facial As a starting matter, governments and departments that are particularly committed to privacy might even consider adopting some of the framework of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation for data. This framework prohibits data processing without a legitimate reason. Lawmakers should either prohibit the use of facial recognition technologies outright or subject them to procedural protections like mandatory privacy impact assessments before implementation and judicial authorization before use. Additionally, lawmakers should limit the reuse of data collected by body cameras for other facial recognition programs. Additionally, lawmakers should establish rigid rules limiting or prohibiting the reuse of data collected by body cameras. One of the key tenets of fair information process is what some call "purpose limitation."
4. **Data Dissemination:** Finally, lawmakers and courts must determine when data is disclosed and to whom. Instead of binary rules that either keep information locked up or release to the public for any and all uses, it might be best to use the relative obscurity and confidentiality of information as a slider to determine the extent to which information is protected and released. Some parties might have more access than others based on their need for information. Other kinds of data might be less sensitive or better obscured, for example with faces or sound blurred out or the entire screen blurred with a filter. Those who have been surveilled should be guaranteed access or at least a presumption of access to body camera data. One important problem to protect against is officers accessing records for retaliation purposes or just general snooping. This can be a violation of trust, obscurity, and autonomy. The ACLU has advocated that "[t]he use of recordings should be allowed only in internal and external investigations of misconduct, and where the police have reasonable suspicion that a recording contains evidence of a crime."

Lum, et al., Existing and Ongoing Body Worn Camera Research: Knowledge Gaps and Opportunities (2015):

Compiling existing research and concluding that BWCs may reduce complaints against the police or result in quicker resolution of complaints (see Katz et al., 2014; ODS Consulting, 2011). However, whether or not that signals increased accountability, improved citizen satisfaction, or improved police or citizen behavior is still uncertain. It is also unclear, perhaps because of low incident rates, whether BWCs significantly reduce incidents of use of force (either excessive or non-excessive). For instance, Ariel et al. (2015) finds that BWCs reduce use of force incidents, but Katz et al. (2015) find that arrest activity increases for officers wearing BWCs (Owens et al., 2014, also seem to find similar impacts on individuals being charged). Interestingly, Ready and Young (2015) seem to find that officers wearing cameras, while less likely to perform stop and frisks or make arrests, are more likely to give citations.

Lum, Stoltz, Koper, & Scherer, Research on body-worn cameras: what we know, what we need to know (2019):

Summarizing the research and finding mixed, equivocal results on most measures. It may be fair to say, however, that BWCs have not produced dramatic changes in police behavior, for better or worse. Although early findings indicated BWCs reduce the use of force by officers, more recent findings have been mixed, perhaps in part as a result of variation in agency policies regarding how the devices should be used. Both police and civilians are generally supportive of police using BWCs. Nonetheless, it is not clear that BWCs improve civilian views of police or their behaviors toward police. One exception is that BWCs may discourage citizens from filing complaints against police in some contexts (perhaps depending on the seriousness of the officer's misconduct), but this will not necessarily translate into citizens having more positive views of police. BWCs also might exacerbate an already challenged relationship between citizens and the police, especially if citizens expect cameras to be used to increase police accountability and transparency, but officers primarily use them to increase the accountability of citizens.

Kim, The Power of Observation: An Empirical Analysis of the Effects of Body Worn Cameras on Police Use of Force and Productivity (2020):

As the first cross-agency study on BWCs, this paper is able to over-come these empirical challenges. I find that BWCs are associated with a drop of 43% in use of force, a reduction of 81% in subject injury, yet not with officer injury, or other productivity measures such as crime and clearance rate.