

Clinton Section Officers' Perception of Body Worn Camera in Policing After Implementation: Full Report



Nate LeMahieu
Research Assitant

Na Liu, M.S.
Research Associate

Chris Sweadner
Research Assistant

John Klofas, Ph.D.
Director
jmkgcj@rit.edu

John McCluskey, Ph.D.
Department Chairperson
jdmgcj@rit.edu

Irshad Altheimer, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
ixagcj@rit.edu

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the Rochester Police Department (RPD). We give special thanks to research coordinator Lieutenant Michael Perkowski from RPD who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research. We would also like to show our gratitude to the patrol officers and sergeants who were involved in the ride-along sessions for sharing their thoughts with us.

Abstract

This mixed-methods study evaluates the impact of body-worn cameras (BWC) on police work, police-citizen encounters, and internal administrative procedures of the Rochester Police Department. To understand and measure the impact of the BWC, researchers use a series of quantitative data including, crime occurrence, complaints against police, and criminal justice processes (criminal and internal investigations) pre and post camera deployment. This ride-along report was designed as a qualitative study for researchers to understand the nature of contemporary police patrol work. The purpose of the ride-alongs was to collect qualitative data on officers' attitudes they have acquired pertaining to body-worn cameras after BWC implementation and how it has impacted the nature of police work. After analyzing the result of each ride-along interview, researchers identified several major themes that were essential in understanding officers' current thoughts related to policing and the initial effects of BWC.

Key words: *body-worn camera, ride-along, policing, perception*

Research Purpose

The public's expectations for body-worn cameras (BWCs) are extremely high (Mitchell, 2017), and the same may be said of policy makers and police administrators (21st Century Policing Task Force, 2015). Body-worn camera advocates claim that BWCs deliver enhanced law enforcement transparency and legitimacy, improved civilian and officer behavior and interactions, improved evidentiary benefits leading to reduced complaints, and opportunities for police training (White, 2014). However, current research has identified unintended consequences in utilizing body-worn cameras, concerning officer and citizen privacy, as well as harming police relationships with witnesses and victims (Letourneau, 2015). Traditional survey methodologies may not be able to uncover the full scope of the experienced benefits and consequences of body-worn cameras. Therefore, we make use of qualitative data in the form of ride-along interviews to fully explore the subject of body-worn cameras in police patrol

This report describes officers' experiences with BWCs in the Clinton Section of the Rochester Police Department (RPD). In this report we first describe the methodology, outlining the sample of officer patrol shifts and the interview protocol. In subsequent sections, we provide a detailed assessment of officer experiences with body-worn cameras organized by theme.

Methodology

Sample Selection

The Operational Bureau of RPD consists of five patrol sections: Lake, Genesee, Goodman, Clinton, and Central. Each section is divided into car beats (See Appendix A for additional information detailing car beats in subsequently mentioned patrol sections). Within Lake, Genesee, Goodman, and Clinton Sections there are three platoons (1st Platoon: 23:00-7:00; 2nd Platoon: 7:00-15:00; 3rd Platoon: 15:00-23:00); for Central Section there are five platoons (1st Platoon: 23:00-7:00; 2nd Platoon: 7:00-15:00; 3rd Platoon: 15:00-23:00; 4th Platoon: 19:00-3:00; 5th Platoon: 11:00-19:00). Central Section's staffing is different from the other sections due to its unique combination of foot posts and walking beats in the downtown business district between its 5th platoon and detail personnel (See Appendix B for the staffing detail of each platoon).

Ten observations were drawn from ten police beats in Clinton Section: 207, 217, 227, 237, 247, 257, 267, 277, 287, and 297 (See Appendix A for the location of each car beat in Clinton Section) within which researchers conducted ride along interviews. The ride-along interviews were conducted anywhere between four to six months after the initial BWC rollout. For the ride-along sessions with patrol officers, researchers first randomly assorted platoons and patrol beats, then randomly assigned the assortments to three researchers. Each ride-along entailed four hours of observations and questions by researchers. Each eight-hour Platoon was divided into two four-hour periods for each researcher to choose. For example: Researcher A was randomly assigned to the assortment of the 2nd Platoon of Beat 277, since 2nd Platoon includes the whole eight hours from 7:00 to 15:00, the researcher could choose to do the ride

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

along either from 7:00 to 11:00 or from 11:00 to 15:00 on a week-day based on his/her schedule. A CPSI Research Assistant contacted the RPD BWC research coordinator in advance to schedule the ride-along sessions. Researchers began the ride-along interviews on February 16th, 2017 and finished ten ride-along sessions March 3rd, 2017.

Officers selected for the ride-along sessions were all males with differences in years of policing experience ranging from 1 to 25 years. Although this selection reflects the pattern of staffing in Clinton Section, it should be acknowledged that the sampling result is limited due to the absence of female officers in the Clinton Section.

To insure the consistency of the interview content, researchers developed an interview protocol to be used as a guideline (See Appendix C for General Interview Questions for BWC Ride-along Research). In the present study, we revised the previous BWC survey framework to reflect the content of the interviews prior to BWC implementation. The goal of this survey modification was to identify changes in perceptions and experience after the BWC implementation. In addition, the interviews followed a semi-structured design which allowed for researchers to ask further questions pertaining to officers' experiences with the BWC outside of the interview framework. Before each ride-along interview, researchers explained the purpose of the ride-along study and provided an oral statement of confidentiality. Additionally, in order to keep officer statements within this report confidential, placeholders such as "Officer A" or "Officer B" were used in order to link statements across officers.

In addition to surveying patrol officers, researchers interviewed two sergeants within the Clinton Section. As with patrol officers, we developed a semi-structured interview framework pertaining to sergeants' perceptions and experiences in relation to the implementation of the

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

BWC (See Appendix D). Each sergeant interview was approximately an hour long, was scheduled at the sergeant's convenience, and was either conducted in person or via telephone.

Clinton Section Ride-Along Findings

The analysis of the ride-along interviews resulted in the identification of several themes on the patrol officers' perceptions and attitudes of the BWC. Most interview content focused on the officer's attitudes toward the BWC technology, the implementation of BWCs, and the BWCs impact on workload. Additionally, we were able to gather information pertaining to the BWC's impact on a variety of policing factors. These factors included: perceptions of the BWC policy, the BWC as it relates to officer and citizen privacy, the BWC's impact on complaints and discretion, citizen and officer behavioral changes resulting from the BWC, as well as the benefits recognized from BWC implementation.

Officers' General Attitudes on BWC Implementation

Following any major change in the processes or nature police work, the existence of officers who outright support, or dislike the change is to be expected. There were only two officers who unreservedly supported BWCs, and two who did not support BWCs. As a whole, the overarching perception of the Clinton Section officers we interviewed held neutral opinions of the BWC's implementation. These same officers stated that the implementation of BWCs was "bound to happen," regardless of agency-wide support or opposition. The officers realized that the implementation of the BWCs was occurring across the nation, and were prepared for the RPD to be the next agency to adopt them. The officers recognized that the BWC project was young at the time of their interviews, and that more acclimation to the BWCs on their patrol would be required before making a conclusive assessment. However, the officers were able to

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

share with researchers their current experiences with the BWC, with approximately four to six months of experience.

Three of the officers interviewed stated that they felt that the BWC is the equivalent of having “Big Brother” watching them. These officers stated that they believed body-worn cameras were not necessarily implemented to support officers on their patrols, but rather to monitor officer conduct. One officer said that the implementation of BWCs symbolizes a lack of trust in the officers and stated:

“As a police officer, we already have to undergo a lengthy background check to become an officer, and the public seems to think we still need BWC to show our words and actions can be trusted. I don’t like the trend recently that the public perception of police seems to be we cannot be trusted unless we have a BWC.” –Officer A

Researchers asked the officers if they felt that the BWC was an improvement or a burden in their daily patrols. Across the ten patrol officers, the responses were evenly split between believing the BWC was an improvement or a burden in policing. The officers’ responses mostly focused on the technological aspects of the camera, which is discussed in detail below.

Attitudes on BWC Technology

The officers of Clinton Section noted many problems and frustrations with the technology of the BWC. While most officers were open to the BWC, and some even supported its implementation, most officers could not fully endorse the usage of BWCs due to some of the technological issues their patrol section had been experiencing. In this section, we explore some of the technological matters that officers routinely reported to researchers. These BWC

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

technological issues included: docking stations, attachment, footage quality, and the activation button.

“I generally like the idea of having a camera, just not the ones that we have. It’s more about the product rather than having to use a camera. Having a camera can be awesome ... in a perfect world [where the BWC always works] the BWCs are always useful.” –Officer B

BWC Docking Stations

The majority of the officers interviewed noted that they had experienced problems with the docking stations in regards to uploading and tagging videos during their shift. The frequency in which these problems occurred for officers varied, with one officer noting that these problems occur “quite often,” while other officers mentioned that it was uncommon for them to experience any complications. As one officer put it, docking with the BWC tends to be “hit or miss, really.” As a result of the docking problems experienced by officers, the BWCs required several efforts in order to successfully upload its videos, as there was an inability for the docking station to recognize the BWC. In the event of the former, it can “take away five to ten minutes at a time when it’s not working,” but the officers seem to consider it “more of a frustration than anything,” rather than a significant problem. When the officers were unable to successfully dock the camera, they would be forced to return to the Clinton Section headquarters in order to upload and tag the videos using a computer. This could take a large amount of time away from their patrol activities.

Officers generally had stated that this problem was more commonplace during the beginning stages of the implementation process. One officer, who regularly worked with the

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

technical application of the docking systems, indicated that when the BWCs were first deployed he was tearing apart three to four docking stations per week. Since the beginning phases of deployment, it would appear that these issues have been moving towards resolution, and are not a persisting concern.

BWC Uniform Attachment Issues

Some of the officers mentioned having problems with the manner through which the BWC was attached to their uniforms. There were many reports of cameras regularly falling off of officers who engaged in more physical activities, including, but not limited to, pursuing suspects on foot or engaging in a physical altercation. One officer noted that “anytime you run, there’s a better than fifty percent chance it’s going to fall off.” As a result, several officers stated that they would have to physically hold the camera during foot chases, which significantly slowed down the officers. In addition, some of the officers stated that this attachment issue could be easily fixed if there was a second “clip” that would secure the lower portion of the BWC.

Furthermore, the officers noted that the loose attachment of the BWC has impacted the quality of their camera footage. Officers have stated that the BWC “kind of sits at an angle so you can’t catch half of what is in front of you,” so officers try to carefully position their bodies when talking with citizens, though this may not be an option in more tense situations. The BWC also tends to bounce on the chest of the officer, even while walking, and the footage while running tends to be very blurry. The implications of the impact on footage quality could potentially result in BWC footage that may not be useable, or differential utility if only some officers adjust camera and positioning to make up for the shortcomings.

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

BWC Footage Quality

The officers offered some additional feedback on the general quality of the BWC's footage. One common criticism was the poor quality of the camera's low-light settings. The officers stated that "the low-light on the camera is terrible," or "if it's dark at all, they're garbage, you can barely see." Though this setting was intended to better replicate the sight of an actual officer in the field, the officers noted that the cameras were unable to capture almost any useful footage at night, even in areas with streetlights. Otherwise, however, the officers generally held positive opinions of the picture quality of the camera as well as the audio quality, though "with wind, the sound quality's out the window." Officers gave some examples of the value of the camera's crisp quality, with one officer using it to locate keys and another had used it to show the context of his drawing of his firearm in a near use-of-force case.

BWC Activation Button

Some of the officers mentioned that the pressure button on the front of the camera used to turn the BWC on and off has been problematic. The button is "very sensitive" and the BWC was noted by officers as being turned off from bumping into another person or even from brushing it while opening the trunk of a vehicle. This was noted as being especially problematic "because of where it's located," as the center of the chest is more likely to be bumped or hit in a fight, which had been experienced by one of the officers. In addition, "it's next to impossible to notice it's off in the middle of an active situation," so the majority of a physical confrontation might be missed should the pressure button be brushed against. Officers stated concerns for the consequences of cameras turning off during physical disputes. These officers believed that in the

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

event that a camera accidentally turns off, the officer would face disciplinary action, as it would be hard to define whether the camera turning off was a deliberate action or not.

Impact on Officer Workload

Patrol officers are tasked with a large set of responsibilities in their day-to-day operations. The addition of BWCs likely creates a larger workload, as the BWC involves tasks that include, but are not limited to: activating and deactivating the BWC, uploading BWC footage, footage tagging, and reviewing the acquired footage. Accordingly, researchers probed further regarding how officers perceived this change in their workload.

Across all the interviews, officers stated that on average BWC-related tasks and processes took approximately twenty minutes out of their shifts. Considering a shift is typically eight hours, twenty minutes spent in a shift is approximately four percent of that shift. When officers were asked which BWC-related task consumed the most amount of time, officers unanimously mentioned that tagging footage was the most tedious. As mentioned previously, the amount of time spent on these tasks was dependent on the functional status of the docking system. If the docking system was not working properly, then the time spent on uploading and tagging the footage increased substantially. The consequence of a non-functional docking system is having to drive back to the section headquarters, therefore increasing the time spent. When all the equipment is in functioning order, then uploading and tagging the footage takes one to two minutes per call-for-service.

“When the camera is working really well, then everything only takes a few minutes (per call). Then it’s not really a hassle at all to me.” –Officer B

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

Generally, when the BWC equipment was operating effectively, officers perceived this time spent using the BWC to be minimally time consuming. However, when technological malfunctions occurred, officers stated that the expense of time on BWCs could be extensive. Notwithstanding, even if the technology is in working order, two officers expressed concerns that BWC-related time expenditures could become problematic during the summer months. The ride-along sessions were conducted during the winter months. During the winter months, there are generally less calls-for-service, and, as a result, BWC usage is lower. During summer months, generally there are more calls-for-service and consequently BWC usage is expected to increase. Increased time spent uploading and tagging footage would be expected to occur. In response to the concern about increased time spent tagging footage during summer months, officers expressed the need for an alternative tagging program that would shorten the time span to interconnect incidents with the related footage.

Officers agreed that the added responsibility of camera activation and deactivation was initially challenging. Activating and deactivating the BWC is the least time-consuming duty associated with the addition of using BWCs in patrol, however, concerns were expressed pertaining to disciplinary measures if officers failed to recall this procedure. Officers stated that during heat of the moment incidents they may forget to turn on their cameras, such as in the below officer's recount of an incident:

“One day I had to respond to an incident where I pulled over a guy with a stolen car. As he gets out of his car, he grabs his waistband and starts running from me. At the time, I thought he was trying to pull a gun, which eventually fell out during pursuit. I later got questioned for not turning on my BWC.” –

Officer C

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

The issue of remembering to activate and deactivate the BWC was most significant for officers in the early stages of the implementation of BWCs. However, officers frequently stated that this was no longer as much of an issue as they became more acclimated to the BWC. Lastly, in relation to camera activation and deactivation, officers stated that in some incidents they felt that using the BWC was unnecessary, and can be a burden to their workloads if used when “not necessary.” Below is an example of an officer who had believed utilizing the BWC wasn’t always necessary:

“There’ll be some instances where I respond to a call, where I go up to an individual’s door, turn on the camera, and nobody answers (the door). Now I have to go and upload footage of absolutely nothing and it takes me off the street.” –Officer D

In relation to activating and deactivating the BWC, there seemed to be differences from officer to officer in their understanding of the BWC policy dictating the usage of the camera. As such, this next section discusses the officers’ perception of the RPD’s BWC policy.

Officers’ Perception of the RPD BWC Policy

Officers had differing interpretations of the RPD BWC policy in regards to when the BWCs should be used in incidents. A handful of officers believed that the BWC should be activated at every call-for-service, without the consideration of the officer’s discretion. A few officers acknowledged that the BWC policy did in fact give officers discretion in “optional” incidents. One officer mentioned that mandatory recording jobs show up as “A” jobs on the mobile data terminal when responding to calls, whereas “B” jobs were optional jobs.

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

Among the officers who had a more accurate understanding of the policy, they stated that the policy was fair. Specifically, an officer mentioned the “safe and practical” clause in the RPD BWC policy as being practical and helpful. However, a couple of officers had also described the policy as unclear, such as in the case of an officer’s description below:

“The guidelines (and) training could have been better. They could have been clear. When we all came back from the training, we were all saying different things (about the BWC).” –Officer E

In addition to lacking clarity, a two officers mentioned that the RPD BWC policy could potentially conflict with HIPAA laws. HIPAA laws deal with patient confidentiality, which could include: conversations between patients and doctors, insurance information, patient health information, and conversations between a patient and his/her doctor (Your Rights Under HIPAA, 2017). Officers frequently respond to calls-for-service that take place in a medical environment. In the case that an officer responds to a call-for-service of sensitive subject matter, such as in sexual assault cases, officers expressed concern regarding HIPAA laws pertaining to patient privacy. HIPAA (2017) states that most law enforcement officers are not required to follow these laws.

A few officers mentioned, but not as frequently, how the RPD BWC policy could possibly conflict with another RPD policy, namely the policies for cases that require photographs to be taken. In cases such as hit and runs, officers are required to take pictures of the damage. These officers felt that it was unnecessary to be recording this type of incident, and also have to take photographs, as “footage is better than photos.”

BWC & Officer Privacy

Occasionally, officers mentioned that the BWC could result in potential issues concerning privacy. However, this issue was not regarded by the officers as one that was significant. In the beginning stages of the implementation process, there were instances where the BWC would be activated unintentionally in situations that were not related to patrol, such as during lunch breaks or in locker rooms. Since then, these incidents have occurred less frequently.

The most significant privacy concern that officers mentioned to researchers did not primarily pertain to their own privacy, but for undercover officers. Undercover officers, narcotic officers, or plain clothed officers could potentially have their identities unveiled on BWC footage.

These privacy concerns were mentioned in conjunction with the Freedom of Information Laws (FOIL). While the footage capturing the identity of an undercover officer or the location of an officer's residence by itself was not concerning, the officers stated that if the footage got into "the wrong hands" this could be a concerning matter. In this next section, we will summarize the discussions that researchers had with patrol officers concerning FOIL laws.

BWC & FOIL Laws

The FOIL laws cover the public's right to gain access to government records (Open Government, 2017). These government records include BWC footage. Officers consistently expressed concerns regarding the FOIL laws and the potential consequences to their privacy and

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

safety. Officers frequently mentioned that they believed that citizens could FOIL BWC video at any time and for any reason they wanted, without restrictions on the videos they can access.

“One time, I accidentally turned on my body-worn camera in the locker room. It sounds funny, but its all FOIL-able. All someone has to do is go and fill out a FOIL request and they can get the video.” –Officer D

According to the RPD’s BWC policy in Section XIII, the FOIL policy includes exemptions in the videos that could be requested. The RPD’s FOIL policy prohibits the distribution of videos that could potentially infringe upon the safety, privacy, or integrity of law enforcement operations. In the case that a video breaches these considerations, access to the video will be denied.

Additionally, officers mentioned concerns that BWC footage will be used by defense attorneys in order to help their cases. In some instances, an officer may use their discretion in deciding whether or not to ticket or arrest an individual. A few officers were worried that BWC footage showing officers using discretion to not arrest or ticket an individual could potentially be obtained through FOIL, and be used to assist defense attorneys in their cases. One officer, who dealt primarily with traffic incidents, stated that due to this concern, he felt that his discretion would be limited in order to prevent footage from being used to help defense lawyers.

BWC & Discretion

Most officers did not feel that their discretion was limited as a result of the implementation of BWCs. A couple of officers mentioned the limiting of discretion for particular incidents, primarily domestic incidents. Occasionally, during domestic incidents, instead of resolving the situation by means of arrest, officers will act as mediating actors between the

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

involved parties. However, if during an incident a BWC records something of a criminal nature, officers felt that they would have to resolve the situation with an unnecessary arrest rather than situation mediation.

“[My discretion is limited] when it comes to domestics. We’re [with BWCs] mandated to make arrests when it comes to domestics. For example, if someone calls us and say someone broke my T.V., and says they don’t want to press charges, we’re mandated to make an arrest. Before, we could hang out and try to work out the problems between the individuals.” –Officer F

Aside from the implications for discretion in domestic incidents, most officers generally felt that the implementation of BWCs would not affect their discretion in how they handle incidents. Regardless of BWCs or any other technological implementation that may occur in the future, there was a general consensus that officers will “do their jobs the same way they’ve always done them.”

BWC & Complaints

Researchers also queried patrol officers on the topic of the BWC and reducing complaints. Most of the officers interviewed mentioned that they have not yet dealt with complaints that the BWC was able to address. These officers stated that most of the time a complaint could be resolved through a simple conversation rather than needing to use BWC footage. Additionally, dealing with internal and external complaints are primarily the responsibility of sergeants and the professional service section (PSS). Two of the officers interviewed, however, mentioned that their complaints were dropped due to body-worn camera footage. In terms of receiving less complaints overall, the officers stated that they had not

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

observed any significant reductions. However, officers have stated that they have heard across the agency that BWCs have been responsible for decreasing “unprovable complaints.”

Unprovable complaints are not able to be resolved due to a lack of substantial evidence, and as a result are labeled “unprovable.” Typically, the nature of how complaints are deemed unprovable are through one individual’s interpretation of an incident versus the police officer’s recount of the incident, with lack of sufficient evidence to merit a complaint being filed. As a result of the implementation of BWCs, the happenstance of “unprovable complaints” is perceived to be less frequent due to the addition of footage providing clarity to incidents.

BWC Impact on Citizen Behavior

Across the ten officers we interviewed, the general consensus was that citizens have not been noticing BWCs. A few of the officers have stated that because they wear so much equipment, the addition of BWCs has largely gone unnoticed. A few of the officers have stated that even before BWC implementation, citizens have mistaken other pieces of equipment as BWCs, such as the radio.

“Since I’ve had the body worn cameras, there’s only been a couple circumstances that people have even noticed it. People for a long time were aware that cops had cameras and thought that things such as radios for instance were the BWCs. I think the effects (such as improved citizen behavior) have already been around as citizen’s believed we had cameras even when we didn’t.” –Officer D

Officers have stated that in uncommon incidents where an individual did notice a BWC, generally, their behavior did not change. Officers supported this belief with statements such as

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

“individuals will treat us the way they’ve always treated us,” or “individuals who obey the law typically like the police, those who don’t obey the law generally do not like us, and that has not changed.” Only in rare scenarios did the officers think that an individual would change his or her behavior as a result of the camera. Officers have stated that often when they arrive at an incident, the citizens are in an “excited state of mind,” and the presence of a camera would not do much to change this.

A few officers stated that in some scenarios, when individuals noticed the presence of the BWC, they would be more hesitant to talk to the police. This could include asking officers to turn off the cameras in order to cooperate or give information to the police, such as the officer had stated below:

“One time, I responded to an incident on [XXX] where somebody had pulled a gun. We questioned some individuals [in the area] about who had the gun, and one guy had said they would tell us, but we had to leave the body camera in the car. He probably would not have given us this information if we had worn the camera.” –Officer C

BWC & Officer Behavior

An indirect effect of BWC implementation that was mentioned, however not as frequently, were changes in officer behavior. While generally, the officers stated that they would “do things the way they’ve always done them, regardless of technological implementations,” officers stated that they have noticed themselves and other officers using more professional language in the presence of BWCs. As a result of more professional police conduct, it is possible that the BWC has promoted more respectful interactions. Additionally, when patrol officers were

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

asked whether or not the BWC has affected their levels of proactivity, most officers had stated they had not experienced any changes.

Additional BWC Benefits

Aside from the factors mentioned in prior sections, officers stated that there were a variety of other benefits they have recognized from the implementation of BWCs. On separate occasions, officers gave examples of where the BWC had significantly contributed to the resolution of incidents. In one of these incidents, an officer had misplaced a set of keys, and by reviewing BWC footage, he was successfully able to locate the keys. Another officer stated that the BWC was able to help convict an individual of a gun-related incident.

“There was an incident where during a call, we ran into an individual for a gun related incident. After some time, we reviewed the body-worn camera footage, and the footage showed the individual with the gun behind his back and throwing it into a broken window behind him. In this case, the footage helped in order to convict the guy.” –Officer G

One officer had stated that the BWC had been valuable in capturing statements, which could corroborate or contradict previous stories. “[The footage] can tell the police when someone is lying, and can be solidly used as evidence.”

Summary of Patrol Findings

At the time of the ride-along interviews, the patrol officers within the Clinton Section had approximately four to six months of experience with the BWC. Most of the officers were open to

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

the implementation of BWCs, some even supported it, and very few disliked it. Across all ten of the patrol officers that researchers interviewed, the bulk of discussions centered on the technological issues with the BWCs. Most of the officers perceived the camera as a tool that could greatly benefit officers on their patrols, by supporting officers with additional means to collecting evidence, resolving complaints, and building probable cause. However, these benefits were contingent on camera functionality. If the BWC was experiencing issues with docking systems, accidental activations, or camera detachment, officer productivity would be inhibited through increased time expenditures in order to resolve the issue.

Correspondingly, as a result of technological malfunctions, officers have stated that the BWC can significantly interfere with operations by increasing their workload. When BWCs are in functioning order, BWC related tasks typically consume only four percent of a patrol officer's day. When technological malfunctions occur, the end result is fewer officers capable of responding to calls for service, and instead prioritizing time around the BWC. Thus, the happenstance of technological issues occurring with BWCs have negatively impacted patrol officer perceptions of the overall BWC implementation.

Officers unanimously mentioned that BWCs are rarely, if ever, noticed by citizens in the general public. One assumption of BWC implementation is that they can help promote socially desirable behavior (Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2015). However, these effects are reliant upon whether an individual is aware that his/her behavior is being observed (Wicklund, 1975). If individuals are not aware of the BWC, then behavioral modifications cannot take place. As officers frequently stated that citizens had generally not noticed the BWC, they have not observed significant changes in citizen cooperation with the police since implementation.

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

However, as officers were aware of the BWCs, officers found themselves using more professional language when interacting with the public.

Researchers were able to identify that there were department-wide misinterpretations of the BWC policy. Few officers were able to correctly understand and apply the BWC policy. Some officers believed that the BWC was to be used in all policing operations, without discretion. Others understood that in certain circumstances, BWC recording was optional, but the extent to which the BWC recording policy allows for optional recording was not well understood by officers. Therefore, it would be beneficial for officers to be further educated on the BWC policy, as the officers with a more thorough understanding correctly believed the BWC policy to be fair and adequate.

While direct privacy concerns resulting from the camera was not a substantial source of content resulting from the ride-along interviews, officers expressed apprehension pertaining to FOIL laws. While officers stated that they have not yet experienced sensitive material being subjected to FOIL laws, officers feared that this could potentially occur in the future as the public becomes increasingly aware of BWCs. Officers feared that as a consequence, FOIL laws will be used to infringe upon officer privacy, or be used by the public to challenge the ethical and moral standing of police officers.

The technological issues that officers are experiencing with BWCs are likely to be resolved in the future, and we can likely expect officers' attitudes towards the BWC to improve as a result of technological improvements. With the resolution of these technological issues, we can also expect officers to experience the benefits that BWCs are intended to provide, such as

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

improved collection of evidence, reduction in complaints, and opportunities for police training (White, 2014).

Clinton Section Sergeant Findings

A component of the ride-along study was to identify any changes in the processes and procedures in the nature of law enforcement supervision. Within the Clinton Section, researchers had the opportunity to interview two sergeants. According to the sergeants we interviewed, each sergeant has different responsibilities and priorities, and therefore their experiences with the BWC project have been different. Of the two sergeants we surveyed, one sergeant had more experience with the BWC alongside patrol functions. The other sergeant that researchers interviewed had more experience with the BWC in a clerical environment doing administrative tasks, which included, but was not limited to monitoring the radio and handling complaints.

Researchers discussed with the sergeants the subject of changes in their workloads since the implementation of BWCs. According to both of the sergeants, as a result of BWC implementation, their workloads had increased substantially, however, this varied on a day-to-day basis. Both sergeants stated that as a result of BWC technical malfunctions, sergeants have to consistently assist patrol officers with their BWCs and make sure that their BWC is in functioning order. One sergeant stated that he was on his third body-worn camera as a result of technical issues with the camera's firmware. Additionally, one sergeant stated that he will soon have to begin monitoring and auditing videos to see if officers are complying with the policy, which will take substantial amounts of time to do in a shift.

Both sergeants also stated that there had been a department-wide misinterpretation of the BWC policy. The sergeants have stated that the BWC policy is full of "grey areas," and that

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

there were a lot of common misconceptions on when the camera should be turned on or off. Additionally, one sergeant stated that the design of the camera has made it hard to comply with the policy, especially in highly stressful situations.

“I don’t think officers have a good understanding [of the policy]. There are a lot of common misconceptions as to when the camera should be on or off. The design of the camera and the ability to comply [with the policy] aren’t congruent. Officers want to do the right thing. The camera has a very small button to turn it on in front of it, and very frequently the camera is accidentally activated. When officers do need to activate it, during high stress situations it’s hard to turn the camera on, because the tactile ability to turn it on without looking at it is very difficult.”

Both of the sergeants stated that they had not used the BWC much for complaint resolution. The sergeants stated that this was not because the BWC was not useful for solving complaints, rather that in order to resolve complaints, footage does not always have to be reviewed. In most circumstances, complaints could be resolved through conversation with the individual filing the complaint.

Overall, the sergeants stated that the BWC project was a good idea, but one sergeant described it as a project where the “benefits are yet to be seen.” The sergeants stated that at the time of the interview, the project had many technical issues that were hampering the progress of the overall project, but remained optimistic that these issues would be resolved as the RPD is “progressive from a training and equipment standpoint, and always look to improving training

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

and policies.” One sergeant stated that “I think cameras are here to stay, but the issues we experience boil down to the particular camera we have.”

Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, the findings we gathered on the perceptions of the incorporation of body-worn cameras into daily policing responsibilities were homogeneous between patrol officer and sergeants. In addition to the concerns, consequences, and benefits of utilizing body-worn cameras in aforementioned sections, we were able to find additional information pertaining to body-worn cameras assimilation into supervisory duties such as complaint resolution and ensuring working status of BWC systems.

The primary concern mentioned by both sergeants and patrol officers were the technological issues with the BWC systems. It was apparent to the researchers that most of the opinions formed by the patrol officers and sergeants interviewed were influenced by the technological malfunctions experienced with docking systems, BWC activation buttons, BWC mode of attachment, or firmware crashes occurring during the stages of implementation. For sergeants and officers alike, the occurrence of BWC system failure resulted in increased workloads by prioritizing troubleshooting the BWC versus standard duties. Many officers cited that with the resolution of technological issues would result an improved perspective of BWCs.

Aside from rectifying the BWC operational issues, multiple officers stated different understandings of the BWC policy in terms of when to turn on and off the BWCs. The sergeants researchers interviewed also confirmed that there was an agency-wide misconception on the BWC policy. Some officers that researchers interviewed stated that to their knowledge, the BWC policy did not allow officers discretion in turning on or off their BWC, which in circumstances,

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

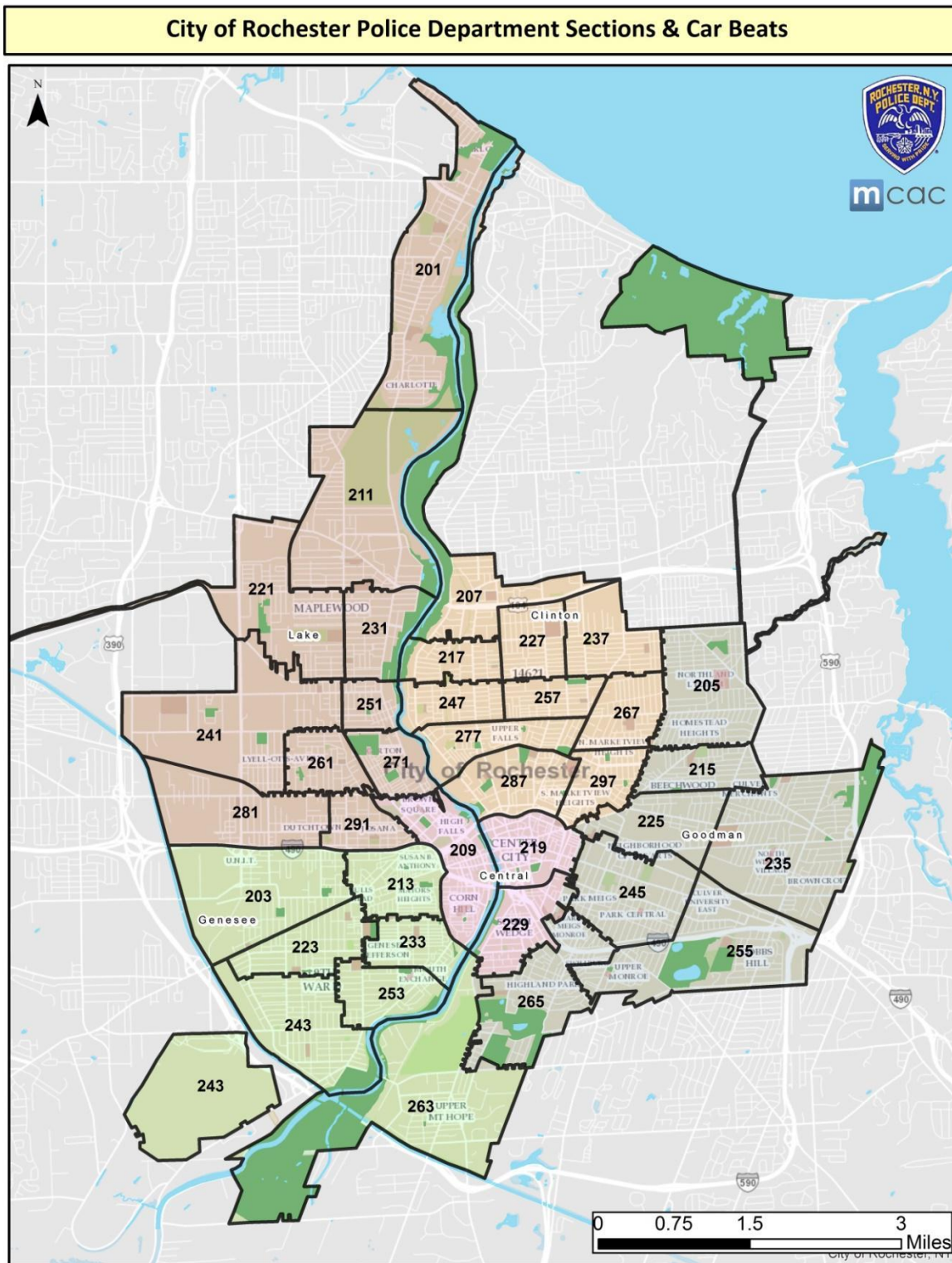
can result in lost intelligence from witnesses who do not want to be recorded for privacy reasons. It would be beneficial if the RPD re-visited the specific knowledge gaps in BWC policy with officers in order to reduce misunderstanding.

Additionally, most officers stated that they had privacy concerns regarding public disclosure of BWC footage. These officers that public disclosure of BWC footage could reveal the identity of undercover officers, or witnesses in sensitive incidents could potentially endanger the safety of these individuals. Additionally, officers stated concerns with BWC footage documenting officer usage of discretion, which could include deciding not to ticket or arrest an individual, could be utilized to supplement defenses' cases in court proceedings. Section XIII of the BWC FOIL policy prohibits the distribution of videos that could potentially infringe upon the safety, privacy, or integrity of law enforcement operations. It was a widespread belief of patrol officers that BWC footage could be obtained by anybody, for any reason, despite privacy or safety violations. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the BWC FOIL policy to be clarified for the patrol officers of the RPD.

References

- Ariel, B., Farrar, W. A., & Sutherland, A. (2015). The effect of police body-worn cameras on use of force and citizens' complaints against the police: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of quantitative criminology*, 31(3), 509-535.
- Committee on Open Government. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.dos.ny.gov/coog/index.html>
- Letourneau, D. S. (2015). Police body cameras: Implementation with caution, forethought, and policy. *U. Rich. L. Rev.*, 50, 439.
- Mitchell, T. (2017, January 11). 6. Police views, public views. Retrieved January 18, 2017, from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/01/11/police-views-public-views/>
- President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. 2015. Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
- Your Rights Under HIPAA. (2017, February 01). Retrieved April 03, 2017, from <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals/guidance-materials-for-consumers/index.html>
- White, M. D. (2014). Police officer body-worn cameras: Assessing the evidence. *Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services*.
- Wicklund, R. A. (1975). Objective self-awareness. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, 8, 233-275.

Appendix A



Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

Appendix B:

Rochester Police Department Patrol Staffing

		Officers					Sergeants	Lieutenants	Investigators	
		4x2 Work Week*			5x2*	Total				
Section	Platoon	Wheel A	Wheel B	Wheel C						
Lake	1st	7	7	7		21	3	1	0	
	2nd	8	8	8		24	4	1	2	
	3rd	10	10	10		30	5	1	3	
	4th					10	10	1	0	2
	Total	25	25	25		10	85	13	3	7
Genesee	1st	5	5	5		15	2	1	0	
	2nd	7	7	7		21	4	1	2	
	3rd	8	8	8		24	4	1	3	
	4th					8	8	1	0	2
	Total	20	20	20		8	68	11	3	7
Goodman	1st	5	5	5		15	2	1	0	
	2nd	7	7	7		21	4	1	2	
	3rd	8	8	8		24	4	1	3	
	4th					8	8	1	0	2
	Total	20	20	20		8	68	11	3	7
Clinton	1st	7	7	7		21	3	1	0	
	2nd	8	8	8		24	4	1	2	
	3rd	10	10	10		30	5	1	3	
	4th					10	10	1	0	2
	Total	25	25	25		10	85	13	3	7
Central	1st	3	3	3		9	1	1	0	
	2nd	3	3	3		9	2	1	1	
	3rd	3	3	3		9	1	1	1	
	4th					4	4	1	0	1
	5th					10	10	1	0	0
	Detail**					10	10	0	0	0
Total	9	9	9	24	51	6	3	3		
Patrol Total		99	99	99	60	357	54	15	31	

Platoon	Hours			* Patrol personnel work either a 4 days on 2 days off rotating schedule or a fixed 5 days on 2 days off schedule.
1st	23:00-07:00			
2nd	07:00-15:00			
3rd	15:00-23:00			** Central sections staffs a unique combination of foot posts and walking beats in the downtown business district between its 5th platoon and detail personnel.
4th	19:00-03:00			
5th	11:00-19:00			
Times may vary slightly by Section				

Appendix C:

A Framework Interview for Post-Implementation Ride Along

- a. What does a typical work day look like?
 - a. How long have you been a police officer?
 - b. How long have you been patrolling this area?
 - c. How long have you been working on this shift?
 - d. How long have you used a BWC?
 - e. How long do you spend on BWC related work per day (downloading footage, activating the camera)? Have BWC related processes contributed significantly to your workload? If so—has this interfered with patrol operations, and how?
 - f. Have you had to contact your supervisor more since using BWC?
 - g. How has your attitude towards BWC changed since its first deployment? What part of the process was difficult for you to get used to? (Ease of use, downloading and uploading data, camera activation, etc.)
 - h. Did you notice other changes after the BWC deployment?
2. Do you think BWC has changed the nature of police work?
 - a. Have you experienced changes in the nature of policing with the addition of BWC?
 - i. Do you think BWC made a change on your policing style? Or did you notice that you become more/less proactive because of BWC?
 - ii. When you have your BWC on, do citizens you encounter during calls for service tend to be more compliant/cooperative? Do citizens acknowledge the presence of BWC during interactions?
 - iii. Do you think BWC has affected your discretion? Example: whether or not make an arrest, give a traffic ticket, stop a person, use force, pay more attention to language etc.,
 - iv. Has the BWC presented any privacy concerns for yourself? If yes, could you explain?
 - b. Possible changes in different kinds of encounters or calls due to BWC?
 - v. Family disturbances/domestic disputes?
 - vi. Repeated calls on same individuals?
 - vii. Early investigative activities
 - viii. Dealing with juveniles? (Especially in school settings)
 - i. How has BWC changed the citizens' view of cooperation with police work?
 - i. Do you think there's a change in citizen's trust in police after BWC's deployment? (Justify certain cases?)
 - ii. Have you experienced circumstances where citizens questioned the camera and how the footage is being used or asked you to turn it off?
 - iii. Has the BWC affected police interactions with *witnesses or person with knowledge*? (not general police-citizen interactions) Has the BWC effected the quality of follow up investigative interviews?
 - iv. Has any of your BWC footage been used as evidence in court? Or have you heard of other officers' footage being used as evidence, what kinds of cases are they used for?
- b. Police Perception of BWC (Positive, Neutral, or Negative)

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

- a. Do you perceive the BWC as an improvement of policing or do you tend to perceive it as a burden in your daily work? Why do you think so?
If Burden > Improvement
 - What was the most difficult part with using/implementing the BWC? (Technology? Workload? Discretion? Policy? Privacy Etc.). Can you give an example?If Improvement > Burden
 - In what aspects has BWC improved policing? (Technology? Workload? Discretion? Policy? Etc.). Can you give an example?
- b. Now that you have had the chance to use a BWC, how do you feel about the expanding usage of BWCs nationwide?
- c. Based on your knowledge of RPD's BWC implementation and nation-wide BWC implementation, how do you think RPD's BWC project could have been improved?
- d. Do you think the amount of time and effort you spend on BWC related work affect your role as a police officer?
- e.
- f. Can you give me some examples of circumstances/locations/encounters where the presence of BWC (whether it's on or off) posed a major problem regardless of policy? (e.g., in homes, schools, with minors, in extreme weathers, particular kinds of events/witnesses)
- g. Can you give me some examples of circumstances/locations/encounters where the presence of BWC (whether it's on or off) helped you solve the problem easily?
- h. Is your opinion of body-worn cameras different now in comparison to when they first rolled out?
- i. Are there any shifts or patrol areas that the BWC would provide more utility?

Appendix D:

Body Worn Camera Interview Framework for Supervisors Post-Implementation

1. How long have you been a supervisor for?
 - a. What are your primary duties as a supervisor? (use this question to probe)
 - b. What was your level of involvement with the deployment of BWC, or any BWC related functions?
 - i. What are these BWC related functions?
2. Since the body-worn cameras have been deployed, how much time have you spent reviewing footage, or dealing with other BWC related processes for managerial purposes?
3. Has the expectation that the body-worn cameras would resolve complaints met its expectations?
 - a. Complaint resolution (Faster resolution of complaints, reduction of complaints filed)
 - b. Decreased unsolvable complaints
 - c. Citizen satisfaction of outcomes
 - d. Reduction of complaints forwarded to internal affairs?
4. Has the body-worn camera impacted your officers' decision to use force usage of force?
 - a. Decreased unnecessary usage of force?
 - b. Create hesitation or reduced discretion in using necessary usage of force?
5. Since BWC deployment, what is your general experience with the BWC policy (camera activation, footage retention, etc.)? Do you feel that it is appropriate or adequate?
 - a. Was the policy able to be established with your patrol officers with ease? Has this improved over time?
 - b. Have there been issues with compliance with the BWC policy?
 - c. Was training the officers (if applicable) on the BWC present challenges?
6. Has the BWC footage been able to improve the completeness or accuracy of crime reports?
7. Since BWC deployment, have patrol officers had to consult with you more often? What consultations had to be made (authorization to record, permission to not record)? If so, has increased consultation created any difficulties in performing your duties?
8. Has the body worn camera provided utility in shift briefings, teaming meetings, or training sessions? If so, how?
9. Has the body-worn camera created or reduced your workload (paper work, complaint resolution, disciplinary/training, etc.) How so? If so, has this impacted your ability to perform your duties?
10. Has the body-worn camera provided utility in assessing patrol officers performance? Has the BWC increased the need to discipline officers? Has the footage been utilized for consideration for position promotions?
11. In your time spent as a sergeant, do you have to spend time conducting investigations? Has the body worn camera footage improved your ability to investigate (identifying suspects, and witnesses)
 - a. What has been your experience with the BWC in the field (if applicable) in contrast to managerial functions?

Body-Worn Camera Study Ride-Along Report

12. Currently, how much do you support the body-worn camera project? Has this perspective changed since the BWCs initial deployment?
 - a. Do you believe the BWC's current environment will improve in the future?
13. Since implementing the BWC, what has been its major successes? It's challenges?
 - a. What steps have been taken to overcome these failures?
 - b. Are there additional ways to utilize the BWC that may not be directed by policy mandates?
14. Overall, have the benefits of the body-worn camera outweighed the negatives in it's implementation?
 - a. Cost<impact and vice versa?
15. Are there any other important elements to the BWC you would like to mention that has not been discussed at a point in time in this interview?