

Explore and evaluate the use of body-worn cameras in evidence-based policing.

This essay will contain the use of body-worn cameras and evaluate the ways in which they are used to provide evidence when needed. Throughout the essay, it will explore what the use of body-worn cameras can and cannot provide. There will also be a discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of body-worn cameras. Additionally, the research provided will explore the criminological theories underlying the use of body-worn cameras and will be backed with evidence. Further points to be covered will be the use of body-worn cameras providing evidence in any case, as it delved into the rationale behind a more expansive policing community and its effect. Finally, in concluding the essay a specific crime topic has been selected – domestic violence – and analyses the use of body-worn cameras in relation to it.

To begin this essay, discussions will be of the use of body-worn cameras. The purpose of these cameras and why police officers carry them is to collect audio and video data during encounters with the public. This data is crucial in court proceedings as it is the most reliable and vital piece of information. (College of Policing) Police officers who have access to body-worn cameras are protecting themselves in case a member of the public accuses them of saying or doing something. They can review the footage on the camera to determine if the accusation is true or false. When placing body-worn cameras on her chest, there are certain requirements for the officer to follow. Officers are not allowed to secretly film and should only use the camera when responding to an incident or argument. For instance, they should not film if a member of the public approaches them to ask a question. (Body Camera, 2023). After conducting research, a finding has been stated that "footage captured reduces the overall amount of time required for officers to complete paperwork for case files". This means that because the evidence provided by these cameras is consistent and substantial, there can be no argument against it as they record both audio and video. (Chapman, 2018). The body-worn cameras are provided to officers who are handling situations with the public, in order to safeguard the officer when they are presenting her testimony. The use of body-worn cameras has been implemented following research that suggests they can enhance safety for officers. This is due to the fact that once the body camera is activated, it records 30 seconds prior to the intended recording, which can be useful for the officer. Additionally, being recorded can also enhance the public's perception of the police and their accountability. (Garwood, 2022). There are concerns regarding the limitations of body-worn cameras, which may result in female officers potentially losing their jobs due to their lack of integrity and honesty. Additionally, data encryption is a concern as there is a risk of people hacking into the system if the footage taken from a public situation is not stored securely. (Global 2022)

When an officer has dealt with a situation or is dealing with a tricky situation involving the public, there is a requirement for the police force to keep the video footage on the system for a maximum of 31 days. This is in case there is a need for a criminal investigation, so there is access to the video and audio footage (Garwood, 2022a). An advantage of using body-worn cameras is that they provide evidence that can assist officers when writing reports about encounters or incidents they have dealt with. By referring to the footage from their bodycams, a female officer can ensure that her report is accurate. (Metropolitan Police, 2021). On the other hand, where the advantages lie, there are also drawbacks to using body-worn cameras which can lessen certain aspects. For instance, officers noted that people may be less likely to step forward as responsible witnesses to assist female police officers and their inquiries

(<https://www.facebook.com/EInvestigator>, 2019). Another drawback of using body-worn cameras is the quality of the video footage. The public has raised concerns that the footage shown in courtrooms may be of inferior quality. Despite an officer's inability to control their movements or position while recording, there may be lags in the footage that could make it difficult to interpret and annotate (Systems, 2023). It is evident that researching the criminological theories that are associated with the use of body-worn cameras, and after some consideration, from research, there is a theory which is the deterrence theory.

From research, there is an article which relates to body-worn cameras and the deterrence theory. It states that "the deterrence effect of BWCs is a function of discretion linked to a weak deterrent effect which leads to more use of force and weak discretion linked to a strong deterrent effect and less forceful police responses. This suggests that it depends on the discretion of the officer whether there is either a minimal or maximum deterrence. With the appropriate training on the correct use of body-worn cameras, the officer will have a higher use of force and can apply more discretion, according to Ariel et al. (2017). The theory of deterrence states that an increase in the cost of crime should discourage individuals from committing it. When there is a law in place, people are compelled to obey it due to the fear of facing an unknown punishment (Johnson, 2019). The deterrence theory was initially formulated in 1764 by philosophers Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. Its primary objective is to discourage offenders from committing crimes, rather than encouraging new offenders to do so. Despite its existence for some time, the theory was only formally developed with this purpose in mind (Tomlinson, 2016). After carrying out and evaluating some research, she has come across a website that provides statistics proving the use of body-worn video and their effect on the public. According to Ariel, research states, "arrest rates dropped significantly, with the odds of an arrest when Body Worn Cameras not present is 18% higher than the odds under treatment conditions." it suggests that when body-worn cameras are not active on officers, there are fewer arrests happening compared to when the officers activate the cameras themselves (Ariel, 2016).

Some people may think why there is such a big difference between officers having access to body-worn cameras in comparison to years ago when this technology was not accessible however, the reason why body-worn cameras are being used every day is to "increase police officers' self-consciousness that they were being watched and therefore to increase their compliance to rules of conduct, especially around the use of force" this suggests that if someone was going to happen whilst officers are dealing with a scene from members of the public they know that they can go back to their body-worn video and refer to it as they presume that they are being watched for example if it was a big scene such as murder or rape then someone higher than them will review the footage and with this happening the officers know that they will have to stick to the rules of conduct whilst being compliant and even more when they apply force towards the individual (Institute, 2015).

There is a significant impact on the use of body-worn cameras in the policing community where the police force is trying to develop and tailor a policing response to a specific problem and refer to it after a while to see whether it has been effective. With the rate of crime increasing college of Policing has put in place an intervention which is Problem-orientated policing which is an approach to develop the chosen targeted interventions. According to this website provided by the College of Policing, it states that by having prevention in place such as POP etc based on this it led to a 33.8% reduction in crime and disorder and its effects on its community. (College of Policing, 2017). Based on a widened-based policing community

the public will be able to see how precautionary the police force is being just based on using body-worn cameras to protect themselves. The College of Policing states that the impact of policing has an “increased in public perceptions of safety” This means that the police have the best eye in the interest of the public and themselves by reducing disorder and anti-social behaviour, and they have received an increase in confidence and trust from the public and that the public can see that officers are acting upon complaints and engaging with concerns raised by the community. (College of Policing, 2013).

Based on a chosen topic, it is evident that there will be a comparison of the use of body-worn cameras to that case of domestic violence which has been chosen. Based on the use of body-worn cameras there will also be a discussion of what they do towards such a case as domestic violence. According to the University of Leeds, the website states that use of body-worn cameras is very valuable when gathering evidence immediately after an incident because the cameras have recorded visuals and audio therefore you have the chance to speak to the victim, the accused and the witness you have gathered name, age, address and the allegations that have been said which would have been quite poor information if it was written down as you may have missed vital pieces of information. Based on a domestic abuse case, officers may feel that having access to the body-worn camera will increase their confidence because they could justify their decisions That having access to the body-worn camera will increase their confidence because they could justify the decisions that they made when referring to their body-worn video. (ESSL, 2017). According to the College of Policing, they carried out a trial of the use of body-worn cameras and their impact on criminal justice outcomes. This trial was conducted through Essex police officers attending domestic abuse incidents. Through conducting this trial the results came back as a “significantly higher proportion of people were charged with an offence when cameras were worn at the scene; 81% of the sanctions issued were charged, as opposed to 72% from incidents where a camera was not worn” this goes to show having the use of Body worn camera can change a scene quite drastically, officers that wear the cameras can make themselves aware of their own behaviour and actions because they have to refer back to them when writing a statement and that it recorded accurately of the scene layout or damage caused. (RESPONSE.COM, 2014)

To conclude this essay, the use of body-worn cameras is the best way to provide evidence in a court after an incident because having it recorded 30 seconds prior can cover valuable information and as mentioned the layout of the scene and damage caused can be covered all on video footage. In today’s policing there are issues that are underlying with the access of body-worn cameras they will be the forward because they can be used either in the public’s favour or by the police in any circumstance to back their description up. Based on justifying the use of body-worn cameras, it is evident that based on research they provide a better outlook to the wide range of the public and to be able to access different strategies based on different officers, they can justify an officer's actions as it was caught on audio as a video however for a public view they can be stored for a longer period to be referred back to when the case attends court and that exact camera has been stated and asked for. Furthermore, officers can state their opinion of choice on having one of the cameras and more than likely majority of the vote will agree with each other because it makes the police force more efficient.

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