From:	Gregory Gelembiuk
To:	Myadze, Charles; Keith Findley; Schieve, Luke; tbrown@ulgm.org; Veronica L; dokithia@gmail.com
Cc:	Kapusta-Pofahl, Karen
Subject:	Systemic effects of bodycams
Date:	Wednesday, October 28, 2020 3:23:31 AM
Attachments:	Outlook-zmix33yy.png Outlook-qyyrjbyy.png Outlook-avyqj2xn.png Outlook-fkknsqn0.png Outlook-vm2c3p2b.png

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This is intended as a one-way communication. Please do not reply all.

Fellow Committee Members,

I'm sending along some information/discussion points on bodycams. Specifically there's information here beyond what's in our current readings - examining systemic real-world effects.

1. An overall point.

Here's a podcast that worth listening to, by Nick Selby, a Texas police detective. He produces the Quality Policing podcast, in collaboration with Prof. Peter Moskos of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

podcast: https://www.spreaker.com/user/qualitypolicing/extra-body-worn-cameras-all-parts-in-one

He's a cop with a strong pro-cop bias, but he's articulated a lot of true things about bodycams - things that many people don't realize. Excerpt:

> Nick Selby:
>
> **The question that citizens and even police agencies should ask is 'What do we want these cameras to do?'. And they haven't been asking it. How do I know? When most cops get cameras they hate them. A year later they love them. When civilians hear that cops have cameras they love it. I year later they hate it.**
>
> **That says that neither cops nor civilians realize what they're getting into. And when they realize it, they change their minds.**

Some of the same material in an article by Selby: "Why Police Body Cams Aren't What They Seem to Be".
Excerpt:

“Today I think I have found the solution that will help law enforcement officers and our citizens go home safe,” Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) said in 2015. “That solution [is] body-worn cameras to be worn by our law enforcement officers throughout this country.”

There was literally no evidence that this was true.

Scott had no scientific basis for his conclusion. He just … hoped … that it would work. And that was despite our national experience with dashboard cameras in patrol cars, which some police executives said would address the issue of racial profiling—but failed to live up to their promise....

Almost all prosecutors are using the video to prosecute civilians, and almost none of them are using them for what we thought body cameras were there for.

What’s ironic is that Sen. Scott, a host of other officials, activists, and the press were scaling Mount Hype on body cameras much more aggressively than even the companies that sell the cameras—which found themselves in the strange position of having to temper wildly enthusiastic expectations, based on nothing but hope.

In October of this year, the biggest-ever randomized study of body cameras showed no measurable reduction in complaints or use of force by officers in Washington, D.C.

If you think that means body cameras aren’t working, well… you’re wrong. The truth is, body cameras are working just fine.

They’re just working differently from the way people expected they would....

The expectation was that, when officers had these cameras on their chests, people would be more courteous and less likely to fight, and officers would be more courteous and less likely to behave badly.

That’s not what happened.

What did happened was that police and prosecutors became better at demonstrating criminal behavior by civilians. Prosecutors in particular were able to more efficiently get plea deals....

“Everyone is coming to the body camera question with a totally different take on what

> these tools are going to be used for," Prof. Seth Stoughton of the University of South Carolina Law School, who specializes in the regulation of policing, told us.
>
> "The community thinks, 'Hey, you go this for officer-accountability reasons, but all you're using it for is to prosecute people.' I think that has the potential to be taken as a failure, a betrayal."

https://thecrimereport.org/2017/11/29/why-police-body-cams-arent-what-they-seem-to-be/?fbclid=IwAR2AIstHu-MN39O2w6tpPGaDsMJbqY4YE_krgy_WjKjnT0wXxBqlaXh9xjQ

2. Effect on perception of police culpability.

People who watch a bodycam video are less likely to blame an officer involved in an incident than if they watched a dashcam video of the incident or just read a report about the incident. Because officers are invisible in video from their own bodycams, viewers do not ascribe intentionality and blame to them.

Basically, bodycam video generates a perceptual distortion that insulates officers from being held responsible.

Article excerpt:

> "They found that people who watched a body cam version of an interaction—anything from the wearer bumping into someone to a police shooting—were less likely to believe that the person instigating that action did it on purpose, as compared to people who saw

the same interaction filmed by a dash cam.

There was a “diminished sense of blame or responsibility for the person who’s wearing the body cam,” Roese says.....

In a lab experiment, the researchers asked 203 people to read the report. Some participants also viewed body cam or dash cam footage of the incident. Then they had to decide whether the officer should be indicted on several different charges.

Seventy-one percent of dash cam viewers recommended indicting for assault, 69 percent for battery, and 60 percent for aggravated battery. But among body cam viewers, those figures were only 49 percent, 53 percent, and 49 percent, respectively.

Surprisingly, people who read the report without watching any videos were about as likely to indict as the dash cam group. The researchers don’t know why, but they speculate that when people do watch a video, they tend to focus on that and pay less attention to the report.

“Video dominates written words,” Turner says. “It’s almost like the report exists less when there’s a body cam.”

https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/body-cams-impartial-police?fbclid=IwAR1Fmr7tbzrhZ4KKGRBckNwgSCptrEG3lDLeR_Oyl1JR3NP1INa4C9RwCqo

Do Police Body Cameras Provide an Impartial Version of Events?

New research reveals that people assign blame differently after viewing body cam versus dash cam footage.

insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu

Note that the primary cause of this effect (causing decreased ascription of responsibility) appears to be that the officer is largely invisible in their own video - the wearer is largely out of sight, while the individual in front of them is visible. **This is much harder to rectify than a simple positioning effect** (e.g. a chest-mounted camera making the individual seem taller) **or jerkiness of video** (which could be partially rectified with image stabilization). Almost all bodycams just capture a forward view (there's one shoulder-mounted model that captures a 360 degree view, including the officer's head, but almost no departments use it).

Here's an article about Law Prof Seth Stoughton (a former police officer), also discussing

perceptual distortions - "Body cameras tell truth, right? Not so fast, professor warns". Excerpt:

> The law professor had one main message for prosecutors when he came to town: You shouldn't always believe your eyes.
>
> As the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and the police union hammer out details to implement body-worn cameras, prosecutors took an afternoon last week to learn how to use that evidence in court.
>
> "As a prosecutor, any time we can have video footage of significant events in a criminal action it's essential for us," Chief Assistant State Attorney Mac Heavener said before the training. "The jury essentially becomes a witness to the things that happened."
>
> But then Seth Stoughton, a University of South Carolina law professor and one of the foremost body camera experts, raised his hand to interject. "Actually, I'm going to spend time this afternoon about why that's not true."
>
> "When we're talking about body-worn cameras as evidence, there are cases where it will help, cases it obviously won't help, then cases where it looks like it will help but it actually hinders or harms." He said the cameras could even potentially result in wrongful convictions or acquittals.
>
> Camera footage can actually mislead, he said, making it look like something happened just because of the distortion of the camera or the angle. He showed the prosecutors a series of videos where an officer's use-of-force might have appeared warranted on footage. Then he showed the same situations from a different angle.
>
> Stoughton has prepared a similar quiz for The New York Times. Body cameras tend to make situations appear more intense and aggressive, he said....
>
> A national survey last year found that "nearly all prosecutors' offices in jurisdictions" with the cameras have used footage to prosecute private citizens, compared to 8.3 percent of offices that have used them to prosecute police officers.

3. Opinions of prosecutors and defense attorneys.

Various surveys and interviews have looked at the opinions of prosecutors and defense attorneys regarding the implications of bodycams. But in assessing the validity of some of these opinions, it's important to keep in mind that bodycams are a new technology (with much hype) - in most jurisdictions only rolled out in the last few years. So current opinions of effects may not always be trustworthy and may change as people acquire more experience.

Here are results of a survey of assistant district attorneys and public defenders in three jurisdictions (Monroe County, New York; San Diego County, California; and Travis County, Texas).

The majority of public defenders and assistant district attorneys agree that bodycams increase pleas [SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, A=agree, SA=strongly agree]:

Table 6: Beliefs about the impact of BWCs on case processing

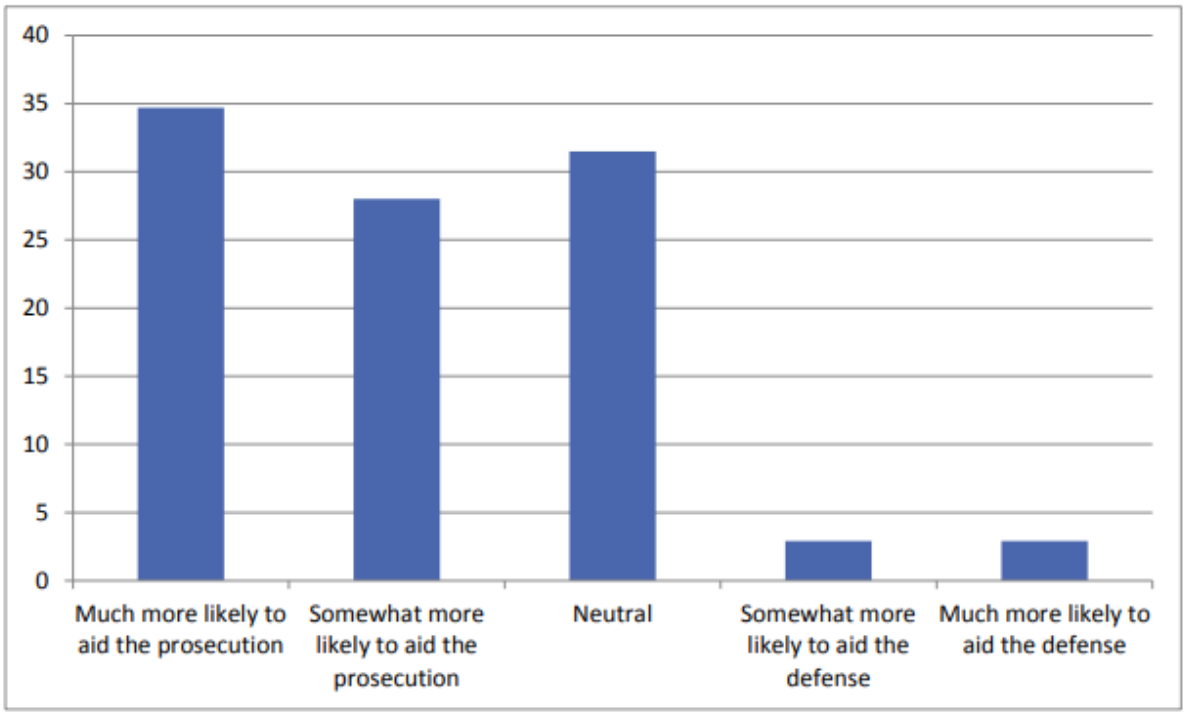
		% SD	% D	% No Op.	%A	% SA	Total N	X^2 (df)	*p*-value
Video Evidence Increases Pleas	PD	0	25.6	16.3	51.2	7	43	5.6 (3)	0.135
	ADA	0	17.9	22.6	39.6	19.8	106		

In the same survey, "Sixty-six percent of PDs agreed/strongly agreed that BWCs increased the likelihood of acquittals, whereas 61 percent of ADAs agreed/strongly agreed that they increased the likelihood of convictions." **Note that these majority opinions cannot, in reality, both be correct.** Opinions should eventually shift to be congruent as people gain more reality-based experience and understanding of the implications of bodycams.

Increase Likelihood of Acquittals/Convictions	PD	2.3	9.3	20.9	51.2	16.3	43	1.2 (4)	0.871
	ADA	2.8	15.1	20.8	43.4	17.9	106		

Here's a different report that only surveys lead prosecutors - "Body Worn Cameras and the Courts: A National Survey of State Prosecutors Survey of State Prosecutors":
From a survey of the lead prosecutor in 321 state prosecutor's offices:

Figure 12. "Overall, do you think that BWC evidence is more likely to aid the prosecution or the defense?" (n=314)



An individual opinion from the article by Nick Selby:

> "The big problem," said Steven Wasserman, an attorney with the Legal Aid Society in the Special Litigation Unit, "is that the police control the button."
>
> From the defense table, it's less about whether cameras are being used to go after misbehaving cops. Prosecutors who are using body worn camera video use it to decide whether to prosecute, and in preparing the charges they will bring.
>
> If you're imagining a courtroom with a jury watching, that's not it. What the prosecutors mainly use the video for is to get to a plea deal faster. There's evidence the video reduces time from arrest to plea....
>
> So how do body cameras shake out for the defense?
>
> "It is a sort of a net liability to the defense," Wasserman said. "The important thing is to make sure the recording is done in a way that approximates some kind of even-handedness and objectivity."

Excerpt from a San Diego newspaper article:

> On occasion, body camera videos may even be exculpatory evidence, helpful to those cited by police. But more often than not, body cameras hurt the defense, said veteran San Diego defense attorney Michael Crowley. Still, Crowley welcomes the videos, which can set the record straight and clear up discrepancies in the memories of an officer or suspect.
>
> “They help facilitate settlement, because it’s one thing if a law enforcement officer is writing in a report and it’s another if you can see it and test the accuracy of what the officer wrote down,” Crowley said. Still, “it’s not the panacea that’s going to solve everything,” he said....
>
> San Diego Police Chief Shelley Zimmerman has said body cameras have driven police complaints down in recent years. That’s because existing policy gives police supervisors discretion to show the footage to citizens who complain about police officer misconduct, “to assist in clarifying the complaint, resolving the complaint or having the complaint withdrawn.”....
>
> I’m concerned about individual sergeants doing that to try to dissuade someone from filing the complaint,” said Crowley, the defense attorney. “They are in an intimidating situation as it is. They don’t know the law on it. It just has the potential for coercion. … People don’t know what their rights are and don’t know if they’re being bamboozled.”
>
> Crowley said he recommends citizens have an attorney present while viewing the footage before dropping a complaint.

Excerpt from Gotham Gazette article "Thousands of Low-Profile Cases Could Turn on Police Body Camera Footage":

> According to Cynthia Conti-Cook, a staff attorney with the Legal Aid Society, “the way prosecutors interpret discovery laws in New York State and criminal procedure law really allows the prosecutor to delay what he or she is revealing, causing many people to plead guilty before potentially vital evidence is disclosed." This can place public defenders in difficult positions – if prosecutor determines that body camera footage isn't relevant to a case, the public defender may never see it.
>
> While key factors in many legal proceedings involving police body cameras will be when the camera is turned on (and off) and what is recorded, it is illegal for prosecutors to withhold footage that could exonerate a defendant.
>
> According to Debora Silberman, senior staff attorney with Brooklyn Defender Services, “prosecutors have an obligation under [the] Brady [Bill] that they are required, if there is exculpatory video, they're obligated, [by] ethical and constitutional obligations under the

law, to turn that over to us, and to make that known to us." But this doesn't necessarily mean that a public defender will have access to body camera footage, even if it does exist.

Conti-Cook of Legal Aid said that if there is a recording from a body camera that was not evidence a prosecutor wants to produce in support of their case, either because it exonerated the defendant or in any way undermined police testimony or other evidence, then the way that prosecutors work, the prosecutor will likely withhold that evidence until the day of trial, hoping for a guilty plea before they were forced to disclose.

When contacted for comment, multiple representatives for District Attorney offices disputed this. They claimed that the Supreme Court decision of Brady v Maryland, which established that prosecutors must turn over all exculpatory evidence, meant that body camera footage would have to be given to public defenders, regardless of whether that footage was favorable to a defendant or a police officer and D.A.

Still, some public defenders have expressed doubt that it is so cut and dry and closely followed in all cases.

As things stand now, public defenders are looking forward to the proliferation of body cameras, largely so they can contextualize cases. A problem that defenders often point to is the short amount of time they're given to prepare a case for a defendant. According to Conti-Cook "We have attorneys in Manhattan who don't learn the names of the complaining witnesses until the day before or the day of trial. And there's no way that you can prepare a case without having that information. So the night before they're always scrambling with coming up with a quick investigation, you prepare for the next day. But it really puts us systematically at a disadvantage when it comes to counselling our clients."

4. Effects of bodycams on prosecution rates.

When Mike Gennaco of OIR presented to our committee, he talked about the underappreciated large systemic effects of bodycams throughout the criminal justice system. More people are charged when bodycam video is available. Often prosecutors are charging without reviewing the video, but just based on their knowledge that video exists - since they believe the presence of video evidence will strengthen their case. Defendants don't obtain access to the video until much later, via the discovery process. Defendants most often then plead out, even if they're innocent, to get out of jail or move on with their lives.

There's much hard evidence that corroborates the pattern that Gennaco described.

Here is a table from a study by Groff et al (2019), which I've linked. They examined filing of misdemeanor charges in Los Angeles (all misdemeanor prosecutions for the City of Los Angeles are handled by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office). If bodycam footage is available, they found that prosecutors are 2.4 times more likely to file charges against a resident than if the responding officers did not wear bodycams (see estimates in columns 2 and 3 of the first line of the table; the 3rd column probably provides the most accurate estimates). Prosecutors are filing more charges because they believe they will now have more evidence to support the charges in court. The implication is that bodycam adoption is leading to filing of misdemeanor charges against a large number of residents who would not previously have been charged.
https://liberalarts.temple.edu/sites/liberalarts/files/BWCProsecution_FinalReport_1_18_19.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0drhqSYzxqGOvaU9qiDXhK7FVXR9KXYcgoIt9arcPKxE053NC1AGyPmYs

Table 23. *Effects of BWC Video Availability on Filing Outcomes*

Outcome	Model 1 Unadjusted	Model 2 Entropy	Model 3 PSM
Misdemeanor File			
Video Available	1.86***	2.42***	2.49***
	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.15)
Hearing			
Video Available	2.54***	1.26**	1.22*
	(0.21)	(0.11)	(0.12)
Other			
Video Available	0.64	0.65	0.59
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
vs. Misdemeanor Reject			
Loglikelihood	-98141.50	-5050.82	-5096.32
X^2	201.27***	357.62***	274.32***

Treatment: Video Available.
Control: Video Not Available.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Exponentiated coefficients (i.e., Relative Risk Ratios) are reported. Standard errors are reported in parentheses.
Entropy=Entropy Weighted Control; PSM=Propensity Score Matched Sample

A very large randomized controlled trial in Washington D.C. found no significant impact on almost any of the measured outcomes. In that study, bodycams did not significantly reduce use of force, complaints, etc. Only one outcome showed a significant change (at the p<0.1 level) - there was an increase in prosecutions of residents after controlling for officer characteristics (see row 1 column 1 in this table):
https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/suppl/2019/05/06/1814773116.DCSupplemental/pnas.1814773116.sapp.pdf

Table C.28: Effects of BWCs on Judicial Outcomes

	Prosecuted	Found Guilty	Not Found Guilty	Entered Plea	Not Pursued
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Officer Assigned BWC	3,633.3*	14.9	−14.8	111.0	−111.7
	(2,174.7)	(20.1)	(22.0)	(347.2)	(104.5)
charge_prosecuted_1000_rate_pre	0.9***				
	(0.1)				
trial_guilty_1000_rate_pre		0.01			
		(0.01)			
trial_not_guilty_1000_rate_pre			0.02		
			(0.02)		
not_trial_guilty_1000_rate_pre				0.1**	
				(0.03)	
not_trial_not_guilty_1000_rate_pre					0.03**
					(0.01)
gender_nonaMale	1,692.8	17.6	9.6	82.5	199.3*
	(2,937.1)	(27.8)	(25.8)	(309.9)	(106.0)
race_3_nonaRace: Other	5,274.9*	−24.2	−50.8*	332.0	−336.6**
	(2,845.3)	(23.7)	(26.4)	(533.0)	(146.4)
race_3_nonaWhite	6,831.2***	15.7	9.3	356.7	−157.3
	(2,514.0)	(26.1)	(33.2)	(298.7)	(163.2)
length_of_service_nona	−1,448.9***	−3.7***	−3.7**	−64.6***	−23.3***
	(140.7)	(0.9)	(1.4)	(12.9)	(6.8)
Constant	30,235.4	64.7	88.8	1,318.0	573.1
	(4,129.8)	(26.9)	(32.4)	(388.5)	(175.0)
N	1,922	1,922	1,922	1,922	1,922
R^2	0.3	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.02

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01
Outcomes are yearly event rates per 1000 officers.
Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

Here's another study, in Phoenix, that looked only at domestic violence cases. Again, charges were more likely to be brought if officers wore bodycams.
https://publicservice.asu.edu/sites/default/files/ppd_spi_feb_20_2015_final.pdf?TB_iframe=true&width=921.6&height=921.6

Exhibit 22: Domestic Violence Case Flow

	Pre-Test Case		Post-Test Comparison		Post-Test Camera	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Number of DV-Related Contacts [a]	878	100.0	933	100.0	252	100.0
Cases Initiated	369	42.0	320	34.3	103	40.9
Charges Filed	333	37.9	243	26.0	90	37.7
Case Furthered (Not Dismissed)	131	14.9	58	6.2	32	12.7
Plead Guilty	27	3.1	11	1.2	11	4.4
Guilty at Trial †	25	2.8	9	0.9	11	4.4

a The number of contacts is derived from the DV Pocket cards, which included data on 2,063 unique incidents from January 1, 2012 through July 31, 2014 from the Maryvale Precinct.

Here are results from a randomized controlled trial in Essex, UK, showing the probability of a detected offender being charged, based on whether the officers were wearing bodycams or not. "Risk Assessment" refers to the seriousness of the crime. Basically, given bodycam video, low-level crimes are charged at substantially higher rates, but there's minimal increase in the rate at which serious crimes are charged.
https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/BWV_Report.pdf

Table 2. Probability of charging for various levels of initial risk, and presence of BWV

Risk Assessment	Proportion of Detected Cases Charged		
	Treatment	Control	Difference
Standard	57%	45%	12%
Medium	80%	72%	9%
High	99%	98%	1%

Other studies have, in general, produced congruent results. The bulk of the evidence indicates that people are substantially more likely to be charged if responding officers were bodycams. Mostly the increase is in lower-level charges (misdemeanors).

It's worth considering the above in combination with the following - an interview with a reform minded former Baltimore police officer.
Interview excerpt.

> Former Baltimore Police Officer Mike Wood: "The laws are to the point where anybody can be locked up for pretty much any time. Like, one of the cases I did, in the Senate in Maryland I testified to is how you can't actually drive a car legally - it would be impossible - no-one could get this car from here to the end of the street completely legally. At any point in time."
>
> Interviewer: "So you can be arrested at any moment."
>
> Wood: "At any time."....
>
> [Discussing need to make arrest quotas]
> Interviewer, narrating: "The solution - drive two blocks away where we can easily find young Black men."
>
> Interviewer: "So who would you arrest here? For what? It seems like you need as reason. You were saying earlier..."
>
> Wood: [emphatically] "But you don't! That's the thing you're not understanding. So they

were in the street."

Interviewer: 'So that's enough?"

Wood: "That's enough. Yeah. Jaywalking. So they throw a cigarette on the ground. You can do it. And people do those petty arrests. You've seen them. So Freddie Gray being arrested for a spring-loaded pocket knife. You can't tell me that Black people carry spring assisted pocket knives at a greater ratio than white people do, or even Hispanics, since they're doing the construction sites around here. That's a ridiculous thing to say. Of course we all have spring, I have a spring assisted pocket knife..."

https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/08/baltimore-ex-cop-discusses-police-violence-toward-young-black-men.html?fbclid=IwAR1ayKQerbXzzUgpdcmNDRZXqIQtzPAQFA4AIt9zJ2HlPdWA-KWtL7SSYVQ

CRIME

Why Police Are So Violent Toward Black People

In the words of an ex Baltimore cop.

By LEON NEYFAKH and AARON WOLFE

AUG 06, 2015 • 12:57 PM

In assess bodycam impacts, it's critical to think about the impact on misdemeanor charging.

NPR story "Law Professor On How Misdemeanors Sweep Blacks Into The Criminal System" -

Excerpt:

> Misdemeanors — these types of low-level criminal offenses — account for about 80% of all arrests and 80% of state criminal dockets, says Alexandra Natapoff, a law professor at the University of California at Irvine and author of Punishment Without Crime.
>
> "It's surprising to many people to realize that misdemeanors — these low-level, often chump-change offenses that many of us commit routinely without even noticing it — make up the vast majority of what our criminal system does," Natapoff tells NPR's Ari Shapiro on All Things Considered.
>
> "The offenses can include everything from traffic offenses to spitting, loitering, trespassing, all the way up to more serious offenses like DUI or many domestic violence offenses," she says. "It's ... the vast majority of ways that individuals interact with police."
>
> Natapoff says the misdemeanor system has "not gotten its fair share of blame" for the racism of the U.S. criminal justice system and how it disproportionately affects people of color.

Natapoff:

> Although we rarely think about them this way, misdemeanors constitute the vast majority of the American criminal justice system. With over 10 million minor cases filed every year, compared to 3 to 4 million felonies, misdemeanors constitute approximately 80% of state dockets. Most criminal convictions in this country are misdemeanors, and most Americans experience criminal justice through the petty offense process. Indeed, in a system that is internationally infamous for its size and harshness, misdemeanors are one of the largest yet least appreciated sources of overcriminalization. While the war on drugs, terrorism, and the death penalty command center stage in the national debate, it turns out that the lowly misdemeanor is in fact the paradigmatic American crime.... When prosecutors fail to screen cases rigorously, low-level arrests convert too easily into criminal charges.

Many of the additional people prosecuted for misdemeanors because of availability of bodycam video, who wouldn't have otherwise been charged, will actually be guilty of the crime (though many who are innocent will also plead out). This process likely leads to more crime than it prevents. It's very well established that criminal justice system processing of juveniles for misdemeanors or low level felonies just increases future criminality relative to doing nothing, and there's reason to believe that may be true for adults as well. And in Madison, policing has been negatively impacting racial equity - year after year, the proportion of citations and arrests that have been of Black residents has continued to climb, and the disparity is one of

the worst in the U.S. Thus, there appears to be valid reason for concern that bodycam implementation will cause more harm than good.

5. An overall assessment of bodycams from the Justice Tech Lab at Texas A&M University.

The mission mottos of the Justice Tech Lab are "Technology is transforming the criminal justice system. Let's make sure it's for the better" and "Finding effective, scalable solutions to criminal justice problems". It assesses technology in the context of the criminal justice system.

Here's an article by Jennifer Doleac, an Associate Professor of Economics at Texas A&M University and Director of the Justice Tech Lab. "Body Cameras Don't Make Police More Accountable" - Excerpt:

> Did the public get anything for this investment? This is a rare instance where there is a lot of research. Many cities rolled out body-worn cameras as a randomized controlled trial — assigning some officers to wear cameras and others not. By comparing otherwise identical officers with and without cameras, researchers were able to measure the impact of the cameras themselves....
>
> All in all, the research does not point to a definitive conclusion — except maybe that body cameras alone do not lead to better officer-citizen interactions.
>
> One question is why this technology, which sounded so promising initially, didn't have the intended benefits. It could be that most officers who use unnecessary force do so because they genuinely fear for their physical safety — even if, in retrospect, it appears they were overreacting. In other words, the unnecessary use of force might not be malicious. If someone fails to keep their cool in a stressful situation, then cameras alone are unlikely to deter officers' behavior, because that behavior isn't a really a choice.
>
> There is another argument for the use of body cameras: Even if they don't always deter bad behavior, they can tell departments where to direct their attention. In some cases, additional training could be helpful. Yet policing is difficult and dangerous work, and it isn't for everyone. Some people won't change their behavior no matter how much training they receive. These people should not be police officers.
>
> Could cameras at least help identify those people? Possibly. But as it turns out, identifying problem officers is not difficult. Past complaints predict future bad behavior. Even if police departments had the capacity to watch tens of thousands of hours of body-worn camera footage — and they don't — such scrutiny would be of marginal utility in helping them figure out who needs training, reprimanding or firing. Their data on citizen complaints provide the information they need.

> This leads to the question of why they're not using it. After all, officers who receive a lot of complaints don't necessarily face bad consequences. Similarly, video evidence of bad behavior doesn't lead to bad consequences. In fact, even a viral video of a police officer killing someone who posed no threat does not always result in charges filed against that officer, or lead to that officer losing their job. (And in instances where officers do lose their jobs, it appears relatively easy for them to simply move to another department.) In short, bad behavior has few costs for police officers....
>
> As an economist, I love data. I also believe strongly in the power of incentives. Body-worn camera programs are an expensive attempt to find a way to build trust between police officers and their communities. Video footage alone can't do that, however, if there are no consequences for the bad behavior it reveals.

In closing:

Nick Selby talks about Mount Hype with bodycams. This is a technology that has a huge amount of hype around it, and people are caught up in that hype. It may be hard to believe now, but at one point, there was a huge amount of positive hype around lobotomies, and they were almost universally promoted as helpful and humane. They were the hot new thing. Likewise, there were points where total dental extractions and oophorectomies were hyped as effective treatment for the seriously mentally ill. As one author noted: "*Our follies are never-ending, because we are so quick to treat persons with mental illness with fashionable (for the era) social policy changes rather than evaluated treatment interventions. We pay lip service to evidence-based practice and practice the intervention du jour.*" As with serious mental illness, solving problems around policing is very difficult, and there's a temptation to jump to easy answers. There's now a lot of hype around bodycams. But we need to be careful not to be caught up in that hype. It's especially important to look at bodycams realistically and from a full systems perspective, rather than just thinking in terms of potential benefits in a particular hypothetical scenario one might imagine. If we don't properly assess the full costs and benefits, we risk doing net harm.

Greg