BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance
Philadelphia Police Department & Temple University

Chip Coldren: Hello, I'm Chip Coldren. I serve as the managing director for justice programs at CNA in the Institute for Public Research and I am the project director for the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance Program.

Today, I am speaking with Chief Inspector, Michael Cochrane, from the Philadelphia Police Department and Dr. Elizabeth Groff, a professor at Temple University, about the department's recent Body-Worn Camera Pilot Program, and the research on the program conducted by Temple University.

Also joining us are Sgt. Jay Bowen, who works with the police department's Office of Forensic Science and Digital Media Evidence; Mike Vidro, public safety program manager from the Office of Innovation and Technology; and Jennifer Wood, also from Temple University.

Thanks to all of you for speaking with me today. To start, Chief Inspector Cochrane, can you give our listeners an overview of why you decided to work with a research partner on this project?

Michael Cochrane: There were a number of reasons. The most important was, it added legitimacy to the evaluation process on our body-worn cameras. And, of course, Temple was a nonpartisan evaluation—they conducted a nonpartisan evaluation—and I'd also like to mention, before I go any further, we work close with Temple. We've worked closely in the past with them. They were integral with this body-warn camera, both professors, they did an excellent job.

It's still on ongoing process and we also have a number of other projects going on with Temple at this time. So, it was easy to reach out to them and was important. Basically, they added their research skills and, again, the neutrality in tracking and reporting the research that they developed.

They were integral in developing the surveys for us and they also conducted these surveys and tracked the research for us, reporting back to us. We believe in transparency and certainly working with Temple. It was a transparent

operation between the both of us. There's accountability and, of course, adding Temple to our team added professionalism to the goal of bringing body-worn cameras to the Philadelphia Police Department.

Their research added—it looked at the goals of using the body-worn cameras in the police department—and they looked at technical usability, they looked at body-worn cameras being worn in different situations and operated in different situations, and, of course, they reported on the risks and benefits in considering—with continuing—with the body-worn camera program.

So, it was important that we had another party assisting us, so, we just didn't develop this program ourselves and come up with our own stats. It was independent review and I believe the police officers are probably be more honest and forthcoming to the individuals with Temple.

And also, where this camera program took place in our 22nd police district, Temple University sits dead in the middle of this district, so, I believe they'd be more comfortable reporting there the use of the body-worn cameras to an independent group than they would to myself or upper management.

Chip Coldren: Good. Thanks very much. That's a very thorough answer.

Elizabeth, let me ask this question of you—can you just talk briefly about the—from your perspective, the key questions that the pilot study was trying to answer?

Elizabeth Groff: Actually, (Jenn) is going to take that one.

Chip Coldren: That's fine. Go ahead, (Jenn).

Jennifer Wood: We had several aims. The first thing was to determine whether officer's preconceptions of the effects of the cameras on the nature of their police work on a day-to-day basis would change over time, over the course of wearing the cameras, and getting used to them.

We were also interested in whether officers who didn't volunteer altered their views as well simply by virtue of being around officers who were volunteering to wear the cameras. Undoubtedly, informal discussions among

22nd District officers happened and they discussed amongst themselves the perceived downsides and benefits as the pilot program unfolded, so, we were quite interested to see if there was any type of—sort of, a broader—change in attitude among the camera-wearing officers and the non-camera-wearing officers.

We were also interested in exploring whether public complaints increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the course of the pilot study, when you compared the officers wearing the cameras versus those who did not.

We also examined use of force incidents. We also examined whether there were any fluctuations in types of officer's activity levels including arrests, pedestrian stops, and other official activity. So, we really examined attitudinal measures as well as any potential changes in the daily activities of officers.

We also had an additional prong, which was particularly important to the police department, was to examine these usability issues; the various technical aspects of wearing the cameras; bringing them back to the office at the end of the day and downloading them; and really learning from officers what design features mattered to them; what types of camera models were comfortable to them; what features relating to video quality or to size or to durability; what mattered to them in different types of policing situations including just every day patrol, but also more rare circumstances such as police chases.

So, we had a wide range of outcomes and, of course, what was most important to the police department was really understanding what cameras worked the best for the officers so they could begin a gradual rollout across the city.

Chip Coldren: OK. Can you or Dr. Groff talk a little bit about the data collection that you did and the types of research methods you used in this study?

Jennifer Wood: Yes, sorry. Yes. We used several different measurement devices, both qualitative and quantitative; we had focus groups with officers, both before the cameras were deployed and at the end of the pilot series; we had three different survey instruments that we used.

The first was a (pre-post) survey, officer perception of and attitudes toward body-worn cameras. The second was a daily survey that officers who were

wearing body-worn cameras filled out about their experiences on the street with the cameras. And, then, we had a survey that was used to gather officer feedback regarding all the different camera models that they tested out.

And then, of course, we had the quantitative assessment of the effect of wearing cameras on the number of citizen complaints; use of force incidents; using matching methodology, and that's still ongoing.

Chip Coldren: OK. Thank you. And, exactly how many cameras were involved in this pilot and—I think we heard about the area of the city they were deployed in—but maybe a few more details about that?

Mike Vidro: I can take that one. This is Mike Vidro speaking. Initially, we started with—I believe it was 12 different manufacturers and about 13 modes—before we actually kicked the pilot off, we scaled it back to a total, at the beginning, of 35 cameras, 7 different models, from 6 different manufacturers.

A large part of that was based on the number of volunteers we got for the pilot, the officer volunteers.

Chip Coldren: Thanks. So, did the pilot help you narrow down the field, of candidate manufacturers?

Mike Vidro: Yes, it did, I believe it did. I mean, part of my task during the pilot was to figure out the technical pieces of it; the uploading, downloading; the network infrastructure and how all that data was going to look like on a daily basis; and try to calculate for () during the pilot.

We started out with a group of cameras that we knew were going to, in different ways, fit our model, as far as infrastructure went. So, towards the end of the pilot there, it really came down to the officer's preference in the cameras and—we really started seeing drop-off in the cameras.

Initially, in the beginning of the pilot, there was obviously technical issues with the cameras—some of these cameras were pretty cheaply built—they were just not working with the normal ergonomics of police work, so, those were obviously dropped. And, it obviously also reflected in the survey the

officers did, so, they were kind of easy to, kind of, roll them back down, by the end of the pilot, to one or two models.

Chip Coldren: So, did the outcome of this study influence the department's decision to purchase more cameras? Because I know there's several hundred more cameras coming online. I'm wondering about what some of the findings were and how they contributed to your decision to go forward with cameras.

Michael Cochrane: I can take that one, Mike. This is, again, Mike Cochrane back. First of all, the one thing we were all proud of, —and we had told the officers that were part of this volunteer group that whatever camera they chose and the end of this pilot program, we would make every effort to utilize, that we would purchase—and, in fact, at the end of the pilot program, they actually requested a two-month extension on the pilot program because they were down to just two cameras.

Without hesitation, we granted that request. Again, after further review, the camera that they wanted is the actual one that the city—through the effort of Mike Vidro— we actually are going to purchase initially for this program.

But, the end result of this pilot program—there was a lot of success stories in it—one, it was hard to gage the use of force and complaints against police, because it wasn't a lot of officers using that to get the statistics.

But, I can tell you that there were a number of complaints that were made—a number of complaints that were made—before they were officially complaints that went to our internal affairs group and were individuals who came into the 22nd Police District—after reviewing the footage with the (camera), some just literally turned around and walked away and others actually apologized for their conduct.

So, that being said, we know going forward—plus all the studies across the country on the use of body-worn cameras—serves to reduce in the complaint in use of force, which is important to us.

Another important issue is the –working with the district attorney's office— you know, at some point we're going to have 4,000 cameras in place in the next several years. It's going to put a great effort on the DAs office in

prosecution of all these cases. So, we work closely with them, they were in on it, so, the relationship worked out that we had a number of successful prosecutions because of these cameras.

It was important also to mention—there are several patrol districts that border the 22nd Police District. Officers were calling—they were calling down here—they were also asking officers in the 22nd District wearing the cameras—when is this body-worn camera going to proceed—because, they wanted to progress—they wanted to wear the cameras. That was the great interest that they had in it.

So I could go on. But, without a doubt, this pilot program worked to the point where we are proceeding. We're proceeding slowly because, again, we're looking at a department with, at some point, will have 4,000 cameras. So, we don't want to rush into this, but, the pilot program worked out great and we're going to proceed to go from there, by, first, we're going to have all the officers in the 22nd District, including their supervisors, equipped with the cameras. Then, we're just going to sit back—for lack of a better work—and see how that works out, both with our technology and things like that.

Absolutely, this pilot—and, I can tell you—any department going to buy the cameras, whether it's a large department like us or a small county department, should absolutely have a pilot program. It's a necessity.

Chip Coldren: Thank you. And, as the camera program goes forward, I'm assuming that you'll continue to work with Temple on an evaluation process? Could someone talk about that a little bit? About how that's going to look going forward?

Sgt. Jay Bowen: This is Sgt. Jay Bowen. I just wanted to—if I could—I could answer that question.

Chip Coldren: Please.

Sgt. Jay Bowen: I mean, Temple University right now, I mean, in my opinion, that was the low-hanging fruit, when we got into this program with this pilot and working with Temple, and just to reiterate what everybody was saying earlier with the chief, and Mike.

You know, by having that transparency and by having this university conduct the study—as a supervisor, I'm more of a front line supervisor—you do see the officers tend to answer the questions or the surveys when it's dealing directly with a research survey. I was not privy to see the surveys. It wasn't something that I got and graded and received back. It was something that they directly answered questions to, to (Liz) and her team.

And, by doing so, it really opened up the door for the officers to really buy into it. And, by buying into it, we actually made them the stakeholders in this. You know, often times, you'll see new products in technology purchased and pushed out there, you know. And, often, individuals that are boots-on-the-ground officers sometimes don't have an opportunity like this.

So, by getting them more involved from the beginning, from the ground up, we made them stakeholders. And, we wouldn't have been able to do that without a third party researcher group like Temple and I would recommend this—not only, like the chief said, I would recommend a pilot program—but, I would also recommend that if you are a department doing a pilot program to take on a nonpartisan group like Temple or a similar university to conduct these surveys, to conduct these studies.

And, I feel that the outcomes that you'll get are going to far exceed your expectations. And, definitely, I mean, from what I've seen it grow—I've been with the program for a little over a year, from the beginning to the end—and like Mr. Vidro was saying—yes, sure the logistics and the technology sometimes in the beginning is a little hairy and there's some different glitches that you have to take care of—but, as you continue to grow with the research and get the feedback from the researchers and from the officers, I think you do end up seeing a more effective, definitely a more efficient, program, that allows you to expand to 4,000 cameras from only a few dozen.

I mean, as far as my concern is—seeing it, talking with the officers, talking with the researchers and upper command management—I definitely see a benefit with dealing with this, this third party research group.

Chip Coldren: Thank you. That's an excellent point. So, my last question, actually, gets us back to the first question I asked—and I honestly believe that each of you has

touched on this already—so, I might change the question around a little bit. But, the question is, would you recommend other agencies partner with a research partner and if so, why?

So, if somebody from the department or somebody from Temple would like to comment on that, I'd like to hear that, but, I want to add, maybe, a question for Temple University. What is the benefit to Temple to being engaged with the Philadelphia Police Department? We've heard a lot about how the police department and the program is benefiting from your involvement but, I might turn that question around.

I want to ask first if anyone has anything they want to add about the value of working with a research partner in this kind of a project.

Michael Cochrane: I'll go first, Mike Cochrane. I'll just use the word, absolutely. You should absolutely reach out to a university or again, I don't want to go through everything I did in the opening, but; just the transparency, their skill sets, and this is what they do. You know, if they'd have come back to us and said, you know—this camera, or these cameras don't work, we've got these opinions and that opinions—it's invaluable.

Because you don't want to just rush a program like this with the officers, because, let's be honest, it's a costly program. And, working with Temple—and I'm going to be honest with you—from my point, I came on a few months late, I wasn't at the initial roll out—you know, they were great, I consider them friends now.

It worked, it truly worked reaching out to Temple. There was different cogs in the wheel that made this whole program work—Mike Vidro with OIT; you know, Jay Bowen, did a ton of leg work and technical work; and the professors, the work they did—and if you put all these cogs in, it made the wheel turn very easily.

So, I think a department—especially, again, and I'll say a department the size of us—where your rolling out close to 4,000 cameras, you have to go this route, you truly do.

Chip Coldren: Thanks, Inspector. Listen, Jennifer, how would you describe the benefits to the university for this kind of a partnership.

Jennifer Wood: I can take that one if you'd like, this is Jennifer. I think that for our job as researchers, there's nothing more fruitful than a collaborative relationship like this. We see this partnership is really reflective of a new paradigm of research, where researches and police are equal partners.

                  Our partners on the phone, our partners on this podcast, they bring knowledge and expertise that we do not have. They raise interesting questions that we never would have thought of. The insight that we learn from officers on the streets, from upper management, from everyone that was involved in this pilot, has really expanded our horizons and allowed us to see the implications of body-worn cameras on police work, really in a new light.

                  And, so this has been as beneficial to us, I think, as it has to our partner. So, I think we wouldn't have been able to produce the body of knowledge we did without doing this together as equal partners and we would encourage it in other jurisdictions.

Chip Coldren: Well said. Dr. Groff, anything you want to add to that?

Elizabeth Groff: Not really. (Jenn) hit all the major points. Just to reiterate the PPD came with a lot of technical questions; a lot of policy questions; a lot of backend questions, meaning—how do we transfer video footage to prosecutors, to defense attorneys, to our detectives—there's just a lot of moving parts when you think about body-worn cameras.

                  You know, what should the policy for officers to use cameras—what should that look like—they came with all of those interesting questions that, as researchers, we didn't really think about. We were more focused on—how's this going to change the job of a police officer on the street.

                  I felt like, by the end, we had the whole picture. So, we each brought our own strengths to the table, which (Jenn) said much more eloquently.

Chip Coldren: Good. Thank you very much. So, Chief, Inspector Cochrane, and Dr. Groff, thank you. Jay, Mike, and Jennifer, thank you as well. We're grateful you

could speak with us today and share your knowledge on this important topic. We encourage law enforcement, justice, and public safety leaders, whose agencies are interested in learning more about the implementation of body-worn cameras programs, to visit the Body-Worn Camera Tool Kit at www.bja.gov/dwc.

This toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help with the adoption (of useful) community engagement, policy development, data collection, officer training, and educational purposes. We also encourage listeners to share and promote these resources with your colleagues and staff.

Lastly, all of these resources—and especially the Body-Worn Camera Toolkit—have been designed as a national resource. It is your resource. Please submit your ideas for new content on the Web Site through the BWC support link at the bottom of the home page.

This is Chip Coldren of CNA's Body-Worn Camera Team signing off. Thank you to our listeners for joining us today.

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