

## **BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance Tempe Police Department BWC Study Podcast**

Michael Rosa: Hello. I'm Michael Rosa, Senior Policy Advisor for the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Body-Worn Camera Technical Assistance Team.

And today I'm speaking with Brenda Buren, Assistant Chief of the Tempe Police Department. Assistant Chief Buren is joined today by Dr. White, a professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University.

In addition to serving as the Assistant Chief of the Tempe Police Department, Brenda Buren manages the administrative, financial and research functions of the Tempe, Arizona Police Department. She holds a PhD from Arizona State University in Public Administration with emphasis on public management and program evaluation, and also serves as an adjunct professor at Arizona State University.

Dr. Michael White serves as the Director of the School's PhD program. And as an Associate Director of ASU Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety, he receives his PhD in Criminal Justice from Temple University in 1999.

Prior to entering academia, Dr. White worked as a Deputy Chair from Pennsylvania. Dr. White's primary research interests involved the police, including use of force, training, and misconduct. His recent work has been published in Justice Quarterly, Criminal Justice and Behavior, Criminology and Public Policy, and Crime and Delinquency.

Assistant Chief Buren and Dr. White, thank you for speaking with me today.

Brenda Buren: Thank you. We're very happy to be here.

Michael White: Thanks, Mike. Happy to be here.

Michael Rosa: Thanks.

To start, Assistant Chief Buren, or Brenda if I may.

Brenda Buren: Sure.

Michael Rosa: Why did Tempe PD decide to get involve with a research partner?

Brenda Buren: Well, we actually decided to get involved with a research partner for a variety of reasons.

And probably, I would say first and foremost, when we started pursuing our digital evidence in our body-worn camera project here in Tempe, it was pretty clear that there was very little research available on the topic nationally and internationally.

And as an agency that recognizes the values of empirical research the values that we bring to our organization and police more broadly, we thought it would be important to try to use our project, to add to the broader knowledge about body-worn cameras, and better understand the impact that they had on police organization. So we're really looking at the big picture because we saw a gap out there.

Second, we recognized that with our project here in Tempe that we had a data-rich environment that we thought would be really conducive to doing a research study. And consequently, we thought we would be appealing to some of the very best researchers out there, many of them that happened to be right next door to us, the ASU. Mike White was one of those. He and I had not met. And so he actually started this project, so that's been a huge benefit for us.

And I think finally, just as our Police Department, we simply wanted to learn from the research that they were doing so we could make our program better in terms of our broad digital evidence that we talked about, which body-worn cameras is a big piece of that. And the partnership that we've developed certainly has done that.

Michael Rosa: That's great. Thank you.

So Dr. White, kind of the same question but on the research side – excuse me. Can you give our listeners a review of what the study is about and what we have to learn from the study?

Michael White: Sure, Mike.

The study that I'm conducting is it's funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. It's a two-year project. And really there are two main parts to the study. The first involves an examination of planning and implementation of a body-worn camera program, and then the second is more of an impact evaluation.

So on the planning and implementation side, as you know, there are lots of questions about the proper and best way to plan and implement a body-worn camera program. There are lots of pitfalls, there are lots of challenges, lots of questions about how to do it well.

So with this study, what I've been able to do is I essentially become and embedded researcher for really the last almost 14 months now, and just observe how the Tempe Police Department has gone from – essentially, from Point A to Point Z in terms of planning and rolling this out.

And it's been a really interesting process. And what we're doing is we're capturing how Tempe has done this. And I believe that the way they've done this is really a reflective of best practices and will show kind of a nice roadmap for other agencies on how to do this well in terms of planning and implementation.

The second big piece of the project is more towards the impact of the technology on some of the key outcomes that other researches have focused on. Certainly, two of the big ticket items that research is focused on with body-worn cameras is the impact it may have on police officer use of force, and on citizen complaints against officers. So we'll be looking at those outcomes.

We're looking at officer perceptions, and we're looking at officer perceptions over time. So we have a survey that we administered to all patrol officers in Tempe PD, and we've administered that survey three times and will do handful of other administrations. And that is both before deployment of body-worn cameras and after. So we're going to track off the perceptions over time.

We're also focusing on citizen perceptions. And we're doing this right now where basically we're contacting citizens who had interactions with Tempe police officers within the last week of the call when we reached out to the citizen. Some of those interactions were with cameras wearing cameras and some were not.

We're asking those citizens about the encounter. We're asking them about their awareness of a camera during the encounter and how that made them feel.

And I guess I should have mentioned beforehand that the study that we've designed, Brenda and I, is a randomized controlled trial. So we're in the middle of a six-month period here where half of the patrol force has been randomized to wear cameras, and the other half has not. And the rigor of that design, I think was to – to some of the points that Brenda had mentioned about how the study is going to be able to inform the larger field.

So these are some of the key areas that we're focused on with the study.

Michael Rosa: That's great. So effectively we're going to end up with a massive documentation on process, technical impact, then even the offshore and the citizen perception, so that's a lot of information.

So Chief from Tempe's point-of-view, one is what are you hoping to learn from this partnership? And then with all that information, what are you planning to do with it?

Brenda Buren: Well clearly, we want to learn from the national research that's being conducted. And we want to make sure that we have not only the best policy, which is a huge piece of this whole project in place, and that we continue to update and maintain that policy, but we also improve the actual use of body-worn cameras in our agency.

And also on, just two points that Mike made, and how they impact us in terms of the research. In terms of better understanding the perceptions of officers, that has been really important to us. As Mike mentioned, he's asking our officers a lot of questions.

And to give you an example with just one, one of the questions that's been asked of our officer several times throughout the study is their comfort level, just in locating and retrieving the video that they've taken with the body-worn cameras.

And from an implementation standpoint, if we don't have a good technology and related systems in place to make it easy for the officers to use, they're not going to want to use the technology. And we all know if they're resistant to using that technology, we're less likely to get the benefits from implementing body-worn cameras that we're all looking for. And I would say the same logic plays out with all of the questions that the researchers are asking our officers.

And then, I think in terms of the citizen perception pieces, it was really interesting to me. Because we want to better understand the citizen perceptions that the cameras have. You know, there's certainly been a lot of conjecture that suggest citizens want officers to wear cameras, and that their interactions with the officers will somehow be better with the cameras on.

And there's really no research that I know that we're aware of, that I'm aware of, where the citizen's perception has been addressed. And this is critical for us because not only for the law enforcement community but for us, if we want to find out if the – the intent behind the cameras, which is to increase police accountability and legitimacy, is really happening for the citizens, you know.

We assumed that's happening but we don't know if that's the reality for them, particularly when they are having the camera on them during one of the most difficult events of their lives. You know, a police interaction the victim, potentially.

So we want to better understand how cameras can help or potentially harm our interactions with citizens. And if we know that, we can also alter the way that we're using the cameras all through our policy and just make sure that our interaction with the citizen is better.

So just a couple of examples that the research Mike is doing can really help us operationally day-to-day improve the program overall.

Michael Rosa: It sounds like win-win.

Brenda Buren: Absolutely.

Michael Rosa: So Dr. White, were there other benefits to this partnership leveraged besides the ones spelled out, and like the abstract or the policy review training, that kind of work? Where else did it go? What else did you get out of this?

Michael White: You know, Mike, I think one of the big benefits for me and my research team since we've been so involved with the Tempe rollout of this is I have tended to think about the body-worn camera technology and issues surrounding it more at a 30,000-foot level.

And that's – you know, that's been very useful. I think I was involved in the – you know, the development of the national body-worn camera toolkit that the BJA has. But the work that I've done with Tempe has really gotten me down on the ground level. And that has provided, I think, a nice perspective for me so I can think about some of these larger issues and how they play out.

But when I'm sitting at the table with Brenda and her team, and they're talking about really nuts and bolts issues with regard to implementation, with regard to policy, with regard to citizen notification, I think it really – you know, it gives me some important insights.

And the second piece of that is spending time with the officers, out in patrol cars, as they're – you know, they're going about their daily routine and now they're wearing cameras. And as I'm sitting next to the officer and seeing how that affects what the officer is doing and saying I think that that provides some really important, as I said, some insights. So you know, I'm seeing it now if the rubber is hitting the road.

Michael Rosa: Right. That's great.

And Chief, did you have anything on that? Are you seeing other benefits from this partnership, other lessons learned?

Brenda Buren: Yes. Absolutely. I think that there are certainly some benefits related directly to the study that I certainly did not expect and in others that will, I think help us develop and consider a long-term relationship with Dr. White and his team.

And I think some of the direct benefits, or kind of the opposite of what Dr. White is talking about, he's learning the nuts and bolts. Well, when today they are sitting at our table, we're also keyed into a lot of what's going on nationally.

So we get information a little bit of ahead of time so we can adjust to that and be compliant for that. And so that's been really helpful, hearing about what's going on in other states and that sort of thing. So I think we had sort of seen what he has in a different way.

I also think without sort of impacting a research, having Mike and his researchers out there has helped us sort of understand maybe what we can improve ourselves giving example of something recently.

Well, they're out there. They know what our policy is. They've been in our committee meetings. And you know, recognizing that one of the things that we wanted to do is ensure that we notified we had camera on for a lot of reasons. And that's part of our policy. That's not always happening.

So just getting some feedback like that really helps us adjust our program very quickly. That's something we may not have found out for quite a while. And so just having them there day in and day out helps us with this particular project very much.

And I would say, second to that, and sort of indirectly, we developed a really strong relationship with Mike and his team, and you know, have asked their assistance in other areas. You know, providing some guidance on other things like use of force, and things that they're experts on in the academic world. And that has really helped us a lot as well. So I think a lot about this particular project but then outside of this has been very helpful.

And third, the Arizona State University is sort of been our backyard. It's a huge university, more – you know, part of the scenic metro area and they've

got huge resources there. So it's been nice to develop this relationship with Mike and his team in ASU.

Michael Rosa: So it's good to make the team bigger if you can and more people looking at (front mostly helps).

OK. So Dr. White, without revealing you know, the nuts and bolts of the actual potential outcomes here, we just heard one of the initial outcomes of citizens making aware of officers turning on cameras or not, or notifying them of it being turned on, what other initial outcomes are you seeing? And what surprise you about most of them?

Michael White: Mike, there are three things that I can talk about briefly with regard to outcomes.

The first goes to that part of the study that I described as planning and implementation. And I think Brenda can talk to this too. I think we -- both Brenda and I have been surprised with regards to how seamless the implementation has been. There have been very few problems. There have been very few challenges.

I've seen body-worn camera programs start in other departments where there have been major issues both technological, and policy, and training, and you name it. And those have not been experienced in Tempe. And I think that goes to that very thorough and thoughtful planning process that the department engaged in.

The second area of findings, like we mentioned, and we talked a little bit about this earlier, is the officer perceptions survey that we've done. As I said, we administered that survey on several occasions, twice before the rollout of cameras and now once after.

And what I can tell you is we've done similar work with other police department both in the Phoenix area and elsewhere. And the perceptions amongst Tempe officers with regard to this technology before the cameras rolled out was -- the perceptions or the attitudes were very positive.

And again, I think that goes to the fact that the leadership in this department has been talking to the line level for a long time now about these – about the cameras, the fact that they're coming, and they've sought out, the leaders have sought out the input of the officers, and have engaged them in the process.

As a result, when we asked officers, line officers about their views, they're very positive. And then what we saw is once we administered the survey, again, after officers were wearing cameras, we saw this bump in terms of positive findings with regard to comfort, with regard to familiarity.

And so I think that that kind of stands out and shows the importance of planning, because the officers were ready for it. And when they began wearing the cameras there were few problems and positive attitudes about it.

The last finding I'll mention, and it goes to the citizen surveys that we've done, and we've done now 92 surveys of citizens who had interactions with Tempe police officers. And two things I'll mention, just anecdotally that we're finding, we're going to keep going, and hopefully we'll have about 300 completed interviews by the time we're done.

And this goes, the first theme that we've seen goes to the point that we talked about with citizen notification. To date only about 20 percent of the citizens that we've surveyed knew that a camera was present.

So for whatever reason, either officers are not making the notification, or officers are making the notification. And citizens are upset, they're not hearing and it's not processing, most are unaware that the camera is present.

Now that said, we also asked the citizens their general perceptions. So what do they think about body-worn cameras? They think they're a good idea. They think they're a bad idea. Overall, the citizens that we've interviewed have very, very positive views about body-worn cameras, and they're very happy that the officers in Tempe are wearing them.

And again, this isn't kind of a general population survey. This is a survey of people who are using police services. These are people that have had bad things happen, and as result, they're having an encounter with an officer. And

their attitudes about the cameras being present generally are very, very positive.

Michael Rosa: Yes. As Chief mentioned earlier I don't know of any other studies that have approached the citizen side of this. And I can imagine the difficulty of that type of research.

And so Chief, were there any surprises for you?

Brenda Buren: Well, I think what Mike mentioned is it's a pleasant surprise, is you know, whenever you undertake a big initiative like this, you end up having probably more bumps in the road than we did.

And I guess just to give some folks an overview real briefly about to how we approach this is we early on pursued through our city council to get funds for this. And they were very positive and supportive.

And then following that, we ended up getting a committee involved, of not only PD folks, experts in technology and finance, and all of our officers, and you know, folks involved with the projects.

We also went out and talked to a lot of citizen groups. We talked to the ACLU. We talked to the (NAACP). We've got a lot of input from different entities that really helped us along the way and did communication like Mike mentioned.

We did a lot of communication in person. We threw up the SharePoint site. And we're very transparent with every piece of information, along – you know, along our process. And really did a lot of things planning for this.

So we were probably in queue about a year-and-a-half before an officer got a camera. So it's a lot harder than most people think to do this right. So I think Mike is right. We were surprised by the small number of bumps in the road, pleasant surprise.

Michael Rosa: And I'll reiterate -- in my terms, what I heard the doctor say long-term, slow, thoughtful development of policy leads to better implementations. Open communications between leadership and line officers leads to easier

implementation and fewer bumps in the road. And ongoing communication with the citizens keeps your progress on target.

Does that seem like a reasonable summation?

Brenda Buren: I think it's a great summation. We ...

Michael Rosa: All right. I'm good. I'm good. I'll write that one down.

So let me get to this last question here, and you also have to pardon me, I'm going to switch it up a little bit.

And I definitely recognize, with the first question, part of the question, is would you recommend -- this is (inaudible), other agencies partner with a research partner? And if so, why? But also, how would you recommend agency's approach to research that is out there? And this is going to be one of those research items out there. And obviously it's going to be critical to help agencies understand.

Can you -- beyond just saying, how important it is or however you feel about the research partner aspect, could you also talk about the use of research and your policy and implementation efforts?

Brenda Buren: Yes, absolutely.

And I think one of the answers, of course, is going to be I would recommend any other agency to get a partner. I know that as easy as it sounds when we approached to ASU. You know, it's not easy for them to put these things in their schedules. It costs money. You know, to do these things right, it does take a lot of resources. So we know it's not as easy as it sounds.

So I think when you think about how can other agencies take advantage of the research that's out there or how we do, we, in this project in particular, what we did is we went out and just (skyward). You know, the literature out there which there isn't that much in the academic literature, there is some more internationally. But then we also looked at lot of newspaper articles anything that we can get our hands on to try to better understand the issue before we started doing things.

And I think in terms of learning from any research that's out there is exactly that. You know, take the time to go out there and use the research and make sure that in your planning you can you're avoiding a lot of the pitfalls that other entities might just by just jumping into it.

And I think that's what usually happens on this particular type of project, with body-worn cameras, is you know, officer grade. They – you know, be in responses and starting and new projects and doing things. And so they just wanted to get cameras and get out there, but it's not that easy.

And I would say more broadly, I think from a research perspective, we as an organization have always relied on empirical research to help guide us in decision-making. We have a very robust group of analysts in our department that allow us to look at data and do a lot of things. But we simply don't have the capacity to do the kinds of things Mike is Dr. White is working on.

So I don't know if that exactly answers your question. But I guess you can hopefully hear from my response that I would recommend in any way, shape or form, to take advantage of the research that's out there, and do with it which you can.

If you don't have the opportunity to have the relationship like we do with Dr. Mike in ASU, there are still a lot of other information resources available.

Michael Rosa: And absolutely, you answered the question perfectly, I think.

And for Dr. White on this, what do you see is the research benefits to an agency for partnering? What do they get out of it? What is the benefit to being that partner to a researcher that you see?

Michael White: Well, I think a lot of it goes to what Brenda was just talking about.

But you know, if an agency has locked in with a good researcher on this topic, the researcher is going to know generally what the best practices are nationally. And then the researcher can relay those best practices to the agency. So that should be – that should be one benefit.

And the researcher needs to be part of the team. You know, hopefully we've moved far away from this, kind of old school approach where the an academic researcher drops in once at the beginning of the study, and then once at the end, and says "Give me your data, and then I'll write your report."

We guys we're far away from that. You know, my approach is that I'm part of the team and I'm there on a routine basis so that I can observe what's going on but also then provide some input. So certainly, the best practices piece.

But then also the departments roll out body-worn cameras for different reasons. They have different goals, different objectives, and they expect different effects and impacts. And when you partner with a researcher, the agency then is able to determine down the road whether they actually achieved the goals and objectives that they had sought out when they rolled out the technology out there. And if they did not achieve those goals, why not? And the researcher can help with that, with course corrections.

Brenda Buren: I'll just throw one other thing in there too. I think our committee has found -- you know, we have a lot of folks that maybe haven't had contacts with researchers or to professors at the university in terms of helping us with our works.

Mike and his team have been fabulous. And as a result, it's -- finally I have officers come in my office, and they wanted to talk about an entirely different topic. And like, "Do you think you can introduce to me to that Dr. White?"

So you know, I think from a very day-to-day operational level, our officers continue to see more value in research and more value in having researchers here. And I think that's great for everybody.

Michael Rosa: That sounds like it. And so if you're an agency, wondering why your system isn't quite going the way you thought it was, find yourself a researcher and get the work. It sounds like a good message.

So that's where we have to conclude it. But thank you very much, Assistant Chief Buren and Dr. White.

Brenda Buren: Thank you. It's very nice to be here. We appreciate it.

Michael White: Yes. Thank you very much.

Michael Rosa: All right.

We're glad that you can speak with us today to share your knowledge on this important topic.

We encourage law enforcement justice and other public safety leaders who's 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](http://www.bja.gov/bwc).

This toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use and put adoption and use for community engagement, policy development, data collection, officer training, and educational purposes. There's so much in the kit.

But we also encourage listeners to share and promote these resources with your colleagues and staff. A tool is not useful unless you actually get it out there and get it used.

Lastly, these resources, and especially the toolkit, have been designed as a national resource. They're your resource. So please submit your ideas for new content through the BWC support link. It's at the bottom of every page.

So this is Michael Rosa 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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