BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance
LAPD Police Department BWC Study Podcast

Narrator: Hello and welcome to part 2 of BJA's Body Worn Camera podcast with Sergeant Dan Gomez of the Los Angeles Police Department and Dr. Craig Uchida from Justice & Security Strategies. In this segment, Sergeant Gomez and Dr. Uchida discuss the relationship and collaboration methods between research partners and police departments.

Dr. Craig Uchida: In terms of the part -- benefit of partnership for research, I think, because I think that's important. Can I get in to that a little bit?

Todd Maxwell: Sure.

Dr. Craig Uchida: One of the things I want to say too is that, I'm -- I feel real fortunate to be working, you know, with the LAPD in this partnership way, that there are so many different things that you don't get to do as a researcher in police agencies. One of which I think is being able to work as closely as we do with the department at all levels.

Not just at the officer and supervisor level but with the command staff and the chief himself on these kinds of issues and I think it gives -- it gives a different insight -- at least for me about the police department overall, and just generally I think the benefits to myself and my staff as well as for the research community is to get a much, much better understanding of how the police department operates and works.

And I -- and I say this as for instance, one of the things that the LAPD has done for years is only allowed ride-alongs for researchers or for civilians with supervisors or a senior lead officer who has a single officer vehicle.

I think for the first time that I ever and at least from what command officers have told me, we were given special permission to ride with the patrol officers and which is extremely unique and be able then to get as much information as we can from those ride-alongs and from those observations. And I think that level of trust that the department has in the research team, you know, spoke to me in volumes just because it hasn't been done before.

And I think-- I think that is a very important aspect of this and not only benefits us but it benefits the research that we're doing. And so to me that kind of thing is a real fundamental part of the part -- the true partnership I think that we have with the department.

Todd Maxwell: Are you guys -- in part of the study are there any other agencies that are part of the study? For some reason I was thinking UCLA was part of the study?

Dr. Craig Uchida: Yes, of course, and UCLA and George Mason University are both part of the study. George Mason, (Steve Ostrosky) is a professor there and in fact a very well known scholar in policing helped us develop the instruments for both the survey and the observations that we're doing and I want -- I do want to say a word on that too.

Because the -- through the observations that we're doing were able to measure police legitimacy and public trust, and that's something that hasn't been done either in the kind of way that we're doing it. So we're able through his assistance -- we're better able to answer questions about procedural justice and I think that alone is going to contribute a lot to the research and a lot to the debate and the whole issue around procedural justice.

So, you know, we're going to be able to identify areas there -- officers show respect and trust and are neutral in how they make decisions and how they're able to get citizen input in to the decisions that they make. I think that contribution from Professor Ostrosky and the implementation of what we're doing, I think that really be huge.

The other part that UCLA is doing, they're assisting us with the video analytics and that is we're trying to determine how to analyze the video footage, and Dan you can -- you can speak to how many hours of footage and all that? Just want to mention that a little bit too of what we already have?

Sgt. Dan Gomez: Sure in our initial deployment we started the for all intents and purposes full deployment around September 1st of last year and running through our five divisions -- roughly we have about a thousand or so cameras out and we've collected well over 200,000 videos already.

We're averaging well over 1,200 videos a day that we're uploading from those units. So the amount of data that we're collecting is massive already, and our goal is to have 7,000 cameras out in roughly about a year which would cover our enforcement force. And that really when you talk that kind of volume without having the discussion of, hey what are we going to do with all this video? How can we use technology and analytics to help us? I think you're missing a vital component that all organizations are going to struggle with regardless of the size of your organization.

Because it's all proportionate, if you're a smaller agency, you probably don't have as many people assigned to be able to look at it but we all have to attack the data in a smart and efficient way to answer some of those questions around training and are we doing the right thing and going back to policy review. And that's were, I think analytics will really play a key role once you get pass the -- what I like to turn kind of this shiny object, right. You look at the shiny thing that comes out the box and you have to look at all the data and how you're really going to make it meaningful and work for your organization and for the community.

Dr. Craig Uchida: You said UCLA is involved. Oh, I'm sorry.

Todd Maxwell: No, go ahead.

Dr. Craig Uchida: Let me just mention what UCLA is doing. We're working with (Jeff Fransingham) who has very good links with the math department and he's going to work on predictive solutions and predictive analytics. And what he's done is he's brought in mathematicians to begin to look at footage and begin to try to parse out what it is that we want to identify in these thousands of videos that we're getting.

And we have to take it in small chunks obviously, but having those mathematicians work with us and perhaps get us to a point where a person doesn't have to review all of the footage, but an algorithm can identify certain features within the footage and be able to tell us, OK, here's where that footage is, here's how…

Todd Maxwell: Dr. Uchida? I think we lost him.

Sgt. Dan Gomez: Yes. I think we -- I think we did lose him there. So I think where he was going is that, these algorithms that we're looking at because whenever you have video that is either a part of a use of force or some sort of event, we have a lot of eyes on that. That -- that is something that we already know we're going to look at. And a lot of people are going to be able weigh in on the appropriateness of that action.

But there's going to be a lot of, you know, I hate to say the word but routine video -- video that we do every day in law enforcement where were we going to be making contact with the public and the algorithms and that we're talking about really provide an opportunity for us to use technology and algorithms to look at that and say, are there things that should be for instance flagged, are there things that will help us in random sampling to ensure compliance with policy.

Those are the kind of things that through technology and through this project we'll be able to then say, hey, we don't have to use as many human hours behind that, we can be much more strategic and how we look at the data.

(CROSSTALK)

Todd Maxwell: Oh you're back.

Dr. Craig Uchida: Yes I'm back. Sorry.

Todd Maxwell: Sgt. Gomez was sort finishing your train of thought but I just wanted to, if you want to finish, I know I said…

Dr. Craig Uchida: No, it's fine.

Todd Maxwell: OK. (BWC) symposium at Stanford -- I heard little bit about some of the research that UCLA was doing and I think it was around traffic stops. And foot pursuits possibly?

Dr. Craig Uchida: Yes, foot pursuits. Yes. And they did that last summer, I think that was. And part of what they -- we learned, I think more importantly than anything else is that because these cameras are attached to people, they move.

And capturing any kind of things with movement of the person changes this dynamic of the cameras and how you can analyze the data from those cameras. And I compare that to the closed circuit TV cameras and other fixed cameras that just pan and really are exactly that, they are fixed.

And it's easier to use that and most of the technology and most of the algorithms right now are based on those CCTV footage and just basic video that's already, you know, just still, and here we got officers that move and that kind of dynamic, it change a lot of things. Because it's moving, it's shaking, it's juggling, et cetera. And -- but they were able to see how foot pursuits could be analyzed and they were able to break through I think to a certain degree there.

Todd Maxwell: Great. Thanks for elaborating and then all that, both of you and thanks Sgt. Gomez for filling in when we had the technical difficulties. Without revealing any potential outcomes of the study, can you tell us, maybe from both of your perspectives, what surprised you most about this evaluation process -- excuse me -- process or the partnership itself.

Sgt. Dan Gomez: So I'm happy to jump in first, I think that from the LAPD side I think the value of having the observers in the car and taking a look at what was happening kind of a step back view, I think has already kind of resulted in some interesting findings that, you know, will get to play out later.

But, you know, one of things that has always been talked about was when it comes to that observation, the initial contact with an officer and then having a camera, will that modify behavior, we've all said that we all act better on camera which I absolutely believe, but in initial contact when someone calls for help, I think what -- I think what this next round of questions will really kind of reveal is does the camera really matter in that initial point of contact.

And anecdotally what we're seeing is that people don't really care about the camera in that moment of first contact, and the officers are not thinking about the camera in that first moment of contact because they go back to their training and trying to understand what's happening and the community member that's calling us for help is looking for exactly that, help.

So the camera in that initial point of contact is not the first thing on everybody's mind, eventually comes out but it's not the first thing. So I think anecdotally I think we'll start to see through the research whether that kind of plays itself out, but we're already starting to see that in our initial deployment.

Dr. Craig Uchida: I want to follow up on that scene because one of the things we preliminarily have found in the observations is that the officers are responding in obviously very professional ways and that when we looked at these components of procedural justice, and I can just take one as an example. So participation is one of these components of procedural justice, and it means that, does the officer -- when he or she arrives at the scene, are they listening to everybody? Are they getting feedback from everybody? And also how are they listening to people, right? And what we found, you know that was -- over 76 percent of the officers that we observed and in their encounters, they were very active listeners, and that is they would ask questions, they would throw. And that frankly was pretty high in terms of our expectations.

I think we also saw that they showed a great deal of respect to the citizens they encountered. That in everyday encounters that – when they respond to a call, whether it's a disturbance or someone asking them a question on the street or it's a theft or whatever their arriving at, we found that over 90 percent of the officers showed respect and were respectful to the citizens that they met up with, right? And this is before the cameras are implemented. So what I'm thinking is that because this is how they operate already, the way in which they're going to operate with the cameras really isn't going to change all that much frankly.

You know, I think that -- and again though we can measure that and say here's what and how much procedural justice they did beforehand, and here's what they did with the cameras. And no difference in this particular instance could be very good for the police department in that regard.

And I think that might be a potential outcome that we'll see, and that really surprised me -- and I shouldn't be surprised because the LAPD really is a professional department but I think to deal and have those kinds of numbers

really bolstered that argument and really showed how they do respond and how they do act on the street just generally.

(CROSSTALK)

Dr. Craig Uchida: Yes I think it is. And I told the department about this and they weren't that surprised, I guess. But I was so, but I think this is one of those real benefits that research can tell them and show them.

Todd Maxwell: So, final question. Is part of BJA solicitation for grant funding is, that they recommend collaboration and you guys have obviously been collaborating. Would you guys recommend other agencies partner with a research partner? And if so, why?

Sgt. Dan Gomez: Yes. From the LAPD side, I would say absolutely yes. And I kind of go back to where I started. I think that, you know part of the challenge that law enforcement's having today is to make sure that we're giving out the correct message to the community.

And I think that having partnerships with universities, with all these partners, really helps again frame that method that -- it's not just the LAPD saying it, it's our partners at UCLA or George Mason. Again it allows -- it creates a greater weight relative to what you're doing.

And then it also allows for that different and thought because a lot of times Dr. Uchida and the staffs that he brings and the partners he brings to bear on this, really look at from a different angle and it's great to kind of get outside of your comfort zone.

I'm very used to setting up perimeters and doing the things that we do every day and the police work, but when it comes to the academia side certainly it's been quite a long time since I've done that. And I'm not as good of that, so I welcome the partnership with them to be able to take a step back and say, hey, can we do this differently? Can we look at this in a different way?

And vice versa, I think that the information that we're able to provide to these partners is some -- is an insight that they don't typically get, and then together

we come up with something really good. So from my perspective, I would say that it's an absolute win, win both for the organization and for the partners and then ultimately it's a win for the communities. So for me it's an absolutely that they should be working towards that every time that they -- especially going down -- something that it's important as this which would really kind of change modern policing.

Dr. Craig Uchida: Yes. I don't disagree with any of that. I think the partnership that we have is great and like I always tell people, I am having so much fun doing this that it's just pleasure to go in to the department and to engage with everyone and do the research that we do.

I think one of the things I would caution though is that the police agency needs to be very open and open minded about research, and I think that's really important and it starts at the top, I mean Chief Beck and his command staff and everyone that I know and have met have been very open.

In other departments, that's not the case and if the department and researcher are going to form a partnership, I think there has to be that kind of transparency on both sides in terms of what we do as researchers and what we think, and let the departments know that, you know, there -- the department's agenda is very, very important and that to me especially I will follow that and answer questions and let them know how and what we're doing.

And I think the open mindedness of the department makes it easy for me to do that. On the other hand if the department isn't that way and is skeptical and not open, it's going to make things much more difficult. But I think that's part of the relationship building that has to happen as well.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you Sgt. Gomez and Dr. Uchida. I'm glad you guys can speak with us and trade your knowledge on this important topic. We encourage the law enforcement and justice public safety leaders whose agencies are interested in learning more about the implementation of body-worn camera programs to visit the body-worn camera toolkit at www.bja.gov/bwc.

This toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help with the adoption and use of 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 these resources and especially the body-worn camera toolkit have been designed as a national resource -- your resource. Please submit your ideas from new content to the BWC support link at the bottom of the homepage. This is Todd Maxwell of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-worn camera team signing off. Thank you for our listeners for joining us today.

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