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When the Watchers Are Watched: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Body-Worn Cameras

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the individual construction of the body-worn camera (BWC) within what would be labeled as an average size police agency. Using a pre- and post-implementation qualitative design and leveraging interpretive phenomenological analysis as the analytical strategy, this research explores the nuanced reaction to this technological diffusion within the agency. Results reveal global themes spanning a continuum of negative and positive reactions to the diffusion, with an overwhelming acceptance of the device and individual construction of how best to use the device. While providing an initial lens of analysis for future researchers, the research includes considerable unanswered questions concerning what the diffusion of this technology holds for officers, agencies, and communities.

Introduction

Calls for greater police accountability abound as new means of surveillance have diffused throughout society (Goldsmith, 2010). These calls for accountability vest great power within the community, increasingly able to record encounters between police officers and the community. Historically, communities have struggled with holding officers accountable for their actions in the absence of documentation. As current events demonstrate, a state of distrust or diminished trust exists between many police agencies and the communities they serve. Accessible video technology and an efficient means of wide distribution afford the community the means of holding individual officers accountable for their actions. The advent of video evidence, recorded by community members, has led to profound changes in policing and heralded in tremendous progress.

As Goldsmith (2010) articulated, manifesting accountability within the golden age of video technology transitioned accountability from the court of law and other institutionalized channels to the court of public opinion and, by extension, those within the community with this technology. All too vivid is documentation of South African Police beating a protestor with a disability, police officers in Hong Kong using violence to disrupt pro-democracy protests, the historical account of the LAPD attack on Rodney King or the all-too-recent videos capturing inappropriate use of force and police brutality across the United States. However, this diffusion, while incredibly important to usher in reform, may reinforce police misconduct being the norm (Erpenbach, 2008).

The increase in video documentation of atypical police incidents has created an environment wherein these brutal, graphic, and exceptional reflections of the perception of police are common and increasingly used to generalize police practice. A common search for “police brutality” on the popular flash-video website YouTube, for example, produces over four-hundred thousand videos in 0.31 seconds. This does not reflect four-hundred thousand unique incidents of police brutality. Rather,

YouTube serves as a central repository, with each video providing documentation and thus reinforcement of police brutality as the norm.

Nearly two decades ago, Ericson (1995) suggested that police, when threatened with a power imbalance, would overcome to swing the pendulum and reclaim control. As Chan (2001) writes, of the many reasons information technology emerged, one outcome was a means of reasserting control. If the pendulum were swinging as Ericson (1995) suggested, the police would seek to reassert themselves and establish control by providing the context to frame incidents. Subsequently, police administrators face an unusual challenge as the pendulum of power shifts away from the agency, once able to establish the narrative by framing the context, to the community. In fact, in the context of the United States, in an era in which the community increasingly controls the context (Goldsmith, 2010), police agencies have taken steps as a means of reasserting their role in establishing the narrative.

The subsequent growth in surveillance technologies within large municipalities may suggest agencies lack trust in the community. The decision to implement body-worn cameras is a rational augmentation on the logic that implementation *may* address whatever issues plague the organization, be they actual or merely perceived. However, the response by police administration and city governments may inform and promote poor policy, facilitating short-term gain and resulting in long-term economic and social consequences. More specifically, the administrative response may pursue body-worn cameras (BWC) without considering the impact the device may have on officers, the agency, the community served, or society. Plans for implementation may be made without rigorous evaluation of the technology, leading to poor implementation and unintended consequences (White, 2013).

Currently, research looks from the outside in, establishing dangerous precedent for merely accepting implementation of the BWC without question. In the limited implementation studies on the device, the primary means of assessment relied upon survey research or output measurements—reduction in complaints and use of force (see White, 2013; Farrar, 2013, ODS Consulting, 2011). It is the intent of this research to start on the inside, specifically exploring the individual construction of the BWC as used by officers. Therefore, this research becomes exploratory, undertaken as a means of understanding the implementation of the BWC within an organization.

Recognizing the intersectionality of individual construction of technology, this study frames its analysis through the contextual emergence of the BWC as an accountability mechanism. Subsequently, this research provides a general genealogy of imaging as an accountability mechanism and a general overview of police misconduct, a behavior most often linked to the need for stronger accountability mechanisms. Using this analytical frame, I then introduce the officer perspective, and why the emergence of the BWC is an attempt to regain control, reassert trust in the organization, and reduce personal liability.

Image technology as an accountability mechanism

Prior to the growth of the internet, news organizations and public interest groups relied on photography as a means of holding agencies accountable for their actions (Kappeler et al., 1998). One of the most prominent times in which image technology was used to hold agencies accountable for conduct was in the 1960s. Consider the photograph taken by Bill Hudson in 1963 of a civil rights demonstrator in Birmingham attacked by a police dog. The initial report prompted no investigation. However, presentation of the photograph prompted an investigation and a public apology from the agency. Furthermore, the famous 1967 Newark riots, which lasted five nights and resulted in numerous cases of police brutality, 23 dead, and over seven-hundred injured, produced among many, a powerful black and white image involving two officers walking out a young black male from a home, covered in blood. This photograph epitomized in many ways the reality of those who felt oppressed.

Immortalized within these works are visual depictions of the history of police brutality acting as important sources of cultural transmission for normalized police brutality (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997). The police, while admitting excessive force in certain situations, tried to explain the context within which they occurred—offering them not as a systemic issue of excessive force and misconduct but instead as a tragic response to a devastating event. In many ways, police administrators and individual officers responded by suggesting that these incidents were a rational response to a set of irrational circumstances.

These images represented and reinforced the perception of police as prone to misconduct and excessive force. These images provided proof that, in many incidents, officers engaged in misconduct, which then prompted national inquiries seeking redress. While larger social forces prompted the national inquiries, the role of imaging as an accountability mechanism did have an impact on the perceptions of communities, driving public outcry and subsequent political involvement.

Video recording and accountability

While a single image can convey a tremendous amount of information, a video provides a visceral recounting of an incident. Very few people have forgotten the video of the brutal beating Rodney King endured at the hands of the LAPD. Likewise, the video of a restrained protestor being repeatedly shocked with a Taser while on the ground has lasting appeal to those who contest the use of the device or challenge policy to increase its threshold placement on the continuum of force.

As cell phones became more compact and the ability to record video became a standard feature, the ability for citizens to record incidents and engage in “citizen journalism” increased (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011, Mansour, 2012). Unlike photography, video would push the pendulum of power towards the community. However, it was not until the advent of social networking, co-occurring

with the availability of video recording devices and accessible internet, that the power of the community would tip even more (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011).

Social networking and accountability

Over the last decade, the amount of information available has increased and the amount of users on the internet has expanded exponentially to a staggering 2.8 billion people (Internet World Stats, 2014). Social networking, as an accountability mechanism, focuses on the ability for users to share their experiences—be they real or fabricated. The two primary mechanisms this occurs through are social blogging and social media websites (i.e., news stories selected and voted upon by users) like Reddit, Nowpublic, and digg. Currently, the capacity for citizens to act as an accountability mechanism is reflected in the speed with which users can “tweet”¹ or Instagram² their daily interactions and the ability of users to disseminate information (in audio, visual, and text) across any time or place via smartphone (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, Elhusseiny, 2011, Bhuiyan, 2011, Mansour, 2012).

Police misconduct as the catalyst

Police misconduct

Initially, agencies addressed misconduct via improvements within recruitment, selection, academy training, field training, and supervisory monitoring and review (White, 2007; Chan, 2003; Manning, 1997). Despite improvements in these areas, incidents of misconduct within agencies reaffirmed the belief that misconduct is a systemic issue amplified by sociopolitical and technological factors. For example, consider the myriad of videos available concerning the Rampart CRASH Unit investigation, video footage of Occupy Wall Street protests and inappropriate use of force complaints, isolated incidents pertaining to closed-circuit video feeds, and the all-too-vivid recordings of officer-involved shootings of unarmed citizens. Proliferation of this footage reinforces the perception that police misconduct is endemic. However, these perceptions are contrary to research demonstrating serious misconduct as statistically low considering the tremendous volume of police-citizen interactions (Baker, 2002).

Decades of research demonstrate misconduct is not a systemic issue. Rather, misconduct is a product of lax organizational and supervisory oversight, officer isolation, victimism, the emergence of an “Us vs. Them” mentality, and the unique local historical, economic, and political issues of the community (Manning, 1997; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993; Delattre, 1989). The isolation experienced by officers and the nature of police-citizen interactions foster opportunities for misconduct (Baker & Carter, 1994). This can occur via modeling of other officers’ conduct, developing strategies for “what works” (Chan, 2003), and acting with a lack of supervision (Walker & Katz, 2002; Rubinstein, 1973; Reiss, 1971).

When serious issues of misconduct occur, agencies often reexamine the mechanisms that *could* have uncovered the problem or, as critics may offer, “prevented” the incident. This may result in the

formation of committees, additional training and organizational oversight (Ivković & Haberfeld, 2015), implementation of citizen-review boards (Walker, 2001), additional rules to govern interactions (Manning, 1997), and the deployment of integrity tests (Roberts, 2005; Punch, 2000; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993).

Supervision has been the primary accountability mechanism for police misconduct (Walker & Katz, 2002). However, a combination of patrol staffing and limited supervisory roles within agencies has made it difficult for an ideal level of supervision. The importance of this accountability mechanism is seen in the research of Weisburd et al. (2000), in which 90% of surveyed officers agreed that effective supervision prevents police misconduct. More specifically, when patrol sergeants effectively carry out supervision, there is a noted decrease in police misconduct (Klockars, Ivkovich, Harver, & Haberfeld, 2000; IACP, 1989).

If the greatest internal accountability mechanism is supervision, then agencies and communities may look to the BWC as the technological panacea to the absence of patrol-sergeant-supervised interactions. What follows is an overview of the mobile video system (MVS) and the pilot program initiating the diffusion of the BWC across a police service. Both implementations occurred at the height of criticism of police practice.

Mobile video systems

As a means of addressing increasing complaints and allegations of racial profiling, the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) created the In-Car Camera Incentive Program (IACP, 2004). This program created funds for agencies to deploy the in-car camera within patrol vehicles. The initial cameras were stationary and had a fixed field of view, making them ideal for traffic stops but not as effective for recording other police-community interactions.

A National Institute of Justice report noted that prior to the COP funding initiative, 3,400 (11%) of state police and highway patrol vehicles were equipped with in-car cameras (IACP, 2004). The IACP (2004) found that in the 3-year period following the funding initiative, there was a considerable increase in implementation of the in-car camera, with over 21 million dollars in grants dispersed to agencies. The implementation rate as of 2004 was over 17,500, which represented nearly 72% of total state patrol vehicles (IACP, 2004).

From the internal accountability perspective, the IACP (2004) report noted several dramatic findings, which included "improving agency accountability". Agencies utilizing the videotapes as a component of supervisory review noted a reduction in officer complaints (IACP, 2004). Officers utilizing the systems reported they believed the system increased safety and they noticed a positive change in citizen behavior when citizens were notified the interaction was being recorded (IACP, 2004). Citizens

expressed the systems made them feel safer, though they did note they wanted to know when they were being recorded (IACP, 2004).

From an internal accountability perspective, the problems with the MVS primarily related to the general lack of policy governing the utilization of the system (IACP, 2004). There was a wide range of discretion in the utilization of the device (a reduction in accountability) and officers' had concerns that the device was primarily a tool for monitoring performance (IACP, 2004).

In addition to these noted problems, the utilization of the MVS and subsequent retention of video recordings created additional challenges. How would an agency approach Freedom of Information Act requests for videotapes of specific incidents? Currently, some agencies still utilize videocassette recorders and the process for examining the footage takes considerable resources. As agencies transition into digital recording, viewing footage is becoming less resource intensive; however, increased requests could increase resources expended. This interaction effect is noted in the work of Chan (2001) pertaining to information requests. In addition, digital video recording is often met with skepticism. As noted in the IACP (2004) report, "a Tennessee jury requested that a patrol car be brought into the court as evidence as they were concerned with the safeguards in place to protect against alteration of the video" (p. 50).

Skepticism within the community coupled with a lack of policy governing the utilization of the MVS prompted the IACP to issue a policy recommendation. The IACP (2004) recommends policy similar to the American Bar Association (ABA) and Justice Project's policy recommendation concerning the recording of custodial interrogations. The IACP (2004) policy recommends the use of the mobile video system in all priority responses, all vehicular pursuits, all prisoner transports, all crimes in progress, and all traffic stops (IACP, 2004). In addition to mandating recording of these specific situations, the recommendation includes a statement governing the recording of the totality of the incident. Current technology allows for the recording of an entire 12-hour shift. However, the IACP notes that the utilization of the MVS should only occur during police-community interactions with no need to record routine patrol.

Body-worn cameras

Prior to describing evaluations of the BWC, it is important to describe the device. According to the official definition, body-worn cameras are

mobile audio and video capture devices that allow officers to record what they see and hear. Devices can be attached to various body areas, including the head, by helmet, glasses or other means, or to the body by pocket, badge or other means of attachment (such as in-car on the dash). They have the capability to record officer interactions that previously could only be captured by in-car or interrogation room camera systems. (NIJ, 2012)

There are several different models of devices in use today. In fact, the National Institute of Justice identified eighteen different models (NIJ, 2014). The devices range from shoulder-mounted and head-mounted to gun-mounted and taser-mounted. Mounting can occur to the belt, lapel, the head via a headset, or as an attachment to sunglasses. Models range in size, from a deck of cards for the entire recording device, to a small recording camera attached by a cord or Bluetooth to the storage medium.

Recording resolution ranges from 640x480 to high definition resolutions of 1920x1080. Recording life varies considerably from 1.5 hours to 12 hours with standby time covering an entire shift at the lowest end to well over a week (NIJ, 2012, p. 27). The primary BWCs in use today feature evidentiary safeguards by way of security hashing and user tracking as means of ensuring data is not manipulated and ensuring the authenticity and integrity of the videos. While all devices include date and time stamping of footage, other tasks, such as tagging specific details of the interaction (e.g., case number) and locating those taggings within hours of footage, remain time consuming (NIJ, 2012). Storage of evidence occurs either on the evidence management system of the department or on the cloud-based video management tool, *Evidence.com*.

Evaluations of the BWC

In 2007, the Home Office commissioned an evaluation of a pilot program involving the deployment of head camera devices. The device utilizes a small video camera recording to an internal compact computer drive. The report, titled *The Plymouth Head Camera Project*, noted several initial findings concerning officer safety, reduction in crime, improved crime detection, and increased prosecution. In fact, in the context of officer safety, researchers identified an 18% reduction in officer wounding (Somer, 2007). Additionally, agencies employing the device noted a 40% reduction in complaints, specifically for incivility and excessive use of force (Somer, 2007).

Initial analyses of pilot studies undertaken in Orlando, Phoenix, Mesa, and Rialto suggest implementation of the BWC yielded positive results. Results of the Mesa and Rialto studies suggest a 60% decline in complaints against officers (White, 2013). This tremendous decrease in claims had a profound impact on the agencies' resources. Additionally, the Rialto evaluation indicated that use of force by officers decreased by 50% (White, 2013). Research on officer perceptions by Jennings, Fridell, and Lynch (2014) indicated police officers generally supported the device and believed it could improve their fellow officers' behavior, their behavior, and even that of the community.

Unfortunately, while these studies provide some insight, the varied research designs, implementation strategies, protocols, and policies limit their generalizability. For example, initial results suggest that arrest rates increase, because officers are more likely to make an arrest and those arrests are more likely to be charged and to result in a guilty plea (White, 2013, Somer, 2007). However, this has not been corroborated by other studies. Moreover, a widespread technological diffusion of this level

necessitates careful planning and a political and administrative commitment to consider all perspectives prior to implementation. It is for this reason that the present study explores the officer perspective, allowing them a voice on the inevitable implementation of the BWC.

Methods

Recognizing technology is an individual, organizational, and social construction, this research uses a qualitative methodology employing Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). As summarized by Smith (2011), IPA provides the necessary framework for qualitative data analysis when attempting to gain an insider perspective into a phenomenon while recognizing the shaping of that interpretation by the researcher. While other qualitative methods concern a specific context (i.e., the nature of the phenomenon), IPA replaces the phenomenon as the object of analysis, instead focusing on the *person* experiencing the phenomenon—or in this case, the person experiencing the body camera. IPA acknowledges the lived and shared experiences of participants, offering insight into how participants make sense of those experiences (Smith, 2011; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Participant selection focuses on purposive sampling, selecting a small and homogenous sample for understanding the divergent and convergent experiences of specific populations (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The primary means of participant selection includes the participant's ability to inform the research questions (Aresti, Eatough & Brooks-Gordon, 2010). Generally data is obtained from these small samples through semi-structured individual interviews, although focus groups (Tomkins & Eatough, 2010), email interviews (Murray & Harrison, 2004), internet forums (Chappell, Eatough, Davies & Griffiths, 2006) and diary entries (Smith, 1999) have been analyzed using IPA. Researchers have also found success in applying IPA to open-ended questions on written surveys (Epstein & Ogden, 2005).

Summary of interpretative phenomenological analysis

IPA is a double hermeneutic methodology, meaning the interaction between the participant's narrative and the researcher's interpretation is co-occurring as the construction develops (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA then is both social constructionist and phenomenological, and it is typified as a Grounded Theory approach. Unlike traditional interview methodologies, the production of an objective record of particular phenomena is not the intention of IPA. Rather, the detailed lived experience of a homogenous sample is the desired outcome (Smith, 2011). These lived experiences are not a straightforward data set ready for analysis, as IPA is not a simple descriptive methodology. Subsequently, the researcher must complete the interpretation of this information. It is this interpretation setting IPA apart from other qualitative methods, which also acknowledge that researchers cannot separate themselves from the findings of their research.

As Smith (2011) details, it would be wholly careless to assume a researcher could suddenly remove themselves from the meanings of the world around them. Subsequently, the interpretation of data within the framework of IPA acknowledges the inability to deny the preconceptions a researcher may hold about their world and its influence on the outcomes (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). For example, I have spent the last decade studying technology implementation within agencies and most recently finished an analysis of high-volume genetic forensic practice from the officer perspective. My knowledge and experiences working within police agencies affords me a unique vantage point for describing the “real reality” of my respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, my capacity for describing this “real reality” is situated within the contextualization of the implementation of the device. It becomes not my interpretation of the perception, but, rather, the interpretation of the phenomena according to my respondents.

Recognizing this basic underlying assumption, IPA provides a methodological framework incorporating a systematic approach to the development of thematic conceptualizations from these experiences rather than broad generalizations. This thematic analysis develops over the course of multiple reviews of the interview material beginning with the development of basic themes, representing commonalities and distinct points, then clustering into organizing themes, and finally coalescing around global themes or superordinate themes (Smith & Firth, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Stirling, 2001). The initial thematic analysis is descriptive. However, as clustering occurs, the researcher begins to interpret the organizing themes as they develop. As these organizing themes develop, the researcher identifies superordinate themes, merging the descriptive (what is said) with the theoretical (what is interpreted). The outcome of this process is a heuristic tool of global themes suitable for future research.

As a means of illustrating the process of thematic analysis, consider the following. The context of this conversation concerns the removal of the in-car camera during the implementation.

Interviewer: Because the in-car cameras are being removed, right?

O3: Yeah, which I find personally frustrating. Just because if you ever watch any of the police videos or any of the shows, if you see an officer walking up to a car and a person starts shooting at them or doing something, they're scrambling all over the place. I mean, they're not necessarily facing what's going on; they're running around, trying to find cover, trying to do what's necessary. But you have that broad view from that dash-cam; it catches it all. And with the other camera, now you've got: what did the officer see, plus the whole situation. I don't see why you wouldn't want both, personally.

The initial analysis of the conversation highlights frustration, a loss of control, potential liability concerns, and fear for personal and professional safety—stemming from the removal of the in-car

camera and the inability for the BWC to capture the totality of the incident. While the initial thematic analysis provides ample insight into the phenomenon, missing are the organizing themes, which overlap the extraction of the basic themes. As the researcher obtains more information, additional basic themes and organizing themes develop, providing insight into the phenomena. Lastly, analysis of these organizing themes produces a set of global themes. Specific to the above conversation, the global themes that emerged included missing the nuances of the moment, officer credibility, technology concerns, and establishing the entire context.

Analogous research

As introduced prior, currently no research exists on the BWC experience of police officers and IPA as a methodology is rarely applied in the field of policing. However, studies on the lived experience of technology use in the field of medicine provide valuable insights into the change in culture and behavior that can occur because of technology adoption. While the field of medicine may seem atypical to the experiences of police, the similarities are considerable. Both occupations carry considerable liability, require immediate decisions, and involve tremendous internal and external accountability and oversight. Alasad (2002) examined the lived experience of critical care nurses and their use of technology in an intensive care unit. The researcher analyzed interviews with 22 nurses and 240 hours of observation. The author found the use of technology helped nurses feel in control because it gave them constant access to critical health information about their patients.

Although stressful initially, nurses emphasized the importance of developing competence in technology. Initially, there seemed to be so much difficulty adjusting to the use of so many different pieces of equipment that it detracted from seeing the patient as human. As nurses gained experience, they were better able to balance the attention given to the patient and the technology used to monitor the patient's health. Many nurses felt once they adapted to the use of technology they greatly relied on it and were not sure how they could function without a constant flow of readily available information. Alasad's study illustrates the ways nurses change their behavior and adapt their rituals because of technology adoption. As discussed within this study, officers underwent the same changes and made similar adaptations.

Location

In an effort to highlight the individual, organizational, and social construction of the BWC, this research takes place in a small agency with 30–40 officers, primarily working patrol. Despite being a smaller agency, the unique context of servicing both permanent residents and a diverse population of college students provides a backdrop for considerable interactions between the police and the community. Moreover, the agency has faced challenges dealing with a marked increase in violent crime, experiencing a 41% increase in violent crime and assaults between 2002 and 2007 and a further

45% increase in Part I index crimes between 2008 and 2010. Concentration of these crimes occurred within areas primarily housing students.

Participant selection

Inclusion into the research was voluntary and distribution of an interview request occurred by way of the chief of police. This request indicated participation was voluntary and detailed the single research question regarding officer experience with the body-worn camera (BWC). Participants selected the interview location where they most felt comfortable, with all selecting various rooms within the agency. The sample for this study contains a pre- and post-implementation design, including twelve (n=12) officers responding to an extensive survey assessing their perspectives of the BWC and nine officers (n=9) participating in post-implementation interviews. While twelve surveys and nine interviews may seem low, it is important to note that IPA concerns itself with the unique experiences of participants. When applying IPA, researchers adopt minimal sample sizes, often about ten (Smith et al., 2009). Interviews ranged from 20 minutes to over an hour, totaling approximately six hours of recorded interviews and comprising nearly 170 pages of transcription. A research assistant transcribed the interviews verbatim and analysis occurred within the IPA framework (as described within the methodology section).

The body-worn camera

As detailed prior, there are a range of devices available to agencies. The BWC device used by the agency in the study is the Autonomous eXtended onOfficer Network (AXON), by TASER International. The AXON device acts as a digital recording device—recording interactions at the push of a button— and acts as a communication device for the officer. According to the chief of police, in total the agency spent in the “neighborhood of \$60,000” for the initial equipment and for a three-year period of digital storage at *Evidence.com*, the cloud-based storage service provided by TASER International.

Results

Prior to implementation of the body-worn camera

Twelve officers (n=12) responded to the survey request. What follows is the thematic analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions, including verbatim quotes from participants. Sectioning of the thematic analysis uses a dichotomous scheme of negative and positive. This scheme was undertaken because the primacy of the initial frustration prior to implementation produced overwhelmingly negative attitudes concerning the device.

Negative themes

Potential management abuse

When presented with a question concerning their overall feelings towards the BWC, the majority of officers believed implementation of the BWC merely reflected monitoring individual officers. The following statements highlight this frustration.

Regardless of statements used by management, the primary use of these videos will be to police the officers' actions and to be used for disciplinary actions.

Obviously a tool by administration to monitor officers rather than trust them.

At best it's probably a desire for lazy management at worst management hopes to use it as a disciplinary tool.

While the above are brief statements, the thematic analysis identified basic and organizing themes surrounding the emotional experiences of the officers, including frustration, anger, and resentment. Some officers reflected on management as a whole, while others directed their criticisms toward the new chief of police as displayed in the following responses.

Body worn cameras could have the potential to be a great optional investigative tool. Mandating their use as administrative oversight taints the value. If the Chief truly doesn't trust officers and wants to video all of our work, he should get out of his office and meet his employees. We are not the criminals. We are good, hardworking, honest employees who have devoted our lives to public service. We have a tough job and it only gets harder when every word we speak and every action we take is scrutinized out of contexts. It was obvious the Chief made up his mind and was not going to accept any input from the Guild.

The Chief has a great disconnect from his officers. It is easier for him to look at a video than to invest the time to know his officers. If he knew us, he wouldn't push mandated use to monitor us. He would give us a tool to help us.

It is important to add the decision to implement these devices occurred early into the tenure of the new chief of police. The organizational culture was still adjusting as the chief encountered resistance from the police guild and individual officers on organizational decisions concerning staffing and shift adjustments.

Increased work

Increased workload is the second negative theme emerging from the thematic analysis. Commonly noted was the increase in workload stemming from reviewing recorded video to ensure it matched the report. Additionally, the requirement to tag videos and add the appropriate metadata (case information, incident details, etc.) concerned officers, as displayed in the following comment: "I will

spend way more of my time tagging videos and adding metadata to videos. I will spend less time on patrol doing other tasks because of it.” It is important to add that implementation had not occurred. Officers were constructing the use of the device within their current practices.

Officers were also concerned with potential public information requests, which could increase the workload of the department, removing support staff from other more worthwhile tasks. Several officers believed, “The public records requests for video will be overwhelming Handling video files as evidence after the fact will be extremely time consuming.” Additionally, officers remarked on the possibility that the camera would inhibit confessions or statements from witnesses, though only a few officers addressed this. The following statement reflects this concern: “There is the real possibility that the camera could hinder our ability to obtain confessions in some situations, suspects tend to stop talking once they know they are being recorded.”

Distracting from the moment

One of the unanticipated negative global themes emerging prior to implementation is the BWC’s potential to distract officers from the moment. The organizing theme reflected the increased danger the device posed to officers. While only discussed by two officers, it did generate a global theme connecting to other potential dangers the device posed to the officer and agency.

I believe that the net effect of the introduction of much of the technology as of late is more of a distraction from police work than an enhancement. The ability to use the senses in real time, and to make quick and correct decisions under stress and time constraints is of extreme importance. Introducing distractions, such as buttons to press, cameras to aim, monitors to monitor, and keyboards to type on detract from these crucial abilities.

As we have seen in news coverage, video only captures a small amount of what is going on and does not always give a true picture of the situation. In addition, if an officer starts to worry about what he is doing and/or saying may look bad on video, will that momentary lapse or delay result in injury to the officer or bystanders?

Missing the nuances of the moment

Connecting to the organizing theme of danger, this negative global theme reflects the concern that the BWC might capture the situation, but miss the nuances of the moment. Additionally, this global theme contained the most basic themes: (a) mistrust of the officer; (b) the sterility of the video, which lacks the emotional state of the incident and prominence of the incident necessitating an immediate response, known as split second syndrome (Fyfe, 1986); and (c) the relationship between experience and a capacity to filter sensory information.

While the camera may provide the officer's perspective of a scene, it does not capture the peripheral nor the heightened state of the scene. As stated by an officer, "It does not capture all the sounds and details that human perception does." Building on this point, officers worried about "administration, politicians, the public, etc. not understanding that the camera DOES NOT capture what the Officer perceives, it only captures what the camera is pointed at ... The camera has no training or experience." This is a point echoed throughout the comments, including the following specifying how the video was actually "unfair" to the officer.

By having a video for the jury to see, they will listen less to the officer's expertise and perspective and focus on the video, which may or may not show what the officer witnessed and/or actually observed. There may be something in the video that later seems obvious that the officer missed due to psychological stress factors and made judgment calls without having the benefit of factoring that information into the judgment. Everyone filters sensory information based on their experience. It is unfair to allow juries to allow juries or judges to believe they have the perspective of the officer using only the experience they bring to the scene and not the experience that the officer does. Juries will have the benefit of watching the video repeatedly while the officer had only once. In criminal cases, the jury may not be able to see something the officer did because the video was out of focus but then deem the officer less credible because of it.

Potential for abuse

While not a global theme, the following organizing theme is important as it reflects the mistrust regarding use of the footage by external agencies directly or indirectly. For example, early release of footage could complicate an ongoing case. Additionally, incorrect timestamps and lack of oversight could result in segments of video being released to the media. As officers mentioned, "Cameras have limited abilities and perceptions and could be used negatively by outside influences to create problems. How many times have you seen video where the clips were cut to create the perception someone wanted to portray, rather than the entire circumstance?"

Officer credibility

This global theme concerns the capacity for the BWC to undermine officer credibility. Through development of this global theme, officers spoke to the coming evolution of police work and broader concerns involving technology and privacy. While officers acknowledged the utility of the BWC, the broader concern represented how failure to capture a statement on camera may eventually be used to suggest that the statement had never been made. Before the implementation of the BWC, the word of the officer would have been enough. However, the officers believed, "Net affect will be that statements that would have previously been trusted on the officer's word will need to be backed up by what is mistakenly seen as the truth of an 'objective' viewpoint." Additionally, officers expressed

concerns about the erosion of privacy at both the officer and public level, speaking to the “implementation of an Orwellian level of surveillance.”

Technology concerns

The overall concern, as reported prior to implementation, regarded potential failures in recording—operator error or technical error and lack of real-time control of the device (e.g., checking where the device is pointed). The latter is not merely the potential that the device is recording out of the field of view. Rather, the device may fail to capture a specific angle and this failure will not be known until the officer reviews the footage. There are no retakes or re-shoots as it pertains to incident documentation.

Curbing discretion

The last negative theme concerns the capacity for the BWC to curb officer discretion, typified by the following comment concerning the officer being “less likely to be lenient in some circumstances, because of a fear of discipline for not following the exact letter of the law or policy.” Additionally, this theme includes the organizing theme of fear. This organizing theme centers on the hypothetical capacity of the BWC to increase personal liability, including insuring against unmanageable risk. Central to this fear is the potential of deciding not to make an arrest, only to have the person then commit another crime. While not a new fear within the use of discretion, the BWC would provide video evidence of that initial interaction.

Positive Themes

Establishing the entire context

Transitioning to the positive global themes, officers believed the BWC could reduce liability by establishing the entire context of the incident. While several officers reported the device held limited to no benefit to the organization, some acknowledged the direct benefits concerning liability, best exemplified in this comment: “I like the idea of having my actions recorded to assist me in accurate recording and protecting myself from lawsuits and complaints ... The cameras allow people to see/hear how much we tolerate.” Additionally, officers spoke to the ability to establish the entirety of the context and reassert the actuality into the narrative forming.

We are often being watched and recorded by the public anyways, so I feel better about having the incident captured from my perspective in its entirety, as compared to a 30 second edited clip uploaded to YouTube by a partial citizen.

Improving professionalism

The potential the BWC has for improving professionalism within the agency is another positive global theme. Several officers commented on how “implementation of body worn cameras is leading our agency in the right direction” but believed reliance on the BWC as the only means of recording an

interaction could prove “misconceived.” Additionally, officers reported the ability for the device to document evidence and hold officers more accountable for their behavior—best represented in the following comment.

Current thoughts are they may be good for some evidence gathering so can be helpful, don't think they will create any problems for the officers although they may hold some officers to a higher standard of professionalism, will assist in stopping complaints about officers if they occur.

Pre-implementation summary

The frustration and suspicion present before implementation reflects the broader context of organizational culture, lack of familiarity with the device, and general concern concerning the device, which while beneficial, could prove detrimental to the organization and individual officers. Central to many of the concerns were the unsatisfactory responses many officers felt they had received about why the agency was pursuing the device. There had been no catalyst event calling for an increase in accountability and there existed no high profile cases or lasting concerns for accountability. Many officers wanted to know why the device was being pursued, and answers like “it will ultimately help you” were not enough.

When presented with an opportunity to suggest alternatives for using the allocated funding, overwhelmingly, officers indicated training and staffing concerns. The comments ranged from a common statement, such as “training, filling open positions, better and newer essential equipment” and “filling the two open patrol positions” to more frustrated comments, including, “The cameras cost over \$40,000. We are still understaffed. Why not hire more cops if they have money to waste on toys.” The following excerpt epitomizes the entirety of the feelings towards the BWC, displaying global themes across the positive and negative spectrum. It is added here in its entirety, as this was a response to an open-ended survey question and nearly perfectly aligns with the positive and negative themes emerging from the analysis.

Absent any cost consideration and given a policy that allows me to use it as a tool and doesn't dictate using it at all times or doesn't change how I interact with the public, more ‘hard proof’ from my perspective is great. However, the cost is ludicrous and will only continue to increase. It will add stress when it doesn't work and at worst will make me appear to be hiding something and thus less credible. There doesn't appear to be any rhyme or reason for doing this and it makes me suspicious of management's motivations. The absence (not lack) of direct communication from management about this only furthers my suspicions. Management says it's for additional evidence to prosecute cases, but the prosecutor's office rarely dumps cases because of problems with the officer's testimony. Management says it's for vindicating us from complaints, but I've never heard of someone actually being disciplined for something they didn't do. There's an

argument for the cameras increasing the community's trust in officers, but our community trusts us a great deal. The biggest group of people who generally don't like us are the students, but generally the reason they don't like us is for what we ACTUALLY do ('ruin their fun') not so much because they believe we're corrupt or dishonest. The notion of cameras increasing officer safety is laughable. A camera won't save my life unless it's in the shape, size and composition of a ballistic vest. It might help catch and convict the murderer who killed the cop, but that will be little consolation to their spouse and children. By contrast, the same money that went to fund and maintain the camera could've put another cop next to the officer that got killed or could've gone towards honing that officer's DT and firearms skills with additional training.

After implementation of the body-worn camera

In total, seven patrol officers participated in the post-implementation interviews. Overwhelmingly, the apprehension had subsided. Officer perceptions displayed optimism, enthusiasm, and a greater acceptance of the device and the direct and indirect benefits provided. While overlaps exist within the thematic analysis, the global themes emerging predominately demonstrate benefits instead of suspicion and skepticism. Therefore, the thematic analysis does not employ a dichotomous structure (positive/negative) as the global themes emerging exist on a continuum as officers individually constructed how they would use the device (e.g., while more work is created in one area, a decrease is observed in the other).

Increased workload

Overwhelmingly, officers reported increasing workload as a primary concern. Primarily, the time taken to tag videos with the appropriate information concerned officers. Officers who were on top of their tagging faced minimal increases in their workload, but if the call queue was elevated for a few days or calls took longer to clear, tagging could backlog, as demonstrated in this excerpt.

More or less, it's the cases that are going to put you into overtime. But then if you have that added—you know, if you have 20 videos you have to tag, and some of them you have to look through a little bit, that could take you a little bit, like an hour overtime. But again, that's worst case scenario. That's cases that are going to really tie you up. But on a normal basis, as long as you keep up with it, and do it every day and keep everything tagged every day and not fall behind, it's not that big a deal. It gets to be a big deal though if you go three days without doing it, and each night you had 20 different videos, and now you have 60 videos.

The compulsive need for some to review recordings for accuracy in their documentation holds the potential to effectively double or triple the amount of time it takes to complete a report. As an officer shares, "Unfortunately, the cameras have not allowed us to decrease detail in written reports or other

areas. There seems to be a trend in law enforcement to increase the amount of detail in our documentation, and the body-worn cameras just add to this.”

Recognizing the increased workload, the agency responded by implementing a pilot test of smartphone tagging, allowing officers the ability to tag videos directly from their smartphones, interacting with the AXON device. For those in the pilot, this was an immediate benefit typified by the following statement, “I really do like it when I can use my phone app to do it, because it’s so much easier, so much faster. I mean, it makes a difference between night and day on tagging videos.” Possessing the ability to tag at the scene, live tagging, is something officers discussed as a prominent factor in reducing their workload.

While smartphone tagging was a response to the increased workload, the volume of information needing to be tagged presented a challenge. This was further complicated by the addition of requests for tagging of specific sections or pieces of information at the request of prosecutors. The following statement summarizes the concerns of many officers: “I think the prosecutor would like certain sections highlighted, like: ‘here’s when we read Miranda, here’s when we did ...’ you know?” By the officers’ account, specific tagging requests exceeded the case information to include specific time stamps reflecting more requests for information from various stakeholders. Originally, officers anticipated an increased workload, but few anticipated the introduction of entirely new tasks. Still, they found themselves verifying the accuracy in the report based on the sequence of the video. The following excerpt highlights this specific concern.

I think it [BWC] brought along a whole another slew of issues. Recording laws, and what we’re supposed to be doing, what the department expects us to do, what prosecutors expect us to do, what the law requires us to do, and ultimately how we’re able to work that into our routine. As far as telling people when they’re being recorded. What other things are required to Miranda, that sort of stuff. So it’s just new things that you had to kind of learn and had to work in. Makes a lot of work in some situations too, because I think with some police officers, especially now in a more serious case, where before you were writing everything based off of your notes and your memory, and you’re kind of putting together. When you take notes and you’re memorizing things, those are all things you’re making note of so you can write a better report. So you kind of do that. Well, when you have video, I know for me, well I stopped making note of that stuff, because, well, it’s in the video. I’m going to focus on other things because it’s going to tell the entire story, and I can go back and review that and that’s going to trigger my memory or whatever. But that requires us to look at the video and watch what could be an hour-long section or we’re watching maybe all of our stuff to put together a good report and something we can send over to our prosecutor. So, that can be kind of a headache.

Several officers identified frustration in that their attempts to overcome this workload were stifled. By this, they referred to the availability of the entirety of the incident and explained that they felt writing a detailed report and then tagging the video were a duplication of effort. They believed for low-level cases, such as a DUI blood test, they should be able to refer to the video timestamp, instead of explaining what occurred. As an officer remarked,

I'm of the thinking where, 'you know what, if you want to know what happened, watch the video. I'll give you a synopsis of everything so you can quickly read it. But if you want the details of what all they said, watch the video, because it's all in there.' It's just doubling up our work.

The final subtheme developed within this global theme of increased workload was unique and unexpected. The implementation of the BWC resulted in some officers noticeably increasing their own workload by verifying the accuracy of what they reported by returning to the video footage. Unlike the subtheme of self-correcting, this specific subtheme speaks to a duplication of effort to verify information because the officers worried a potential inconsistency could exist between the report and the video record.

You know, I don't want to get anything wrong. I don't want to miss a small detail, or even contradict something. I mean, that would be the worst thing possible, is I say this happened, but the video shows this, or something like that. That's just ... that would be awful. So I watch my videos from start to finish of the important stuff, so if I have an interview with someone ... and we did that a lot before. We were getting recorded statements from people so we'd have their side of the fence from their version, not something that I'm taking notes of or interpreting. I want somebody else to tell the story, so basically what I end up doing instead is kind of a synopsis of everything that happened. But then again, that's still something we're going to have to go and watch the video for. I mean, someday it's going to make the written reports less detailed, but there're too many people that are opposed to that change right now.

Reducing liability

Reducing liability is a unique global theme, unique not by its emergence in the thematic analysis, but unique because it was *not* a driving force behind implementation of the BWC within the agency. While the diffusion of the BWC into policing has taken on this characteristic for many larger agencies (see White, 2013), the emergence of this global theme reflected the potential benefits of the device. Every officer interviewed expressed how beneficial this device was for reducing liability. Moreover, each officer shared a specific example displaying how a lack of the BWC could have resulted in a lawsuit or disciplinary infraction for the officer.³ Regardless of age, rank, or experience, officers universally agreed this device held the capacity to reduce officer and agency liability. Several officers went as far as to offer a very common retort to claims of privacy, typified by the following excerpt:

If someone wants to come in with a lawsuit, it saves my butt. The opportunity for people to file complaints, it's great: there's always evidence there. So if you have nothing to hide, why would you not want to be recording everything you're doing? So, that's kind of the way I see it.

Prior to the BWC, it could take several days or even weeks to resolve a dispute. This would produce stress on the part of the officer, command staff (particularly the commander responsible for adjudicating these claims), and the complainant. The introduction of the BWC streamlined the process and alleviated much of the fear and apprehension surrounding these claims. The video evidence also provided a secondary benefit in showing the complainant the entirety of the incident. This is extremely beneficial in cases where the person is intoxicated and their recollection of the incident is quite different.

Technological frustration

Frustration represents an interesting global theme, specifically because any technology implementation experiences some “growing pains,” as an officer remarked. However, the frustration experienced within this global theme is associated with potential liability concerns because the technology failed to capture the event, or what was captured represents the officers’ perspective and misses the broader view. This limited viewpoint reflects a common concern because the officer never knows exactly what is captured until they review the video footage. This also bridged to the global theme of increased workload, as officers found themselves preoccupied with if the video captured the entirety of the incident or if it activated. As an officer remarked,

It's a little frustrating, because you're like: 'ugh, I know the camera should have caught that!' But it didn't. It's not all the time; it's just in a few cases where I'm like, you know, it could be out of view, or there've been a few times when I've gone back to look at the video, and it got bumped.

As depicted prior, several officers expressed how reviewing footage could be “painstakingly long, because, you know, you're sitting around watching video and then typing up, trying to type up details; where, before, you would have just done it.

This frustration is compounded by informal policy and adding another routine to their procedures. With so many procedures already within the organization, adding another one created some frustration for officers, typified by the following excerpt:

I guess early on one of the big problems obviously is just getting used to another step in your process of doing stuff. Having to turn them on, and then, when you come back (because we're supposed to turn them off when we return to the station), so if you come back and turn it off and then you run out to something and you don't turn it back on. Then you go to hit it to activate it, and it's not even on, so then you turn it on, and then you're waiting—while you're still trying to

interact with someone—you're waiting for it to beep, telling you it's on, before you turn it on again. That can be one of the most frustrating things, just because sometimes those situations are the most fast-acting, stuff's going on, and you really would like to have that information on camera, and you don't have it because you didn't get it on in time, and stuff like that. And that, I guess, is just a learning curve with everything else; you've got to get in the habit of making sure you turn it on.

While the device was field tested, the reality of police work and the need for physical control tactics meant that in some cases the device failed to capture an incident. The following encapsulates this specific point.

We had one incident in particular, where we went to back up [Redacted] officers with a guy who was acting strange and looked like he was high on drugs or something, you know, mental problems or something. And the moment we were hands-on, we were fighting the guy. Both me and the other [Redacted] officers that were out there with the [Redacted] officers had these cameras. Now, in one instance, the other officer, it came off his glasses, and was just twirling. So you get the audio, but it almost makes you sick to watch, because it's spinning. And then mine at that time was on my collar, and you see my cheek half the time, because I'm holding the guy's arm like this, trying to have a control hold on him, and the camera's just looking at the side of my face. Now, all this happened right in front of my patrol car. If we'd have had that dash-cam, the whole scene would have been caught, and then you'd have the audio, and the video of whatever you see from each officer. But, you know, we got none of that, because there's no dash-cam.

Officers shared examples of the cord disconnecting or breaking, the device failing to start recording, and other similar issues. While the officers expressed that many of these issues were user error, it influenced them considerably—including second-guessing themselves on if they activated the BWC. As one officer remarked,

Mentally there're some things to get over, as far as second-guessing yourself. You know, because before, it was: 'well, this is exactly how I remember it, this is exactly how it had to be.' But you're so worried about putting it on paper and submitting it before you've seen the video and made sure exactly what happened, where before—and you know, nine times out of ten it's exactly how you remember it—but you know, you have that doubt, because you know that everyone's going to see the video, and if you said something different, they're going to call you out on it.

Some officers needed the device and it came to act as a secondary layer of protection, in many ways a symbolic “complaint proof” vest, protecting them not from bullets but from liability concerns. The following excerpt expresses the fear some officers hold with the video being unavailable. The

context of this incident is a domestic violence call with the likelihood that physical force would be necessary.

He was like: 'Sergeant [name], my video's not working!' Right in the middle of the thing, and he's telling me: 'my video's not working!' I'm like: 'Okay! We can't do anything about it now, we'll just have to do without your video that's not working.' But he was ... from my perspective, he wanted that video on, and so he was actually concerned enough about it, you know, even though I couldn't physically fix it at that point, like: 'okay fine, if it's off, it's off.' But I could tell he wanted it on, because if we ended up using force, he wanted to have video of what was going on, and why.

Frustration with technology also influenced officer decision making, if only by delaying their decision to engage. This specific subtheme is an excellent example of the merger of liability concerns and frustration with the technology. Waiting a few seconds or double-checking to ensure the camera is active seems like a minor inconvenience, but to some officers this made them delay interacting with a person until they knew the device was recording. During one interview, the officer demonstrated just how long that delay could take, which is only about ten seconds. He explained, however, that during an incident, time tended to freeze, as he waited for that beep. As an officer shared, this delay is something they need to overcome.

The BWC introduced additional frustration on the part of some officers, specific to the prosecutor's decision to file charges. As an officer remarked, in one incident the BWC captured the criminal act and the prosecutor decided not to file. For some officers their tenure afforded them the ability to minimize these frustrations. As an officer commented, "Actually, I've learned in my career that my job is done once they're arrested and my report is complete, and if I worry too much about what the end resolution is, it's just going to stress me out, and make me mad." However, for some, this presented a unique frustration because, unlike previous case reports with witnesses and statements, now reports could contain actual video evidence of the confession.

Device location

While device location does not represent a global theme, it does reflect a prominent subtheme as every officer interviewed discussed the best location for the device. Camera location is one of the technical frustrations experienced by officers. Some officers tried the lapel, others the middle of the chest; some clipped it to their glasses, and others utilized a reverse headband specifically tailored to the device. Over time the majority of the officers transitioned from the lapel and body locations to the head, most often after reviewing the video and noticing "a lot of times the camera would be pointing off in a direction." For some officers this created some awkward video captures. An officer explains the decision to switch to a head mount: "It was like: well, what if that camera's pointing at some girl's

chest, and I'm standing here talking to her, and then we look at the video and all it is: 'am I going to get in trouble?' You know, kind of like that."

Individual discretion (officer credibility)

While policy dictates the use of the device, the policy does afford discretion on the part of the officer. As some officers noted, not all witnesses, victims, and suspects wanted to talk on camera. This required incorporating very specific and clear statements in their video documentation in order to minimize criticism from the administration, the prosecutor, and defense. An officer recounted a specific case where it became necessary to turn off the camera during an investigation: "I have no worries about someone coming back and saying: 'well, why did you shut your video off?' It's like, 'well, did you watch the video I do have?' Because what he told me is, 'I'm not telling you anything unless you turn it off.'"

The need for officer discretion became apparent when officers expressed changes in their interactions. From their perspective, the device did not change the demeanor of the person. As an officer remarked, "When you tell them you have a camera they often say 'I don't give a damn' or something like that. They're usually hyped up and hostile from the start and they just don't care." Additionally, the following excerpt elaborates on this point.

When people notice that they're [BWC] there, it's more of a professional relationship between both parties. They don't want to look like the bad guy either, because they know that it's going to be in court, so it's just easier to deal with people. But on the other hand, you have some people who say: 'well I'm not going to talk to you while you have that on,' and just flat-out refuse to cooperate.

For the most part, these officers interacted with those primarily under the influence of a substance and the device did not change their behavior. However, officers did notice that it changed their interactions with some individuals and this is why officer discretion to stop recording was important to them. Some officers worried that witnesses and suspects may not want to talk, because it went from being a conversation to something more formal.

Reducing workload

A unique benefit emerging as a global theme is the reduction in work. Officers shared accounts of reductions in time expenditures for impound sheets and DUIs. The introduction of the BWC and adjustment in policy allowed the officer to narrate these events. As this officer shared,

Now what I do is say I'll walk around the car with my flashlight and narrate it out loud: 'there's a dent on rear passenger quarter panel, there's a scratch up here, there's a panel missing on this

side, broken headlight, there's a CD player in here, there's a wallet in the center console, there's no money in it.' So I just go through and that's quick and stored.

As with prior global themes, this specific benefit overlapped with reduction in liability concerns specific to "liability-type stuff." As an officer remarked,

You can just narrate as you go and you're covered. There's other things you can do that for, just with inventorying people's property, that type of stuff, you know, when you're searching them. Counting out money—there's an awesome one—just counting it out loud, so people can't come back and say: 'well I had \$300 there, where's my \$200?' You know? And you have it on video.

Self-correcting behavior

A surprising global theme emerging in the analysis was how the introduction of the BWC improved officer performance. A secondary benefit of reviewing the recorded footage meant that for some officers they noticed mistakes. This self-correcting behavior allowed them to review their interactions and change their language, tone, or even their actions on subsequent encounters. As an officer shared, "I use it as a tool a lot of times to watch myself and say, you know, I think I could maybe do that a little bit better." The fear prior to implementation that officers would be "Monday morning quarterbacked" or being called before a supervisor to explain decision made in the field changed as it became the officers themselves who were doing the "quarterbacking."

This benefit spanned the continuum from informal encounters to formal processes like interrogations. One officer shared his reaction to reviewing an interrogation video:

If you watch something like that—'that didn't sound that good when I said it like that,' or 'maybe I could have gotten him to confess if I'd done it a different way,'—you can go back and critique an entire interrogation. That's kind of a cool thing that we weren't able to do before.

For some officers being able to review the footage allowed them to improve their response by looking for particular cues they may have missed and learning from their perceived or actual mistakes. The following excerpt highlights this specific benefit.

We went to a domestic violence scenario not too long ago, and the person happened to be pretty hyped up and out of control. I knew that she had emotional issues, so I allowed things to proceed, or, go along a little bit longer than I probably should have. And after watching them I realized: you know what, I probably should have put her in handcuffs right from the start, and not let this whole action take, let her take control of the scene. Yeah, I use it as a tool for myself, to critique myself.

However, for some officers, having access to the footage allowed them to overly focus on very minor issues—essentially "nit-picky things." As shared by an officer, "I'll just nitpick stuff, like: 'gosh, I

sounded like an idiot. Why did I do that? I shouldn't have said that,' or 'I should have phrased this a different way. Why did I do that?' And it gives you a chance to critique those things."

Improved training

A common theme in organizational literature espouses how beneficial training opportunities are when they come from within the organization (Chan, 2003). Essentially, an organization learns better from their mistakes than from the mistakes of others. The prominence of a "suicide by cop" incident echoed across the interviews with every officer reflecting on how this was an excellent training opportunity. The following excerpt recounts an officer's reaction to seeing the video.

We had a guy a few months ago who was yelling and screaming at officers, I think there had been a DV involved. And he had a finger gun behind his back. And he's yelling, and the two officers, they have their guns out, they're saying, 'show us your hands, show us your hands, show us your hands!' Well, he does this with his finger, and it's just like that. It's wild to see that, because you see these crazy videos on YouTube and stuff like that all the time from the bigger departments. But you see somebody that we've all dealt with, and two of our officers that we know really well and are good cops—to see how they reacted to it—and you start putting yourself in that situation. Like: 'wow. What would I have done? Would it have been the same outcome,' you know?

As a result of this incident, officer training improved because they were able not merely to discuss how it was handled but also to inform the officers on patrol to be aware of this person, because this individual had frequent contact with the police and displayed mental health issues. The location of the camera became an added benefit of this footage, as detailed by this reaction to the video:

It was awesome. And it's cool to see on the video, too, because you go from like the officers were trained, in the low-ready, where you're not on-target with that guy; as soon as he goes like this, and you see their video pops up, if they're wearing the lapel-mounted ones, you can see it pop up right at that time, and they're assessing it. And it's almost instant. You know, one of the guys says: 'you stupid son of a bitch!' Or something like that, you know, just mad that he would do something like that.

Retrospective investigations

The next global theme represents the added benefit of retrospective investigations. Possessing video footage spanning a broad period afforded officers the ability to reexamine prior encounters. This could lead to identification of additional witnesses missed, potential suspects (i.e., people dispersing when the officers arrive who are captured on camera), or, as in the specific incident below, linking items recovered to a series of stolen vehicles. As the officer explained,

We were looking through the trunk of the car with the property owner (to find out which stuff was his and which wasn't), there were some items in there—you know, pots and pans and some personal belongings like that—and he was like: 'nope, no, no.' Later, I took a case where it involved the same suspect as the stolen vehicle, and one of the things they said was stolen were these cast-iron pans. Well, then I was able to go later back and watch my video again, and, sure enough, they were right on the camera, there right on the video is me pulling them out of the trunk and going: 'are these yours?' So, in that instance, it tied those belongings back to the suspect.

Improving professionalism

The last global theme mirrors the positive features this device brings to the agency. Namely, that while it is an outstanding device for reducing liability, it also possesses the capacity to improve officer professionalism. There is always going to be those who resist this technology, who view it as a violation of privacy or an impediment to the officers' ability to investigate crimes. However, for the majority of officers, the BWC raised the quality of their interactions. It made them reflect on their interactions—bridging to the global theme of self-correcting behavior—and, as some officers expressed, it held the capacity to hold accountable an officer who needed more training or who simply was not suitable to be an officer. This person was identified as "Officer Questionable," and the person "who probably shouldn't even be a cop." If the BWC could address issues early in an officer's career or even correct constructions of "what works" for even those most senior, it could improve professionalism within the agency.

Catalyst events

The following section represents the unique catalyst events, those specific examples proving the worth of the device. Catalyst events are those events that prompt changes within an organization. These events may be positive or negative in orientation and, within this research, the catalyst events had a profound influence on the overall acceptance and the successful integration and diffusion of support for the BWC. Presentation of some of these specific events occurs in their entirety. Events ranged from the benign to those with considerable personal and organizational liability concerns—including a potential lawsuit believed to be for over a million dollars and a "suicide by cop" incident.

Suicide by cop

Well, probably the one criminal case, that we ended up getting felony charges on ... there's no doubt in my mind that we would have never gotten criminal charges at all, much less felony charges on. There was a call up on, just off of [Redacted], residential area, middle of the day, domestic situation: husband and wife. He's really drunk (and again, it's daylight, so the cameras pick it up really good), and he's throwing stuff around, yelling and screaming, beats her up a little bit [sic]. And he is located, and then he leaves on foot. And officers locate him about two blocks

away from the residence [sic]. He's in somebody else's driveway, he's yelling and screaming, and he decides, in his drunken ol' mind, that he's going to commit suicide by cop. So he acts ... so the officers contact him and jump out, and he's, you know: 'f you, f you, f you,' this kind of thing [sic]. And he has his hand behind his back, and they tell him to bring his hand out, and he acts like it's a gun and purposely pulls it around and points the finger at the cops, who already have their guns drawn, and everything else. And they don't shoot him (thank God) because he didn't have a gun. But ... and that's all captured on body-worn camera ... Prosecutor watched the video and actually charged the guy with assault on the officers—even without a gun or anything else—just due to his mannerisms and the fact that he was trying to get the officers to shoot him[sic]. And so he ended up getting two counts of assault third. There's no way in hell he would've gotten those types of charges on that case if you didn't have the pictures to go with it. And, it's just, the power of pictures is just amazing.

The wealthy donor

We had another guy a while back who got arrested—this was last winter. And he was some rich guy who had all kinds of money, and he was a booster for the football team, and all this stuff. And he was just a really belligerent and nasty guy. And I didn't deal with him up there but I remember coming down here because he was yelling and screaming and pounding on the cell; just causing all kinds of general mayhem. And this wasn't a 23 year old college student; this was like a 39 or 40 year old adult, you know? And he was being nasty and, you know, belittling, and just like a horrible person. And I remember, at that time, thinking: 'I'm getting this all on video. Thank goodness this is all here!' I made a point of videotaping him, and telling him to just calm down, and he was just so bad. And I remember after that, after we turned our videos off, I said: 'you know what, I' ... because he was threatening to sue[sic]. We already knew that he was going to sue us, because he had money. And I said 'you know what, this is going to be interesting to see if this goes to court, because he's suing us, his whole demeanor and attitude is going to be right there for the world to see, and it's going to be pretty hard to look good, on his part, to the jury.' Thinking: 'I don't know about all the rest of it, but this is really not going to look good, because I wouldn't want to be in court seeing what I remember what I saw with my eyes, and having the jury witness all of that.' ... his attorney probably saw the video and I'm guessing he was like: 'you know what? I'm not going to court with this in front of a jury [sic] . You were just a big jerk, and maybe we should just make the best of this that we can, so why don't you just plead guilty to a couple of misdemeanors and we'll drop a couple of charges for it[sic].'

The “you're a racist” guys

Well, I have had some complaints while wearing the camera, and those complaints have been awesome, because again, it's usually from intoxicated people. I've had a complaint of—actually, I

think they were both saying I was racist[sic]. And it was fabulous, because the commander got to review the video, and he didn't even have to talk to me; just reviewed the video, and saw that I was patient, I was polite, and at the end, each one resolved, the resolution, was like: '[the officer] showed more patience than I would have in this situation [sic].' So, I'm like, 'hey, that works for me!'

The “you raped me” girl

This catalyst is excerpted instead of quoted in its entirety because it represents an uncommon but deeply troubling catalyst for male officers. This specific incident involved a heavily intoxicated college female, who stated, “I’m going to tell them you raped me.” The recording of this statement, presented at the student accountability board hearing, displayed the totality of the interaction. During this hearing, the young women watched her behavior and her remarks. As the officer recounted, “She was crying. She was so upset that she acted that way,’ and it was sincere, you know. They [the accountability board] could tell that she had no idea what she was doing that night. [The video is] invaluable for us, invaluable for them.”

Some officers discussed concerns of sexual harassment or inappropriate touching during a search by a male officer. Use of the BWC acted as an additional barrier of protection shielding them from claims of inappropriate behavior.

Policy diffusion

While officer experience promoted acceptance of the technology and policy, it is the collective stories and accounts of its benefits echoing throughout the agency that became the foundation for BWC acceptance. As expressed during the analysis, at times the officers recounted the same stories, even though they were not working that specific shift. The praises of the BWC were institutionalized, as everyone knew the stories. As Bayley (2001) suggests, it could well be that this word-of-mouth reform acted as a catalyst for officers using the device to its fullest capacity. When asked how best to implement the BWC into another agency, the officers universally expressed how important it is to hear stories of success. The following excerpt encapsulates those sentiments:

The best way, I think, that they could implement cameras in a department that doesn't have them, would be to have the officers actually talk to other people that have them—other officers that have them and use them. Or, alternatively, talk to somebody like you, who has actually talked to officers and got some specific things, information that would cause them to see the benefits to the officer, you know.

The organizational culture further enhanced the diffusion of the BWC, as the command staff proved they were not going to misuse the footage. As an officer mentioned,

If I was in a department where the administration, all they wanted to do was to catch me doing something wrong, and they were just going to use it as a tool to hammer ... go on a fishing expedition. Really, if that's all they really wanted, then it would never be a useful tool because all the benefits to me would not be anything I care about. I would just be angry about the fact they want to do it and I would probably hate the whole idea.

Additionally, because of the volume of interactions recorded and officer admissions of mistakes, the potential for abuse of the data was high. However, the command staff did not retrospectively reprimand officers, despite opportunities to do so during the course of the study.

Discussion

Having now spent two years studying the implementation of the body-worn camera within a police agency, the potential for the device to transform policing is remarkable. Analysis of the pre- and post-implementation themes yielded insight into the hesitation, frustration, skepticism, and worry of officers prior to implementation. These negative themes, while very much a reflection of the technology, in part reflected an organizational culture adapting to a new chief of police and the prominence of perceptions of the administration. However, as displayed in Table 1, several themes disappeared post implementation. Namely, the potential for management abuse and abuse by others were absent. Additionally, the belief that the device held the capacity to curb officer discretion no longer made its way into conversations, though it could pose a considerable challenge with a suitable catalyst event.

While negative themes emerged post implementation, they often were co-occurring and intertwined with the positive themes. As officers gained experience and familiarity with the device, integrating it into their daily routines, they came to experience the immediate benefits. Additionally, these benefits exceeded benefits to the individual officer, as the implementation of the BWC developed alongside the leadership of the new chief of police. While individual officers had been reprimanded because of footage captured by the BWC, these officers believed the interactions were somehow fairer. The footage provided a context, which offered the officer a chance to explain the behavior and the totality of the incident.

Reflecting on this implementation, the diffusion of the BWC across the police service is inevitable and becomes not a matter of *if* but *when*. However, this optimism is not without hesitation. Much remains to be studied and it would behoove practitioners and academics to take up this call to research. Police organizations like PERF, the IACP, and other advisory organizations support implementation of this device. Uniquely present in these reports is the call for independent research employing varied research methodologies. This study provides analysis into a two-year implementation of the BWC within an average police agency. However, the fact so few studies exist on the BWC speaks to our

anemic response to the study of technology within the police service (White, 2013) when that technology does not align with crime control (Byrne & Marx, 2011).

Table 1. Thematic analysis pre- and post-implementation

Prior to Implementation	Post Implementation
Potential management abuse	Potential management abuse
Increased workload	Increased workload
Distracting from the Moment	Distracting from the Moment
Missing the Nuances of the Moment	Missing the Nuances of the Moment
Potential for Abuse	Potential for Abuse
Officer creditability	Officer creditability
Technology concerns	Technology concerns
Curbing discretion	Curbing discretion
Establishing the Entire Context	Establishing the Entire Context
Improving professionalism	Improving professionalism
	Reducing Liability
	Technological Frustration
	Catalyst Events
	Reducing Workload
	Self-Correcting Behavior
	Improved Training
	Retrospective Investigations

	Improving Professionalism
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Future research

At present, few programmatic assessments of the BWC exist within the United States. An overview of the state of research by White (2013) identifies this deficiency and includes several key questions and concerns for the implementation of this device. While the summary provides policy recommendations and calls for general research, several remaining questions exist. What follows is a departure from traditional future research sections; instead, I present a series of questions, segmented by area of research, in the hope that these questions will act as a necessary catalyst for future research on the BWC.

General policy

As agencies develop their internal policy, what influences will the device, when utilized according to IACP or PERF policies, have on officers, agencies, the community, and even the criminal justice system? Moreover, will agencies adopt the IACP or PERF guidelines? The in-car cameras allowed officers to interact with community members outside of the field of view. In the context of the BWC, the only alternative is to not record an incident, which only further opens up an agency and individual officer to criticism if the recording is not available. Will officers merely turn off the device or employ other tactics to inhibit its use? How will officers adapt to the device on their person? What variations exist across the expectations of stakeholders, which is to say how will police guilds, police unions, or other entities propose policy amendments?

Officer privacy

From the individual officer perspective, privacy is a deeply rooted characteristic within the United States (Nissenbaum, 1997) and, as such, even officers have come to expect a certain level of privacy. Police officers experience a myriad of criticisms ranging from the benign to the abusive. One result of this is their capacity to “blow off steam.” These quips, undertaken as a means of alleviating stress or reducing the tense atmosphere of a situation, were never meant for public consumption.. However, the BWC possesses no filter and these interactions will be recorded. What influence will the BWC’s limitations on officer privacy have on officer solidarity and organizational cohesiveness?

Administrative concerns

From an administrative perspective, how does the utilization of this device influence those who become police officers? Does this marked utilization narrow the applicant pool, and is this narrowing beneficial to the organization? At a fiscal level, what are the initial and ongoing costs of storage—including data redundancy? How should organizations approach what the IACP (2004) referred as one of the emerging challenges to police organizations—the storage of digital evidence? As White (2013)

addresses, the cost of implementation and on-going storage may be prohibitive to some cities and agencies. The bureaucratic reality supposes that resources must flow from one program to another, leaving the question as to what programs will receive less funding to implement and maintain the device. Small-scale implementations (30–50 officers) have the potential to cost over \$100,000 in startup and ongoing maintenance and storage in the first 3 years of operation. While many agencies may argue the cost of a single lawsuit exceeds the overall costs of BWC implementation, how will this influence smaller agencies who lack frequent lawsuits and will inevitably need to make sacrifices to implement the device?

Concerning storage of digital evidence, what implications exist concerning the cloud-based architecture of the TASER International endeavor, *Evidence.com*, a website service providing digital evidence storage? What are the implications of utilizing a private company for the storage of digital evidence? Is this an example of successful public-private partnerships, or is this an example of private security companies incentivizing utilization of a technology and creating a dependent consumer?⁴ These partnerships introduce an additional line of inquiry: what drives the utilization? The diffusion of the MVS across agencies occurred because of the COPS grant program. It is important to understand what is driving the implementation of these devices. Is it about reasserting control or insuring against future liability? Will insurers provide reduced premiums for agencies adopting the BWC?

Specific to the community, it is important to understand how this technology will influence the community-police relationship (PCR). Moreover, what impact will footage have on victims of crime within the court process? Consider a victim of trauma, reliving the exact moment of the incident in high definition. By extension, consider the psychological impact and organizational stress resulting from documentation of an attack on an officer. Additionally, what of the officer wounded on the job, who now has the ability to review the incident, and the fellow officers who watch helplessly at the assault of a colleague? What impact will this have on mental health, police practice, and training?

Future research must address these questions and subsequent policy implications. Since the 1980s, the in-car video camera has recounted heroism by officers and provided evidence to refute claims of misconduct (Westphal, 2004). Research must examine the complete influence the BWC will have directly or indirectly on the police service, the criminal justice process, and society. Will utilization of this device transform policing? As the second transformative technology, will it exist as merely an investigative tool or will it be utilized as symbolic capital for administrators looking to display technological modernity?

Conclusion

The recording, utilization, and retention of video footage by police agencies (specifically, with the rapid deployment of CCTV across the public space and the emergence of the BWC) are often associated

with the Orwellian state (Marx, 2013, Mitchener-Nissen, 2014, Surette, 2005). The resulting environment attempts to balance the existing paradigm: retroactive police intelligence and expanded accountability mechanisms. As discussed above, the influence of this level of surveillance upon officers, communities, and the profession of policing remains under-examined.

While the results are preliminary, this implementation study displays the complexity of the BWC as a technological integration beyond what other studies have explored, identified, or accounted for in their analyses. The true implementers of the BWC will not be command staff, researchers, or consultants. Rather, research must acknowledge the true implementers of the BWC—street cops. It is through their insight and experiences that the successful integration of the BWC within police agencies will occur.

Appendix

Appendix A. Body-worn camera implementation survey

Open-ended questions used:

- The intent of the research is to sit down with officers at a roundtable and individually to understand your thoughts on the device. However, prior to implementation I am interested in your current thoughts on the body-worn camera. To benefit the research into the device, could you share your thoughts using the space below?
- Do you foresee any potential detriments of using the technology, and if so, could you provide some insight.
- What, if any, additional influences do you believe are influencing the implementation of this device in your agency?
- What, if any, additional influences do you believe are influencing the implementation of this device across the nation?
- Do you believe the funds for this technology are best allocated to other areas, and if so could you provide a few examples of where funds should be spent?

Follow-up question and open-ended question:

- Do you believe the device will change the nature of how you accomplish tasks?
 - A great deal
 - A fair amount
 - Not very much
 - Almost none at all
 - In reflecting on your answer to the prior question, could you provide an example?
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Footnotes

1. Twitter is a social networking website allowing users to post brief statements to an unlimited number of followers. [↵](#)
2. Instagram is a social networking website enabling users to post images from their cell phones or other such devices directly to the website. [↵](#)
3. Presentation of these catalyst events occurs later in the analysis. [↵](#)
4. While agencies utilizing the storage system are able to transition back to an in-house network at any time, to do so is prohibitive for most agencies. Subsequently, once an agency has transferred terabytes of information, it becomes exponentially more difficult to develop the in-house capacity. [↵](#)