



Assessing the Effects of Body Worn Cameras on Police and Citizen Interactions

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Abstract

This study aims to use quantitative data analysis expanded by a qualitative interview to explore the effects of BWCs on police-citizen interactions by looking at citizen complaints against officers in various police departments across the United States. The goal is to provide an overarching view of the effects of BWCs across the whole United States. Specifically, this study is looking to see if BWCs can improve the interactions between police and citizens as a part of re-legitimizing police in the eyes of the public.

Introduction

This study is focused on police-citizen interactions within the United States. As such, it is looking at a problem which permeates throughout the entire U.S. and could affect any of the millions of citizens' security in their liberty. It also affects anyone who is a part of the criminal justice system as police are the cornerstone which can affect all that follows the initial police-citizen interaction. Because of how significant this problem is to most everyone in the U.S., this study appeals to those who would be interested in reformations or changes in policing.

Methods

Quantitative

- The data for this study came from the 2016 LEAR database

Hypotheses

- H0: If an agency implements BWCs then there will be no change in the number of complaints against officers of that agency.
- H1: If an agency has implemented BWCs then there will be a reduction in the number of complaints against officers of that agency.

Qualitative

Qualitative Approach

- The approach and methods employed in this study were guided by two research questions:
 1. What are police officer's perceptions of the relationship between BWCs and citizen complaints?
 2. What are police officer's perceptions of the effects of BWCs on policing?
- This study employed a constructivist paradigm
- The participants were current active-duty officers who have experience wearing BWCs on duty

Results

Quantitative

- There was positive correlation between the two variables, number of BWCs and citizen complaints
- The relationship was significant ($p = 0.131$)
- There was a negative correlation between the two variables deployment of BWCs and citizen complaints
- The relationship was insignificant ($p = -0.18$).

Qualitative

"...the type of misconduct we see of people [officers] [is they] just are not using enough force."
"The main thing is for my protection and the citizens protection. It shows both sides. Like within an interaction it shows my side and your [the citizens'] and it's all documented, it holds both of us, the citizens and us [officers], accountable."
"I just think quality of a human being is going to make it better. I don't think supervision is going to make a difference."