BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance
Phoenix Police Department

Michael Rosa: Hello. I'm Michael Rosa. I'm a member of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Team. And today, I'm glad to introduce Dr. Charles Katz from Arizona State University and Sergeant Kevin Johnson from the Phoenix Police Department. Welcome, guys.

Kevin Johnson: Thanks for having me.

Michael Rosa: Charles Katz is the Watts Family Director of the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety and is a professor in the school of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University. He received his Ph.D. in Criminal Justice in 1997 from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His research primarily involves collaborating with agencies to increase their organizational capacity, to identify and strategically respond to crime and violence affecting local communities.

He recently served as a research partner to the Phoenix Police Department to evaluate their agency's BJA sponsored Smart Policing initiative. It was the first federally sponsored evaluation of the effectiveness of police body-worn cameras -- BWCs. He recently served as one of two primary authors of the U.S. Department of Justice Body-Worn Camera Toolkit which you can find at www.bja.gov/bwc -- I'll make sure I say that often -- and currently serves as a senior advisor to the Bureau of Justice Assistance on its Body-Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance team. He is also currently working with the PPD on a – I'm sorry, Phoenix Police Department -- PPD -- on another evaluation of its BWC program.

We're also joined by Sergeant Kevin Johnson -- K.J. He started with the department 26 years ago and he spent 18 of those years as a patrol officer. In 2008, he was promoted to sergeant and has been in the Community Relations Bureau for a year and a half with the body-worn camera unit -- falls under the Community Relations Bureau. The Phoenix Police Department's body-worn camera unit has created – was created to manage the existing body-worn

camera program operating the Maryvale precinct and to prepare for the future program expansion.

In 2013, the Phoenix Police Department deployed body-worn cameras as part of the Department of Justice-Bureau of Justice Assistance Smart Policing Initiative grant to evaluate body-worn camera technology. The initial 56 body-worn cameras deployed in 2013 were expanded to 85 cameras in conjunction with the department's October 2014 patrol reorganization. An additional 60 were deployed for a total of (150) body-worn cameras.

As the program grows, the body-worn camera unit continues to manage, identify and make video data available to officers, detectives, prosecutors and (handle) public requests as well. The unit also updates policy, develops curriculum and provide the requisite training for the agency. The unit continues to build strong internal and external relationships to help improve this valuable program in the support of the department's commitment to reducing crime and strengthening relationships between the police and the community.

So we're going to get this how started. I'm going to start with Dr. Katz, if you don't mind.

Charles Katz: OK.

Michael Rosa: So, Arizona State University and the Phoenix PD partnered to do research -- we talked about the smart policing. Dr. Katz, can you give us an overview of that study and its findings?

Charles Katz: Sure. This was a pilot program that the Phoenix Police Department wanted to test the implementation and impact of about 50 body-worn cameras in one precinct. It was the Maryvale precinct. The body cameras were provided to one of the squads and another squad served as a comparison group. And there were a couple objectives of the study. One was to look at officers' satisfaction with the equipment and with its use, another was to look at its impact or their impact on complaints and then the other was to look at their impact on

domestic violence and arrests and prosecution with respect to domestic violence.

A number of results came out of the study. We found that while the officers were satisfied with the equipment itself, they still had a tough time accepting or being interested in suggesting that those body cameras would be beneficial to the department as a whole or other agencies. But with that said, we found a number of other positive findings. One was that complaints were reduced dramatically. For every one percent increased in the officers used of the body cameras, we found a one percent decrease in the number of complaints that they received.

When compared to the comparison group, we saw a substantial decline in complaints as well. With respect to domestic violence, we found that those officers who wore body cameras were more likely to make an arrest in incidents of domestic violence. Prosecutors were more likely to move their case forward and charge the offender. And they were about four times more likely to result in a conviction than those that – where an officer did not wear a body-worn camera.

One of the more unexpected findings from the research was the impact on the investigation of complaints on the police. In the past, there was about a 50 percent chance that a complaint would be sustained, that they would find some issue with what had occurred, whether it was a verbal warning that needed to be given to an officer or something more substantial. And we found that sustained complaints went from about 50 percent to about – down to about 25 percent being sustained. And so we saw it having a pretty substantial impact on the outcome of some of these investigations and were helpful to the officer in addressing what the problem may or may not have been.

Michael Rosa: (Very cool). So, am I – tell me if I'm getting this right – (you have) one percent to a one percent; is that the same as a one-to-one correlation?

Charles Katz: Right.

Michael Rosa: Cool. So, that's quite significant. So, K.J., help me out here. The obvious -- there seemed to be nothing but benefits, though I'm sure there are challenges as well on this research. How did the officers perceive that, the idea that the sustained complaints are being reduced? That the investigative ability and charges are being applied? That seems in the officers' favor. Was – is that consistent?

Kevin Johnson: I would say so. As we went through the – as we went through this pilot program initially, the officers were really resistant, as Dr. Katz mentioned. But as we started to go through, we noticed that many of the officers who were not – that weren't wearing the camera -- actually were contacted me and wanted to have cameras on. So in sharing that information -- the benefits -- the fact that complaints were going down and prosecution was – it was going up, I think the officers, for those reasons and other reasons, really wanted to have the camera.

So I think we've noticed a little bit of a change in them being a little more comfortable and wanting to have that technology.

Michael Rosa: That makes sense. I'm not a cop but I have the feeling that after that information was provided I would probably make that decision. If they told me in my current job that was the same effect, I would certainly lean in that direction. So, you've got great research with some good findings come out. I understand that there's a new research program. So, you've done all this work; how is the new research program going to differ from the first one, Dr. Katz?

Charles Katz: Yes. So, one is that it will be a randomized control design. In other words, we're going to randomly select officers to receive body cameras and randomly select officers to compare changes that may or may not take place. So, one is in the methodological rigor of the research. Second, is we would like to pay a lot more attention to two issues. One, is use of force and the other is compliance. Last time around, we were not able to incorporate some of the use of force data as strongly as we would have liked to. This time we're going

to great strides to make sure to include some of that information and make sure that that data is valid and reliable.

Second, we want to focus on compliance rates and we want to understand how often officers are complying and what are some of the factors that lead to noncompliance? So in other words, possibly debriefing with some of the officers in cases where they did not turn on the camera, try to learn why that is the case -- is it due to muscle memory, is it due to the witness did not want to be filmed -- and really try to understand issues revolving around compliance as well as their impact on complaints and use of force.

Michael Rosa: So, methodology, that certainly helps. We've heard a lot of different studies and it's always the methodology that gets questioned, but it seems you've found two sweet spots for body-worn cameras. Obviously, use of force is -- agency transparency and those components -- are typically driven around the use of force, so that part fits quite nicely. Compliance is certainly what the public's expectation is yet they're really curious as to what are the challenges to compliance and what happens with that. So, K.J., help me out here; how does the agency expect to use this research and move forward with it?

Kevin Johnson: Good question. With regards to – let me back up -- and (just – let me just) say that as with the first study, we obtained a lot of information. We learned a lot -- a lot of excellent relevant data -- that allowed us to evaluate our program. I think (amongst -- that was) the compliance issue, we're going to use this data to better our program, to look at it, to evaluate what we do and try to get better with the compliance issue, specifically.

It allowed us to really focus on our policy development and making some changes there. Adding some compliance -- additional accountability -- with -- regarding compliance into our policies. And also focus on some training aspects and maybe focusing more on getting the officers to comply with those – with our operations order and our new policies. So I think that's the best way to answer that.

Michael Rosa: Sure. So it's always touchy moving into a noncompliance area because officers get worried that they're being watched more just like the public. So how is the agency dealing with that compliance? Is there a – is there a window where as you asked these compliance questions that there may not be punishment or corrective actions taken or to -- versus verbal versus written, those kinds of areas?

Kevin Johnson: I think that's very delicate. I think that's just some things that we're continuing to look at as to why we haven't received the compliance that we're looking for. There's privacy issues that we are trying to address, other very sensitive issues with our victims, just – and this is a – keep in mind, although we've been dealing with this or we've had this since early on for couple of years, it's still a relatively new tool.

So these are things that we need to take the data that ASU is providing us, network with other agencies that have had other research teams, and just kind of work together towards best practices to try to come up with the answers to compliance and other challenges that have been raised through ASU's data. So I think that's kind of how we're addressing it. So just gathering that data or doing networking and finding out what are best practices, but compliance is just one of the issues that we've had to deal with.

Michael Rosa: Sure.

(Multiple Speakers)

Michael Rosa: … (and I applaud) the agency for staying ahead of the curve because that's a hard place to be particularly in policing. So certainly it -- we're hoping that through these podcasts that we can help inform agencies as to the challenges and difficulties doing this. But…

(Multiple Speakers)

Charles Katz: Mike, can I...

Michael Rosa: Are you going to say something else?

Charles Katz: Yes. Mike, one of the things I was going to point out is people need to understand that some of these folks that wind up with body cameras have been policing for 30 plus years, and (to) may come to these changes, it can be rather complex using new technology. But more importantly, I think if we go back and think about the Miranda rights that people are required to be read; today that's standard. Officers do it right when they're supposed to and there's near 100 percent compliance. But back in 1966 after the Supreme Court ruled on the decision, there were individuals who were looking at compliance of reading suspects their rights -- they were very rarely read -- and it took a number of years for police officers to get into that type of routine.

Now, because we know this, we've come a long ways in terms of we know and we need to provide additional training, reminders to people, we need to have policies in place, but historically, with any change -- a substantial change like this -- there's going to be a learning curve to it. And my assumption is that that learning curve is going to vary depending upon how long the officer has been with the agency in the field when they received their training. Officers that receive their body-worn camera and while they're going through basic training are most likely going to be performing with it very differently than an officer who started policing before computers were placed in the field and (the such).

And, so, there is a learning curve here and I think our role as researchers is to try to understand what can help expedite that process so that the department can move forward as comprehensively as it can.

Michael Rosa: So it's not just muscle motor memory. It's actually mental motor memory as well.

Charles Katz: Right.

Michael Rosa: (So, OK). So significant research helps drive good policy and that's great to see a method for going that direction. K.J., let me start on you on this one. So

what do you see as the benefits of partnering a researcher to do this kind of work?

Kevin Johnson: Wow. I mean, that's a long list and we've talked about some of those. (But, yes), we've received quite a bit of information, quite a bit of data from this, our first evaluation. So it generates that knowledge. It builds a foundation for training. It lets us look at our department and find out what it is that we need to do, what are some changes that we need to make?

And also provide an opportunity for us to network; I mentioned earlier that this is a relatively new tool but many of the agencies are going this direction. And so as we work with a research partner, we gather all that information, we can share that with other agencies and just work on -- as you've mentioned before -- best practices.

And ultimately we want to improve the police and community relationship. And I think the best way to do that is making decisions based upon the empirical data that our researchers provide. It's really, I think, compelling or it makes a strong case when you can tell officers that complaints go down if you're wearing the camera. I think that provides a lot of buy-in which is another benefit. So there's a long list of benefits to working with the research partners.

Michael Rosa: So you're – what I'm hearing there is -- effectively, a research partner is a foundation for change. Change is hard and it's good to have that third-party there to move you smartly in the right direction. So, Dr. Katz, from – how about from the research perspective, how important is it to work with on -- frontline agencies on this type of work?

Charles Katz: Well, I think anyone who is interested in having a true impact on the field of policing, it's incumbent upon them to work with the police, learn from the police and try to disseminate what they learn from them to others in the field. And our understanding of policy and police practice is researchers-enhanced, and if we do our jobs right, we're able to disseminate that information, (that will) hopefully help others in the policing community do their jobs better.

Michael Rosa: Awesome. So, I was going to have a last question which is would you recommend it? But I think that last answer on both sides says a resounding "yes." So I'm going to keep this podcast short and go from there. So, to start, I want to thank both of you for participating today and just great job. I really appreciate the help.

Kevin Johnson: Thank you.

Charles Katz: Thank you.

Michael Rosa: So, we're grateful you could speak with us and share the knowledge on this important topic. We encourage law enforcement, justice, and public safety leaders whose agencies are interested in learning more about the implementation and research of body-worn camera programs to visit the body-worn camera toolkit. As I mentioned before, www.bja.gov/bwc.

This toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help adoption – with the adoption -- and use of community engagement, policy development, data collection, officer training, educational purposes. Again, research has been posted there. We encourage the listeners to share and promote these resources within your colleagues and staff and the other agencies you may speak with.

Lastly, all of the resources, especially the toolkit have been designed as a national resource -- your resource. So, please submit your ideas for updates or new content through the BWC support link at the bottom of the homepage.

Thank you again, Dr. Katz and K.J. This is Michael Rosa, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Body-Worn Camera Team, signing off. Thank you to our listeners for joining us today.

Kevin Johnson: Thank you.

Charles Katz: Thank you.

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