

Literature Review – Dan Edwards 2124866

Introduction to review

Since 2005, UK police forces have been equipped with body worn video cameras; the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary were the first force to utilise them. In many policing operations, especially in public order situations, the use of video gives a convincing evidential record regarding the actions of suspect and police evidence collecting (Home Office, 2007). Body worn cameras are an emerging technology that police organisations are using to increase openness. They are made up of a small camera that is commonly worn on an officer's shirt, shoulder, head, or stab vest with the lens being front facing. When activated, it will capture all that the officer can see. This video will then be stored on the device and uploaded onto secure cloud storage (White, 2014). While body-worn cameras have been available in the UK for more than ten years, the benefits of the technology are constantly changing, and police forces are making use of the cameras for purposes beyond obtaining video-based evidence, some of the videos captured by officers body worn cameras have been made available to the public through a variety of means such as freedom of information requests and police media releases (Headley, Guerette and Shariati, 2017).

In evaluating the effect of police body worn video on how police officers are truthful and transparent in their interactions and decision-making, as well as in their communication with the public and their policing colleagues, this research will examine and assess the impact of this emerging and developing technology on police transparency (College of Policing, n.d.). Additionally, it will assess the impact of body-worn cameras on the public's perception of the police, which is a gauge of the public's trust and confidence in police. People will view the police as having legitimate power if they treat them with respect and fairness and in a way that is consistent with their moral convictions, resulting in public cooperation and obedience (Hough, 2012). This review will focus on literature and studies which have examined the effect of body worn video on policing, specifically the effect on perceived police transparency and the effect the introduction and use of these devices has had on the public's perception of policing organisations in order to gauge and study both the impact on the public and police officers.

Literature search strategy

A number of search devices, including Google Scholar, the University of Wales Trinity St. David's online library, Science Direct, the College of Policing's library, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley's online library, were used to find literature relevant to the topic of this paper. In order to ensure the relevance of material, searches for material were limited to that produced after 2004 due to the emergence of the body worn camera in police settings beginning in 2005, also meaning that previous research may be limited to that produced in the last 19 years. A small variety of government agency reports and internet articles are cited in addition to peer-reviewed research and journals; nonetheless, the main purpose of this

material is to bolster or refute previously established claims. Key terms and phrases used to search included, body worn video/camera, police transparency, public perception of police as well as synonyms and amalgamations of them.

Body worn video

In order to safeguard officers and the public, boost accountability and transparency, build public trust, and improve the quality and quantity of evidence both domestically and abroad, modern police departments invest in video technology (White and Malm, 2020). Being able to view what truly transpired during an event is made easier for police commanders, the courts, and the general public by the use of body worn cameras to record police operations. This degree of openness through video removes any room for disagreement or uncertainty on the part of either party. Everyone can view the facts. Having unedited police-perspective footage of what happened is crucial in an era where anyone with a smartphone may record an encounter between the public and police and then pick and choose when to share the video to suit their own agenda (Careless, 2021).

The effect on transparency

The perceived ability of body-worn cameras to increase transparency and public perceptions of police legitimacy, as well as their potential to have a civilising effect and improve behaviour between citizens and police officers, have all been documented by government organisations. However, there is also a perceived risk that these cameras will raise privacy concerns among the public because they record in real time the distressing events of individuals who are detained, arrested, or victims of crime. The distress of the people can increase if these incidents are documented. These same government documents, however, also show that these assertions have not been adequately investigated. Almost no research has been done on how the public feels about the effect of this practice (White, 2014). In their study, Tregle, Nix, and Pickett (2022) discovered that accountability is shared between police officers and members of the public alike. Body worn cameras are seen by both members of the public and police as a means of holding individuals accountable for their conduct and assisting in the reduction of issues like; the use of force whether this be reasonable or unreasonable and citizen behaviour towards officers.

Despite the increased interest around body worn cameras and their alleged advantages, there is still a dearth of data supporting their efficacy, and the field of study on the subject is still relatively new. Specifically, not much is known about how the general population feels about the technology. The findings of Sousa, Miethe and Sakiyama (2017) revealed that the vast majority of respondents said that body worn cameras would make police operations more transparent, and a sizable majority said they would lessen the use of excessive force. It's possible that individuals view these results—transparency and overuse of force—as broadly tangible ideas with comparatively close connections to body worn cameras. By

making body worn camera footage available to the public, media, and courts, the police department is openly displaying its transparency.

The effect on public perception of police

Body worn cameras are not just useful for gathering information about suspect interactions; they may also be used to keep an eye on police officers' productivity and performance. Despite the fact that this new type of video surveillance has been connected to modifications in the conduct of police officers as well as the public when they engage with them (Lum et al., 2019) this published literature also leans towards the fact that members of the public hold the belief that the introduction of these cameras will boost public confidence in the police and make police officers more transparent. Police officers' use of body worn cameras also affects the members of the public who might find it difficult to be recorded in private or highly sensitive settings (Saulnier, Couture-Carron and Scholte, 2022) providing an explanation of negative effects on public perception, causing members of the public, in particular victims of crime to feel less comfortable in disclosing potentially traumatic and sensitive elements of crime out of potential embarrassment or being fearful of being on video record. Cubukcu (2023) focused research on racial disparities when he examined public complaint data filed after 2013 from the Chicago Police Department to ascertain the degree to which body-worn camera footage improves the validity of proof that is utilised when drawing a conclusion of accountability. Results show that body worn cameras significantly reduced the number of investigations closed for lack of evidence and significantly increased the number of disciplinary measures taken against police officers who had enough proof to convict them of misbehaviour, further discovering that the introduction of body worn cameras decreased the differences in complaints between racial groups paucity of proof.

The findings of Miller et al., (2014) in an informal survey of 500 law enforcement agencies in the USA, appear to echo that found in other literature, appearing to be published by a government organisation; affirming that the perceived the advantages of having a video record of important events and interactions with the public, enhancing police transparency, accountability, and offering a useful new kind of evidence—far than any possible disadvantages whilst also finding that introduction of the devices also effected officer behaviour with one police force finding that there was a sixty percent decrease in officer use of force incidents; half as many use of force incidents occurred during camera shifts than during non-camera shifts; and an eighty-eight percent decrease in citizen complaints from the year before to the year after camera deployment.

Novich, M. and Zduniak, A. (2021) found that technology is frequently used to distribute videos of police misconduct, including misconduct which is captured on police body worn video, the pair sought to question of how these pictures affect people's opinions of the police. There is a dearth of study on how social media affects perceptions of police, considering factors like ethnicity and age. The resulting study found that the effects of watching recordings of police violence are not equal among youth. Rather, they are

particularly detrimental to young people of colour because they use social media more, can identify with the victims, and feel scared, hopeless, and angry after seeing these films, leading to a very significant detriment to police and public relations.

Lately, law enforcement organisations in the USA have started to record and make available portions of video and other information in order to provide the public with their reports of crucial events involving interactions between the police and citizens. These consist of shootings involving officers, the use of force, and police involvement in rallies and demonstrations (Uchida et al., 2022). Since this practice is relatively new, the impact of making public body-worn films of significant police events is still understudied. The Los Angeles Police Department introduced a new policy in 2020, revising their department manual, to mandate the release of relevant body worn video footage to the public following critical incidents which include all officer involved shootings involving the public and use of force resulting in death or serious injury. In 2020, the Los Angeles Police Department revised their department handbook and developed their policy requiring the public to be given access to pertinent body worn video footage after significant incidents. These incidents include all shootings involving officers and public shootings that result in death or serious injury (Los Angeles Police Department, 2020). There are multiple arguments both for and against this policy, including but not limited to: demonstrating the department's public transparency and openness; boosting public confidence in the police force and its investigations into its use of force, as well as possibly upsetting the families of the involved civilian or officer, especially if the video is highly graphic and goes viral on social media or mainstream media, and possibly biasing juries in a criminal case against the civilian or officer (NYU Policing Project, 2017), despite these arguments not much research has been done on the effect on public perception and transparency. A similar project has been undertaken by UK police forces where a number of them, including west midlands police, have released body worn video to the public relatively quickly following a critical incident however there is very little literature supporting the effects of this and no policy publicly available to view. This potentially opens another line of research for this study as while the majority of existing research focuses on the effects of the body worn camera being present and/or recording; there is significantly less research which examines the effect of the footage obtained and released to the public. Mrozla and Pieper (2023) carried out an investigation to learn more about the elements influencing the public's understanding of their right to watch body worn camera footage of a critical incident and the subsequent police communication surrounding it. The public was mostly in support of the option to see released film, even if one of the study's main emphasis areas was how age and race affected respondent opinion. The public believed that the release of body-worn camera material promoted police transparency. The distribution of collected film would enhance the public's perception of police, as supported by the majority of the population.

Conclusion

Literature from the UK, Australia and other European nations is likewise becoming more and more prevalent however, because these different countries have different policing models,

this does present some concerns as it is highly likely that the different policing models would also have some degree of an effect on public perception and police transparency. This research piece would be focused on effects seen in the UK and so some data examined in the review may be less relevant – it will be useful to be able to examine and analyse the potential differences in results. Some of the data included in this review shares a focus upon how race, religion and other characteristics would impact public perception again, having a potential impact on data reviewed.

In this review, I have researched and analysed existing literature which examines the effect of body worn video on police transparency and public perception. This has identified a number of effects which appear both positive as well as a number which appear negative. Despite a reasonable amount of literature surrounding police body worn cameras, there is still a dearth of data supporting their efficacy and the opinion held by members of the public is under researched. The research conducted shows that police body worn video can affect members of the public by raising privacy concerns, also making potential victims of crime less likely to report crimes to the police due to embarrassment, leading to a decline in the public's perception of police. The use of body cameras also effecting behaviour of both civilians and police officers when they are used, producing a civilising effect, reducing use of force by officers, improving citizen behaviour, again improving transparency. The literature examined holds that body worn cameras significantly improve police transparency as video provides a however, the effect of the release of camera footage by police is again understudied and not much data is available surrounding the views of the public. Whilst positive footage released by police agencies can improve public perception in relation to critical incidents, negative footage can in turn have a negative impact on public perception whilst holding or improving the level of transparency police display. From this review, further research should focus on public opinion surrounding the use of police body worn video to examine the effect on public perception and also study the effect of released body worn footage from critical incidents to further support the research objective. American police has served as the basis for a large portion of existing modern and historical literature.

2449 words

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