

Policing on the Surveillance Frontier: Officer Perspectives of Body-Worn Cameras¹

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This study examines frontline police officers' perceptions of body-worn cameras (BWCs). This current paper replicates, and then extends, the limited research available on law enforcement perspectives of BWCs. A confidential, online-survey was distributed to members of the Oxnard, California Police Department to assess their attitudes towards BWCs, and specifically questioned if the respondents believed that the equipment would affect their personal behaviour, the behaviour of their colleagues, and the behaviour of civilians. Overall, results indicate that officers are generally in favour of BWCs. Statistically significant correlations were found between age, rank, and level of education when comparing officers' perceptions of BWCs. The study has limitations in generalizability since it deals with only one department and cannot be inferred that the perceptions apply to officers working in other agencies. We also recognise that perceptions may change due to department policy or other operational considerations. This study confirms existing findings on law enforcement members' general support for BWCs, yet suggests differences across samples. Our findings point to significant benefits, as well as challenges, for law enforcement and the public regarding the deployment of police body cameras. Discussion about the need for BWCs is addressed especially in the current era of litigation.

Keywords: police accountability, use of force, technology, surveillance

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1 Introduction

In the wake of a series of high-profile incidents involving the use of deadly force by officers, the public's call for police oversight and accountability has reached a crescendo. As evidenced by tragic encounters in St. Louis, Baltimore, Staten Island and other cities nationwide, there is no question policing is increasingly challenging, particularly in communities where violent crime, unemployment and mistrust of

the police are rampant. The police must be responsible and accountable to the public they serve, and are expected to exercise considerable restraint in difficult circumstances. Given the number of calls for service and observations made by the police in any time period, it is expected a certain percentage of those encounters will result in complaints of incivility or excessive use of force complaints. It is important to note that a vast majority of police interactions with the public do not involve the use of force. As an example, in 2015, the Los Angeles Police Department reported 1,503,758 public contacts. During those public contacts, 1,924 resulted in a use of force. These use of force incidents represented only 0.13% of the Department's total public contacts debunking the theory that the police are out of control seeking and out citizen victims (Bui & Cox, 2016).

There is a dearth of research on the effectiveness of BWCs, and a particular void in our understanding of officers' attitudes toward the use of BWCs (Mateescu, Rosenblat, & Boyd, 2015). It is of paramount importance that empirical studies of BWCs, and the perspectives and experiences of officers regarding the use of this technology, coincide with its widespread and swift implementation by agencies as a policy standard. The purpose of our study, therefore, is to measure the perceptions of officers and command staff as they embark on policing in this new surveillance landscape. We conducted a comparative analysis of one of the few studies to date that has surveyed

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front-line officers' attitudes towards BWCs (Jennings, Fridell, & Lynch, 2014). We augmented data from the East Coast city of Orlando, Florida with a focus on officers' perceptions of BWCs on the West Coast in California. Our study offers a replication and theoretical extension of Jennings et al. (2014), in their research on patrol officer perceptions, and our paper also contributes to the limited research on how members of law enforcement command staff regard BWCs (Smykla, Crow, Crichlow, & Snyder, 2015). We begin by reviewing the relevant literature on the use and perceptions of BWCs before describing our methodology and findings.

2 Research on BWC

Monitoring police-citizen interactions in so-called "field encounters" has occurred for a number of years. Mobile forms of video surveillance burgeoned with the use of dashboard-mounted cameras in police cruisers ("dashcams"). These were initially implemented as a means of supporting convictions in cases of traffic stops for Driving-Under-Influence or Driving-While-Intoxicated, as well as in drug arrests, and to document consent to vehicular searches. Additionally, research by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) suggests that in-car cameras enhance officer safety, improve agency accountability, simplify incident review, and reduce agency liability (IACP, 2005). As of 2007, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BSJ) found that dashcams were being used by 61% of police departments, but their utility is limited to interactions within the camera's view that take place around vehicles, unlike mobile body-worn cameras, which accompany police throughout the course of their duties (BSJ, 2007). British police agencies in Plymouth, England first experimented with BWC and associated technology in 2005 and 2006 (Harris, 2010). Although the initial studies were small and there were no comparative research designs, the agency purchased 50 camera systems and trained 300 officers to use the technology (Goodall, 2007). The British police were pleased with the results yielded by BWC, and several police agencies in Scotland have also evaluated body-worn camera technology.

In July 2011, evaluations of the technology focused on the impact on citizen attitudes, criminal justice processing (guilty pleas), citizen complaints, and assaults on officers. Although the studies were not comparative in design, positive results in police – citizen interactions were reported (White, 2014). Support for BWC in the United States is on the rise following recent events of police shootings in several cities. A survey by the Police Executive Research Forum in 2013, revealed that approximately 75% of the law enforcement reporting agencies did not use body-worn cameras (Miller, Toliver, & Police Executive Research Forum, 2014). However, the number of

participating agencies is expected to increase due to President Obama's proposal to invest in Body Worn Cameras. Known as the Partnership Program, the aim is to invest 75 million \$ through a 50% investment matching arrangement with states and localities to cover video and equipment expenses (Miller et al., 2014).

There have been three major comparison studies on BWC in the United States (White, 2014). The first was an evaluation of the Rialto (California) Police Department body-worn camera project, led by Chief of Police William Farrar who was completing his master's thesis on the topic (Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2014). The Rialto study began in February 2012 and continued through July 2013. The study involved a randomised controlled trial in which half of the department's 54 patrol officers were randomly assigned to wear the BWC. The experiment tested the impact of the cameras on citizen complaints and police use of force incidents, comparing officers who wear the cameras to officers who do not. The Rialto evaluation reported that BWC resulted in a reduction of citizen complaints against the police on the use of force by police officers dropped by 60% (Mims, 2014). In Mesa, Arizona, the Police Department outfitted 50 officers with BWC in 2012 and re-evaluated in 2013. The study measured the effect of cameras with police officers. Officers generally had positive views about the potential impact of the body-worn cameras. It was reported that 77% believed the cameras would cause officers to behave more professionally (White, 2014).

The third evaluation of BWC was conducted by the Phoenix (Arizona) Police Department and Arizona State University in 2013 (Cassidy, 2015; White, 2014). This study included 56 officers wearing BWC to test whether the cameras deterred unprofessional behaviour from officers, lowered citizen complaints, reduced citizen resistance, and disproved allegations against officers. As with the Rialto and Mesa police department studies, complaints against officers in appeared to decrease following the use of body-worn cameras. Ariel et al. (2014) are currently replicating the Rialto experiment with over 30 forces across the world. Early signs match the Rialto success, showing that body-worn-cameras do appear to have significant positive impact on interactions between officers and civilians.

Other departments have reported success with BWC. In Oakland, California, BWC was instituted in late 2010, and as of 2015, the department had 619 cameras, and stores its video indefinitely. Despite some officers' failure to use their body-worn cameras, the Oakland Police Department reported a significant reduction in the use of force and deadly force incidents (Cushing, 2014).

One of the first cases of a successful prosecution of police officers due to BWC occurred in January 2015. Two Albuquerque police officers were charged with murder after fatally shooting a homeless man. One officer's helmet camera filmed the incident, and the video was released publicly and led to local calls for prosecution of the two officers (Rojas & Kolb, 2015). In July 2015, a BWC showed the interaction between a black motorist and white police campus officer employed by the University of Cincinnati. The encounter began when the officer detained the motorist for a non-moving traffic violation. The camera recorded the conversation between the citizen and officer which escalated into an officer shooting. Although there was a lack of visual clarity on the shooting, the officer was charged with murder (Perez-Pena, 2015).

The other research approach to studying BWC is measuring officer perceptions on the value of BWC. Surveying police officers on their perceptions of BWC has limited research evidence. However, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP, 2005) surveyed officers about their perceptions of *in-car* cameras *after* they had experience with them. One-third of the officers reported that they felt safer as a result of the *in-car* cameras. Most of the officers (70%) reported that the *in-car* cameras had little or no impact on their behaviour, and higher percentages reported that the *in-car* cameras had no effect on how they handled incidents (86%) and their decision to use force (89%).

There is also evidence that citizens who have been recorded by BWC have changed their behaviour (O'Reilly, 2014). Citizens who know they are being recorded may display a more civilising attitude and become more compliant with the police. A 2013 study on measuring officer perceptions of BWC was conducted on the Orlando police department in 2014 (Jennings et al. 2014). In the study, ninety-five patrol officers consented to participate in the study. Ninety-one completed the study yielding a 96% response rate. Major findings of the study indicated officers generally favoured the use of BWC. The officers generally reported high rates of agreement as to their belief that Orlando police department should adopt body-worn cameras for all police officers. Officers further believed that BWC would also be supported by their fellow officers.

2.1 Transparency and Accountability of BWC: Some Concerns

It is expected that the use of BWC will increase transparency and accountability in police–citizen encounters. However, concerns are raised about the efficacy or risks of BWC as an emerging law enforcement policy (White, 2014: 6). One area of concern is privacy issues (Rutledge, 2015), by which, unlike other surveillance methods, BWC can record both audio

and video images. Additionally, BWC allow officers to record inside private homes and businesses to film encounters that might emerge during calls for service (domestic violence, etc.).

There are concerns about how the footage from BWC will be used. For example, will someone be able to obtain video recorded inside another's private residence? How long will agencies keep the videos? What about the recording of innocent bystanders? Or is it possible that BWC images will be compromised and posted on a social website? When implementing body-worn cameras, law enforcement agencies must balance these privacy considerations with the need for transparency and accountability.

Another area of concern is the activation of BWC. One approach recommended by the ACLU is to require officers to record *all* encounters with the public. Under this approach, BWC would be activated eliminating officer discretion as to when or what to record. If a police department is to place its cameras under officer control, then it must put in place effective means of limiting officers' ability to choose which encounters to record. This approach would require a department-wide policy that mandates the police to record every interaction with the public (Stanley, 2015).

Another approach favoured by police executives and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), is allowing officer discretion or not recording every encounter. Recording every encounter would undermine police–community relations and privacy (Miller et al., 2014). It can be argued that in some situations or informal contacts with the public, a degree of officer discretion is needed as to when and what to record. Such encounters may include citizens asking for directions or assisting a stalled motorist. Clearly a standard policy must be adopted on how and when BWC are to be used.

A final concern is the recording process itself. All recordings must be accurate capturing the entire encounter police–citizen encounter. Sometimes technical problems may occur, officers may forget to record an encounter, or camera recordings may be compromised due to physical struggles with a citizen or other unexpected interferences.

3 Method

3.1 Setting and Sample

Our investigation focused on police officer attitudes regarding BWCs through a survey of sworn officers employed by the Oxnard Police Department (OPD) in Oxnard, California. With a population of approximately 205,437, it ranks as the largest

city in Ventura County (US Census Bureau, 2014). Oxnard is located on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, approximately 60 miles north of Los Angeles and 35 miles south of Santa Barbara and covers roughly 27 square miles. An ethnically diverse community, 74% of residents are of Hispanic or Latino decent, 15% Caucasian, 7% Asian, 3% African-American, and about 5% comprised of people who are of two or more races (US Census Bureau, 2010). Known as a working-class community, the median household income is 53,482 \$ and 15% of its residents live below the poverty level (US Census Bureau, 2014). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's [FBI] Uniform Crime Report [UCR] 2015 data, there has been a continued increase in crime in the city of Oxnard since 2012, with a total of 7,640 Part I crimes reported, which consisted of 920 violent crimes and 6,720 property crimes (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2015). In an effort to reduce gang-related crimes in the city, a number of civil injunctions (effective since 2005, 2006, and amended in 2008) have been obtained against the most criminally active and violent gangs.

The passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 109, also known as "California's Public Safety Realignment Initiative" or "Post Release Offender (PRO) Program" was passed and signed into law. (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2011). Its purpose was to reduce prison overcrowding, and has undoubtedly influenced the upward swing in crime rates in Oxnard and Ventura County; AB 109 shifted the responsibility of supervising and housing felons and parolees to local governments and probation agencies. As reported by the Ventura County Probation Agency, since the PRO program began, Oxnard leads Ventura County as the city with the highest crime rate and one of the highest in the State in both property and violent crimes. Thus, the local police department is tasked with complex public safety challenges in this diverse community.

In 2015, there were approximately 254 sworn officers and 154 civilian personnel serving in the OPD. As addressed later, not all responded to the present study. The department has applied for local and federal funding, but has yet to receive the necessary to support to acquire, equip, and train officers with BWCs. Currently, all patrol officers are equipped with a Puma® digital audio recording device, and are required to record all enforcement and investigative field contacts in their entirety. A few sergeants have dash-mounted digital video recorders, but otherwise officers do not use visual recording devices.

3.2 Survey Instrument and Procedure

Our study replicated and extended the baseline survey created by Jennings and colleagues (2014) regarding officers' attitudes towards BWCs that was originally distributed

to members of the Orlando Police Department ($n = 95$) before that department was equipped with BWCs. The survey initially included fifteen items used to measure respondents' general perspectives on BWCs, the potential influence of BWCs on officers' personal behaviour, as well as the behaviour of their colleagues while on duty, and how BWCs may affect the behaviour of civilians. Respondents were given 5-point Likert-scale response options to gauge their level of agreement to specific statements about BWCs, with a 5 indicating "strongly agree" and a 1 indicating "strongly disagree." In addition to these items, the questionnaire was expanded to include the demographic variables of duty assignment, years on the department, gender, race, and educational level (please see Appendix 1 for the baseline survey used in our study).

After obtaining approval from our university's institutional review board and the permission from the command staff at OPD, we distributed our survey via Qualtrics, an online survey platform. All sworn officers of various ranks ($n = 240$) received an invitation to voluntarily participate in the anonymous survey.

Respondents were given nearly a month to participate; the survey was initially distributed on June 30th and data collection was completed by July 19th. In total, 108 officers participated in the survey, resulting in a 45% response rate.

3.3 Officer Characteristics

The demographics of the sample ($n = 108$) were analysed using descriptive statistics. Table 1 delineates the gender, age, race/ethnicity, level of education, rank, assignment, and years of experience in law enforcement of the respondents in our sample. It was not surprising that given the larger gender composition of OPD, and of law enforcement more generally, the majority of our respondents were male (89%, $n = 96$) with only 11% ($n = 12$) female respondents. In terms of age, the sample ranged from 39% ($n = 41$) between the ages of 35–44, 27% ($n = 29$) between ages 45–54, 25% ($n = 27$) were in the category of 25–34, and only 6% ($n = 6$) indicating they were between 21–24 and only 3% ($n = 3$) of the respondents were 55 or older. Regarding the race/ethnicity of the sample, 60% ($n = 62$) identified as White, followed by 26% ($n = 26$) who self-selected as Hispanic, 4% ($n = 4$) reported as African-American, 5% ($n = 5$) were Asian, and another 6% ($n = 6$) selected the "Other" racial/ethnic category.

The OPD officers who completed the survey were well educated; 49% ($n = 53$) had obtained at least a four-year college degree, 22% ($n = 24$) had some college, 16% ($n = 17$) had obtained a two-year college degree, and 13% ($n = 14$) had a graduate or professional degree. Only 2% ($n = 2$) indicated

that high school or a GED was the highest level of education they had completed. Three-quarters of the sample comprised Officers or Senior Police Officers (75%, $n = 80$), 19% ($n = 20$) were Officers at the rank of Sergeant, and another 6% ($n = 6$) were members of the OPD Command Staff. Regarding current assignment at the time of the survey, 62% ($n = 62$) were on Patrol Services with 27% ($n = 29$) assigned to Investigations, which was the next largest category. The sample was comprised of officers with substantial years of experience in law enforcement; 51% ($n = 55$) had over 15 years, followed by 17% ($n = 18$) of officers who had between 11–15 years and 17% ($n = 17$) between 2–10 years, and finally 14% ($n = 15$) who had fewer than 2 years of experience in law enforcement.

Table 1: Officer Characteristics

	n	%
Gender (n = 108)		
Male	96	89%
Female	12	11%
Age (n = 106)		
21–24	6	6%
25–34	27	25%
35–44	41	39%
45–54	29	27%
55–over	3	3%
Race/Ethnicity (n = 104)		
White	62	59%
Hispanic/Latino	27	26%
Black/African American	4	4%
Asian	5	5%
Other	6	6%
Education (n = 106)		
High School/GED	2	2%
Some College	24	22%
Associates Degree	17	16%
4-yr College Degree	53	49%
Grad/Professional Degree	14	13%
Rank (n = 106)		
Officer/Senior Patrol Officer	80	75%
Sergeant	20	19%
Command Staff	8	12%
Assignment (n = 108)		
Patrol	67	62%

Traffic	2	2%
Investigations	29	27%
School Resource Officer	1	1%
Other	4	4%
Years of Experience (n = 107)		
Under 2 years	15	14%
2–5 years	9	8%
6–10 years	10	9%
11–15 years	18	17%
Over 15 years	55	51%

4 Results

We begin our analysis with a discussion of officers’ general attitudes towards BWCs, and then focus on four perceptual categories, outlining officer perceptions of the effect of BWCs: 1) on civilian⁴ behaviour, 2) on their own behaviour, and 3) on colleagues’ behaviour. We conclude our analysis with the significant correlations that were found between age, rank, and level of education. For each analytic category, we provide a summary analysis of our data and then a comparison to Jennings et al. (2014), as well as figures to illustrate our findings.

4.1 Officers’ General Attitudes towards BWCs

Figure 1 below reports officers’ general feelings towards the adoption of BWCs by their agency as well as their personal comfort level with the equipment. Of the officers surveyed, 73% ($n = 79$) agreed or strongly agreed that their agency should adopt body-worn cameras for all front-line police officers ($M = 2.08$; $SD = 1.18$). In addition, 76.8% ($n = 83$) of the officers reported that they would feel comfortable wearing body-worn cameras ($M = 1.99$; $SD = 1.11$). This echoes, and finds Oxnard Police Officers slightly more favourable towards BWCs, compared to the findings of Jennings and colleagues (2014) in regards to Orlando Police Officers’ positive perceptions and openness to body camera technology.

⁴ We opted to use the more inclusive term *civilian* rather than *citizen* in our survey instrument and analysis to avoid excluding non-citizens, whom the officers may routinely encounter.

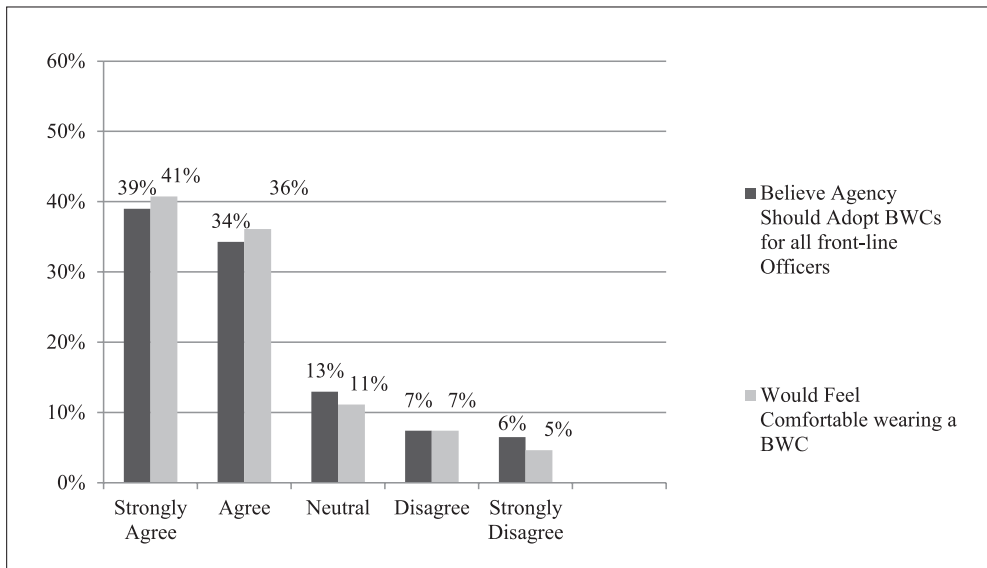


Figure 1: Officer Perceptions of Body-Worn Cameras

4.2 Officer Perceptions of the Effect of BWCs on Civilian Behaviour

Officers perceived BWCs as positively altering the behaviour of civilians with whom they had contact with in the field. As illustrated in Figure 2, over half of the officers, 61% ($n =$

65), reported that they strongly agreed or agreed that BWCs would improve ($M = 2.55; SD = 1.25$). Again, this corresponds with the findings by Jennings et al. (2014), that Oxnard Police Officers were slightly more likely to believe that BWCs would improve civilians' behaviour.

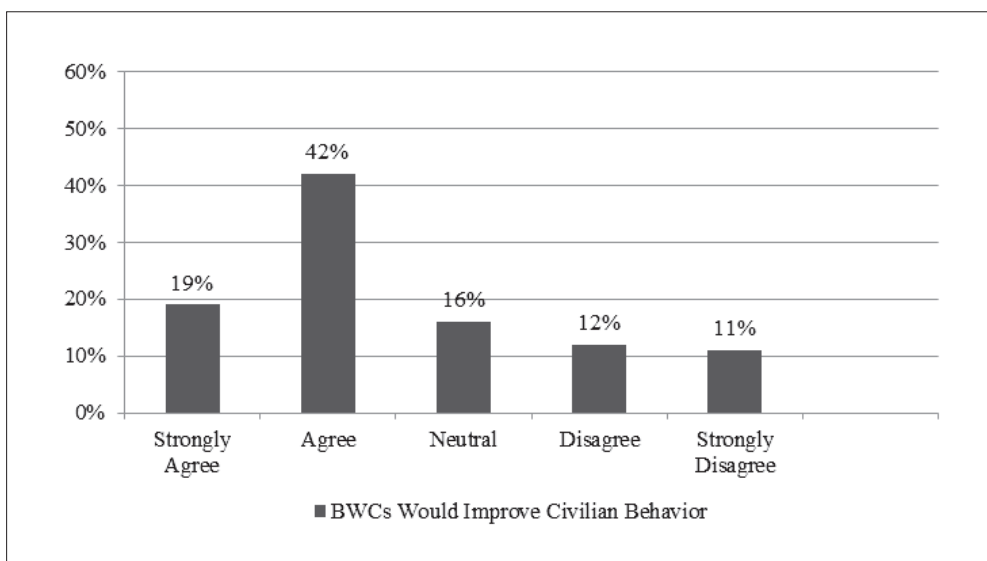


Figure 2: Perceived effect of BWC on civilian behaviour.

4.3 Officer Perceptions of the Effect of BWCs on Their Own Behaviour

As far as the effect of BWCs on officers' *own* behaviour, respondents either remained neutral on the subject or disagreed that the technology would influence their behaviour. As Figure 3 denotes, when asked if BWCs would improve their behaviour, 33% ($n = 35$) selected neither agree nor disagree, and 53% ($n = 56$) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.08$). Similarly, officers did not believe that BWCs would increase their likelihood of behaving "by-the-book" with 50% ($n = 54$) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.03$). Most adamantly, officers felt as though BWCs would *not* reduce their willingness to respond to calls for service with 81% ($n = 85$) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with that idea ($M = 4.18$; $SD = .83$). These findings again mirror the results of Jennings et al. (2014) on these metrics, indicating that officers felt as though BWCs would not have a substantial influence on their *own* behaviour.

4.4 Officer Perceptions of the Effect of BWCs on Colleagues' Behaviour

Interestingly, officers were more likely to report their belief that BWCs would have an effect on their fellow officers' behaviour in the field. As figure 4 illustrates, nearly a third (28%, $n = 30$) agreed that BWCs would increase the likelihood of other officers behaving "by-the-book" ($M = 3.11$; $SD = .95$). Respondents felt as though a larger percent of officers would be effected by BWCs compared to their own behaviour, but they still disagreed or strongly disagreed 64% ($n = 69$) that BWCs would reduce other officers' willingness to respond to calls for service ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 1.00$). Once again, our findings corroborate Jennings et al. (2014) results on these specific metrics.

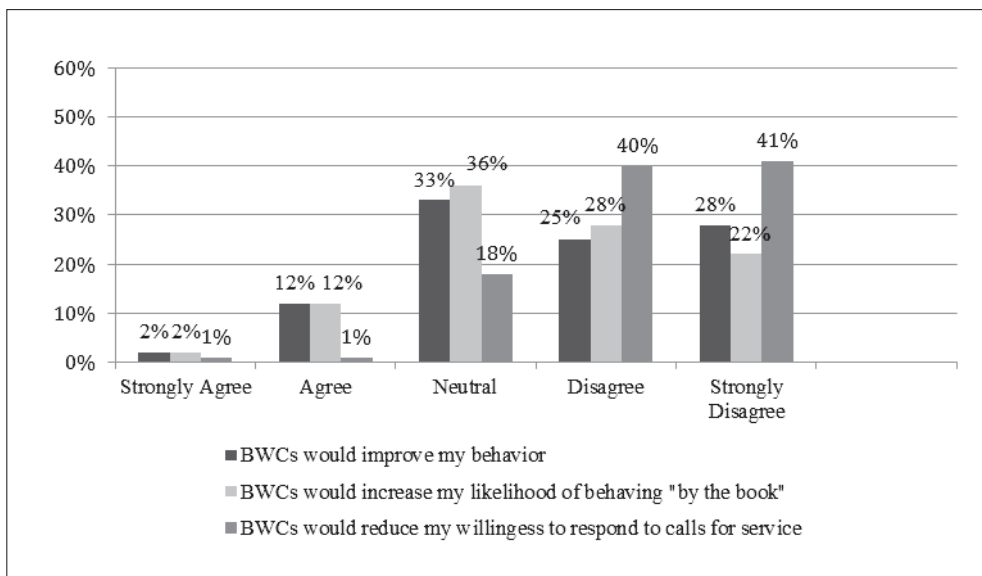


Figure 3: Perceived effect of BWCs on personal behaviour

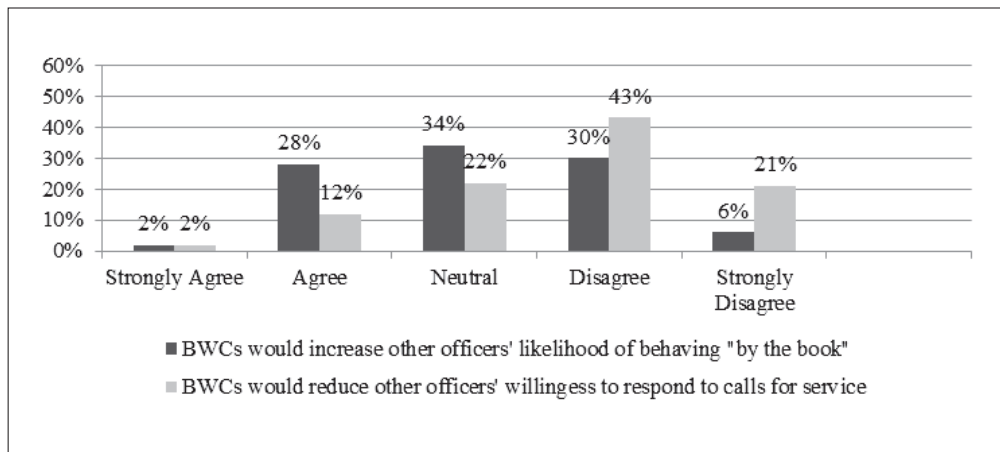


Figure 4: Perceived effect of BWCs on colleagues' behaviour.

4.5 Demographic and Perceptual Correlations

Across the various demographic categories in our study, and consistent with the findings of Jennings and colleagues (2014), more similarities than differences were seen in how officers compared in their perceptions of the effects of BWCs. Table 2 outlines the cross-tabulations between officers' age, rank and level of education with their perceptions of BWCs across six major perceptual categories. There were six statistically significant correlations observed in our sample.

First, the officer's age was negatively correlated with their perception that wearing a body camera would increase the likelihood that their *own and other officers'* behaviour would be "by-the-book". Older officers (35 years old and above) were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statements compared to younger officers who were 34 years old or younger ($p = .03$).

Secondly, rank was a statistically significant predictor of whether or not respondents believed that BWCs would improve their personal behaviour in the field; front-line officers were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (59%, $n = 49$) compared to members of command staff, of whom only 32% ($n = 8$) disagreed or strongly disagreed ($p = .04$).

Third, rank was positively correlated to respondents' answers to the statement: "wearing a body-worn camera would reduce my use of force against subjects." Officers who answered this question ($n = 79$) were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (70%, $n = 56$) compared to Sergeants/members of command staff ($p = .03$).

Finally, there were statistically significant correlations between level of education and two metrics. In both of these cases, officers who had a 4-year college or advanced degree were more likely to strongly agree and agree (78%, $n = 52$) that Oxnard Police Department should adopt BWCs for all front-line officers ($p = .02$), and more likely to strongly agree and agree (63%, $n = 42$) that BWCs would reduce the number of civilian (external) complaints that the officer would personally receive ($p = .03$) compared to officers who had less education (GED/high school diploma, some college, or an associate's degree).

Table 2: Officer Perception similarities/differences by Age, Rank, and Level of Education

	⁵ Officers M	Older ⁶ Officers M	Frontline Officers M	Command Staff M	Some college and below M	Higher ed. M
<i>Officer Perceptions of BWCs</i>						
Believe Agency should adopt BWCs for all officers	2.39	1.89	2.22	1.69	2.56	1.91
Would feel comfortable wearing BWCs	2.27	1.84	2.14	1.54	2.29	1.81
Would feel safer wearing BWCs	3.58	3.22	3.42	3.00	3.39	3.29
<i>Officer Perceptions of the effect of BWCs on Civilian Behaviour</i>						
BWCs would improve civilian behaviour	2.70	2.47	2.67	2.16	2.98	2.79
<i>Officer Perceptions of the effect of BWCs on their Own Behaviour</i>						
BWCs would improve my behaviour	3.67	3.63	3.80	3.16	3.95	3.89
BWCs would reduce my willingness to respond to calls for service	4.16	4.25	4.13	4.38	4.17	4.18
BWCs would increase my likelihood of behaving “by-the-book”	3.33	3.71	3.59	3.54	3.44	3.64
<i>Officer Perceptions of the effect of BWCs on their Colleagues’ Behaviour</i>						
BWCs would reduce other officers’ willingness to respond to calls for service	3.58	3.79	3.61	4.04	3.56	3.78
BWCs would increase other officers’ likelihood of behaving “by-the-book”	2.88	3.21	3.16	2.96	3.12	3.10
<i>Officer Perceptions of the effect of BWCs on their own use of force, number of internal and external complaints</i>						
BWCs would reduce my use of force	3.91	3.83	4.03	3.46	4.02	3.76
BWCs would reduce external (civilian) complaints against me	3.09	3.15	3.25	2.73	3.27	3.06
BWCs would reduce internal complaints against me	3.15	3.31	3.41	2.81	3.39	3.20

⁵ Younger officers were coded as 34 years old and younger.

⁶ Older officers were coded as 35 years old and older.

Note: Significant mean differences and correlations ($p < .05$) are noted in bold and italics.

5 Discussion

The implementation or movement toward the use of BWC in recent years resulted from negative encounters between citizens and the police. While most encounters do not result in the use of force, recent incidents in past years have prompted more scrutiny of police actions, particularly in minority communities. Police use of force and shootings has drawn increased attention with calls for more accountability and transparency, and in some communities, the police are faced with the dilemma of becoming more passive due to the fear of litigation (often referred to as Depolicing). Consider the city of Chicago, Illinois which had the distinction of having the most murders of any U.S. city in 2015. In that year, 468 murders occurred in the city, an increase of 12% from the previous year, and there were over 7000 guns confiscated by the police in 2015. The police are placed in a precarious position when they stop a vehicle or respond to an incident. Many of these high crime cities are dominated by minority gangs involved in drugs and other illegal enterprises. It is reasonable to assume that the police will encounter criminal elements in their day-to-day patrols and the possibility of use of force, including deadly force, is possible, particularly involving persons of colour since that is the primary demographic in these troubled areas. The 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson Missouri is an example of an encounter that forced serious conservation on police behaviour in minority communities. However, the shooting of Brown was ruled justified despite early incomplete and inconsistent reports by witnesses, which were also fuelled by media hyperbole. As researchers are quick to point out, FBI data on police shootings by race is notoriously incomplete. Another concern is that what perpetuated these shootings or what the officer experienced or saw to justify a shooting or the use of force. However, there has been research attempting to explain demographics surrounding police shootings and use of force. A study from John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University of New York, used figures from a memorial website dedicated to police officers killed in the line of duty. In looking at those officers killed by gunshot, it was reported that roughly 49% of those killed by officers from May 2013 to April 2015 were white, while 30% were black. In the study, the author also found that 19% were Hispanic and 2 percent were Asian and other races (Moskos, 2015). In a recent Harvard study on police shootings in ten police departments in Florida, Texas, and California from 2003–2013, there was no evidence of police racial bias in the use of deadly force (Bui & Cox, 2016). In other words, whites were shot more than minorities. However, there was evidence in the study of reported police bias in non-lethal cases.

These figures suggest that shootings of whites is also prevalent but without the media attention. In such tragic instanc-

es, the determination as to the validity of the complaint often relies on witness statements (which may conflict), victim and officer(s) version of events, or forensic evidence obtained at the scene. In some cases, civilians are initiating their own surveillance of the police, such as using smart phones to record their own, and others' encounters with police (Considering police body-cameras: Developments in the law, 2015). To control for misinterpretation, to officially document police-civilian contacts regardless of race, and to boost public confidence in the police, a number of law enforcement agencies across the country are adopting body-worn cameras (BWCs). The use of BWC may help to document police-citizen encounters or at least offer evidence aiding the police or citizen, and it is imperative that the police support the policy.

5.1 Limitations

The results of our study must be considered in light of a few limitations. The generalizability and representativeness of our findings may have been affected by the small scope of our project in its exclusive focus on one police department, our relatively modest sample size ($n = 108$), and the use of non-probability sampling. We believe these drawbacks, however, are outweighed by the merits of our investigation. Overall, our project extends existing research on front-line police officers and command staff perspectives on BWCs *before* the widespread proliferation of this powerful policing tool. Another limitation, and one we will address in future studies, is measuring the effectiveness of BWC regarding police-citizen encounters. Perfections may change, but data on usage will enhance the research on BWC. Yet, our findings underscore the importance of pre- and post-test investigations of BWCs, as well as the need to clarify policies and procedures for the use of police body cameras before their widespread deployment. Our study suggests that we remain cautiously optimistic about the benefits of police body-cameras, but that BWCs will not be a panacea for police-civilian problems. Ongoing research is necessary to understand, and balance, the associated challenges and opportunities of police body-cameras for the public and the police alike.

6 Conclusion

We had two primary research objectives in designing this current study; replication and elaboration. First, we provided a comparative analysis of officers' perception of BWCs to help close the gap in the extant literature on law enforcement attitudes regarding this technology. Secondly, we elaborated on the specific variables that influence law enforcement attitudes.

In regards to our first goal, our findings echo the results of Jennings and colleagues (2014) in that officers are generally supportive of the adoption of body-worn cameras and would largely feel comfortable wearing the equipment. Similar to the Orlando Officers (Jennings et al., 2014), those from the Oxnard Police Department predicted that when officers are equipped with BWCs, the behaviour of civilians would improve. This supports studies that suggest body-cameras may have a “civilising effect” and that an awareness of being watched can produce socially-desirable behaviour (Ariel et al., 2014; Foucault, 1979; White, 2014).

Interestingly, officers in both samples also agreed that the technology might have a slight influence on their colleagues’ behaviour, but almost no influence on officers’ personal behaviour in the field. One explanation of these contradictory findings can be found in psychological studies of cognitive processing; scholars have demonstrated that people tend to overemphasize the role of internal characteristics on other people’s behaviour, known as “fundamental attribution error” (Van Boven, Kamada, & Gilovich, 1999), and that people often perceive their current and future selves in an overly favourable manner, known as a “self-serving bias” (Kruger & Gilovich, 1999). It remains to be seen whether BWCs will have a demonstrable influence on the actual behaviour of civilians or the police, and in what specific ways, but it is telling that our findings on officer perceptions indicate countervailing trends. This speaks to the importance of post-implementation studies to investigate whether officer perceptions and predictions match empirical outcomes when BWCs are widely, and publically, adopted.

In regards to our second goal of elaboration, we successfully demonstrated how the specific variables of age, rank, and level of education play a statistically significant role in officers’ perceptions of the effects of BWCs. With the exception of age, rank and level of education were not variables originally considered in our comparative study (Jennings et al., 2014). Our findings corroborate those of Smykla and colleagues (2015) in that members of law enforcement command staff have strong, consistent, and positive views towards BWCs. Further, our study contributes to the literature on the role of higher education on police attitudes and behaviour (see Rydberg and Terrill (2010) for a review of the empirical scholarship on this topic). One particularly promising line of research would be to investigate the correlation between police-body cameras, officers’ level of education, and their behaviour (including their ability to operate the equipment, their compliance with camera policies, as well as their behaviours in the field such as the use of force, arrest rates, etc.). As a final note, the Oxnard police department recently distributed BWC to all patrol officers. A follow-up study is planned to determine the effec-

tiveness of the BWC in reducing citizen complaints and documenting the use of force encounters.

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Appendix 1: Police Officer Perceptions of Body-Worn Cameras: Baseline Survey Perception

Q1. What are your perceptions about the impact of body-worn cameras in policing? *Please rate your level of agreement for the following statements on the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree:*

- a) I think the Oxnard Police Department should adopt body-worn cameras for all front-line police officers.
- b) I would feel comfortable wearing body-worn cameras.

Q2. What are your perceptions about wearing a body-worn camera while on duty? *Please rate your level of agreement for the following statements on the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree:*

- a) Wearing a body-worn camera would improve my behaviour in the field.
- b) Wearing a body-worn camera would improve the behaviour of civilians I contact in the field.
- c) Wearing a body-worn camera would make me feel safer while on the job.

Q3. What impact would wearing a body-worn camera in the field have on your behaviour while on duty? *Please rate your level of agreement for the following statements on the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree:*

- a) Wearing a body-worn camera would reduce my use of force against subjects.
- b) Wearing a body-worn camera would reduce the number of civilian (external) complaints I would receive.
- c) Wearing a body worn-camera would reduce the number of department (internal) complaints against me.
- d) Wearing a body worn-camera would reduce my willingness to respond to calls for service.
- e) Wearing a body worn-camera would increase the likelihood that my behaviour would be “by the book.”

Q4. If the Oxnard Police Department adopts the use of body-worn cameras for all of its front-line officers, what impact would wearing body-worn cameras have on other officers' (not your) behaviour? *Please rate your level of agreement for the following statements on the scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree:*

- a) The agency-wide adoption of body-worn cameras would reduce other officers' use of force against subjects.
- b) The agency-wide adoption of body-worn cameras would reduce the number of civilian complaints submitted against other officers.

c) The agency-wide adoption of body-worn cameras would reduce the number of internal complaints submitted against other officers.

d) The agency-wide adoption of body-worn cameras would reduce other officers' willingness to respond to calls for service.

e) The agency-wide adoption of body-worn cameras would increase the likelihood that other officers' behaviour would be "by-the-book."

Izvajanje policijske dejavnosti na meji nadzorovanja: pogledi policistov na nošenje osebne kamere

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V študiji preučujemo zaznave policistov o nošenju osebne kamere (angl. *body-worn cameras* [BWC]). V prispevku smo ponovili in razširili obstoječe raziskave o zaznavah policistov o nošenju osebne kamere. K izpolnjevanju anonimne spletne ankete smo povabili kalifornijske policiste iz Oxnarda, ki so ocenjevali svoj odnos do nošenja osebne kamere. Posebno pozornost smo namenili vprašanju, ali respondenti menijo, da bi tovrstna oprema vplivala na njihovo vedenje, vedenje njihovih sodelavcev in vedenje ljudi v policijskih postopkih. Ugotovili smo, da je večina policistov naklonjenih nošenju osebne kamere. Nadalje smo pri primerjavi zaznav policistov o BWC odkrili statistično pomembne korelacije med starostjo, rangi in izobrazbo policistov. Omejitve študije vidimo v nezmožnosti posploševanja rezultatov na policiste, ki so zaposleni na drugih postajah oziroma agencijah, saj smo v študijo zajeli le policiste iz Oxnarda. Obenem izpostavljamo možnost, da se zaznave policistov lahko spremenijo kot posledica spremembe politike oddelka ali drugih operativnih razlogov. V študiji smo potrdili obstoječe ugotovitve, ki kažejo na splošno podporo pripad policistov za nošenje osebne kamere. Naše ugotovitve kažejo tako na pomembne prednosti kot tudi izzive, ki jih za organe pregona in javnost predstavlja nošenje osebne kamere. Posebej se osredotočamo na razpravo nošenja osebne kamere v primerih, ko ukrepanje vodi v sodne postopke.

Ključne besede: policijska odgovornost, uporaba sile, tehnologija, nadzor

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