

BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance Milwaukee Police Department & Urban Institute

Todd Maxwell: Hello, listeners, this is Todd Maxwell again, member of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera Team, and today I'm speaking with (Sgt. Doug Wiorek) from the Milwaukee Police Department and Bryce Peterson, Research Associate in the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center.

(Doug Wiorek) is a sergeant with the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Police Department. (Doug) has been in law enforcement since 1988, with 19 of those years working for the city of Milwaukee. (Sgt. Wiorek) has held several long-term assignments during his career with Milwaukee PD, including research and policy development.

He currently holds the role as the Executive Officer to the IT department, and is the Body-Worn Camera Program Manager Administrator for the department. In addition to his law enforcement experience (Doug) has several years of private security experience in North America's largest shopping mall, The Mall of America, and has served as a volunteer firefighter.

Bryce Peterson is not only the Research Associate in the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center, but is also leading the evaluation of Milwaukee Police Department's Body-Worn Camera Program. Bryce is also principal investigator of several projects funded by the National Institute of Justice on policing and corrective – correctional interventions, including evaluations of surveillance, video analytics, and the (survey) of correctional contraband.

His work has been published in peer reviewed journals such as "Crime and Delinquency", "The Prison Journal", "The American Journal of Criminal Justice" and "The Journal of Interpersonal Violence". Before joining Urban, Bryce was the project manager for the Correctional Incident Database, a research fellow at the Research and Evaluation Center in New York City, and adjunct lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where he taught criminology, criminal justice and statistics. He received his PhD in criminal justice from John Jay College, the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Bryce, thank you, and (Sgt. Wiorek), for speaking with me today. My first question is, why did the police department decide to get involved with a research partner?

Sgt. Doug Wiorek: Good morning, Todd, let's get this started, this is (Doug Wiorek) from the Milwaukee Police Department. The Milwaukee Police Department has a pretty extensive history, as far as getting researchers involved in various projects, at least through the last 8 years, when Chief Flynn has been our chief. So, we've been involved with Urban Institute in the past, or currently involved with them for three projects that are currently going on. So, it was kind of a natural fit for us, just based on the positive results we've had over the years, paring up with various partners.

We saw this as a natural fit, especially with the body-worn cameras. It's a new technology and there's a lot of questions out there that need answers, and there will continue to be for a good number of years. Like I said, this was a great fit for us.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you. Bryce, could you tell us what – or give us an overview of what the research project is all about.

Bryce Peterson: Sure, so essentially what we'll be conducting is what's called a randomized controlled trial, basically means that we randomly find some officers into a treatment group and others into a control group. There's a total of over 500 officers who are participating in that part of the project. And within that randomized controlled trial, the treatment group officers are the ones who will receive the cameras, and the control group will be officers who will not receive cameras.

And that part of the study's going to last for about 9 months, and after that time, all the officers and Milwaukee Police Department, including those who were assigned to the control group, will receive body worn cameras. And kind of, during that 9 month study period, we're going to be evaluating whether the cameras in the treatment group have resulted in better outcomes overall, and whether, especially compared to those who do not receive cameras in the control group.

And by outcomes I mean, we'll be looking at things like use of force incidents, citizen complaints and several other measures of police officer citizen interactions, to be able to determine whether those have improved when officers have cameras, compared to when they don't.

And then there's a few other components of a research study, and they're all kind of designed to measure whether police community relations have improved or changed after body-worn cameras were deployed in Milwaukee. So for example, we'll be conducting some focus groups with officers, other focus groups with committee members, and then we have the sort of pre-post citywide survey that we're doing with people who live and work in Milwaukee. And we've already done the first wave of that earlier this year and we will be conducting a second wave next year.

Todd Maxwell: So, just a quick follow up to that – how do you try to prevent contamination from the two groups, and we all know that everybody in the department will talk to each other and sort of, possibly change their behavior. We've seen that from some of the earlier studies, how people change their behavior once they know that there's a study going on.

Bryce Peterson: Sure, well without getting into too much of the methodology, there are kind of two different ways that people do body-worn camera research like this. Especially if you're trying to randomize officers – randomized groups I should say. And the one way is the way we're doing, which you randomize at the officer level. Meaning some officers receive cameras, some of them don't.

The other way to do it, is sort of at the shift level, or the district level or some other level where you try to isolate. So that way, only officers who have the cameras – or only officers are working with one another who have cameras, and those who don't are only working with those who don't. So for example, every officer in the day shift might receive cameras, compared to officers in the night shift, who will not.

We opted to go with it this way, because there are basically issues with both the ways of doing it. If you were to randomize by shift, what happens is you have officers who sometimes might have cameras and other times might not

have cameras, so their own type of contamination, where as they're getting the treatment some cases, and not getting the treatment other cases.

Going with it the way we have now, as you just indicated. There's certainly going to be the challenge of some officers who have cameras working with those who don't have cameras, they're going to be talking to one another, there are definitely situations where they're together at a scene – officers who have cameras and officers who don't. And there could be, what you call, contamination effects or effects. Whereas officers who don't have cameras benefit or have, at least, altered outcomes because they're with officers who do have cameras.

There are a lot of ways to adjust – to try to address that statistically. So controlling for in a statistical model, in terms of trying to prevent that for research purposes, it's just one of the challenges with doing this kind of research in a real-world setting. You know, you often hear of randomized controlled trials being done in these very controlled settings, kind of like pharmaceutical companies do it, so those are like highly controlled laboratory settings.

This is one of the challenges of doing this type of research in a real-world setting, but it's not really a challenge that were concerned with, I mean in the sense that it's going to happen, we're going to address it the best we can, and I think there's actually some useful findings that we'll have from that. So, we'll be able to tell whether – in addition, you can look at it as contamination, you can also look at it, look at it as the spillover effect, meaning it might benefit officers in a positive way. If they're working with those who have cameras maybe it'll have a civilizing effect on them, and that's the term that's used in the literature. So, it's just something that we're aware of and we're looking forward to looking at.

Todd Maxwell: Great, thank you for that. (Sgt. Wiorek), what is the police department hoping to learn from this and do with the outcomes from the research?

Sgt. Doug Wiorek: Well, I'm sure you're aware, when you're talking to various other agencies, this isn't new technology. It shows the potential to either improve

or weaken community relations depending on the reception that it gets through the various organizations. So, we see this as a very expensive technology, it is, and you know, one of the outcome that we're looking for, is whether or not it is a worthwhile venture for departments to spend millions of dollars on a camera system and reap the benefits of trying to reduce citizen complaints, use of force and what not.

So ultimately, we're looking for good data. We're partnered with an excellent partner and we hope that other people can learn from some of the mistakes that we're going to make. Again, we're kind of in the infancy of this whole body-worn camera program nationwide. And you know, there's a lot things to learn and a lot of things to develop, and again, hopefully we can help another department move forward from those mistakes that we might make.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you. One of the things that Bryce mentioned was follow-up community outreach poll, or questionnaire. And have you guys done any advertising or outreach to the community about this trial and this research, to get any feedback leading up to this, or that something you might do afterwards? That's just for the part about the questions?

Sgt. Doug Wiorek: Yes, I think we're actually going to wait. We've been kind of talking about it in small group settings at some community meetings, as far as what the department is doing. We haven't done a large outreach. I don't think we want to contaminate what we are doing.

We kind of started a little backwards with the program, the original grant was supposed to have kicked off the ground sometime in late 2015, but due to some of the red tape between the various agencies – things didn't get aligned until about February. So, we already had cameras out in the field, and we didn't want to contaminate anything that was currently out there. So we were kind of low key as far as that's concerned and I see a much bigger drive as this starts ramping up.

Todd Maxwell: That was great, thank you. So, from a police department perspective, what do you see as the benefits to partnering with the researcher?

Sgt. Doug Wiorek: Well like I said, Milwaukee's been involved in numerous research ventures throughout the years. Chief Flynn, again, is very data oriented, data driven and that's one thing that this police department has been really focusing on the last 8 to 10 years. So, we get a lot of experience with a lot of support. We get to see things from a nonbiased, independent evaluation.

What the researchers find, versus what our officers might find, are totally different. So we've got a wide range of views to look at and of course we like anything with the word doctor behind it. We're cops, we tend to do things the (inaudible) way. You get some academia behind it, it shows more weight and the flexibility and transparency that we're looking for.

Todd Maxwell: And for Bryce, what are some of the uniqueness that you find in partnering with a police department and doing research like this.

Bryce Peterson: I think it goes both ways, so kind of what (Doug) was saying, I think there's a lot of benefit to the agency to partner with the researcher. You know, we can provide feedback, meaningful feedback kind of early on in the process. Help them course correct if necessary, make recommendations for changes, make sure that things are being implemented in an evidence-based way et cetera, et cetera.

But certainly from our side, so the term research or evidence-based practices guidelines or standards – that's kind of thrown around a lot. I think I just did it myself. But it's impossible to say or to determine which of these practices guidelines or standards are evidence-based, without working with, kind of, strong agency partners that are willing to try new things, be innovative, be good collaborative partners.

So, I think from our end, we benefit greatly from working with people who are as open and willing to do research as the Milwaukee Police Department is – provide us with data on timely requests. And just being willing to be there in the trenches with us and make adjustments as necessary. And kind of be flexible and the research plan, and meet sometimes.

What might be seen as a crazy thing to ask for – like why should you just get half of your officers, were going to randomly (sign) them, why don't you just

give half of them cameras, even though you have cameras for everybody, but wait in giving them for 9 months. Or we asked them to delay the officers who were assigned to the control group, we asked them to delay how long they cameras for another 3 months, because we thought it'd be better for the study. So having a partner who is willing to do those kinds of things, is really valuable to us.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you (both). Without revealing any potential outcomes, could you tell us what has surprised you both about this evaluation process and/or the partnership?

Bryce Peterson: I can start and then I'll give it over to (Doug). So we're obviously still very early in the study, so it's not like we have many results to talk about anyway. And when we do, we'll certainly be releasing that information broadly to Milwaukee as well as everywhere else in the U.S.

But I think at least, what surprised me the most so far is, like I said, how much of a willing partner Milwaukee has been. They've been really forthcoming with all of their data requests – very willing to work with us closely, and make sure that our research is unbiased and informative to their process. You know, oftentimes police departments can be leery about working with researchers. Because either they don't understand our motives or the importance of the research process, but Milwaukee has been really easy for us to work with. And I think that's just a testament to how committed they are to, kind of, the research process and making sure that their practice is informed by the evidence.

Sgt. Doug Wiorek: And I'll just kind of echo on what Bryce said, we're kind of patting each other on the back here. But again, we've been working with researchers, specifically the Urban Institute for a number of projects in the past as well as present. We feel they have a great relationship with them, it's a two way street as far as data is concerned. They've been very flexible with us and work in some of our needs, and we try to reciprocate that as best as we can.

Like Bryce was saying, it is too early for us – we just basically started this in March, April – as far as getting things going. So we're very early in it toward

the end of the year that data will start coming forward and we'll have more to offer, as far as outcomes.

Todd Maxwell: Again, thank you both. The final question is for (Sgt. Wiorek). Based on the different research projects you've mentioned that you've seem to have worked with different research partners with the department. And would you recommend other police departments that will be listening to these podcasts, to partner with the research agency partner, and can you give us some of the reasons why you would recommend it, if so?

Sgt. Doug Wiorek: Yes, absolutely Todd. Working with research partners, like I said, once you establish a relationship, it becomes very easy. There is a wide-range of information to be shared amongst the partners. The research partners learn something as well as the organization. So we've been involved with a number of third-party researchers in various capacities.

It definitely increases the credibility of what the police department is trying to learn from it – (venture) from these studies. If the police department does it and puts the information out there, I think the credibility factor is a little less credible. When you start pairing up with the various universities – again, you have doctors, you got varied points of view, different takes on things, and that only makes things better.

So I would definitely implore many agencies, especially – funding can be an issue, but there (aren't) many grants out there. Definitely implore different agencies to give this a shot and make the best of it, get the best info you can.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you, both. Thank you, (Sgt. Wiorek) and Dr. Peterson, we're grateful you could speak with us today and share your knowledge on this important topic. We encourage law enforcement, justice, public safety leaders and everyone who's agency are interested in learning more about body-worn camera programs and their implementations, to visit the body-worn camera toolkit at (www.bj.gov/bwc), this toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help with the adoption and use of, for 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 body-worn toolkit have been designed as a national resource, your resource, so please submit your ideas for new content to the BWC support-line at the bottom of the homepage. This is Todd Maxwell with the Bureau of Justice System's body-worn camera team, signing out and thank you for listening.

END